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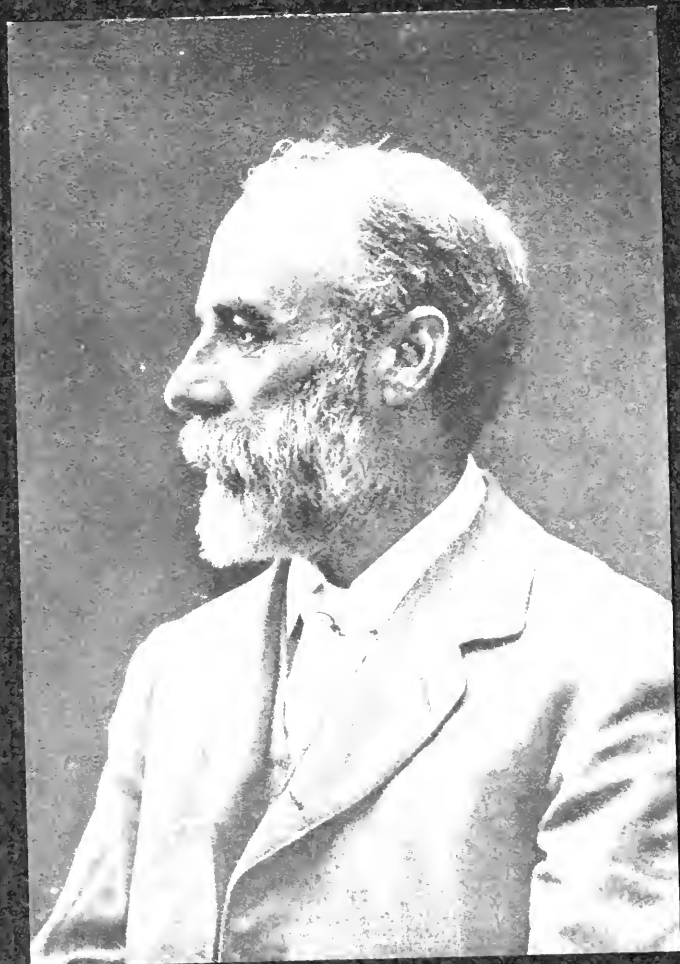




SERMONS, ADDRESSES  
AND ESSAYS

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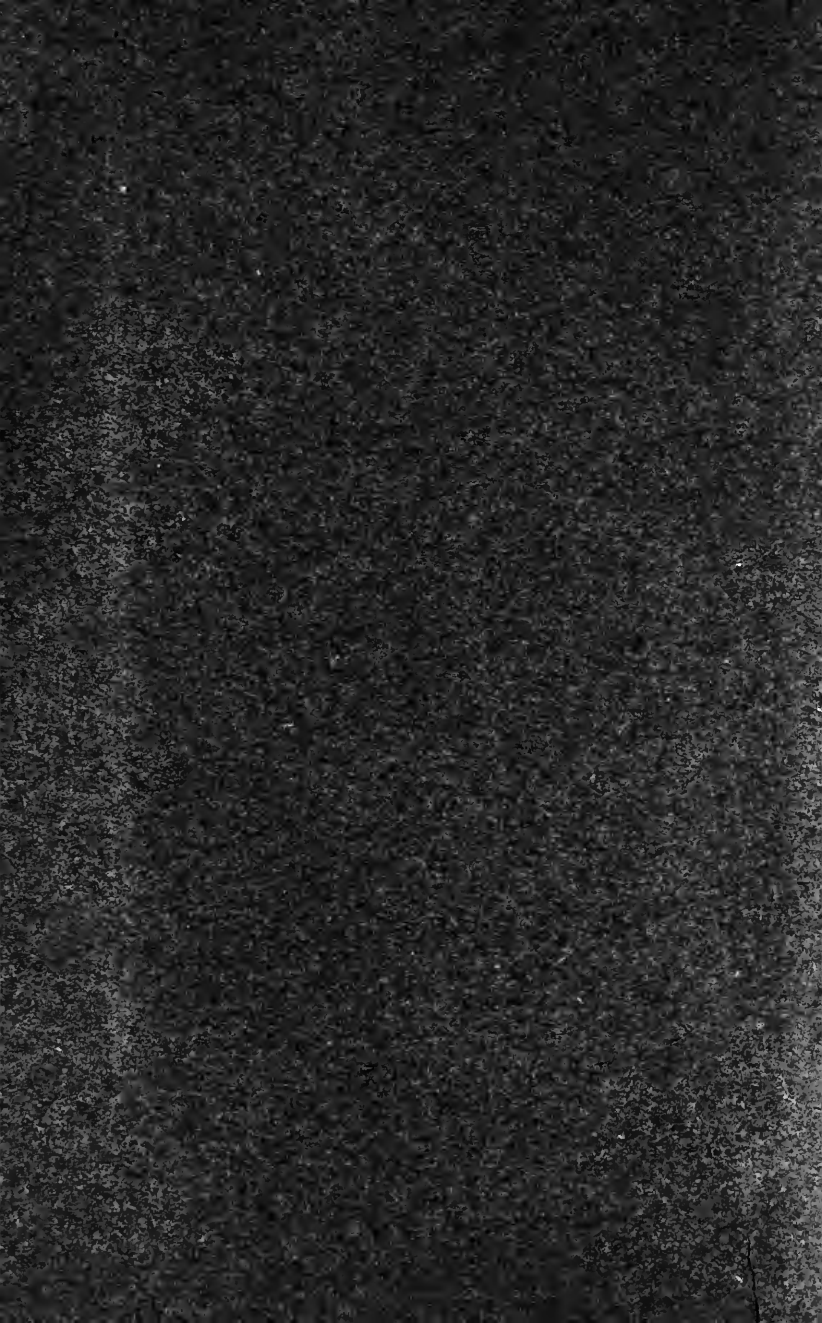


HERBERT RIX





ALICE RIX



# SERMONS, ADDRESSES AND ESSAYS

BY

HERBERT RIX, B.A.

PUBLISHED AS

A MEMORIAL OF HERBERT AND ALICE RIX

*With an Appreciation by Philip H. Wicksteed*

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“Through such souls . . .  
God stooping shows sufficient of His light  
For us in the dark to rise by.”

“Work unsevered from tranquillity.”



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## NOTE

THE following pages contain selections from the manuscripts and published papers of the late Herbert Rix. With the exception of a few pieces at the end of the volume they represent him as the religious teacher and as lecturer on ethics and social reform.

From the rich store of material left to us the task of selection has not been easy. Where all is so excellent it is hard to decide what shall be omitted.

Apart from some necessary verbal alterations the Addresses and Lectures are printed from the manuscripts as he left them—in the form in which he had been accustomed to deliver them in public utterance. The concluding papers are reprinted from the pages of *Seed-Time* and *The Ethical World*.

Readers of this book who have not heard the living voice of the speaker will hardly realise the full significance of his message. Yet they will discern that these are no ordinary pulpit or platform discourses; they will discover here the fruitage of a large and liberal culture, wrought to finest use by free and sometimes profound and always reverent thinking—the gift of a mind richly stored with knowledge but never burdened or obsessed by it; they will reap some of the results of a long and

serious brooding over the problems of religion and philosophy and social life. The grave and measured discussion of these problems is relieved and often illumined by the play of a delightful humour ; the severe criticism of orthodox beliefs and conventional modes of living is balanced by the lofty idealism of a constructive faith. The whole is made beautiful and convincing by the enchantment of a style at once clear and vigorous and chastened.

The book is issued as a real though very inadequate memorial of a life devoted to the noblest ideals and of a robust and rare intelligence—a life and an intelligence such as only those who knew and loved Herbert Rix can ever duly appraise ; nor indeed can they. The words of this book are his, but the influence and charm of another is here also : the spirit of Alice Rix breathes through its pages as a presence of light and beauty and joy.

The words of Philip Wicksteed, which stand as a prologue to this memorial volume, express, perhaps as fully and faithfully as language could express, that tribute of enlightened affection and sympathy for which the friends of Herbert and Alice Rix will always be grateful and glad.





HEADLAND COTTAGE

## HEADLAND COTTAGE

AN APPRECIATION OF HERBERT AND ALICE RIX

THEY only lived in Headland Cottage for eleven years, about a quarter of her life and a fifth of his. Before that time their characters had already been formed, and many of their ideals had taken shape, hers in spontaneous and harmonious reaction with her environment, his under the stress and pressure first of mental conflict, then of more or less uncongenial occupations and a felt desire for escape; and they had already found each other, and found support and fulfilment to their lives in ten years of married happiness. But it was in those eleven years in Headland Cottage that their lives came to full and perfect expression. *Finis coronat opus.* Those who knew Headland Cottage could read all the story of the earlier years of Herbert and Alice Rix in the full light of their final outcome; as though for once they were taken into the counsels of providence, could see the end from the beginning, and understand every step that led to it. Neither of them

was old in years, but they realised what Dante presents as the chief grace of old age : "Wherefore, after our own proper perfection, which is acquired in manhood, that perfection should also come which enlightens not only ourselves but others, and man should open out like a rose that can no longer keep closed, and should spread abroad the perfume which has been generated within."

Herbert Rix was born in December 1850, and was only fourteen when severe attacks of rheumatic fever left him with the heart troubles to which he ultimately succumbed. He recovered sufficiently to enable him to live a strenuous and hard-working life ; but a certain deliberation and composure, avoidance of sudden strain and abrupt transition, became imperative, and these physical limitations doubtless helped to determine certain mental characteristics that corresponded to them. Herbert Rix was a hard thinker and a hard worker, and in his official life he could get through an immense amount of business ; but all must be and was done deliberately and considerately. Nothing was rushed. No masses of work were forced through by sheer thrusting power. He always knew what he was at, and wasted no strength in random experiments or flustered impatience to get forward.

As a boy he was fascinated by the idea of being a missionary ; and though for a time he tried a clerkship

at a Colonial warehouse, he turned quite early to the ministry and entered the Regent's Park College, under Dr Angus, as a theological student. He took his B.A. at the London University, and was regarded as a most promising student in his college ; but he became growingly uneasy on the point of his own Baptist orthodoxy. It was the doctrine of eternal punishment on which his doubts began to shape themselves. With characteristic conscientiousness and precision of mind, he laid his difficulties before the authorities, and ultimately felt obliged to relinquish his hopes of entering the Baptist ministry. He looked with longing eyes towards the Church of England, where he was told by some of his friends that he would have far more practical liberty than he could hope for in his own communion ; but the uncompromising explicitness of the formulæ offered an insuperable objection. "For instance," he urged, "how can a man say in the Athanasian Creed : 'which faith, except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, *without doubt* he shall perish everlastingly,' if he is not sure that there is everlasting perdition in store for any son of man ?" He was apparently not aware at this time of the existence of any religious community unbound by formulæ or subscriptions, and he could find no escape from the apparently paradoxical conclusion that he

must give up all hope of preaching the "glad tidings of great joy that shall be to all peoples" in any recognised or official capacity, because he doubted whether any soul should "perish everlastingly"! Through the influence of Dr Angus, who had acted throughout with the greatest sympathy and kindness, the young heretic got an appointment as classical tutor at the College at Pontypool, and soon afterwards a "door was opened to him," and he became assistant to Mr Allanson Picton at St Thomas's Square, in Hackney. This engagement, however, was soon brought to a close by Mr Picton's resignation; and although in after years Mr Rix had many opportunities of finding settled pastoral work in Free Christian or other churches, he had perhaps already discovered that his bent was rather towards preaching than towards the general duties of a pastoral charge. At any rate he never accepted a settled ministry, but preached or lectured frequently wherever a pulpit or platform was open to him. In 1879 he received the appointment of Clerk to the Royal Society, and in 1885 succeeded to the position of Assistant Secretary, which placed him at the head of the staff.

Amongst the pulpits that he had occupied from time to time was that of Mr Tipple of the Central Hill Chapel, Norwood. There he met Alice Russell, his



future wife. Alice was born in December 1862, and was thus almost exactly twelve years the junior of her future husband. She was only five when her family came to Norwood, and for the delightful old house and garden which were her home there she always retained the deep love which springs from the associations of a happy childhood and strong family affection. She had early felt the influence of her pastor, Mr Tipple, and from twelve years old had taken a serious interest in his broad, undogmatic, and deeply spiritual teaching, which opened her mind to wide views of life and religion, refined and strengthened her moral perceptions, and gave the initial impulse to the full development of her religious thought and moral life. Her devotion and gratitude to her earliest spiritual guide remained as vivid and unqualified to the end as they had been in her girlhood. She always had the gift of discipleship without surrender of her own personality. She was gratefully and enthusiastically receptive of fresh possibilities of thought and insight, but nothing was imposed upon her by authority. Everything she received she assimilated by intellectual or spiritual affinity. Hence she was enabled to go through life with all the strength and gladness of hero-worship without the penalty it so frequently brings of disillusion, revulsions, and the

wearying drag of liabilities that cannot be met and cannot be repudiated. And this is but one instance of her gift for life and joy, a gift which spread to all who came in contact with her, a kind of contagion of happiness. Her small and girlish figure made her look almost a child when she had already grown into womanhood, and the freshness of her delight in life often made her feel like one; and she would half shyly apologise, sometimes, when she caught herself literally dancing for joy *à propos* of nothing but life in general. One of the best of her photographs shows her surrounded by her doves, perched upon her shoulder and feeding from her hand; and one who knew and loved her well, standing at her grave-side whispered: "Our lady of the dove." But the "dove" was not all that was in her. There was nothing of the "serpent" indeed, but the rich colouring of her hair and complexion told of fire and passion as well as innocence and joy.

Her keen intelligence and moral enthusiasm made her a favourite pupil of Miss Arnold at the Dulwich High School, where, in spite of extremely defective eyesight, she afterwards taught mathematics, a subject by which she was always fascinated, and for which her eagerness in following any constructive line of reasoning, and her habit of testing the steps of every intellectual process, gave her a special aptitude.

It was not till the autumn of 1884 that Herbert Rix and Alice Russell saw much of each other ; and in August 1885, soon after Herbert had received the appointment of Assistant Secretary to the Royal Society, they were married. The exuberant joy and physical energy, combined with the rare spiritual and intellectual qualities of the girl, had slowly drawn the shy, reserved and deliberate student out of himself ; and he declared, in his last days, with solemn and impressive emphasis, that her moral character had arrested him at a critical point of his career, when tendencies to a materialistic philosophy were threatening to warp his thought, and even his character. He declared that he owed his moral salvation, and indirectly his philosophical enlightenment and regeneration, to the wife whom, as the years went on, he came "almost to worship." Her health and vigour and the permanent depression of his strength consequent on his heart trouble reversed the normal relations of man and wife in some respects. It was she that had to watch over and spare him ; and he accepted the situation with a humorous and tender frankness that gave it dignity. He liked boating, he would say, "as long as I steer and Alice rows." When, near the end of their lives, the strain on her powers became more than her strength could bear, it was partly this habit of de-

pendence that blinded him to the real condition of things, and partly his ignorance of his own critical state of health, which by urgent medical advice was as far as possible concealed from him. He had little idea of the unremitting anxiety of watching that was laid upon his wife, and could not comprehend the minute restrictions by which his own doings were unobtrusively but effectively hedged round.

It was many years before this, when they were living in the spacious and somewhat formal official apartments in Burlington House, that I first knew them. He was a perfect secretary, with rare powers of organising and arranging details, punctual, systematic, upright and conscientious ; sometimes, especially in the later years, when his heart trouble made the burden of his work heavier than he could rightly bear, he showed some irritability of temper ; but he was unflinching in generosity, scrupulous in giving credit to his subordinates and securing recognition for their services, stern in the face of anything in the least degree shifty, but frank in his allowance for errors frankly admitted, giving his staff the sense of being called into fellowship of work by a friend rather than ordered by a superior, but bracing them by his example, his character, and his tacit expectation to the highest and exactest quality of work of which they were capable. He won their enthusiastic loyalty and the steady respect of his

colleagues and employers. He consulted all tastes and considered all susceptibilities, without any belittling diplomacy, and kept everything in smooth working order. He was full of courtesy and sympathetic kindness, but the fire would be struck from him by anything approaching an imputation against the Society of which he was the servant. On one occasion a disappointed interviewer, who had hinted that some wire-pulling might have affected the selection from the candidates for membership, suddenly found himself passing through the door as the secretary held it uncompromisingly open. This is the only action of Herbert Rix's of which I have been able to find a record that I should describe as "abrupt."

Yet though his character impressed itself upon his work and made it what it was, his heart was never wholly in it. He was a living refutation of the saying that we can do nothing well unless we like it; for he longed to escape from all the routine of his duties and to give his whole life to the preaching that could now only claim his fragmentary leisure, and to the philosophical retirement in which already his soul lived. Not that he sought the life of a hermit; for in spite of what struck strangers or casual acquaintances as astonishing taciturnity, he dearly loved the society of his friends, and he had a veritable gift

for friendship. Amongst his intimates his conversation was at once easy and pregnant. Though he never "talked without saying anything," he was entirely free from the sententious and didactic style, and his talk was lightened by an unfailing sense of humour, which (like all true humour, as distinct from wit) was never irrelevant, never obtrusive, never distracting, but always illuminating and humanising. Such a man could not wish to withdraw from contact with his kind, but he wanted a simpler life than he could live in his official residence and amid his official relations. He wanted a life more contemplative, in directer communion with nature, and in closer contact with primitive and essential human relationships. Even the atmosphere of scientific thought in which he lived ministered but slightly to his higher aspirations ; for he had no great love of science except in its simpler applications to the study of nature and in the bearing of its general conclusions upon problems of philosophy. So, though he did his work as perfectly as if his whole heart had been in it, knew what all the scientific world was doing, and could direct any man who wanted information to the source from which he could obtain it, he had not found the true home of his spirit, and longed for freedom to live a life more after his own heart. Theologically he had travelled very far from the position in which the verbal inspira-

tion of the scriptures and the doctrine of eternal punishment were the two points on which he had "doubts." In his social and personal ideals, Wordsworth, Emerson, Thoreau, and latterly Tolstoi had influenced him deeply, and the Brook Farm experiment made a strong appeal to his imagination and affections. He had joined the "Fellowship of the New Life" from which the "Fabian Society" ultimately sprang. The principle of the Fellowship was to "treat all men as ends in themselves, none merely as means to others' ends," and to embrace gladly the simplification of life which seemed to be involved in that principle. So the life for which he now longed was to be devoted to the systematic study of social, and especially religious, problems, and was to be lived in the simplest surroundings. But the very remoteness of his practical life from this life of his dreams had led him to form a somewhat doctrinaire conception of the outward conditions of the latter. He had built a cottage at Limpsfield (where some of his friends had already pitched their tents), which was in some respects more nearly an artistic symbol of the life he wanted to lead than a practical instrument to enable him to lead it. I think his scheme was to live there with his wife on £100 a year, and to vary sermon writing by cultivating his little plot of land.

But when his retirement at last came, in 1895, things worked out somewhat differently. The Society he had served so admirably showed its appreciation by voting him a pension, and he still retained some secondary official appointments and duties which necessitated journeys to London, but materially increased his income ; so that in one way or another his resources, though modest, were very considerably greater than those on which his ideal scheme had been built. The "simplifications" of his cottage turned out to be productive of many "complications," both physical and mental, and he often expressed an intention (unhappily never carried out) of writing "The Confessions of a Simplifier." Had he done so, it would have been rich in humour, tenderness and wisdom.<sup>1</sup> But what happened at Headland Cottage was not the relinquishing of a foolish dream, it was the realisation of a beautiful and noble ideal. Details and machinery were altered, additions and changes modified the cottage ; but ideals were not sacrificed, only they were brought into closer working relation with reality and were purged of all suspicion of preciousness.

The Rixes were amongst the early discoverers of Limpsfield ; and one friend after another, attracted by their presence, came and settled in their neighbourhood. Headland Cottage soon became a centre of

<sup>1</sup> See page 227.



philosophic thought and a fountain of spiritual influence of deep, perhaps even of wide, significance. Now that he was able to shape his life as he would, Herbert Rix impressed his friends more and more as one who had found for himself, and illustrated for others, a rare harmony between the spheres of thought, emotion and action. His philosophy, his religion and his practical conduct of life exercised a steady mutual pressure upon each other, and no one of them was allowed to get out of touch with the others ; they were seeking, and in no small measure finding, a complete harmony, and no one branch of life was allowed to get so far away from the others as to lose its sense of responsibility to them. It was this that gave so strong a sense of reality to all he said, and of significance to all he did. But there was no strain, only a steady forward pressure about it all. He never had any wide reputation as " a great preacher " ; yet his preaching was great, for every discourse was the record of thought, feeling and action coming straight from the life of a living man, and therefore it intimately touched and affected the lives of others.

His interest in metaphysics had been early roused by Allanson Picton ; and now, under the guidance and stimulus of his friend Maurice Adams he entered, together with a group of other friends, upon a systematic and comprehensive study of philosophy which

extended over a number of years. He entered upon this inquiry with a purpose. He wanted to know what light philosophy had to throw on the nature and destiny of man, the meaning of duty and moral responsibility, and the relation between man and God. These were the things he cared about, and it was on their behalf that he questioned philosophy. He was inspired by the hope that she might yield some definite contribution to the reconstruction and fortifying of religious faith. This hope was in no small degree realised ; and the provisional results of his investigations are presented in the very remarkable series of lectures which he delivered to the "Croydon Ethical and Religious Fellowship," and which he published in 1903 under the title of *A Dawning Faith*.

The creed of *A Dawning Faith* is a devout monistic idealism, in which the material universe, time and space, and, above all, every kind of evil and wrong, can have no more than a relative existence, determined by the limitations of the sub-organisms of human personality. To the absolute and eternal consciousness these things, as such, cannot exist.

I believe that he never relinquished this monistic faith, and that he found in it an exalted strength and consolation. But, perhaps, he never succeeded in bringing it into complete and satisfactory relations

with the whole field of his own religious life and spiritual experience. He was emphatically a sincere thinker, and would allow no consideration of consequences to warp the inevitable advance of an intellectual argument along intellectual lines. Hence a scrupulous determination not to stretch the results of philosophic inquiry further than they can rightly go towards meeting the demands of heart and conscience. Whether or not Philosophy will give to the spiritual nature all it requires, at any rate no attempt must be made to extort false witness from her. And an under-current is traceable, even in *A Dawning Faith*, indicating that there are such unsatisfied demands, seeking for some justification and support beyond the ground as yet made sure by the unquestioned warrant of Philosophy. But here it is only an under-current. For the lectures, as the title indicates, are an attempt to forecast an ultimate harmony ; and the stress does not fall on discords as yet unresolved.

Afterwards, however, these defects and difficulties in his harmonising of religion and philosophy asserted themselves more stubbornly. Towards the close of his own life, and especially in the last weeks when his wife's death seemed to him to have brought the perspective of life and the relative significance of things into distincter consciousness, he demanded a

more definite assurance, and more clearly formulated conceptions concerning personal life, death and immortality than those he had so beautifully embodied in *A Dawning Faith*. Nor could he rest in the belief that the evilness of evil and the sinfulness of sin, of which he was deeply conscious, were merely relative conceptions. He thought not only of sin as something to be vanquished and put aside, but of a sinful act as something that ought not to have been. Yet he could not put this into terms of the monistic faith which he still held to be our highest conception of the ultimate truth. For, in the timeless Being, what has been is ; and, in the Absolute and Perfect, that cannot be which ought not to be. And yet the conception that sin is sinful and that evil is evil not only refused to be dislodged from his practical thought, where it was within its rights, but asserted its claim to a place in his religious, his philosophical, even his contemplative life itself. If we could see as God sees, these contradictions would surely disappear ; but meanwhile it was as though we could formulate, utter, and sometimes feel, a higher truth than as yet we could understand, act upon, or use as the key to our own experiences. So at least I interpret the last words I ever heard from his lips. It was on the very day of his death. "No !" he said, "for man it must be dualism ; monism is for God."

Second only, perhaps hardly even second, to his devotion to the problems now indicated, was his interest in the Gospel story and his desire to make some contribution to the critical reconstruction of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. He had laid down an extensive plan for the study of the Fourth Gospel, in which he was convinced that valuable traditional matter was embedded. Moreover, he had made the subject of Palestinian geography especially his own, and six years before his death he fulfilled one of the dreams of his life by a journey, with his friend W. J. Jupp, to the Holy Land. The record of this side of his thought and study may be found in the volume entitled *Tent and Testament*, on the proofs of which he spent some hours on the very day of his death, and the significance and value of which has been amply recognised by the experts; and in three lectures, "Rabbi, Messiah, Martyr," published since his death.

If we were making any attempt to enumerate Herbert Rix's chief studies, we should have to include Wordsworth, to whose Duddon Sonnets in particular he had devoted that combined gift for topographical investigation and vivifying spiritual insight in which he was a kind of specialist. Nor could Wordsworth himself have felt more deeply than did he the sanctity of the simple and elemental relations and

conditions of life. His gift for friendship extended to all those with whom he came into close relationship. The old labourer who helped him with his beloved garden was indeed bewildered by his refusal to shoot or snare the jays that made havoc of his work, and was baffled by his declaration that "he loved the jays at least as much as the green peas"; but nevertheless he understood him well enough to love him, and to know that he had in his employer a friend and brother. Indeed Herbert Rix, more fortunate than Wordsworth in this, succeeded in making his affection for the peasantry mutual, and Headland Cottage was not only loved by those who found it a centre of high and earnest thought, but by all those also who could understand "the charities that heal and soothe and bless."

But he alone could never have made Headland Cottage the temple of joyous and earnest worship of the Spirit of Life that it was. His wife Alice, that Martha and Mary in one, felt, perhaps with less effort and more unflinching instinct than his own, the oneness of material and spiritual things. And she had not only gifts of management and administration, as well as keen intellectual insight, but a genuine love of dealing with all the material things on which life is built. There was something even better than "plain living and high thinking" in her home; for the phrase

suggests an austerity which was precluded by the wealth and generosity of Alice Rix's nature and her delight in everything she handled. But one felt that there was nothing to eat, to drink, to touch, or to look at, that was not spontaneously and inevitably doing its full share in supporting the life of the spirit that pervaded the house. The feeling of unity superseded the stock contrasts and distinctions which only come into prominence when there is war of some kind between sense and soul. And in her there was no such war.

She seemed never to forget and never to neglect anything. New claims and new possibilities entered her life without displacing anything that was already there. She had the genius of order that makes the full life of its privileged possessor less crowded and hustled than the empty one of another. She would spend long hours week after week or month after month by the bedside of a suffering neighbour. Her own defective sight filled her with tender sympathy for the blind. She served on the Committee for the revision of the Braille system of writing for the blind, and, with a friend, transcribed a translation of the whole of Dante's *Comedy*, of which she was a devoted student, into the Braille type. She loved to remember birthdays and send or bring flowers by way of greeting. The many presents she made were considered and purposeful,

“with their faces towards the receiver,” signs not only of affection but of insight, helping her friends to things they wanted. Her visits to saint and sinner, to the whole and the sick, “consoled the afflicted, and added sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier.” On one occasion she asked a friend to take her place in visiting a poor neighbour who was suffering from a torturing disease. To come “instead of Mrs Rix” did not seem a promising introduction; but the poor sufferer found the chance she had never had before, and from her bed of pain sang her hymn of love in praise of her constant visitant. To have been able to speak freely of her to a good hearer was for one while as good as having seen her; so that the substitute came away after all having given and received true comfort. But she was not one of those who impoverish their own lives by giving freely to others. I have spoken incidentally of her mathematical talent and her love of Dante. She shared her husband’s love of Wordsworth. She was a keen student of social questions and brought to her study of the ethical aspects of political economy the severity and accuracy of thought of which moral enthusiasm is too often impatient; and no friend will forget the zest with which she entered into the discussions which made her husband’s study a laboratory



of the truly "higher" thought. When her face was in repose she might have sat for the Mary or Rachel in whom the mediæval imagination symbolised the contemplative life. And even when she took no spoken share in the discussions her presence was part of them; and from time to time a smile would play over her face, as if suggested by some inward reserve of her instinctive insight, as she followed every turn of the argument, and saw more clearly than the disputants themselves how it bore upon some fact of spiritual or practical life that was, to her at least, outside the potency of ratiocination to lift up or to cast down. She had great powers of organisation too. It seemed as if everything she undertook went smoothly, and that she accomplished everything on which she was bent; and yet you would not say she had a commanding personality, but rather, as a friend put it, a permeating one; and of all her characteristics none stands out more prominently than her unflinching courage. It did not fail her even at the last. The constant strain upon her of her husband's critical state of health, the long watchings at the bedside of a dying friend, afflicted with a terrible malady, and, finally, a serious bicycle accident, broke her power of endurance, but not her courage or her faith. Foreseeing with perfect clearness the inevitable and absolute collapse of her

over-strained powers, she remained in perfect and calm self-possession, making all arrangements with tender prevision, until the strain reached the breaking point. She died on August 21st, 1906. Her husband survived her only a few weeks.

By their neighbours Herbert and Alice Rix were deeply loved. Herbert served as a manager of the village school, in which he took a continuous interest. He gave much attention to the library, offered prizes for nature study, and had little groups of boys and girls at his home to look at microscopic slides and other aids to study and enjoyment. Children were devoted to both Herbert and Alice. Herbert condescended to every artifice, from the box of sweetmeats that he habitually carried with him to elaborate and sustained correspondence, in paying court to the little queens of his heart. And of course children loved Alice by instinct. But it was not children alone that loved them. There was no trouble which they did not seem able to lighten, no perplexity or difficulty which they could not help to remove, no public or private possibilities of an enlarged or more gracious life which they were not daily engaged in opening with balanced and inventive wisdom.

They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not long divided.

## SERMONS

### I.—ADAM, THE SON OF GOD

“Adam, which was the son of God.”—LUKE iii. 38.

THESE words occur in one of those quaint pedigrees of Jesus which I suppose were considered to be a kind of triumph at the time when they were written. I cannot tell you how interesting those pedigrees are to me. Their delightful *naïveté*, their obviously unhistorical character, and their curious mutual contradictions, show with what a childlike mind these ancient Christians came to all questions of external fact—how independent of external fact the truth they lived by really was, and how true it was of them (to quote the phrase of the Apostle Paul) that they had their treasure “in *earthen vessels*”!

The two genealogies which have come down to us in Matthew and Luke are, of course, controversial documents. They were not written for biographical but for

doctrinal purposes. That is to some extent true of the whole gospels, and it is one thing that we always have to take into account when we attempt to read the gospels historically. But it is particularly and specifically true of these two pedigrees, in which the line of descent is traced, for Joseph the husband of Mary, from Adam in the one case and from Abraham in the other.

Of course, when these genealogies were compiled, the question at issue was not whether Jesus was incarnate God ; that did not come till long afterwards. The question then at issue was a less exalted one. The burning controversy at the time when the gospels of Matthew and Luke were written was whether Jesus was *Messiah*. *That* had not been settled yet. There were serious arguments to be met. It was averred, for instance, by the opponents of the Christian movement that Jesus was not of the line of David ; and if so, it was certain that he could not be the Christ. That was one point in the controversy. And these genealogies were written as a contribution towards setting that point at rest. The brethren should be confirmed, the waverers should be convinced, the hostile Jews should be converted. His descent should be traced through the line of David. It should be *proved* that he was of royal blood.

I. That, then, is the first point that I want you to

notice. It is a point of *similarity* between the two pedigrees. Afterwards we shall notice a point of difference.

The point of similarity is that both the genealogists trace the pedigree of Jesus *through the line of David*. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Zechariah had all prophesied that in the golden age of the future a descendant of David would hold sway over Israel as king. It appeared, therefore, to the early Christians to be a matter of infinite moment to show that Jesus was of the line of David. They trusted that it should be he who should redeem Israel, and how should that be if he were not the son of David? To us Jesus is neither greater nor less for his descent from David or from another: to Jesus himself it appears from the gospel story to have been a matter of no consequence; but it was not so to the Christians of the first and second century. The Messiahship of Jesus was a burning question of their time and their circle, and all agreed that the descent from David was one crucial point in the discussion.

This seems to us to-day so strange, so trivial, so unreal! But how like it all is to the religious controversies of a later day, to our own religious controversies! How plain it is that the religious conviction came first, and the proof followed afterwards; that

faith was foremost and reason brought up the rear! How plain that the followers of Jesus *felt* that he was the Christ; that they *saw* him to be the Messiah; that they *experienced* his delivering power; and that, *because* they had this immediate perception, they set to work to square their theology to it! It is exactly the way that we go to work to-day. Faith comes to men now as it came to them then, not through the understanding but through the heart. It comes to us by way of grief and love—by feeling and affection; and then, when we have experienced the faith and seen the divine splendour, our uneasy brains, puzzled by an inconsistent theology, set to work to theorise and account for our experiences. Just as the artist *perceives* beauty, *recognises* it *at once*, intuitively and unhesitatingly, and does not, until that recognition has taken place, begin to analyse and account for it, so too with the religious man: the elevation of a great character, the moral beauty of a noble life, flashes in upon him, is recognised swiftly, completely, and undoubtingly for what it is; and not until this act of insight has taken place does the intellect begin to consider and substantiate and buttress up the experience of the heart by a system of theology or a formulated creed.

I think it is of great importance for us all to get a clear grip of this truth, that *no* theology is *essential*—

that the most it can do is to enshrine and more or less imperfectly *express* an experience which in its essence is not intellectual at all, which is independent of the system which contains it, and which will remain alive even though that system may pass away.

These genealogies, which were compiled with so much pains, are easily seen to be entirely worthless ; when they are compared together they mutually destroy each other. But the vital truth which they were meant to support, and which for a time they *did* support, *remains* although the genealogies are gone. Jesus *was* the Messiah. Religiously, spiritually, ethically he was the anointed one of God. He headed a new spiritual era. He established a new principle. He brought an obscure experience into vivid consciousness and practical life. He turned things upside down, showing convincingly the worthlessness of the most esteemed qualities, the utter vanity of the most coveted prizes, and the value (the vital and enduring value) of just those qualities in man, and just those things in life, which had till then been most lightly esteemed.

If a man who thus altered the whole face of things and gave us a new principle to live by, and who revolutionised the whole world of human affection, was not anointed of God—then there is no God and no

anointing ; there is no power which makes for righteousness and no outpouring of that power on man ; there is no reality in life and no genius in humanity. But if there *is* a reality in life, and if that reality expresses itself in genius, then Jesus, we say, bears every mark of being an expression of that reality. He is one of those, the highest (as we think) of those, who have been anointed to the work of regenerating human life. That is the vital truth which, all unconsciously, these ancient controversialists had at heart. That is the truth which enshrines itself in all sorts of theologies and supports itself by all kinds of arguments. From time to time the creeds and arguments tumble into ruins ; but the *faith* remains, because it is a matter of spiritual experience. Through that course all theology has invariably run. Theology is an inevitable science ; we cannot help it. It *must* grow up, it *must* be elaborated and debated and built upon. And also, it *must* be superseded. It alters with new knowledge and new philosophies, and with the prevailing analogy of each successive age—the analogy of mechanism in one age and of organic evolution in the next.

“ Our little systems have their day,  
They have their day and cease to be.  
They are but broken lights of Thee,  
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.”



II. This, then, is a point of agreement between the two genealogies. But now let us look at a very significant point of difference. One of the pedigrees goes back to *Abraham* and there stops : the other goes back to *Adam*.

Here, again, is an echo of long-past controversies—a sort of fossil we may call it—telling us of the life that once breathed and moved and struggled—a weapon dug from the battlefield of ancient strife. The one pedigree, it is plain, must have grown up in Jewish-Christian circles, the other in Heathen-Christian. The one represents Jesus as *Israel's* Messiah, the other claims him for the whole human race. The difference takes us to the very heart of the first controversy which convulsed the Christian Church. It carries us back to the little community at Jerusalem, the sect of the Nazarenes, who lived there so lovingly and harmoniously, true to their Judaism as well as to the memory of their Master. It takes us back to the first heretic, the first dissenter, the first free-thinker, the first martyr, the first man among the Christians who had *views*, and who dared to proclaim the doctrine that the Spirit of Christ was contrary to the spirit of Judaism, and that the external precepts of the law would ultimately be rescinded and the service of the temple superseded : it takes us back to *Stephen*. And it takes us back to

the fiery young Pharisee who was present at Stephen's death and who distinguished himself by his zeal in persecuting these innovating Christians. It takes us back to Antioch, the centre of this newer, freer Christianity, which under the leadership of Paul began to free itself from the old, narrow Jewish conceptions.

What zeal, what earnestness, what struggles to bring to birth these new and living truths, what life and energy breathed and pulsed under these ancient controversies ! And how entirely dead and gone they are !

And yet, no ! if you come to think of it, they are not so dead—they are only transformed. Indeed, they are going on around us at this very day. The strife between the old and new conceptions is a never-ending strife. The battlefield is changed, but not the battle. *We*, too, are confined by the manacles and fetters of creed and custom ; and now and again a modern Stephen or a modern Paul calls upon us to break them and go free. The life and thought of our own age find the old thought and life something of a burden and an incubus. The garment is too narrow, and it begins to burst ; and already the hum of the looms is heard weaving the garment of the future.

“You are going too far !” cry the judicious upholders of the ancient faith. “You are going too far ! hold your hand ! the creeds and customs are endangered

by your rashness !” Just as of old Matthew’s genealogy might call aloud upon the genealogy of Luke: “You are going too far ! stop at Abraham ! Abraham is the orthodox resting-place ; it is not safe to go so far as Adam !” But the pedigree that went up to Adam won the day. The *human* conception won the day. The Messiah of *all mankind* was the Messiah that came to be believed in. Not all the sacredness of Jerusalem, nor all the venerableness of the law, nor all the prestige of the eleven personal disciples could keep the Christian Church tied down to Judaism. The spirit of Jesus, the spirit of wide, free, fearless truth, the spirit of a boundless *life* was in it, and down went the old walls of Jewish creed and custom, and away, away, over the wide human world sped the religion of Jesus.

So it was and so it will be. Where there is earnest, truthful thought ; where there is wide and generous love ; where there is the heart and the spirit of *liberty*—*there* is life, and *there* lies the secret of the future.

These, then, are the two main lessons which the genealogies of Jesus teach us : first, that Jesus has verily been, what the Jewish Christians said he was, a Messiah, an anointed spirit ; and secondly, that he is so not in any exclusive Jewish sense, nor in any exclusive Christian sense, much less in any exclusive evangelical

sense, but in a broad human sense and by virtue of a great human message which he brought us.

Have I said enough? Or may I dwell yet a little further on this great truth of Adam's sonship—this greater Christianity which all along was folded in the lesser, but which we only now by slow degrees are beginning to apprehend?

“Adam, which was the son of God!” We, all of us, sons of God! The human race, Greek and Jew, bond and free, all of them sons of God! How great a thought this was to seize upon any age! How great a thought if it were more fully realised even in our own! We have all, I suppose, got beyond Jesus the son of *David* in our beliefs—all of us outrun even Jesus the son of *Abraham*. We have by this time mostly grasped the truth that Jesus was the son of Adam; but have we arrived yet with any fulness of conviction at this last step—“Adam, the son of God”?

It will be said, perhaps, that, after all, this pedigree-text only makes us sons of God by *bodily descent*, or, rather, bodily creation. Well, take it so. I think it implies much more than that; but take it that way first. Is that nothing? Is it nothing to believe that the body came from the hands of God, that the great physical Adam—corporeal humanity—is the son of God? Is it nothing to know that the body of man is the temple of

the Holy Spirit? Believe me, we should be a better and a happier people if we believed that truth more firmly. Learn to reverence the body—your own body—the bodies of others. Learn that dirt is a sin, that unwholesome habits are a wickedness, that injurious trades are trades that should not be followed by ourselves or demanded of our brothers and sisters, that the man who can find amusement (amusement, forsooth!) in the bodily danger or the bodily distortion of his fellows is a degraded being. Learn this, get it well into your head and heart as a practical conviction, and you will have learnt a lesson of infinite value and a lesson that is profoundly Christian.

Adam is God's son—his body as well as his soul. This amazing structure—this epitome of wonders—this catalogue of countless thoughts—this correlated group of marvellous intentions, so fearfully and wonderfully made—this is God's; it is sacred—sacred in its design and purpose, if desecrated in its use and history. This body of man is a holy thing, and yet we use it—how? We use *our own and each other's* bodies—how? The newspaper will tell you with ghastly faithfulness. We enslave it for our enrichment, exhaust and consume it by cruel labours and, when it serves us no longer, fling it aside as forgotten and useless lumber. We contort and degrade it for our

amusement, stare open-mouthed upon its abuse with no thought of reverence, no touch or hint of brotherly human regard for it as the work and care of God. We defile it by our lust, and fill the prisons, fill the asylums, by all kinds of social sins. This is how we treat the bodies of these sons and daughters of God, our brothers and sisters, which he has consecrated to himself as temples of his Presence. And we scarcely treat our own any better. Even in matters where we have the power and the ability and the liberty to honour our bodies, we degrade them and defile them and neglect them and maim them by our stupid and vicious and thoughtless ways of living.

Yes ; if you say that only the body comes from Adam and the soul comes from God, I reply that body and soul both come from God, that the body no less than the soul is God's and that what we Christians above all other people have to learn is that, until the body is rightly revered, the soul will never grow to be of much account.

III. But now, in speaking thus upon the *physical* truth of this doctrine—the truth that in *body* we are all sons of God—we must not lose sight of the greater truth that much more are we his sons in spirit. That ancient Scripture, “In the image of God made he man,” has for us a deeper intent than the physical : it speaks to

us of a *spiritual* kinship with the Highest. Man has a spiritual nature. He is the expression of a spiritual reality. The universal Adam is to some extent Incarnate God—he has the God-germ within him, which is always working, and driving him to strange and vast and unearthly issues.

Do not think that I am speaking the language of fancy. I am speaking the language of sober truth. The tokens of this spiritual nature are to be seen in familiar life. Look, for instance, at the familiar but most mysterious fact that men everywhere are impelled in one super-humanly prescribed direction : that men and nations are eternally driven by some unseen power to seek their bliss in one order of actions, one set of relations—that there is no permanent bliss in any other direction ; that, when this impulse is obeyed, the being rises into grandeur ; when it is resisted, ruin and degradation are the fruit. Look at this universality of the moral imperative, and say whether this is not a sure token that we are spiritual in our make and fitted for a higher than physical life.

Again ; do we not get an inkling of this truth in the *self-discovery* which sometimes happens to us ? We have all, I suppose, discovered at times quite unsuspected depths of feeling, quite hidden springs of emotion ; some new form of beauty has awakened a

response within us that we should never have believed possible ; some unfamiliar phase of virtue has revealed to us a capacity for admiration, a moral enthusiasm, with which we did not credit ourselves. Self-discovery of this kind brings home to us the truth that "we are greater than we know," and assures us of a spiritual essence which interpenetrates us, a spiritual atmosphere which, all invisible and intangible, we breathe — a spiritual world in which all unconsciously we live.

When I speak of this spiritual nature as universal, I am, of course, not saying that the spiritual sense is in all men equally developed. I am not even saying that the *potentiality* is possessed by all in equal degree. It is certainly *not* equally developed in all ; whether it is equal potentially in all I cannot say. All that I am saying is that the spiritual reality which gives rise to it *exists* in all, and that in this sense the whole race of Adam is the son of God.

I suppose there are few who have not felt in themselves at times possibilities which have not been realised. Do you not find yourself sometimes feeling that it only wants a *little more*—some quickening of the blood, some clearing of the thought, some strengthening of the memory, some added drop of vitality here or there in your composition, to enable you to be and to do somewhat far greater than you have ever yet attained



to? You feel a *kinship* (do you not?) even with the greatest—a persuasion that in some other life where circumstances might be less oppressive, or the will more vigorous, or the mental powers raised in some way by just a few degrees, *you* might be such a one as those whom we now revere as the wise and great. We are not one in *attainment*; but in essence, in *kind*, in inward genesis, we are all *one*, and all divine.

This divine sonship of mankind is a universal truth. Churches and sects have set up special claims which can seldom be maintained. Such societies are of eminent usefulness; but, like all things human, they too are subject to decay, but the “Word of the Lord endureth for ever,” and that “Word” is not “bound.”

True spirituality is a matter of vast importance, but that which calls itself so is often something very different. The spirituality which arises from man's sonship, the gift of insight, the prophetic touch, the inherited spark of poetic fire—this is not a thing to be despised. It is a precious gift, some modicum of which we all hold in some recess of the nature, though, no doubt, in varying degree. But that which *calls* itself “spirituality” is often far enough removed from this. Just as “caste” apes “breed,” so “Pharisaism” apes spirituality. The fact that spiritual insight has degrees—a certain natural scale or spectrum of spirituality—

is seized upon by the sectarian temper to set up a *false* scale, based upon doctrinal or sacramental tests, in which the possession of religious gifts is pretended where it does not exist. And this accounts for many curious paradoxes : as, that the men who most loudly lay claim to religion show the least fruits, that the *religious* newspapers are the most bitter and ill-tasting, that the religious societies are the most rife with petty disputes, that the religious books are the most disgustingly morbid, that the religious novels are the most intolerably stupid, and that the self-styled religious world is often the most hateful world in which a man can be called upon to live. But if it is *true, native, inborn* spirituality that you seek—the spirituality which makes Adam the son of God—you will often find it in another quarter altogether : you will find it where the publican stands afar off and will not lift so much as his eyes to heaven—in the man who has lived, suffered, sinned, repented, made shipwreck of his life, but whose heart is still tender and whose love goes out to all who wear this same suffering and sinful nature.

And now, in conclusion, let me say that I am not one of those who find pleasure in the cheap sarcasm or the sour derision with which that ancient doctrine of the God-man is too often met by the so-called “free-thinker.”

The sacredness of human nature—of *all* human nature—this, I believe, is what the spirit of truth was leading men to, through the sacred channel of parable and poem, when the Messiah-doctrine issued at length in the doctrine of the incarnate God.

God comes down into a little baby-child and so sanctifies humanity. Men wanted to believe that human nature was sacred. They *did* believe it in their inmost spirit, in a sort of groping, half-unconscious fashion ; and, out of that dim desire which lay beneath, there sprang the strange but lovely legend of the baby-God born in a stable. It is *true*, as all such soul-begotten legends are true. But how true it was those who wrote it did not fully know. Only, in this Gospel of Luke—all through this human Gospel of Luke—there is a dim suspicion, a vague kind of guess, of some greater truth, of a wide human kind, not yet fully revealed. There is a new human texture in this gospel, a deep sympathy with this nature which we wear ; and it was out of *that* that this little bright and burning spark was struck : “Adam, which was the son of God.”

## II.—LAMECH

“And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, hear my voice ; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech : for I have slain a man for wounding me, and a young man for bruising me. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.”—  
GEN. iv. 23, 24.

THE book of Genesis consists, as you well know, of a number of interwoven legends obtained from various sources, and combined and edited at a much later date than that of the legends themselves. And the earlier chapters of Genesis, in particular, consist of *two* legends, written by very different men in very different language, with very different conceptions and in very different styles.

Now, the tradition to which our text belongs, although it is broken up and mixed into several chapters, has a wonderful unity, not only of style but of doctrine. A certain way of looking at things and a certain belief about the arrangement of the universe and the way in which it is ordered (or, rather, disordered)

pervades the whole. The writer, like all these early Hebrew writers, had strong moral convictions and used his material to enforce them. He selected his traditions to illustrate certain beliefs which were deeply graven in his mind. The truth of *conscience* was the main thing with him, and history was valuable chiefly in so far as it illustrated certain doctrines in which he most profoundly believed.

Foremost among these doctrines—the central point, in fact, upon which all turns—was the belief that man is ever tending downwards. Every step he takes, according to this writer, is a step in the wrong direction—a further fall from innocence.

This idea runs right through the legend. It represents men as beginning with a state of innocence and falling away more and more as time went on. Adam, the father of all men, ate of the tree of knowledge, and from that time forth everything went wrong. God had never meant that man should grow out of the state of happy ignorance. Men had purchased knowledge at the price of peace. Thorns and thistles grew up and the strife of man with Nature began. Evil passions sprang up and the strife of man with man began. All flesh, both man and beast, grew more and more rude and wild, till the Lord, seeing that there was nothing but evil in his creatures, repented that he had made

them and opened the windows of heaven to destroy them by a universal flood.

This is the theory of life which the legend presents to us—the theory that man is continually falling away from grace ; and that theory has lived on into the Christian Church until these latter days, when it has fallen into some discredit.

It has fallen into some discredit ; but it contains, nevertheless, a vital truth—the truth that the aspiring in every age are haunted by a sense of deficiency. It may not be true, nay, it *is* not true, that the whole human race is actually progressing toward evil. Our Christian faith forbids us to accept for a moment any such dismal doctrine. But for all that, though the race be advancing as a whole, though there be a glorious future for mankind, and a glad hope for all of a “rest that remaineth,” it is true now, as it was true when this ancient writer penned his story, that within us there is a power which tends to hold us down, a power which continually withstands and hinders the attracting force of the divine love, a spirit of evil against which it behoves us to contend, and in presence of which we dare not delude ourselves with the loose fancy that evolution is going to do everything for us, and that all we have to do is to let things go their own way.

It is not, however, upon this general theory that I

intend at the present time to speak. We are to speak this morning upon a specific phase of this theory which our text brings before us—the doctrine, namely, that civilisation is itself one form of this downward tendency—a manifestation and token of the evil that dwells in man.

You will have noticed that our writer has a suspicion that the root of the evil is man's ambition to *know*. The disaster began by Adam's eating of the tree of knowledge and culminated in the confusion of Babel, which was the device that God was obliged to adopt to prevent men from becoming as gods and scaling the very heavens in their sinful ambition. Now, this old song of Lamech's furnished the chronicler with a very apt illustration of his idea. The fathers of the arts and crafts, he tells us, were all descended from the first murderer. Jabal the father of herdsmen, Jubal the father of musicians, and Tubal-Cain the father of metal-workers were all the sons of Lamech, and Lamech was the direct descendant of Cain. The other legend of which I spoke makes Lamech to belong to the righteous line of Seth, whose descendants first taught men to call upon the name of the Lord; but *this* legend makes him to belong to the family of Cain.

And not only so. Not only were the beautiful and

useful arts “altogether born in sin,” but they justified their birth in bringing disaster and unhappiness to men. In their eager ambition after knowledge, men had learnt how to get metal out of ore, and how to bend the metals and to edge them—a vast improvement, as they thought, over the old-fashioned stone implements which their fathers had used. This new-fashioned *bronze* was tougher and could be worked more readily into special shapes. If you wanted to make an axe, you did not have to chip away for a couple of days before you got it into shape ; and you could get a much finer edge to it, and a much broader surface than one of those clumsy old wedges that had been in use before. “Yes ; and what was the upshot of it all ?” asks our writer. Only that men were more savage and overweening than ever. Woe to the man who dares to touch Lamech now ! His son Tubal-Cain has given him a new bronze axe, and henceforth a *wound* shall be punished with *death*. “I will *slay* a man for wounding me, and a youth for bruising me.”

Fate has been kind to Lamech. It has given him clever sons. He and his sons have an advantage over their neighbours. They have learnt how to make instruments of metal. And they use their advantage—how ? To make the lot of their neighbours better ? To supply them with tools, or teach them how to



work them for themselves? Not so: they use their advantage only to execute a seventyfold vengeance on any who should wrong them. "If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold." Thus the new time is ever worse than the old; and, the further men progress in knowledge, the further it would seem are they separated from innocence and bliss.

Let us examine this doctrine and ascertain what of truth there is in it and what of partiality or of error.

And, in the first place, let me remark that the doctrine, whether it be true or false, is exceedingly widespread. It is one of those beliefs to which men continually revert. Deny it, disprove it, deride it, it may pass out of fashion for a time; but presently up it comes again in some new garb, or some slightly altered shape. Sometimes it is a Rousseau who lauds the nobility of savage nature; sometimes a Carlyle who weeps over the degeneracy of the present and praises the honesty and earnestness of the past. Then again it is a Ruskin who calls to us to return upon our footsteps—to root up our railways, overthrow our factories, and return to the agricultural simplicity of olden time; or a Tolstoi who dons the garb of a peasant and abjures the whole system of society; or an Edward Carpenter who regards our social life as a disease and

writes a book on *Civilisation : Its Cause and Cure*. This cry is perpetually recurring : "The elaboration of our life is an evil. Let us go back to the old simplicity. Things were better in the days of our fathers." And the names of those who take up this cry are often very great names.

You remember how, according to the book of Exodus, the Lord said unto Moses : "If thou make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stones ; for, if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it." The Lord has been saying that same thing to a great number of people since the days of Moses. Nature is sacred : the hand of man pollutes. The untouched world is sacred : Art perverts. The hermit, the wild wanderer, the devotee of Nature, are sacred : civilisation vulgarises and distorts. This consecration of the *unhewn* has been, I repeat, a word of the Lord to many since the days of Moses. Religions have always favoured it, poets have always followed it ; and in no age do men quite feel the human, common, manipulated present to be sublime. The old, the simple, the untouched by human hands, these are the hallowed among men.

Now, when we find a sentiment like this so deeply rooted in the hearts of men that they return to it again and again in spite of all disproofs and disillusion,

you may be sure that there is some living truth at the core of it. There may be prejudice and fallacy and confusion of thought associated with it ; but, behind and beside all these, there is certain to be some vital verity as well. And it is our duty, in such cases, to distinguish as well as we can what is fallacious and misleading from what is useful and wholesome.

This, then, is what we have to do in the doctrine which lies before us. It is startling, perhaps, to be told that civilisation is one manifestation of man's imperfection and that it is upon the whole more of a curse than a blessing. We see at once that there must be here the overstatement which usually accompanies a violent protest. And yet we shall find, when we come to look closely at the matter, that this recurring protest of poet and prophet has its truth. There is in this startling doctrine a certain core of truth which is both wholesome and useful to be known.

Is it not a truth, for instance, which lies upon the forefront of our experience, that civilisation, like every other blessing, is continually used for selfish ends ?

It seems almost a paradox, a self-contradiction, for *civilisation* to lend itself to *selfishness*. The very nature of civilisation is social. It is social in its origin, social in its means, social in its aims—the very reason for its

existence is social ; and that *this*—this outcome of the social side of man's nature—this product of associated life, should lend itself to individual greed and selfish isolation, seems surely to be the very irony of fate. And yet nothing is more certainly the fact.

Civilisation means greater productiveness. Far more work can be done, far more wealth produced, by twelve men associated than by twelve men living apart. But productiveness is not in itself a blessing. It is no blessing that Lamech and his sons can make a metal axe if they use it only to avenge themselves seventyfold for every injury. There are many questions to be asked about a tribe or a nation, besides the question how much wealth is produced : as, for instance, who produces it ? and who gets the products ? and whether the wealth produced is the kind of wealth that brings happiness ? Now, a wealth-producing civilisation very often means little else than a small number of people becoming inordinately rich and a large number of people being made very miserably poor. This is the case, and always will be the case, so long as the spirit which inhabits and inspires the body of our civilisation is a selfish spirit.

It may not be true to say that *civilisation* is no blessing ; but it is perfectly true that a *selfish* civilisation is not only no blessing, but a downright curse.

The very fact that civilisation means greater wealth makes it all the more a curse if it is selfish. A superabundance is a trouble and a responsibility, even to the best of men. At the best it is a crown which makes the head of the wearer lie uneasily. But when the man to whom the superabundance comes is *not* the best of men, when he is puffed up by the spirit of ostentation or accumulates wealth only that he may consume it upon his own lusts, then this superabundance becomes a terror and a danger: like the axe in the hand of Lamech, that which ought to be a *tool* becomes a *weapon*. The wealth of a selfish man is a weapon that wars against society. It is an injury in a hundred ways. It diverts the streams of industry into useless channels; it employs upon luxuries for the rich, labour which might have been employed upon necessities for the poor; it corrupts the innocent and tempts the weak; even justice itself it frequently perverts by ruinous and unrighteous litigation, enabling an evil man to crush his opponent with cruel retaliation, like Lamech singing to his wives: "I will *slay* a man for wounding me and a young man for bruising me."

So that civilisation, I say, in its character of a wealth-producing system is not *in itself* a blessing. This much, at least, must be conceded to those who inveigh against it, that the blessing lies, not in the thing itself, but in

the way that it is used. That organised association of men which we call "civilisation" is a mighty engine for the production of wealth; but wealth is merely *power*, and power is a blessing *only* when it is wielded by wisdom and a good heart.

Then, again, a selfish civilisation, besides putting into the hands of a few tremendous power, irrespective of their moral qualities, has this further radical defect that it is and always must be fiercely competitive. And you know what that means. It means all that it meant in the days of Lamech and a good deal more. In Lamech's days it meant warfare; and it means warfare now. In Lamech's days it meant taking your neighbour at a disadvantage—rejoicing that you have a bronze weapon while he has only a clumsy tool of stone; and it means the same thing now. It means widespread suspicion and almost universal distrust: my hand against every man and every man's hand against me. And, because the same evil spirit which reigned in Lamech's day has continued to reign till now, all our advances in knowledge, all our multiplication of inventions, all our elaboration of comforts, all our rapidity of communication, our cities and governments and commerce and art and literature have failed to make us happy. For into all these comes this fierce strife for masteries. We learn for personal fame, invent for

personal advantage, govern for personal ambition, trade for personal wealth, and write and paint and lecture and preach and build and dress and converse, not that we may use naturally the powers that God has given us and make men happy by their use, but that we personally may be esteemed and courted and admired. This is our disease—this lust of outdoing our neighbour. And from this comes half our modern miseries—our strikes and lock-outs and sweating systems and all the exhaustion and agonising wear and worry of our business life. We live our active life in this atmosphere of selfish competition ; and, from the market and the warehouse, the studio and examination-room, we carry it into the home and the church. To live, not *for* each other but *against* each other, that is the wicked aim that we have continually before us.

This, then, appears to me the first great truth which lies behind this widespread distrust of civilisation. Civilisation, as we have hitherto known it, is framed upon this evil principle of individual greed ; and, so long as that is the spirit which animates it, the poets and prophets are right to mistrust it. This old Jahvistic writer is quite right : it is better to have no improved metal implements at all than to use them as Lamech meant to use them.

But now it may perhaps be said that all this relates

merely to the *perversion* of civilisation, not to civilisation itself. "It may be true that we use our civilisation for selfish ends ; but is that any reason for sacrificing the glorious products of modern associated life ? Is there any sense or reason in the gospel of Ruskin and Tolstoi and Carpenter ? Why should we not cover the land with mills and railways ? Why should we not live in palaces and create and maintain our mighty cities, if we have the energy and wealth to do so ? Let us get rid of our selfishness if you will and, instead of competing for individual wealth, let us work together for the *common* wealth ; but let us not fling away this wonderful elaborated life—this amazing creation of the latter days, with its bodily comforts and its material splendour ! To do so would be for Lamech to fling away his new-found bronze and go back to the old stone age, as if it were the axe that had been murderous and not his own wicked heart."

There is, of course, an immense deal of truth in this position ; and those teachers to whom I have alluded, who proclaim the revolt against civilisation and the return to simple nature, have been guilty again and again, as it seems to me, of an overstatement of their case. That they have a word of God I do not doubt ; but too often they have surrounded it with human and personal prejudices. It would be madness to



throw to the winds those institutions and inventions which really minister to human happiness.

Only there remains, of course, the question: What institutions and inventions do really minister to happiness? And it is in this direction, I think, that we shall find the really important truth which these men have to teach us. Supposing that we bring about ever such an unselfish civilisation, the question will still remain whether we have not allowed it to reach an undue elaboration. The first and most important question, no doubt, is whether our civilisation is not too *selfish*; but there is a second question above and beyond this, and that is whether our civilisation is not too *elaborate*.

We quote and quote again the familiar precept of our Lord: "Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" but we never seem to understand it or to learn it. And yet, if you read through your New Testament with this doctrine in view, you will find that he really meant it and that he was perfectly consistent in his teaching of it. He meant precisely what he said—that we spend too much thought upon our outward life, to the great impoverishment of the inner man. And this evil has increased. It has increased to such an extent that nine-tenths of us live a life of

perfect worry and distraction and have completely starved and killed the inner man. So absorbed are we in the *arrangement* of life that the life which we seek to arrange has eluded us. The machinery of life has so exhausted our attention that we have quite forgotten to supply the machinery with anything to grind. Our comforts and luxuries have so multiplied that the wear and worry of providing them have robbed us of the power to enjoy them. A third of our waking life we spend in earning and arranging our food, a third in earning and arranging our clothing and the remaining third in performing and undergoing useless ceremonies. Which three things are precisely the three things that Christ taught us not to do ; and yet we never seem to doubt for a moment that we are Christians.

Consider, if you will, two respects in which an over-elaborated civilisation wars against the soul, quite irrespective of the selfish competition which has hitherto animated it. In the first place, *it cuts us off from Nature.*

Now here I know that I do not speak to *all* of you. You are not *here* cut off from Nature to the same extent as those of your countrymen are who live in the overgrown cities which have spread their vast areas to such an appalling extent in the last two or three generations. And, being yourselves free to some extent

to look upon the face of Nature, you have not perhaps realised the condition of those who seldom or never see her solemn beauties. Moreover, it is apparently not to every one that Nature is a spiritual necessity. But to some it is, and to these I speak. Let those, then, who think this an unimportant consideration bear with me for a few moments. I shall come presently to a second consideration which must appeal to you *all*. But to those of you, now, to whom Nature is no mere luxury but a necessity of life—a word of God without which the soul cannot live in health—consider how this elaboration of our material life cuts us off. The very conditions of space make communion with Nature impossible as our life is now arranged. The vast areas of our great cities cut off at one fell stroke several millions of our countrymen from all such possibility ; and some millions more are limited to two or three weeks in the year, with occasional hours snatched from the fangs of the enemy. It is not with us as it was with our fathers—even those of our fathers who were doomed to live in towns. With them, half an hour of walking sufficed to take them into the presence of the august mother of us all ; but with us (those, at least, of us who live in London, or in any of our great manufacturing centres) a weary and a costly journey must be undertaken before we can find

ourselves among the silent hills or the solemn woods. It is hard that we should be cut off from Nature's voice—that her beauty, her serene majesty should be so far removed. And what have we got by way of exchange? For what have we bartered these sacred opportunities? We have bartered them for elaborate indolence and enervating luxuries, alternating with exhausting worry and ruinous tension. Maddening hurry at one moment, impotent collapse at the next—these two, in ceaseless and monotonous alternation, are what we have accepted in place of the sweet breath of fields, the solemn wonder of the heavens, the breadth and calm and glory of God's world. And then, besides the conditions of space which have thus cut the soul off from its appropriate food, there is the imperative round of mechanical duty which our elaborate civilisation necessitates—all the petty and meaningless acts, the automatic, unthinking and joyless acts which we have to perform by the thousand every day in order to keep this great scheme of civilisation going. There are all the ceremonies of Society—the letters and calls and meaningless conversations and idiotic smiles and hypocritical compliments and mutual grimaces and attitudinising which so effectually separate soul from soul and man from Nature. Our attention is absorbed, our mind is distracted, our

emotions atrophied by this mechanical life ; and the sum total of it is just one gigantic barrier, hopelessly hiding from the human heart that sublime vision of the Divine Presence which was meant for man.

“ The world is too much with us ; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers :  
Little we see in Nature that is ours ;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon !  
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon ;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers ;  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune ;  
It moves us not.—Great God ! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn ;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn ;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea ;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.”

And now, if this seems to any of you to be a mere sentimental grievance—if, like Samuel Johnson, and Gotthold Lessing and many others, you do not care much for *Nature* and find your revelation of God almost entirely in *Man*, let me ask you whether your case is any the better. Let me put it to you whether this elaborate civilisation in the midst of which you are doomed to live is calculated to bring you very near to *man*. Very near to *men*, in the sense of being one in a crowd, it certainly brings you ; but, alas, how far away

it is apt to remove us in heart and affection ! Is the mutual dependence which it creates of the kind that makes us neighbours and helpful and loving ? Is the money-bond, which is the bond upon which our civilisation now mainly depends, that which most closely knits the soul of one man with the soul of another ? I do not think so. I do not think that your dependence upon the milkman or the baker or the butcher or the dress-maker, or their dependence upon you, whichever you like to call it, is of the kind that kindles a mutual affection and interest. I have seen in the old rural life, I have seen even in town life, between poor neighbours, the mutual affection and interest which *can* be kindled by mutual help and interdependence ; but I have not seen it, as a general thing, produced by the money-bond of our twentieth century city life. A barren, hopeless bond it is, drying up the source of natural affection, and issuing in monster strikes and commercial wars and miles upon miles of competing advertisements and all that makes our business life discordant and hideous. And the whole of this, as it seems to me, might be saved by a simpler mode of life, a less elaborate civilisation, a certain restraint in matters of luxury, a less material, more spiritual type of life.

And now, I daresay it may seem to you that I have strayed very far away from my text. But this, you

see, is just the axe of Lamech. This civilisation is his new bronze axe which was such an improvement upon the old stone hatchet, and with which he immediately sallied forth to do seventyfold vengeance on the young man who bruised him ; the only difference being that we, with the greatly improved axe of our modern civilisation, do vengeance not so much upon others as upon ourselves. We wound *ourselves* with our civilisation, do injury to our own souls, bleeding them to death with our multiplied material comforts, while at the same time we torture them with our manifold worries and distractions. But, whether the lesson follows obviously from the text or not, I am truly anxious that you should understand it. I am so convinced myself that it is practical as well as important—so convinced that it will *have* to be learnt some day, if ever we are to be other than a depressed and careworn generation. The sooner we learn it, the sooner shall we be in the road to happiness. It is not *my* message : the wisest have preached it ; the greatest have taught it ; Jesus himself proclaimed it again and again ; and it is written for us in the book which we have taken from our Sacred Scriptures.

Let me, then, in conclusion, summarise in a few words the practical lesson which I have sought to bring before you : Civilisation, properly understood, should

mean the harmonious perfecting of man both individually and socially. Man is individual and needs to be individually complete—needs, that is, to be free and self-respecting. Man is social and needs to be socially environed—affectionately helpful and gratefully helped. If civilisation really does this for a man, then it does everything and is an unmixed blessing.

But civilisation, as we have hitherto known it, has lamentably failed in both respects. It has failed to perfect man *as an individual*, by being too material. It has not had due regard to the *spirituality* of the individual ; and, in a certain over-anxiety to surround him with physical comforts and conveniences, it has entirely swamped him, smothered his better part, his *spiritual* part, by the very superabundance of those conveniences and comforts. And *socially* it has failed, too, for it has not developed the social affections in their purity. By the unequal and often unjust distribution of its products it has separated men into widely-sundered classes—making a few disastrously and unhealthily rich and a vast number very miserably poor. The practical upshot of all which is just this—to rid ourselves as soon as possible of the idea that evolution is going to do everything for us, that civilisation is a big machine endowed with perpetual motion, and that all we have to do is to let it alone. The practical duty,



I say, is to rid ourselves of this idea, and to understand, once for all, that we have to work out our own salvation. We must *look after* our civilisation. As citizens, as thinking men, as reasonable and social beings with a certain degree of influence among our fellows, we must labour to alter the type and character of our civilisation. We ourselves must beware of luxury, beware of indolence, beware of a material and mechanical life and a spiritual paralysis. We must learn to live less selfishly, more sincerely, more earnestly, more spiritually—learn, above all, to be less dependent upon physical and sensuous comforts, to be braver, truer, hardier, purer and more “kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love.”

### III.—NATHANAEL

“Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!”—JOHN i. 47.

THE gospel of St John is the gospel of ideals. Its value lies less in its historic materials than in its exalted presentment of spiritual truth and its succession of ideal characters. Who Nathanael was we have not the least idea : he is never mentioned by the synoptics ; and even in this gospel he is mentioned only in this place and once again in the appendix. Who he was we do not know ; but we would not lose for a good deal this brief sentence, in which his character is outlined by one sweep of the pencil, and in which Jesus is represented as exulting in the simple beauty of a guileless soul.

There is a school of critics, you know, who hold this gospel to be of small account because the characters and the history depicted in it are idealised. The picture of Jesus, for instance, as it is here presented, differs considerably, they tell us, from that which is given in the other three gospels. The Jesus of St John

is sublimated and etherealised and differs from the historical Jesus much as the Socrates of Plato differs from the historical Socrates. The events, too, are different, and many of them seen as through a golden mist, magnified and softened and to some extent transformed. And so the historical and scientific school of critics is apt to regard this gospel in much the same light as that in which Luther regarded the Epistle of St James when he called it (because it did not aid him in his doctrine of justification by faith) an epistle of straw.

But *our* feeling, I apprehend, will rather be with those who consider that the idealised gospel has a function and a message of its own.

Consider—we would say to these devotees of historic fact—consider whether a gospel of ideals is not a gospel which we want. Is the world to be all prose to us? all science? all accurate and sifted fact? Are we to have no fancy? no prismatic mist? no sunlit landscape? no gleam of that “light which never was on sea or land”? Do you really want to have an Enoch who died in his bed, a Moses whose face did not shine, an Elijah without his fiery chariot? a gallery of saints with their halos painted out, and accurately clothed in the vestments of the period? Do you really want this?

I suppose they do want this. Our age is an age of

fact. Our aim is truth—literal and unvarnished truth—that kind of truth which is determined to get the *external* relations right at any rate. And I suppose that these literalists see no need of making things appear more beautiful or sublime than their naked material existence seems to say they are. They are quite content with the body; they do not want the soul. Or, if that is not quite just, we may say at any rate that they want the soul exactly as it is, not as it might be or shall be : with the soul in its promise and its potency they have nothing at all to do.

But there comes a time when dogmatic science has spent itself and the heart begins to hunger. “Give us a little of the bread of beauty ! Slake our thirst with a draught of the sublime ! This bread-and-water of the finite fact does not satisfy us.” And then we begin to recognise the existence of another world besides the world of finite fact, and of other laws besides the laws of the physical universe, and of another human faculty besides the faculties which apprehend the phenomena and the laws of the material world. And we understand that the *spiritual* world must be interpreted, and the *spiritual* laws must be apprehended, and the *spiritual* part of us, which lives for the infinite and the perfect, must be sustained and fed. And then this gospel of ideals may help to meet our need. We

may find refreshment and stimulus and warmth as we contemplate these ideal characters passing one by one before us—the guileless Nathanael, the steadfast Peter, the eager Samaritan, the humble and believing Syrophenician, and many another ; and, in the midst, the glorified and lovely figure of Jesus uttering sublime and mystic thoughts.

I. This, then, is the first point to which I desire to call your attention in connexion with our text—*the spiritual value of the ideal*. It is implied, you see, in this exclamation of Jesus : “ Behold an Israelite *indeed*.” It is plain that Jesus had been looking about *in Israel* for *an Israelite*—an Israelite that satisfied his idea of what an Israelite should be. In other words, he had been cherishing an ideal. And it is the value, not so much of this particular ideal as of the ideal in general, that I invite you to consider ; because many things of late years have led us away from this : the rapid and enormous strides of mechanical invention, the fascination of physical discoveries, the intensified eagerness of our commercial life, the increased attention given to the *practical* side of education, the strain and hurry of our life and the lack of leisure which has to *some* extent starved the reflective, and to a *very great* extent starved the spiritual and religious side of our nature. All this, I say, has led us away from the ideal, so that we

have come to consider it of little value, or at any rate have been obliged perforce to thrust it into the background of our minds.

Now, I think we may say broadly that the value of the ideal lies in this, that it keeps alive within us the sense of the infinite. It lifts us to another plane of life than that upon which we habitually live. It is easy to pass our days upon the practical plane and lose all thought of this higher reflective plane to which the better and more enduring part of us properly belongs. And the ideal, the poetic, and, in a certain restricted sense, the *religious* help us into this higher and larger life. It re-awakens that side of our nature which is turned away from the finite and which is more especially akin to the infinite which lies beyond.

I. Consider, for a moment, *how our life is enriched* by having alive within us this perception of the infinite.

There exists, and always has existed, a rare race of men (particularly rare at this present time) who have the power to awaken it. Beauty of colour, form and sound have been among their means : a certain select few of those who handle these media and use them for our *pleasure* having (superadded) the *higher* gift of so handling them as to suggest heights and depths and breadths of experience infinitely exceeding those which the bodily senses can compass, and so of ministering,

not merely to our *pleasure*, but to our spiritual capacity and power. There have been those, too, who use what is perhaps the highest medium of all, the *spoken word*, suggesting, appealing, arousing, moving the heart, penetrating the conscience, and often revealing, both in heart and conscience, vast and unsuspected depths. Greatest of these was Jesus—Prophet of all prophets—Poet of all poets—Maker and Inspirer to the end of time of loftiest dreams.

Such dreams, such revelations of the spirit, are a necessity to all of us. We cannot live or love without them. But it is given to few men to *create* them. And so to certain artists, musicians, poets, we come and come again, drinking in life for our spiritual part from the deep wells of their creative souls.

That is what the poets (the great poets) do for us. They furnish us with ideals. Whether in colour or form or sound or words, or if there be any other medium of communication, they present to us that which liberates us for the time being from the finite. They awaken the infinite. They make us aware that the soul has another side which mostly slumbers. They let the light into that chamber and the soul stirs a little and opens its eyes ; and for a moment we see what the world really is.

I suppose that, if it were not for the poets in their

various sorts, we should as good as die. For these dreamers—these visionary and unpractical people—have given us all that makes life worth living. Strip life of its poetry and what remains? The children no longer play their games or tell their tales, the men and women have neither faith nor hope nor love in what they do or say or think. There are no *homes*, but only houses; no wedded love, but only marriage contracts; no friendship or courtesy or modesty or courage; no touch of chivalry and no suspicion of romance! What a bald thing life has become and how very *little*!

The infinite has gone out of it! Then comes the poet; and music speaks, and colour thrills, and the heavens look with eyes upon us, and Nature moves us, and the children's games are full of merry fancies, and the men and women begin to hope and love, and there are eyes that weep, and cheeks that blush, and hearts that beat, and lips that smile, and all the world is alive once more, because the soul has stirred.

That is what poets do for us—or that, at any rate, is what the poetic, the creative spirit does for us. It may come from the diffused influence of forgotten men, or it may come from definite creations of individual souls. But it comes always and only from the religious and ideal as distinct from the material and the utilitarian influence. And that is what Jesus



did. His soul was touched with the fire of the eternal world. He lived full in view of the ideal and never for one moment suffered the actual and sordid world to drag him down to its own level. And so, wherever there was a heart for whom the world had proved too strong, it leapt forth to meet this life-giving touch. The old half-forgotten dreams of life's possibilities rose up in the mind once more in bright and living colours. Men threw aside their nets and their money-bags and left their receipt of custom and followed after this dreamer of dreams, because these dreams are the most precious things which the heart knows.

2. Consider, again, how valuable the ideal is *in giving to life its true perspective*. Through it the great is *felt* to be great, and the mean to be mean. Until you have met a great man—I mean a man of intellectual or moral or religious greatness—you do not perceive how small the small man is; and, until you have come within sight of a high ideal like this one of our text—a guileless Israel, a guileless nation, a society founded upon simplicity—you do not get to see how very small our ordinary ideas are—our ideas of a Society founded upon wealth or upon fashion or upon force of arms, measured and valued by these things.

It is with nations as with men. A morally great man

is nearly always guileless ; and he who measures a man by his social position or his wealth or his brute power simply has not understood what greatness is. He moves in a world of small ideas and does not know how great the *real* world is. He is a sort of villager in the moral universe. And so it will be when the great *nation* arises—the nation that is not merely *big* or *strong*, but spiritually *great*.

You will generally find, I think, that at the bottom of any sad perversion of character, whether in a nation or an individual, there lies some mistaken ideal. Men ruin themselves in character and conscience and health by fiercely struggling for the means of ostentatious living ; women fall into miserable snares, and fret away the best part of their lives because they cannot get the means of gratifying their foolish social ambitions ; and all this because men and women have never perceived the dignity and charm of simplicity. How deep the soul may sink through these mistaken standards, the record of any single day, as it is given us in the public prints, will testify. And, where they do not end in crime and social disaster, they end, and always must end, in a worn and weary heart, a fretful, discontented mind, a spoiled, disfigured soul. Across the face of nine-tenths of our English life as it is lived to-day the old prophetic word might be inscribed :

“Why do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” Yes, “why do they?” We re-echo the question. Because they have had dreams—misleading dreams: false visions of a false happiness, false notions of a false greatness, wrong ideas of life’s aims and the relative scale of their importance. But the *true* ideal does *this* for us: it gives us a worthier standard of life and brings us to see it in a true perspective.

3. And it does more: *it inspires us with hope and stimulates us to action*. It is not only a priceless treasure for the present, but it is a sure prophecy for the future.

For the ideal—the *moral* ideal—goes deeper than the fancy: it touches the *conscience*. And these aspirations of the conscience, these visions of spiritual loveliness, open up before us the path of spiritual advance. They are at once a prophecy and a stimulus. They tell us what is coming—if not in our own day, then in some future generation. For all that an enlightened conscience aims at will one day be achieved: not perhaps in the limited and narrow mode which our own minds picture, but in some wider and worthier mode which will grow from that. I never heard that this dream of Jesus was fulfilled in the narrower sense. I never heard of Israel becoming a guileless nation, but rather the reverse. But I am quite sure that some day this

ideal will be realised in a much fuller sense, and that the heavens will look upon, not merely a guileless *nation*, but a guileless *humanity*.

A *prophecy* and a *stimulus*—yes, both are involved in these aspirations of the conscience : a *prophecy*, because conscience posits the universal law which cannot but work itself out in history ; and a *stimulus*, because the moral ideal partakes of that *imperative* quality—that attribute of urgency—which belongs by nature to the inward voice. That voice commands and it attracts ; it impels and it persuades, so majestic is it and so lovely. And such is the ideal ; such is the spiritual imagination when it seizes on the soul. It is a fire which burns, a light which draws us. To neglect it is to die ; to obey it is to live. Like life itself it both consumes and creates us ; a zeal which eats us up, and yet a buoyancy, a hope, an inspiration which knits us in immortal union with the unseen world.

II. And now let us briefly look at the complementary truth. Take the text now as *history*, or take it at any rate as representing an experience known to us in human life—the *realisation* of the ideal. Turn from the *ideal* of guilelessness to the *fulfilment* of that ideal in this Nathanael, and we shall see that ideals, precious as they are, are not enough. The ideal is the prophecy, and is valuable as such ; but, when we meet with our ideal

realised, then the prophecy is justified and an immense support is given to the moral life.

You can enter, can you not? into the spirit of this glad outburst of discovery—"Behold! behold! an Israelite indeed!" Call to mind what a tide of satisfaction flooded your own heart when, after long searching and disappointment, you found at last a man who touched a line near to the level of your dream—a man of sincerity amid all the vanity and folly of society, or a man with free thoughts and a large heart in the midst of a narrow and custom-bound life. And then, in the intensely human experience of Jesus, imagine the sense of repose, of attainment, of sweet satisfaction as he exclaimed: "Behold an Israelite indeed!"

These moments of discovery are grand epochs in a life. When the philosopher lights upon some principle to harmonise his facts, or when the astronomer sees at last the living light of the planet which his calculations told him must exist, the glow of success must no doubt be very great. But a *man* is more to us than a whole galaxy of stars. And when we have tracked at last the orbit of a human spirit and found the *man* after our own heart—the man who verifies by his existence our spiritual calculations, what a triumph that is for a soul! How roomy and healthful the world becomes! how well worth living life seems! and how strong we feel

in our reliance upon the inward voice which has not played us false, but which told us truly that the good was possible !

This, then, it seems to me, is the office of the *real*. The ideal is the *prophecy* of conscience ; the real is our assurance that the prophecy was no mere dream. Yes ; we need the real as well as the ideal. It is not enough for the plant to have the light, it needs to have the *soil* as well. And we, too, cannot live by merely reaching forth ; we must go on from strength to strength, feeding in the heart upon this one and that one who shows in his living person *that* virtue to be possible after which we so dimly strive. The man who realises in his own person the secret surmises of the heart, who corresponds to conscience and justifies our faith, is eminently helpful. The soul leaps to him, clings to him and climbs by his aid further toward heaven than it could ever have gone alone.

Let us not think, therefore, that religion comes only from the temple. It comes from the world as well ; it comes from the battlefield and the senate-house and the settler's farm and the counting-house and the ship's deck. Wherever men can live and do and die, thence may come this verifying response to the prophecies of conscience. We feed upon what men do as well as upon what they think and feel. We are nourished by

their characters as much as ever we are nourished by their thoughts. And when there rises to view a man of probity or courage, or of refreshing simplicity and candour, of strength or beauty of life, there goes forth from our hearts a cry like that which went from the lips of our Master—a cry of gladness for the fulfilment of our most sacred hopes—the fulfilment in one man of that which we look for in the race.

And let us remember this. As the good life lived by others is helpful to ourselves, so the good life, if it is lived by ourselves, will be helpful to others. Whatever beauty of character we exhibit in our lives will serve just this purpose with our fellow-men : it will enable them to believe in goodness. In every man there dwells some divine foreshadowing of a beauty that may perchance be yet revealed : show the man that beauty realised and you will at once give shape and substance to his hope. That was just what was needed to change his hope into faith and his faith into assurance. A good man helps us to believe in God. Groping, stumbling, feeling blindly in the labyrinth of life, there bursts upon us this light of a good man's life. In an instant the way becomes clear and the life becomes glad. We were not mistaken ! God *is* possible ; heaven *is* possible ; the redemption of mankind *is* possible. For here before us stands a good man, a

guileless man, a true Israelite: the dayspring from on high hath visited us, and now we need but to wait with patience for the perfect noon.

I set before you, then, these two—the ideal and the real; and I assert that both are needful for our growth in the Divine life. We need the ideal—the poetic imagination and the prophetic dream. We need it to bring us into emotional relation with the infinite, to keep alive within us the faith in a coming glory. We need it to give to the pursuits of life their true perspective, to inspire us with hope and stimulate us to action. And we need it, I may add, to give definition and currency to the aspirations of the soul, to furnish a language for the heart, presenting to the mind's eye in concrete shape the impalpable breathings of the inward nature after spiritual loveliness.

And also we need the actual, the realised ideal. We need it as a verification of the inward prophecy, as a confirmation of that in which we have believed. The real justifies our faith and defines our dreams. Like him who was the Bread of Life, so is every good man food for the soul.

And now, in conclusion, consider how these two are related. They are related as the two sides of one transcendent fact. The one is the inner experience, the other the outer perception. The one speaks from



within, the other answers from without. Is the one more divine than the other? I think not. Both together are divine; and yet neither without the other is complete.

I wonder whether this is not the truth which lies at the heart of that ancient doctrine of the Church—the Divine Three in One; whether this striving and hoping and thirsting for the divinely beautiful is not the breath of the Holy Spirit within us; and whether the beautiful revealed in *man*—the righteousness lived before our eyes—is not the *son of God*, the divinely sacred in the outer human world? And I wonder whether that which completes the doctrine does not also complete the relation between the ideal and the real—the one transcendent God, Father of all, encompassing, embracing, sustaining the twofold life, within us and without; one life in which they both unite, one source from which they both spring, one end to which they both tend—“One God and Father of us all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

God the Father speaks *in* man and speaks *to* man. He speaks *in* man; and sometimes we call his voice the Holy Spirit, sometimes we call it *conscience*; sometimes, when it works through the medium of imagination, we call it poetry or prophecy. But, by whatever name we call it, the ideals that are thus inspired must and will

be some day fulfilled. They belong to the eternal world ; they are the promises of God ; and God is not a man that he should lie or the son of man that he should repent.

“ All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist ;  
Not its semblance, but itself ; no beauty, nor good, nor  
power

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the  
melodist

When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too  
hard,

The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,

Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;

Enough that He heard it once : we shall hear it by-and-by.”

#### IV.—LOVE OF THE WORLD

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”—  
I JOHN ii, 15.

WHAT does this writer mean—“Love not the world”? He is using, of course, the language of symbol—the language of poetry. He does not mean any visible orb—any realm of nature or tangible arrangement of men or things; he means some spiritual relation or influence. There is some danger which he has felt; some lovable, attractive sphere of things, which he has found poisonous to the soul. And this sphere of dangerous attraction, this channel of poisonous influence, he calls “the world.”

The difficulty, of course, is one of language. These early Christians had a vocabulary of their own which they used to express their religious experiences; and this vocabulary has partly become obsolete. When *we* speak of “the world,” we generally mean some definite arrangement of things or of people of wide extent. We

either mean this earth or we mean the whole visible universe ; or, yet again, we mean the whole scheme of human institutions. But the New Testament writers did not mean that ; or, if they did, they meant that with a very special emphasis laid upon the relationship which such things bore to the soul. It was not so much Nature or Humanity which they had in mind when they spoke of "the world," as it was a certain attitude of the soul towards "Nature" or Humanity.

Now, if you will consider it, we have to-day a certain analogous use of the word. That is to say, we sometimes mean by "the world," not the visible orb of men and things, but the relation which that orb bears to us. For instance, the inquiring mind plays upon this web of Nature's wonders, and you get the *scientific* "world." The sense perceptions, informed by the spirit of beauty, play upon the *same* sphere, and forthwith you have the *artist's* "world." The study of human relations with a view to human well-being gives you the *political* world. The consideration of Nature and of man with reference to the informing spirit of the whole gives you the *religious* world. And similarly you may go through the whole range of human faculties and interests, and you will see that there are just as many "worlds" as there are sides to human nature. Nay, you may go further and say that inas-

much as we are *all* different—each one looking out into this sphere of wonder with individually different eyes—there are in truth just as many worlds as there are men. The *soul* contributes something to the making of the world. Each man in large part makes his own world. The world will be to you what you are.

Which, then, of all these worlds was “*the* world” of which the apostle was so much afraid? Was it the scientific world, or the artistic world, or the political world, or the social world, or some other world? The answer is that it was no one of these worlds, in and by itself, but it was all or any of them in a certain relation. What that relationship is, he has told us with great clearness, and it is very important for us to understand it.

It is important for us to understand it, because we must all test our world. Since there are so many different worlds, we must have some criterion by which to judge our world. This scene of things has many aspects. The human heart creates many worlds. But every man has some one *prevalent* world. *Your* world is different from *my* world, and *my* world is different from that other man's. I wonder whether *my* world is a wholesome world! I wonder whether *your* world is a beautiful and lovable world! I wonder whether that other man's world is a poisonous and forbidden world! How are we to know? What standard shall we apply?

How shall we determine the character of the particular world in which we live ?

Our text answers this question, and answers it, I think, with extraordinary insight. "Love not the world, for that which is in the world is *not of the Father.*" That is the criterion. There you have the true test as to the character of your world. Does it come from the Father ?

The relations which the world bears to the soul are manifold ; but spiritually they are all reducible to two : either it proceeds from the Father and speaks of him, or it proceeds from a small circle of material and sensuous interests ; and then it does not speak of the Father, it speaks of *death.* There are as many worlds as there are men and women ; but there are only two *kinds* of worlds. There is a world which *fills* you with life, and there is a world which *robs* you of life. My world, your world, does the one or the other. It is life to you, or it is death to you. The world which is *alive*, which wraps you round as a hallowing presence, which lifts you up like a benediction—that is the *divine* world. The world which is *dead*, which is mechanical and cold and earthly ; or the world which is *small and paltry*, which exists for *my* particular purposes and *my* little enjoyments, and is significant of nothing beyond them—that is the *forbidden* world. The one is the

world of the child, of the poet, of the saint, of the soul ; the other is the world of the worldling, the cynic, the time-server and the flesh.

At first sight this may seem a little difficult. If we are going to formulate a practical rule for our life, we seem to want something simpler than this. It is all very well to say that the forbidden world is mechanical and cold, but how can you expect the average man to have any very clear ideas as to whether the world is mechanical or whether it is spiritual ? It is all very well to say that a man's world must not be small and paltry, but suppose he is a peasant in a little country parish who knows nothing about the great world of humanity beyond it ?

In short, we need to have this forbidden "world" a little more fully described before we can feel sure that we have understood the doctrine.

Well, the context of our passage does this for us ; it explicitly sets forth those attributes which belong to the world in that particular relation in which we may not love it.

I. In the first place, it assigns to it the attribute of *sensuousness*.

"All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father." The world which touches only the senses,

and penetrates no farther, is not a world that we may safely love. This, at first sight, may seem a severe and ascetic rule. Why were our senses given to us if we are not to use them? And how, indeed, can we come into relation with the world at all, except by using them? But here, again, that phrase, "it is not of the Father," explains the doctrine: it is not that the pleasures of sense are forbidden fruits; it is not that the scent of hedgerows or the gleam of waters or the gaiety of crowds are poison to the soul; it is that the senses should be a channel to the heart, a golden ladder for the angels of God, and that if they are not this, if beauty speaks of no deeper harmony, but ends in lust, if gaiety is not the natural expression of a heartfelt gladness but only the fevered aim of an unhealthy craving, if life with its stir and its endeavours is the scene, not of helpful activity, but of personal ambition and of pride, then the world in which we live is not of the Father and is no fit home for a child of God.

Man is the child of God—that is the key to the conundrum. He is the child of God, and his world should come *from* the Father and lead *to* the Father. For the *animal*, a world of sheer sense is a perfectly right world. The lower creatures *are* "lower," just because they have no more than the barest rudiments of reason and conscience. Their world is almost



entirely a sense-world, and when they live in it they fulfil the law of their being. With man it is not so. In him the world of sense is but the porch leading to the temple. He cannot enter the temple except through the porch ; but, having entered the porch, he must not stay there. I am sure that you yourselves, if you follow our golden rule of consulting your own experience, will see that this is true. I am sure that you have at some time in your lives experienced the dissatisfaction that comes from indulgence in sense-pleasures *that led on to nothing else*. When some lust of the flesh or lust of the eyes has ended with itself and awakened no wider life in the affections or the religious feelings, the experience has ended (has it not ?) in a feeling of *emptiness*, if not of disgust or self-reproach. The day's pleasure which found no outlet for unselfish thought ; the dance, the novel, the lounge, the dinner, or what not, which was accepted and indulged in for the sake of self and with no reference to the larger area of life—you *know* that there was not much *real* pleasure in it. It palled. It ended in disgust or in *ennui*. The full human nature was not satisfied. It was "not of the Father." This surface-world, then, when it has no reference to the inner sacred world of the spirit, is that of which the writer speaks ; and its shallowness, its mere sensuousness, its separation from

all life of conscience or of heart, of affection or of worship, is one characteristic by which we know it.

It is difficult, I know, for the young to believe this. The delights of colour and music and fragrance ; the charm of the gay world, the thirst for love, the zest and hopefulness of life are vividly felt and keenly enjoyed. And all this is as it should be. It is the voice of Nature calling to the young heart. That is the first voice that comes to us, and it is quite right that we should follow it. Be gay and glad, young friends ! Rejoice in your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes ! Only, know that beyond all these things there is a deeper depth, a wider life, a larger blessedness. You are at the first edge of life. You have scarcely crossed the threshold. You stand yet within the porch. A few more years and you will learn that these things, *apart from that to which they lead*, are fleeting. They are not sufficient in themselves. In a little while you will learn more perfectly that of which perhaps you have already had a hint and a suspicion : that the brightness of the world is no longer bright unless it is echoed by a brave and cheerful heart ; that the music of the world is a very empty noise unless it speaks the deeper harmonies of life ; and when that time comes all the zest of life will melt away like a morning cloud, unless it is linked

to some lasting purpose, some spiritual and hidden life. The pleasures of sense are not *worthless*; but, as the nature becomes fuller and richer, they are felt to be unsatisfying in themselves, and precious, not so much for what they *are* as for what they *suggest*. They have little depth or endurance, unless they lead the spirit on to a larger world of thought and to the doing of God's will on earth, where the great human realities abide—the realities of character, the realities of self-forgetting love, the realities of devotion to God's will.

II. Again; this passage gives us a second attribute of the forbidden world, its *evanescence*. "Love not the world, for the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The world that changes, the world that passeth away, the world that comes and goes and leaves the man no richer in character or sympathy, this is not the world for an immortal soul.

The apostle contrasts the passing *world* with the Eternal *Father*, the ever-changing forms of life with the perennial spring of life itself, the ever-shifting shapes of outward things with the Eternal Spirit who lies behind all things and shines through them and lives in them and *never* changes. "Do not love the *changing*," says the apostle; "for if you love the changing you cannot love the eternal; if you are wholly

set upon the mere shows of things you cannot take any strong hold upon their essence ; if you love the world you cannot love the Father.”

Here, again, the *spiritual* quality is that which is mainly intended. It is not that there is any particular virtue in liking our joys to last. *That* all men desire. The worldling, or at least the money-getting type of worldling, has this for his very special aim. To secure his wealth, to fortify himself against privation, to lay up goods for many years—this is one of the chief aims of Dives. But what Dives has not learnt is where to find *joy* that lasts. Your barns or your bank may be as safe as the world can make them, but the trouble is that the *joy* passes. It is possible to have hoards of *wealth*, and yet, for all the *joy* that it brings, to be as good as *paupers* ; to dwell in the midst of beauty and sicken of it ; to move in the midst of gay crowds and be very lonely. It is the *joy* itself that is so evanescent. Hell itself may quite possibly be a wealthy and busy place—a city, as Shelley said, very much like London ; but a place of joylessness it *must* be, because its wealth and its business have no root of reality.

Can you, in fact, imagine a worse hell than to live for ever in a world of shams ; to drag the length of your eternity through meaningless ceremonies and

shallow pomps ; to walk through the ages in a pretence of greatness or of virtue ; to be beset for ever and for ever, haunted through endless time by phantom faces smirking, flattering, fawning, incapable of a gleam of real joy or a smile of genuine love ? Can you imagine any more horrible depth to which a soul can plunge than to *wear* for ever a face which is not your own, play for ever a part which is not your own, live for ever a life which is not your own, to seem and never to be, to know always that there lies behind a soul and a sin which does not show itself, and a rotted, blighted love that has sickened into impotence ? Aye, *that* is hell ! And there is a great deal of that hell in existence. Shelley was quite right : “ Hell is a city very much like London.”

This, therefore, gives us a second touchstone of the world in which we live. Do you live in a world of reality ? Do you really love the things that you pretend to love ? enjoy the things that you appear to enjoy ? Does your whole heart go into your work and pleasure ? Is it the *essence* that you love, or only the *accidents* ? Is there a soul in your pursuits ?

If not, if your world is not a permanent world, but only an evanescent pretence, then do not dare to love it. To have your affections entangled in a world of mere show and seeming is to hazard your very *life*.

Many of our uses of the term "worldliness" are framed upon the feeling that nothing can be permanent which is not rooted in eternal principle. We call a man "worldly" when he seeks to associate with people of high position, not because he esteems them or loves them or believes in them, but because he hopes for a little reflected lustre from their rank. We call a man "worldly" when he apes the ways of well-bred people in minor and accidental circumstances without seizing upon the *essence* of their refinement, the subtle grace, the fine, discriminating fellow-feeling which is the central principle of courtesy. We call him "worldly," again, when he temporises, when he forsakes his ideal and lets himself down with the stream, when he drops a principle for the sake of getting out of a difficulty. These uses of the word are perfectly just: they illustrate that attribute of evanescence of which we are speaking. To care more for outward show than for inward grace, to depend upon "luck" and "chance" instead of upon eternal right, to trust to temporary expedients instead of to consistent action, these are but varying forms of one spirit—that spirit which trusts to a world which "passeth away" instead of to that which "abides."

These, then, are the two attributes of the forbidden world—its sensuousness and its evanescence. And these

two are one. The evanescent is the sensuous, and the sensuous is the evanescent. "The world passeth away and the lust thereof."

The changing is the outward, the permanent is the inward ; the changing is the material, the permanent is the spiritual ; and the nearer we get to the spiritual the nearer we get to the truly lovable.

This is no new doctrine ; long before it was written in this epistle it was well known to every devout heart. There was a psalmist in very ancient days who said that there were pleasures which God held in his right hand *for evermore*. What pleasures were they ? What were these eternally enduring pleasures ? He tells us. All his delight, he declares, is first in God himself, and secondly in the *excellent* among men. Yes, there are many pleasures in this beautiful world, but there is none to compare in depth or in permanence with the pleasures of character and of religion—the pleasure of admiring brave and good people, and the pleasure of reverent wonder as we stand amid this amazing world. These are the two chief pleasures of life, and all experiences lead naturally up to them ; if they *stop short* of them, then they are mere surface-pleasures which have no eternal root.

My friends, there are two opposite views of our

relation to the world of sense, both of which are very prevalent, but neither of which is very Christian.

One view is that the wisest thing we can do is to enjoy ourselves : to eat and drink and sleep and laugh and love and make music while we can, and keep death out of our thoughts ; that this is the main, and indeed the only discoverable purpose of life, and that we had better leave the inscrutable alone and give ourselves to this while we may. The other view is that the *preparation for death* is the main end of life, that the man who enjoys himself here cannot expect to enjoy himself yonder, and that the pleasures of sense are on this account a hindrance to the soul.

Neither of these, as you very well know, is a very wholesome view of our relation to the visible world. Men of serious mind have always been averse from the first ; but neither are they in our day altogether content with the second. And so we find an ever increasing multitude of those who attempt a middle course. They try to do a little of each : a little grasping and a little giving, a little feasting and a little fasting, a little of the church and a little of the world ; the ball-dress to-day and sackcloth to-morrow. This seems to us to-day the golden mean. “ Be religious, of course, but not too religious ; enjoy the world, of course, but cautiously. Do not go too far ; do not let the world



interfere with your religious duties ; but neither, on the other hand, need your religion altogether cut you off from the pleasures of the world."

This middle course between sense and soul recommends itself to many in our time. The life is divided into two ; and what they call "the *worldly*," that is, the *pleasurable*, half, is indulged in, so far as may be, without altogether neglecting what are conceived to be the grey and monotonous, but safe and wholesome, offices of religion. But in this Laodicean middle course there is neither salvation nor delight. Wisdom does not lie half-way between : it lies in the fusion of the two. It is not given to man to steer his course half-way between God and the world ; but it *is* given him to make the world the way to God. Let your joys be duly subordinated in the scale of duty, and then *frankly accepted*. *All* experiences save those of sin may lead you on to God. Your eating, drinking, sleeping, laughing, loving, dancing, working, playing may all be means of grace to yourself and blessings to those about you.

If this seems to you paradoxical or impossible, it is perhaps that you are mistaken in your notion of the true purpose of life. Of course, if you think that the end of life is enjoyment (the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life), why, then, you are sure either to throw religion overboard altogether, or

to degrade it into a perfunctory price which you have to pay to make your enjoyment safe ; but if you once see clearly, if you are once *convinced*, that the end of life is *not* enjoyment but ennoblement, that to get the soul pure and strong and true is the very purpose of your being in the world, then the world will easily and naturally find its proper place as a means to this end, and the whole life of sense, instead of being a phantom, a mirage, a continual disappointment, and a cloying, sickening joy, will shine upon you as a radiant sky, will descend upon you as a refreshing dew and make the soul to respond with fragrance and beauty to him who is the Father both of soul and world.

Let us live, then, with a glad heart in that world which God has given us ; let us love the world and the things that are in the world ; let us love the world with a pure heart fervently, for all that is in the world is not of the world, but is of the Father.

## V.—RELIGION : GOOD, BAD, AND INDIFFERENT

“Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”—JAS. i. 27.

THIS text is instructive, not only by reason of what it expresses, but also by reason of what it implies. It implies that the thoughts and feelings and actions which we call “religious” are not necessarily good. It reminds us that our religion must be pure and undefiled, and implies that it *may* be impure and befouled.

Nor does the contrast which the writer has in mind seem to be that of religions true and religions false. He is not setting Christianity against Paganism, or the worship of God against the worship of devils, or anything of that kind. It is possible, he seems to say, to have a knowledge of the true God, to believe in him, and fear him, and yet to be all astray, and far off from the pure and perfect worship. “The devils also *believe*—and tremble.”

Now the inquiry which the passage suggests is what "religion," in this sense, can mean. If there is *good* religion and *bad* religion, what can there be common to them both? Why do we call them both "religion"? When Saul went "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," was he religious? and if he was, what remained with him, what did he take over with him when, from being the persecutor, he became the persecuted? The *fact*, of course, is familiar enough; very cruel things are constantly done from the most sincerely "religious" motives; Jesus himself told his disciples that the time would come when those who killed them would think that they were doing God service. The *fact* is familiar, but what does this familiar fact involve? Why do we continue to connect such deeds, in some sort, with religion? What is it that lies at the root of these mistaken or wicked deeds which compels us to recognise them as, in a certain sense, "religious"?

Well, there is something, I believe, common to all experiences to which that term is attached. There is something simpler and more fundamental than that noble passion which is the flower of life—"religion" in the highest sense—a certain something which belongs to the *root*. It is not confined to the active side of our nature, nor to the emotional; but it underlies

them both. Those surgings of the soul, those despondencies and ecstasies and enthusiasms, which the emotional nature recognises as "religious," have a core or nucleus from which they spring. And those works of our hands, those outpourings of good deeds, that visiting of the destitute and keeping spotless from the world, in which, on the other hand, St James considers that religion lies, these, too, have a certain core or nucleus. And the nucleus is in each case the same. There is one principle which lies at the centre of all religious experiences, whether those experiences be of the heart or hand. The religious life is based on something simpler than itself. The superstructure of hopes, convictions and energies, which in a *specific* sense we call "religion," is built upon a foundation laid in the very fabric of the soul, which also, in a certain *general* sense, is called "religion." This foundation belongs to the very make of man ; it is born with him, lives with him and never leaves him.

In what, then, you will ask me, does this foundation, this core, this root of our religious life, consist ? It consists, I answer, in a certain natural sense of the Infinite. It is a universal perception of a living Presence which besets us. It is a recognition of Mystery, a dread of the Unknown, a whisper of Inscrutable Life. It is not an acquired possession, or

a man-made faculty ; it belongs to us by virtue of our humanity. It is woven as a thread into the warp of the human soul by the hand of life ; and, for good or for evil, there it will remain till the hand of death frays out that warp and woof and scatters the shreds of them upon the wide winds of eternity. The human heart goes forth in vague wonder to the Infinite Unknown. Through the windows of the soul shines the world of land and sea and sky, pressing upon us at every point with unspeakable thoughts and mystic feelings. In the heart of the child, in the heart of the savage, in the heart of the most uninstructed peasant, there abides that same dread sense of the superhuman which in other forms moves the mind of the philosopher or the heart of the poet.

*This* it is which lies at the root of religion—a feeling for the Infinite ; and, for good or for ill, this feeling is possessed by every soul of man. It may be strong or weak, crude or developed, constant or occasional, instructed or ignorant, but to some degree and in some form it is the birthright of us all.

And now, returning to our text, we begin to see why we are warned that our religion must be “pure and undefiled.” This perception of the infinite, which lies at the root of religion, is not *necessarily* a good thing. It does not *of necessity* bring happiness or

virtue. In itself it is indifferent. It is good or bad according as we use it. Just as *intellect* is neither good nor bad except as it lends itself to truth or error ; just as emotion is neither good nor bad except as it robes itself in love or malice ; just as perception is neither good nor bad except as it discriminates aright and sees the beautiful to be beautiful ; so the *religious aptitude* is, *in itself*, neither good nor bad, but yet may be good beyond all goodness, or bad beyond all badness, lifting a soul to mountain-heights of the sublime or plunging it into the very pit of ruin. Our weak humanity is so apt to pride itself upon its feelings, so apt to persuade itself that all is well because, forsooth, it has some stirring of religious *feeling* in its folds. But religious *feeling* is not enough. It is not enough to say "Lord ! Lord !" It is not enough to prophesy, or cast out devils, or even to perform many wonderful works ; for it is possible to do all this and yet to "work iniquity."

I do not know whether it is necessary to illustrate this truth by modern instances. A score of such perversions of religion will occur to most of you.

Have we not all known of homes overshadowed with a religion of fear ? homes where the days are made irksome by a thousand unnatural restraints and rules ? Have we not known little children taught that they

must pass through all kinds of dark experiences before they can come into the shelter of God's protection ; and have we not seen them, poor little souls, creeping along the path of life, shivering with the dread of a hereafter which they scarcely dare to think of ? Have we not seen them at last give way before the strain and buy their safety at the cost of inward truth—persuading themselves of experiences that they have never known and of repentances which they do not need ? Or, to take another illustration, have we not known examples of what is called the *religious press*, in which the religion was anything but “pure and undefiled” ? Take the average religious newspaper. Consider the spirit which animates it—the bitter, contemptuous, sarcastic spirit. Read the denominational organs of the various so-called Christian sects and see how every line strikes chill upon a loving soul, how they hide the light and warmth of heaven and yellow all the world with a thick fog of sectarian suspicion !

Or, again, consider what are called the “religious” *bodies*—the sects and churches and associations devoted to religious ends. Are they always kindly, humble, helpful, cheering and charitable bodies ? Is the fact that they are *religious*—that they are concerned, that is to say, with the problems of infinite being—sufficient in itself to assure their being *good* ? Is their indwelling



spirit of necessity an angel of light? Is there no strife for masteries, no jealousy, no envy, no fanatic hatred of the theologically erring, within the borders of the churches? Is it not plain that the strife and railing and fanaticism are intensified tenfold by the very fact that the subject-matter of them is religion? And if all this be true, do we need further illustration of the fact that religious feeling often allies itself with dark and bitter thoughts, with cruel and worldly deeds?

It is not enough, then, I repeat, to have "religion," if by "religion" you merely mean that sense of mystery which is forced upon us by the conditions of our life. Pagans, persecutors, fanatics, sectaries of every kind are possessed of such religion. If the cold-hearted professor needs to be reminded that his religion, to be of any value, must be warm and living, so, too, does the fiery enthusiast need sometimes, on his part, to be reminded that his religion, besides being warm and living, must be "pure."

But now, let us consider briefly the converse truth. Granted that, if a man have religion without goodness, that man's religion is vain, does it follow that goodness without religion is enough? By no means. That perception of the Infinite which we sometimes call "religion" may be all insufficient unless it is joined to goodness; but equally is a cold goodness all insufficient

until it be wedded to religion. I do not say, you will observe, that it is *worthless* ; I say that it is *insufficient*. It is not the best that man can attain to. The correctly-ordered career is very admirable in its way, but it is not the highest possibility of life. There is a righteousness which *exceeds* the righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees—a righteousness which belongs to the children of the kingdom. There is a life sublime in its devotion, a goodness all aglow with love, a glorified morality, a soul fired with that passion of humanity which, careless of censure, careless of praise, careless of life or death or fate, casts itself, all heedless, on the overmastering current of an uncalculating piety.

Learn this, O man of the world, O cultivated and reputable Christian ! A man may be what thou art, doing that which it is his duty to do ; he may be an intelligent, lively, agreeable and polished man, a good-natured and sociable man ; he may be a successful man, may win for himself a competency and an esteemed position ; and the end of it may yet be the frightful conviction that his life has been one hopeless and irredeemable mistake.

For he who lives in such a way that no heart is touched, no nature bettered, no fire of devotion kindled by his presence in the world, has missed his mission. It was not for this that he was sent here. It is a small

matter that he goes through life without censure, if he also goes through life without love. A man who never gives himself away, never forgets himself, never spends himself, never loses himself, never steps beyond the bounds of duty into the illimitable region of devotion, has not fulfilled his being.

You remember who it was that said : “ This ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor ” ? It was one whose actions were regulated by the opinion of an outside world and who felt no response to the abandonment of adoring love. He spoke the words which two-thirds of the respectable and moral world would in like circumstances have spoken. They were the words of calculation and common sense. They were the words of a sober prudence which hated sentiment and hated waste. But they revealed a great lack in the nature that prompted them. The nature that could prompt those words was a nature with no enthusiasm and no power, therefore, to estimate the costly gift of an unbounded gratitude. But Jesus knew. He instantly divined the spirit of the gift ; and well he understood that the woman who could so kindle to generous devotion was not the one to live untouched by the sorrows of the poor. Let the warm heart have way ! let the aching love—the ardent, painful passion of the lonely soul—have vent ! “ She

hath done what she could. And verily, I say unto you, wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Such was the mind of Jesus on this matter. He could praise good deeds ; he could praise the useful giving to the poor. He had a word of commendation for the widow's mite and for the noble restitution of Zacchæus. But that which he most praised in them was the spirit from which they sprang. That which he regarded above all was the condition of the heart : its warmth, its earnestness, its power to love. And the useful morality, the calculating economy, of Judas, untouched by any glowing piety of feeling, found little favour in his eyes.

Religious feeling, then, although it is valueless as a criterion of action, and unavailing as a justification of that which is evil in itself, is far from being valueless or unavailing when it is associated with good deeds. It cannot make bad deeds good ; but to good deeds it may give a heightened value : it may lend them force and fervour, and may raise them from the merely *useful* into the region of the beautiful and sublime. And this, my friends, seems to me the greatest spiritual problem of our age : how to bring these two into their natural alliance. The secularist says that he has no need of religion, that religion

contains nothing of any value that cannot be found in ethics. And the religionist says that he cares little enough for ethics, that he does not want your moral discourses and that if a man has religion he is sure to go right. So goodness boasts herself that she has no need of religion ; and religion retorts that she has no need of goodness. But *that*, at least, cannot last for ever. Religion and goodness shall yet go hand in hand ; and from their union shall spring that "pure religion and undefiled" which alone can reconcile the schism in the camp.

Meanwhile, we may be forgiven if we ask how these things can be. How can *we*, in an age divided between a dry morality and a fanatical religion, bring our good deeds and our religious sense into this desired alliance ? How is our morality to be touched with this emotion, our emotion to be cleansed by this morality ?

To which we answer : In many ways and by many means ; but chiefly by having regard to one special sphere of religious contemplation in which the fusion has already taken place.

I spoke, at the commencement of my discourse, of that perception of the Infinite which lies at the root of our religious experiences. Now there is another infinite, besides the infinites of space and time and

power ; and upon *this* we must make it our endeavour to take hold. If there were no infinite but the infinite of space and time, then our religion might culminate in a vague wonder ; if there were no infinite but an infinite of power, it might culminate in an overwhelming terror. But there is another infinite—the infinite of goodness—which carries us away from the physical and introduces us to the spiritual. This “infinite,” which is more correctly called the “perfect,” is the most fruitful object for our contemplation ; and it is by the contemplation of this that our morality kindles with emotion.

Learn to know the noble lives that have been lived ; learn to look upon the noble lives still living ; give yourself the chance of catching the divine flame. It is not of the wise and prudent that I speak ; not of those who, under advantageous influences, have maintained the level of family tradition or of official virtue ; I do not speak of the righteous who have moved among the sinners with blameless step, content to be unstained and to win the esteem of the world by a life of respectability, self-sufficient and self-content : I speak rather of those who, often among many errors and many passionate sins—sins as black, perhaps, as those of David in the old time, of Burns or Shelley in the new—have yet, like them, been capable of great

and chivalrous deeds, of deep and self-effacing love, whose natures *suggest*, though they so lamentably fail of, the divine and perfect goodness.

Such natures, I say, *suggest* the perfect ; for the perfect can only be *suggested*. By the coldly good it is not even suggested ; by them the region of which I speak is not *approached*. For the infinite of goodness is a region by itself. It is the region of great deeds. Only when self is wholly forgotten in the doing of such deeds is that region entered ; and what I desire to bring home to you is that one such deed, though it happened in a bad and broken life, is a *suggestion*, a *revelation* of a kind of goodness which belongs to the eternities, and which lies clear beyond and above the temporal calculations of our decent moralities.

This, then, is the region which I would have you often enter, at least in thought ; these are the lives that I would have you study ; these are the men whom I would have you know ; for it is from these, and from these alone, that you will *catch the flame*.

A religious society should properly be a society in which the members encourage each other to great, passionate deeds of goodness. At certain times and in certain places the Christian Church has been this ; full of splendid poetry, both of feeling and action. At present it is *prose*—downright, deadly prose. It is

ethical without being religious. It has scarcely a touch of the infinite about it. The *great* deeds are nearly all done by the sinners. I could tell you of deeds done by anarchists, revolutionists, outcasts, unbelievers, atheists—deeds of personal self-sacrifice and burning love, which if we realised them would put our little trivial goodness to utter shame and bring us to our knees. Why should we have to look in such quarters for the crucifixion of the self? Such deeds belong of right to the Church of Christ. But no: the Church is too respectable and too rich. It is like the young ruler who came to Jesus and felt that he wanted something, he knew not what: he wanted to get to the other side of the cold, crystal wall which hemmed him in; he wanted to get into the world of *greatness* and of *life* which he could dimly see, beyond. But, when Jesus showed him the only possible way, so far as he (the young ruler) was concerned, he found it was beyond his strength.

That is what the Church is like. It is *good* but it is not *religious*. It is *respectable* but it is *weak*. I do not think, therefore, that we shall in this matter get much help from the Church as it now is. It can help us in the practice of virtue, it can organise our practical efforts, it can restrain us from gross and sensual sins, it can marshal the forces of decency and order. And



all this is very good and very necessary. But what it does *not* now do (as it has done in some of its more vital periods) is to lift us into the ideal region. It does not make us realise the *poetry*, the *romance*, the unspeakable *beauty* of self-sacrificing deeds.

But that which you may fail to find in the useful moralities of the Church *visible* you may yet discover in the Church *spiritual*. There is a Church whose boundaries are not circumscribed by creeds or rites—a Church which contains many a man who passes for a worldling ; the publicans and sinners are often found within its invisible walls ; and there you may find the souls, there you may find the deeds, there you may find the matchless beauty of a spiritual order. Learn to know those men, learn to love those deeds, clear the eye and the heart that it may perceive the grandeur of the human soul. Have a place in your reading, in your memories and affections, for fine character and great actions. And above all make some effort to understand Jesus of Nazareth—chief among the outcasts of his day and chief among the religious heroes of all time. Let us regard that life as it was really lived. Let us contemplate him who took his motive, not from the surrounding world, but from the indwelling Spirit ; who did good deeds, not because they were approved, but because he so greatly loved. Let us look upon

a life that flung itself all trustingly upon the world, that poured itself forth in an agony of love for that poor neglected, destitute mob which thronged about him. Let us remember how he cast honour behind him, braved the respected and the great, withstood the wicked in high places and died for truth. And then, if we really see him as he is, we shall not fail to be touched with a sense of the beauty of such goodness, the eternal life which comes from the dying of the self ; and when that takes hold upon a man, when it governs his thought, and stirs his heart, and fashions his life, then that man is *saved*. He is saved because the world of the spirit is opened to him and he sees this universe all alive with love—a love which broods upon us, watches us, dwells around us and within us and never sleeps ; and he himself is penetrated by that love, even the love which is the fulfilling of the law, the only religion which is for ever pure and undefiled.

There are those who in their social work seek to do much by the gospel of culture, who make it their endeavour to bring refinement and a love of beauty into degraded lives ; and God speed them in their work ! But let them not think that this is all man needs. Whatever be our day-dreams of a golden age, when knowledge shall be freed from prejudice and error, and beauty be perceived by every eye ; whatever

be our day-dreams and our hopes, let us be assured of this : that what men most need is faith in the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Yes, that is what they need ; they need to have opened to them the world of spirit, and to realise that this universe is all alive with love—a love which broods upon them, watches them, dwells around them and within them and never sleeps. Morality ? temperance ? honest and decent lives ? Oh yes, let us teach them that ; let us send men who will help them to that ; but let us teach them, above all, with the teaching of a compassionate heart, that character which never faileth, that *love* which is the fulfilling of the law !

## VI.—MAN THE ABSOLVER

“ And Jesus seeing their faith saith unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak? he blasphemeth: who can forgive sins but one, even God? ”—  
MARK ii. 5-7.

THE Scribes were startled ; and I do not wonder. Who would not be startled ? For how can a *man* forgive sin ? How can a *man* say : “ You have broken through the universal order, but *I* forgive you ” ? How can a human atom in this infinite universe take upon itself to pronounce sentence in the name of that unfathomed life ? Consider what it means. Here, in a side-eddy of the sea of life, is one tiny pulse—a speck of consciousness only half aware of its own being. It knows almost nothing of the nature of that life of which it forms so infinitesimal a part. At the most it has spelled out one or two of its endless secrets. Into that solemn ocean of ordered being an attempt has been made to bring disorder. Defiance has been uttered against its discipline ; self-will has set itself against its

laws ; folly has risen up and scorned it. And this insignificant speck of consciousness takes upon itself to say to the rebel : Thy defiance is forgotten ; thy rebellion is as if it were not ; thy sins are forgiven !

Were not the Scribes right ? “ Why doth this man thus speak ? he blasphemeth : who can forgive sins but one, even God ? ”

As to the forgiveness of personal injuries, that, of course, is another matter. Jesus had taught that we ought to forgive our enemies ; and I do not know that the Scribes had ever objected to that. What they objected to was his forgiving *sin*. There is a great deal of difference between forgiving personal injuries and forgiving *sin*. The sin of which the Scribes accused this sufferer—aye, and of which the multitudes who looked on, and the very friends who bore his couch, accused him—was some deadly, hidden sin against God. No one, they held, could be afflicted as this palsied man was, unless he had grievously sinned against heaven. A wrong, in so far as it is committed against ourselves, may be forgiven by ourselves ; but, in so far as it is committed against the eternal laws, it can only be forgiven by God. That was a doctrine taught, not only by the Scribes, but by Jesus himself ; and yet he says : “ Son, thy sins are forgiven ” !

Now, there are three proposed solutions of this

problem. There is the theological solution, the ecclesiastical solution and the human solution.

The theological view is this. It is quite true that God only can forgive sins ; but Jesus *was* God, and *therefore* Jesus could forgive sins. This view, as we shall presently see, has its truth, and it errs principally by its dry technical way of stating that truth. The truth as it is set forth in the evangelical text-books comes under no known law and can be explained by no known analogy. It is a sort of cypher writing with the key lost ; it carries no meaning to the mind and no feeling to the heart. It is not sufficiently organic. It is bald and hard and scholastic, and attempts to state truths which lie near to the warm sources of life by means of formulæ as lifeless as the  $x, y, z$  of algebra. Its poetry has gone, and with its poetry have gone its significance, its vital power, its saving truth.

The second solution is the ecclesiastical solution—that the office of absolver was *delegated* by God. In apostolic times it was the *Christ* who received power from God to forgive sins ; in later times it was the Christian priest. According to this view, the forgiveness of sins rested *ultimately* with God himself ; but the divinely-appointed representative of God—the Christ or the Christian priest, as the case might be—exercised on God's behalf the function of forgiveness.

In this solution also I think we may say that there is a certain partial truth. But, again, it has lost its poetry, and therefore its life. It is the official view, the legal view. A kind of power of attorney has been executed. There is, in this churchly interpretation of the truth, no emotional play, no moral depth, no welling up of the eternal springs. We cannot bring it into touch with human experience.

In contrast to these two views we have the third view, the *human* view, which I cannot but think is that which Jesus had in mind. "You cannot forgive sins," said the Scribes, "for you are but a man." "I can forgive sins," answered Jesus, "*just because* I am a man." "You have no authority," urge the Scribes. "My authority rests in my humanity," answers Christ; "for the *Son of man*—man as a spiritual being, man as possessed by the Divine life—hath power on earth to forgive sins."

This is what I call the human or natural view, and this view is vital. It touches us in our most living part. It is proved by experience. We recognise in it a process of the soul. It is a profound and far-reaching view, carrying with it an exalted estimate of human nature and a penetrating insight into the nature of sin and the nature of forgiveness. Human nature purified and inspired *can* forgive sin. Human nature tran-

scendent and spiritual touches God. When the *soul* speaks, it is *God* that speaks ; and when the soul forgives, it is God that forgives. Such was the view which Jesus took of this question of forgiveness.

This, then, is the doctrine of forgiveness which we are to consider a little more closely this morning. It embraces the whole theory of pardon, both human and divine ; and if we are to get at the root of the matter we shall have to speak of them both. We must speak of divine pardon and of human pardon, and of the connection between the two ; how our notion of human pardon affects our understanding of the divine, and how our experience of the divine pardon should raise our conception of the human. In this way we may perhaps get a clear view of what it was that Jesus claimed when he said that he had power to forgive sin.

Now, there is a certain sense in which it may be truly said that God *never* forgives. If we confuse between "forgiveness" and the "annulling of consequences" ; if we suppose the remission of sin to be the same as the remission of penalties, we may emphatically declare that in that sense there is no forgiveness. Stick to that old pagan notion that by sacrifices of some sort God can be bought off, and there is nothing for it but to deny the whole doctrine outright. That God forgives is most certainly true ;



but that he will excuse us from our punishment is most certainly false. No instance of such a thing has ever been known. We never meet with it in our daily life. God does not let us off from the results of our wickedness or folly. "Be not deceived ; God is not mocked. What a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Look at the truth upon its physical side. Did you ever, in the physical sphere, find causes that were not followed by effects ? Did you ever find the violation of physical law go unpunished ? Did you ever know a wild youth that did not lead to a crippled age ? Aye ; and, however much the wildness of youth may be repented, the aged sinner continues crippled. Repentance may do him *spiritual* good, but it will not do him any physical good. Effects will follow causes, however much we may pray for pardon. If the physical effects cease, it is because the physical causes cease, not because we are sorry we transgressed. The amending or annulling of the physical ruin which a man has brought upon himself is not the meaning of divine forgiveness.

And in the spiritual sphere the same holds good. In the unseen world of the human spirit, retribution follows the breach of law as surely as ever it does in the visible world. God *does* forgive, and he *does* redeem ; but his forgiveness and redemption do not

consist in the withholding of due penalty for committed sin. The sin against conscience brings the reproach of conscience ; and, if it continues, it brings what is worse—the *deadening* of conscience. And that sequence is as certain as any other sequence of cause and effect. God never breaks his laws. He never makes exceptions. He never separates effects from causes or causes from effects. He keeps the *physical* sphere intact ; he keeps the *spiritual* sphere intact. Every sin will have the full effect of its own past. In the moral as surely as in the material world we shall have to pay the price. The penalty will follow, be it physical, be it spiritual, inevitably, irresistibly, inexorably. Physical disorders will bring their full measure of suffering without abatement ; spiritual disorders will bring their full spiritual punishment worked out to the bitter end. “Sin, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth death” ; and God has never yet been known to stay the process. In *that* sense he never forgives.

In what sense, then, is it true that God *does* forgive ? It is true in the profoundest sense. Solemn and inexorable as is the law of retribution, the law of forgiveness is no less certain. All history testifies to it. The literature of every nation has recorded it. The daily experience of every devout and repentant heart discovers it. It is a great human consciousness,

a truth which we know, because we see it in its effects and feel it in its working. Everywhere around us and within us there is going forward this great process, this power and influence, this operation and movement, transmitting, vitalising, re-creating, redeeming, healing, blessing, making all things new.

We shall understand the matter best, perhaps, by reflecting upon the human analogy. In human forgiveness there is both a noble and a base sort. The base sort is that which lets off the culprit, not because the sentence is unjust or the victim irresponsible, but because the judge is weak. But there is also a high and noble sort. The highest human forgiveness is that which recognises a change of moral attitude and freely offers the old affection. A man is in the deepest sense forgiven when the stubborn pride has given place to love.

I can conceive of a father who might know better than most fathers how to forgive his children their faults, and yet might make it a rule never to excuse them from the punishment. For exemption from punishment is not the *essence* of forgiveness. The essence of forgiveness is the re-establishment of moral harmony. And I can imagine a father who gravely and sorrowfully and without anger administered unwaveringly the full punishment in every case of wrong-

doing, and yet never failed to meet, with an immediate response of tenderness, the first motion of repentance.

That seems to me the *highest* type of human forgiveness. When the father, inexorable in penalty, yet wins back by tender sympathy the child's affection ; when he knows how, in spite of punishment, to melt the hard, obstinate feeling from the child's heart, then you have the true forgiveness. It is the renewal of the old affectionate relations. It is the healing of the breach. In such a case the parent knows that, just because he has not remitted the penalty, he may safely indulge the free expression of tenderness. And the child knows that, although the price of past sin must be paid, sorrow for that sin has removed every cloud. The child in such a case is truly forgiven ; he is forgiven with a *spiritual* forgiveness. Love upon the one side and repentance on the other have brought parent and child into spiritual harmony. And it is quite conceivable that such a reunion of hearts may take place even while the penalty is in the very act of being paid.

Now, this seems to me to be the true nature of divine forgiveness. When I ask whether God can forgive, I do not mean will he turn aside the penalties of sin ? What I want to know is something very different : I want to know whether communion with the Eternal mind and a sense of the Father's love can be

re-established when it has once been broken through. I want to know whether God loves me even though he should chastise me, and whether he will open up to me a path to a purer life. Have I shut myself out from all hope of goodness by my evil doing? must I bear the stain to all eternity? must I be a creature of a lower grade because I have sinned against the light? or is there any way back to holiness? That is what I want to know.

It is not for remission of penalty that we shall cry if we are wise: rather shall we welcome all needful penalties for the discipline and correction of our hearts. Let us pass through the fires that we may be purified. Let us tread the rough road that we may find our home. Let us suffer nature's purgatory for our eternal cleansing. Only give us faith to know that the free play of love shall be restored; make us sure that God loves us and that we may love God. Give us back that communion of hearts, that mutual tenderness, that benediction on the one hand and that "trust" upon the other, without which life itself is death.

That, my friends, is the only forgiveness for which we ought to pray. Is that forgiveness possible? Is that re-establishment of divine communion possible? It is not only possible, but it is a daily fact. We see it all around us. Everywhere we see the process of

reconciliation going on. Everywhere we see the hardening of the heart arrested, pride broken down, love springing up, the sunshine and sweet air of heaven pouring into the sinner's life.

Cease from sin, and immediately the regenerating forces begin to play upon the soul, helping it to recover its lost estate. By a thousand means the hearts and lives of men are renewed : by the beauty and bounteousness of nature, by the sweet memories of childhood, by the tenderness and truth and love which cluster round the home. Old memories come welling up in the silent hour. Lost faces, forgotten words, come to life again at some chance suggestion of circumstance or place. The heart is softened, the affections are renewed. *Sorrow* touches us and makes us new beings ; *joy* uplifts us and drives away our dark humours ; *hope* enters by some crevice in our hard lot ; *faith* arouses from her slumbers. We come into touch with some fresh life ; we learn to admire some newly-discovered character. Some picture, some play, some book, some man, some history, takes a hold upon us and re-baptizes us in the clean waters of a holy spirit. And such spiritual renewal is the only and the sufficient evidence of divine forgiveness.

And now pause. Let us ask ourselves what has taken place when a man is thus renewed in his inner

being. A very notable thing has taken place : a new moral force has entered his life. If we did not take account of this fact, our doctrine of retribution and forgiveness would be incomplete and shallow. The world is not a mere *chain* of causes and effects ; it is a *network* : there are other lines coming into the system on all sides at every point. And it is the same with a human life. It is not a mere single line of causes and effects ; it is a *system*, a complicated and widely spreading system. And so it is possible for a new spiritual force to enter the system and to modify the play of the old forces. We may follow up the physical analogy with which we opened our statement of retribution. Suppose a man, whether through ignorance or wilfulness, falls into unhealthy habits and does his body some physical harm. That harm may be of such a kind and degree as to be irrevocable ; but, on the other hand, there *may* be physical forgiveness for him. If he physically repents—that is to say, if he stops his unhealthy way of life—then the world is full of healthy things : fresh air, clean water, silence and sleep, which may virtually make a new man of him ; they are new powers which enter the system of his life. And it is just the same in the spiritual sphere. It is just possible (and that is a very terrible thought) that the moral harm the man has done to himself has been so

long-continued that he is almost beyond amendment. The conscience has become deadened and hardened. Perhaps only a convulsion—something that may come to him beyond death—can save him. But often, generally, the nature is open to the play of a new moral influence. It enters his life and modifies the direction of the forces there. The effects of the bad old life will long be a hindrance and a misery ; but even over these he may so triumph at length as to be a new creation. And thus the law of retribution is always open to this light. It is true that causes will always produce their effects. But *repent*—that is, stop the causes—then there will at any rate be no *added* effects ; and, what is more, you give occasion to the redeeming powers of the world to play their part. They may enter as new causes and so transform the whole system that the man may become a new creation. There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared.

Life in its chief intent is an inward transformation. And accordingly we find that life is *full* of instances of divine forgiveness. Wicked ways are abandoned, evil hearts are renewed, proud spirits are broken, the winter of despair is vanquished. Again and again in our own experience, when our footsteps had well nigh slipped and the powers of darkness were upon us, we have found ourselves brought back by this kind



discipline and set once more in the ranks of light, fighting with man against evil instead of with evil against man. And in such experiences we have, not merely the pledge, but the very *fact* of divine forgiveness.

II. And now let us turn again to our text. I have tried to tell you what life seems to teach us about divine forgiveness. What, then, did Jesus mean when he took upon him to say : " Son, thy sins are forgiven " ?

If you read the full narrative, you will find that the absolution is given in a twofold form. First, Jesus sees these men making their determined effort to get healing for their friend, and recognises something which he calls " faith " ; and thereupon he quietly announces the *fact* of the man's forgiveness : " Son, thy sins are forgiven." He does not himself absolve, but he assures the man that *God* absolves. Then come these carping critics, these Scribes, accusing him of blasphemy, saying that he has no right and no authority to declare such absolution. Whereupon, with that magnificent audacity which belongs to genius, he turns upon them and takes them at their word. " What ! " he cries, " you will not let me even tell a sinner that God forgives him ? You accuse me of usurping God's place and forgiving this man on my own behalf ? Well ; I accept the accusation ; I admit the crime. I *will* take God's

place ; and I *do*, in my own name as a son of man and the possessor of a human conscience and a human heart, *forgive this man* ! For the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins."

I tell you I think that is grand. It is a magnificent flash of insight, a sublime and a most holy blasphemy !

For consider what he meant by it. Look into your own experience and interpret it by that. There is a certain experience which few of us have not known at one time or another in our lives : an impersonal forgiveness ; a forgiveness based upon sympathy and conscience ; an absolution which we pronounce with confidence, and which issues from some very deeply-seated region of our nature. Often have we forgiven the penitent in the name of that common humanity which we share with him—forgiven him because we understood him. Every sympathetic and candid heart has at times silently pronounced such absolution. Our own experience enables us to weigh the circumstances of a life and the strength of a temptation, and thereupon a healthy conscience will often pass an emphatic verdict. "Whatever *man* may say," declares the voice within us, "*that* sinner will find mercy at the hands of God." There is something within us which seems to rise at times above the normal level ; it transcends the average life and the average morals ; it goes outside the circle

of the individual soul ; it reveals itself as a larger being, a greater self, which extends beyond the area of the individual self, and it is *this* that speaks.

Every man is to some degree a combination of two beings—a small, conventional, regulated being, judging things by the code which his particular circle of acquaintance has established ; and a larger, emotional and transcendent being, which recognises a kinship with souls widely removed from that narrow circle of acquaintance.

That greater Being judges conduct with a wider sympathy, with purer motives, with juster standards. Its existence within us is the profoundest fact in human life. It testifies to the human possession of the universal soul. It rests upon our kinship with an unseen world. It is the Universe within us, God speaking through us, the light of the One Unbroken Spirit shining in the human fragment.

Therefore it is that the Son of Man—man in the larger sense—has power to forgive sins. It is not the narrow self, it is the universal self, that forgives ; not the temporary and local man, but the spiritual man. When you *forgive* in this higher sense, it is not your prejudices that speak, but your purest sympathies. The prejudices of your class will often *excuse*, and excuse wrongly ; but to *forgive* impersonally, impartially, justly, it is the conscience that must speak—the conscience

purified, uplifted, enlightened, which is the voice of God in man.

This, then, seems to me the truth which flashed forth from the soul of Jesus in that indignant protest against the petrified piety of the Scribes. This is the warm human truth which lay at the heart of his saying. The phrase "Son of man" may, indeed, have borne a certain Messianic sense. His disciples may have understood this high function of absolution to belong to Jesus by virtue of his messiahship. But upon the lips of Jesus that phrase always had something more than a theological meaning. If it meant messiahship it always meant, with him, messiahship in the peculiarly human sense—Messiah as the representative *man*. And thus the truth remains unimpaired. It was as *Man* that he forgave sins.

And now, before I close, I am bound in all honesty to admit one serious difficulty in the story, and do my best to meet it. In accepting the challenge of the Scribes, Jesus seems also to accept their view of the evidence for forgiveness. He seems to suppose that the *healing* of the man was evidence that God had *forgiven* the man. The story reads as though Jesus thought it a harder task to cure a paralytic than to forgive a sinner; and as though he were arguing that because he could *cure* the man, therefore much more

could he *absolve* him. "God has given me power to heal the body ; much more, therefore, has he given me power to heal the soul." Such seems to be the argument of Christ ; and we are very sure that such an argument is not sound.

Well, there are two possibilities in the case. We have to remember that these gospel stories come down to us by tradition, and that the tradition is one which was handed on by the lips of ignorant peasants, so that we can never be quite sure that we have the precise truth about any incident. This may be the case here. The incident may have been distorted in accordance with the preconceptions of the Galilean country-folk.

Or, on the other hand, the incident may be true, and we may have here only an instance of those human limitations through which the divine spirit in Jesus worked. This may be one of those cases in which the genius of the Nazarene prophet shines through a mist of local or temporary belief. Jesus was a world-force, a sublime Son of heaven, but he was also a Galilean villager.

Either of these possibilities may explain the curious incongruity of such an one as Jesus adducing bodily healing as evidence for spiritual pardon.

I am inclined, however, to put this by as a mere accident of time and place. What the rustic adherents

of Jesus never *could* invent was such a saying as this : "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." They could not invent such an utterance as that, just because it was foreign to all their preconceived notions. There you have the mark of an individuality ; and there you have the splendid saying of a poet.

Let us, then, set aside the Galilean superstition, and fix our attention on the universal truth. *There* is the vital matter ; there is the saving doctrine ; there is the truth that we are called to live by : the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins. Purified humanity, inspired humanity, humanity in touch with God, has the power to forgive sins. And that power is the pledge to us that there is forgiveness with God.

Even we, all imperfect as we are, find in ourselves some dim reflection of that divine experience. We, too, are sons of men, and know what it is at times, by virtue of our humanity, to silently pronounce absolution on another. In *ourselves* we sometimes find that same emphatic protest against unrelenting human law. Such are we even now, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. We live, perhaps, at too low a level as yet to speak the words of absolution with assurance.

That which we whisper to ourselves we hardly dare to pronounce aloud. The true self—the eternal self—from which such forgiveness comes, is hidden too far

away, too little realised, too little known. But there is more in man than man himself yet dreams of. "We feel that we are greater than we know." And in some far-off glory of the future, man may yet dare to take up the divine prerogative which he has forfeited, and may speak, with conviction and with power, those healing words for lack of which many a human soul is now driven to despair.

Meanwhile, let us think, even now, more worthily of our humanity. Nay, rather, let us have nobler thoughts of God ; and instead of denying to his Spirit all power to work in present days, let us freely confess that every pure impulse of our hearts, every good thought of our minds, and every holy motion of our human wills, is the breath, the voice, the power of his indwelling life ; and brightest of all the thoughts, purest of all the feelings, let us ascribe to him the glory of our human pity, thanking and praising God "who hath given such power to man," and hath made it possible for the Son of man to "forgive sins also."

# ETHICAL LECTURES

## SOME MODERN MALADIES

### I.—RIVALRY AND ROUTINE

As an ethical society we are not *immediately* concerned with economics. In ethics we deal primarily with *character*, the inward life; in economics with *condition*, the outward life. And yet you cannot satisfactorily deal with character without taking condition into account, nor with condition without taking character into account. The two are very closely related; so that an ethical society, after all, is indirectly, if not directly, concerned with economics, or the external arrangements of life.

It is perfectly true that the only fundamental and lasting reform is the reform of the heart; and yet it is also true that the reform of the heart may be helped or hindered by the external conditions of the life. It is perfectly true that the best riches are



the riches of character; but it is also true that some physical conditions make it very hard to win them.

In short, there is no real contradiction between promoting a *spiritual* reform and altering those conditions of personal or social life which are obstacles to that reform.

Now, in what I have to say in this lecture it is with *character* that I am concerned, but with character as affected by some of the external conditions under which we live. There are certain circumstances which now-a-days are affecting character injuriously, and it is our business to study them and ask how they may be altered. Most of us, I suppose, could draw up a long list of such circumstances, and we might find it difficult to choose among them all and say that *these* were more harmful than *those*. But we shall find, I think, that many of the dangers to character run up into two great fundamental dangers. There are two mighty forces which operate to produce many of our modern evils. They are *root-forces*. They go very deep into our nature, and we shall see in the end that they are closely related. So I shall begin with these, and ask you to consider them, and to remember them, and to be always seeking, as good men and good citizens, for some remedy or alleviation—something which, if it

cannot abolish them, may lessen and weaken them as obstacles to the spiritual life.

These two forces which are so characteristic of our time are *rivalry* and *routine*. Of course they are not *new* forces ; there is nothing new under the sun. But the exaggeration of them is new ; the extreme to which they are carried is new ; their power in controlling and penetrating all our life is new ; their influence over our spiritual part, the way in which they weave themselves into the very fabric of our souls—all this is new. They have always existed, but they have never before existed with their present intensity.

I. To take the first of them — Competition or Rivalry. In the old days there was the rivalry of cold steel ; there was the competition of sinew and muscle and brute force ; and it must have been very terrible to live in a time where that kind of strife was the normal state in which men existed. But I doubt whether even *that* was so fierce and so degrading as the fight which is now fought in the market and the exchange. War is now an anachronism. It lingers among us, but we *know* that it is wrong, and we are going to get rid of it. It is too stupid to live for ever. But we are far from being convinced, I fear, that this modern warfare, this competition of the commercial and industrial sort, is injurious or wrong.

And yet, see what it does for us ! See how it exhausts us ! See how it bleeds away our strength ; how it drains off our physical and mental energy ; how the very process of acquisition withers up the power to use what is acquired ! And see, also, how it contracts us ; how it narrows the man's area ; how it starves him into a mere personal point ; how it whittles him down to a poverty-stricken thing which is scarcely worth the name of "soul."

Of course I know that the commercial is not the only world in which rivalry reigns. I know that it reigns in the educational world, the social world, the art world, the literary world, the political world, and even (O tell it not in Gath !) in the religious world !

But it is not to these worlds that I desire at present to turn your thoughts. We confine ourselves in these lectures mainly to the commercial and industrial world, because here we see the race for wealth in its most glaring and obvious form, and it is with the race for wealth that we are immediately concerned ; also because, whether we realise it or not, this is the world whose arrangements and whose informing spirit affect an overwhelming proportion of our fellow-citizens, far more than are affected by those limited and special worlds which I have mentioned.

Confining our attention, then, to this department of

life, is it not true that a fierceness of competition now obtains which was unknown in olden days, and which results in an exhaustion, mental, physical, and moral, which sucks away the very marrow and meaning of life?

I am told—I have often been told by business men—that the furious competition of modern trade and manufacture makes business a worry, that it robs it of its zest and interest, and makes it simply difficult and wearing. I am told that a man cannot now care for his business *on its own account*. It is too exacting for that; the heart has gone out of it; it is now a means to money and nothing more, and even to that only by incessant vigilance, lest the advantage won from rivals should be lost again.

I can believe that. I have lived a somewhat varied life, and have had in early manhood some experience of the things about which I speak. But what I am most concerned about is the fact that something more than a man's pleasure in his work suffers; his character suffers too. It is not only that a man's business falls to a level below that of his proper work and interest, it is that the rest of his life is impoverished too. The margin of life is absorbed. The *wider* spiritual interests, the *higher* levels of attainment are encroached upon, the *fuller* mental life is atrophied—starved by the

sheer physical exhaustion of the fierce competitive struggle.

What a mockery to talk about fervour of feeling or energy of beneficence to a man who has barely time to snatch a hurried morning meal before he is plunged into a whirl of toil and worry which lasts till night ! How vain to spread before him a banquet of great thoughts, to talk of God's wonders in the earth, of the thrill of heroic lives, of the tender grace and beauty which lurk in hidden places, when he comes home weary, spiritless, and jaded, his brain exhausted, his nerves benumbed, and he himself fit for nothing but to take the sleep he needs for the next day's battle ! There are thousands, nay, millions, whose life is one ceaseless strain upon the bodily and mental strength, who are subjected every day to a process of exhaustion which drains dry the very fountains of life ; and to expect from that arid soil the rich fruits of the spirit—noble feeling, glowing thought, quick sympathy, bright imaginings, eager interest in life's movement—is a vain and futile dream. From such a life you can get nothing but poverty of soul.

This, then, is what the competitive system is doing for us. I speak with conviction. I know that this is so. It is exhausting us, and at the same time it is dwarfing us. The area of life is becoming narrowed.

The spirit is becoming cramped and confined, its energies exhausted or diverted. And if the process is continued it will issue in a creature who can calculate, but cannot think ; who can bargain, but cannot feel ; who scans the share-list but cares nothing for the world ; whose heart is in the market, and to whom admiration, hope and love—the things by which men truly live—are empty or flimsy dreams.

II. The fierce rivalry of our time, then, is one condition to which our spiritual degeneracy may be very largely attributed. And now let us turn to a second condition—I mean the deadening influence of routine.

Now, here I know that a certain qualification is needed. You will not all feel this to be in any special degree a characteristic of the present day. To a certain class life is less of a routine now than it was fifty or a hundred years ago. We travel faster and wider ; we see more of men and things ; and life is more intense and more vivid, and has altogether a wider reach than it had in the days of our fathers. This is so with a large class ; but with a far larger class the opposite is true. The enormous increase of mechanical appliances and the vast extension of the principle of division of labour, both tend to increase routine and to diminish the scope for individual contrivance and interest.

In the factory this is obviously the case. A machine

can of necessity perform only a fraction of the whole process which was formerly performed by the man, and the man's task is now reduced to the tending of the machine that performs that fraction. Thus a division of labour takes place which is precisely parallel with the division of the process.

And this subdivision of human functions has passed into commercial and official work. The mechanical conception has infected the whole community. Mark Rutherford tells in his *Deliverance* how a copying clerk in the counting-house where he worked used to try to introduce some variety into his life by passing from steel pens to quills, and quill pens back to steel. And that is typical. I have often met such cases. The hopeless numbing of the powers by prolonged monotony, the feeling that consciousness is becoming extinguished, the mind becoming withered, is one of the most horrible experiences through which a man can pass ; and that is the lot of many thousands of our countrymen.

You may say that it cannot be helped, that we shall never be able to go back to the pre-mechanical age, and that since there is no *fault* to be found, there will be no injury to *character*, however distressing the effects of this prolonged routine may be. But I reply that there *is* injury to character, and that we can see it ;

and that this is just why I am seeking to bring the matter home to you. Why do you suppose that three-quarters of the operatives in many manufacturing towns are gamblers? Because their lives are just one deadly monotony, and excitement of some sort they must and will have. Why, in certain trades, do the majority of workers drink? Because they can no longer bear the routine-life, and forget it in some way they must. A clergyman who works in a suburb inhabited mainly by the inferior class of city-clerk told me the other day that he could find no single point in the clerk's mind to take hold of; there was *nothing, nothing*, in heaven or in earth that the clerk of that grade cared for; science, art, literature, politics, even athletics, were nothing to him. Why is that? because the mechanical toil of the counting-house, the deadly routine of the department of a department of a department of the office has killed the poor fellow's mind and dwarfed and starved his soul. That is so. There are millions in our land of whom that is true. There are millions of men who are nothing but bodies, with a bit of clockwork where the brains should be, and an affectionate but almost microscopical little soul attached to an infinitesimally small number of things and people dwelling within the narrow breast. I know that what I say is true. I have seen it and suffered it.



This, then, is the fatal influence of routine. This is the damning effect of that indiscriminate division of labour which turns men and women into mere machines, stupefied or brutalised as the case may be, by the eternal repetition of some small mechanical operation, performed perhaps all the better for being performed without the interference of either thought or feeling.

Now, if you will consider it, these two attributes of our modern life, rivalry and routine, stand to each other in a very remarkable relation. At first sight they appear to be opposed. Competition has the ring of battle about it; routine has the sound of death. The one looks like *too much* life; the other like *too little*. The one speaks of agonising effort; the other of dull lethargy and grey existence. And yet they are, as we have seen, to some extent complementary. They exist by reason of each other's existence. It is the fierceness of competition which has led to the increase of routine. It is the organisation of routine which makes the larger forms of competition possible.

The fact is, that there is involved here one of those paradoxes which pertain to the essence of human nature. The two principles really are in a sense opposed, and yet they are both found in one and the same man. They belong to two sides of our nature,

and both sides are necessary to our being. We compete because we are individuals ; we form habits and routine because we are members of society. We are none of us individual only, we are also social ; we are none of us social only, we are also individual. Competition, rivalry, is necessary to our individuality ; habit, routine, is equally necessary to our sociality. And therefore, strange as it may seem after what I have just been preaching, it is nevertheless the fact that no life is livable which has not some degree of both.

This, then, ought to throw some light upon the question for us. I have condemned the rivalry of our day as unfavourable to the spiritual life ; and I have condemned the mechanical routine which our associated life exacts as being equally hostile. And yet both are inevitable and both are good. And nevertheless my condemnation holds.

If this sounds like a riddle, it is a riddle which is easily solved. Many things which are good in themselves are bad in excess. There is nothing bad in rivalry as such. It is right that boys should try their strength against each other ; that they should compete both in games and work. It is only so that a boy learns where he is strong and where weak—that he gets to define himself to himself and to correct his own

deficiencies. It is right that men should compete with each other in excellence of work, in power of service, in self-development, and even self-assertion for the common good. It is only so that men can take their natural places in the scale of ability and strength—their natural ranks in the social order.

And so, on the other hand, routine is not harmful in itself. In some of its aspects it is absolutely necessary. A man would not walk any better for meditating upon each step that he had to take, or reckon any better for recalling the mathematical grounds of every rule that he applied. Even in the sphere of morals the effect of mere habit is partly beneficial. It forms a support to the will and becomes of material service in moments of temptation. It continues the effect of a past impulse and carries the will beyond the critical point. It helps a man over those positions where the mechanism of his virtue might come to a deadlock—bears him through and away from the disturbing action of present enticement and onward into the region of normal and regulated motives.

Habit, therefore, is not in itself a mischievous influence, and I can quite see that in its industrial application—in manufactures, in the organisation of business and the like, routine, system, uniformity, even monotony, has its necessary and beneficial place. The suppression

of the single will, in degree, and in the proper place and time, is inevitable and wholesome.

No ; it is not the *principles* that we blame. The principles, both individual and social, are right enough. Rivalry and routine are both wholesome in their degree. It is the *indiscriminate* application of the principles that we condemn. It is when they are applied to the wrong process, or applied in excessive degree, that we cry out against them. It is when communal sympathy is sacrificed to individual greed that competition is so fatal. It is when, on the other side, individuality is killed out by an exacting community that routine is so fatal. And the condemnation of our present industrial and social system is that it commits both these sins. It drives us to compete, man with man, nation with nation, continent with continent, with a fury the like of which the world has never seen before. And, on the other hand, it drills vast bodies of men, by force of threatened starvation, into the performance of a mechanical and weary round which robs life of all its interest and worth.

I say that this is characteristic of our times. I dare say it has existed in other ages in some degree. In fact, we know that this is so. But in our own day new elements have entered which have enormously intensified the process. And I hold that the critical point has

now been passed. A healthy rivalry has now grown into a ruinous and degrading warfare; and a useful and tolerable routine has become a benumbing and deadly monotony. So that it behoves us to take this matter up, to consider more carefully the causes of this exaggerated intensity, and to ask whether there is any cure or any alleviation for the evil.

To this question, then, let us devote a few moments of the brief time which remains to us. What is the cause, or what are the causes, of this modern intensification of the spirit of rivalry, and of its correlative—automatic or mechanical routine? The answer which, no doubt, will leap to the lips of many is that the cause is the selfishness of men. This fierce fight for masteries is due to the fact that we “look every man on his own things.”

This, no doubt, is true. The ultimate, or rather penultimate, cause of our social warfare is doubtless selfishness. *Absolute unselfishness*, if intelligently applied, would cure all possible evils of the social kind.

And yet I do not think it is of much use for the preacher to go round raving. A mere imperative is not enough. We must deal not merely with spiritual causes but with material conditions. The understanding and removing of *obstacles*, as I said at the beginning of my discourse, is a large part of our duty in these

matters. What, then, is the proximate cause or immediate condition of this exaggerated rivalry of our time ?

The answer to this question, I think, is obvious. These two modern maladies depend for their greatly increased intensity mainly upon one thing—*the modern mastery of natural forces*.

I have already touched incidentally upon this fact. I have mentioned that competition and routine are both of them increased by the increased use of machinery. But it will be just as well for us to realise the extent to which this is the case. It is a cause which operates not only directly, but indirectly. In so many modes and so many directions this influence is at work. For instance, the great controlling fact about modern competition is this: that it now goes on mainly between corporations rather than individuals ; and without machinery that would not be possible. The vastly increased rapidity of communication works in three ways to bring this about. In the first place, it enables a larger population to reside on the same area, and at the same time extends the area itself from which a factory or warehouse can be served ; so that far larger bodies of men can be employed in one and the same industrial centre than formerly. This of itself increases enormously the magnitude of the competing unit. Secondly, this competing unit, if it is of the manu-

facturing order, can be supplied with raw material from an immensely extended field. The whole globe can be laid under contribution, so far as the means of transport is concerned. And thirdly, when the raw material has been worked up, distribution now takes place from the one centre to widely scattered markets. The factory is able to pour forth its goods to the very ends of the earth. Here, then, is the prime factor of the situation. Competition is no longer between men, but between huge masses of men organised into gigantic units ; the battle is no longer between ancient muskets, but between batteries of artillery.

And upon the individual workers, also, this same rapidity of communication has its own effect. Dense populations of workers crowd round the industrial centres. They are enabled to live in this congested state solely by the modern possibilities of transport. A generation ago such a London as now exists could not have been fed even for a single day. It is maintained in existence now solely by means of railways and steamships. It is machinery, then, that brings together and keeps together these dense populations ; and the result, of course, is that when work is slack the fight for life between the workers themselves—the competition for bread between man and man—is such as the world has never seen before. That is what lies at the

root of modern competition. And the very same thing lies at the root of modern routine. The monotony from which the modern factory-worker suffers is occasioned by the minute mechanical division of the process. A man is no longer a man; he is the mere tender of a machine. Formerly a man passed through a long series of intricate and varied steps in the production of an article; now a minute fraction of that series is performed by a machine which has to be tended by a man. The result, of course, is that the man's motions become very largely automatic; his work becomes almost entirely mechanical. He must be alert and attentive, but he does not have to think and contrive.

That is one way in which machinery produces monotony. And another is by rendering possible the organisation of larger bodies of men. The larger the bodies that are organised, and the more perfect the organisation, the less will the individual count. In this way the warehouse and the office have become mechanised as well as the factory. Huge bodies of men are ready to hand—kept upon one available area by facility of transit and transport; and so division of labour is possible to a degree which was formerly never dreamed of.

These, then, are the conditions with which we have



to deal. The old rivalry between individuals has issued in combinations for the sake of more effective fighting. Competition leads to organisation. Individual workers combine in groups; the groups pass into great companies; and companies now tend to be absorbed into gigantic trusts. And these vast combinations grapple with one another in deadly strife. The workers, on the other hand, massed together in comparatively small area, vie with each other in times of crisis for a share even in that deadly monotony which at least brings them bread. And those who organise the workers—the masters, the capitalists, the traders-in-chief, the manufacturers—carry on at all times, times of crisis and normal times alike, a ceaseless warfare. The competition, formerly distributed among the million, is focussed into fierce centres of white-hot battle. Now and again one of the leaders goes down, the company is broken, the master is bankrupt, and with him he drags into the abyss the hundreds or thousands who depend on him. It is warfare, and warfare on an ever-growing scale. That, I say, is a characteristic of our time; and that, my friends, is what we have to mend.

That is what we have to mend. What a hopeless task it seems! Where are we to begin? Nay, how are we to begin at all? Are we, for instance, to

abandon the principle of the division of labour? The man who attempted it would soon be in the workhouse. Are we to follow Ruskin's advice and give up using machinery? Of any such attempt we may say the same. Are we to give up competing and let our rivals in business work their will? That, again, means ruin. We are caught in the maelstrom of a great social force, over which the individual has next to no control. We are borne along with it; and in the end it will work its will. Society itself cannot annihilate it; it can only modify and direct it. As to the individual, he can do almost nothing. What possible remedy, then, can we hope to find?

Well, I am not sure that the finding of a remedy is the business of an ethical lecturer. The remedy is for the practical man to find; the business of ethics is to find the *principle*. And the principle, the fundamental principle, has been written down in a very ancient scripture, which is as sound to-day as it ever was: a passage in an old Jewish letter which says: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

That is the main principle. It speaks of a communal interest which must set a limit to the aims and ambitions of the individual. The *other* man's welfare in trade, the *other* man's success in manufacture, is to be a

matter of concern to us as well as our own. And it speaks of human sympathy. It cuts at the root of the complacency with which we see our workmen or our clerks labouring at the treadmill of routine. That is the principle. The *other* man is one with me; and if he suffers, I suffer too. "Look every man on the things of others."

But while the principle speaks of communal interest, it also recognises the *individual* claims. It is not solely and *exclusively* on the things of others that we are to look. There is an "also" in the dictum. Look on your own things, yes; but *also* on the things of others. The principle is two-sided; and that is important. Whatever practical measures we adopt to meet the great evils of which we have been speaking, they must have regard to both poles of the principle. They must not contravene either of the fundamental facts of human nature—its individuality or its sociality.

Starting from this twofold principle, then, we begin to see the *kind* of measures that must be adopted. The extreme individualist says that individuality is everything. Give unrestricted freedom. Let each man be complete in himself. Give up the whole idea of organised government, organised armies, organised education, organised communities, and life will forthwith right itself. The extreme Socialist, on the other

hand, says that the society is everything. Put compulsion on any and every individual so far as is necessary for social stability and development, and never mind if some individuals do suffer. And individualist and Socialist seem to me to be both wrong. Both elements in humanity must be taken into account. Man is both individual and social. Our practical measures, therefore, must be such as will limit competition so far as it is destructive of community, and limit mechanical routine so far as it is destructive of individuality.

I know very well that this will please neither party. It is not sufficiently logical. It is not sufficiently ideal. It is merely practical. The Socialist says that competition must be *abolished*; I say that it must be *restricted*. Certain industries where the evil is most flagrant may be gradually taken over by the community. Certain manufactures, certain means of transit, certain prime necessities of life, in which a whole municipality is concerned, may be taken over by the municipality. All such measures help to diminish and to limit competition. Gradually, wisely, and with the general consent, such communal action may, step by step, be taken. The process is already begun, and I think we shall all be wise to help it. I know you do not all agree with me. Some will even bitterly disagree. Well; go and find out for yourselves how else the principle may be

applied. The principle is the great thing. "Look every man also on the things of others."

On the other hand, some extreme individualists like William Morris have thought that because mechanism, as applied at present, is killing out individuality, therefore machinery ought to be given up altogether. To me, all that seems wildly impracticable and unadvisable. And yet I so far agree with them as to think that from certain pursuits it ought to be excluded ; that it ought never, for instance, to be applied to art. The whole meaning of art is the communication of individual feeling ; here, therefore, repetition is dangerous and routine is fatal. I also so far feel with them as to hold that machinery should never be allowed to absorb *a man's whole life*. We have no right to *degrade* our workers by mechanical routine. I am not prepared to say that drudgery has no spiritual value. It may well be that the patient performance of *our share* of the world's routine may be good for us. But if I shoulder off *my share* on you, so that your *whole life* is reduced to monotony, why, then, it is good neither for me nor you. I grant you, we cannot revert to the old, slow systems of the past ; but this we can do, and this we are bound to do : we can give back to the world's workers in another form that of which we have robbed them. If we make men into mill-horses, that we may

get through the work of the world more quickly, we are bound to do our best to make the mill-horses into men again. We are bound to give back some portion of the time which the routine method has saved ; and equally are we bound, so far as in us lies, to fill that leisure with humanising influences. I do not hesitate to say that a large portion of the leisure which has been earned at such a bitter price belongs, *of right*, to those by whom the price has been paid. It seems human, it seems just, to give to the routine-worker the opportunity of regaining, for at least a portion of his life, something of that manhood which by no fault of his own he has lost.

That will, I hope, serve to indicate the *kind* of measures which seem to me most likely to mend, or, at any rate, lessen the evils which at present are so degrading to our manhood. I believe in common ownership and common action, in so far as it tends, as it often does tend, to free the individual worker and to soften the severity of competition. I believe in the municipalisation of those things in which the *whole* municipality is concerned, and the nationalisation of those things in which the *whole* nation is concerned. But, in the process of thus combining for common purposes, I also believe in a very tender regard being had to individual freedom and individual development.

Where a vast concern is managed for the sake of a community there is necessarily a very elaborate human machine organised for the purpose ; and that means a deal of monotony and routine. In all such cases a jealous eye must be kept upon individual liberty and leisure ; the workers must not be made into slaves ; their working-hours must be shortened in proportion to the monotony of their work.

I will not to-day go into more detail about practical measures. The evils, the maladies, of which I have spoken are certain ; the practical measures are matter for study. We may differ about them now, and for some time to come. But one appeal at least I may make, and in making it I cannot be wrong : it is to turn your minds with greater zeal and concentration to this great subject. To you, as social beings, as members of a community, who have some degree of social influence, it belongs to attack this problem. Whatever you have of ability and leisure you owe to this great end.

It is the Sphinx riddle ; and, if it is not guessed, it will certainly be death. Seek, then, earnestly, honestly, impartially, for the solution. Ask yourselves whether there is no conceivable remedy for the present condition of the labouring masses, no possible cure for the exhausting, the degrading competition of our com-

mercial life. Make this, if you can, the subject of serious and continuous study. For I hold it to be our duty as citizens and men not to let such questions solve themselves by revolution and disaster, but to use the reason which Nature has given us and the leisure which many of us possess both to learn and to teach the means by which revolution and disaster may be disarmed. Let us get rid of this indolent acquiescence and this despairing lethargy. For the question of our time is one of the utmost gravity ; and upon the temper in which we face that question, and the industry which we give to its solution, the future of the State depends.

If we are content with our own freedom while others are enslaved, if we are indifferent to misery or injustice, and defend ourselves with Cain's question : " Am I my brother's keeper ? " we shall be responsible for more than physical ruin or material disaster ; we shall be responsible for starved souls, for hardened hearts, for blighted lives, for embruted humanity, for the *spiritual* ruin of one generation at the least and perhaps of many. It is for souls as well as bodies that we shall have to answer to future generations, if in this matter the call of conscience meets with no response.



## SOME MODERN MALADIES

### II.—LUXURY AND WANT

“Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.”—Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

ON a previous occasion we spoke of a certain characteristic of our times which is detrimental to the inward life—the prevalence of intense competition on the one hand and of deadly routine upon the other. To-day we are to speak of another danger to character which is also very characteristic of our day—the existence of excessive wealth alongside of extreme poverty. We shall find, I think, that the causes of the one pair of evils are fundamentally the same as those of the other pair, and that in principle the cure is the same for both.

But first let us speak of the phenomenon itself, the fact of inequality, and let us consider the proposition that luxury is harmful, that want is harmful, and

that the existence of luxury and want side by side is more harmful still.

Of course there is nothing new in the existence of wealth and poverty, and there is nothing new in the harmfulness of their spiritual effects. They have always existed, and they have always had their dangers. The new element, the modern danger, does not arise from their existence but from their magnitude. The riches are greater, the poverty is deeper, and the gap between the two is much wider than at any former time; and it is especially the existence of this wide gap, removing the wealthy by such vast difference of circumstances from the poor, that constitutes the peril of our day.

As to the bad effects of riches or poverty as such, you see what this old proverb says. The man who wrote it feared to be too poor lest he might curse God in his misery; and he feared to be too rich, lest he might forget God in his comfort. Those were the two religious dangers which he saw as threatening the luxurious and the needy. Well, the same two dangers exist to-day. It is still degrading to live in abject poverty, and it is still unwholesome to live in extreme wealth. Riches destroy the sense of dependence upon God. The rich man gets to *believe* in riches. They are strong, and can defend him. They are powerful,

and can work his will. There is no upward lifting of the eye to that realm whence true power issues. He comes to regard his riches as a part of himself. It is *he* who is so powerful—he the rich man, he the centre and the mainspring of a mighty social machine. Wealth he understands and sees and feels ; he stretches out the long arm of wealth and strikes ; it is *his* ; nay, it is himself : “Who is the Lord ?”

On the other hand there is the great spiritual danger of poverty—the danger of bitterness. The poor is tempted to blaspheme ; not always, perhaps, against him who is theologically called “God,” but against the divine order of the universe which permits so fearful a thing as starvation or want. The world seems all wrong. Man is hard and cold, and the very universe seems cold and hard as well. There is no pity in the heavens. The soul of the poor is embittered ; and that is a dreadful thing, a spiritual disease.

Such are the *moral* and *social* dangers of poverty and wealth ; and these derive their harmfulness, not only from the existence of poverty or of wealth as such, but especially from their *simultaneous* existence *within the same community*. They arise when great wealth and great poverty exist *side by side* ; when there is a gulf separating the two classes, so that the rich are proud by reason of their position above the poor, arrogant by

reason of their power over the poor ; and the poor are tempted to be sly and envious and hostile when they compare their lot with the lot of their more powerful brethren.

And now, if these are the normal and necessary effects of poverty and wealth, applicable to every time and place where human beings are gathered together, what are we to say of our own time ? Does Britain, does Europe, does the Western World, come under this natural law and spiritual sequence ?

Of our own time we say this : that the exaggeration of the causes has produced the exaggeration of the effects. Never were there such extremes of riches and want as now. Never was there such a yawning gulf between the lot of the wealthy and the poor. We go to Jerusalem and see the site of Solomon's gardens ; we gaze at the pools which tradition ascribes to him ; we can reconstruct his parks and his palaces and all the wonders over which Ecclesiastes shakes his head : and we smile to ourselves. Any one of a thousand second-rate towns can show finer things to-day. We count up the personal property of Solomon, and we know that a modern millionaire could buy the lot with his spare cash.

Or we turn to the Middle Ages with their powerful kings and barons, and we see that their wealth cannot

compare with that of modern days. Here and there, it is true, we may wonder at the ruins of a castle which overtops most things that our modern art can show ; but never before in the world's history were there *streets upon streets* of palaces, *mile after mile* of luxurious mansions. Never before could a single country show a *score* of autocrats each one of whom held in the hollow of his hand thousands of men absolutely dependent upon him for their bread. Never before did conspiracies of the rich exist to deliberately make bread dear, to make light dear, to make water dear, to make the roofs over our heads dear, to make a thousand things dear, and to batten upon the death of a nation. The wealth, the power, the arrogance, the luxury which exist to-day on both sides of the Atlantic are such as the world has never seen before, and I would fain hope will never see again.

And the poverty ! Has the world ever before looked upon such abject lives, such unspeakable horrors, as those which fester in the slums of London, Liverpool, Manchester, New York, Chicago, and many another city of dreadful night ? The drink, the filth, the vice, the crime, the madness, the hopeless suffering of those courts and alleys ! the black ignorance, the foul stream of obscene and loathsome language ! the utter degradation of those lives ! That is a poverty

more sickening in kind, more overwhelming in mass, than the world has ever seen before.

John Burns, I know, with that optimism which is both the stimulus and the just reward of service and achievement, asserted recently that "London is better than it was"; and that, I daresay, may be true. But this *relative* improvement of a portion of *one* city is far from depriving of its dreadful significance the appalling mass of destitution which yet remains in almost every great city of Europe and America.

I have myself seen sights in London, and heard facts from those officially engaged in work upon the housing of the London poor, which persuade me that what I have said is literally true: "The sun has never before looked down upon such horrors."

London *may* be better than it was; but it is still true that incidents like one which was recorded a little while ago are of weekly and almost daily occurrence in one or other of our towns. I daresay many of you saw it mentioned in the daily press:—A house-painter threw himself into the Grand Surrey Canal at Peckham and was drowned. At the inquest the motive of the suicide was inquired into. It was not far to seek. Pinned to the clothes of the unfortunate man was a piece of paper with three words written upon it. The three words were these: "*Not a chance.*"

“Not a chance!” That seems to me to sum up the whole situation. “Not a chance”; no hope; nothing left to live for. “Not a chance”—no work, no bread; no way to get either the one or the other. Plenty of wealth in the country, plenty of wealth in the city, money poured forth in streams over trifles, gold lavished over some new toy—some means of rushing aimlessly along the roads—some fresh amusement or device for killing time. Plenty of wealth, plenty of means! Why, in London alone there are 740 people who pay £1000 a year each for the rent of their houses! These are the people who sleep in silk sheets. I daresay you saw a recent county court case in which the evidence showed that one sheet and two pillow-cases cost £20. That is the kind of thing, I say, which you have at one end of the scale; and, at the other end of the scale, “*Not a chance.*”

And so, my friends, I am bold to say that, comfortable as some of us find ourselves, peaceful as is the even tenor of our lives, this is a dreadful age in which we live. This new world of ours, with its new powers and its new politics, is a dreadful world. And it behoves us to seek into the causes of its spiritual horrors. Look bravely at the dark gulf which yawns between the rich and poor, and let us ask why it is so much wider and darker to-day than it has ever been before. And what

can be done? Can anything be done to lessen the horror of it? If we cannot close it, can we perhaps *bridge* it? Can we lessen the *artificial* difference of lot? Can we return at least to that condition of *natural* inequality which corresponds to the *natural* difference of ability? If we cannot get love, brotherhood, perfect equality and sympathy, can we not at least get *justice*, a lot more nearly apportioned to merit, work for those who are willing to work, means for those who are able to use them? Can we not at any rate give our fellow-countrymen "a chance"?

Those are the questions which I have at heart, and to some of them let us briefly address ourselves in the short time at our disposal.

And, first, there is the question of the cause or causes of this evil. What are the causes—the proximate causes—of this immense difference in the fortunes of the two great classes? Why is the distance between the possessing and the non-possessing classes so greatly increased?

In this matter I am afraid that our proverb will not help us much. The ancient world possessed very little idea of causation; the antiquated East of to-day is still almost totally devoid of the idea. If you look at our text you will see how the matter was regarded in pre-scientific times. The man of old sought for the roots



of poverty and of riches, not in human arrangements nor in physical environment, but in the dispensation of God. "Give me," he says, "neither poverty nor riches." Perhaps, on the whole, an industrious man would be more likely to thrive than a sluggard; but often and often a drought or a storm sent by God would cancel all his thrift. It was, after all, God who settled the lot of man. Poverty and riches came from *Him*. For the old Hebrew an omnipotent God held in the hollow of his hand the fate of the individual man. He meted out to him poverty or wealth, with all that those might mean to soul or body.

The modern outlook is different. God in these latter days has revealed himself as *law*. He works through Nature and the rules of Nature. He reveals his action as cause and effect. His faithfulness never swerves. There is nothing arbitrary in what he does. We look for the causes, and we know that they will fit the effects.

We recognise, too, in these latter days what the ancient did not at all understand—that the individual is the product of society. If we see prevailing poverty we are certain that it is due to social conditions. If we see overweening and plethoric wealth we are sure that something in the social system produces or allows it. A man is to us not an isolated person; he is a member of society. God works not only through *Nature* as a

whole ; he works through *humanity* as a whole. And so we do not think it sufficient to send up a prayer to God : “ *Give me* neither poverty nor riches ” ; we know that we must ask *why* he gives us poverty or riches ; and how he is to be *prevented* from giving us such poverty—how he is to be hindered from making us so disastrously rich.

This modern way of regarding the problem ought long since to have superseded the old Hebrew way. It has not altogether done so, but it *ought* to have done. That, at any rate, is to be our point of view this morning. We are to look at the matter socially. There are two classes of people that trouble us, and we are to ask how they come to exist. We are troubled to find among us folk who are miserably and wretchedly poor. And we are equally troubled to find among us a class of people who are most unhappily and unhealthily rich. We are very sorry for them, and we ask ourselves how it comes about, and how we can prevent their being so rich, and standing such a poor chance of the kingdom of heaven.

Now, looking at the matter in this light, there are certain physical conditions which we must take into account. They are not, strictly speaking, the *causes* of the evils, but they are the *occasions*. The *causes* are spiritual : they are ideas, and feelings, and characters ;

but these *physical* conditions give the *opportunity*, and we must take them into account.

I need hardly go through them in detail. Let me only remind you that the great fundamental fact is the modern control over Nature, the understanding of certain natural laws and the application of certain natural forces to the processes of manufacture and transport. There is the ability to obtain and transform raw material in huge quantities by mechanical powers, and to convey it whither we will. The materials which mother earth provides are tossed hither and thither as if by magic. A wave of the wand, and all that is needed for the erection of a mansion, for the clothing of an army, for the feeding of a city, is gathered at the necessary spot. By a touch, the energies of Nature are unlocked and the material is transformed into the comforts and luxuries of life ; and forthwith the same unseen powers carry them to and fro round the surface of the globe. All this enormous power of production and transport has been developed in our lifetime—the lifetime of a single generation.

There is, futhermore, the fact of vaster human co-operation—closer human organisation. Facilities of transit have brought masses of men within reach of one another who formerly were widely sundered. What you have now is a palpitating human nucleus with a

sparsely populated zone of feeding-ground around it. Armies of men can be brought at any moment to given centres and maintained there in a manner that half a century ago was impossible.

This, upon the physical side, is the significant factor, the occasion of the mighty changes which we see going on around us : *man's new control over Nature's powers*. To the believer in Providence it cannot but wear the aspect of a divine challenge—God's challenge to man. The education of humanity seems always to have gone on in that way. Some new power is given into man's control, and the new power always means a new problem. The power which in the past century was entrusted to the human race is perhaps the greatest which has ever yet been handed to him, and the problems, the social problems, which it has created are tremendous.

This problem of luxury and want is one of them. It is a question set by our great schoolmaster for our age to solve. Into our midst this new thing has been cast. Into our hands this new power has been put, and the voice of time cries to us that God will have us use that power and solve that problem.

And now, see this : the first step in the solution of the problem is that we should understand *ourselves* better, and what it is that we have all along been doing.

The control of certain energies of Nature is the *occasion* or *opportunity* for that vast difference of lot among men which we are considering ; but it is not, properly speaking, *the cause*. We must go a step further back, to find the cause—yes, even to find the proximate or human cause. Increased production could not *of itself* create this vast difference between the rich and poor. It is not the increased production, but the *mode of apportioning the product*, which has magnified that difference.

That, I suppose, is obvious to everyone. So much extra wealth has been produced by improved mechanical appliances. Suppose we had it lumped in a heap before us, or set down in figures in a universal bank-book, and suppose we were set to distribute it. It is plain that we might so distribute it as to equalise the lot of men ; or so distribute it as to maintain the original difference of lot ; or yet again, we might distribute it in such a way as to accentuate and increase the original difference. We must not, therefore, put the whole blame of our increased social inequality upon machinery ; the blame (if any blame exists) rests primarily with our mode of apportioning the increased wealth produced by machinery ; in other words, it rests with our “ rules of payment.”

What, then, do you suppose is the rule observed ? In what proportion, on the average, is the distribution

made? What, in other words, is that rule of apportionment which always made a difference, but which, when applied to an increased production, increases the difference, and increases it *not proportionally* but *out of all proportion*? It is a little question in arithmetic, the arithmetic of proportion; and it is worth a little attention, for the want of a clear realisation of it is fraught with momentous results.

Suppose, for instance, that the extra wealth produced by modern methods had been equally divided among the individuals concerned—that the owners of the machinery and the workers of the machinery had individually received equal shares of the increase. I do not say that they *ought* to receive equal shares; but suppose, for the sake of argument, that they did; then the original difference between them would not be increased; it would not even remain what it was; it would actually be *diminished*. It would be diminished, that is to say, relatively; the recipients would be nearer than they were before to a state of equality. That is a simple fact of every-day arithmetic.

Suppose, again, that the owners of the land or the plant received considerably more than the workers, but only in proportion to their previously existing incomes; then their difference of lot would of course remain just what it was before.

But when we come to ask what has actually taken place, we find that it is neither of these things. The actual result of the increased wealth produced by modern methods is this: taking the working-class as a whole, a certain small section of them, consisting of the specially capable workers, are somewhat better off than they were in the pre-mechanical age. But if you take the rich as a whole, an increase of wealth has taken place in their class which is out of all proportion to the general betterment. Speaking roughly, you may say that, if the more efficient workers are twice as well off as before, then the wealthy class is something like fifty times as well off as before, while the non-efficient and average workers are actually worse off than they were under the old conditions. In brief, some of the poor are a little less poor, but most of the rich are enormously and preposterously more rich.

What, then, can the rule be under which such a result ensues? What principle of payment leads to such a strange apportionment? Well, the broad fact is this (and the economic developments of the past half-century have brought it out into glaring light), the broad fact is this: the powerful classes, the possessing classes, the classes who hold in their hands the means of production, have always appropriated the surplus product over and above the cost of subsistence.

Exceptional ability, because of its rarity, will always have a price of its own ; but the average worker has always received just so much as will keep him in working order, and the owners of the land or the machinery, ninety-nine per cent. of whom have never so much as seen the mills, the railways, the mines which they own, these have taken all the rest. That has always been the rule, and that is the rule still ; and that is why, when new methods and new discoveries give to the nation an increase in wealth, the poor remain pretty much as they were, while the eyes of the rich "stand out with fatness, and they have more than heart could wish."

Formerly the surplus was not very great, and though the possessing classes appropriated it, it did not make such a very enormous difference between them and the workers. But now, machines produce such mighty wealth, materials are drawn from such mighty distances, the areas of competition are so vastly widened, that the surplus is tremendous. And this tremendous surplus follows the old rule. The means of producing it are new, but the rule of distributing it is old. The powerful classes take it nearly all, just as they took it before.

Now it is not necessary to be an anarchist, or a socialist, or anything else dreadful ; it is not even



necessary to be a Christian ; it is only necessary to be an honest man, to see that this rule of distribution is not a very righteous rule. Considering that no living man invented the application of steam to manufacture, or of electricity to transport, or discovered the principles of mechanics, or invented the extraction of metal from ore, or did a thousand things which were necessary before the mechanical process could be put to the work of supplying human needs ; considering that the whole generation is the inheritor of those large factors in the problem—one class, the possessing class, the capitalist class, ought not to take *all* the increased output which the control of Nature has given us. And yet this is very nearly what they have done.

I have said enough, then, I think, to show you that if we are to seek the cause of the great gulf fixed between Dives and Lazarus—I mean the gulf which exists in this life—we shall not find it in the invention of machinery (that is only the *physical occasion*, the *means we use*), but the *cause* we shall find in our principle of payment, our method of payment, our method of appointment ; and the cause of that cause, the motive of the whole, we shall discover in the selfishness of the human heart. That, I am afraid, is the truth of the matter. I am not, of course, accusing individuals ; it is the system which I am

accusing. The selfishness is organised ; it is legalised selfishness ; it is an inherited system of selfishness ; and it would, no doubt, be very difficult for the individual to do anything against it. But do not let us hide the true nature of the system. It is essentially a selfish and an unjust system. As to individuals, I have known capitalists, owners of land or of machinery, both in this and other towns, who are by no means rolling in wealth, men who live an anxious and harassed life and are by no means overpaid. But you know very well, if you know anything at all about the social conditions of our time, there is another class of owners, men with vast property in affairs which they do not themselves manage, who live in gross luxury. But even that class I *pity* rather than *blame*. As *individuals* I do not believe we are a bit worse now than we have always been. We are, as I have said, merely following the old, well-established custom ; and I am not at all inclined, therefore, to scold at the rich men and say, "You are a lot of selfish, God-forsaken souls !" But I *do* say that we ought now to begin to see what our system of payment means, because the developments of the last fifty years have written it upon the wall in letters of fire. They have brought out the intrinsic nature of that system in such a startling way that we ought now to begin to understand it ; and if we

have any conscience left we *ought* to, and we *shall*, condemn it.

And now, in the next place, let us ask what is the cure for this state of things. We have inherited from our fathers a competitive system from which the individual cannot altogether break away. What, then, can we do? We have inherited a set of rules which are based upon the assumption that the employer of labour, the possessor of land, the owner of plant, has the right to all the product that he can get, which generally amounts to all but the barest living wage. These principles of social antagonism and social selfishness are inwoven into the very fabric of society. It is society itself, with all its rules, that must be revolutionised. And how can that possibly be done?

Those who have tried to do it have generally been crucified, or stoned, or burnt, or banished, or shot, or hanged. Is there no other way than that of passionate revolt? I believe there is. I believe there is *one* way. It can be done by the slow appeal to reason. Men must be taught; they must be shown where their happiness and salvation lie. Force is no remedy; and even martyrdom, though morally stimulating to the survivors, is no permanent solution. Education is the only sure instrument—education intellectual and moral. The mind must be instructed, the conscience

must be touched. If this is done, if this process is earnestly carried on, it will issue at last in legislation : in legislation and in altered customs, corresponding with the new ideals.

The revolution of which I speak will have to come. Society cannot be *permanently* founded upon self-seeking. A nation cannot *permanently* exist in a state of mutual antagonism. Human sympathy cannot *permanently* be disregarded. There is no *permanence*, no *stability*, in the dry money-bond. The eternities are against such notions. The make of the universe forbids them. They *must* go. If they can be replaced by means of education and through moral conversion, well and good ; society is saved.

If they cannot be so replaced, then the inevitable will follow ; the "inevitable" of forcible revolution ; from which may God in his mercy preserve us !

This, then, is the prime word we have to say about the cure. The cure must be social, and a large social education and conversion must be the first stage towards it. What economic measures may meantime be gradually adopted I indicated in the last lecture, and I will not repeat them now. But I will add just this one word about the individual duty : The individual has his own immediate duty, as well as that of taking part in any larger social movement.

We are, after all, not mere driftwood. We cannot change the flow of the stream, it is true, but we can battle against it ; and there are many matters in which we can effectually act in a spirit contrary to the spirit of the world. We can sometimes soften the rivalry which is the world's great principle. We can often act in co-operation and fellowship even in business-matters. We can humanise our relations to our employés. If we have the misfortune to be very poor we can guard ourselves from servility, we can cultivate a free and independent spirit, and we can watch against bitterness and envy. If we have the still greater misfortune to be very rich, we can anxiously study how to give away our wealth without harming those to whom we give. It is a dreadful task to be put upon a man, an arduous, almost a hopeless task ; but it can be done. From such duties the individual cannot be relieved on the ground that the malady is mainly social. Personality is a fact from which we cannot get away. We must influence society so far as we can ; but we must also try to shape our individual lives in accordance with our individual ideals.

## SOME MODERN MALADIES

### III.—PARASITISM OF THE RICH AND OF THE POOR

OUR subject to-day is Parasitism, and its connection with our last two subjects is obvious. In our first discourse we treated of Rivalry and Routine, and we saw how the rivalry of individuals, which had always existed, and which is, indeed, fundamental to human nature, had in these last days issued in a new and magnified commercial rivalry—the rivalry of huge organised bodies, companies and trusts, which compete with one another, and which are maintained at the competing centres by our new mechanical means of transport and manufacture. We saw how the correlative, or necessary, accompaniment of this magnified competition was a deadly routine by which the individual worker was robbed of his individuality and reduced to a fraction of a man who does the fraction of a man's work.

That is the great fundamental change characteristic

of modern times, the outcome of the modern control of natural forces.

In our second discourse we saw that this condition of things issued in a greatly widened gulf between the rich and poor. The immensely increased output secured by the employment of machinery is not apportioned either equally or proportionally between owners and workers, but is appropriated almost bodily by the possessing classes, leaving the poor almost where they were, and so increasing, and greatly increasing, the difference in lot which already existed between the classes.

And now we get the third stage. Just as the extremes of wealth and poverty issue out of the modern mass-competition, so the disease of parasitism issues out of the extremes of wealth and poverty. Parasitism is a social disease, and it inevitably follows from those social conditions described in my previous addresses.

Before, however, we attempt to deal in detail with the causes and the cure of this modern malady, let me explain what I understand by the term parasitism.

Etymologically the word parasite means one who feeds at another's table ; and it is metaphorically applied to an animal that lives at the expense of another animal, haunting its body and sucking its blood, or to a plant that lives at the expense of another plant,

using up the juices which its host extracts from the soil for its own nourishment.

Now, not only do animals and plants have their parasites, but human society has its parasites as well. There are folk who suck the life from the social order. There are people who exercise no social function, contribute nothing to the social well-being, but whose life is mere absorption. The healthy and honest life is the life that both gives and takes, and that gives at least as much as it takes ; and the parasite is the man or the class of men that does not do this. Society would be better off without some people ; the social organism would be actually richer and healthier if certain folk were removed ; such people are parasites. Of course the function performed by the honest life need not necessarily be in the material sphere. Pictures have been painted, books have been written, perhaps even (occasionally) sermons have been preached which were worth the food and clothing that they cost. A man may do intellectual or *spiritual* work for the world as well as manual. But *some* function, physical or spiritual, some *real* function to enrich and bless society, a man must perform, before he has any right to the gifts of society, or even any right to *live*. "If any man will not work, neither let him eat."

This, then, is what we mean by parasitism, and this is



the phenomenon we are to consider. There are two kinds of it : the parasitism of the rich and the parasitism of the poor. It will be instructive to consider them each in turn.

And first, as to *the rich parasite*, let me begin by saying this guarding word. Do not suppose that it is of *every* rich man that I am speaking. Bear in mind the definition which I have just given you. Do not be carried away by the crude imaginings of ill-instructed revolutionists. Not every rich man, not every man, that is to say, who is *relatively* rich, is necessarily a parasite. Many a man who to the poor seems "rich," has performed and is performing social functions of which his "riches" are merely the means and the instruments, justly earned, rightly proportioned, and usefully employed. A man may have large possessions because his public functions are large. So long as he genuinely employs those possessions for the general good, we may indeed pity him that he should have to manage and use such elaborate social machinery, but it would be absurd to condemn him. The dead level of mathematically equal property we shall never attain to, and it is not desirable that we should.

The riches, however, of such a man as that are necessarily of very moderate amount as fortunes go now-a-

days. You cannot but know that there are rich men whose riches are out of all proportion to their services, whose wealth has never been earned and cannot by any possibility be usefully employed. There are men who simply consume and waste, whose very generosity, when they exercise it, is a danger to the State, pauperising the individuals, the institutions and the communities upon which it is lavished, and inhibiting the healthy function of the social body. There is no millionaire in existence whose wealth can by any possibility have been *earned*—earned, that is, by proportional individual services to society. Such fortunes always *must*, under existing circumstances, have been obtained either by conspiracy to divert the natural flow and distribution of wealth, or by some system of taboo legalised under unjust or antiquated laws. And there are thousands of lesser fortunes of which the same may be said; thousands of men of mere middle-class success, who have never fed, nor clothed, nor housed, nor instructed, nor organised, nor protected, nor in any other healthy way served society, but whose wealth has been got by various kinds of gambling, or else by performing some totally useless part in a decaying social system.

These are the rich men of whom I speak; whether their fortunes be colossal or what is called “moderate,” if they have not been obtained *by* service and are not

used *for* service, such men come under the ban of "parasitism."

I want to get you to understand what this means. I want you to see the fact from the right angle. I want you to apprehend that Nature is *against* this order of men, and that there is a new version of the old Scripture going forth to us to-day—a voice which cries aloud to men who are heedlessly engaged in getting wealth by any and every means ; a voice which speaks to every young man who is choosing his profession and making his start in life ; and that it says in new phrase just what the old Scripture said in days gone by : "Who is on the Lord's side ?" "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."

In a very remarkable work entitled *The Tree in the Midst*, Dr Greville Macdonald has recently furnished a striking illustration of the truth that Nature is *against* the luxury that preys upon society. He gives an account of the process of evolution and the secondary laws which it involves ; and in speaking of luxury, he takes as an example the prehistoric monster known as the ichthyosaurus.

The ichthyosaurus was one of a whole series of creatures horrible in character, function and form which existed in an early age of the earth's history. It was a reptilian fish, thirty feet in length, with the

backbone and tail of a fish, the jaw of a crocodile, and the skin of a whale. Its eye was held in a socket eighteen inches in diameter and was protected by an armour of bony plates. It had a most extraordinary range of vision, and it could see in the dark.

This monster, therefore, was highly gifted. It was, in fact, actually in advance of its age. It had points of advantage not existent in any other creature at that time. It anticipated the higher possibilities in structure. It was far on in the line of evolution.

Why, then, did it disappear? Why was not the process of evolution continued along that line? Why is it now an extinct creature, telling us its story only by the petrified remains of its terrible body which are dug out from its rocky grave?

Most significant is the answer to this question. *It died out because life was too easy for it.* The world did not desire it. It did nothing but feed and propagate its kind; and it did this with no effort on its own behalf. It was undesirable from the point of view of upward evolution. That this was the truth concerning it is proved by its remains. There is evidence of its swallowing fish and reptiles in quantity far larger than it could digest, far larger than could be necessary for its own maintenance and the transmission of its species. Its awful jaw, its enormous stomach, its impenetrable

armour, its great fleetness, made other creatures such an easy prey to it that labour or painful effort was an experience it never knew. Its only enemies were its prey ; and these enemies were altogether powerless to resist it, while its food was always superabundant.

And so the ichthyosaurus died out. It died of too much ease. Its extinction was the inevitable result of its luxury. Vital energy began to ebb, structural refinement did not increase, because it was not wanted ; the size and strength of the monster meant diminished need for intelligence, and the ascent of intelligence was checked. Nature was against it. It transgressed the fundamental law of upward-moving life, and it was swept into the limbo of forgotten things.

Now, that seems to me just typical of the rich parasite who feeds upon society to-day. Those rich and mighty robbers who victimise society, and whose misdeeds are condoned only because they act upon so large a scale that by simple folk their actions are not fully understood—they are the ichthyosauri, the greedy, brutal, loathsome, insatiable monsters who prey upon the feeble in the teeming ocean of modern life.

But Nature is against them. They lose their souls, and you can actually behold the process. It is not they or their like who ultimately inherit the earth.

Of course I know that the philosophic person will

call out upon me at this point. He will say : How can Nature be *against* these monsters, whether biological or social, seeing that they are themselves a part of Nature ?

To which I answer : These social questions must be fought out upon the human plane. If you decide upon the parasitic life, Nature will certainly in an ultimate sense not be *against* you ; she will use you, but she will use you by destroying you. There was a sense in which Nature was not against that weird monster of which we have been speaking. Nature knew how to make it useful. It could not evolve itself, but it unwittingly helped forward the evolution of others. It helped them by its very terrors. Its tyranny was one of those evils which had to be overcome. It acted as a stimulus, an occasion for effort, a motive for increased intelligence, and a tonic for the will.

Well ; are *you* willing to help the world forward in *that* way ? You, the wealthy speculator, who are meditating some commercial stroke which shall benefit yourself at the expense of the community ; you, young man, who are about to choose a career in life which you know to be socially unproductive or even harmful, merely because it is lucrative, are you careless whether the world shall go forward *in spite of you* or *by your aid* ? If that is your decision—if you decide to be rich what-

ever happens ; if you decide that it matters little to you whether you are useful or not so long as you are wealthy—then Nature, in a way of her own, will *make* you useful : she will make you useful by your very sin ; she will make you the victim of that society which you victimise ; she will make you a foil and a warning, a soul to be shunned, an evil to be loathed, a power to be opposed by all the righteous and the just and the excellent of the earth. And if that *satisfies* you ; if you still say : “ Riches in spite of all,” why, then, all that can be said is that you are already a lost soul.

That is the practical lesson for the individual. That is how the social duty of the *man* appears. We have no right to justify ourselves by appealing to necessity and to inevitable law ; and if we do so justify ourselves and hold on our way regardless of the social effects of our actions, that law to which we appeal will vindicate itself in unexpected ways.

And now, before we leave this subject of the rich parasite, let me briefly touch upon another aspect of our individual duty in this matter. Many years ago Ruskin distributed with his own *Fors Clavigera* a pamphlet by his friend Mr Girdlestone. In this pamphlet an attempt was made to classify society, and the classification which the writer proposed was this : English society, he said, consists of workers and non-

workers ; and the non-workers are of two sorts : they are either beggars whose victims are willing persons, or stealers whose victims are unwilling persons.

You will anticipate what kind of people he places among the stealers. There are the thieves who promote companies that are never meant to succeed, or that produce no real, usable wealth ; there are the thieves who make their money by artificially driving the market up and down, who raise or depress the price of stocks and shares by false rumours and the like ; there are the speculators who make "corners," or help in making "corners," in necessary or useful articles ; and there are all those who by their wealth, their rank, or their knowledge, are extortionate or unfair to another's disadvantage. Such men, whether they act legally or illegally, act immorally, and are in a literal sense thieves.

This is simple enough. But the difficulty begins when we begin to deal with the beggars. What, for instance, shall we say of the man who lives upon the rent or interest of *inherited* property ? What shall we say of the sleeping-partner in a business whose income accrues, not as the wages of superintendence, but as dividends on a capital which he did not earn ?

Such a man is, in Mr Girdlestone's sense, a beggar



—that is to say, he does not directly do anything for society in return for what he receives.

As a matter of classification that is all very well, but what moral are you to draw as a matter of individual duty? Now, upon this point Mr Girdlestone makes an important remark, in which I think we may follow him. He says that the rich beggar of this class may wipe the dishonour from his shield by taking his fair share in that unpaid work which society is always needing to have done by volunteers. That society should permit any man to grow rich without working is of course a defect in the social system; and that there should be any unpaid work—any work which must be done and yet which society does not pay for—is again a breakdown in our social arrangements. But the individual has to take the social system as he finds it, and make his part in it as just and honourable as he can. And things being as they are, may we not agree that the right thing for the individual in such a case to do is to accept that which society so foolishly gives him, and to use it for strenuous work of the kind which society so foolishly leaves unpaid? By this means he may enter the special class of beggars which Mr Girdlestone calls *serviceable* beggars. He cannot indeed cease to be a *beggar*, and that he may as well keep in mind; but he may cease to be a *parasite*.

Such a man is rich through misfortune. He is born rich, or property is left to him. His inner life is cumbered and choked by huge possessions. It is the fault of society that this is so. In a well-ordered society it would not be so. We should be sorry for such people ; they are suffering from a social disease. Their only way to health and peace is to use that great wealth as speedily and as wisely as they can for the social good. But the fool who is *wilfully* rich, who actually tries to be rich, who positively endeavours to catch this disease of mammon, who purposely smothers his better part by the possession of material wealth—what are we to say of him? Of him we say that, if that is indeed his aim, if his aim in life is not to serve society but to gather riches, if he accepts the wealth that comes to him, with no fear, and no sense of duty, and no adequate return to the community that enriches him—then he has no true life in him ; his life is parasitic.

So much, then, for the rich parasite ; and now just a word or two about the poor one. We do not need to dwell at any length upon this side of our subject, because people are unfortunately so much more ready to admit the evil in the case of the poor than they are in the case of the rich. Of course there is no difficulty in assigning to his proper class the burglar or the pickpocket. These cannot be called useful members of

society : they receive without giving. Nor is there any difficulty about the beggar who whines after you in the London street, or the country tramps who come begging at your kitchen door. These are all parasites pure and simple ; and they largely exist by reason of the diseased and disordered state of the community. The difficulty begins when you come to consider the workers who do useless work. These are not "workers" in Mr Girdlestone's sense : they do not enrich society. A man who turned a useless crank all day long, or who shovelled gravel from one end of a yard to the other in order to shovel it back again, might do a deal of labour, but he would not be exactly a honey-bee in the social hive ; he would not in the productive sense be a social worker. And there are people of this sort in modern Europe ; only the difficulty is to know precisely which are of this sort, because we may differ a good deal as to what work is productive and what is useless.

For instance, there is a class of persons for whom I have a very high esteem—the domestic servants. I think that, fairly and justly considered, there is no class more estimable or more praiseworthy. The patience, the industry, the forbearance, the orderly and regular lives which the great majority of them exhibit, are an example to many who consider them-

selves their superiors. But when we come to consider the work which they are called upon to do, we are obliged to admit that a large number of them, especially in the households of the rich, are, through no fault of their own, engaged upon useless labour. One of the greatest mischiefs wrought by the luxurious class is this misdirection of life and this waste of labour. They are obliged to have numbers of servants to perform offices that bring nobody either profit or pleasure, but only serve the vain purposes of ostentation. Then there are all the other persons that the rich man employs—the jockeys, the footmen, the architects and builders of unused or half-used mansions; the makers of false or foolish jewelry, the painters of meaningless portraits or other joyless pictures, the composers of lascivious music, the vulgar or indecent dancers, the mimics and courtesans and ministers of debauch—there are these and a hundred others who contribute nothing to the true life, either of the individual or of society, but who require, all of them, to be fed and clothed and housed by means of labour that might be used, and ought to be used, for the supply of physical necessities or of noble pleasures. These, in so far as they consume without any wholesome production, belong to that melancholy class, the parasites of the parasites.

But when we come to ask what is, in their case, the individual duty, the answer is far more difficult to find than in the case of the rich. With these, to oppose the social system does not mean the mere abandonment of superfluities, it often means the loss of the prime necessities of life. In the case of those who minister to sin or to sheer sensuality the case admits, of course, of no doubt; but in the case of those who perform offices more or less frivolous and unmeaning—offices of a ceremonial sort, in which they can take no serious interest—it may be a question whether they should starve rather than perform such duties. The Son of Sirach, indeed, in his downright way, takes the bull by the horns. “Be not an underling,” he says, “to a foolish man.” And I confess I should like to see something of that spirit abroad. I should like to see *that* sort of strike among workmen’s unions—not strikes for better pay or shorter hours, but strikes against the foolishness of their masters. I should like to hear of a factory stopped because the men refused to work for an employer who squandered his wealth upon wickedness or folly or silly ostentation. There would be some hope of the world if *that* sort of strike were instituted. “Be not underling to a fool”; yes, *that* is where the individual duty lies in the case we are considering. So far as is possible, strive in that

direction. Do not always engage yourself to the master who *pays best*; engage yourself to the master who is richest in *wisdom*. Serve the man who serves the State. Work for the man who works for the world. Choose the place which will give you the best opportunity of doing wholesome, productive, and useful duties. Something, surely, might be done in that direction by those whose lot in life it is to serve.

And now we must pass from the individual to the social point of view, and consider very briefly the causes and the cure of this social disease. The two classes we have been considering—the rich parasites and the poor parasites, who eat without working, consume without any true production—are standing dangers to our civic life. They suck the blood of the nation. They impoverish the social organism. They undermine the commonwealth. It was by such that Athens fell; it was by such that Rome fell; it is by such that nearly every dead empire of ancient or modern times has fallen. Luxury breeds them, and they imitate the luxury by which they are bred; and so the action and reaction goes on, the disease spreads, and the whole body-politic decays.

That is the disease. Whence does it spring? It springs, so it is said, from the sudden expansion of our human powers. And that, no doubt, in a sense

is true. It is true, as we saw in our previous discourses, that the modern evil is accentuated by our new control of Nature's powers. We have linked ourselves to the forces of Nature ; we have yoked the horses of the sun to our chariot, and we have harnessed the thunderbolts of heaven. Fire and lightning are our servants, and we have bound them in chains of steel. The control of these mighty agencies of electricity and heat is the proximate cause of that massing of economic force which has issued in enormously increased wealth, leading to that luxury which has given rise, in its turn, to this evil of parasitism.

This, I say, is doubtless the *occasion* of the evils which we deplore. But the *cause* lies further back. The cause is in the human heart ; and for that there is only one cure : that which our fathers very rightly called "conversion." We must be *converted* ; we must see things in a new light. We must turn ourselves round and look at things from the opposite quarter ; we must realise the horrible character of the evils under which we live ; we must set ourselves to amend and regenerate the whole system of society.

All those evils which in these three addresses I have brought before you—fierce competition, deadly routine, enervating luxury, distressing want, and this last evil of functionless and useless life—all these grow up

under common conditions ; they are knit together in a common system ; and it is the whole system that must be amended.

The detailed measures by which this is to be done it is not my place to set forth, but the *principles* upon which the reform must be carried out are these :—

1. By the adoption of common action and common enterprise, rivalry and emulation must be limited. It must be limited to such an extent and in such a way that at any rate the necessaries of life shall be honourably accessible to all who are not absolutely undeserving.

2. By common consent, all mechanical routine which tends to deaden consciousness and destroy individuality must be limited in duration ; so that a fair proportion of a man's day shall be reserved for him to follow his native bent and restore his individuality.

3. Society must, by common consent, appropriate for the common good that part of a man's wealth which the *community* and not the man has earned.

4. And, lastly, all parasitism must be discouraged. The legislature should always have an eye upon it, and so frame the laws as to make it difficult. In its extreme forms, such as that of gambling and betting, whether on the exchange or in the public-house, it should even be directly and openly punished.



All legislation must base itself on the ideal of *exchange of service as sharers of a common life*. That is the true principle, the principle which condemns all parasitism, the only principle upon which a wholesome social life can be built up. We are members of an organism ; we are sharers of a common life ; and as such, the only way in which we can live rightly and cleanly, with advantage to the community and with respect for ourselves, is by performing mutual service.

I dare say that these principles which I have set before you will not wholly satisfy either of the contending factions ; they are not exactly what the individualist would like, and they are not at all what the communist would like. I think that is because each of these looks at only one side of human nature. We are individual as well as social. We are social as well as individual. The problem is to harmonise those two. No man has the right to follow his individual wishes at the expense of the common good ; neither is that a well-ordered community which crushes out of the individual all the individuality and character and special gift which gives zest to life. We have to harmonise those two ; that is our tremendous problem to-day. Some will see more of one side and some will see more of the other ; so it is not likely that what I have said will wholly please either party.

But I sincerely believe that the principles which I have laid down are the true principles—the principles upon which we must build reform ; and therefore I have thought it right to set them plainly before you.

But I repeat again, that first of all we need “*conversion.*” A change of heart, that is what we need ; for it is certain that none of us will ever *do* the right things until he comes to *love* the right things.

#### IV.—INDIVIDUALISM OR SOCIALISM ? EITHER ? NEITHER ? OR BOTH ?

*Individualism* and *Socialism*, these are the two terms which are placed as alternatives in the title of my lecture ; and they are terms which one hears from everybody's lips, which in books, reviews, conversation, lectures, one is constantly finding compared and contrasted. What do they mean ? What is Individualism ? what is Socialism ? and what is the real relation between the two ? Are we obliged to choose between them ? and if we are, which shall we choose ? which shall we uphold and follow and fight for ? in which of them lies the hope of the future ? In either of them ? in neither of them ? or in both ? These are the questions which I propose to discuss.

“An Individualist,” wrote Grant Allen, “is a man who recognises without stint the full, free, and equal right of every citizen to the unimpeded use of all his energies, activities, and faculties, provided only he does not thereby encroach upon the equal and correlative right of

every other citizen” ; and he supports this definition by an appeal to those whom he calls the Individualist Fathers—Mill and Spencer. To Mill and Spencer, then, we turn, and we find that the definition seems to be borne out—at least, we find much in the writings of these philosophers (both of whom are recognised as authorities by individualists) which supports the view that the full right of every citizen to the unimpeded use of all his faculties is the ideal at which to aim. John Stuart Mill, in his little book on Liberty, has worked out the whole doctrine in logical sequence. He has a long chapter on “Liberty of Thought and Discussion,” followed by another long chapter on “Individuality as one of the Elements of Well-being.” He shows how greatly our happiness depends on perfect liberty for the individual : on free development of individuality, free choice of one’s own plan of life, free following of one’s own taste, free formation and expression of one’s own opinion ; and, in the case of men of genius especially, how important it is, not for the man only, but for the whole community, that genius should be allowed to unfold itself freely both in thought and practice.

Herbert Spencer is equally explicit. His first principle is that “Every man has freedom to do all that he wills provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any

other man." The State, he says, is a voluntary association for mutual protection, and we ought to be very jealous of any step which the State may take beyond this; we ought very carefully to watch lest, in the endeavour to benefit a few, the State should cripple the individual energies of the many. Civilisation, he says, is a progress towards the complete manifestation of every one's individuality. "To be that which he naturally is, to do just what he would spontaneously do, is essential to the full happiness of each, and therefore to the greatest happiness of all."

Mr Grant Allen's definition, therefore, seems to be made out. If Mill and Spencer are the Individualist Fathers, then individualism is pretty much what Mr Allen says it is—"the full, free, and equal right of every citizen to the unimpeded use of all his energies."

I do not say, mind, that is the sense in which the term is always used to-day. I shall show you presently that practically it means something very different. But it is the sense in which the term is sometimes used, and in which it was originally meant to be used. It is the sense which those attach to the term who oppose Socialism on the ground that it will prevent development and variety of individual character; who laud Individualism as promoting that development and variety. And so I say, for the present let the definition

stand. Individualism shall be, for the nonce, the system which favours the full, free, and equal right of every citizen to the unimpeded use of all his energies.

And now, what does "Socialism" mean? Socialism is a term used in a multitude of senses. Anybody who preaches Land-nationalisation, Co-operation of any kind, Profit-sharing on any scale, calls himself now-a-days a Socialist. And even those who preach no positive amelioration of any kind, but only destruction of the existing order of things, are often called Socialists and reviled accordingly. But what is Socialism in its essence? We have appealed to the Individualist fathers for their doctrine of Individualism. What, according to the Socialist fathers, is the doctrine of Socialism?

Well, I am not sure who the socialist fathers are. Herbert Spencer has himself been reckoned among the socialist fathers, though he used to be much hurt at this assertion, and indignantly protested that he was nothing of the sort. But if we go back a little further, we shall come to undisputed ground. Owen, St Simon, and Fourier, these at any rate belong to the early fathers of socialism; and in the discussions which arose in connection with one of them, the very name "socialism" took its rise.

What, then, was the aim and doctrine of these three venerable fathers? Robert Owen, in his *Book of the*

*New Moral World*, insisted upon the influence exerted upon man by external circumstances. The way to permanent peace and happiness, he declared, was in equalising those external circumstances. Equality of education and condition among mankind—this was his aim; and society, he declared, if only it were united in promoting that aim, possesses illimitable power to remove those inferior debasing circumstances which weigh down so large a portion of the race—illimitable power to replace those debasing circumstances by better and wholesome and more elevating conditions.

St Simon, the founder of French socialism, insisted in like manner upon the necessity of a new and positive reorganisation of society. His vision was that of an industrialist State directed by modern science. The social aim, he said, was to produce things useful to life, and the goal of all our activity should be to encircle the globe with one vast association directed to this useful production.

Fourier, the third of the patriarchs, was a somewhat fantastic man; but through all his vagaries there ran this fundamental doctrine, that competition is wasteful, that co-operation is economical, and that society, as a whole, must be organised on the lines requisite to give full scope to co-operation.

If these, then, are to be taken as the fathers of

socialism, it is pretty clear what socialism means : it means greater equality of opportunity and condition, closer association for the production of useful things, and greater freedom from the wear and tear of competition ; and all this to be attained by subordinating the individual interest to the common good. Socialism, in short, is the denial to the individual of the right to fight his own way to wealth or greatness, irrespective of the effect which this free fight of the individual has upon the well-being of the mass. It substitutes association for isolation, co-operation for competition, the good of the whole for the advancement of the few.

Now, concerning these two systems, I put three questions : Either ? Neither ? or Both ? First I ask, Will you have *either* of them ? Will you choose between them—accept one and decline the other, with (or without) thanks ? If not, it must be either because they are both so bad that you prefer to decline them both, and your answer is therefore “*neither*” ; or else because they are both so good that you cannot do without either of them, and your answer therefore is “*both*.”

In the first place, then, we have to put the question “*Either ?*” Will you choose one or the other of the two principles ? And to put the question effectually, we must consider fairly and somewhat more fully the principles between which we are called upon to choose.



Let us consider first the principle of individual liberty.

I suppose there is nothing in the world of which we are more firmly convinced than we are that every man has a right to think freely. I do not say that every man has a right to believe what he likes; that is a right which no man has. A man's right is not to believe what he likes, but to believe what is true. But in the process of finding out what *is* true in order that he *may* believe it, all kinds of thoughts must pass through his mind; all kinds of opinions must be canvassed; and he has a perfect right, every man and woman has a perfect and indisputable right, to carry on this process for himself, to till his own mental soil and grow his own mental crop, and to sort out the weeds and burn them at his pleasure. "If all mankind, minus one, were of one opinion," says Mill, "and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind."

Liberty of thought and discussion, then, I put down as the first element in individual liberty, without which all else is nothing worth; and the second element is like unto it. For scarcely less important than liberty of thought is liberty of action. Scarcely less important, and far more neglected, is this second element

of personal liberty. If the fire of truth has for the most part been kindled by the sparks dropped in the clash of reason with unreason, so, too, has the fire of virtue. To live rightly, we must live freely. We shall never find out the best way of living till we are freer to experiment. Strange as it may sound to some, I believe that there is far too much restriction in our mode of life. In our efforts to suppress the evil, we too often suppress the good as well ; we root out the wheat along with the tares. Cranks, no doubt, are troublesome people—social lunatics we have ever with us ; never mind, give them free play ; now and then you may be entertaining a philosopher unawares. Let the worth of different modes of life be proved practically by anyone who thinks fit to try them. Let individuality be not only allowed but encouraged. Without it there is no happiness and no national greatness.

An evening party has been aptly described as an assembly in which everybody knows what *not* to do. And our whole civilised life, I fear, is rapidly becoming just such an evening party—as flat, stale, dull, and unprofitable : we have to dress alike, however hideously ; to behave alike, however absurdly ; to think alike, however irrationally ; to believe alike, however baselessly. Our feelings are so tender that nobody dares to speak his thoughts till he has groped all round about

his companion and found out exactly to which sections of the body politic, the body ecclesiastic, the body artistic and the body social he belongs. Everybody belongs to some section, nobody is himself, and every section regards certain sins of the other sections as unpardonable. To one vast section, the unpardonable sins are to wear fustian or to do useful work ; to another the unpardonable sins are to keep a shop, to drop your h's, or to speak the truth. But to be *himself*, to speak his convictions without offence, to follow his tastes without contempt, to live his life in the light of day without patronage and without reserve, this, in the present state of society, it is not given a man to do.

Now, so far as our definition has carried us at present, you will see from my tone that I am a throughgoing individualist. I believe in liberty, in individuality, in unrestricted freedom for individual development. But a difficulty arises when we take into account the fact that we are not *merely* individuals ; that we are also *social*. There are not many men who would be content with liberty and nothing else. If anybody says he would be so content, we may set him down in some vast wilderness where roads and railways have not yet reached, and say : " Very well, my dear sir, here are blackberries, and here is water, and here too is unlimited freedom ; live and be happy." There have

been hermits of that kind in the past, but they have been comparatively few, and mostly mad. On the whole, we have to recognise the fact that man is social ; and *that* is as good as saying that absolute individualism is impossible ; for directly you admit that some converse with your fellow-men is a necessity of life, you admit at the same time that there must be some limit to your individual freedom. Society is necessarily founded upon give and take. So long as you live alone in the wilderness you may take as many blackberries as you like, and nobody's fingers will be pricked but your own ; but directly you admit a brother hermit to your cell, your liberty will be somewhat restricted. You must not meddle with the berries which he has gathered for himself ; you must not lie in the sun and make him gather berries for you ; you must not sing jubilant psalms when he wants to sleep ; and if you have only one drinking-vessel, you must go turn and turn about. No conduct that injures the interest of another, no selfishness that lives upon the labours of another without adequate return, must be left unchecked. Liberty, if that be liberty, must be restricted.

The definition of Individualism, as I quoted it at the beginning of this paper, provides for this. It says that "every citizen has a right to the unimpeded use of all his energies *provided he does not thereby encroach*

*upon the equal right of every other citizen.*" But modern individualism has practically confined itself to one part of this definition ; it has contented itself with emphasising individual liberty without mentioning its restrictions. Unlimited competition, unrestricted freedom of contract, a minimum of interference with individual action, and especially with the individual action of the capitalist—this is its teaching, and hence comes socialism.

To socialism, then, it is now time for us to turn. Socialism lays stress upon just that part of our *dictum* which individualism is apt to slur. It finds in man an evil selfishness which makes him forget that his own liberty must be limited by the equal right which every other citizen has to the same liberty. It maintains that the warfare of class with class and man with man is productive of immense and needless evils, and "it holds that it is the function of the State to moderate this warfare and to remedy these evils. In short, it insists on the principle that the rights of the individual are subordinate to the well-being of the whole society."

So long as individualism held undivided sway, "children from seven to ten were working in factories and mines, starved, stunted, squalid ; women were losing their womanhood in degrading forms of labour ; millions were living in dwellings unfit for swine, and were sinking into a state of brutal degradation. The

wealth and luxury of the rich stood out in glaring contrast with the hideous poverty of the poor. The share of the labourer in the fruits of his labour was diminished by the middleman who came between him and his capitalist employer.”<sup>1</sup> “These things,” said socialism, “ought not so to be”; and, by dint of measures which were socialistic in principle, some of them have ceased. Too many, alas, remain.

Now, the moral of this is, that liberty sometimes means liberty to oppress your fellows, liberty to take your neighbour at a disadvantage and enslave him, liberty to starve and dwarf your children, to degrade your women, to let four-fifths of a generation grow up in ignorance, and that, when personal liberty comes to mean this, personal liberty must be curtailed; man must be reminded that he is social as well as individual, and that he has duties to society as well as to himself.

“Our legislation,” wrote a high ecclesiastic some time since, “our legislation on the tenure of land in Ireland, on Sunday Closing Acts, our systems of State-aided and compulsory education, our measures for the further protection of children, our Allotment Acts, are all essentially protests against the *laissez-faire*, *laissez-aller* of a pure individualism. The popular cries for local option or other regulations of the drink traffic, for an eight-

<sup>1</sup>Dean of Wells.

hours' day of labour, for free education, for compelling landlords to improve the dwellings of the poor, for three acres and a cow, for a graduated income-tax, are all essentially socialistic in their nature. They set aside for the common good the rights of individuals in their freedom or their property. They assume that the State, in the order of God's government, is the creator of property, and may therefore, while it protects its rights, insist on the performance of its duties." In the face of this description of Socialism and its tendencies, I think it will be hard for any man to deny that the socialistic movement, in the main, is beneficial.

"But suppose we were to treat Socialism as we have treated Individualism," one may ask, "and try to carry it to its logical extreme, would it work?" We may admit that it would not. At least, we may admit that if you mean by Socialism some unimaginable state of things in which the limitations of individual liberty were continually increased and individual liberty itself gradually reduced to *nil*, such a socialism would be uncomfortable. If the State is to say how long I am to work, what I am to work at, what goods I am to receive in payment, and how much of them; when I am to be married, whom I am to marry, and how many children I am to be allowed to have; where I am to live, what I am to read, and how I am to travel; and in general to regulate every

detail of my life—why, then, I had rather be as I am. But all this, though it is State-interference, is not socialism, and I only imagine such a state of affairs for a moment in order to bring out the chief point at which I have arrived. What that point is I will now briefly state.

I have hitherto supposed that the essence of individualism is individual liberty, and the essence of socialism is a restriction placed upon individual liberty for the social good. And these are, in fact, the meanings of the terms as they are frequently used. Now, what I want to bring home to you is this—that in this sense of the words “Individualism” and “Socialism” you cannot choose either one or the other. To the question whether you will have either of them, you must answer “*Neither*,” and you must also answer “*Both*.” Carried to their logical extremes, you can put up with *neither*. It is impossible to have unlimited individualism without going mad ; and it is impossible to have unlimited socialism without committing suicide. Either by itself is an inconceivable mode of existence ; and the only answer to the question “*Either?*” is “*Neither*.” But if you are content to be a little less logical, and a little more reasonable and practical, you will see that there is another answer possible—and that is “*Both*.” We will have personal liberty so far as it is compatible with the general good, and we will have



community of interest, even at the expense of some sacrifice of personal liberty. We will have both Individualism and Socialism,—free scope for all our faculties and capacities, but limited by the necessity of giving equally free scope to others.

The fact is that, whatever opposition exists between these two principles, lies in the very make of our minds. The economic antithesis is based upon a psychological one. Every man is at once personal and impersonal, individual and social ; and no form of government, no form of social life, can ultimately be satisfactory which does not take account of both sides of our nature. No socialism is sufficient which does not give free scope for individual development and individual action ; no individualism will ever be satisfactory unless it enables and encourages men to live in a state of harmony instead of a confusion of warfare ; to live a brotherly and kindly and truly social life, each for all and all for each.

But now, if we revise our definitions, and if we take Individualism, not in the sense in which the term was originally intended, but in the sense in which it is now too generally used, we shall find that the opposition between the two is much more real. There is a sort of phantom warfare continually going on in the papers and elsewhere between the terms, used in the sense in

which I have hitherto been using them. The phantoms hit each other tremendous blows ; but the whole thing lacks reality, because there is no true opposition involved. But alongside of this, or mixed up with it, there is a real battle going on as well, and one which will wax hotter and hotter as the years go on ; and it behoves us very carefully to distinguish between the shadow and the substance, lest we waste our zeal upon the air.

If Individualism meant really that which it is so often said to mean—if it meant indeed full liberty of action, limited only by equal freedom in others—we might all be individualists. But what it practically means to-day is something very different. The individualism of the Liberty and Property Defence League means practically little else than the privilege of a small and fortunate class to protect their own liberty and property at the expense of the slavery and pauperism of a large and unfortunate class. An individualism “which sets out with the indefensible principle that one man may own another as his private chattel, or may hold an inalienable lien over some portion of another man’s time or labour, or the product of his labour, or may monopolise more than his own fair share of the common stock of raw material . . . is not individualist [in the sense of freeing the individual energies of all, but quite the contrary] ; it is simply rapacious, predatory and lawless.” It is

against this kind of Individualism that Socialism unfurls the standard and sets the battle in array; and if it comes to a question between Socialism and Individualism of this sort, then my answer would no longer be "Neither," and would certainly not be "Both." For now we have two real opposites; and now the call comes to every man to choose, and the time already approaches when between those two, by every thinking man, the choice will have to be decided.

Let me, then, put the antithesis in what I conceive to be its true form. The true antagonism is not between socialism and individualism, but between socialism and capitalism. That capitalism has come to be called "individualism" I regard as a misfortune. It confuses words and leads to confusion of thought. True individualism, I hold, will be the outcome and the fairest flower of socialism. But capitalism, the system of private and competing capitals, is quite another thing; and between this and socialism there is a great gulf fixed.

Let me, then, keeping in view this true antithesis, put my questions over again,—Either? Neither? or Both?

To the question "Either?" you cannot answer "Neither," for you must have one or the other. And you cannot answer "Both," for they are in principle mutually exclusive.

One or the other, I say, you must have. There is no middle course. Certain middle courses have been proposed, such as Nationalisation of the Land, Co-operation, or Profit-sharing. But none of these will give us a position of stable equilibrium : none is thorough-going. I do not say they are useless as steps to a more complete application of the principle, but they cannot be regarded as ultimate. Land-nationalisation cannot completely save us so long as tools, machinery, means of transit and the like remain in the power of competing capitalists. Co-operative societies are of no great use so long as their co-operation is applied only to distribution and not to production, and so long as they are themselves only big competitors in the universal scramble. Profit-sharing is no cure for our ills so long as it is merely a concession granted by the employers out of charity, and not a legal right that can be insisted upon by the workmen. When land-nationalisation is supplemented by the nationalisation of other instruments of production, then it will be of great use ; but that is Socialism. When Profit-sharing means that the *whole* of the profits are shared by the producers, that will be of great use ; but that, again, is Socialism. When the co-operative society expands to a co-operative *nation*, that will indeed be a cure for all our economic ills ; but that, once more, is Socialism. “ It is the severance of capital from labour which has done

all the mischief," wrote the Dean of Durham a week or two ago, in a letter which I hope you all read. And that is the root-principle of Socialism. Are capital and labour to be severed or united? That is the question which I am putting to you.

So that, *in principle*, I say there is no middle course. Whether the socialistic ideal is immediately feasible, or whether it will ever be feasible in its entirety, is a separate question. But, *in principle*, you must choose one or the other. In the last resort you are driven either to the present system of competing capitals, or to the collective ownership of all the means of production. Capitalism and Socialism are in principle mutually exclusive. When the question comes to you, therefore, "Which will you have?" you cannot answer "Neither." One or the other you are driven to accept.

And equally impossible will it be to answer "*Both*." It is true there are certain features of the present system regarded by some as individualistic which many socialists would nevertheless retain; and it may seem at first sight as though this were an attempt to plead for *Both*. But upon further consideration it will be found that these do not affect the *first principles* of socialism, and that socialism and capitalism remain mutually exclusive.

For instance, *freedom of demand* is not inconsistent with socialism. There is no reason why the means of life and culture should be officially allotted, why everybody should be made to live alike. There is no reason in the world why one man should not live in a big house and another in a small house, under a socialist régime ; why one woman should not wear silk and another cotton, one indulge in horses and another in pictures, and another in tea-meetings and platforms. I know very well that some socialists speak and write as though this would be a violation of equality. It would be nothing of the sort ; it would be a *manifestation* of equality. Equality does not consist in being all clipped with the same shears to fit the same bed ; it consists in all having an equal right and an equal opportunity for natural development. The one who indulges in silks will not perhaps be able to have so many expensive books and pictures, and the one who is content with cottons can have more of them. The only difference will be that the silks and cottons will *then* mark differences of taste ; not, as they do now, differences of rank.

Again, there is no reason (in spite of the descriptions of the social future indulged in by some socialists) why *individual domestic freedom* should not be retained. Those horrible arrangements of public dining-rooms

and the like, which some regard as such a delightful feature of Utopia, are not essential to socialism. You may have your chop at home if you prefer it and yet be a sound socialist.

And lastly, you may, I believe, even admit into the socialist state so pronounced a feature of our capitalist era as a fluctuation of wages (within limits), and yet not violate the socialist principle. I know I am sailing rather near the wind here, and I admit this feature of capitalism not because I like it, but because I think it may perhaps prove necessary. Without it I doubt whether it would be possible to keep labour, production and demand in economic equilibrium.

Karl Marx's plan of making the standard of value a definite fraction of the aggregate social labour-time is attractive at first sight, but it seems doubtful whether such a plan would work. So far as I have studied the question (which I am bound to confess is not a very long way), it seems to me that there is much in the objection which Dr Schäffle raises in his very able book, *The Quintessence of Socialism*. I suspect that to make socialism work, there would have to be a certain concession in the direction of fluctuation of wages — that a lower wage would have to be given for the production of goods for which the demand was less than supply, and a higher wage for the production of

goods for which the supply was less than the demand : very much as we find to be the case under our present system. The only alternative for this would be a system under which workmen would be *ordered* away from one place to another place, from one industry to another industry, or under which purchasers would be deprived of the liberty of buying what they liked and as much as they liked ; a system also which would run the risk of breaking down from the sheer impossibility “of maintaining and directing so great a body of labour, production and demand in equilibrium,” and so enormous a mass of bookkeeping as would be thereby entailed.

Only what I would insist on is this—that such a partial reintroduction of one of the features of the present capitalist system would not amount to capitalism : it would not affect the first principles of socialism. The fusion of capital and labour which results from making the whole State the capitalist—and that is what we mean by Socialism—would still remain, and with it would remain all the blessings that such a social state must bring—greater equality among social classes ; something more than the bare necessities of life to every willing worker ; a sense of joint responsibility in relation to poverty and misfortune ; a more certain check against overwork and against the neglect of children and women ;



the hindrance of exploitation by private interest ; the removal of idleness and of unproductive parasitic life ; the prevention of corruption, of boundless luxury, of crimes against property, of bitter competition, of exhausting business worry. For all these ameliorations, I believe, would follow in the train of Socialism rightly understood.

And now, in conclusion, let me again urge, and urge with greater emphasis, that Socialism, so far from being opposed to a true Individualism—that is, to the full and free development of the individual—is the only way to it. The only way to individuality is by the road of socialism.

You say that you have freedom now ; that this is a free country ; and that our delightful system of what is called “free contract” secures the greatest possible amount of liberty to all. But what, let me ask, does this boasted liberty amount to ? What freedom is there even for that comparatively small class whose liberty the system is intended to secure ? What real liberty does the wealthy capitalist himself enjoy ? The exaggerated inequality which the iniquitous system produces shuts him up in the little circle of those he calls his equals. The great mass of his fellow-countrymen consist of two classes who are equally cut off from him. One class has been *really* rendered unfit for his friendship by the

iniquitous system under which they live ; the other class, although they are not really unfit, and form, indeed, the most interesting part of the community, are socially tabooed, and he *dare* not mingle freely with them, however much he may wish to do so.

“A free and living intercourse with all the various classes of mankind ” is one of the chief conditions of a happy life. And yet, as Tolstoi has very justly pointed out, “the higher people rise in the world the more must they miss this important condition of happiness. The higher the position of men, the narrower and more limited is the range of their intercourse, the lower, in their intellectual and moral development, are the few who form that charmed circle out of which there is no issue.” So that, even for the capitalist class itself, I would contend that the enormous gulfs between the various sections of society which are opened by the prevailing system forbid all possibility of a truly free and happy life.

And if the life of the wealthy is spoiled by the régime of private capital and free competition, what shall we say of the poor ? What shall we say of that man whose strength of sinew or of brain is all that he has, and that “all ” at the mercy of his master ? Is there, as a matter of fact, for the proletariat, either intellectual or manual, any shadow of true freedom ?

Can they choose their work? choose their master? choose their place of abode? Do they live in slums, then, because they like it? live in the filth and poison of these great cities because they love them? work twelve to fifteen hours a day because their work is so delightful? Or is it, rather, because if they don't, they'll starve? They are free, you say; they are no longer bound to the soil. No, they are not. If they were, their masters would not have the right to discharge them when they will. If they were, they would have the power, which they possessed of old, to labour for their own advantage for at any rate a portion of their time. If they were, they would have at least the means of subsistence. But as things are, serfdom itself would often be better than the wage-labourer's "freedom." He is free now to own land, but has no means to buy it. He is free to go where he pleases so long as he does not go where he mustn't, and that is almost everywhere. His freedom is, in fact, a barren thing, of no use to him whatever, but of great use to his master, who gains thereby the right to discharge him when he will, and that is the whole secret of the matter.

Labour is free, but it is helpless. It is helpless without capital, and therefore lies at the capitalist's mercy. And herein is the root of roots of the whole

question. It is this schism between capital and labour which is the source of all our want and half our crime. So long as the labourer owns neither tools nor material there is small chance for him. So long as stuff and tools are both another's, so long he will be compelled to hand the produce of his labour to that other—be compelled to hand it over, all except one small fraction, which will be carefully pared down to the minimum that will keep him going.

He can strike, you say? He can, and more and more he will. But if you think that an eternity of strikes is a blessed future to look forward to, I don't. And yet, under the present system, that is the only alternative. Starve or strike; this is the only choice, so long as capital is in one man's hand and labour in another's. This, then, is the remedy proposed: make the labourer his own capitalist, make the capitalist his own labourer. When that is done the oscillation between starve and strike is ended. And Socialism is just that: it is the amalgamation of labour and capital. By it the labourer becomes part owner both of tools and stuff; by it he becomes his own capitalist; the schism is ended, the slave is freed, and at length the *man* begins to *live*.

## V.—THE SIMPLIFICATION OF LIFE

### I

THIS subject implies a postulate which, though many of those whom I now address accept it, an average audience will scarcely grant—the postulate that the life we are living is unsatisfactory and needs simplifying. In support of this view of the unsatisfactoriness of life as we live it we may, however, quote several of the prophets of our time. Wordsworth, but half a century dead, sang :—

“O friend ! I know not which way I must look  
For comfort, being, as I am, opprest,  
To think that now our life is only drest  
For show ; mean handiwork of craftsman, cook,  
Or groom !”

Carlyle complains that “we have sumptuous garnitures for our life, but have forgotten to *live* in the middle of them.” Ruskin mourns over air made pestilent “to supply London and other such towns with their iron

railways, vulgar upholstery, jewels, toys, liveries, lace, and other means of dissipation and dishonour of life." Thoreau, Emerson, Tolstoi, and Edward Carpenter all write in the same strain.

Such, then, is the disease. What is the cure? The cure, like the disease, is complex. The disease is partly social, partly personal; and so must be the cure. This morning we deal only with the personal question: Can the *individual* do anything to counteract the deadening influence upon himself of a sated and luxurious society? That is the question before us.

It would be difficult to say by whom the doctrine of simple living was first taught. Wherever a complex civilisation has arisen, there has probably been some protest against the dangers of luxury. Plato, in the second book of the "Republic," represents Socrates as describing the mode of life in the ideal state. His citizens were to have clothes and shoes and houses, and to feed on barley and wheat, "made into noble puddings and loaves," which, to save the kitchen-work, should be served up on a mat of reeds or clean leaves. For a relish he concedes salt and olives and cheese and onions, and for dessert, figs and pulse and beans. We know also that the historical Socrates did actually live a life of extreme simplicity. "He had a maxim that to want nothing belonged only to the gods, and to want as little

as possible was the nearest approach to the godlike that man might reach."

Jesus of Nazareth also taught his disciples that they were not to fret about what they should eat or what they should drink, or how they should dress; he reproved the woman of Bethany who was "cumbered about much serving"; and he emphatically declared the great disadvantage of being too rich, because it made it almost impossible for a man to pass through the narrow gate of a spiritual life. For ages these sayings of Jesus took no great or general hold except when adopted from motives of self-mortification. But now, in these last days, there has begun a revival of this Nazarene doctrine. Wordsworth heads the movement, Thoreau, Tolstoi, Carpenter and others follow in his wake, and carry the doctrine to its logical extreme.

But what, more precisely, do we mean by simplicity? We mean two things:

1. The renunciation of superfluities.
2. The renunciation of artificialities.

1. The advocates of simplicity often speak as though their main idea was to abandon all the conveniences of life. The reasonable man will abandon only the inconveniences of life. We must remember, however, that inconveniences are of two kinds, those that come from too little and those that come from too much. We do

not always realise the extent to which we are oppressed by the latter—the superfluities of life. There is scarcely one of us who does not, through them, separate himself more or less from reality, who does not do things that he does not want to do, pretend to enjoy things that he does not enjoy, and allow himself to be drawn more or less into the toilsome stream of fashion. The extremists perhaps carry their doctrine too far. They say, keep your leisure by sacrificing household goods and the whole household system. But though this is the obvious solution, I am not sure that it is the right one. It may be worth our while to sacrifice a certain measure of liberty for the attainment of a certain measure of comfort. The difficult question is, What measure? The answer to that difficult question depends upon what the comfort is for. Is it for comfort's sake or for *life's* sake? It also depends upon who the individual in question is, and what are the needs of his particular nature; so that the definition of a reasonable simplicity is reduced to this: "That degree of plainness in living which for the individual in question contributes to liberty, repose, or any other spiritual good."

A life to be rich must be social; also, it must have varied experience and a large outlook. And these suggest certain limitations to the extreme doctrine of simplification. The truth remains, however, that



nine-tenths of us burden ourselves and others with a mountain of labour, the outcome of which is a heap of superfluities which do not increase our happiness or comfort, but which decrease our liberty and leisure.

We may perhaps illustrate the principle of simplicity by a reference to art. Simplicity in art consists in omitting the irrelevant. No beginner in art is ever simple. The beginner puts in all he sees ; and it is only by degrees that he gets to see the essential, and by degrees that he gains courage to omit the non-essential. As in art, so in life. Living is, in fact, one of the fine arts ; and the lives of the majority—their homes, their domestic arrangements, their pursuits—are lacking in the grace of simplicity. They are not like the picture of the great artist, simple in all their variety ; they are like the production of the tyro, crammed with teasing detail.

In answer to all this, there are two main objections which one continually hears.

First, there is the stock objection that it is *asceticism*, a word which is supposed of itself to be a sufficient condemnation of anything to which it is applied. As if anything worth accomplishing had ever been accomplished *without* asceticism ! As if ἄσκησις, self-restraint, the athletics of the soul, were not the very backbone

of every worthy and redeeming movement! That moderation, that self-discipline, that wise economy of force which is often foolishly confounded with fanatic gloom, is in fact the very salt of human character and the very soul of social reform.

Secondly, there is the objection so often urged that simple living would destroy art. In a simpler state of society the frippery-monger would probably disappear, bric-à-brac might vanish from our midst, beauty, on the whole, would be less divorced from utility, the general tendency would be rather to make the useful beautiful than to crowd the home with beautiful inutilities; but art itself would be the very last thing to suffer in our New Republic.

## II

But there is another great branch of the subject—the simplification which wars against *artificialities*. I think our life needs amendment in this respect also, and yet I would begin by observing that this artificiality is not an unmixed evil. There is a certain *rationale* in most conventions of which it will be well for us to take heed if we wish to avoid hasty and ill-founded judgments.

For instance, in that form of convention which we call “fashion”—that imitativeness which makes any new

style spread through the community like an epidemic—there is, after all, much more of reason than the cynic is apt to allow. Englishmen of a certain generation furnish their houses in a certain way. With the past generation it was all gilded consoles and wax flowers ; now it is all overmantels and screens. Or we *dress* alike ; we all make ourselves ridiculous for a year or two with one style of garment, and then, discovering its absurdity, we proceed to make ourselves ridiculous in another style of garment. Whereupon the cynic cries out upon our lack of individuality, upon the servility or the silliness which compels us to follow in the monotonous sheep-walk of fashion. But the cynic is wrong. The absurdity of fashion does not lie in the consensus. The consensus, on the contrary, is the one redeeming point about it. The consensus results from our corporate life. We furnish alike and we dress alike because we belong to a community ; and the question where individual differences are to have free play, and where communal sympathy is to curb them, is not so simple a question as the cynic implies.

The consensus is necessary to give the restful unity amid the stimulating variety. It is quite right that we should agree upon some vogue, some common standard, some type or norm, from which to branch out into individual diversity. The only pity is that the accepted

theme upon which we are doomed to play our variations is often of so low a type that no music of the finest soul can altogether redeem it, no amount of individuality raise the whole effect very far above the vulgar or inane.

This, then, is the first concession which I wish to make in favour of "fashion" in general. I acknowledge our gregariousness; I know that it lies at the very base of our humanity, that it belongs to that community of Nature which underlies our individuality; and I recognise it as inevitable, nay desirable, that this gregariousness should find outward expression in a common style, whether in dress, furniture, architecture, etiquette or what not.

But there is another concession which I think we ought to make. Convention springs not merely from the natural imitateness of our common life, it springs sometimes from another and a still more vital root. It results from the fact that we are spiritual beings. Spiritual relations between individuals have to be expressed which can find expression in no other conceivable way than by conventional signs—signs arbitrary and unmeaning in themselves, but which we agree together are to represent such and such ideas. And so with many of our conventions: they are the language which we speak, the signs which stand for values;

social life could no more do without them than algebra without its  $x y z$ . By such arbitrary signs we build a bridge of communication between soul and soul, for souls can only meet by symbols. Hence it comes about that all life is covered by concentric circles of ceremony: great ceremonies and small ceremonies, political ceremonies and social ceremonies. It could not be otherwise in a world where the spiritual is expressed by means of the material. Without form there is chaos.

But now, having made these two large concessions, I come to the more fruitful inquiry whether life might not, all the same, be vastly simplified upon its ceremonial side. Granting all that has been urged, we shall yet find, I think, that our life is fettered and spoiled and falsified to no inconsiderable extent by perfectly needless and entirely disastrous artificialities.

Let us consider, then, at what point the necessary and natural convention passes into the unnecessary and the harmful; and let us ask ourselves how far and in what way it is possible for us in this matter to simplify our lives.

In the first place, all conventions which *curtail the liberty of the individual with no adequate advantage to the community* are harmful and ought to be resisted.

To take the most obvious illustration, that of *etiquette*.

There are two classes of habits to which the term "manners" is applied. There are the "manners" of which William of Wykeham spoke when he framed his famous motto, "Manners makyth man"; and of which Cicero spoke when he began his oration against Verres with the exclamation, "*O tempora, O mores!*" In this, the major sense, the term "manners" seems to be used for those great and imperative lines of conduct for which we now reserve the term "morals." But the same word "manners" is also used for those minor social ethics, together with those purely conventional courtesies which, all mixed together in an undistinguished heap, form a body of rules considered only *less imperative* than the major "manners" of the moralist.

Now, in process of time, a great deal which was formerly indifferent has come to be considered as imperative. When Catherine gave receptions to the Russian nobility she found herself obliged to publish certain rules of etiquette which were something more than ceremonial and which would be unnecessary now for any but the roughest boor. Gentlemen were not to get drunk *before the feast was ended*; ladies of the Court were not to wash out their mouths in the drinking glasses; noblemen were forbidden to strike their wives *in company*; and so on. Or, if you wish to see what rules for social intercourse it was necessary to lay

down even in England a couple of centuries ago, you may consult a little book published in 1653 entitled *The Accomplished Lady's Rich Closet of Rarities, or Ingenious Gentlewoman's Delightful Companion*. The rules there enunciated are of the most primitive kind, and serve to show the point from which we have advanced.

This movement, then, is continually going on. Matters which in one age are regarded as belonging to the minor manners, in the next age enter the sphere of the major. They are sublimated or assimilated. They enter a new phase of being. They become part and parcel of the social existence. But as this process goes on (and here is the point) there is always a certain residuum. The minor manners are not all ethical; some are purely ceremonial. And therefore, while some rules, at one time regarded as indifferent, afterwards became axioms of conduct, others remain indifferent. They belong by right to the sphere of convention—are recognised as essentially and permanently artificial, serving a temporary purpose, perhaps, to indicate by common consent this or that human relation, but capable at any time of being modified, suspended, or superseded.

Now, it is upon this, the purely ceremonial side of politeness, that the danger lies. If we define "politeness" proper as a minor benevolence, then etiquette is

that body of conventions which are used to express that minor benevolence. But suppose they no longer express it! Suppose that many of the conventions are empty survivals, expressing nothing, and imposed upon us merely from long and unthinking habit? Then what follows? "Nothing," you say, "that matters." Something that matters very much, I answer—the needless curtailment of freedom.

Some curtailments, no doubt, are needful; they are of advantage to the community, and so contribute to the larger life of the individual himself. But the conventions which are of no advantage to the community deprive man of his freedom without giving anything in return; they forbid, with the whole weight of social bann, certain actions or expressions, modes of life, or personal preferences, which, for all we know to the contrary, are necessary to the full development of the individual life.

This, therefore, is one consideration adverse to the multiplication of social rules. One would not grudge a certain loss of liberty in the observance of conventions which are intended to convey just and right relations between men; but when the liberty is sacrificed to what is neither necessary nor beautiful, when the man is reduced to the condition of Gulliver, tied down by ten thousand pigmy bonds, one is apt to rebel and to



feel at times like poor Rollit in the play, when he had been taking lessons in the art of deportment : “ Don’t you worry me ; I’ve been a gentleman for a month, and I’m going to have a morning off.” Precisely because the tyranny of custom is such as to make eccentricity a reproach, it is desirable, in order to break through that tyranny, that people should sometimes be eccentric. You cannot, as Mill said, get a coat or a pair of boots to fit you unless you either have them made to measure or have a whole warehouseful to choose from ; and people think, forsooth, that it is easier to fit you with a life than with a coat.

Again, there is this second touchstone—Convention is harmful when it wars against *equality*.

I know quite well the walls that here stand ready for me to run my head against. I know that no two men ever were, ever are, or ever will be, equal in all respects. I know that we are born into the world unequal—unequal in physique, unequal in intellect, unequal in æsthetic and even in moral susceptibility ; and that when two or more of us do happen to be born equal in any one of these respects, inequality of fortune and opportunity will often cause one to outstrip the others. But I know also that where such inequality does not exist it is often made to appear as if it did ; that where it does exist it is emphasised and magnified out of all

proportion ; and that an immense body of conventions is maintained for this sole purpose and no other—to produce an appearance of inequality whether the reality is there or not. Equality of worth in character, equality of rank in intellect, ought to be recognised wherever they are found ; but our conventions often run distinctly counter to this principle.

Hodge may be as holy as St Francis of Assisi, but if he lives in a half-crown cottage he is simply Hodge. Mr Smith may be as clever as Shakespeare and as brave as Cœur de Lion, but if he lives over his shop he will always be *Mr* Smith ; never, until he attains to the dignity of a semi-detached stucco villa in the suburbs, will he be entitled to the mediæval military title of “Esquire,” and then only in the suburbs.

These distinctions are, in fact, much like that traditional sentinel in the old War Office story, who was placed to keep off the people from a newly-painted seat, and whose successors continued for a century or more, in due military routine, to mount guard at the same spot, though the seat had long crumbled into dust. The distinctions, the living distinctions, have long since ceased to exist : the esquire no longer bears the shield, he only puts it on his spoons ; but the sentinel still mounts guard over the fancied rank, every bit as jealously as if that rank were real.

Tolstoi complains that our whole life—food, dress, dwelling, cleanliness, and even education—is purposely artificialised, with the deliberate intention of placing a gulf between the ruling classes and the workers. “For a rich man,” he says, “it is out of the question to invite a poor person to his table. One must know how to hand a lady to table, how to bow, how to sit, to eat, to use a finger-bowl, all of which the rich alone know how to do.” The same with dress. We must have all kinds of dresses. Evening-dress coats, frock-coats, lounging-coats, shooting-coats ; one coat for our work, and another for our sport, and another for our parties. Nay, even our cleanliness is used to create a social difference ; our very shirt-front becomes an impassable barrier.

And so, too, with our education. Lord Beaconsfield meant it cynically when he called Eton an “expensive ceremony” ; but in all sober truth a good deal of our education is nothing else. It is ceremony of the worst kind ; it is conventional, uselessly conventional, wickedly conventional. Do you think that the piano is always learnt from love of music ? that Greek and Latin are learnt from admiration of the classics ? that the algebraic formulæ for the permutations and combinations of all the letters in the word “parallelogrammatically” are crammed up because it is such a splendid discipline for

the intellect? I tell you that in nine cases out of ten the parents have these things taught to their children, not because they think that their lives will be enriched, their minds made flexible, their hearts made happy, but because these things will stamp them and mark them off from the lower classes. Talent or no talent, hated or loved, the piano must be strummed and the Latin verses scanned, for the same reason that digging, building, scrubbing, cooking, must be eschewed. Tolstoi is quite right: more than half our education is purely exclusive in its aim.

I plead, then, for equality, for an equal recognition of worth wherever it is found; not by knighting every brave butcher or baker, or canonising every holy grocer, but rather by forgoing and, as far as may be, disusing all distinctive titles which are retained through mere social viscosity after the distinction has become unreal; for all such distinctions which have no basis in the man himself are apt to become fertile roots of petty jealousy and fancied slight and artificial reserve—of vanity on the one hand and resentment on the other; and the man who strives to simplify our manners in this respect is doing much to uphold the spirit of justice and to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood.

But if conventionality sins against liberty and against equality, that is not all. There is a greater sin than

these ; these may be forgiven, but there is another sin—a fundamental, deep-seated sin—a sort of sin against the Holy Ghost, unpardonable and irremediable unless it be wholly rooted out and utterly destroyed ; and it is of this that conventionality is often guilty—I mean the sin of untruth.

The conventional man is generally an insincere man ; and when in this respect we teach simplicity, it is, in fact, sincerity that we teach. All simplicity is a kind of sincerity.

When social conventions have become hollow ; when social life is sicklied over with the unwholesome taint of pretence ; when the free and living man, the human soul with his glorious possibilities, is doomed to walk in a vain show, fettered, dwarfed, and maimed by a million meaningless restraints, things once serving as the expressions of inward meanings, but now the very incubus by which those meanings are stifled and the real world of men and things obscured, then I think it is not unfit that we should take into consideration even this trivial subject of social convention.

Most serious seem to me the multitudinous minor insincerities into which we are by our social usages betrayed. I had occasion a year or two ago to study the contents of books of manners of different ages ; but of all such books, ancient or modern, the most doleful

and dreary which I came across bore this truly ghastly title : *Society Small-talk ; What to Say and When to Say It*. Consider the condition of a society which could possibly call forth such a manual as that. The utter dreariness and the miserable sham ! What a masquerade, what a marionette-show, such a society must be ! How far removed from the vitality of truth, from the spontaneity, the living fire, the warmth and light and thrill of real spiritual contact and communion ! And yet three-fourths of the speech which takes the place of such communion among us is of this order—prescribed for us by the social code. You shall not say what you will, you shall say what is expected—that or nothing.

The age-long habit of society to pretend that things are as they are not, to feign respect for whom no respect is felt, obedient service of those who are not served, and admiration where there is supreme indifference—this pretence of prudery where there is neither modesty nor shame, of worship where there is no reverence, and love while the heart is cold—this vast web of sham, in the midst of which we live and move, I will tell you what, in the end, it does for us—it blinds us ; it prevents us from seeing things as they are.

And as it is with things, so it is with men. To know a human soul is a great gain, a more profoundly

interesting knowledge than any knowledge whatever of the lower creation. We were meant to know each other ; man is the proper study of man. Nature has set us face to face with kindred souls, so that the fire may play from soul to soul ; she has given us the spiritual eye that we may love the beauty and admire the strength, and wonder at the play of light and shadow in the heart of man. And what have *we* done ? We have all with one consent set ourselves to defeat these beneficent and gracious ends. We have agreed to make life a masked ball and go about with false faces. We have learned to screen ourselves behind a web of hypocritic smiles and compliments. We have blinded our eye that we may not see our fellows, and we have taken good care that our fellows shall not see us ; and therefore our intercourse, which was meant to be a communion between living spirits, has become a series of regulation remarks, ridiculous attitudes, petty flatteries, smirks, simpers, bland pretences, and polite shams. That is what, to a large extent, we have substituted for the poetry of life.

We learn this art ; we are carefully taught it while we are still young, and by the time that we have reached middle life it has become a second nature. And now we are all busy teaching it to our children, that the next generation also may have the advantage

of politeness, even though it be at the expense of truth. We are not content with being dull people ourselves who dare not depart by a hairsbreadth from established custom, we are anxious that our children should grow up dull people too. But, O for that kingdom of innocence, that realm of the childlike, where hearts never grow cold, and manners never harden into mannerisms, and faces never tell false tales! "Except ye become as little children," said One—except ye have the open heart, and the clear eye, and the truthful lip—"ye cannot enter the Kingdom of Spirit." Yes, that is what we are doing; shutting ourselves and our children out from the Kingdom of the Spirit; bartering our birthright of mutual knowledge, and moral insight, and spiritual fellowship, for that cheap mess of pottage called respectability, decorum and social rank.

And now, if we at all realise what social life might and ought to be—how glad and loving, how full of interest and zest, how bright and brave and spiritually significant, we shall not think it vain to attempt some remedies for the depression and constraint from which it too often suffers.

We might, perhaps, speak in the æsthetic vein, use the analogy of art and reduce our remedies to the formula which I used in speaking of the *superfluities* of modern life, "omission of the irrelevant." In



fact, there are certain kinds of conventionality which fall more readily under this æsthetic formula than they do under a more rigidly ethical rule. The æsthetic formula is specially applicable to cases where the convention is not so much socially exclusive or hypocritically insincere as simply silly and superfluous. It is all very well for certain of the chief human relations to be symbolised and embodied in ceremonies, but we don't want *everything* symbolised. Such over-symbolisation is an artistic quite as much as an ethical blunder.

However, we may, I think, upon the whole and in the vast majority of cases, more fruitfully employ an ethical than an æsthetic analogy. Simplicity, I have said, is a kind of sincerity, and the remedies we need for the false and foolish conventions of our modern intercourse are of an ethical kind.

Two such remedies I would suggest. The first is *Courage*. Courage lies at the root of all virtue, especially of the virtue of veracity; and the only cure for the evils of convention is the courage to be yourself. The great men, the prophets who have brought us back to truth, have all been men of courage. Even the eighteenth century—that century of shams—had its three truthful men who faced the fiery furnace of public opinion: Lessing in Germany, Voltaire in France, and brave old Samuel Johnson in England.

And the Song of the Three Children has been taken up by many since. Goethe, Carlyle, Ruskin, Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, and many a minor prophet have refused to bow down to the idol of the moment at the sound of harp, sackbut, and psaltery. Such men, by sheer force of manly independence—veracity upheld by valour—have cleared the way for us; and their lesson, I believe, has sunk deeply into the consciousness of the present generation.

But what we need now, I fancy, is not so much a Lessing to bring our cultured classes back to native homeliness, a Johnson to “clear our minds of cant,” another Carlyle or another Ruskin; what we need is a whole body of the rank and file—the united influence of a number of ethically-minded people bent upon courageously living a free and sensible and sincere personal life undeterred by the fear of exciting remark or of losing caste. Profoundly wise were the words of one of our wisest, “that there is no alleviation for the sufferings of mankind except veracity of thought and of action.” And those words of Huxley’s are true, not only of the greater sufferings of nations, but also of that mass of smaller sufferings—the soreness and heart-burnings caused by class-difference, the weariness and the monotony caused by ceremonious sameness, and all those other petty social evils which follow from

a complex and unnatural code of manners. Of these, too, it may be said that "there is no alleviation for them except veracity of thought and action."

Our second remedy is *Love*: that love which seeks to get near to the living soul of one's fellows, and whose impulse is to sweep away all barriers of false dignity or vain conceit. Love—good fellowship—this is the cure for half of our social boredom and half our social friction. Dip, if you will, into one of those doleful little volumes of social rules, and see how the rules assume throughout that all one's acquaintances are anxious and waiting to take offence, their tempers nicely balanced in a state of most unstable equilibrium. Then think of Charles Lamb and his Wednesday evening parties; or think of any of your own younger experiences, before you were overcome by the pigmies of convention; social gatherings of old schoolfellows or college chums, where good, kind, healthy human feeling swept all ceremony to the winds, and liberty, equality, fraternity were the only rules. What is the secret of it? Just this: that there is a thoroughly good understanding between the various members of the circle; and Jack doesn't care a rap whether he sits at the top or bottom of the table, nor Tom whether he is helped first or last, so long as you listen to his song or laugh at his joke when his turn comes.

A good and kind and healthy feeling among the

members of society—that, I say, is what we want. But that is what, under present circumstances, it is most difficult to get. Schopenhauer said that society was like a family of porcupines who were obliged more or less to hold themselves aloof and make others keep their distance by reason of the abundant prickles with which a beneficent Providence had endowed them. And that, I fear, is largely true and will remain true while classes are so widely sundered and our whole life is so far removed from Nature. But that better organisation of society for which we look, and that better state of heart for which we all of us hope and in our measure work, will of themselves do away with a whole world of false dignity and a whole body of useless rules. These two motive forces, then, these two moral qualities, we need if we are in any degree to rid ourselves of the incubus of unnecessary convention.

First, *courage* ; because courage lies at the root of truth, and truth will speedily destroy the *monotony* of convention. Second, *love* ; because love lies at the root of that sense of equality, that recognition of a common nature, which will set aside half our artificial class-distinctions. The first of these will give us social variety, the second social unity ; and not until we get a perfect fusion of unity and variety shall we arrive at that rational and healthy social state for which we look.

## VI.—THE CONFESSIONS OF A SIMPLIFIER

[NOTE.—The MS. of the following address, given by Mr Rix as the opening of a debate on Simplification of Life, was found after the rest of the volume was in print. Mr Rix intended, had he lived, to write an article under the above title which would probably have been an expansion of this address.]

I COME before you this evening, not in the character of a preacher and reformer, but in that of a penitent—a man who has miserably failed to attain his ideals. I have been asked to speak to you upon simplicity of life ; but I do not myself live simply. I once had dreams of doing so, and even made some small attempt in that direction ; but, whenever I attempted to cross to the land of Canaan, I found there was a very rapid current down stream ; so that at the age of fifty I find myself landed in a residential neighbourhood full of desirable mansions. I never wear fustian trousers : the smock-frock which I wore about three times is kept in the box-room ; I indulge in a most enjoyable intercourse with several sinners who live in villas both at Limpsfield and especially at Sanderstead ; I keep a

servant ; I eat meat, and always have a pudding afterwards ; I never call in the disreputable tramp to dine with me ; and my acquaintance with the poor is limited to a few of the most interesting and respectable of the villagers, not in the land of milk and honey (those simple articles of diet), but much nearer, I am afraid, to the shores famous for dead-sea apples.

Well, I will ease myself by making a clean breast of it. In those long-past days when the Fellowship of the New Life indulged in shining dreams I was caught by the enthusiasm. I had visions of a labourer's cottage, an acre of fruit trees and a market cart, an oasis in some remote wilderness whence I should issue week by week, lay aside my mattock and pruning-hook and preach the gospel of simplicity to the benighted dwellers in Babylon. I had a vision of corduroys and a smock-frock, the spade relieved by the pen, a close acquaintance with wild Nature, a total divorce from villadom, a dinner of one course, no servants, no conventions, no flesh-food, a place at table for the needy wayfarer, and an intimate fellowship with the poor and the oppressed.

This was my vision. And now what is the outcome ? My labourer's cottage is a rather comfortable little villa, my economic acre boasts flower-borders and a lawn. My wilderness is full of thousand-pound

residences. What right, then, have I to come and preach to you about simplicity? None, my dear brethren, none! My only comfort being that very few of you are any better than myself.

In part, as I have said, this lapse from the ideal is due to the strong current of social opinion which too often sweeps the simplifier off his feet. There was my architect—an excellent fellow, but utterly incapable of conceiving the simple life. I tried hard to make him understand that what I wanted was a labourer's cottage—that I was going in for a life of the soil, that I wished to get near to Nature, that I wanted no conventions, that it was not necessary to provide a drawing-room because I desired to live in the kitchen, that he need not provide a passage (or what I think is called a *hall* by some people, *i.e.* a minute tunnel 2 feet 10 inches wide), for I wished the door to open straight out of the garden into the living-room. Very well, said he, such a cottage could be built for £300. But he never seemed to think I meant it. Then, there was the partner of my life. She said she did not want any cooking in the sitting-room and we must have at least a scullery with a stove in it. She thought it would be cold in winter to have the door opening straight out into the garden and we must have an entry. My friends, that scullery grew into a

kitchen, the kitchen grew into a parlour, and the entry grew into a passage (commonly called a "hall"). The cottage, it is true, still looked fairly simple on paper ; but when it was built—well—the parish refused to rate it as a cottage.

Let me give you another instance of this strong perverting current of social opinion. I thought it would be nice and simple if, when you went to a friend's house, you were to shake hands with the servants. I did not see why servants should be treated differently from other people. It seemed to me to be one of the false refinements of our elaborate social system ; and I desired to simplify in this direction. So I started with the thin edge of the wedge. I used to preach at that time at a chapel where the minister was very much of an invalid and spent some months of each year upon the continent. It was his practice to lend his house on those occasions to the people who preached for him, together, of course, with the services of his domestic staff. This seemed to offer a fair field for a commencement—there were the servants to practise on and no host to criticise. Well, I went there several times and I always shook hands with the servants. They seemed surprised ; but they did not refuse this token of friendship. The invalid minister came back and invited me to spend a Sunday



with him. And now came the tug of war. I had to do it with the host *there*—Dear friends! I cannot proceed! You must permit me to draw a veil. I gave up shaking hands with servants.

These are, I know too well, the confessions of a weak man. But, my friends, have you ever estimated the strength of the current of public opinion in these little matters? A man may abjure the top-hat; he may wear sandals; he may give up umbrellas and wrap himself in a Scotch plaid; he may clean his own boots or paint his own house; he may be a vegetarian, an anti-tobacconist, a socialist or a free-thinker; may go to church in a builder's shed up a dark entry or not go to church at all, and his neighbours will only regard him as a harmless lunatic. All this may be condoned, and many of his friends will still be true to him (especially if they are not very well to do); but, if he wishes to shake that social edifice to its foundation, if he wishes to estimate the strength of the social current, let him fetch his dinner-beer from the public-house, smoke a clay pipe upon his door-step, or shake hands with the servants.

And now, having made my confession, it occurs to me that it may be edifying to consider the causes of my lapse from grace. Well, in addition to that feebleness of will for which no man dares to plead

excuse, however inevitable and inborn it may seem to himself, there have, I think, been two things which have prevented the realisation of early dreams—one of them inevitable and excusable, the other a fault or at least an instinctive defect.

The one was a somewhat serious lack of physical health—a complaint which made impossible that manual toil which is a most important condition of a primitive way of life. This could not be helped, and it is instructive only as indicating one noteworthy limitation which must always be taken into account in planning a simple way of life for oneself. The other is a very important defect, and one which ought to furnish the principal subject-matter for your consideration this evening: I mean the lack of some clear principle or principles to which the practice of simplicity ought continually to be referred and ought gradually to be conformed.

Let me ask you, then, to make this the chief aim of your debate this evening. Try, if you can, to formulate some intelligible principle to which this question of simplicity can be reduced. Or, if it cannot be reduced to one such principle, set forth the principles which ought to underlie our practice, that we may not be the victims of delusion and disappointment, and that we may not justly be termed faddists or fools,

but may be able to give some reason for the faith that is in us.

Let me briefly illustrate the necessity for this by putting before you the two extremes of simplification as they have come beneath my own notice in the course of my career.

Edward Carpenter once drew the attention of the New Fellowship to the existence of a Society called "The Fellowship of the Naked Truth." The chief and, I believe, the sole article of its faith was that people should not wear clothes. Its members were very simple people, and this was how they expressed their simplicity. It is obvious that life would be much simplified if we did not have to wear clothes. Our needlework would be simplified, also our bedroom furniture. The hatstand and the wardrobe would both be abolished. Our thoughts would be liberated from the consideration of the fashion-plates; and the time which we spend upon the toilet would be much reduced.

It is true that the Fellowship of the Naked Truth was not altogether free from the vice of compromise. The English branch of the Society, at any rate (it was of Indian origin) consented to wear some articles of attire when they appeared in public, though they reduced them to a minimum. But in their committee meetings,

I am told, they adhered strictly to principle. That is, they appeared in the character of what Carlyle calls the "forked radish."

This, my friends, represents one pole of the doctrine of simplicity.

The other pole is represented by a noble earl who once heard me lecture and afterwards invited me to his mansion for a private interview. In the course of that interview he explained to me that he was much attracted by the doctrine of simplification, but did not see how he could go any further than he had gone already. I inquired to what point he had attained. Well, he said, he was much hampered by the existence of the mansion in which I then sat. He held it as a trust, not only for unborn heirs, but also in some sense for the nation. It was full of antiquities and of very precious works of art; and in that he did not see how he was to do with a smaller staff of footmen or of female servants than he at that time employed, which he admitted was pretty numerous.

That, my friends, is the other extreme of the doctrine of simplicity.

Now, for the most of us the practicable and, I think I must say, *obligatory* degree of simplification lies somewhere between these two extremes. I cannot think we are bound to embrace the first extreme; I

feel sure we ought to attain to a greater degree of simplicity than is indicated by the second extreme. And yet I am not at all satisfied that a medium course is right *merely because* it is a medium. If it lies between the extremes, it lies there because there is some principle which has placed it there — some principle other than mere compromise or love of moderation. There must be some sound principle for adopting a degree of civilisation, there must be some equally sound principle for not adopting all its elaborations. *What is that principle?* This, my friends, is what I invite you this evening to debate; this is the golden truth which I invite you as truth-seekers to disinter.

Perhaps it may assist discussion if I just mention some of the considerations which have in my own case strongly attracted me to a simple way of life. In my acknowledged character of “A prodigious failure” I can of course only give them for what they are worth. You must thresh them out and see if there is grain in them. You must consider whether these which I give you merely as *motives* may be dignified by the name of principles; and, if they may, whether they can all be reduced to one embracing principle which may give us a solid and spacious foundation for our faith.

In the first place, a strong attraction to me was the

greater freedom which comes with a simple life. The life of the average Philistine is exceeding laborious and exceedingly trammelled : in both respects simplicity makes for deliverance. It gives ease and it gives emancipation.

It is true that a simplifier often works exceedingly hard, and so seems sometimes to belie this doctrine. He attempts, perhaps, to do all the work of the house himself ; and his friends exclaim : " Well, if that is what simplification means, save me from simplifying." But the fallacy here is very obvious. You are working with two variables. Have the same amount of labour at command, and it is a truism that a simpler way of life will enable you to use less of it. But, of course, if you reduce the work to be done and at the same time reduce *still more* the working-power, the life becomes not easier but harder. If I employ two servants to keep an eight-roomed house going, it does not follow that I can dismiss them both and keep a six-roomed house going without help. That is the kind of thing the simplifier often does, and so simplification gets a bad name.

The fact is the simplifier is generally a man who dislikes hired labour, and so the simplifier's wife has a hard time of it. But if by co-operation or communism or some other scheme of life hired labour can be

abolished without bringing all the manual labour of a house upon one individual, it is very clear that simplification makes for liberty.

From the trammels of convention, the weariness of routine, the ghastly bondage of civilisation as it is ordinarily understood, it is still more evident that simplicity of life (which includes simplicity of manners) is a great deliverance.

A second motive which induced me to attempt simplification was the feeling of equality. This feeling, I have observed, varies enormously in different people. People are *born* with different degrees of it ; and early surroundings have also an important influence in fostering or checking it. But, given a certain degree of this democratic feeling, the established mode of life in so-called "civilised communities," and especially in England, is literally "painful." I frequently see girls standing behind the chairs, doing up the boots, cleaning the clothes or the rooms of young middle-class women who are in almost every way their inferiors. The "servant" is frequently superior in appearance, in manner, in fine feeling, in moral characteristics to the quasi-fashionable person whose dirty work she does : and it *hurts* me. It hurts me to see an elderly butler who has passed through life's discipline and become mellowed in character and refined in feeling and

affection (as is very often the case) standing mum and respectful in the presence of some supercilious young snob. It hurts me to see some aged labourer left out from the festal gathering of his daughter because she has married a shopkeeper or a postman. These gulfs between class and class which characterise English society from the very bottom to the top of the artificial ladder are painful to a degree; and they would be greatly lessened and in time obliterated by a simpler way of life. It is the differences in wealth and style—in clothes and food and petty luxuries—far more than the differences in education, which make the gulfs.

A third characteristic of the simple life is its sincerity, and this again forms an immense attraction. I was much struck in reading Kropotkin's *Memories of a Revolutionist*, by his account of how the two characteristics of the love of equality and the love of sincerity went hand in hand. The young revolutionists of Russia who gave up everything—rank and wealth and friends—and went to live among the people, invariably exhibited toward each other great sincerity, while they exhibited toward the peasantry the sense of human equality. The two things always went together.

Probably the same motive lies behind them both. There is in the simplification of the material basis of life a certain moral impulse which is near akin to the



sincerity which impels to veracity and a certain unceremoniousness in social intercourse. To be sincere is to be simple. But I leave to the philosophers who shall follow me in this debate to work out this suggestion and reduce it to consistent thought.

Fourth and last, there is, as it seems to me, an *æsthetic pleasure* in simplicity. I never could see that the "greenery-yallery, Grosvenor gallery" young man was the true æsthete. I never could understand why crockery-ware hanging upon walls in perilous positions, fans, screens, overmantels, Liberty-frippery and nic-nacs should be called æsthetic. Which gives the higher form of pleasure—all this teasing nonsense, or the repose of a simply-furnished farmhouse? The one is the manufactured pleasure of an idle life, the other the natural pleasure of a life near to Nature. The one is the unhealthy pleasure of elaboration, the other the pure pleasure of simplicity.

The æsthetic quality of simplicity in *everything*—in food, in dress, in dwellings, in society, in literature, in dancing, in gardening, in music and in painting, in household arrangements and in the entertaining of guests—cannot be too highly valued. With more simplicity, life would be a different matter. It is not that I object to variety: let us have all the variety you will; but don't let us have it all at once. Don't let us set our

affections on strawberries at Christmas and peas in spring, or try to find delight in half a dozen parties in one evening. Don't let us suppose that the way to enjoy Art is to go to the Academy and look at five hundred pictures, expressing five hundred emotions (or five hundred inanities as the case may be) all in one afternoon and go home with a headache. Don't let us imagine that the way to enjoy music is to sit for three hours in a heated room listening to a long programme of disconnected joys, till the manifold joys get mixed into one very composite pain. Take things simply—enjoy them one by one—content yourself with the world as it was made. You were never meant to live in all four seasons at once, nor in all the scales of emotions at once, nor in every stage of thought at once. Life was not meant to be a simultaneity, it was meant to be a succession. *Learn simplicity and gain repose.*

# ESSAYS AND ADDRESSES

## I.—THE RETURN TO NATURE

“THE Universe,” says Emerson, “is composed of Nature and the Soul,” and it is in this sense of the term Nature that I am about to use it. I mean by Nature all that we recognise as not ourselves—all that exists and lives apart from and uninspired by the human soul. I recognise two spheres, distinguishable in thought, whether or not they are distinct in fact : a sphere without and a sphere within. The outward sphere is not necessarily material in the gross and earthly sense of the term ; and the inward sphere is not necessarily ideal in the allusive and phantasmal sense of the term. But the latter is a world which we contemplate by turning backward and inward, and in which we are, or think ourselves to be, causative ; the former is a world into which we look outward and around, and in which the nature-spirit has free course and exercises undisputed sway ; and it is of this

world that we speak when we speak of the return to Nature.

Now the problem of the return to Nature, taken in its widest sense, arises in this way. There is a certain intersection of these spheres. The sphere of the human soul impinges upon and penetrates the sphere of Nature, and the figure of intersection embraces all that in the widest sense we mean by art. Not only the fine arts but the useful arts are the outcome of the human soul ; they are the products of the mental in its control over a small portion of the material sphere. Music, painting, poetry, architecture, engineering, drainage, navigation, are all the result of man's mental part working in the material sphere. Art, in its widest sense, is the mixture of man's soul with Nature. But no sooner does man begin to meddle with Nature than he is apt to distort Nature (not always or inevitably, but very generally), so that there continually recurs the necessity in every department of art or craft of going back to Nature.

First, in respect of *truth* we have to return to the origins of our work—to study afresh the material and the forces which fill the unadulterated sphere of Nature. In the useful arts we have to get rid of all sorts of *a priori* notions of how Nature and Nature's forces ought to work, and ask ourselves simply how they do

work. We have to question Nature and observe her answers—abandon fancy and return to fact—and a large part of experimental science consists in a clever and careful propounding of these questions to Nature, in the interests of the useful arts. In the fine arts and in literature the same return to fact is continually needed. Poetry, painting, architecture, are dishonoured, when they are used to deceive—when they try by mere trickery to excite a vulgar wonder or to assert the existence of that which does not exist. When the builder, for instance, represents his material to be other than it is, or decorates his surface with machine-made ornaments, he degrades his art. I know a certain seminary in our metropolis devoted to the inculcation of theologic truth which boasts a magnificent hall, and everyone of the pious folk who attend the devotional gatherings occasionally held there, exclaims with uplifted hands as he enters those grave portals: “What magnificent carving!” but in truth it is neither “carving” nor “magnificent”; it is plaster of Paris, painted, grained and varnished. The whole room is a vulgar lie. That is the degradation of art by untruth. “Nobody,” as Mr Ruskin says, “wants ornaments, but everybody wants integrity.”

And the same is true of poetry. For although it has been said, and in a certain sense may be admitted,

that "Poetry is never so brilliant as when it is unfettered by truth," yet it somehow happens that the greatest poets have always been those who, revolting from convention, have paid studious attention to truth—not, of course, the truth of photographic detail, but that of a loving study of Nature, and of simple human life. But all this is too well known. The revolt from convention, the return to truth, applies to every department of literature and art. One does not need to quote Burns and Wordsworth, to dilate upon the pre-Raphaelite movement, or to instance the revolt of modern realism—"that severe and pitiless truth" which has of late entered alike into painting and into fiction—in order to illustrate so trite a matter. Man cannot content himself with lies, nor even with that falsehood which was once true, but which is true no longer because the breath of its life has frozen in presence of the Gorgon face of custom.

But it is not only in respect of truth that we need continually to return to Nature ; still more perhaps do we need it in respect of *beauty*. Theologians tell us that there is a certain law by which man continually gravitates to evil. Whether they are right or not in this, I am pretty sure that there is some mysterious law by which man continually gravitates to ugliness. What but original sin could possibly make women dress as

fashionable women dress to-day? And (to hold the balance fair) who could possibly wear a chimney hat but a child of the devil? There is a blindness to beauty, not only in such minor matters as these, but in the great presence of Nature herself, which nothing but some such "fall of man" can account for. You remember, I dare say, the wail of Tolstoi over the English people at Lucerne; how he curses the tourists whose false taste had torn down the old crooked covered wooden bridge with chapels at its corners and pictures on its roof, and had caused to be built instead a granite quay, straight as a stick; how he raves at that granite quay with its rows of lindens set out and provided with supports, and its green benches between the lindens; how he tries all the windows of the hotel in the vain attempt to find one whence he may see the blue lake, the moist, fresh green shores, the meadows, gardens, dark green wooded heights, and the far vista of mountains with fantastic peaks and crags and dead white mounds of snow—where he may see all this without being obliged to see the promenade, the lindens, and the green benches; and how, where neither lake nor mountain nor sky showed one single completed line, one single unmixed colour, one single moment of repose, but everywhere motion, irregularity, fantasy, here "amid this indefinable, confused, unfettered

beauty, stretched in stupid kaleidoscopic confusion, the white line of the quay, the lindens with their supports, and the green seats." This deadness to true beauty and calm acquiescence in discordant monotony Tolstoi lays to the too eager pursuit of money. And this, no doubt, may be one cause of an unfeeling heart. But whatever be the cause or causes, this much at present I desire to note, that when the dead heart begins to beat again, when some prophet's touch unseals those eyes and the beauty of the world floods in upon the soul, that also is one aspect of the return to Nature.

But there is a certain art upon which I have not yet touched at all—an art in which the soul is brought not only into relation with Nature, but at one and the same time into relation with other souls, and which is therefore the supreme and most difficult art of all—I mean the art of living.

I may seem perhaps at first sight to be using the term "art" in a somewhat forced sense in this connection. But a moment's consideration will show you that living is strictly an "art" according to the definition with which I started. It is the overlapping of the spiritual and the material spheres. For when I speak of the art of living I merely mean the arrangement of our material environment so as to subserve the purpose of individual and social well-being. And in this art,



while the return to truth and the return to beauty are both involved, there is a certain special form of the return to Nature which is as imperative as either of these can ever be, and that is the return to *simplicity*. I know, of course, how this doctrine, like all doctrines that ever were preached from the days of Noah, the preacher of righteousness, till now, is capable of perversion. I know the exaggeration of the doctrine which was the inspiration, and probably the death, of Thoreau. I do not believe in the yankee savage of Thoreau any more than I do in the noble savage of Rousseau. I do not believe even in our friend Edward Carpenter when he echoes, as he sometimes seems to do, this Thoreau heresy. To all men who rave against the complexity of civilisation and laud the simplicity of Nature, I am inclined to reply that Nature is simple only at one end. The simplicity of Nature is a very complex simplicity. Unity at one end, infinite variety at the other—that is the kind of simplicity we praise when we praise the simplicity of Nature. And if endless variety is no detriment to the simplicity of Nature, neither is it detrimental to the simplicity of civilisation. I do not want your gaunt unhallowed life which has no veneration for the hoary symbols of the past—which can walk the streets of Canterbury, Oxford, or St Andrews and feel no breath from out the ages sending whispers

through the soul. I do not want a life without variety, to wake and dig and eat and sleep from day to day till death do come. But when Mr Carpenter teaches us, what is after all the pith and purpose of his teaching on this matter, that the results of civilisation "will not necessarily have to be rejected, but only to be brought into subjection," then I for one say "Amen." But how is it with us now? We are so absorbed with the means of living that we have no time to live. Meat is more to us than life, and raiment than the body. Civilisation and its results oppress us. We are overburdened with things that we do not want, and those results of civilisation which might be a joy to us are rendered nugatory by the lack of leisure which comes from a ridiculous rivalry of accumulation on our own part or on the part of those we serve. It would be something if this accumulation were only an accumulation of things that were a joy to someone: if the clerk, the shop-girl, the seamstress, the labourer, could feel that they were sacrificed for the good of others, but they are not even that. These goods that are "laid up for many years" are a joy to none. They are a mere clog upon the man's movements and a burden upon his soul. The rich man, and even the man who would not be accounted rich, is too often like the poor donkey on the common with a log tied to his leg to prevent him

from straying. We no longer possess our possessions ; it is our possessions that possess us. What dreams we used to have as boys of wandering through the land in gipsy-vans, or roving over wide oceans to see the wonders of the world ! What a fascination every book had which raised this delightful mirage of free movement and adventurous travel ! But the boy becomes the man, and the man never fails to tie a millstone round his neck which he calls "comfort."

When we preach, then, the simplification of life, the simplification which we preach does not involve of necessity the abandonment of any product of civilisation which is worth the keeping ; it necessitates only the abandonment of that superfluous luxury, that multitudinous collection of needless trifles, that congestion of meaningless literature, of wearisome ornaments, of miserable pictures, of useless servants, of toilsome calls, condolences, congratulations, Christmas cards, and crinkum-crankums in general, which feed neither the body nor the soul.

In the words of Mrs Piatt's little boy to the tramp outside the window :

"It's not so nice here as it looks  
 With china that keeps breaking so,  
 And five of Mr Tennyson's books  
 Too fine to look in—is it, though ?

If you just had to sit here (Well!)  
In satin chairs too blue to touch,  
And look at flowers too sweet to smell,  
In vases—would you like it much?

If you see any flowers, they grow,  
And you can find them in the sun,  
These are the ones we buy, you know,  
In winter-time—when there are none!

Then you can sit on rocks, you see,  
And walk about in water, too—  
Because you have no shoes! Dear me!  
How many things they let you do!

Then you can sleep out in the shade  
All day, I guess, and all night too,  
Because—you know, you're not afraid  
Of other fellows just like you!

You have no house like this, you know,  
(Where mamma's cross, and ladies call),  
You have the world to live in, though,  
And that's the prettiest place of all!"

And now let me narrow for a moment the meaning of our phrase. Let us speak of the literal "Return to Nature" so that we may see how far this is necessary in order that we may win the "Return to Nature" in its larger sense. In the larger sense of the phrase we include all return to truth, beauty and simplicity of

life. How far, then, is it necessary to this end that we should come literally into personal contact with the life of the winds and woods and waters?

The chemist, of course, may study the facts of Nature in his laboratory. So with mechanics and physics. Even geological and paleontological research is largely carried on in museums. The science which formulates and classifies calls us only occasionally into the midst of Nature; it does not necessitate that we should dwell there. But if you would see Nature live; if you would acquaint yourself with that crowning fact, that supreme outcome of Nature—life—how shall you see it but by dwelling within reach of it? It was not a mere wayward whim of the old prophet of Brantwood when in one of his Clavigeran letters he told his readers that if they could not get at mother earth in any other way they were to keep some pots in a back-yard, and that without this they could not be his disciples. I know by my own experience the pure delight and the spiritual refreshment which comes from such contemplation of Nature in a pot. But this is after all but a corn of wheat for a hungry man; it only seems to make him hungrier. To know that every May-time the hawthorn whitens for us, and the blackbird whistles, and the king-cups fill the marshes with their golden glory, and we poor prisoners drag our weary eyesight

up and down the length of smoky bricks or desolate stucco and lose it all, because we or someone else cannot do without silk dresses, diamond rings, and hothouse fruits! What wickedness it is when one comes to think of it!

And there is yet another function of the soul, yet another boon of Nature, for the full enjoyment of which it is absolutely necessary that we should come personally into the august presence of the living Mother of us all. Nature, Emerson has taught us, is more to us than commodity or beauty, language or discipline; it is *symbol*. "It always speaks of spirit. It suggests the absolute. It is a perpetual effect. It is a great shadow pointing always to the sun behind us." "Nature is the organ through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual, and strives to lead back the individual to it." So says Emerson, and so, too, in his own way says another great idealist, Novalis. "Let man honour Nature," he writes, "as the emblem of his own spirit; the emblem ennobling itself, along with him, to unlimited degrees." And such teaching finds an echo in our hearts. Nature is not mere commodity but speech—an utterance from the spirit to the spirit—a word which if it were once all uttered all would be ended, but which is never uttered but always uttering. Nature is all this to us, and yet we forsake her and fill our ears

with the deafening roar of the city. Truly he who would arrive at a knowledge of Nature needs, as Novalis says, a training of the soul. He needs to discipline his moral sense, to act and conceive in accordance with the noble essence of his soul ; but he needs as well, to quote the words of the great mystic, "long, unwearied intercourse, free and wise contemplation, attention to faint tokens and indications ; an inward poet-life, practised senses, a simple and devout spirit." For the attainment, then, of *truth*, these supreme truths of mind and heart, we need a literal return to Nature.

But how about *beauty*? Surely we do not need to baptize ourselves in Nature from the natural depravity of a love of ugliness, when we have in our own land of civilisation the Abana and Pharpar of poetry and art? Alas! how shall either poetry or art appeal to us if we are ignorant of Nature? What branch of art, what class of poetry, is independent of Nature for its suggestions of majesty or beauty? Both art and poetry are echoes of Nature; not *mere* echoes, I admit; for every work of art is a unification of impressions, a microcosmos in itself; but still the material of which each such miniature universe is composed is a reflection from natural objects, and without that tender love of Nature which comes from a familiar acquaintance with country

life it is doubtful if art and poetry can ever make their full appeal. I do not speak merely of landscape-painting or descriptive poetry, but of all high literature and art ; for all such are filled, if not with the form, at least with the spirit of Nature. I doubt whether the aisles of a cathedral are ever truly felt by one who knows not the cathedral aisles of poplar or of elm ; whether the full pathos of tender music ever reaches him who is unfamiliar with the wail or sigh of wind and wave ; and as for poetry, earth and sky are the very language of the poets. How can a wholly town-bred man feel the calm creep into his soul that ought to creep into it when he reads such lines as these ?

“Calm is the morn without a sound,  
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,  
And only thro’ the faded leaf  
The chestnut pattering to the ground :

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,  
And on these dews that drench the furze,  
And all the silvery gossamers  
That twinkle into green and gold.”

There are perhaps two millions or more of people in London who never saw the dew-drenched gorse upon the downs, and never heard the chestnut pattering to the ground ; and how, I say, can imagery such as this awaken an echo in a soul whose nearest approach to any



experience of the things of which the poet writes are, perhaps, a tile pattering to the pavement or a watercart drenching the asphalt? Even of that moiety of London which can afford to breathe pure air for one month in the year, how many are there who allow themselves to become familiar with Nature? What can they know, these souls who take town with them wherever they go and cannot live without a *table d'hôte*, of

“the pure delight of love

By sound diffused, or by the breathing air,  
Or by the silent looks of happy things,  
Or flowing from the universal face  
Of earth and sky?”

I declare that reading *Anna Karenina* the other day, I almost wept to think that probably more than half the people who read those delicious chapters describing Levin in the mowing-fields read blindly in a dead language. And even if this were not so, even if it were possible for us to enter into the work of poet or painter without the help of Nature, why should we be content with this? Why should we be content to have these mediating priests between ourselves and the shrine? Why should we not, as Emerson has said, “enjoy an original relation to the universe”? It is for this that the heart and the flesh cry out. Nature is not a mere luxury; it is a deep need. The love of it is

fundamental to humanity. The thirst for it lingers from generation to generation in our city slums. To many, perhaps, this will seem mere sentimental nonsense. The lower classes of our cities enjoy their music-halls and taverns, their "free-and-easies" and melodramas; but to imagine that they are pining for the beauty of the country, or could feel that beauty if they saw it, is a mere sentimental delusion. When Mrs Bardell and Tommy went with Mrs Cluppins and Mrs Rodgers to the tea gardens, and when Mrs Rodgers remarked to Mrs Cluppins how delicious the *country* was, she was uttering the bare truth; tea gardens and country are all one to her and to her class. Such is the avowed belief of not a few. I will mention, however, two London sights which give the lie direct to any such idea. One is a Sunday morning market in St Giles's which I often pass, and where amid second-hand boots and cast-off clothes and cheap crockery there are invariably to be found many barrow-loads of gay flowering plants eagerly bought by the natives of the slums; the other is the tramcars full inside and out, following closely one upon another all Sunday afternoon, from Clerkenwell, St Luke's, and Shoreditch, up to Clapton Common, where, upon the melancholy strip of green intersected by gravel paths, which calls itself by that name, you shall see the toilers of the city with their

families crowded in a doleful attempt to enjoy the nearest approach that they can get to country. To me such sights are proofs as strong as they are pathetic of the ineradicable instinct for natural beauty which lives in the hearts of these prisoners of the town.

Why, does not every man at some time of his life aspire to own a patch of earth somewhere? Does not every boy of twelve desire to be a farmer? For my own part I know that it was not until this desire had been parentally sat upon with crushing persistence that I reluctantly abandoned it, and informed my father that, if that could not be, I should like to be either a missionary or a lawyer.

Even in respect of *sincere and simple living*, direct contact with Nature would seem to be an almost necessary condition. Nature cannot fully teach us unless we will follow her along the hedgerows and on the hills, but then she will often touch us so profoundly that her voice enters the very fabric of the soul, and imparts to us not merely truths but truthfulness. Doubt it who may, I feel convinced that life in the presence of Nature and contact with her primal forces are conditions most favourable to veracity. For honesty and directness, simplicity and trustfulness, for transparency of life and cleanliness of thought, I know well where to look. I look for these where I have seldom

failed to find them—among the fishermen of our coast, and the toilers in our fields, and the labourers in our quarries. Among these you will find no fussiness or fancies, no make-believes or social fibs or polite hints and innuendos, such as largely compose our town-bred talk. They are simple and sincere, because they live in the best of company—the company of Nature.

“Long, unwearied intercourse, free and wise contemplation !” Yes ; but how are these to be obtained ? Granted that it is necessary for us, for the reasons which I have enumerated, in a literal and material sense, to “return to Nature”—that our life, physical, perceptive, intellectual, spiritual, depends upon our doing this—yet what distant chance is there that one in a hundred of us, even at great sacrifices in other matters, could return to Nature if he would ?

At the present time “the young citizen,” as Mr Grant Allen writes in this month’s (May 1889) *Contemporary*, “finds himself from the outset turned loose upon a world where almost every natural energy, and almost every kind of raw material, has been already appropriated and monopolised beforehand by a small and unhappily compact class of squatters and tabooers. Not one solitary square inch of English soil remains unclaimed on which he can legally lay his head without paying tax and toll to somebody. He cannot sleep

without paying rent for the ground he sleeps on. He cannot labour without buying the raw material of his craft, directly or indirectly, from the lords of the soil, the encroachers on the native common rights of everybody. He cannot make anything of wood or stone, for the wood and the stone are already fully appropriated ; he cannot eat of the fruits of the earth, for the earth itself, and all that grows upon it, is somebody else's. The very air, the water, and the sunlight are only his in the public highway ; nay more, even there for a single day alone. His one right, recognised by the law, is the right to walk along that highway till he reels with fatigue—for he must 'keep moving.'” This is the problem which we have to solve, and the system which can solve it, whatever it may be, will, by the very fact of that solution, be the gospel for our day.

## II.—THE REUNION OF PROCESS AND RESULT

I WAS asked, in the concluding issue of *Seed-time*, to review some department of our work and the harvest which might be counted upon from our seed-sowing as already evinced in the springing blade. Accordingly I reflected upon the signs of awakening life which could be seen as resulting from our labours in the field of domestic reform, especially in the simplification of our domestic ways. - And there seemed much to say, many encouraging signs to note, a distinct and remarkable effect in the personal lives and domestic arrangements of many members of the Fellowship, the direct result of our teaching and standard ; and looking abroad, a wider movement in the same direction, the result of a large and healthy social current of which our own doctrine and effort is but a small side-stream—a part, though a concentrated part, of a larger whole.

But while I mused the fire burned. I was led on to reflect anew upon the subject itself, and upon one

aspect of it which had not, perhaps, been explicitly set forth.

In the little leaflet by which the "Fellowship of the New Life" originally set forth its aims, the governing principle of the whole was laid down as "The subordination of material things to spiritual things"; and, in the methods set forth for attaining this end, next to the "Supplanting of the spirit of competition by that of unselfish regard for the general good," stood "Simplicity of Living." This doctrine was elaborated in a later manifesto (September 1885); servitude was forbidden, and therefore household needs must be simplified; in dress the vagaries of fashion were condemned; in house-furnishing the furniture was limited to such as could be kept clean and orderly without undue care and attention; in social intercourse a thorough sincerity and frankness in speech and behaviour were demanded. These are the main heads of the ideal of simplification, which, in its early days, the Fellowship set before it.

The aspect of the subject which now occurs to me touches our doctrine of Simplification at several points, both in respect of simplicity of living with its saving of labour and worry, and in respect of Simplicity of Character, with that "sincerity and frankness" which belong to it. But it points to a principle wider and vaguer, and perhaps less practical. It is doubtful, indeed,

whether it amounts to a *practical* principle at all. Yet it brings together a number of significant facts of social life, and is, I think, if not directly useful, at any rate suggestive.

The broad fact which strikes me and arouses my curiosity, and which it has occurred to me lies perhaps near the root of the simplification question, is that in every department of life we are tempted to hide the process and exhibit the result. I am not saying that it is right or wrong, that it is preventible or not ; I am merely at present noting the plain fact. Indeed I may as well confess at starting that I do not see how in some matters the practice could be avoided, however desirable it might seem. The division of process from result, and the hiding of the process, seem to me often advantageous, and sometimes inevitable. But into this we shall presently have occasion to inquire more closely ; at present I merely record the fact that you can hardly name an item in the daily routine of civilised life in which this separation and concealment are not practised. The preparation of our meal is hidden away in the kitchen ; the wood and the coal are kept in the back-yard, and the back-yard is carefully screened from the front entrance. The "residential neighbourhood" shuns the cottages, by whose inmates it is served ; the West End shuns the slums, by whose labour it subsists ;



the shop is shut off from the factory, the showroom from the workers' den, the larder from the butcher's shop, and the butcher's shop from the slaughterhouse. In every detail of our life process is divorced from result ; sometimes inevitably, as it would seem, sometimes benevolently, sometimes mischievously.

It will, perhaps, help us on our way to the formulation of a principle if we first consider some respects in which their divorce is mischievous and set them over against some respects in which it appears to be beneficial.

In the first place, it is obvious that this divorce is often mischievous in making our life elaborate. The reunion of process and result would, in certain cases, bring with it the advantages of household simplicity. Life is less elaborate and, in many respects, easier in a farmhouse kitchen where the joint is transferred from the fire to the table, where the neighbour who calls takes his place on the settle unannounced, where the servant lives in one room with her mistress, than it can possibly be when the divorce of process from result necessitates the division into kitchen, dining-room and withdrawing-room, with passages to be traversed, two sets of meals to be provided, and all the elaboration of the answering of doors, the announcing of guests, the leaving of cards, the cleansing and care of three rooms and three sets of furniture instead of one. This division may or may

not, on other grounds, be desirable, but at any rate it costs a price. Some simplicity, with its advantages of less work and less worry, is lost by the division. It may or may not be an advantage to have the preparation of food hidden from the eye of the eater—a sufficient advantage, that is, to compensate for the additional labour it involves ; but at any rate it is plain that the abandonment of such concealment would result in less elaboration of domestic life.

Again, the reunion of process and result would, in certain cases, result in more reality, and in that interest which such reality invariably brings. There is surely infinitely more interest in the farmhouse kitchen merely as a room, than there is in a suburban drawing-room. The gun upon the wall, the fitches hanging from the beam, the bright bit and bridle on their nail, the whip standing in the corner, the bellows by the fire, the many articles which tell the tale of the inmates and their daily life, bring you nearer to the process of living, and are full of vitality and human zest ; an infinite relief from the dreariness of the nic-nacs on the wot-not.

Especially is this seen in works of art. The painter's first rough sketch has a certain interest of its own which the finished picture is sure to lose. It reveals the process, and is therefore more human. The old silver tankard is more beautiful than the new machine-made

one, not merely because of its antiquity, but because it shows the hammer-spots and brings you up against the fellow-creature who wrought it. Throughout the whole range of handicraft we thirst for the sign of the human hand at work, for that which the machine does its utmost to obliterate—the story of the process.

More deeply still does the principle apply to the life of the community. The man who works upon the process lives in the cottage, the man who consumes the products in the villa ; and the chief aim of the villa is to keep clear of the cottage. With what result ? What is the consequence of this divorce ? That ghastly desert, that horror of deathly gloom known as the first-class residential neighbourhood : the neighbourhood in which no house shall be built of less value than £800, in which no trade shall be carried on, and in which therefore no sign of active life or wholesome existence is ever seen. “Desirable residences” herd together, building themselves just sufficiently far apart to look unneighbourly, and at the furthest possible distance from all those who carry on the processes of life, with the inevitable result—unreality and death.

Still more horrible is the effect of this separation in the city, where the mansion draws its skirts aside from the slum, and the enforced monotony of the productive East is created by the voluntary monotony of the largely

unproductive West. Nay, the town as a whole, with its five millions of souls exiled from Nature, cut off from all knowledge of the basis of their own life, ignorant of the commonest processes by which the great Mother supplies their simplest wants, is one mighty example of that divorce of means from ends, of process from results, of labour from its fruits, which tends more and more to eviscerate our life and deprive it of all reality.

And yet, when we come to look more closely at the matter, we are fain to confess that the union of process and result is sometimes not possible, and often not desirable. Even if the middle wall of partition between dining-room and kitchen were broken down, and the senses blunted to the disagreeables of cooking by force of habit, or the repugnance overcome by sympathy with the cook, yet still I suppose the scullery and the dust-hole would remain outside! The artist's sketch, it is true, may be interesting from the tale which it tells of hand and eye at work, but none but a commentator could care for a poet's corrected proof. We should not, I suppose, go to the theatre at all if we were doomed to hear all the rehearsals of every drama we went to see. The tuning of the violins before the oratorio commences has, I admit, from associations, a certain charm for me, but I do not know that I ever desired to hear *all* the instruments tuned nor all the parts practised. It

appears, in short, that this notion of a reunion of process with result does not amount to a practical principle. It is not universally applicable. It is sometimes desirable, but not always. And the question arises, what other principle, over and above mere individual taste, we can apply as a criterion by which to judge when such a union should be attempted and when it should be renounced.

Let us then, by way of arriving at such a criterion, examine the roots of that divorce between process and result which forms so marked a feature of our civilised life.

I. The first root appears to be *the economic advantage of divided labour*. Take the house, for instance, as a result. I do not hesitate to say that a house, to be perfectly interesting, should be designed, built, and decorated by the sole labour of one man. It could be but a cottage, but that cottage would in every part show signs of individuality. It would be the expression of a character. Practically, however, this is almost never possible. Civilised life of even a very simple kind requires a house which can be produced only by the combined labour of many men. If the architect will condescend to take a manual part in the actual decoration, as was the case in a certain building in my own neighbourhood, the house will be more of a poem than

it could otherwise be ; but obviously it would be sheer loss to the total result if he spent his energy and attention on carrying the hod for the bricklayer or nailing the battens for the plasterer.

The architect is, in fact, the man whose business it is to do spiritually what it is no longer possible, in the matter of house-building, for any man to do physically—to combine the process and the result ; that is, to build the whole house. If he truly knows his work he will conceive every part of every process. When Wren built St Paul's he personally examined the whole material and personally checked every invoice and account (and he did this, by the way, on a salary of £150 a year). Only a man of Wren's versatility and boundless energy could do even this. But every architect must in some degree combine a clear conception of the result to be attained with a more or less perfect knowledge of the means to be used. Now because an architect does this—because he is the man who holds within his brain the whole process from beginning to end and ideally creates the result to which that process leads—he is the man who necessarily stands at the head of affairs in the building of the house, and the man, I do not doubt, to whom the house has the greatest significance and the greatest interest.

But you observe that even this modified form of

that combination of which we are speaking is not possible to all who are concerned. The builder, the foreman, even the artisan, if he is an intelligent worker, may certainly have more or less in mind, besides his particular process, the result to be obtained. They, too, may ideally combine to some degree process and result. But imperfectly. And when we come to the labourer, the man who fetches and carries, we reach the man who is absorbed in pure process. Hence arises that which is the great evil of our modern system of division of labour—the shame of manual work. How deeply this has entered into the system of society, and what a canker it is in the whole body of this sick nation of ours, I am more deeply impressed with every year that I live.

But now, while I admit it as inevitable that, for most of those who take part in such a work, process and result should be divorced ; and while I regard this as in some respects a misfortune, I consider—and this is the important lesson—that a way has been shown to us in which that misfortune may be largely remedied.

Remember that no one of those who take part in such a work could be spared ; that the whole body of them form one organic whole ; a unity engaged in the production of a unity. And then consider how this strikes at the root of that false shame of which I have

spoken. It may not be possible in each individual to unite result and process, but they may be united in the organic whole, if only it were indeed organic. Why should not every house that is built be dedicated to its uses by a social gathering of owner, architect, builder, foreman, artisans and labourers, in which by good fellowship and hearty appreciation every individual who has taken part in the building should be made to feel that he has contributed to this result and is held in honour therefor ; that as the home is one, they too are one—" every one members one of another " ? And so with every great work that is performed. Nay, I look to an ideal future in which the scarlet-coated bodies of destroyers shall no longer parade their horrid trade with bands and banners, but when those shall be reserved for the constructors and creators ; when the workmen shall march in regiments with colours flying to their noble work of enriching the community, and brave music shall inspire them to a sense of the honour and the glory of their work ; when the workmen's trains shall no longer swallow them each night, a sordid and sullen band, and disgorge them in the morning, rebellious at their fate ; but the men who build a Museum, a People's Palace, or State Treasury, shall be honoured by all, respected by themselves and surrounded by every picturesque and poetic symbol of



public esteem in which their creative function should be held.

Nor is the false shame of manual labour the only evil attendant upon this separation of the workers from the end to be attained. The vast operations of modern civilised life are in all departments carried on by this sacrifice of the individual. An army of half a million men take the field with the dimmest notion, or no notion at all, of the cause for which they are fighting, still less of the immediate end to be attained. They may be fighting to save their country, or merely harassing some hill-tribe on the outskirts of the empire ; carrying out some heroic and chivalrous policy or some mean act of commercial treachery. It is all blank to them ; they practically know nothing of the end which the heads of the nation have in view ; if they think they know, they are oftener than not deceived.

And it is the same in civil government. The whole of official life is based upon the same divorce of process from result. The result to be achieved is known to very few ; the vast army of those employed are engaged in pure process, carried on in blind obedience, on the theory of no responsibility.

This it is which forms the strength of Anarchism. The man, the individual man, has under the system of organised life become an abstraction. He is the

fragment, or rather the ghost, of a man ; and Anarchy protests in favour of the *whole* man. In official life, in military life, in organised industrial life, the individual has no will and no intelligence as far as the ultimate result of his day's labour is concerned ; he suppresses the greater part of his individuality and becomes the obedient tool of others. Anarchism teaches that these things ought not to be so ; that the individual ought to comprise both result and process ; that no occupation is truly organised unless each individual has a clear vision of the whole object of his work ; unless, that is to say, his co-operation with others is purely voluntary and carries with it the whole intelligence. Because, by the present social system, the individual is thus suppressed and the unit reduced to a fraction, the Anarchist wages war upon the present social system. It is on behalf of the individual man in his completeness that Anarchism raises the voice, and sometimes the arm, of protest.

And surely it needs no great wit to see that Anarchism holds the complementary truth which we need to make our ideal of Society complete. Our so-called "organised" bodies—our armies, our trade-unions, our public offices—are not true organisms. In the true organism the whole is in every part. And though the Anarchist is often wrong because he is reactionary

and would reduce Society to a discrete mass of units, in this he is right, that a body which is unified only by compulsion is not truly unified at all, and that it is only as we approach to the ideal in which the unit reflects the intelligence which animates the whole and freely identifies his own will with the will of the whole that we approach to that truly organised society of which our present social system is but a doubtful promise, or for which it is at the best a rough first stage of needful education.

II. A second root of that divorce of which we are speaking is *the physical repulsion which we feel from certain processes, which lead nevertheless to desirable results.*

This, no doubt, to return to the simple illustration of the kitchen and the parlour, is why the latter has been invented. Yet it is not a law of Nature that you should have someone to skin the rabbit for you before you eat your rabbit-pie. The universe seems rather to indicate that those who eat the rabbit should skin it. The present arrangement of society by which one order of people is devoted, so to speak, to the skinning and cooking of rabbits and another order to the eating of them—an arrangement which appears to be so entirely right in the eyes of the eaters, arises from the fact that in the total act of feeding, the process (cooking) is less pleasurable than the result (eating).

The separation of process from result which in this matter has taken place shows several stages. First comes the simple person—the completely simple person—who eats her dinner in the kitchen in which she has herself prepared it. Then comes the separation of the room into two: the kitchen splits itself into kitchen and parlour. The goodwoman, wife of the artisan or small shopkeeper, desires to forget for a while the process by which this delightful result, rabbit-pie, has been attained. Next she gets a “help,” who does some things for her—the cleaning of fish, the trussing of fowls, chopping of suet and the like, but she makes the pastry herself. At this stage she generally calls herself a lady. Then comes the full-blown flower, the complete separation, when the lady condescends to lunch on fowl and apple-pie in an interval of poetry and letter-writing, but has no more to do with the preparation of the pie than she has of the poetry.

Now, as to the separation itself, it seems to me quite reasonable that when the preparation is physically repulsive, the result should be enjoyed in as complete a divorce from that preparation as can be achieved. I don't mean, of course, only in respect to the trade of the cook, but also to that of the actor, the musician, the gardener, the groom—to every enjoyment

where some sense is offended in the preparation. But I doubt whether the *people* should be needlessly separated—the preparer and enjoyer as well as the preparation and enjoyment. I doubt, in the first place, whether the enjoyer does not lose something of his enjoyment by not having paid its due price ; whether the fruit of the fig-tree tastes so sweet to anyone as it does to the man who digs about and dungs it ; whether the “coverings of tapestry” gave as much delight to King Lemuel himself as they did to her “who sought wool and flax and wrought diligently with her hands.” And in the second place I doubt whether anyone has any *right* to any enjoyment who has not in *some* way taken his share of the disagreeables of the world. We cannot, indeed, all have a hand in the preparation of the rabbit-pie, because some of us must break stones, and some must cleanse the drains, and some must hear the youngsters thump out their scales on the old piano ; but if we have not done *some* such disagreeable work, surely we have no right to the smallest slice.

This, of course, takes us back to our first root—division of labour—an arrangement which cannot be altogether helped. But when it *can* be helped, when the disagreeable process is one which it comes in our way to perform, when we cannot plead that we are undertaking some other disagreeable in its stead, then

that is the price we can and ought to pay, else we have no right whatever to the enjoyment ; and, indeed, I think we shall not get it, at any rate not the full flavour.

Decency is a motive which comes under the same head. There are certain repulsive processes which we are more than justified in hiding. Nature herself hides many operations. Even in the animal—the non-human—world, we already find this motive of decency at work. A healthy cat or dog living in a natural state (not in some town street) covers its excrement just as the Israelites did under the law of Moses (Deut. xxiii. 13, 14). A horse declines to graze—will starve rather than graze—in a field where there is a great deal of horse-dung ; but he will put up with cow-dung. Probably all decency has its origin in considerations of health. The “Fellowship of the Naked Truth,” in their quaint crusade against clothing, may be justified in teaching that decency is not an ultimate principle, but they can never abolish decency where it safeguards health or that which is also a branch of health—morality.

This, of course, like those other processes of which we have already spoken, is open to abuse. Fastidiousness, prudery, pruriency, are the distortions or the reactions of decency.

III. *A third root*, and one that takes us much deeper than the other two, is that of *dramatic interest*.

There is undoubtedly a genuine satisfaction in the exhibition of the result as an isolated phenomenon. We like to present the outcome of our labours as if it had dropped from heaven. We like it to be a sort of Melchizidek, without father or mother. The mystery of the thing, the pretence of omnipotence in ourselves, the joy of imagining ourselves and imagining each other to be creators, and not mere makers, is a distinct and perhaps a legitimate reason for sometimes hiding the process.

The drama itself would lose some of its interest but for the curtain ; the clergyman would not be so effective a person if he smoothed his hair and put on his surplice in sight of the whole congregation, instead of marching out of the vestry as if he had worn it all his life. We don't like to be reminded of our limitations ; at least, we like now and then to forget them, and to pretend that we can attain to results without the use of means. We like to imagine the poet as so celestially inspired that he can roll off his couplets without running through a list of jingling words to find a rhyme. The Persian standard of divine inspiration is the untaught ability to pour forth unpremeditated verse, and we Westerns cherish the same conceit. We smile at Wordsworth short of a rhyme ; "pursued," as he confesses, "by the malice of one luckless word." It

is too commonplace, too incongruous with the "eye in a fine frenzy rolling," too limited, and, therefore, earthly. We like to forget that a great singer has to practise. He should, we feel, if he be so truly great, be able to sing like the angels, without rehearsing. Rehearsals are inappropriate to angelic choirs.

And now, let us gather up our results, and see if they point to any criterion which can help us to decide when a reunion of process with result should be attempted.

Can we, from the foregoing considerations, deduce any single criterion of action? I do not know that we can. It is plain, indeed, that in *every* case there is some loss to the individual when he is excluded from the result and limited to the process; but that loss apparently is often overbalanced by the gain. And we seem left, so far as practical life is concerned, with one or two rules which do not readily combine into a single criterion.

First, it seems plain that in works of art, where the expression of the individuality is such an essential factor, the divorce of process from result is generally mischievous.

Secondly, it is evident that where the process, or our own connection with the process, is hidden, from regard to a foolish social standard, such concealment is self-condemned.



Thirdly, it is clear, I think, that many processes which are physically repulsive are quite justly hidden ; and

Fourthly, it is sometimes allowable to satisfy the dramatic instinct which prompts us to exhibit the result apart from the process.

But if no single criterion can be found to embrace these practical rules, I think it is not difficult, leaving the sphere of practice and turning for a moment to the sphere of reflection, to find an all-embracing philosophical principle which goes to the root of the whole matter. The division of process from result arises from the relativity of our human nature. In the Absolute they are combined, or rather they are one. In the eternal sphere there are no results but one eternal process, and there is no process but one eternally complete result. And it is our kinship with that sphere, our dim consciousness of the universe within us, which makes us for ever dissatisfied with our limitations.

We are driven to divide our labours, because no great labour can be performed by that fragment of the whole which calls himself an individual man. We are driven to rules of sweetness and decency, because the relations of individual to individual require those rules ; in other words, because our limitations forbid us to transcend them. We may refresh ourselves at

times by stripping ourselves from certain limitations in imagination and fancying ourselves creators. We may don the robe of dignity, strut upon the stage of magnificence, or roll the drums of glory ; but to do it we must hide the process. The glory is but the result of tears, the stage we tread is hollow, and the robe covers the nakedness of one of God's feeblest creatures.

And yet this is not all. As we are conscious of the universal, so we dimly see how the limitations which contravene it may come to be transcended. We are not truly individuals ; we are fragments. We are organs of the social body, members of a relatively complete humanity. And by virtue of this completeness to which we belong, and of which we are vaguely conscious, we may sometimes rise above our limitations to a plane upon which the process is combined with the result. Our democracy is an attempt in this direction. It is a splendid experiment, of which we do not yet foresee the outcome ; an endeavour to make each item of the body politic to combine its own fragment of the process with the complete conception of the result to be achieved. And hence the importance of education to a democratic country. In an autocracy or an oligarchy the means are provided, and the process is carried out, by those who are ignorant of the result to be achieved. But in a democracy that result must

be understood in its main features by every member of the community, so that he who provides the power may know for what that power is used. A tremendous task, seeming sometimes almost hopeless, but a task to achieve which the very attempt is grand.

And this, which is the meaning of our politics, is the meaning of many things to which we are slowly moving. The fusion of the many in the one has a thousand daily applications. What a drama that will be when the star-actor and his attendant supers shall give place to a cast animated by a clear conception on the part of each of the result to be attained! What a city that will be when vestrydom and individual interests shall give place to a pure desire for the public good, informed by a clear intelligence and inspired by a vision of ideal beauty! What an army that will be which shall no longer be a blind machine for the capricious will of a few, but a living organism for the righteous will of itself and the whole nation! What a nation that will be which shall be less exclusively intent upon the diplomatic process, or the gaining of a momentary advantage for its fragmentary self, and shall see that process in the light of the wide result to which every combination, and, indeed, its very life as a nation, *must* ultimately tend—the advancement of humanity at large!

Nay, deeper still we may go. Of sin itself we may say, although it be with bated breath, and with a certain tremor, lest we deceive ourselves or others, that it is the inevitable result of human limitation, and that, like all other limitations, sin itself may be transcended. Even in the human sphere we may rise by stepping-stones of our dead selves, climb by our very sins, and attain the calm of an exalted faith, by comprehending in one ideal vision the sinful process with the victorious result. And in the divine sphere, if human reason may be trusted—if we may speak of that which, at the best, we can but see through a glass darkly—in that sphere which is the *Whole* Sphere, the undivided Unity, the Life and Mind of God, there can be no schism of process and result, neither sin nor righteousness, defeat nor victory, but one untroubled and Eternal Calm.

### III.—THOUGHTS ON THE REMOVAL OF FURNITURE

FOR the first time in my life I have had to move my furniture. I have had to unmake an old home and make a new one. It is an experience which, though to the indifferent eye it seems so trivial, yet touches in some respects, as indeed all human experiences do, the very roots of life.

I have entitled this address "Thoughts on the Removal of Furniture," but it is the whole process which I have in mind : the disarranging of the furniture and the rearranging of it, the disarranging of the house and the rearranging of it, the disarranging of the life and the rearranging of it. There are many subordinate processes involved — selection, rejection, estimation, idealisation ; the imagination of the probable futurity, the adjustment of means to realise that imagination, the rejection of such appliances as will not help it, the re-estimating of values under new conditions ; rejection, for instance, of that which is useful only in town-life,

acquisition of that which is necessary for the country. There is a reviewing, too, of the past life, and a certain degree of wonderment at what we have been and what we have acquired, and what we have neglected. There is a whole round of human thought and feeling and volition in the process of household removal. It is, I repeat, a symbol, in little, of vast cosmic processes. Empires die and live again. Ages work themselves out and are renewed. Worlds, solar systems, perhaps the universe itself, is unmade and remade, dissolves and is renewed. And the household removal is the same process on a smaller scale and in the human sphere. A "move" is, or should be, a *reform*.

The first and obvious thought, especially to a member of the Fellowship,<sup>1</sup> when he has to "move," is to *simplify*. Here is an opportunity, a gracious, heaven-sent opportunity, of getting rid of a portion at least of that heavy burden of conveniences, that intolerable load of comforts, that hateful entanglement of luxuries, which destroy the chief comfort and greatest luxury of all, free movement and leisure. Here at last is a chance of ridding oneself of some of the *impedimenta* of life. The unravelling of the web of household arrangements reveals the nature of the threads of which that web is made. One learns what superfluities, what lumber, what absolute ugliness

<sup>1</sup> The Croydon Ethical and Religious Fellowship.

often one is surrounded by, to which the eye has grown accustomed, and which half-unconsciously, by a sort of reflex, automatic process, we have been taking care of without wanting them, dusting, storing, arranging perhaps for years, doing everything but getting rid of them. The attention is called anew and in a new way to the presence of these things, and the part they have been playing in one's life ; that part being little else than to perplex the eye, and smother what there is of real beauty in the home.

All this has a bearing on the larger issues of life. In the furniture of the mind it is the same. In the purposes of the life there is a like disease. In thought and in action we need to simplify, and to this end we need sometimes to take stock of ourselves, to keep the mind clear and the purposes direct and simple. Many a man mars his effectiveness by attempting, not too *much*, but too *many*. Force is dissipated by multitudinous work almost as much as by an excess of pleasure. It is characteristic, and unwholesomely characteristic, of our age that nothing is done with thoroughness because everything is attempted at once. Our life—the life even of our best men—is a scramble. The greatest life which we know was characterised by its simplicity, by great intensity directed on a few high aims and a few great root-ideas ; and when death came, the great Soul who

had thus thought and worked was able to say with emphasis and with truth, "It is *finished*." This is the spirit in which we, too, must live: forgoing many ambitions, abandoning many pet schemes, content to be ignorant of many things and to leave undone many tasks which we should like to attempt; we must make it our aim to "*finish* the work which God gives us to do."

This old doctrine of simplification is a keynote of our Fellowship. But though it is one of our articles of faith, and though we believe it to be a thoroughly sound one, we need not make of it a fetish. And I will proceed to suggest one or two limitations to the doctrine which have occurred to me in the course of my recent "removal of furniture."

In the first place, that which appears at first sight to be useless for happiness, is not always really so. As you lay aside, in the process of dissolution, those things which you decide to part with, you are on the point of adding to the rapidly-accumulating mountain some article which you bought for its beauty, but to which you have become indifferent. Suddenly, the crisis of parting with it reveals to you that it is as beautiful as ever, that the defect is in yourself. You perceive that it is really a means of joy, and that what prevents you from enjoying it is that the eye has become dulled. This is to all of you a familiar experience. There are few, very



few things which the eye can meet daily in the same relations, and not at length forget to see. The most beautiful picture, the most exquisite statue, the most perfect vase or bronze, will fail to impress you after a time from force of custom. It is not that "it palls upon you," as people say. Anything that palls upon you should be got rid of at once ; it is too luscious, or too luxurious, or too sensuous. The things I speak of are not those of which you are sick ; they are really beautiful and really wholesome, but the eye has become temporarily exhausted for them, just as it becomes temporarily exhausted for a colour by long and steady contemplation. Now, in such cases one should not be hasty to simplify the things away. The probability is that in a new place and in new surroundings the eye will regain the power to perceive their beauty, and they will be once more a channel of joy to the life. This, then, I state as a limitation to the doctrine of simplicity.

One may draw, of course, certain simple practical lessons from this familiar experience, such as the wisdom of changing the places frequently of things of beauty, or the advisability of establishing an interchange among friends of all such things, and so keeping the freshness of impression intact, or renewing the vividness of a dulled perception. One might perhaps in this way rekindle consciousness by a change of arrangement just

as one renews health by a change of air. This would of course apply, not to things useful in a particular place, such as articles of *furniture* properly so-called, but mainly to things kept purely for their beauty—to things, that is, whose sole function it is to form a channel for mental impressions of this order.

But there is another lesson, which has no near connection with household removals, but which comes under this same law of the weakening of a passive impression by repetition. To rise from the sphere of furniture to the sphere of friendship: how apt we are from force of custom to slip into indifference to another form of beauty—beauty of character! It is not only in household furniture, it is in household affection also, that one needs to be ever on one's guard against the deadening influence of custom. Beauty of individual character and disposition, when it meets us every day, ceases sometimes to appeal to us. We come to accept the affection of wife, parent, child, as an undoubted right, and as a pure matter of course. And too often it happens in family life that we do not discover until too late that we have been entertaining angels unawares.

How necessary, then, it is to keep the eye open and the mind fresh to the *moral* as well as the physical beauty by which we are surrounded! The household

bully, the morose father, the indifferent husband, how can they be what they are, we ask, in the presence of such tender grace, and such sweet affection of wife or son or daughter? That has happened to them in the moral sphere which happens to us all in the æsthetic sphere when articles of beauty cease to please: the eye is dulled. They no longer see that grace or appreciate that affection. Partly, perhaps, selfishness or other sin has blunted them, but partly, we may be sure, that subtle source of indifference which we cannot perhaps call "sin," but against which we need to be ever upon our guard, has blinded them—the influence of familiar routine.

But now, to return to our furniture. The re-awakening of sensibility to actual but forgotten beauty sets one limit to simplification; another and a more sweeping limit is set by the consideration that a spirit living in and by a material medium is in part dependent upon the variety of that medium for richness of life. Poverty of means *does* in a measure mean poverty of life. The greater the soul—the greater, that is, the powers of creation and of enjoyment—the greater is the variety of material needed. A savage who wears no clothes needs no wardrobe. A labourer who cannot read needs no library. But a man of cultivated powers, who finds delight and refreshment

and opportunity of spreading and imparting as well as of imbibing happiness from literature and art, needs more appliances.

The mistake of asceticism is that it regards the material world as a hindrance instead of an instrument and a means. It seeks, as Caird has said, to reach God by the *via negativa*. It is the outcome of a mysticism which dreams of "pure spirit," spirit stripped of all material form and acting apart from any material medium. Such asceticism was not confined to the Middle Ages; it has come down to our own time through the Puritan tradition, and lingers among us in various forms. William Morris, in a debate which followed the reading of a paper by myself on the simplification question, accused the New Fellowship (I think unjustly) of asceticism, and declared that asceticism was "the most disgusting vice that afflicted human nature." I do not think, for my own part, that ascetism is so "disgusting" as sensuality, but both are doubtless mistaken modes of life. They are mistaken, not because they are extremes, not because you want a little of each, or because you ought to steer midway between the two, but because they imply a wrong view of the relation of the physical world to the spiritual life. The physical world and the spiritual life are not *alternatives*. We are not called to choose the one and

to reject the other. Their true relation is that of means to ends. That is what we have to learn—we of the Fellowship, whom William Morris calls “ascetics”; we have to learn that the true relation of the physical world to the spiritual life is the relation of means to ends. The life of sense is not to be suppressed; it is to be *subordinated*. It is a channel of grace, a means of spirituality, an instrument of good. And hence I say that in the practical work of simplification, when it comes to the point of choosing or refusing, what we ought to repudiate and abandon is, not the convenient or the comfortable or the useful, but the convention which is no convenience, the enervating or unhealthy which is no true comfort, the superfluous and unnecessary which is not really useful.

I urge, therefore, this limitation to our favourite doctrine—that we should not abandon those things which are really useful for our *life*. If the life is more than meat, it is also true that the meat is needful for the life. If it is true that the higher the culture the greater the facility for getting joy from simple things, it is also true that the higher the culture the greater the power of using a multiplicity of things. A powerful intellect can use a variety of instruments, and so do a variety of work. To the untutored a houseful of appliances is a houseful of lumber, but to the taught

it may be a houseful of blessing. There is a limit, of course ; the greatest mind cannot use more than a certain number of things, and things unused are always lumber, as Nature emphatically teaches us by means of moth and rust. But within this limit, the greater the spirit the greater the powers of creation and enjoyment, and the greater the variety of material which can be employed. I can well believe that if there are intelligences higher than ours—which there very well may be—they may need a complexity of instruments of which we know nothing, a variety of means such as is shadowed to us in the infinite diversity and complexity which surround us in this earth. I can imagine that if a greater spirit than our human spirit needed to move into a new heavenly mansion, some other zodiac, or some new quarter of the heavens, he might have to take one or two planets with him, or possibly a solar system, for his enjoyment or his use ; but I am also sure that if he were a *perfect* spirit, a fully-educated intelligence, he would not take with him so much as a pebble or a blade of grass that was unnecessary for his work or useless for his life.

But what is useless for our life ? That only which we are too feeble to use—too limited, too finite to use. To the Infinite nothing is useless, and his simplicity lies within endless diversity. In itself, nothing is

useless and nothing fruitless. And we must learn this. If we hold the doctrine of simplification unreasonably or superstitiously, if we think that bareness is a virtue in itself and that a miserly and miserable existence is praiseworthy, then we have to learn this. Go to Nature and see how, besides her unity, she has endless complexity. Look upon the world and see how its mysterious simplicity branches with endless variety—

Such gliding wonders ! such sights and sounds !  
Such joined unended links, each hooked to the next,  
Each answering all, each sharing the earth with all !

Were we as infinite as Nature, we too might revel in boundless variety, uniting it only around the central unity which dwells within us. But that unity must be kept clear at all costs ; and for the sake of that unity we must forgo much variety. Nature can afford to be exuberant and prodigal, and careless to what multiplicity she runs, for she has the secret of doing everything perfectly. Her exuberance does not interfere with her perfection. She does not attain variety by slurring the individual parts.

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of  
the stars,  
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and  
the egg of a wren,  
And a tree-toad is a *chef d'œuvre* for the highest,

And the running blackberry would adorn the parlours of  
 heaven,  
 And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all  
 machinery,  
 And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any  
 statue,  
 And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of  
 infidels.

But if we think that because, unable to follow Nature  
 in this perfection, we dare not give ourselves over to  
 a scrambled complexity of enjoyment or of work ; if  
 we think that because, to retain some unity, we are  
 obliged to sacrifice much variety ; *therefore* variety is  
 evil and multiplicity a sin, and we are called by the  
 voice of heaven to live a bare and barren life, to abjure  
 all wealth of experience and follow the life of a recluse,  
 then Nature in the glory of her infinite diversity laughs  
 at us—

Smile, O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth !

Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees !

Earth of departed sunset—earth of the mountains misty-topt !

Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged with  
 blue !

Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river !

Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and cleaner for  
 my sake !

Far-swooping elbowed earth—rich apple-blossom'd earth !



## IV.—THE PERSIAN BÂB

### I.—THE MAKING OF A GOSPEL

IT is somewhat strange that no detailed comparison has, so far as I know, been made between the life of Jesus Christ and the life of that modern Messiah who was martyred in Persia half a century ago. Comparisons between Christ and Buddha abound; but I have not met with any definite comparison between Christ and the Persian Bâb,<sup>1</sup> except one brief passage in the "Essex Hall Lecture" delivered by Mr Estlin Carpenter in 1895.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, for the comparative study of religion, for striking illustration of the probable way in which history passes into myth, and myth into theology, and, above all, for a direct and overwhelming negative to those belated

<sup>1</sup> Bâb = Gate: Ali Muhammad claimed to be the gate of communication between the Twelfth or Hidden Iman and the Shi'ite Mohammedans.

<sup>2</sup> *The Relation of Jesus to his Age and our Own.* By J. Estlin Carpenter. (London; 1895.) Pp. 41-44.

theologians who still think the case of a supernatural Christianity can be historically proved by evidence drawn from the latter part of the first century, no movement with which I am acquainted approaches in convincing power the story of the rise and progress of Bâbism in our own times.

Here we have what is practically a piece of the ancient world brought down from the century to which it properly belongs, and conveniently preserved in our midst for modern eyes to see and modern brains to study. It is true that Persia has now some telegraphs (interrupted or broken nearly half their time). It is true that the English have made a road from Peshawur to Kabul, and the Russians have lately made another from Resht to Teheran ; but fifty years ago, when Ali Muhammad the Bâb lived and died, even this veneer of modern civilisation was wanting, and Persia belonged practically to A.D. 1. It was an Oriental country without roads, railways, or telegraphs.

In this very ancient-modern country we have a thoroughly Oriental (though not, indeed, a Semitic) people, professing a thoroughly Oriental *and Semitic* religion. We have, as the leaders of this religion, a class of men—the Mullas—strikingly like the scribes of ancient Palestine ; men strong and narrow in their religious prejudices, and too often sordid and hypocritical

in their lives. We have a religious reformer leading a revolt against this state of things, denouncing these hypocritical scribes, scorning their theological prejudices, attacking their vices, teaching a freer theology, and announcing a kingdom of righteousness to come. And, finally, we have the Mullás heading the orthodox party against the spiritual reformers, and bringing to martyrdom, after six years' ministry, the master whom they loved and almost literally worshipped.

And this is but the beginning of the parallel. The Bâb had his John the Baptist ; he worked miracles, he was transfigured, he had eighteen apostles, most of whom were martyred. Birth legends have grown up around his memory ; stories of miraculous precocity in boyhood, proofs from prophecies fulfilled in his person. He had his Joseph of Arimathea, a rich Bâbi, who begged his body, shrouded it in white silk, and laid it in a tomb. Almost every main incident in the gospel story has its parallel in the life and death of the Bâb, except the resurrection ; and the absence of any resurrection-legend can, I think, be accounted for.

Then we have an Apostolic period, with a Petrine and a Pauline party ; we have the growth of gospels by legendary accretions round a historical nucleus ; and, finally, we have illustrated, in the most striking way, the modification and even falsification of Scrip-

tures in favour of theological theories and ecclesiastical parties.

In support of this last statement I will add here a brief account of the *Târikh-i-Jadid*, or *New History of Mirza Ali Muhammad the Bâb*,<sup>1</sup> which is a sort of Bâbi gospel history.

I must premise that before the Bâb died he nominated one of his disciples, Subh-i-Ezel, as his successor. This gentle, contemplative soul was, however, unfitted to control the passionate energies of the Bâbi exiles who, after the great persecution of 1852, were gathered at Adrianople, the Pella of the Bâbis. An abler, or, at any rate, more resolute man, Behá by name, came, therefore, by degrees to usurp the headship of the Bâbi community, and, in 1866 or thereabout, threw off his allegiance to Subh-i-Ezel, and so caused the great schism which convulsed the Bâbi Church, and which has never since been healed. At the present day the vast majority of Bâbis are Behais, not Ezelis, and it would have been exceedingly inconvenient to have in circulation the original and unaltered Bâbi Scriptures, from every page of which the evidences of the wrongfulness of the Beha

<sup>1</sup> This Persian book has been translated and furnished with copious appendices and notes by Mr Edward G. Browne, lecturer in Persian to the University of Cambridge (*The Târikh-i-Jadid*; Cambridge, 1893).

usurpation would stare the reader in the face, and the old and original Bâbi views be all too plainly shown to be identical with those of the despised and dying Ezeli sect.

Now, before this great schism took place, there existed a Bâbi history, written by one who not only had known the Bâb in the flesh, but was one of his earliest and most enthusiastic disciples—Haji Mirza Jani, to wit, a merchant of Kashan. The book was called *The Point of Kaf*, and it was written between November 1850 and October 1851, the Bâb having been martyred, it must be remembered, on 8th July 1850. Much of the earlier literature of the Bâbis disappeared through neglect, but this particular book showed no signs of disappearing: it was too popular. There was but one way to deal with it: it must be manipulated in the interest of the later doctrine, and so superseded by a revised, expurgated and amended edition.

This manipulation was duly carried out, and the result was the *Târîkh-i-Jadid*, or *New History*. The original history upon which it was based came to be so completely superseded that Mr Edward Browne, our chief English authority on the subject, after diligent search in the East, came to the conclusion that it was no longer extant.

And now comes a stroke of fortune such as has been,

alas! denied to Christianity. In the years 1855-58 there resided at the Persian capital a French diplomat, the Comte de Gobineau, who studied the Bâbi religion while it was still in its primitive state, and wrote a very fascinating account of its origin and its founder.<sup>1</sup> In his collection of MSS., which was bought after his death by the Bibliothèque Nationale, was a complete copy of Haji Mirza Jani's *Point of Kaf*. This MS. was unearthed by Mr Browne in 1892, and we have now the means of comparing the original Bâbi history with the later *Tendenz-Schrift*, which was based upon it. It is, in fact, as if we had recovered the original *Logia* of Matthew, or the Ephesian romance which formed the nucleus of that strange medley now known to us as the "Gospel according to St John."

And now, what is the bearing of all this upon ethical religion? Just this. The Christian multitude will perhaps never see where the true value of their own or of any other religion lies until they learn how hopeless it is to try to base religion upon historical documents. Again and again, when I have urged upon the popular Christian apologist the utter insecurity of his historical foundation—a foundation built of documents subjected for many a long year to the work

<sup>1</sup> *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*. Par M. le Comte de Gobineau. (2me ed. ; Paris, 1866.)

of interpolators, careless scribes, and even forgers and falsifiers—I have been met with the objection: “But do such things really happen to any great extent? Your evidence is mainly internal; your hypotheses largely conjectural.”

Well, here are religious histories produced under conditions very similar to those of the Christian gospels, and here we have the whole process carried on in our own lifetime and almost before our eyes. Here we have evidence, both internal and external, of the way in which an Oriental people can and does deal with its fundamental documents in the early stages of a new religion. Given a strong doctrinal motive and a state of civilisation in which the pen, and not the printing-press, is still relied upon for the multiplication of holy scriptures, and the whole series of phenomena which New Testament critics claim to have detected by careful examination of the Christian documents is repeated even in modern times.

## THE PERSIAN BÂB

### II.—LEGENDS OF HIS CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

WHEN I was a divinity student in an evangelical college nearly thirty years ago, our tutors deemed it sufficient proof of the historical validity of the gospel narratives if they showed them to have been in existence within a hundred years of the alleged events. Already, even in those days, innocent though the students mostly were of any taint of literary criticism, there were a few who had a vague suspicion that much might have happened in those hundred years, that legends of miracle and marvel do not in all conditions of society take so very long to grow up ; but, for the most part, the assumptions of the tutors were accepted, and they, on their side, saw no need to reply to objections which were, at that time, only whispered beneath one's breath.

To-day it may seem almost like "fighting extinct demons" to show how rapidly such legends really grow, how early in the history of a religion they appear.



But in the story of the Persian Bâb we have such a striking modern instance of this—an instance, too, which in some respects is so illustrative of the growth of Christian legends in particular—that perhaps, for the pure interest of the matter, I may be permitted to give some brief account of these beginnings of a new religion. Besides, I am not altogether convinced that the “demons” are “extinct.” It is a very common fallacy for those who have themselves lived for some years in a free atmosphere to assume that the whole world now breathes the same air. Perhaps there are dungeons still.

The plain facts of the boyhood and youth of the Bâb are these. Ali Muhammad, who afterwards claimed to be the “Bâb” or “Gateway” of communication with the spiritual realms, was born 9th October 1820, at Shiraz. His father was a cloth merchant, and died while Ali Muhammad was still of tender age. The child was brought up by his maternal uncle, put to school with a certain Sheykh Abid, and at the age of sixteen, or thereabout, was sent to the port of Bushire to engage in commerce. He traded there for about five years, winning the esteem of all the merchants of the town, and then went upon a pilgrimage to the tombs of the Imams at Nejef and Kerbela. At the latter place he listened to the preaching of Seyyid

Kazim, the leader at that time of the heterodox sect of Sheykhis, and for two or three months remained beneath the spell of the new teaching. Thence he returned to his birthplace, Shiraz, where he underwent a period of great mental trouble—a sort of “temptation in the wilderness”—which issued (after the death of Seyyid Kazim) in the “Manifestations,” as the Bâbis call it. That is to say, just as Jesus, when John the Baptist was put in prison, “came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God,” so Ali Muhammad, when Seyyid Kazim died, took up his master’s teaching, setting it forth in a broader and more radical spirit, and claiming, on his own part, to be a “Gateway,” or channel of supernatural revelation.

Now, to speak first of the infancy and childhood. No such poetic legends as those given to us in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke have, so far as I know, grown up about the infancy of the Bâb. Perhaps this might have taken place had not the stream of devotion directed towards his person been afterwards diverted to Beha, his self-proclaimed successor, so that in the later development of Bâbism the Bâb himself came to occupy a secondary place. But although the Bâbi legends are wanting in poetic elaboration as compared with the Christian legend, although they have about them too much of the purely thaumaturgic, too little

of the sublime, yet they exist. Legends did grow up, and are amply sufficient to illustrate our main point—namely, that in the beginnings of an Oriental religion you must get very near indeed to the events if you are to be sure that what you are reading is not myth but historic fact.

It is narrated, for instance, in the *Tārīkh-i-Jadīd*, or *New History*, that at the moment of his birth the babe exclaimed, “The kingdom is God’s” (“*El mulk l’Illah*”); that when he went to school he read the Koran miraculously, without having learned a single letter; that, similarly, he wrote a dissertation on the divine unity without having learned to use his pen; and, finally, that he debated in the subtlest manner certain questions of Muhammadan theology till the tutor, “speechless with amazement, led him back to his home,” and delivered him to his venerable grandmother, saying: “I cannot undertake the instruction of this young gentleman.” But his grandmother, says the story, reproved him and sent him back to school to learn his lessons like other boys.

These school stories, which may be read in full in Mr Edward Browne’s translation of the *Tārīkh-i-Jadīd* (pp. 262–64), remind us strongly of the “apocryphal” stories of Jesus—how the tutor Zachyas, for instance, in the Gospel of Thomas, was amazed at his precocity

and said to Joseph : " Brother, verily this child is not earth-born ; therefore take him away from me." But they also illustrate the feebleness of the foundations upon which those " canonical " accounts of the nativity and childhood rest which are accepted by many as the corner-stone of the doctrine of the " Incarnation."

For, consider : which is the stronger—the evidence for the Bâbi stories or for the Christian ? The Bâbi stories (those, at any rate, about the boyhood) were told by the Bâb's own schoolmaster. The old man was still alive when we were young. When the stories were told, when they were written down and circulated, there were plenty of the Bâb's contemporaries still living who could have contradicted them if they disbelieved them. Nay, there are at this day (or were until quite recently), exiles dwelling at Acre and in Cyprus who saw the Bâb in the flesh and had every opportunity of ascertaining the truth of these and other such stories, and who yet received them with undoubting faith. Moreover, the legends were recorded within sixty years of the alleged occurrences and thirty years of the Bâb's death. What would not my evangelical tutors have given for such evidences for their own " Stories of the Childhood " ?

There are other like legends, such as the prediction of earthquakes by the miraculous boy, and the foretell-

ing of the sex of unborn infants ; but we do not need to dwell upon them. The important point is the rapidity with which such legends grow up and become established in the creed, and this point is clear enough. Neither these nor the foregoing tales appear in the earliest Bâbi history—the history written by Mirza Jani within a few months of the Bâb's martyrdom. But they are all inserted in the *Târikh-i-Jadid*, which was based upon that history, and which was completed in 1881–82. They took only thirty years to grow up, become established and get themselves recorded in the Bâbi Gospel. Thirty years ! Alas for my evangelical tutors !

More interesting than the legends of the childhood are the legends which belong to the time when the Bâb became a disciple of Seyyid Kazim. Seyyid Kazim was always recognised by the Bâbis as the forerunner of the Bâb, just as John the Baptist was recognised by the Christians as the forerunner of Jesus ; and the parallel is in several respects particularly striking.

Every New Testament student knows how debatable a point it is whether John the Baptist ever had any close personal communication at all with Jesus. The critical process soon gets rid both of the cousinship and of the supernatural foreknowledge of his Messiahship, and leaves us with at most the possibility that

Jesus may have been a favourite disciple in whom John saw signs of future greatness, which greatness he foretold to some of his disciples. Precisely the same doubt hangs over the personal relationships of the Bâb and his forerunner ; while legends of supernatural revelation and prophetic announcement as to the Bâb's future greatness are told of Seyyid Kazim very similar to those we find told in the later Gospels concerning John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus.

It is historically true that Seyyid Kazim spoke both in lecture-room and pulpit of the approaching advent of one greater than himself.<sup>1</sup> But the legends relied upon to prove that these utterances had specific reference to Ali Muhammad are such as these :—Some of his disciples one day asked him as to the manner of the manifestation which was to succeed him. “After my death,” replied he, “there will be a schism among my followers ; but God's affair will be clear as this rising sun.” As he spoke he pointed to the door, through which streamed a flood of sunlight, and at that very moment Mirza Ali Muhammad crossed the threshold and entered the room. “We did not, however,” the narrator adds, “apprehend his meaning until his holiness was manifested”—a significant remark, reminding us of such passages in the Gospels as “These

<sup>1</sup> See Browne's translation of *Târîkh-i-Jadid*, p. 31.

things understood not his disciples at the first ; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they," etc. In both cases we see the legend in the making.

Again, we read that one of Seyyid Kazim's disciples unexpectedly entered the Seyyid's private apartment one day and found young Ali Muhammad seated in the place of honour and giving instructions to his supposed master, who received the same humbly and with deference, but changed his manner upon perceiving that they were not alone. (Compare "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?") The disciple adds that he marvelled at what he beheld, because he had repeatedly seen Ali Muhammad enter the Seyyid's presence "*without any special mark of attention.*"<sup>1</sup> The words which I have italicised lead us to suspect that in truth young Ali Muhammad, who, after all, was not regarded as one of the Seyyid's regular and permanent disciples, was in no way distinguished from the rest of such occasional hearers—a suspicion which is confirmed by several unintentional hints dropped by the narrators.<sup>2</sup>

It is impossible in the limits of such an essay as

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341. Both of these stories are given in Mirzah Jani's history, which was written, as I have said, only a few months after the Bâb's death.

<sup>2</sup> See especially *ibid.*, p. 32, last paragraph.

this to do more than indicate in the slightest manner a line of comparison between the rise of the legendary elements in these two religions, the ancient Christian and the modern Bâbi ; but the line is one which might, I believe, be made fruitful in the interests of ethical as against supernatural religion. The task is, no doubt, to some extent ungrateful. It is in part negative and destructive. But it is only by such negative work that the true power of either religion can be seen, only thus that the central figure in each can be set forth in full ethical beauty. The power of the Bâbi religion did not lie in its mythology, nor yet in its mysticism ; it did not lie, as the Bâb himself protested, in the quasi-miraculous works of healing which he accomplished ; it lay in part, no doubt, in the ethical reform which he endeavoured to carry out in the Muhammadan faith, but still more in the admiration which the Bâb himself inspired—an intense admiration for a character of great purity and perfect self-renunciation. This is clear enough when it is seen in a religion not yet sixty years old. When will it become clear to those who follow the greater religion of Jesus the Nazarene ?



## THE PERSIAN BÂB

### III.—AN ETHICAL REFORMER

IN a very interesting letter with which not long since I was favoured by Mr Edward Browne, the Lecturer in Persian to the University of Cambridge, and a well-known authority upon Bâbi literature, I was warned that, as a rule, Europeans who study this movement “are too prone to seek for definite ethical, or political, or social aims. These,” wrote Mr Browne, “even when present, are subordinate.”

Again and again I have turned over this warning in my mind, and have asked myself in what sense was the ethical “subordinate”? What was the vital core of the movement? Was it theological or ethical? I have tried to imagine the Bâbi martyrs going to torture and to death in witness of their belief in the sacredness of the numeral 19, or the religious superiority of the lunar over the solar year, or the talismanic power of the derivatives of words ex-

pressing the divine attributes. I confess that I have not succeeded. The thing will not get itself imagined.

“And yet,” I shall perhaps be told, “men have died for such things : they have died for metaphysics, for theology, even for ridiculous superstitions.” But have they ? Such things may have bulked largely in their professions ; on account of such beliefs they may have been condemned. But can it truly be said that for these they died ? Outwardly and professedly the ethical aim may have been subordinate ; but was not the ethical impulse all the time the true motive-power ? Has it not in such cases been the love of veracity which was the inspiring and fortifying power—the ethical feeling that to deny their faith would have left a moral stain ?

I hold, therefore, that even if Bâbism, as a creed, had consisted entirely of attenuated metaphysics or of Oriental superstitions, we should still have to look for some mighty ethical impulse which made it possible for hundreds of Bâbi martyrs to face the cruellest sufferings on account of these same superstitions—which made it possible for a high authority to write : “There is, I believe, but one instance of a Bâbi having recanted under pressure of menace of suffering, and he reverted to the faith, and was executed within two

years.”<sup>1</sup> In Persia, of all countries, such an ethical support is peculiarly required to account for the phenomenon of martyrdom ; the universal practice of “Ketmán,” or the concealment of religious opinions from prudential motives, making it in that country specially remarkable for a man to die for his faith.

And such an impulse would not be far to seek. Quite apart from the content, ethical or otherwise, of the Bâbi faith, the Bâbis did undoubtedly derive an immense moral inspiration from the contemplation of the Bâb himself. The fascination, the kindling power, the sway over human hearts which this marvellous man exercised by sheer force of character, were well-nigh miraculous. Strong of will, kind of heart and utterly careless of self, his disciples saw in him a type of manhood which both captivated and inspired. And the accounts of the Bâbi martyrdoms seem to me to show that the Bâbis did not die for their metaphysics ; they died for the Bâb—they died, that is, for the ethical ideal embodied in a life. “Subordinate,”

<sup>1</sup> *Persia and the Persian Question*, by the Hon. G. N. Curzon, vol. i. p. 501; London, 1892. The case to which Lord Curzon doubtless refers was, according to the best evidence, not in reality a case of succumbing to the menace of suffering. The disciple in question recanted by command of the Bâb, in order that he might escape and carry with him the scriptures which the Bâb had written in prison.

in a sense, the ethics of Bâbism may have been—subordinate in order of professed importance, subordinate in their intellectual system ; but yet it may hold good that the ethical, albeit unconsciously, was the real motive-power, kindling the affections and controlling the actions.

There was, moreover, besides the concrete ethic of the Bâb's personal life, an express and very interesting ethical nucleus in his doctrine, which, though it is embedded in an enormous mass of transcendental teaching, almost unintelligible to the Western mind, and lying quite apart from the practical plane, indicates that the movement had a vital moral bearing. His doctrine of toleration, for instance, for all religions, and even for unbelievers, is distinctly ethical ; and, though such doctrines are elementary to us, they are by no means elementary to a religion which was founded by the sword, and according to which the hatred and persecution of an unbeliever is a sacred duty.

Or, again, take the Utopia which the Bâb pictured, and for which all good Bâbis were to hope and pray : A community characterised by brotherly love ; dignity combined with courtesy in all dealings and transactions between its members ; introduction and cultivation of all useful arts ; prohibition of useless occupations and studies ; general elementary education ; strict pro-

hibition of mendicity, together with provision for the poor out of the common purse ; religious pilgrimages not to be encouraged ; children to be treated with kindness and affection ; and last, but not least, the emancipation of women, polygamy to cease, the harem to be abolished, the veil to be disused and the women to be allowed to appear in society. Such teachings not only prove a distinctly ethical nucleus enshrined in the surrounding metaphysics of the Bâb's religion, but they indicate a very advanced position when we take into account the religious and social state by which he was environed.

In illustration of this last statement I would instance the system of temporary marriages which obtains in Persia. A Shi'ite Muhammadan may, according to his law, contract a marriage for a period which may vary from a fraction of a day to several years. The mullá or priest draws up a contract, and the marriage is then regarded as regular. Now, the mullás have made this bad practice worse by means of one of those legal quibbles which, like the Scribes and Pharisees of Palestine, they use to circumvent the moral law. According to the law, a woman at the end of her temporary marriage must, if the marriage has been consummated, wait for two months before going to another husband. But as many women who give

themselves to these marriages are practically prostitutes, these holy men have invented a way of saving their clients from this inconvenient interval.

“When the contracted period of marriage has come to an end the man makes a fresh contract with the woman for another very short period; this second (purely nominal) marriage, being with the same man as the first, is legal without any intervening period of probation, and is not consummated; so that on its expiration the woman is free to marry another man as soon as she pleases.”<sup>1</sup>

Such was the moral plane from which the Bâb sought to raise his co-religionists. And the men who invented and supported such a system were, throughout his career, his bitterest opponents. Against the mullás the Bâb mainly directed his assaults, and it was the mullás who brought him to his death. Prince Hamze Mirza, by whom the Bâb was tried, like Pilate of old, declared that he “could find no fault in him.” “I will in no wise meddle further in this affair,” he said to the Shah’s delegate; “it is for you to decide; act as you think best, and apply to the clergy in this matter.” So the Bâb was dragged before the clergy, and by them, when they had fiercely insulted him, he was condemned to

<sup>1</sup> *A Year Amongst the Persians*, by E. G. Browne, page 462; London, 1893.

death. The charge against him was that he had claimed to be the Imam Mahdi—the Muhammadan Messiah ; but the true motive for their condemnation of him was the bitter hatred which they bore him for his denunciation of their lives, his contempt for their quibbles and prevarications, his condemnation of their sordid love of gold. His theology was the handle of his enemies ; but it was not for theology he died : he died for righteousness.

## THE PERSIAN BÂB

### IV.—THE BÂBI MARTYRS

THE Bâbi Paley has not yet appeared. When he arrives he will be able to write *A View of the Evidences of Bâbism*, very much on Paley's lines. There is no reason why he should not start his Part I. : "On the Direct Historical Evidence of Bâbism," with the same Proposition, substituting "Bâbi" for "Christian," which Paley maintains through ten chapters :—

#### "PROP. I.

"That there is satisfactory evidence that many professing to be original witnesses of the [Bâbi] miracles passed their lives in labours, dangers and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts ; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct."

For, although the Bâb cared little about miracles,



save the one miracle (as he held it to be) of his own inspiration, any more than Jesus did, the same cannot be said of his followers. And if it can scarcely be maintained that the Bâbi martyrs died "solely" for their belief in these miracles, neither does Paley very successfully maintain the same of the Christians.

As to Proposition II., "That there is not satisfactory evidence that persons pretending to be original witnesses of any other similar miracles have acted in the same way," etc., if the Bâbi Paley cannot, having regard to Christianity (and some few other religions), honestly assert that, neither can any reader of Paley who has also read the story of the Bâbi martyrdoms honestly uphold the great apologist in that contention.

The story of the Bâbi martyrs, who are to be numbered by hundreds, is indeed a thrilling one; and if their martyrdoms do not, any more than the Christian martyrdoms, prove, or help to prove, the truth of their religion, they do prove the sincerity of their belief in it; and they do, moreover, very convincingly prove the immense ethical and spiritual impulse often lying behind a faith which those who belong to other religions take upon themselves to describe as "false."

Few martyrdoms in the history of any religion exceed in pathos that of Mirza Muhammad Ali, one of the three disciples who were imprisoned with the Bâb after

his final trial at Tabriz. On the night before they were to be executed the Bâb bade him recant, that so, escaping, he might preserve and circulate the Scriptures which he had written while in prison.<sup>1</sup> But Muhammad Ali fell at the feet of his master, and, with tears and passionate entreaties, begged that he might be permitted to lay down his life with his master. In the morning they dragged him, together with the Bâb, to the barracks, and there suspended him by ropes passed beneath the arms. His relatives came, and sought to save his life by pleading madness ; but he would not allow their plea to be heard, continuing to exclaim : “ I am in my right mind, perfect in service and sacrifice.” Turning to him, they besought him to recant, and save his life ; but he answered that this would be the part of a liar and hypocrite. Then they brought him his child, a sweet young boy, hoping to work upon his parental love ; but he would not be moved. So they shot him in the presence of his master. An eye-witness of the occurrence declares that, as he hung there awaiting the volley, he turned his face to the Bâb, and said : “ My master, are you satisfied with me ? ”

This was on 8th July 1850. Later in the same year occurred the death of the “ seven martyrs ” at Teheran. It arose out of a false report that the Bâbis in the

<sup>1</sup> I do not defend the Bâb's ethics in this instance.—H. R.

capital were meditating an insurrection. Thirty-eight persons were seized, some of whom were only suspected of sympathising with the Bâbis ; and seven of these sealed their testimony with their blood.

On their way to the city square, in which they were to die, the spectators reviled them, and cast stones at them, saying : “These are Bâbis and madmen !” Mulla Isma’il, one of their number, answered : “Yes, we are Bâbis ; but mad we are not. By Allah, O people, it is to awaken and enlighten you that we have forsaken life, wealth, wife and child, and have shut our eyes on the world and such as dwell therein.”

These martyrs, also, had to withstand the importunities of friends, the promises of wealth, and in one case—the case of a learned man who was a favourite with the Shah’s mother—even the persuasions of royalty ; but in every case they met their fate with firmness, and even with exultation. And “when all was over,” writes the Bâbi historian, “the heedless rabble foully treated the lifeless corpses of those holy martyrs, spitting upon them, casting stones at them, and reviling them, saying : ‘This is the reward of lovers and pilgrims on the path of wisdom and truth.’”

One of these martyrs was a mere boy, a young Seyyid, so fair of face and pleading of aspect that the heart of the Shah’s delegate was melted with pity, and

he promised him, if he would recant, a pension for life, a fine house and the hand of his own daughter in marriage (such things happen in Persia); but the youth only looked at him wonderingly and answered: "Tempt me not with your beautiful daughter and the perishable wealth of this world; we readily relinquish the world and the things thereof to you and such others as seek after them. For us it sufficeth to drain this draught of martyrdom in the way of the Beloved." Whereupon the official smote him in the mouth, and bade the headsman do his work.

The torture and execution undergone by a number of Bâbis two years later (in August 1852) will perhaps by some not be accounted martyrdom, since these punishments were inflicted in revenge for the attempted assassination of the Shah by three men of their persuasion.

But these victims cannot be justly regarded as suffering judicial retribution. They were, in fact, martyrs pure and simple; they did not die for any complicity in the rash deed of their brethren—of which, indeed, there is abundant evidence that they had no previous knowledge—but wholly and solely for their faith. Some of them had long been in strict confinement, and their judges well knew that they could not by any possibility have been concerned in the con-

spiracy ; while others were convicted solely on account of Bâbi Scriptures having been found in their possession, or merely because they were suspected of sympathy with the despised sect.

Twenty-eight of the brethren were on that occasion put to death. Among them was Suleyman Khan, a wealthy noble, who had embraced the Bâbi faith. He was the Joseph of Arimathea among the Bâbis ; for he it was who begged the body of the Bâb, shrouded it in white silk and placed it in a tomb. They arrested him simply because he was known to be a follower of the Bâb. In consideration of his loyalty and faithful service at court, the Shah offered him large rewards if he would but abandon the creed which he had adopted. He absolutely declined, and in doing so uttered this noble sentiment—very noble and very remarkable, considering that it came from the lips of an Oriental subject, and was spoken to an Oriental despot : “ His Majesty the king,” said Suleyman Khan, “ has a right to demand from his servants fidelity, loyalty and uprightness ; but he is not entitled to meddle with their religious convictions.” This utterance cost him his life. By order of the Shah his body was gashed with wounds, and into every wound was inserted a lighted candle. In this guise he was paraded—a living torch—through the streets and bazaars of the capital, to

the sound of drums and music. During the long agony he never ceased to testify his joy that he was accounted worthy to suffer for his master's sake. He even sang hymns to the Bâb's memory as he walked his *via dolorosa*; and whenever one of the candles fell from its bleeding socket he would, with his own hand, pick it up, re-light it from one of the other candles and replace it in the wound. At length he was led out of the city, and there, close to the city gate, his living body was sawn asunder.

It was in this same persecution that Kurratul' Ayn, that most wonderful of Persian heroines—the one woman included in the Bâb's eighteen apostles—met her end. To her, too, was given the chance to live. Entreaties were pressed upon her to recant simply *pro formâ*, on the understanding that she should be allowed within her own private circle to retain and profess her own religion; but such prevarication she scorned to practise.

On the day before her martyrdom she went to the bath, and returned arrayed in white garments. She then gathered about her the women of the house in which she was held captive, and “spake to them of the decease which she should accomplish.” The next day the executioner came and took her to the place of death. There they bade her remove her veil. But

she who, in the cause of religious freedom and the social emancipation of women, had dared to preach veilless before men, refused to lay bare her beautiful face to the lustful eyes of tyrants and their slaves. So they applied the bowstring over her veil. Dr Polak, a German professor, and formerly physician to the Shah, who actually witnessed her execution, declares that she met her cruel fate "with superhuman fortitude."

These are but a few out of hundreds of such martyrdoms. What, then, becomes of Paley's "Proposition I." ? Nay, take this passage from the Bâbi historian, and compare it with that same proposition of Paley's :—

"Our chief point, however, is that persons so virtuous and reasonable as these would not have been so convinced of the truth of the Bâb's claim as thus willingly and joyfully to forgo life, wealth, fame, name, wife and child, unless they had observed in that Proof of God the clearest evidences of Divine powers and qualities."

I am not sure but that this is an improvement upon Paley ! "They had observed in the Bâb the clearest evidences of Divine powers and qualities." Yes, rightly understood, the Bâbi martyrdoms do prove *that*.





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