

TENDENCY

*THE EFFECT OF TREND AND DRIFT
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE*

JAMES I. VANCE

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Tendency

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TENDENCY

The Effect of Trend and Drift
In the Development of Life

By
JAMES I. VANCE, D. D.

"Opens wider still the portal
To the land of the immortal,
Every year :
And thinner grows the curtain
That divides us from the certain
Every year." —*Anon.*



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*This book is dedicated to the people
who think more of Life than of the
kind of clothes it wears, who feel in
the pulses of the Transitory the tides
of the Permanent, and who find in the
common task and daily round their
points of contact with the Infinite.*

Foreword

MAN is more like God than anything else in the world. The making of the future world is man's business, but man himself is, as yet, in the making; and the kind of world he is to make will depend upon the kind of man he becomes.

The value of any particular civilization or the eminence of any age of the world depends upon where it finds man in the progress of his development. No civilization can be great whose men are inferior, and no age can be illustrious whose manhood is tame.

In a magazine article, Mr. Thomas A. Edison is reported as saying: "We are only animals. We are coming out of the dog stage and getting a glimpse of our environment. We don't know, we just suspect a few things. It will take an enormous evolution of our brains to bring us anywhere."¹

There may be some truth in this statement. If so, it is the truth that was said long ago, and in a far nobler way, by him who wrote: "It is not yet made manifest what we shall be."²

It is the man that makes the age. It is the people that create the civilization. If the man be a mere animal, whose chief functions are bark

¹ The *Independent*, January 6, 1910.

² 1 John iii. 2.

and bite, it will be the dog age ; but if the man has climbed out of the brute and lost his fear of force, and discovered the majesty of ideas and the glory of love and the divinity of gentleness, the dog star is in eclipse ; the dawn of the human, —shall we say the divine ?—is at hand.

Therefore, where is man ? What is going on in him ? Whither do the tides of his being turn ? What are his impulses and faiths, his struggles and ideals ? What is man becoming ? Is the music of his life still half bark, half song ?

What follows in this little volume is an effort to feel along the lines of the development by which man makes his way upward and onward. The chapters deal with some of the forces which are at work in determining the tendency and deciding the destiny of a human life.

One may sign his theological system with what name he likes best, he may prefer the old and call himself Calvinist or Arminian, he may prefer the modern and elect Determinism or Liberationism, or he may prefer not to be classified ; but if he study life at all, he must take into account the fact that it is constantly undergoing some kind of development.

This development may be up or down, it may be trend or drift ; but there is no such thing as stagnation. No man ever stays where and what he was. Nothing leaves us as it found us, and we leave nothing as we found it.

The problem of life is, first to get it and then to live it in such a way as to be coming con-

stantly into a fuller fellowship with Him who is its source.

If a man will do this, there is no reason why he should not become as divine as God ; not that he will ever be God's equal, but that the divine nature of which we are partakers will come to be in full and harmonious control.

While we are, even now, more like God than anything else in the world, "it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him even as He is." ¹

¹ 1 John iii. 2.

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Tendency

I

WHITHER?

"Many a saint in the making seems to be marred by faults and conflicts from which the smug, careful, reputable sensualist is exempt. The difference between the two is not one of position. It is one of direction. The one, however high he stands, is moving down. The other, however low he starts, is moving up."—*Henry Van Dyke*.

THE difference between people and things is that things stay where they are and people move. Anything that stays where it is, whether it be an idea, a government, or a system of divinity, stagnates and dwindles down into nothing but a thing.

The difference between people and things is that things stay what they are and people change. It is in the condition of change that is embedded the chance to grow. People grow because they move on. Anything that stays where it is must stop at what it is. It is a finished product.

The difference between people and all other living creatures is in the direction they are going, because the direction they are going determines the way they are growing and what they are becoming.

It is a matter of tendency. It is not a matter of heredity or environment or any or everything else so much as it is the matter of tendency that determines the dignity of life. And this fact is true, whether the realm be human or divine.

God is not so much a finished product as a being whose personality is packed with divine tendency. On one occasion, Jesus said to His disciples: "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." He was speaking of the tendency of His life. He was going somewhere. He lived with His face towards destiny. He was not wandering aimlessly down the aisles of time. He was not strolling purposeless across the field of human history. Somewhere on the far-away, eternal horizon was a goal and He was moving towards that goal. Nothing could halt or retard or divert or intimidate or discourage or keep Him back from His destination. His life possessed the element of tendency and the tendency of His life determined His career.

This tendency was the matter of chief concern and importance. It was not what He had, nor even what or where He then was, but where He was going.

It was not what He had as He stood homeless among the sons of men and said: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." It was not what He had as He faced the hungry multitude, beside Galilee, with the loaves and fishes of a lad's lunch in His hand. It was

not what He had as He stood at daybreak on the seashore and called to His weary disciples with their empty nets after the night of fruitless toil : "Children, have ye any meat?" It was not what He had that night of His betrayal and arrest when all His disciples forsook Him and fled. It was never what He had. It was always where He was going.

It was not where He was but where He was going. It was not where He was as He went from city to city with His disciples, worn with the long journeys, now sitting down beside Jacob's well to rest Himself, again withdrawing into the solitude of some desert place, that He might refresh His soul by communion with His Father. It was not where He was that night of the agony in Gethsemane. It was not where He was as He stood in Pilate's judgment-hall, spit upon and insulted by the lookers-on. It was not where He was as He hung dying on the cross, as they wrapped His body in death-bands and laid it in Joseph's tomb. It was never where He was. It was always where He was going.

It was not where He had been but where He was going. He came out of eternity for He was "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" ; but Christ's glory was not behind Him ; it was before Him. It was where He was going.

He seems to say to His disciples : " You know where I am going. There may be some mystery as to whence I came, but you know whither My life tends. Whither I go ye know, and the way

ye know." They could pierce the mist of circumstance and tear through the veil of appearance. The thoughtless and heedless crowds saw only the surface, and said : " Jesus is a peasant, the son of a carpenter, friendless, unimportant, without a future." But the disciples had faith and spiritual discernment to see through into the soul of Christ's ministry and discover its tendency.

There was, however, one disciple who failed to see it. He was the disciple who is notorious for his doubts. " Thomas saith unto Him : Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way ? "

Thomas was a shallow materialist. He lived on the surface of things and not in their fundamental and elemental realities. He estimated life by appearances.

Christ rebuked him and set him right. He said : " I am the way ; " that is, " Not My station, not what I have, not what I do or say but what I am, My spirit, My character, is the way. I am going whither what I am will take Me." " He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father," that is, " He that hath seen what I am or he that hath seen whither I am going, hath seen the Father. The Father is My destination."

No one who knows much of Christ has any doubt as to where He has gone, or rather as to where He is still going. There is but one destiny for a life with His tendency. The whither of such a life is unbroken and eternal fellowship

with God. We are not surprised to read that He burst the bands of death and came forth victorious from the tomb. Death could not fetter a life within which beat the tendency of Christ. We are not surprised to read that He rose from the slopes of Olivet into the heavens before the bewildered and astonished eyes of His disciples. Earth has no power to hold down a life with such a tendency. We are not amazed to read that He is seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, for that is the fittest place for a life with Christ's tendency. And we shall not be surprised to see Him coming again, in the clouds of glory, for He has said He would come and there is no power that can block His way or prevent His going whither what He is will take Him.

Such was Christ's sermon on tendency. He illustrated His sermon with Himself. It was His way of saying that even God cannot escape the operations of the law which binds destiny and tendency together. If God is bound by the law, much more is man.

THE ELEMENT OF TENDENCY IN EVERY LIFE

There is the element of tendency in every life. We are going somewhere. We live with our faces towards destiny. We are not wandering aimlessly down the aisles of time. We are not strolling purposeless across the fields of history. We may wish we could stroll but it is not permitted. Out there on the horizon is a goal and every one is moving towards a destination. Man is not

a cloud on the sky to evaporate and disappear. He is not a mirage in the desert to go out of existence with a change of atmospheric conditions. Man is a child of destiny. He is going somewhere. Whither?

He may change the direction of his life but he cannot halt its momentum. Life is the sort of thing that refuses to stand still and stagnate. It may be going wrong, but it is going. It is like the onward flow of a river. The lay of the land may change its direction, but it cannot stop its flow. You may build a dam across the river's course and it will only pile up against the barrier in its way until it breaks through or, with a shout of victory, leaps over and goes on its course. You may pile a mountain in the river's path and it will sweep around it or grind through it, as the Colorado River has done in that awful gorge in Arizona, where the Grand Canyon yawns seven miles from lip to lip, and where one may stand on the dizzy edge and gaze on the river dashing through its wild, weird channel a mile below.

The operation of this law of tendency is as wide-spread as existence. It makes itself felt in the tiny insect life of the world, and it likewise manifests itself in the activities of God.

It shows itself in plant life and in the vegetable world. Here are two seeds that look alike and weigh the same, but when they burst the envelope which holds their life, they express themselves in forms which are totally unlike. Here is a rough root whose tendency will blossom into

a rose, and there is a smooth nut whose tendency will shape out into a mighty tree. Here are two protoplasmic cells so nearly alike that the most powerful microscope can detect no difference, but one makes a baboon and the other an immortal soul.

As we climb the scale of being, the operation of this law becomes, if possible, even more pronounced. It is preëminent in the moral and spiritual realms. Back there in the citadel of the soul resides a mysterious something which projects life in a certain direction ; and one moves, day by day, in all that he says and does and is, in all the windings and turnings and changes of his career, whither his tendency takes him.

TENDENCY THE MATTER OF CHIEF CONCERN

One's tendency is the matter of prime importance and chief concern. It makes one man a saint and another a demon. It takes one to heaven and another to hell.

It is not what a seed looks like and weighs, but what is the whither of the seed. The tendency will determine whether that seed is to make a weed or a stalk of grain, whether that protoplasmic cell is to terminate in animalism or intelligence, whether a particular soul sensation is to express devotion to God or defiance of His will.

It is not what we have, but where we are going. We may have but little. Our possessions

may be all obligations, our liabilities in such excess of our assets as to leave us hopelessly in debt. It is not where we were, but where we are going. The past may reproach us and shame us and condemn us. It is not even where we are on the road of life, but are we on the right road? It is not how long we have travelled the road, but are we going in the right direction? The supreme question is "Whither?"

Out on the open sea two steamships draw near together. One is an ocean greyhound, and the other is a freighter, but their prows are turned in the same direction, and they have both signed for the same port. The greyhound will soon sight land, but, in due course of time, the slow boat will steam into the selfsame harbour, for the two ships are one in their tendency.

Here are two men in the race of life. One is talented, brilliant, distinguished, influential; the other is plain mediocrity; but both men are controlled by the same convictions and their lives are devoted to a common service. They will part company somewhat along the road of life, but only as the two ships parted on the open sea, for their tendency in life is the same, and they will be together at the goal.

Instead of complaining of poor transportation facilities, instead of finding fault with the road-bed and wondering just what station he may have reached on the journey of life, one would

better make sure that he is travelling in the right direction. A blunder here is fatal.

THE EFFECT OF TENDENCY

The effect of tendency on every phase of life is fundamental and far-reaching.

Consider its effect on effort. The value of an effort depends not on what is accomplished, not on where it lands you, but on the direction it takes you. We want to be better, our progress is slow. We strive to get up and on, but there is frequently little to show for the effort save the struggle itself. We know that God wants us to rise. He tempts us to the heights. However far we may have gone, He is saying that it is better further on. However high we may have climbed, He is saying that there are higher heights to ascend, finer sights to behold, better fields to enter. But we make such slow progress. We climb and fall and fail. We strive and fall short and are discouraged.

God looks at the tendency; not at what we achieve but at what we try to achieve; not at the result but at the struggle; not at where we are but at where we are going.

There, at an easy, pleasant stretch on the road of life is a man of decent habits. He has no severe temptations. He is respectable and self-complacent. He is a stranger to struggle. Existence is without events. He is dallying with opportunity and frivolous life. There is not enough of the soldier in him, even to don a uni-

form and think of battle. In the forces which make a world, he simply does not count; he is a human cipher with no unit to give it value.

Down there in the gorge is a soul in the dark, battling with temptation, fighting the spectres of fear, tearing off the fetters of moral slavery, wounded, sore bestead in the conflict, stumbling, sometimes falling, crying out of the shadows for help, but ever keeping his face towards the stars, seeking for the God of his salvation, and swearing through every dread encounter: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him!" That is victory! There is a soul with a future; and over such a career, all heaven bends with sympathy and hope.

Consider the effect of tendency on character.

Man is not a finished product. He is in process of becoming. His development is going on. It does not yet appear what he shall be. Some one has said: "Boys will be boys." He was an abler diagnostician of life who said: "Boys will be men."

The way one goes determines what one becomes. This is a commonplace of science. Man's physical being has been shaped by his tendencies. Cell life has thrown itself out after sustenance, until at last it has made an arm. The arm has continued to reach for things until it has achieved a hand. Whether or not one may accept this as good science, it is certainly true that, in the making of character, we become

whither we are going. "Sow a thought and reap an act, sow an act and reap a habit, sow a habit and reap a character," is one of life's tamest commonplaces. The story of one's career is registered in himself. Everything I have ever done, every word I have ever uttered, every thought I have ever had, every temptation I have ever encouraged or resisted, every battle I have ever fought, every defeat I have ever suffered, every victory I have ever won is recorded in me. What I am is the sum total of all my tendencies. At the judgment day it will not be necessary for the Recording Angel to open the books to find one's record. It will be enough for the man to stand forth in the white light of that throne and show himself. What he is tells his whole life story.

Consider the effect of tendency on destiny.

Destiny is character lengthened out into eternity. "Sow a character and reap a destiny." If tendency affects character, much more does it affect destiny.

We can readily understand the effect of tendency on destiny, in so far as destiny is destination. If one is to reach his destination, he must go towards it. A man who is going to the north pole is not going to the equator. One cannot travel to "the far country" and "home" at the same time. But destiny is far more than destination.

Jesus said to His disciples: "I am the way." For every man, the same truth applies. What

you are is your way, your tendency. Destiny is where what you are will take you.

“ I sent my soul through the invisible,
Some question of that after life to spell ;
And by and by, my soul returned to me,
And answered, ‘ I myself am Heaven and Hell.’ ”

Destiny is not a trick of chance or fate. You are going whither what you are will take you. What one is tending to become now, he is tending to become forever.

TENDENCY AN INTERPRETER

Since all this is true, we can more clearly understand why there must be a mighty difference between faith and doubt.

God is ever calling for faith. He tells us that it is useless to pray without faith, that He can do nothing for us unless we believe. Sometimes we are disposed to regard the demand as unreasonable. Why is not doubt as good as faith, if it be honest? Indeed, sometimes we are rather proud of our doubts. We regard them as the signs of emancipation. We look upon doubt as the hall-mark of independent thought. Is not doubt as good as faith, if it be sincere?

Doubt and faith are nothing in themselves. They are simply soul tendencies, but tendencies in diametrically opposite directions. Faith is the tendency of a soul towards God, and doubt

is the tendency of a soul away from God. Faith is simply the light shining on the face of a soul turned towards the sun, and doubt is the gloom on the face of a soul turned towards the night. It is not a question of sincerity but of direction. The fact that a man who is on the wrong road is sincere in thinking he is on the right road will not bring him to his destination. The sincerity of one who swallows poison, mistaking it for medicine, will not prevent the fatal effects of the drug. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Without faith it is impossible to reach Him. Faith may have its nights of trial, its hard, steep stretches of difficulty, its conflicts and crosses, but it is on the right road, it is moving towards light and peace. Some day it will emerge triumphant.

Tendency also makes it evident that the earlier one consciously surrenders his will to God, the better. If he is going the wrong way, the longer he goes that way, the further he will get from where he should go and the harder it will be to get back.

It is vastly harder for one who has lived fifty years, going away from God, to yield his will to Him, than for a child. The tendency of a lifetime must be revolutionized. The man must retrace his steps and come back to where he was when he was a child. Was not this what Jesus meant when He said : "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." There is nothing

more dangerous than to persist in a wrong course. It is a fallacy that sin leaves us where it found us. It is never too soon to start right.

Tendency also would seem to say that the hope of a chance after death is an utterly forlorn hope. It does not say that God will ever decline to extend the offers of grace. It is saying that there is not the ghost of a chance that one can change his attitude of rejection to the offers of grace, whose tendency away from God has hardened through effort and character and destiny, out into eternity. It is easy to bend the sapling or twist the twig, but wait until the tree becomes a forest giant, and you will not bend it. With your hand you can shape the river's course, as it trickles from the spring at its source, but you cannot stay its tide there where it sweeps into the mighty deep. It is not difficult for Christ to win a child's heart, but what shall be said of a soul that has gone out into eternity, hardened against all the love and compassion of a merciful God? Dives asked that a messenger from the spirit world be sent to warn his brethren, but Abraham said: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

"Now is the accepted time. To-day is the day of salvation." "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

These are the shibboleths of age-old evangelical religion, but they are likewise the household words of current, scientific teaching.

TENDENCY AND SALVATION

The purpose of salvation is to invest human life with a divine tendency.

It is intended, of course, to make one better, to enable him to be good, to quit sin, and live a correct life, but all that is incidental.

It is intended to make him useful, to lead him to invest life aright, to employ his powers in God's service, but even that is incidental.

It is intended to make him happy, to empty his heart of worry and his mind of anxiety, to give him joy and peace and blessed contentment, but all that is a mere incident of salvation.

It is intended to make him safe, to assure him of divine protection against all his foes, to confer on him a stable and lasting hope, but this is incidental also.

Salvation proposes to accomplish all this by giving life the right direction. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." One is saved, not when he is sinless, unselfish, seraphic, safe, but when the tendency of his life is towards God.

This is the work accomplished in regeneration. We are born again. We become partakers of the divine nature. Christ is formed within us as the hope or the tendency of glory. His life tendency is imparted to us, and as it develops it takes us the way He went ; and "we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is."

Repentance is investing life with a new direc-

tion. It does not mean that one is merely sorry for his sins, but that he is sorry enough to quit. Repentance is not tears but tendency.

Conversion is simply changing one's way. It is a man seeing that he has gone wrong and coming back to where he started wrong, and starting right.

This matter of tendency is also the tremendous fact involved in choice. God keeps His hands off when it comes to the human will. He pleads but He will not use compulsion. We stand where the roads divide, and the will chooses, and the choice determines tendency. If the choice is wrong, effort and character and destiny are wrong; if the choice is right, all is right. No wonder that all the eloquence of heaven is packed into the appeal which says: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

WHITHER ?

Let a man examine himself as to the whither of his life. With eternity in view, whither? To keep on living as we are living now, where will it take us? We must keep on living. Suicide will not stop life. It will only take off the brakes. We must keep on forever. What if we are on the wrong road? What if each day

but takes us nearer the invisible edge of a precipice ?

There is nothing in life more important than to get right with God who alone is life's true goal. And the way to get right with God is to accept Christ as a Saviour and follow Him. He is the way to God. If there be a heaven anywhere it is in Christ's direction. If eternal happiness is to be had, it is out there towards Him. Christ is the direction, the tendency, the way, and no man cometh unto the Father but by Him.

"Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

When Christ said it, right before Him stood the cross, but beyond its shame and suffering glimmered the sheen of the white throne. He says : "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." One should not be frightened by the sight of a cross. It is the sign-post on the road to the throne. While the road may be rough and long and steep and marked by a cross, if it lead at last to the Father's house, it is enough. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope " or this tendency, " in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." ¹

¹ 1 John iii. 2, 3.

II

DOWN FROM THE HEIGHTS

“No man is hurt but by himself.”—*Diogenes*.

It does not take a very close study of human nature to discover what may be called “a counter tendency,” or at least “cross currents.”

Man has not always gone and does not always go in the direction of himself.

Possessed of elements that make for divinity, he has not always manifested divine inclinations.

Just as in the natural world there are found the unmistakable evidences of violent eruptions and planet changing, continent-making, hemisphere-destroying upheavals ; so in human personality are found the traces of a tragic past and the undeniable evidences of moral tragedy.

One may call this by either a scientific or a theological term. He may explain it by the doctrine of sin or by the theory of evolution ; but the signs are downward and they indicate not ascent but descent.

Somewhere human nature has suffered a lapse. There has been a fall. Man's tendency has reversed itself, and the race, for the time at least, has seemed to thwart the divine purpose.

This tumble down from the heights, as in the

crossing of some valley to reach a higher range, may have had, in the eternal plan, for its ultimate purpose a higher life for man. Who shall say ? The problem of the existence of evil is the one insoluble mystery. But however it is to be used, sin is a fact, and the fall of man was the tragedy of the race.

The author of the Eighth Psalm, in a striking line, portrays man before this descent manifested itself. He says : "Thou hast made him but little lower than God."

It is the translation of the Hebrew text as found in the American Revised Version. The translation is correct, but its audacity is striking. At last the translators have had the courage to put into English just what the Hebrew says. The old translation is "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels" ; but the word is not the word for angels. It is "Elohim," the word which everywhere else is translated "God," and the daring thing affirmed is not that God made man a little lower than the angels, but that He made him but little lower than God !

The race started high. At the beginning of his career man's moral and spiritual plane was but little lower than that of the Deity. Humanity is Jehovah's finest product. God's greatest work is not a planet, a shining sun, an ether sea, a potent law, a celestial city ; it is not singing angels and shining seraphim, but man. At the summit of creation God made man but little lower than God, stamped him with the divine

image, crowned him, and gave him dominion over all creatures.

A modern sensational writer of freak fiction undertakes to tell the story of man "before Adam." The story is a nightmare. The writer takes his readers among the beasts. His heroes are half human, half brute. Groping amid prehistoric shadows, he tries to show how man has slowly fought his way up out of bestiality and carnality, out of ferocious appetites and base lusts and constant fears to a point where human nature, at the lowest stage of moral filth and spiritual stupidity, has emerged. There is, of course, no evidence that the story is true. Considered as the output of an excited imagination, working overtime, the story is interesting ; but treated as either science or religion, it is not valuable. Compared with the doctrine of the origin of man, contained in the old Hebrew Psalm, it is as a swamp to the Garden of Eden, as dull clay to gleaming diamonds.

"Thou hast made him but little lower than God,
And crowned him with glory and honour.
Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy
hands ;
Thou hast put all things under his feet."

This is the Bible doctrine of the origin of man, and it takes us to the heights. To be a member of the human race, the Psalmist declares, is to come of a great line. It is to have Jehovah for an hereditary ancestor. It is to trace one's

descent from altitudes but little lower than the lofty peaks whose dizzy heights lose themselves in the clouds of the infinite, where Divine Being has its explanation. To have the blood of man in your veins is to be dowered with a heritage of being past the price of all worlds and the glory of all angels.

One may be a very lowly, a very humble and obscure and unworthy member of this human race ; he may be some unfortunate defective or cripple ; he may be a vagabond on the streets, a waif without a home, a criminal in a dungeon, the victim of his own vices ; but upon him there lingers the tracery of the skies and about him is the livery, though in rags, of the life that is but little lower than God. He belongs to the first family of the realm. He possesses a dignity unequalled by all material things. He has a soul ; and Jesus was speaking calmly and without exaggeration when He said : " What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? "

So startling a statement cannot hope to go unchallenged. There are two facts whose challenge may be considered.

THE CHALLENGE OF SIZE

The first is the challenge of size. It confronted the poet of the origin of man. It overwhelmed him in the very moment he was declaring that man was sprung from God. In an outburst of poetic passion he exclaims : " You have made

him but little lower than God," but even as he says it, the absurd audacity of the thing seems to seize him, and before the line is dry, he asks permission to revise. He says :

“ When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained,
What is man, that Thou art mindful of him ?
And the son of man, that Thou visitest him ? ”

That is, he looks around him at the big world. He sees the glowing sun and shining moon and radiant stars ; he beholds the majestic forces of nature ; he hears the roar of the tempest and feels the breath of the storm-wind and sees the leap of the thunderbolt ; he walks out under the sky at night and lifts his eyes to the matchless starry host ; he takes in all the grandeur and glory of that fadeless pageantry ; and then he comes back to himself, to his weakness, his littleness, his obscurity, his infinitely less than minor part in the big world's affairs, and he seems to say : “ It cannot be, the song is false. In a big world like this, man is too infinitesimal to claim the attention of the mighty God. He is lost amid its splendours, hopelessly dwarfed amid its stupendous statures.”

If the ancient singer felt this, how much more must we ; for ours is a bigger world than his.

The study of astronomy is a salutary discipline for human conceit. To gaze upon heaven's spectacular, to let the imagination wander through endless systems of worlds spread out on the map

of space; and then to come back to one's own tiny planet and dying race and puny self, is to be in the mood to ask: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?"

Since the Psalmist's day, the telescope has been invented and stars he never dreamed of brought to sight. The Milky Way has been found to be not merely a band of light on the brow of night, but an innumerable host of individual stars, massed in solid phalanx, marching in close and serried ranks across the fields of space, until we catch but the gleam of their shining armour. Since his day the photographic eye has been invented, and there have been added to the roof of the heavens vast systems of the starry world, invisible to the natural eye even with the aid of the most powerful telescope. Worlds have been added to worlds, systems to systems, out through the infinite spaces, until the heavens have become a stellar host in comparison with which the Psalmist's starry galaxy was but a corporal's guard. If the size of the world was a challenge in his day, how much more in ours?

The doubt which rises in this challenge we feel. It makes us skeptics. God is too great, His affairs too vast, and man too small for God to care. Man is but a part of the dust of the universe; the insect life of a little planet which itself will some day run its course and drop into the sun. Man is only a mote swimming in a sunbeam, a worm crawling around the angle of a

clod, an insect asleep on a leaf. To say that the God who presides over all worlds singled out a single member of the midget tenantry of a tiny planet for His special care, is incredible. Our prayers can never reach Him. Amid the rushing, endless worlds of this labyrinthine universe the weak petitions of our timid hearts can never find their way to the great throne.

The doctrine of a start on the heights may pass as poetry, but considered as serious prose, it becomes a solemn farce. This is the doubt which preys on us.

THE CHALLENGE OF SIN

The second challenge is even more serious. It is the challenge of sin. It sires the doubt which comes, not as we look around, but as we look within. It is the doubt which arose in the mind of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, when he tried to say with one in a certain place: "Thou hast made him but little lower than God."

He quotes the old line. He repeats the ancient doctrine of the origin of man. He recites the early glory of the heights. He tells us how God wrought at the summit and made man in His image, and crowned him with the empire of the world. Then he looks, not at the face of the stars, but into the faces of his fellow men. He looks down into his own guilty heart and darkened mind. He looks at fallen, sinful human nature. He sees man imbruted, his face

written over with the ruin of God's law and his powers eaten out with lust, and he says: "It cannot be. The song is false. Man is too vile to claim the care of the holy God," and the old doubt breaks forth afresh.

"What is man that Thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man that Thou visitest him?"

That is the awful cloud; this is the real tragedy; not what man was before Adam, but what he is after Adam; after centuries of tuition, after ages of divine opportunity, after dispensations of the Bible and the Cross and the Holy Spirit. What has man achieved? What are his accomplishments?

We see him fallen so low that the angels weep over his downfall. We see him living with a thin edge between him and eternal despair. We see him dwelling on the verge of that lost world, the smoke of whose torment ascendeth forever and ever. We see him cursed by want, disfigured by hate, defiled by vice, haunted by fear. We see, under our very eyes, massacres in nations claiming to be civilized, racial atrocities, daily crimes whose trial in the courts of justice leads us to close our windows and bar our doors to save the children from defilement. We see man the author and agent of infamies and iniquities that cry to high heaven for redress. This is what we see. "We see not yet all things put under him."

This is the challenge that makes us falter as

we read the ancient song. This is the fact that made the translators hesitate. It sounds almost like sacrilege to recite the origin of such a creature as next to godhood. Granted that prayer can find its way through the rushing worlds, how can petitions from lips so stained find an audience at that white throne? Our sins condemn us. It is the image of the beast which we bear, the vices which rot in our flesh, the passions which riot in our blood, that seem to make the old song false.

Yet, despite the challenge, the song is true. Though with faltering lips and a fainting heart, yet with a voice which all the ages must hear, it peals out its great creed of man : "Thou hast made him but little lower than God."

THE CHALLENGE OF SIZE REFUTED

Nature itself answers the challenge of size. The very heavens, which seemed to say that God is too great to notice so small a creature as man, say that God is too great not to notice him. The microscope has uncovered the world below man, just as the telescope has uncovered the world above him. The microscopic world is as full of divinity as the telescopic. Tiny molecules, under the microscope, break up into planetary and solar and sidereal systems, all moving in perfect harmony with the music of the spheres and repeating on the scale of the infinitesimal the phenomena of the macrocosm.

Sir Oliver Lodge estimates that if a dewdrop

were enlarged to the size of our planet, the molecules of hydrogen it contains would be about the size of an orange. Compute how many oranges would be required to make a ball the size of the earth ; as many molecules reside in a dewdrop. And yet, each of these molecules is a little world of its own, with planets revolving around a central sun, and all under the same law of the one master mind that made and governs all. That is, size is nothing to God. He is as much in the atom as in the universe.

Thus nature itself gives the lie to the doubt, which would represent God as sitting far off on the rim of the distant heavens, taking no interest in the affairs of a tiny planet and a fallen race. He is the God who steers the Pleiades, but He is also the God who guides the sparrow in its flight. He is the God who feeds "a billion blazing suns," but He is also the God who hovers over the tiny seed as it goes to sleep in the sod. His care runs up to heights and out to vastnesses of which man has never dreamed, and likewise down to insignificancies so minute as to beggar all tables of calculation.

This is Christ's message to man when He takes a withered blade of grass, a bird with a broken wing, a lily in the field, and says : "If God care for them, how much more for you, oh, ye of little faith?" This is the God to whom we make our appeal, and as we do, the heavens and the earth begin to say, "Thou hast made him but little lower than God."

THE CHALLENGE OF SIN REFUTED

The man himself refutes the challenge of sin. After the worst has been said about him, there is something in man that refuses to be explained by a process of nature, something that no cell of protoplasm could ever evolve, and no course of discipline create. The music in the great organ is made by the air passing through the pipes, but there is something in one of Haydn's oratorios which all the atmospheres of time blowing through the tubes of space could not produce. The sap that rises in a rose-bush to the leaves of the flower it carries, is not the same as the love which rises from a mother's heart to her lips as she croons a lullaby over the babe in her arms, the fruit of her own life. A lump of pig-iron outweighs the brain of Dante and Milton and Darwin, but there is something in the gray matter of the brain that no scales have ever been able to register.

The very capacity to sin is a certificate of man's high origin. He is the only being with so sublime a capacity. It proves that he is fallen, but it also harks back to the lofty heights from which he fell.

The power of thought is a relic of divinity in man. The stars are wonderful, the atoms amazing, but more wonderful is the mind that measures them, and explains their process. In his Fernley Lecture, "The Unrealized Logic of Religion," Dr. Fitchett relates the discovery of the planet Neptune, and calls it the "romance of astronomy." He says: "It was noted that at

one point in its track through space, the planet Uranus swung outward from the perfect curve of its orbit. What drew the great planet from its course? Two astronomers, independently of each other, solved the problem. Some unknown mass across millions of leagues deflected the rushing orb in its course. They calculated the distance, the diversion, the weight of the disturbing body, and climbing up, so to speak, on the slenderest thread of mathematical calculations, through measureless altitudes of untracked space, they found the new planet."

The intellect that can conquer space and calculate the schedules of the infinite and wrest from distant and undiscovered worlds their secrets, is not to be put in the dull list of acids and alkalis, and explained by a natural process. Its powers are the outflashings of a soul sprung from the loins of godhood.

Consciousness is further evidence of the sanity of this position. A planet plunges through space but it does not know it. It is a blind, dead, inert mass. Man stands in the midst of colossal forces that appall him, and could easily destroy him, but he is conscious of himself. He knows, and he knows that he knows. Nature may crush him, but there is this eternal difference between him and his destroyer. He knows.

Personality, that marvellous correlation of thought, feeling and volition in the human, is another sign amid the ruins of sinful human nature attesting the high hour of its birth.

× The possibility of growth is another. Man possesses an apparently limitless capacity for moral and spiritual development. He has within him a quality which enables him to take on the culture of God.

All of this, and much more that might be mentioned, shows that there are at least sufficient signs remaining to trace the footprints of Deity as God passed through man's soul the morning of creation. The strongest confirmation, however, remains to be mentioned.

JESUS

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews lifted his eye from the face of fallen man to the face of the Son of Man and exclaimed: "Now we see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus." Jesus is the triumphant vindication of the high origin of man.

He came to reveal God, to tear aside the veil human fear had woven across the face of Deity. He succeeded, and said: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

But He came also to reveal man, to tear away the disguises sin had woven around the human, to show the higher, the finer, the divine possibilities there are for every soul in Him. He has succeeded here also. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

We see the world's vastness and man's littleness, and say: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?"

We see God's holiness and man's sinfulness, and say : "What is man that Thou art mindful of him ?"

Then we see Jesus. We see how low divine love can stoop and how high it can lift ; and once more the ancient song arises without a broken note :

"Thou hast made him but little lower than God !"

In view of all this, no wonder there is a divine concern for man's redemption. The fall of man was the tragedy that shook the universe.

It is the value of human nature that makes the ruin of a soul so stupendous a catastrophe. It is second only to the disaster of the fall of God Himself. Men speak of eternal punishment, but there is no plummet to sound such depths. We have no way of estimating the loss of a soul that goes staggering down from heights which border on godhood into the eternal darkness, to grope amid fears, to be chained by vices, and to be tormented by appetites unfed forever. No wonder all heaven was aghast at the spectacle of man's fall.

III

THE SIRENS

“ It is the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening, slowly silence all.”

—*Alfred Tennyson.*

IN the mythology of ancient Greece, there is the story of the sirens, the sea-nymphs who dwelt on an island in the southern sea, and whose seductive music lulled to sleep the sailors whose boats came too near the fatal shore. Then, while their victims slept, the sirens exchanged murder for song and slew the poor wretches who had yielded to their evil spell. In vain were all efforts to awaken the sleepers. Insensible alike to the entreaties of love, the commands of duty, and the appeals of honour ; shackled by the invisible fetters of the strange slumber into which the song of the sorceresses had cast them, their voyage ended in oblivion and a nameless grave on the tide-washed sands.

In a passage of rare beauty, Charles Kingsley has described the surrender of the sailors to the song of the sirens :

“ They could see the sirens on Anthemousa, the flowery isle ; three fair maidens sitting on the beach, beneath the red rock in the setting

sun, amid beds of crimson poppies and golden asphodel ; slowly they sang and sleepily, with silver voices mild and clear, which stole over the golden waters and into the hearts of all the heroes, in spite of Orpheus' song ; and as they listened, the oars fell from their hands and their heads drooped on their breasts, and they closed their heavy eyes ; and they dreamed of bright still gardens, and of slumbers under murmuring pines, till all their toil seemed foolishness and they thought of their renown no more."

This ancient myth was the Greeks' story of the fall of man. It enshrines the same great struggles with temptation that the Hebrew mind has set forth in the song of the lost Eden.

Human nature, in the splendour of its high origin, was not exempt from temptation. Even the sinless Christ, who was the faultless embodiment of what man was in his first estate and of what he is to be redeemed and glorified, had in Him that which made temptation an awful reality. There at the threshold of His career, the sirens met Him as they had met, at the threshold of its career, the race He came to save.

Christ resisted and conquered where man yielded and fell, and where man continues to yield and fall.

The sirens have not ceased to sing. They are still the temptations that would destroy and their song is ever the music that would lull into a fatal stupor. The sea-nymphs on the flowering beach of Anthemousa, sitting amid the perfumed poppy

beds, are those influences which fascinate the senses, inflame the passions, feed all carnal appetites, but mislead, and, at last, destroy the soul ; for while they charm the sensual, they deaden the spiritual. They come with fair faces and sweet voices, but under their beguiling appeals, judgment is deceived, conscience stupefied, and reason drugged and dethroned.

It is the surrender to temptation that takes a human life out of its true course, that not only arrests development, but dominates personality with the madness that ends in ruin.

In the book of Proverbs there is a line which portrays temptation very much in the same terms as the Greek myth : “ Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.” ¹

Manhood is falling into the fatal stupor, the boat is drifting nearer the shore of death, the sails flap in the idle winds, the oars drift with the tide, and the rudder is at the mercy of the waves. Life has ceased to be a struggle, and a being whose destiny was meant to be as high as heaven finds a nameless grave beside the couch of a sorceress.

For sin is ever a sorceress. Temptation is not an angel ; it is merely the counterfeit of an angel. It comes with seductive ways and a song. It looks like an angel, sings like an angel ; otherwise it would have no power to beguile. If temptation were to come with the mask torn off, with its ghastly deformities and awful ugliness

¹ Prov. vi. 10.

naked and exposed, if it were to speak in the hoarse and strident tones of hate or in the treacherous accents of falsehood and deceit, it would cast no spell. We should laugh in its face and kick it out. But it comes like a siren and captures with a song.

Perhaps at first there may be some vague sense of danger and the soul try to arouse itself and shake off the evil spell, but like a bird charmed by a snake, conscious of peril but rooted by a strange fascination, the will seems soon to lose its power to resist. A fatal drowsiness creeps on; there is an undefined fear, a vague alarm; but the siren sings, and at last reluctance is overcome.

The soul surrenders itself to the delicious sleep of the senses. It is captured by temptation and is satisfied to be a slave. No alarm excites, no warning reaches the ear, and the drugged spirit mistakes stupor for repose and slumber for security.

It is possible for a man to be so bewitched by temptation as to mistake the stupor of sin for immunity from peril; to imagine that there is no longer any danger because there is no longer any fear. Conscience has ceased to trouble him, and he concludes that all is well. He mistakes chloroform for cure, insensibility for innocence, stupidity for safety, a dope for salvation.

The sirens put their victims to sleep only to destroy them. The loss of spiritual sensitiveness is one of the most alarming symptoms of soul

peril. It is something to be able to feel pain, to see a danger signal, to have a conscience that can utter a protest, to be so filled with spiritual alarm as to shake off the invisible foe, whose clutch is at your throat, long enough to cry: "What must I do to be saved?"

The sirens sing that indulgence is better than obedience. This was the temptation that ruined Eden. It is perhaps the primal transgression in man's downward career.

The first lesson one needs to learn, who would grow into the life of God, is the lesson of submission to the supreme will, of surrender to the impulses whose tides are towards divine companionship.

This involves the stern repression of every tendency that is in conflict with the eternal purpose, and implicit obedience to the infinite will.

Sin, however, says that self-will is supreme. It whispers that man is the goal of his own existence, that he has no higher mission than to please himself, and that to indulge himself is better than to obey his master.

The man who surrenders life to this pleasant lie, has made further development and growth for himself impossible. He has locked the gates of glory against himself and barred his own being out from fellowship with the divine.

The sirens sing of success without work. They say that toil is irksome and struggle useless; that the boat will drift into the desired harbour,

blown there by the winds of fair fortune and good luck ; and, as the sailors listen, they become sluggards and fall away from the mast, desert the wind-swept deck, and say, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep."

Is not this the dream many a man has of success? He is thinking of it as something that is to drop down into his hand from heaven, ready made. He would be rich quick. He would be great without effort. He would be happy without merit. He has a body built for toil, brains that can think, and powers to achieve. He is surrounded by circumstances that challenge him to do his best, but he goes through life doped, praying for a windfall.

Success does not happen. It is achieved. It is not an accident, but an event. It is the product of laborious effort, and is wrought out by years of steady, toilsome preparation and application.

We see the day of a man's success, the spectacular moment, and say, "How fortunate!" but lift the curtain and behold him during the long years getting ready for his coronation ; toiling, plodding on, doing each duty as best he can. Genius is steady, homely, downright work.

The law of labour is the first law of salvation enacted by God for man. Having lost Eden by substituting indulgence for obedience, man went out of his first kingdom of innocence, condemned ;

but as he passed through the gates of the happy life he had lost, God said, "Work! In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat thy bread."

To regard work as a curse is to give one's theology a fatal twist in the opening chapter.

The man to whom success comes as a windfall, into whose lap a heritage of fortune drops out of a clear sky, who finds himself, by the trick of events, suddenly thrust into a high place of power for which neither nature nor previous training has fitted him, is to be pitied rather than envied. He is not the favourite of fortune so much as its victim. His seeming quick success is but the method by which fate has decreed his speedier undoing. His great place has only made glaring the small measures of one whose defects might have remained unnoticed out of the lime-light of publicity.

The voices which sing of success without toil, of honour without fitness, are the voices of a sorceress who would cast a spell on life to destroy it. They are a part of the temptation by which the soul suffers defeat and its God-given tendencies are paralyzed.

The sirens sing of sin without suffering. They say that innocence is homely and virtue plain, and that a life of self-restraint is a life without thrills. They fling prudence to the winds and exclaim: "Stolen pleasures are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. Thrust in! He is a coward who fears to take a plunge in the tide of forbidden delights. There is no danger this

once. Stifle conscience, put the soul to sleep, and for one night give flesh a full rein."

Is not this the song that sings its wild notes into the hot blood of many a youth? "One can do wrong without damage. He can be dishonest this once and no one ever be the wiser. He can be impure and no stain be left. He can be untruthful for the time, and hide his tracks forever. He can have his fling and sow his wild oats, and somehow escape the harvest of remorse and regret."

This is what youth hears as it sails by the poppy beds of Anthemousa. It is the song that lures to death.

Sin stupefies. It is a dope. It deadens conscience.

The sleep of sin is ever a fatal stupor. It is impossible to sin and not suffer. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Many a man dies, like Samson with his head in Delilah's lap, sleeping his chance of greatness away, while the sorceress shears him of his strength. It is no sign of courage to do wrong. It is merely a symptom of that madness in the soul which unfits one to diagnose peril.

The ancient myth, in which the Greeks recited the story of the soul's defeat, goes on to say that many were those who fell a victim to the sirens' song. Ship after ship sailed away to come back no more to the home port. At last Ulysses adventured the waters that washed the shores of

the sirens' isle, but ere the song of the sea-nymphs could lay hold of him and of his men, he plugged the ears of his sailors with wax and had them lash him to the mast, leaving every sail unfurled and the rudder set to the open sea. Thus he safely passed the dreaded island, whereupon the sirens in rage threw themselves into the sea and changed themselves into dangerous rocks; that in the form of a new and closer peril, they might destroy the lives of those who sailed the seas.

The myth may still teach us the story of human struggle with temptation, and while it suggests that temptation, defeated at one point, renews the attack at another, it also indicates how temptation itself is to be defeated.

One must be deaf to its message. He must be blind to its charms. He must not look upon sin "with the least degree of allowance." This is God's attitude, and it must be the attitude of every soul that would grow into God's likeness.

The way to become deaf to the call of evil is to fill the soul with the voices of divine truth. The way to become blind to its fascinations is to dwell on "One who is the chiefest among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely." Temptation cannot be entirely avoided. Our boat must sail by it, but if one know the truth, the truth shall make him free and keep him free.

He is safe who lashes himself to the mast of duty, who occupies all his powers with the kind of work God has for a man to do in this world. Evil can do little with one who is positive. It

is the idle, listless, negative souls that sin takes captive. Let a man so tie himself up to duty that he cannot get away from it, and all the sirens of sin will sing to him in vain. For him "All's well." He will sail a straight course and will reach the "desired haven."

IV

DIVINE COMPASSION

“So runs my dream ; but what am I ?
An infant crying in the night,
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.”

—*Alfred Tennyson.*

THE spectacle of a lost soul is a sight that moves the heart of God. The hope of a race that had fallen from the heights resides in the fact of divine compassion. God's disappointment over sin is not the disappointment of either condemnation or despair, but rather of a mighty and measureless pity.

Christ, who is the revelation of God's heart, is represented as moved with compassion on the multitudes “because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”¹

“He saw them,” as the text of one of the old manuscripts of the Gospels would seem to be best rendered, “as sheep with the fleece torn off, bleeding, and unable to rise up.”

This was the picture which filled the Saviour's eyes, and this was the tragedy which stirred His great heart as He “went about the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and

¹ Matt. ix. 36.

preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people."

His was a glorious mission. Never came there a man into the world on mission so heavenly, so splendid and heroic, so sweet and tender and merciful, so unselfish and so sublime. He came to bid the people hope, to lift the veil of the kingdom, and reveal to their enraptured gaze a sight of the glory-throne. He came comforting sorrow, touching human aches and hurts with His tender love, and changing all to health and beauty and grace.

But, oh, the sight that met His eyes as He went about on His mission of mercy ! He had a soul great enough to pierce the mask behind which sodden human misery tries to hide its awful wretchedness, and see the terrible plight of sin-smitten, lost, and fallen human nature dragging through its slough of despond, hopeless and helpless.

Jesus saw it because He had a great heart, a mighty love, a tender pity, an infinite compassion. It is this compassion which has made Him the Saviour of the world. It has lifted Him into magnificent solitude. It leads men to say not only that He spake as man never spake, but that He loved as man never loves and that He pitied as man never pities ; until they fall before Him exclaiming with Peter : "Thou art the Christ," crying with Thomas : "My Lord and my God !"

What kind of a person must this Jesus have been, who, as He looked upon the crowds which surged about Him, saw them "as sheep with the fleece torn off, bleeding, and unable to rise up"? What must have been the plans and purposes and business of one who could see all this and then could feel what He saw? Such an one is the Saviour. It is thus that He comes to men.

THE FACT OF CHRIST'S COMPASSION

Christ came not to be propitiated, to be reconciled, to make people do things to win His favour and earn His grace. This is a heathen and pagan conception of God. The gods which men have made for themselves have all been fears, and their friendship had to be won at great cost. When Jesus came, there was nothing to fear. He did not come to be propitiated but to be a propitiation. He came not to make people offer sacrifices to Him, but to offer Himself as a sacrifice.

Christ did not come to gaze on human woe with idle curiosity and make a plaything of man's misery. This is often man's attitude to human trouble. It is a problem to be studied. The woe and squalor and crime of the world wear the charm of tragedy and mystery. The world studies poor people with a curious interest like that of the man in the laboratory for germs. There was no look of idle curiosity in the eyes of the gentle Christ as He gazed into the faces of the poor.

He did not come merely to pity, to have His

emotions stirred and to weep over our hardships. About the best that we can do is to wring our hands and say that we are sorry, to grow maudlin and sentimental over suffering. They tell us that people have nothing to eat and we say : "What a pity !" and we send them something to eat. They tell us that people have no coal and we say : "What a pity !" and we send them some fuel to keep the fire going. They tell us that the mountaineers live in one-room log cabins and that many of them cannot write their names, and we say : "What a pity !" and we make a contribution that they may have at least two rooms and be able to write their names. They tell us that the heathen sit on the floor and eat with sticks, while we sit in chairs and lift our food to our mouths with a varied assortment of instruments, and we say : "What a pity !" and we send them a missionary.

Pity is good as far as it goes, but there was more than pity in the face of Him who came to save the world. There was compassion.

This compassion is Christ's crown,—not His power to heal, not His wonderful wisdom, not even His personal sanctity, but His marvellous, unfailing, godlike compassion. Christ did not come to save the world with civilization, by curing poverty, by diffusing knowledge. Man can do all this for himself. He needs it, but he does not need a Saviour to do it for him, for he can do it for himself. Christ came to save the world with that which the world needs most and of

which it has least. He came to save by the glory of love.

“ The night has a thousand eyes
The day but one ;
But the light of the whole world dies,
When day is done.

“ The mind has a thousand eyes
The heart but one ;
But the light of all life dies,
When love is done.”

“ Thy gentleness hath made me great !”¹

THE EXTENT OF CHRIST'S COMPASSION

Woe soon wears us out. We cannot sympathize with very many people in trouble before we are exhausted. Every one who has ever tried to help a lame soul or comfort a hurt heart, knows, from experience, what Christ meant when He said : “ Virtue is gone out of Me.” It takes it out of us to try to help people. We can feel up to a certain point and then we find our sensibilities deadening. We can sympathize with a few in trouble, but the soul soon staggers wearied and worn out.

Christ's compassion is unfailing and unwearied. It is for all. All the woes and sorrows of the world break on His great heart. All the burdens of mankind pile themselves upon His shoulders. All the griefs and disappointments of the world cry themselves out on Jesus' breast. He does not try to spare Himself. He invites trouble.

¹ Ps. xviii. 35.

He says: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." He bids all to come, not merely His disciples, not merely the church people, not merely the people of a certain town or community or nationality, not merely the people of a certain sect or age or planet, but all, in all worlds and times; all the sorrowing and weary and disheartened of God's wide universe who are as sheep with the fleece torn off, bleeding, and unable to rise up, Jesus invites to come unto Him and find rest.

He must have a great soul or He could not pay out strength to a sympathy like that. There He stands, bearing all the weight of the woe of the world, carrying all the penalty of the sin of the world, nursing all the sorrows of the troubled of the world, wiping away all tears and making every care His own. Yet there is no sign of weariness about Him, no evidence of reluctance to receive us. Marvellous compassion! Only the heart of a God is big enough for the pulse-beat of a sympathy that throbs around the world.

THE DISCERNMENT OF CHRIST'S COMPASSION

We are disposed to think that Christ surveys the troubles of the world very much as we gaze on a landscape or look across a stretch of open sea. Here and there, where the swell is heaviest, one may detect the white crest of an occasional tide-rip, but, for the most part, it is the dull monotony of unbroken sameness clean to the dim line which banks itself against the far horizon.

Thus we think of Jesus as gazing on human woe in the aggregate, of loving the world without reference to individual needs. But Christ sees far more than an occasional tide-rip on the vast sea of human trouble.

One Monday morning wearied from the duties of the Sabbath, I went with a friend for a walk to Eagle Rock, on the top of the Orange Mountains. The day was fair, the air was clear, and as we stepped out on the plaza at the summit, a magnificent panorama of splendid cities broke on our sight, stretching over northern New Jersey and across the North River into Manhattan and Greater New York. Down there, in our field of vision, lay the communities containing the homes of seven millions of people; a greater number, it is said, than can be seen from any other point in the whole world.

As I looked down on the scene at our feet, I began to think of the many human tragedies that were housed there under our eyes, of the countless sorrows that were there, of the funeral processions which, even then, were winding through the streets, of the disappointed men and women, of the heartless grind of trade, of the struggle with poverty, of the battle for bread, of the conflict with disease, of the woe and weariness, the shame and sin and suffering; and I spoke to my companion about it, and said: "Think of all that breaking on the heart of Christ. He feels all that any man, woman or child down there feels. It all breaks over Him; and all

that is just a tiny wavelet in the vast ocean of human trouble that overflows His great heart." "Yes," said my friend, "and remember that He sees and feels it as they never can, for He sees it in the light of eternity and He feels it as God." So He does. He sees it in all its causes and results, in its intricate relations, in its effects on character, influence, and destiny. He sees it through and through and His compassion deepens and intensifies with the vision.

He sees all this in each life, however lowly and obscure. We are not lost in the crowd. Christ does not deal with humanity in herds and droves, but as distinct personalities and according to the individual need.

It seems impossible. With all these countless crowds thronging Him, how can He find me? In the long sweep of the ages, how can He get my name and study my case and have my needs in His heart, so that He knows the cause of every fear, the meaning of every sigh, the struggle with every temptation, and all my aspirations and conflicts? But He does. He says He does. He says that He knows us by name.

The Saviour has compassion on a man as if he were the only person in the world; and if he were the only person in all the world, all that Christ has done for the whole world He would still do for that one man. Amazing compassion!

THE DEVOTION OF CHRIST'S COMPASSION

Christ proves His love. His is not a cheap

sympathy. It has cost Him much. He had much to give. He was the heir of eternity. All that He had to give He freely gave. He humbled Himself. He emptied Himself of all He had, and took upon Him our flesh. And when He came among men, He took not the lofty stations of honour and distinction, but the lowly place of a man of poverty and shame. He did it that He might come near enough to the weakest and worst of men to feel their need and assure them of His pity. To crown it all, He laid down His life. Greater love hath no man than this. He entered the gloom of Calvary, where the loneliness and desertion were so utter that, for the moment, He seemed to have lost the friendship of His Father, and there was forced from His dying lips that cry of indescribable pathos : "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me !" All this He did without our knowing that He was doing it, before we had ever done anything for Him, before we even had being save in the divine purpose : and while as yet there was no guarantee on our part that we would ever care for Him in return.

Among the charming stories written by Mr. S. R. Crockett is one of the days of Henry of Navarre, the greatest of the French kings. One of the characters in "The White Plume" is a Scotch-Spanish girl, Claire Agnew, who because of her Calvinistic faith and for other reasons, had fallen under the ban of the Inquisition, that terrible and infernal institution of the Spanish Jesuits.

A band of rough men had been sent secretly to compass the young girl's arrest and carry her across the border. Claire Agnew had won the love of a noble French youth, although as yet no word of troth had passed between them. This youth determined to deliver the maid from peril. Without her knowledge he secured her mantle and disguising himself in it, he had himself arrested in her place and taken into Spain, where his identity was not discovered until he stood before the awful and hated tribunal. He was tortured, thrown into the horror chamber of "the Eyes," where he almost lost his reason, and at last was condemned to service as a galley-slave where, chained to the weary oar, he toiled through the long hot days and sleepless nights, in the worst of bondage.

In the meantime the girl had made her escape to a place of safety, but she suspected that all was not well with her lover, and by close questioning she at last forced from the old man who was protecting her the true story of her lover's devotion. Then flashing her "wet, splendid eyes" on the old man, and abandoning herself to the rapture of the thought of a love that had suffered so much for her, she cried: "And all this he did for me, simply because he loved me, and he did it without my knowing it, and he did it knowing that I did not know it!"

Give that story infinite measures and let it have an eternal accent, and we shall at least begin to have some feint suggestion of the length

and breadth and height and depth of the devotion of the Saviour's compassion, which passeth knowledge.

THE STRENGTH OF CHRIST'S COMPASSION

There is power in Christ's compassion. The troubles of the world drive us to despair. We can do so little to help people. We can listen to their story of distress and pity and sympathize and wish we might give relief, but our arm is so short. We are ourselves the victims of the same fearful conspiracy of circumstances. Nothing so depresses one as the feeling of dull, sickening, hopeless helplessness in the presence of human need.

There is no note of despair in Christ's compassion. As the tide of human woe breaks over Him, He is not hopeless. He is mighty to save. He is able to save unto the uttermost. He can endure gazing down into the black depths of trouble and listening to every cry which shrieks out its petition for help, for He knows He can change it all. He has power to conquer all our adversaries. He throws down the challenge and enters the conflict and says: "All that the Father hath given Me shall come to Me."

It is no empty boast. Christ's compassion does not stand helplessly by, weeping idle tears and wringing its hands over the woe of the world.

He seizes the flaming sword and assails the foe.
"The Son of God goes forth to war."

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength?”¹ It is the conquering compassionate Christ marching against our foes, in the might and majesty of the red religion of the blood shed on Calvary. He will prosecute the war until the kingdoms of the world have become the kingdoms of the Lord, for the promise of Jehovah is that the Saviour of the world “shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.”

THE PATIENCE AND TENDERNESS OF CHRIST'S COMPASSION

Great is the patience and gentle the tenderness of Christ's compassion.

He comes with all His pity and power to help us, and how often it is that we do not care! He pleads and we treat His petition with unconcern. The compassion of Christ does not grow bitter and resentful. With a patience that is infinite He bears with ingratitude and indifference. Nothing can chill His love nor tire His devotion.

It is said that there came a time in the life of Dr. George Matheson, the famous blind preacher of Scotland, when the physician had to break to him the news that he was going blind. Placing his hands on the preacher's shoulders and looking him in the eyes, he said: “If there is any face you want to see again, go and look at it

¹ Isa. lxiii. 1.

quickly. Brace up and be a man. Hold yourself together, for your sight is nearly gone and you will never get it again." Then Matheson went to his study and sat down and wrote to the woman whose face he wanted to see more than any face in the world and told her all, and she threw him off and cut him adrift. It was in that hour of bitter disappointment, in the agony of that Gethsemane of his life that Matheson wrote :

"Oh, love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul on thee."

There is a love that is eternal and a compassion that not only misfortune but all coldness and indifference cannot kill.

Then, what tenderness ! If one would know it, let him read the parable of the lost sheep or the parable of the lost son. There lies the soul like a sheep, with the fleece torn off, bleeding, and unable to rise up. We have brought it on ourselves by our wilfulness, our waywardness, our stupid, stubborn disobedience. But there is no harshness with the Good Shepherd as He comes, no stern rebukes, no chidings, no resentment ; but in His eyes a look of wondrous love and in His voice the music of the invisible choir and in His strong arms more than a mother's gentleness, as He lifts a weary soul and lays it on His heart and carries it to His Father's house.

This is the way the Saviour comes to fallen man. And thus it is that He breaks the sirens' spell.

V

A GREAT LOVE

"The supreme happiness of life is the conviction of being loved for yourself, or more correctly, being loved in spite of yourself."—*Victor Hugo.*

"My God knows best ! Then tears may fall :
In His great heart I'll find my rest ;
For He my God is over all,
And He is love and He knows best."

—*Caleb D. Bradlee.*

THE hope of man is the love of God. Man is to recover all that he has lost by sin and acquire vastly more because the God who is interested in him loves him with an everlasting love.

It is not on the fact that God is wise and strong and resourceful so much as on the fact that God is love that man can build an enduring hope.

It is a daring thing to attempt even the discussion of so great a theme as the love of God. One can hope to do little more than direct meditation upon it, and gaze through certain words of Scripture, as through open windows that look out on an enchanting landscape.

As one rides through the matchless scenery of the Canadian Rockies on a railroad train, and gazes, from the car window, out upon the

majestic, glistening, snow-capped peaks which tower about and far above him, and then down into the wild gorges far below, where gleaming rivers, born of glaciers, rush in mad, defiant haste over huge boulders and through narrow passes to the open country and later to the sea, he finds himself unable to put sight into speech. The spectacle is too sublime for words. There is, however, one thing he can do. He can turn to a fellow traveller and say, "Look ! Look at that ! Just look !"

So as we consider God's great love ; as we gaze up towards its sublime heights and out on its limitless stretches and down into the abysmal depths from which it lifts the soul ; as we think of the wonder of its plan and the marvels of its grace ; as we contemplate its tenderness and compassion, its sacrificial atonement and holy entreaties and glorious keeping power, we feel like exclaiming : Oh, to "apprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."¹ Words are too shallow for such a theme. God's love is too vast to be put into words. There is, however, one thing that we can do. We can turn to our fellow travellers along the road of life and say : "Look ! Just look ! For His great love wherewith He loved us !"

Even the inspired writers of sacred Scripture seem to have found all their vocabularies running

¹ Eph. iii. 18.

out and falling short before the love of God. They do not attempt to describe it so much as to point towards it. Through the open window they bid us gaze out and along shining and endless and eternal vistas. This is what John was doing when he wrote, "God so loved the world." He could not measure the love of God. No plummet can sound its depths, no wing can soar to its heights, no line can measure its circumference, no mathematics can compute its reaches, no imagination can conceive its fullness, and so John simply wrote, "God so loved the world." God's love dwarfs all standards, tosses aside all metaphors, runs away from all comparisons. It was this feeling that overwhelmed Paul when thinking of God's love, he seemed to throw all adjectives into one inspired exclamation, "For His great love wherewith He loved us!"¹

A PRESENT COMFORT AND AN EVERLASTING HOPE

There is a mighty chasm between the divine and the human, between God and man. In the opening verses of this second chapter of Ephesians, the writer describes the human. It is a picture of corruption and death. Fallen human nature is described as rotting in vice. Man has his conversation in the lusts of the flesh. He is by nature a child of wrath. He is under the dominion of the prince of evil. God, on the other hand, is holy. His is the white throne. In His

¹ Eph. ii. 4.

presence the creatures rest not, day or night, crying, "Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!" How can there ever be anything but an everlasting difference and an eternal distance between God and man? God would seem to be our fear, our despair, our awful condemnation, until with the voices in the Apocalypse, we cry to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne."¹

Since this chasm exists, how can God enter into sympathy with man? How can He ever understand how we feel and what we need? Yet it is just this that we most crave. We long for some one who understands us, who has walked our way and lived our life and staggered under our burden; who has faced our temptations and fought our battles and drunk from our cup and who has been burned by the flames which scorch and sting us. Where shall we find him?

We are told that Christ is such a friend. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He lived a human life. He suffered on the cross and died to reconcile us to God. Yet somehow we feel that Christ's life is not quite like ours. He had a divine as well as a human nature, and while He may not have used His divine nature to combat temptation and rout Satan, still He had this divine nature. He was God as well as man. Then while He suffered for sin, He never sinned. He was tempted, yet

¹ Rev. vi. 16.

without sin. There is the fatal difference. He knows transgression, not as an experience, but only as a theory. He does not know actual sin, and the story of our life is the record of actual transgression.

Hence the puzzle which baffles faith is: How can Christ understand and sympathize with man when He has never sinned? The monumental pile of righteousness that pillars the church and maintains social respectability may tell me what I ought to be. He may quote all the maxims and mottoes of virtue, and repeat the commandments and denounce the "exceeding sinfulness of sin" and thank God that he "is not as other men are," but what does he know about my conflict? His ravings about virtue do not help me; they depress and discourage and enrage me.

"'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for!
My flesh that I seek in the Godhead!"

I seek a Saviour who knows my road, not from His study of geography, but because He has travelled it. How can Christ do this when He has never sinned?

He does it by the power of love. This is the miracle love works. It enables us to enter fully into all the struggles and aspirations of those we love. It so thoroughly puts our life into accord with another's that we are not only able to sympathize with what he suffers and enjoys, but makes it impossible not to do so. Love cannot escape this vicarious participation.

We are familiar with all this in the experience of human love. I have talked with a mother whose son had been thrown into jail charged with a certain crime. The mother had suffered far more than the son. The thing had almost killed her. Yet she had committed no crime. It was love that bridged the chasm between her and the son in his prison cell.

This is what God's great love does. God is holy. He has never sinned. He cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, but He can sympathize with sinners. With all the vicarious passion of undying love, He enters into our experience, shares our woe and sorrow, our despair and remorse, and tastes our sin. Just as one suffers for and with his child in trouble, so does God with His children. Thus we find ourselves in the Godhead. Thus a great love bridges the chasm between God's holiness and man's guilt. Love spreads its white wings and flies across the abyss. That flight neither tires nor frightens love. Indeed love effaces the chasm. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die ; for peradventure for the good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." ¹

Thus God's love becomes our present comfort and our everlasting hope. The divinity of God is not His power, nor His knowledge, nor His wisdom, but His love. God has power and

¹ Rom. v. 7, 8.

knowledge and wisdom, but God is love. God is love and "could we love as God loves," said Sidney Lanier, "we should be as God is." Blessed be God for His great love wherewith He loved us !

Having uttered this inspired exclamation, Paul follows it with three statements which we may regard as three windows through which to gaze out upon God's great love.

THE WINDOW OF QUICKENING

The first we may call "the window of quickening." It is described in the verse which says : "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."

We are looking out upon God raising a dead soul to life. The sinner is gasping in the throes of final dissolution. The stars of hope are all dead in the sky and despair is about to spread its black mantle, when suddenly a glow gleams in the darkness and love is seen hovering over the face of the dead. It kisses the pallid brow and in the agony of tasting death, it imparts life to the dead, until through all the arteries and veins of being there rushes the warm, strong, tumultuous tide of divine, transforming life.

Recently in New York City a baby's life was saved through the transfusion of blood from the body of the father into that of his child. The operation was one of the most remarkable of its kind and has excited the keen interest of many outside the medical profession. Because of the

delicate and dangerous character of the operation, it was impossible to use either anesthetics or a connecting tube uniting the body of father and child. When the operation began the child was in a dying condition, and before the operation was finished, to ordinary appearances, it was dead. The father's arm was opened from the wrist to the elbow and a vein lifted out. An opening was then made in the child's leg and the blood-vessels of parent and offspring stitched together. An attending surgeon said to the father, "Does it hurt?" With a face livid with pain he said, "It hurts like hell, but if I can save the baby, what of it?" At last everything was ready for the red tide from the father's heart to enter the apparently lifeless little body lying across his slashed arm; and the instant the blood rushed into the child's body it revived. What had been practically a dead body was quickened.

On a divine scale this is the story of Calvary. Christ's death on the cross was the transfusion of God's life into the dead soul. There on the tree God opened His veins that the blood might save us. The life is in the blood. Christ came that we might have life. He has quickened us at tremendous cost. There is no suffering like that which pressed from Him the bloody sweat in the garden. He suffered death itself and the pains of hell forever, and He did it to reveal God's great love.

Some day, that baby will be old enough to hear and understand the story of how the father opened

his veins to save his child. With that knowledge, there will come a stronger, deeper, truer love for the father. The child will say : "I must not disappoint my father. I must not grieve him. With a great love he gave me my life, and I must try to live so that he will never regret the hour he opened his heart and shed his blood to give me life."

Man must not disappoint God. He has quickened him. We have heard the story of the suffering that saves us. We know how one was wounded for us and how His precious blood was shed that we might live.

" And we must love Him too,
And trust in His redeeming blood
And try His works to do."

THE WINDOW OF COMRADESHIP

The second window we may call, "the window of comradeship." It is described in the verse which says : "And hath raised us up together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Having quickened us, God makes us His companions.

It is not easy to gain admittance to a personal acquaintance with the choice spirits of the world. We may read the books written by people of genius. We may be familiar with their portraits and places of residence ; but when we seek to know them, we find the door of introduction difficult to enter. A gentleman came one day, the purpose of whose visit was to secure a personal interview with a certain lady of large wealth and

generous impulses. He had travelled hundreds of miles and carried letters of recommendation from many people of a certain kind of prominence, and spent a fortnight in New York City diligently seeking some kind of influence that would help him to the interview he coveted, but all in vain. I had to send him away as poor as he came. Access into the presence of the distinguished of earth is granted only to the privileged few. But here we are told that admission is granted to companionship with the choicest spirit of all times and worlds. One is allowed to live on terms of intimate and daily companionship with God Himself. God is not only not a fear; He would be a man's closest and best friend. This He offers to the man who has fallen from the heights, who, having yielded to the sirens' song of temptation, has lost all; and He offers it without conditions.

Three words are used to describe this comradeship with God. The first is "raised." God's great love exalts. One must be fitted to move in that high society of divine communion. Love does it. Love is the refining and civilizing influence of the world. Under its spell rudeness and crudeness and coarseness of every kind disappear, and the spirit, refined and cultivated, is in a measure fitted to associate with God.

The second word is "sit." It is a picture of equality and repose. We are not kept standing in His presence, as though we were quickly to make known our request and then to be dismissed

from the divine presence. God's love raises us to sit with Him. It is a happy way of describing privileges that are permanent and secure.

The third word is "heavenly places." Love raises us to sit with Him "in heavenly places," in experiences which have something of heaven in them. They are places with the sky and climate, the scenery and music and associations of God's own country. They are seats of joy and peace and satisfaction.

This is the second sight that greets the eye of the soul that looks out on God's great love. This is love's plan for life. When the dead soul is quickened, it is raised to something more than bare existence. God does not leave man to go starved and beggared through life. He exalts him to royal privileges and blessed fellowship. How can the soul be unhappy in such a state as this? How can one ever get his consent to go back to lust and animalism, after having tasted the felicity of communion with God? This is the Gospel for daily life. It enables the clerk at the counter, the toiler in the mills, the banker at his desk, the machinist, the lawyer, the housewife, the teacher to feel that as they work they are sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Then drudgery is transfigured and nothing is any longer hard.

THE WINDOW OF THE AGES

The third window may be called "the window of the ages." It is described in the verse which

says: "That in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus."

What can one do with a verse like this? For finite intelligence to attempt the discussion of the thought it contains is like handling the ocean with a spoon or weighing a planet in apothecary's scales. As one looks out through this verse, he gazes on a vista that is endless. "That in the ages to come!" The prospect towers like some dizzy peak whose summit is lost in the clouds. We cannot see the top. We can only gaze on the snow-clad slopes of the lower ranges which bank themselves against the sky-line. God's love is not an incident of His career; it is His career. Comradeship is not the whole program, it is but the first number. God continues to exalt those whom He loves throughout all eternity. Age after age there will appear some new unfolding of His wondrous plan. He will be forever manifesting the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. God's plan goes on widening and heightening and brightening forever and forever for those He loves.

It has not yet dawned upon us what it means to be saved. We have glimpses of what it means, but that is all. We see a drunkard reformed, a libertine cleansed, a criminal changed, a sinner redeemed and we say: "That is salvation." It is only the beginning of salvation. The river has not run its course with the first gush of

crystal on the earth's surface. The spring is but the river's start. It will go on deepening, widening, growing in volume and power, until it loses itself in the mighty deep. So is it with salvation. Salvation is an eternal river of joy.

God has not finished. He has not published the full program. He has merely announced the introduction. God's love has resources of which man has never dreamed. He has lifted the veil and shown the glory of Calvary. He has told the story of the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the Ascension. He has made us partakers of all this ; but God's house is more than a vestibule. The great temple of divine mysteries is ahead. He has taken us into the vestibule, that in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.

These are the three windows of vision ; the window of quickening, the window of comradeship, and the window of the ages. These are the three inspired glimpses given of God's great love. No wonder that in the presence of such a sight a man would break forth into an ecstasy of exclamation and cry : "For His great love wherewith He loved us !"

God's love is great. It is deeper than all seas, higher than all heavens, brighter than all suns, more enduring than all ages. All fires cannot consume it, all hate cannot baffle it, all darkness cannot obscure it. It is mightier than death, potent as truth, and glorious as God Himself.

There may be dark problems and great sorrows, but since God loves us, all things work together for good. The fact that God is with us and the thought that He loves us slays fear. When I was a child, like most children, I was afraid to be alone in the dark. When my mother put me to bed at night, as she tucked in the covers and kissed me "Good-night," I remember how she used to say : " God is in the room and nothing can hurt you." The thought that God was there disarmed my fear. If we could only carry childhood's simple faith in the nearness and love of God through all the years, life would be different. With God's great love shining around, why be afraid? With that love watching over the life, why be unhappy? With that love guaranteeing the future, why be worried over to-day or anxious about to-morrow?

" Where there is faith, there is love ;
Where there is love, there is peace ;
Where there is peace, there is God ;
Where there is God, there is no need."

VI

GOD'S ONCE MORE

"It is not to taste sweet things, but to do true and noble things, and vindicate himself under God's heaven as a God-made man, that the poorest son of Adam dimly longs. Show him the way of doing that, and the dullest day-drudge kindles into a hero,"—*Carlyle*.

GOD'S great love wins and the life that was estranged from its maker is once more in His keeping. The prodigal returns to his Father's house. This is the miracle of Calvary. Man, who was made for God, but had been enticed and estranged by sin, and lured by the siren of temptation, is God's once more. He begins to recognize that he does not belong to himself, that he does not exist for his own enjoyment, that he was created for some mission outside of his own being, and that as he fulfils this mission, he finds himself. This fact justifies man's existence, and it is the only fact that does.

The only reason anything in this or any world has a right to exist is that it is not its own. The first question asked about anything is, "What is it for?" If it is not for something it is of no use; and if it is of no use, it has no right to be. A thing justifies its existence by its use, its mission.

The flowers which bloom in the spring are not their own ; they exist to beautify the world. The rivers which run to the sea are not their own ; they serve every living thing along their banks. The stars which shine in the sky are not their own ; they obey the purposes of Him who made them. All creatures, from the microscopic life of the world, through every species and genus and family and class and race and time, toil for the common good. They must serve some purpose outside their own being. Everything that is, must set its face towards some task or duty or master and make obeisance and say, "I am not my own." If it fails, it forfeits its right to be.

There is a sense in which even God is not His own. He does not exist for Himself. If He did, He would never have aroused His powers and unlocked His mighty energies and released His eternal purpose and built around His infinite personality the limitless universe through which He ranges and over which He rules. Even the Deity must exist for something. God must justify His right to be. He must have a mission. There is no higher rôle for even godhood than that of a servant. God is not His own. He is for His world. The tiniest blade of grass may look up into His face and say : "Thou art my God." Every dewdrop and snow-crystal and beam of sunshine may say : "God is mine." Every sighing wind and singing bird as well as the angels which throng the throne and the saints which pray from beneath the altar may speak

God's name with loving reverence and say :
" He is my God too."

Surely man can be no exception to this universal law. His right to be rests on the fact that he is not his own. He can justify his existence only on the ground that he serves some purpose outside his own being. Like the God in whose image he was made, he is to be a servant. His powers are to be aroused and his energies unlocked and his faculties employed for the sake of the world that has been built around him. If he is of no use, he has no right to be. When a man discovers this, he begins to throw off the handicap of all cross currents and counter tendencies and move towards the true goal of being. He is once more a being with a divine tendency. The sinister influence of sin may still disturb, but it no longer dominates him.

Man's master must be greater than himself. If he is not his own, he is owned. If he is owned, he has an owner. His owner is necessarily greater than what he owns. It is not seemly for a lion to be in bondage to a mouse. It is not fitting that man should be the slave of some creature lower down in the scale of being than himself. This does not mean that he is not to do humble tasks and serve little people, but he is to serve the world under him only as the servant of the Lord above him. Just as the sun pours down its radiance alike on the evil and on the good, and lights the track of an insect crawling on a leaf as brilliantly as the triumphal march

of kings and world-conquerors, and does it, not because insects and kings own the sun and give to it its orders, but because the sun's Creator has so decreed ; so man, while occupied in lowly tasks and serving humble duties, must look above and beyond for his master.

Where does he find him ? As he gazes out and along the horizon of existence for a being in whose employ he may find an ample justification of his own existence, what face appears ? There is but one, for there is but one figure that towers higher than man along the line of being. It is the face of God. Man looms next to God in the scale of being. He is the highest up towards God of all His creatures. When God says to such a creature as man : "You are not your own," there is but one thing for man to conclude. It is : "Then I am Thine, O God."

If this be true, can a man who repudiates his obligations to God justify his own existence ? Can he give any adequate reason for his right to be a man ? He may justify his existence as an inferior animal, but can he defend his right to existence as a human being ? It is related of an old Roman, who had filled a high position in his nation, that growing weary of the affairs of state, he retired to his farm that he might live the simple life, and spent his time growing cabbages. At a certain crisis in public affairs, it was felt that his country needed him and a commission waited on him and asked him to return to public office. He declined and said : "Come out and

let me show you my cabbages." God may spare a man who persists in shovelling dirt and growing cabbages when he might be ruling Rome, but can the man justify himself? A being with immortal powers and eternal aspirations must not be satisfied to be chained like a galley-slave. God did not make a creature with such powers and capacities to burrow like a worm through a clod, or flutter like a blind bat among the rafters. Man must live for something that corresponds to the majesty of his being and the boundless sweep of his powers. He must seek his Master on an everlasting throne. He was made for God, and only as he recognizes this and admits that he is God's, can he defend his right to be.

GOD ASSERTS HIS CLAIM

God insists on His rights. He demands possession of His property. He insists that man fulfil the purpose for which he was made and vindicate his right to be.

Is it not a little strange that God must do this with the highest and noblest of His creatures? Everything else that God has made recognizes what it was made for and goes on and does it. The sun was made to shine and it shines. The natural world was made to discharge certain functions and it does so with such promptness and regularity that we call its habits "laws," and we regard them as laws which cannot be broken. With unfaltering fidelity the little creatures assigned to scavenger duty go about their tasks.

Each creature in its place, in the wise and wide economy of the world, does its work and serves its Master without a murmur until man is reached. Then and there rebellion breaks out and man says: "I am my own. I belong to myself. I recognize no master. I will do as I please." That is sin. Sin is rebellion against the law and order of the world. It is man lifting from his brow the crown of his own right to be and hurling it beneath his feet. Sin is the act by which man uncrowns and degrades his own being.

God punishes the rebellion and insists on His rights. He says to man: "No. You are not your own. You are no more your own than the summer storm which purifies the atmosphere is its own. You are no more your own than are the flowers which shed their fragrance and beauty on the world and lay down their lives to fulfil their mission. You have no more right to live a selfish life than the soil which grows your crops or the electricity which drives your cars. You have no more right to live for yourself than I have to live for Myself. I am God. I am that I am. I am self-existent, but I bend My back beneath the burdens of all My creatures. I have a right to be God, only because I do the work of a God, only because I please not Myself, but take upon Me the form of a servant, and minister to all over whom I rule. Do not imagine that man alone, of all that is, can break this universal law and still have the right to live."

God supports His claim with an argument that is unanswerable.

He might have said to man : “ You are not your own, because, like every other creature, you are dependent. You are served by others. You are part of a world in which all are partners, and no one liveth to himself. All that you have, others have helped you to get. You call it your own, but you did not produce it. You speak of your wealth, but multitudes toiled with you in its production. You speak of your wages, but thousands had to work before you could even be employed. What have you that you did not receive? Every breath that you draw, every morsel of food you eat, the raiment you wear, the fuel which warms you, as well as the sunshine and music and beauty of the world, declare that you are not your own.” God might have said something like this, and His claim would have been incontestable, but He goes higher.

He says to man : “ You are not your own, for you have been bought with a price.” He tells what the price was. It was the death of Christ. This is what Christ was doing on the cross. He was paying the price. This is the explanation of the great transaction. God was making the eternal purchase. He was buying back His own. He was redeeming His children from serfdom to self, from slavery to lust, from bondage to sin. He did it with the death of Christ. He paid a stupendous price. It staggered heaven. There was no greater price for even God to pay. Hav-

ing paid the price, God claims His own. He says to His children: "I have bought you from shame and folly, from everlasting misery, from the infamy of a lost life. I have done it by giving My only begotten Son to the shameful death on the cross; and now I claim My own." Surely the price was enough. When one reads the story and thinks of what Christ suffered, of His descent from the throne of deity to a low estate, of His humiliation and temptation and loneliness, and of the agony of His crucifixion; and reflects that He did all this to redeem man from self, and to lead him to lift his eyes from lusts and passions to that sublime, divine face on the high horizon, the face of the eternal Father, and confess that he is God's; it would seem that enough has been paid.

GOD FOLLOWS HIS CLAIM WITH A COMMAND

In the nineteenth and twentieth verses of the sixth chapter of First Corinthians, the writer, having stated the fact that God owns man, passes on to a great conclusion.

"Ye are not your own;" that is the premise; "Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's;" that is the conclusion. Between premise and conclusion is builded Calvary. Before God's "therefore" stands a blood-stained cross and on it hangs the Son of God.

God demands that His own glorify Him; that they do what He wants done; that they live so

as to please Him. It is not a question of whether a thing will honour man. Will it honour God? It may dishonour man, but if it honour God, it is man's duty, for he is God's. It is not a question of whether a thing pleases me. Does it please God? It may displease me, but if it pleases God, I must do it. I am His servant. The duty of a servant is not to please himself, but his master. What is God's will?

We are to glorify Him in the totality of our being and assets, in all that we have and are, in our bodies and spirits, in that which is temporal and in that which is eternal.

We are to glorify Him in that part which is temporal, in our bodies, in the flesh. This body is God's temple. If so, how dare to defile it? What treason to debase it with vice and desecrate it with the practice of loathsome lusts? Sometimes we imagine that if we honour God in our spirits, we may do as we please with our bodies. Not so. The body belongs to God, and He demands that it glorify Him. Besides, no man can keep his spirit clean who allows his body to be foul.

"Let us not always say, 'spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!'
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, 'All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps
soul!'"¹

If we are God's, all that we own is His. If

¹ Browning.

He owns us, He owns our property. He allows us to own it, that He may control it. If one owns a piece of ground, he owns the grass that grows on it. If God owns us, we are to glorify Him with all that we own. What we are to give Him is to depend, not on our whims and moods, not on what we think we can spare, but on what it takes to glorify Him. He is to have not what we like, but what He likes.

This is the kind of ownership of property society needs to have recognized ; not the public, collective ownership of land and capital, for which socialism is shrieking ; but the divine ownership of property whose right rests on the claims of creation and redemption. If men would only recognize God's right to His own, anarchism and communism and socialism and all the other selfish isms that bellow for revolution, would not have an ounce of breath left for their propaganda of unrest.

Man has an eternal part also. He is to glorify God in his spirit as well as in his body. He is to have the kind of spirit that will honour God. The spirit that honours God is the spirit of love. It is not the spirit of hate, of division, of unbrotherliness. God's kingdom in this world is not advanced by appealing to the passions and suspicions and hates of men. The kingdom grows in love. Man's spirit is his immortal part. Some day man dies and leaves his body behind. The spirit goes on, for man is essentially a spirit. He must glorify God in his spirit,

in what he is ; in his faith, his forgiveness, his courage, his fidelity, his sacrifice.

Man's spirit rules his body. If he glorify God in his spirit, he is likely to do so in his body. If he refuse to honour God in the temporal, it is not likely that he will honour Him in the eternal.

Man's chief end is to glorify God. As he does this, he may be trusted to do everything else right. Man needs faith in God to keep him straight and safe. Some time ago a beautiful boat was launched on Lake Champlain. Shortly afterwards a storm came up and the boat began to drift. The captain ordered the anchor out but the boat continued to drift. Again he thundered the command : "Out with the anchor." They told him the anchor was out, but the boat continued to drift, and eventually went down. The anchor chain was three feet too short.

Any anchor chain that fails to lay hold of God is too short to save man in this storm-stressed life. The man who is to live through the storm must have hold of God. It is he who loves God that can be depended on to love his fellow man. It is the man who is genuinely Christian that can be depended on to be thoroughly human. It is the man who carries the highest motive to the lowliest deed that is likely to do best the least thing that needs doing.

Therefore glorify God !

A life with this clause makes "drudgery divine."

IN GOD'S CLAIM AND COMMAND RESIDES MAN'S
GUARANTEE

The command comes wearing the stern face of duty, calling for self-abnegation and self-sacrificing service. It seems to load us down with the shackles of slavery and to impose upon us a perpetual bondage ; but as we come to understand it, the face of duty is transfigured and shines with blessed privilege, the shackles are changed into the jewelled bracelets and gold chains of royalty, and bondage becomes heirship. If we are God's, we must glorify Him ; but if we are God's, we are safe. No evil can befall us. We are not slaves for the very reason that we are God's slaves. Slavery to Him has become a great emancipation. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." If we are God's, we are no longer outcasts, wanderers, but children of the King, vested with all rights, dowered with all privileges, clothed with all powers, and crowned with fadeless destiny.

God will not neglect His own. He may suffer them to be tempted, but not beyond they are able to bear. He may allow them to be afflicted, but He will make it work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. If God has power, He will use it for His own. If He has wisdom, He will use His wisdom for His own ; love, He will use His love for His own. He will not starve His own children. "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children ; how much more shall your Father

who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him ?”¹

We do not admit that we are God's once more ; we boast it.

He will not suffer His own to be lost. Whatever it may mean to be lost, it certainly means something in a real and awful sense, even in this world. One may not like the old theology, but there is a lost world. If we are God's, He will not suffer us to be lost. With His everlasting arms around us, salvation is secure. “All that the Father giveth Me, shall come to Me.” “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.”

If we are God's, God is ours. If God is ours all that God is and has is ours.

One may have little in his own name. If his heaven is to be only what he earns it will be a poor heaven. Human merit will not buy much in the markets of eternity. But if one be God's he is God's heir. If he is God's not only is all his God's, but all God's is his. To give up all for God is not to be beggared. It is not giving up that beggars, it is holding on. A lad, whose father was offering him a present, was unable to take it. He had gotten his hand fastened in a long jar with a slender neck and seemed unable to extricate it. His father told him to pull his hand out, but he said : “I can't let go.” “Let go of what ?” “Why, the penny !” The little fellow had put his hand into the vase to take out

¹ Matt. vii. 13.

a penny and his chubby fist, that refused to let the penny go, was too big for the opening. He let go and found that he got his present and kept his penny too.

It is a common blunder in life to hold on to some trifling value and lose eternal riches.

The way to be rich is to let go and be God's forever.

VII

THE COMFORTER

“ For one soul working in the strength of love,
Is mightier than ten thousand to atone.”

—*Sophocles in Œdipus at Colonus.*

THE problem of man's development toward God is a problem for both man and God. Man's effort to solve the problem, as we shall see later, involves all the complexities of human experience. Nothing is incidental or accidental. Every note, however lightly struck or however much of discord it may seem at the time to make, is a part of the great symphony of being.

God's effort to solve the problem resolves itself into a single task. It is the transfer of His life to man. If this can be accomplished, this life of God in a man's soul will ultimately fashion his character into godlikeness and direct his destiny godward. Just as the life of a rose in a homely root will some day bud and blossom into the flower we love, so the life of God in a man will permeate his being with its glory and direct and determine his development towards God.

The transfer of this divine life into the human is the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

All human need is met by the ministry of the divine spirit. Every plan and purpose of God

for man is realized as the Spirit has the right of way in human life. He is the eternal Father's highest thought for the safety and welfare of His own.

Christ's name for the Spirit is "Comforter."

The Comforter is the infinite soul of the world, "working in the strength of love," to develop the life of God in souls for whom love has already made atonement.

Christ's promise to His disciples was that He would not leave them comfortless. He did not promise that He would not leave them poor or sad or persecuted or afflicted or distressed or sorrowful, but He did say: "I will not leave you comfortless." He did say: "Whatever your lot, however hard your conditions, however great your sorrows and sore your bereavements, you shall have comfort and consolation and cheer and moral strength and spiritual fortitude and holy hope and triumphant confidence, for I will not leave you comfortless."

He fulfilled His promise by sending the Comforter. His plan was not to relieve His disciples of the things which tried them. It was not to destroy their enemies and diminish their difficulties and reduce their work. It was not to give them a new world to live in. The world was to stand but He was to send to them in the world the Comforter. This Comforter is the Holy Spirit, the third person of the blessed Trinity. So great and glorious and complete, so permanent and preëminent and divine is His

ministry, that He has preëmpted the name. He is not a comforter, but the Comforter, the blessed Paraclete.

Christ gave His estimate of the ministry of the Comforter. He said to His disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." The statement must have staggered His disciples. How was it possible for any one to take Christ's place? Nevertheless, He says that there is one who can do better than He has done or can do ; so much better that for their sakes He is going to leave them.

It was hard for the disciples to understand such a saying. As He looked into the faces of the men He loved, with a break in His voice which told of His affection for them and with a light in His eye which told that this affection was so great He would put Himself aside, Jesus stated it as His deliberate conviction that there was a greater blessing than to have Him.

THE VALUE OF THE COMFORTER

Could there be a stronger statement of the value of the ministry of the Holy Spirit?

Jesus seems to say that the highest good He can conceive of for His disciples is not for them to have Him with them but for them to have the Holy Spirit with them. How could anything be better than Christ? If these men may only have Him with them, they can stand anything. If

they may see His face and hear His voice and be blessed with His safe counsel and inspiring leadership and hallowed fellowship, all will be well.

There are Christians to-day who feel this way about the physical presence of Christ. They are looking for Christ's return to earth in bodily form as the consummation of Christian hope. They feel that little can be done under existing conditions. The world is to grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. Their prayer is: "Oh Lord, tarry not but come." The most that the Church can do at present is to protest and witness. Only when Christ returns and leads His Church in person against the enemy can the victory be won.

Yet Christ is saying that there is something better than this, something better for the Church than to have Him. It is for the Church to have the Holy Spirit. It is so much better, that He is going away in order that the Holy Spirit may come.

Christ measured the blessing of the Comforter by the greatest blessing the world had received. He said that it is greater than the greatest. It was something when "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That seemed to exhaust all the resources in the treasury of divine love. That gave the world a Saviour. Christ is saying that a greater blessing remains. God's highest gift to man is to be shed forth. It is the gift of

the Comforter which the Father will send in His Son's name, and through whom He is to communicate His life to man.

What would the world be if Christ had not come and lived in it? We have grown so used to our blessings that we take them for granted. We forget that they came with Christ and are the product of His ministry among men.

Among the cards which came to my table one Christmas was one entitled, "The Birthday of Hope." It is the story of a minister's dream on Christmas Eve. He is seated in his study and hears in the street below his window a band playing the old Christmas hymn, "Oh, come all ye faithful." His New Testament is open before him and he has read in the Gospel of the beloved disciple to the line "If I had not come," when he falls asleep and dreams of a Christless world. The first thing to impress him about this world into which Christ had not come was that it was a world without Christmas. He steps into the street, but there is no Christmas cheer in the air. Instead of the salutations of good-will, there are the curt nods and hurried greetings of those who are absorbed with their own plans. He enters the homes of the people and finds that the children have not hung up their stockings in glad anticipation of Christmas morning. He looks in upon the poor and finds that no one has been there with baskets of good things for the Christmas dinner. The faces of the children are pinched by poverty and pale with want. Turn-

ing to the street again he sees a great bare spot on the top of the hill where had stood the splendid Cathedral overlooking the town with its protecting benediction. It had disappeared, for it was a world into which Christ had not come. As he went on, he came upon other vacant spaces, where had stood other churches, the hospital, the orphanage, the asylum, the dispensary and various buildings erected as an expression of faith in the Man of Galilee.

The people whom he met seemed anxious and weary, and as he looked closer he discovered that each carried on his shoulder a burden. One man as he passed him was saying: "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He was about to tell him of the cross where burdens roll away, when he remembered that there was no cross, for it was a world into which Christ had not come.

Sick at heart, he entered his study again, to find that during his absence, a great change had taken place. Whole rows of books had disappeared from his library shelves. Every book about Christ was gone. He opened his Bible and found that it ended with Malachi. There was no New Testament, for Christ had not come. He took down Browning and Milton and found many blank spaces in these poets. He discovered that everything in his books prompted or inspired by Christ and His teachings had vanished. He turned to find an empty space over the mantel where had hung a picture he dearly

loved. It was the picture of a man, blood-stained, foot-sore, in torn garments, bearing in his arms a tired lamb.

Often, when worn and weary in his work as an under-shepherd of the flock, he had gone to this picture of the Good Shepherd and thought of his Master and been comforted. Now it was gone, and as his eye went around the room, he found that almost every picture he loved had disappeared.

With tears of disappointment, he sank into his chair, when a tap at the door told him that a child below was asking to see him. He went down to find a little girl, her eyes swollen with weeping, who said: "Won't you come to see father? He is very ill." Hand in hand, they went through the night to the home where the lights in the upper windows told of sickness. When he reached the bedside, the dying man said: "Can't you help me?" "I think I can," he replied, and put his hand in his pocket for his New Testament to find that there was no New Testament and that he had no Gospel with which to comfort the last hours of a dying man. The man died a Christless death. At the funeral, there was no song of hope, no blessed promises of the resurrection, no message of the mansions prepared for them that love Him.

The only words of the funeral service were "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." As the hard clods fell on the coffin lid, he awoke from his horrible dream to find that this cruel,

pitiless, Christless world was false, and to hear the band a little further up the street still playing the old hymn :

“Oh, come all ye faithful, joyfully triumphant !”

It was only a dream, and yet there is a sense in which the dream is true, for if Christ had not come the world would be all and worse than the dream. Society would go back to chaos and existence would become intolerable.

Yet Christ declares there is something better than all the blessings which have come by reason of His presence among men. He seems to say : Gather together all that I have brought ; all changes in government and school and home and society ; all philanthropies and charities and humanities ; all merciful deeds and tender loves and immortal hopes, and compute their worth. Tax the mathematics of the universe to cast up the sum total. Beggar the values of time and eternity to express the result. And when at last you have reached it, know there is something better, higher, diviner than for the world to have Me. It is for the world to have My spirit. It is for My people to have the Comforter. This is so much better that it is expedient for Me to go away, “for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.” Amazing statement ! The value of a gift measured on such a scale bewilders us. What men need is not so much a divine example as the divine life.

Christ speaks as if the coming of the Comforter depended on His departure. Why? It is a mystery whose secret we must doubtless wait for eternity to disclose. Is Jesus saying that heaven has claims on godhood, too? Is He intimating that the concerns of that vast realm are such that it cannot surrender two persons of the Holy Trinity to earth at the same time and for the same dispensation?

Whatever the explanation may be, there can be no doubt as to the value of the Comforter's mission. In characters as high as the highest heavens, the blessedness of the Spirit's ministry is announced.

THE MISSION OF THE COMFORTER

How does the Comforter fulfil His mission? How does He communicate and develop the life of God in a human soul? What does He do that makes His mission the crowning consummation of Christ's career?

He applies all that Christ did. He makes the principles for which Christ died victorious. He establishes the kingdom. This is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Christ accomplished salvation, the Holy Spirit applies it. Christ made salvation possible, the Holy Spirit makes it actual. Christ made salvation sufficient, the Holy Spirit makes it efficient.

He does this by glorifying Christ. Christ said: "He shall not speak of Himself," and

again : "He shall testify of Me." The Comforter reveals the glory of Christ. The mission of a stereopticon light is not to display itself, but, as far as possible to conceal itself, and throw on the canvas a picture, and make the picture large and distinct and vivid. This is the mission of the Holy Spirit in revealing Christ. He throws on human life a great, luminous, radiant, lovely revelation of the Saviour.

He also communicates Christ. In regeneration Christ is born within us by the Holy Spirit, and in sanctification Christ is developed within us by the selfsame spirit.

The Comforter also reproves the world, producing conviction.

He reproves the world of sin ; not of the sin of violating the law—any one can convict of that kind of sin ; but of the sin of not believing on Christ. Only the Holy Spirit can convict men of this sin.

He reproves the world of righteousness ; not of the righteousness which is of the law, the righteousness of morality—any one can convince of that kind of righteousness ; but of the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness Christ imputes and whose power is certified by Christ's ascension to the Father. Only the Holy Spirit can convict and convince of this righteousness.

He reproves the world of judgment ; not of the judgment against the violator of law—any one can convict of that judgment ; but of the judgment of evil, of the condemnation of iniquity, of

the defeat and final overthrow of all that is wrong. Only the Holy Spirit can convict in this judgment. He shows men that Christ has won the victory. He reveals the prince of this world in chains, beggared and dethroned ; and, exalted in his place, He reveals Christ, the blessed Prince of Peace.

Such, in part, is the mission of the Comforter. He constructs the kingdom. He lifts the name of the despised Nazarene above every name. To the natural eye, when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him ; but when revealed by the Comforter, Christ becomes the chiefest among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely. No character is so stainless as His, no sacrifice so holy, no love so resistless. With the Comforter, failure is impossible. There is no room for pessimism. The Holy Spirit possesses all power for conquest. Because of a peculiar interpretation of an unfulfilled prophecy, to throw up our hands in despair and declare the present dispensation impossible of results does not honour Christ. It is treason to the value of His ascension promise.

This, however, is not all the Comforter does. It was a great thing for the disciples to have the success of their mission underwritten by the third person of the Holy Trinity and to be absolutely assured of ultimate victory ; but this was not all. There would come times of loneliness and trial and persecution and martyrdom. He was to be the Comforter for these hours also.

The Holy Spirit comforts the Christian with two great blessings.

One is strength. The promise is, "You shall have power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." It makes little difference as to the size of our task or the weight of our burden or the extent of our field if only we have the power. We do not want to reduce our work, but to increase our power. We do not want to become less efficient but more useful. This Christ gives us through His Spirit. Strength is a great comfort. If only we may have strength enough, we can resist, endure, and achieve without growing tired or despairing. Through the power of the Holy Ghost one may double, treble, quadruple himself.

The other blessing is knowledge. The Comforter is to lead us into all truth. He shall teach us all things, and bring all things to our remembrance that Christ has said. He lights up dark problems and gives spiritual illumination. He does not give us a scientific explanation of the mysteries of time and eternity, but He gives us that higher soul perception by which one can say: "I know whom I have believed."

Are we cast down with a sense of guilt? The Comforter takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. He takes the word which says: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," and we are comforted.

Is it an hour of loneliness and depression, of heart-sickness and homesickness? The Comforter brings to our remembrance how Christ

said: "I will not leave you comfortless," and our hearts have rest. Is it a time of anxiety? Is the mind tossed by perplexity or worried with the friction of trifles? The Comforter brings to our remembrance that Christ said: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid," and we are comforted.

Is sorrow our portion? Does bereavement come and break our hearts? Then once more the Comforter takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. He reminds us of the word which says: "In My Father's house are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you." Sorrow has become sacramental. We begin to understand what our Lord meant when He said: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Bereavement has become an open door through which we pass into the secret of the divine presence. Surely Christ made no mistake when He gave to His disciples this highest proof of His love. We are wont to think of His death on the cross as the highest proof, but was it not a loftier devotion even than the cross, when He put His own love aside and went away that His disciples might have the Comforter?

THE CONDITIONS

To acquire the Spirit, it is not necessary to persuade God. One does not need to pray God to send the Comforter. Christ has prayed that

prayer and it has been answered. The Holy Spirit has been shed forth.

The man who wants fresh air does not need to go down on his knees and pray God to send it. He needs only to throw open his window and breathe it in. God has provided as amply for the soul as for the lungs.

“ His greatness flows around our incompleteness,
Around our restlessness, His rest ! ”

One needs but to claim the Comforter.

Nevertheless, before he can do so, he must comply with the conditions for the indwelling of the Spirit.

Christ may send the Holy Ghost, but He cannot comfort one who is living in known sin. Sin grieves the Spirit. This is the awful thing about sin. Its ruin is vastly more than the legal penalty inflicted by a violated law. Sin makes it impossible for the soul to receive Christ's ascension gift.

The other condition is the surrender of the will to God. God's people must be willing in the day of His power. It is an easy thing to talk about complete surrender, but when it comes to the doing, nothing is more difficult. Yet before Christ can give His best blessing, the will must lie broken and surrendered at His feet. God's will must rule ours not because He has crushed us, but because, like Jacob at the brook, we have ceased to contend and begun to cling. This is

the great victory. It is what God wanted of Abraham on Mount Moriah. He did not want the old Patriarch to slay his son. He did want him to slay his will. Job was nowhere greater than when, looking across the barren waste of his desolate life he cried, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." David was never more a king than when he turned from the dead face of his child, and "changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord and worshipped." Christ had no holier hour than there in Gethsemane when in His agony He was caught up into the very heart of God, and said : "Nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

This is the surrender that must be made. It is the price Christ paid to send and we must not pay less to secure the Holy Spirit.

Is Christian experience barren ? Is there little of joy and peace and strength ? It is because one does not give God a chance to comfort him. He is trying to comfort himself with some cheap, shallow, human expedient for happiness ; and all the time the Comforter, whom Christ went to the highest heavens to send down to this troubled, sorrowing, sin-sick world is saying : "Let Me comfort you."

He is here. We may not see Him, nor feel the glory of His presence. We may be gazing into the distant heavens, as if Christ had forgotten, but the Comforter has come. We are in a spiritual atmosphere that is far more real than the sensual.

One summer, on the Santa Fé Railroad, I went through the San Bernardino country, where a few months later gold was discovered, yielding \$120 to the ton ; and into which men poured by the hundreds and the thousands with the lust for gain. As I looked out of the car window on those brown and barren stretches of desert, devoid of any sign of life, I saw only the glare of the blistering sun on the gaunt rocks and hot sands. Yet there before my eyes, within three miles of the railroad track, was one of the richest gold fields in this country.

There is a promise of treasure richer than all the gold of the Klondike and all the diamonds of the Transvaal and all the money in all the mints and all the treasuries of all the nations of the world. But the eye is holden. We look out on life as upon a bare and barren stretch of sun-baked desert sand. We are discouraged and pessimistic and unbelieving. Yet beside us stands one who can change the desert into a garden. Oh, for sight !

VIII

THE MAKING OF A SOUL

“‘A handful of souls,’ he mused—‘just a handful—scarcely enough to make the merest infinitesimal speck of molecular dust in the whirl of the cosmos! And yet—we must believe God cares for even this handful.’”—*The Vicar of Shadbrook* in “*Holy Orders*.”

“Man’s unhappiness comes, in part, from his greatness. There is an infinite in him, which, with all his cunning, he cannot quite bury under the finite.”—*Carlyle*.

THE transfer of the divine nature from God to man and man’s resultant development constitute the great mystery of spiritual life which baffles while it enchants us.

The making of a soul is the business of being, so far as man is concerned, and no business is so complex. It draws on all worlds for its materials.

Spiritual life is not made offhand; even when God Himself handles the tools and presides over the process. The statures and stations of that life are not conferred, but achieved. They come as the result of the unfolding and outgrowing of the divine principle or tendency within.

Jesus throws some light on the question in an interview with two of His disciples, James and John, who had come to Him asking that they might sit the one on His right hand and the

other on His left in His kingdom. Their ambition was great. It soared to the seat of godhood. Their Master rebuked them for stupidity, not because they were asking for too much, but because they expected to get it without struggle. They were thinking only of the glory and forgetting the field of battle. They were fascinated by the vision at the summit, but unmindful of the long, hard climb by which it must be reached.

Jesus knew the weary way along the crags and through the thorns to the heights. He knew that back of the crown was the cross, and He said to the two men whose soaring aspirations vaulted the temporal and sought the eternal: "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?"¹

With an airy, easy self-confidence, which showed that they were, as yet, but shallow students of life, they said: "We are able." They felt that nothing could hinder them or halt their faith or lame their hope. They were like men on the edge of a vast wilderness across whose hot sands and under whose fiery skies and through whose barren, desolate wastes they must pass to reach the goal; but ignorant of it all and thinking that they needed but to make a prayer to arrive at their destination. Their enthusiasm was splendid, but if their experience had been greater, their self-confidence would have been less.

In a tone half sad, half glad, their leader said:

¹ Matt. xx. 22.

“Yes, you will drink the cup. Little as you realize what it means you will adventure the perils of the wilderness way. Already the shadow of the cross is on your faces, though you know it not. You will taste the bitterness of the cup and be baptized with its suffering. You will hear the cry of persecution and the shout of those who would destroy you. You will feel the loneliness, the heart-sickness, the desertion ; and as you do, you will begin to understand how the heights are scaled ; but as to these high seats in glory which you covet, they are not Mine to give, but they are for those for whom they have been prepared.”

The Saviour’s reply must have surprised His disciples, not by its refusal, but by the ground of this refusal. Their disappointment in not getting what they sought was swallowed up in their astonishment at Christ’s inability to give it.

GOD’S LIMITATIONS

There are some things in the destiny of a human life that are not God’s to determine. The reason is not that God is a small god. There are spiritual blessings within reach of every human life, but not within the power of any being, either human or divine, to bestow. There are triumphs of grace and degrees of usefulness and estates of happiness for which the soul longs, but about which even God must say : “They are not Mine to give.”

The amazing thing is that the Saviour, who claims to be able to save unto the uttermost all

who come, makes this admission. Christ is the preacher of the limitations of God in the making of a soul. His is the voice that tells us that there are things God wants us to have but cannot give.

They are the best things. The best is none too good for man. It is not wrong to aspire. It is wrong not to aspire. There is no virtue in being satisfied with little in the kingdom of life. It is a false humility that would content itself with the crumbs that fall from the table of privilege. Every man has the divine right to regard himself as the special favourite of heaven.

It is when we come to claim our privileges that we strike against a dead wall. Heaven seems unable to honour our draft, and we begin to wonder whether the soul is able to covet a blessing that God is unable to bestow, or can it be that human aspiration soars beyond divine resources?

Nevertheless, the best is attainable. The Saviour did not tell His disciples that these high degrees were impossible, that they were asking for that which they could never get. He merely said that they were not His to bestow.

The heights are open. The radiant ascent to the seat of godhood in glory is not impossible. God does not bar the way. Omnipotence does not tether us down to the swamps of doubt and the foothills of mediocrity. The highest soul-life is within reach of all. There is no partiality with God.

There are no arbitrary fiats, no sovereign decrees of reprobation to fix the soul's destiny in

starless and eternal night. God's heaven is for all. The seats beside the throne of the infinite are accessible to man ; yet God is powerless to put us there. He can provide salvation. He can unveil His face and reveal His heart, and call. All this He does, but the heights of spiritual attainment are actually occupied by those who have achieved them.

THE PREPARED

The heights are for those for whom they have been prepared ; for those who are fitted to occupy them ; for those who have the character, the spiritual stature great enough to entitle them to stand beside the Lord in glory. "Heaven," as an old minister used to say, "is a prepared place for a prepared people."

Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you," but the people who occupy it must prepare for the place that has been prepared for them. Are there degrees in heaven ? There is nothing but degrees. In the kingdom of Redemption, there is no mechanical standard, no doctrine of the minimum wage, chaining genius to the heels of mediocrity or boosting indolence to the throne of merit. The people who go to heaven must be ready for it.

Cardinal Newman says : "If a man without religion (supposing it possible) were admitted into heaven, doubtless he would sustain a great disappointment. . . . He would perceive himself to be an isolated being, cut away by

Supreme Power from those objects which were still entwined about his heart. Nay, he would be in the presence of that Supreme Power, whom he never on earth could bring himself steadily to think upon, and whom he now regards only as the destroyer of all that was precious and dear to him. . . . Heaven is not a place of happiness except to the holy.

“Nay, I will venture to say more than this;—it is fearful but it is right to say it—that if we wished to imagine a punishment for an unholy, reprobate soul, we perhaps could not fancy a greater than to summon it to heaven. Heaven would be hell to an irreligious man.

“God cannot change His nature, holy He must ever be; but while He is holy, no unholy soul can be happy in heaven.

“Fire does not inflame iron, but inflames straw. It would cease to be fire if it did not. And so heaven itself would be fire to those who would fain escape across the great gulf from the torments of hell.”¹

This is true of every spiritual experience and attainment. The soul does not wear happiness as the body wears clothes. Spiritual excellence is not handed down ready made, but must be wrought out. Heaven must be within us, before it can ever be around us.

The soul is not hoisted into glory. It grows, is developed, evolved, prepared. Salvation is not a finished product, manufactured in heaven,

¹ “Parochial Sermons.”

and marketed to those who pay the price. It is not a crown to be worn or a sceptre to be wielded or a harp to be played. It is a germ of divine life imparted. As this germ develops, it goes through all the processes and obeys all the laws of growth.

We are familiar with the phenomena of growth in physical, mental, social and moral values. We know that nothing that is worth while jumps, in a single spasm, to full fruition ; or leaps at one bound from conception to maturity. There must be a long process of toil and struggle, of hope and travail, of effort and failure and renewed effort, until through it all, at last, something emerges that carries in itself the stain of every surrender and the glory token of every struggle.

It is thus in the lower realms of being. When we enter the spiritual, is all this to be reversed ? Are we to imagine that soulhood or spiritual excellence is to be handed down ready made ? Are we to go to God, as James and John went to Christ, and say : "Give it to me ;—faith, hope, love, holiness, usefulness, peace, happiness—Thou hast all this. Give it to me. Bestow upon me, O Lord, a great soul, complete, with character and capacity and vision and sainthood qualified to sit on the throne of the highest."

It is not God's to give. It is for those for whom it has been prepared. It must be achieved. Nowhere are the facts of growth so conspicuous, the processes of development so wonderful, the struggle to become so long and difficult, the op-

position so fierce and persistent, the prize so precious, the goal so imperishable as in the making of a soul.

THE PROCESS

All the comedies and tragedies of life are packed into this process. There is no greater sight than this of a human life achieving the spiritual. It is a battle with grim spectres, a desperate struggle with the flesh, a constant fight with temptation. It calls for self-denial, fortitude, patience, hope, daring, perseverance and a daily dying ; but through it all, the soul grows. It acquires vigour, power, vision, responsiveness, capacity. Its earthly estate may dwindle, but it is clinging to the eternal and daily building a statelier mansion. It is slow and stern and often disappointing but it is the only way to glory.

The process is largely in the hands of the individual. Salvation, in a measure, is provided and conferred, but the individual must work it out in his experience, if he is really to possess it.

Among the means of grace or the agencies of growth is prayer. Prayer is not merely what one says. It is spiritual receptivity. It is the soul feeding on the infinite. It is to the soul what air and sunshine are to the body. It is the spiritual laying hold of the materials out of which it is to build itself into the divine likeness.

Work is another of the means of grace. The question of work is not a question of wages. It is something more than a question of service.

It is the active side of spiritual development. It is the act by which one translates what he gets in prayer into what he does in life, and in this way makes it a part of himself. Work passes divine energy through personality and in the process transforms personality into the divine likeness.

Suffering is still another of the means of growth. It is the welding process. It is the furnace of purification. It is a way the soul has of making secure its achievements, and of retaining only that which is of real value.

By prayer a soul comes into contact with the infinite, by work it passes the infinite through the powers of its own being, and by suffering it fuses with the infinite.

All this is a man's business here in time. He cannot unload this business on God. He cannot expect God to pray for him or work for him or suffer for him, in such a way as to furnish him with exemption.

He must do it for himself. This is his concern. He is here to make a soul, to achieve an immortal part, to develop an eternal capacity. Whatever his creed or church or calling, his business is the growth of his spiritual being. All else, sooner or later must fall away,—body, goods, reputation—only the soul survives; the invisible, intangible, indestructible personality; and that goes to the place for which it is prepared. It will never rise higher than its own wings of devotion carry it. Its destiny will have no limitations, save those fixed by the boundaries of its own spiritual capacity.

IX

THE OPEN DOOR AND THE ADVERSARIES

“Do not despise your situation, in it you must act, suffer, and conquer. From every point on earth, we are equally near to heaven, and to the infinite.”—*Amiel's Journal*.

“Tie down a hero and he feels the puncture of a pin; throw him into battle, and he is almost insensible to pain.”—*John C. Calhoun*.

No one ever tried to become, without encountering opposition. While they summon, the heights also seem to warn. They speak of peril and difficulty.

Every man who gets the vision of a better life, if he will but look closely, may see between him and the vision the face of foes.

It is this twofold vision that Paul had before him when, writing to his friends at Corinth, he said, “For a great door and effectual is opened unto me and there are many adversaries.”¹

It is a line out of the life story of a man who, fought by all that was worst, did ever that which was best. Any one who is familiar with this life story must feel that when Paul wrote of adversaries, he was not scared. There was a look in his face that meant war, a note in his voice

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 9.

that meant defiance, a glint in his eye that boded no good to his adversaries. The sight of them only made him more determined to enter the open door. He was never the man to have his career shaped by circumstances, but ever the man to shape circumstances to his career. He belonged to that royal race of men to whom opposition, in the face of known duty and privilege, instead of hindering, only incites to invincible heroism and unconquerable determination.

The men who win are not those who have no foes, but rather those who, fought by all that is worst, do ever that which is best.

THE OPEN DOOR

The vision of the open door is the vision of opportunity. It is the answer to prayer. It is one's chance for something better. Beyond its radiant portal lies the land of promise. Inside the door, opportunity waits to take us by the hand and lead us on to the fruition of all our hopes and dreams.

Man is so constituted that he must press on in quest of the better. There is a voice within every normal human being that is ever saying, "There is something better than this for you. You may not deserve it. You may be unworthy of what you have, but why be balked by lack of merit, when the door of fortune stands ajar? Somewhere an isle is waiting, somewhere a crown is making, somewhere a kingdom is preparing. You have not reached the summit. Push on!"

This is the song of hope. Were hope to cease singing, we should perish.

One may not always see the open door. He may go through life with his eyes tied to his feet, his soul chained to his senses ; like Mary in the Garden, on Easter morn, with the risen Lord at her side, but "she knew not that it was Jesus" ; and not until Christ guided her blind heart as one would guide a blind man, into the ecstasy of the secret, did the great discovery break on her. Thus often a great door and effectual opens, but we do not see it. Heaven is down at our doorstep and we say it is a dull day. We plod on through the mire of things. Opportunity always has difficulty in getting itself recognized.

God is the author of the open door. He does not build a dead wall across any man's path, but a door, and He holds and keeps it open. In the Revelation, it says, "I have set before thee a door opened."¹ That is true for every life. God is ever calling us to something better. He is not trying to keep us down, to hold us back, to make us unhappy, to brand us with failure. He is the God of the open door, the divinity of opportunity.

He is this for every man. One may doubt or deny it. He may say : "There is no chance for me. Circumstances are against me. I am doomed." Let him open his eyes and look ahead, for there is every chance for him. At the next turn of the road, he will come to the

¹ Rev. iii. 8.

open door. Somewhere it exists for him and if he will but listen, even now he may hear the voices of an invisible choir, chanting the call of destiny.

THE ADVERSARIES

There is also the vision of hostility. Opportunity is accompanied by opposition.

It is always hard to climb. We go down grade without effort. We go to pieces without struggle; but to hold on, to hold out, to go on, to rise, to achieve, to overcome, to reign can never be without struggle and conflict. There never was a kingdom of any kind in any realm of the physical, mental, moral or spiritual, but had to be fought for.

Before every open door the adversaries camp. The instant something better dawns on the horizon, an enemy comes into sight. The adversaries are numerous. They are within and without. We find them in the circumstances and conditions of life. Sometimes our friends become our foes. Sometimes a man's foes are they of his own household. It may be that the man himself has become his worst enemy.

Strange as it seems, we must fight to be good and do right. Why could not the opposite have been ordained as the law of the road? Why not locate the enemy in our rear so that a man would encounter his adversaries when running away from duty? But there in front is the bristling line of spears. Even divinity seems to be bound

by this law. When Christ came to save the world, although He came on the holiest mission ever attempted, He encountered opposition. Temptation fought Him at the threshold of His career and the nearer He came to the cross, the more fiercely was He assailed. It is the law for every life. The instant one sets his face towards something better, he confronts war.

If a man is content to be a nobody, he will not be disturbed. If he is satisfied to be nothing but putty in the hands of fate, the enemy will not trouble to muster even a corporal's guard against him. He is not worthy the trouble. A life without ambition and aspiration is a life without opposition, but if there be daring in the soul, determination in the heart, the glint of war in the eye, the very air is charged with hostility.

OPPORTUNITY AND OPPOSITION

Such is the situation. Opportunity and opposition live on the same street. They dwell under one roof. Wherever there is the vision of the open door, a closer scrutiny will detect the adversaries. On the other hand, whenever one encounters persistent opposition, he may rest assured that not far away the door of privilege and blessing is ajar.

This is the tragedy of daily life. The things we most desire, are usually the ones we must fight hardest to acquire.

There is the matter of greater simplicity and less nervous strain and worry in the style of liv-

ing. Complexities multiply. New schemes of extravagance present themselves. We are the victims of our blessings. At the time when emancipation is sorely needed, we find the simple life most difficult of accomplishment.

There is the matter of personal culture. There was never such an open door to education. Every facility for self-improvement is offered. Leviathan universities and fabulously endowed colleges, that offer curricula which only the wise can understand, practice the open door. It would seem that anybody might be learned. Nevertheless, barring that easy knowledge which comes from the hurried perusal of the morning paper or the monthly magazine, it may be seriously doubted whether culture is either easier of acquisition or more widely prevalent.

There is the matter of personal integrity. There was never a time when an honest man had such an open door. He is in demand everywhere, in business, in politics, in religion. Unpurchasable, incorruptible manhood commands the top of the market; but there are many adversaries. It is not easy to be honest, even when one is dead in earnest about being honest. At a time when honesty is one of life's finest assets, it is hardest of achievement. So much so, that many are skeptical of its existence. It is no longer a question as to whether deception is wrong, but does it pay? Can it win? Has it power?

The editorial declaration in a popular New

York daily paper, that a newspaper's chief concern should be with whatever will give it a circulation, was merely the brazen statement of what has become with many the real philosophy of life. It is the substitution of expediency for honesty. It is surrender to the adversaries without even a show of resistance.

When we come to consider matters perhaps more vital to the spiritual development of man, the same situation exists.

Faith is opportunity. All things are possible to faith: Man's supreme need is an ideal. Only that can save him from animalism. He must believe in something better than cash and carnality. Yet faith is not easy. Doubt is insolent and aggressive. Materialism is always abroad, and the man who would believe in the unseen must fight for it. One's faith may not be much; just a crutch to a lame man, but if it enables him to walk with his soul in the air and his eyes on a star, he would do well to fight for his crutch.

It is a day when that friendly, brotherly, human kind of life Christ came to teach and help men to live is longed for. The world is hungry for fellowship and yearns for the pulses of the race-kin. Yet there are many adversaries. The extremes of life are increasing, the chasm of class widens, the walls of caste rise higher, and while "get together" is the word for the twentieth century, it is, as yet, hardly more than a word.

A matter of deeper concern, not only to the

Church of Christ, but to all men, is the world's evangelization. There was never such an open door to Christian missions. Everything conspires to make the present preëminently a missionary age. The one problem that confronts the Church is the problem of the harvest field. The condition of the non-Christian nations is such as to create the greatest religious crisis the world has ever known.

At such a time, Christianity finds itself confronting the most serious situation it has ever faced in lands that are nominally Christian, where it must begin again the fight for existence and give to men a new and better reason for its right to be.

So that, look which way we may, we find privilege and peril living as close neighbours.

OPPOSITION IS OPPORTUNITY

What is a sane procedure when, in sight of privilege, peril threatens? There are those who counsel surrender, who prefer peace to heroism, who look upon opposition as a providential barrier, and change their course. They are like a worm that crawls until a clod or stone blocks its way, and then changes its course. They move along the line of least resistance. They live on the surface of their personality, rather than in its elemental depths. They are merely what the circumstances of the moment chance to make them.

If we will but agree to surrender privilege, we

may escape conflict. All that the adversaries ask is that we stay outside the open door. As long as we make no special effort to enter, they will let us alone. We may discuss opportunity, admire it, prize it, feel that it should be entered, determine some day to enter, and the adversaries will congratulate us on our prudence ; but the moment we start to enter, there is war.

Nevertheless the open door is there to be entered. It is not there for spectacular effect. The right attitude is that of conflict. One must not surrender. He must face the foe. He will never get anywhere nor amount to anything any other way. The people who have shaped the history of the world have all had stormy careers—Calvin, Savonarola, Luther, Knox. They all faced a gray sky and spoke of hindrances, not with a wail or a moan, but with a war-cry.

He who does this discovers that the battle is itself a blessing. He is fit to enter the open door only after he has fought his way to it. No man can wear privilege gracefully and well, who has not learned its worth in the red carnage of conflict. Struggle is ever the royal road to authority and power. It is not an accident that if one would rise, he must climb ; it is merely the law of a divine necessity.

He who faces his adversaries with a manly courage, who fights his battles with a steady reliance on Him who calls him through the red line to that radiant portal beyond which his kingdom is waiting, lives to find that opposition

is but another way of writing opportunity. It is not “the open door, but adversaries” ; it is “the open door *and* adversaries.” They are comrades.

X

SEEING THE INVISIBLE

“The teeming air and prodigal,
Which droops its azure over all,
Is full of immortalities
That look on us with unseen eyes.”

—*Philip P. Cooke.*

THE secret of emancipation is a sight of the unseen. The slave is he who never looks beyond his fetters. That is the real freeman of the world who, whatever his estate, like the ancient Hebrew who set his people free, “endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”¹

This is the sign of greatness and the way to power.

Man cannot see much with his eyes, not because they are bad, but because they are not built to see the big things, the real things, the eternal and the infinite. With his eyes, one can see only the surface, the shadow, the temporary, the changing, the unstable, the things which appear. If he is to rise into companionship with God and be divine, he must see the permanent, the essential, the abiding, the everlasting, the invisible. He must look, not with his eyes, but with his soul. Like the man whose vision made

¹ Heb. xi. 27.

him the leader of a nation and the creator of a civilization, he must endure as seeing Him who is unseen.

Moses looked with his eyes and saw Egypt, its power, its wealth, its splendour, its dynasties. He saw its throne waiting for him. He saw himself heir apparent to the foremost place among the rulers of the world. An ordinary man would have looked no further. The "seen" would have been good enough, but Moses looked beyond Egypt to the kingdom that was coming; the kingdom of righteousness and truth, of peace and good-will, whose throne was not tinsel like Egypt's, and whose authority was supreme. As he saw the unseen, his heart beat faster. He refused "to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," or to be captured by Egypt's cheap show.

He looked with his eyes and saw Israel enslaved. He saw his people downtrodden and oppressed, poor and despised, smitten and apparently hopeless. An ordinary man would have despaired. He would have said, "Nothing can be done with these dumb slaves," but Moses looked beyond the visible and saw Israel emancipated. He saw the light of Canaan on the far horizon. The vision stiffened his courage. He broke through conventionalism, threw down worldly ambition, walked out of the palace; and, setting his face towards the desert, began forty years of stern preparation for real leadership.

The Jew saw what, as yet, had no existence,

save in the divine plan and purpose. He saw into the soul of events and endured. He never flinched nor faltered nor halted nor allowed himself to be dismayed.

This is the sign of victory.

No one ever does a great thing who sees only the seen, the present, the tangible, the evident, the insistent, the finite. He must see the unseen, the future, the intangible, the elusive, the ideal, the infinite. He must discover, not that which is, but that which is to be; that which may be, should be, and which, with a stout soul following hard after God, must be.

The builders of the old cathedrals, which fill us with awesome reverence as we walk their stately aisles and gaze towards their lofty arches, were men who saw the unseen. Those marvellous piles of templed reverence and devotion were caught out of the invisible and dragged down out of the eternal and chained to stone by men who first saw what was not and then translated their vision into shape and form.

The old masters were not sordid materialists, dull realists, stupid copyists, but men whose souls were aglow with the ecstasy of a sight no eye ever saw. Their canvas flames with the portrayal of the invisible. It is not what one sees in a picture that makes it great; it is what he does not see. The true poet, who brings a song out of the kingdom that is coming, is no dull rhymester of homely realities, but a man who sees the unseen. The rapturous quality of a song is

not what one hears ; it is what he does not hear. The divine realm is ever beyond the reach of the senses. Only he can invade it who has a soul.

In so commonplace and unpoetic a thing as daily toil, success rests with him who looks beyond the actual and sees what he does not see. He is not content to plod in the beaten track, but discovering future possibilities, he ventures out. He has visions and holds out and plods on and persists, despite short profits, bad markets, strikes, lock-outs and what nots, until at last he enters his promised land.

The inventors, the promoters, the pioneers, the discoverers, are all built on the lines of faith. They are not slow conservatives, holding to the old ways and saying: "Things can only be as they have been," but prophets, announcing that things will be as they have never been. They have the vision of what may be and venture life and limb, and risk fortune and reputation to make it good.

Nation builders and age makers have all had upon their souls the glow of the invisible. Egypt languished for centuries, cursed by poverty, smitten by famine, afflicted by pestilence, submitting to the handicap of uncertain seasons, empty and full by turns, because no one saw the unseen. At last England sent such a man in the person of Lord Cromer. He has regulated the overflow of the Nile, built walls, dug canals, constructed roads, and given to that ancient land of

hoary traditions, groaning for centuries under unnecessary burdens, its great emancipation.

If one is to have a future, he must quit looking at what he sees. He must let his vision range higher and farther and dwell on what he does not see.

In the realm of influence, the people who help us are those who see not what we are but what we may become. No man ever helped the world who stopped at an accurate diagnosis of its troubles.

The parent who would train a child to greatness must see more than appears in the child. He must look beyond surly moods and fits of temper, beyond wilful disobedience and waywardness to the kingdom of character that may be built up in the empire of that little personality.

This is God's vision of man. It is this vision which makes Him our Father, and enables Him to train us into His likeness. It is this vision which He imparts to man, in the gift of faith, and by means of which man is enabled to come off conqueror in all the conflicts of life.

In any moral revolution or battle for reform, the people who bring things to pass are those who see the unseen.

The galleries are always full of a kind of sight-seers, who go into hysterics over the spectacle of evil. They see the seen in depraved human society. They behold the rampant insolence of men whose god is gain, the crawling cowardice

of men to whom a moral issue is a danger-signal, the lawlessness and class hatred and greed of men who rave about humanity but whose panegyrics are blankets to cloak their own meanness and hypocrisy of soul.

This they see and it is all that they see ; and seeing it, they are in despair. They pronounce the situation hopeless and say: "Nothing can be done. Appetite, lust and greed will have their way. Morals cannot be legislated into a community."

There are, however, some who look beyond the seen. They are fascinated by a social and civic ideal. They have faith in the eternal principles of truth and honour. They listen far enough back to hear the voice which thundered on Sinai, and pleaded on Calvary. They catch the enthusiasm of God and believe in a better world. Already they see iniquity in defeat and immorality routed, and they endure. It is such as these who sooner or later will win the battle and save the day.

It is preëminently such as these who translate God into the life of the world. No man would last in a mission field twenty-four hours who sees only with his eyes. The horizon is banked with difficulties. Everywhere obstacles are sky high. All around are hate, ignorance, sin, the rule and riot of sensualism. The world, the flesh and the devil are in the majority. Any one who stops with the sight of this is bound to be discouraged. He must look beyond and see with his soul and

catch the vision of the chariots of the Lord. Then victory is sure.

Indeed, the acquisition of God is not possible without this vision, for all who come to Him must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Doubt is easy. It is simply looking at what is seen and saying: "There is no God in sight, no immortality, nothing but an ancient dogma and some pious dupes whose weak ways may please heaven, but cannot mislead earth. Faith is foolish."

It is simply a case of bad eyes. The doubter is of a kind with the blind man who does not believe in sunsets he has never seen; with the deaf man who does not believe in music he has never heard.

There is the unseen. Why not look at that? There are truth, honour, love, divine compassion. Why not look at these? Because one does not see them is no reason he should doubt their existence. They are the great realities. The trouble is not with religion but with eyes.

Any one who seeks the upper path will find much to hinder,—temptation, hardship, privation, disappointment. There they are in the way and anybody can see them. When one stops to consider them, they look twice the size they are; and if he look no further, courage will die.

Let him look through them and beyond them, to the everlasting hills, to the fadeless beauty on the infinite sky, to God and the victors whose

shouts already resound from the sublime battlements, and endure. Some fair morning the night will end, the dark change to day, the invisible emerge from its web of mist and shadow, and the soul have its great emancipation. Having endured as seeing Him who is invisible, he shall at last see Him face to face and know as he is known.

XI

THE SUCCESS OF FAILURE

“Massena was not himself until the battle began to go against him.”—*Napoleon Bonaparte*.

“We can fix our eyes on perfection, and make almost everything speed towards it.”—*Channing*.

FAILURE is not always defeat in the struggle of life. It is not the worst thing that can befall us. It is far worse to succeed through dishonour than to fail because of steadfast allegiance to principle.

One is not necessarily beaten when the crowd hisses. He is not conquered because he is crushed. There is such a thing as the success of failure. We should not lose heart and fling courage away because life seems one unbroken succession of failures. Our defeats may turn out to be our real victories.

History abounds with illustrations of the success of failure. The heroes, at whose shrine a nation worships, are usually those it has crucified. The people we would immortalize, we first put to death. The men we honour longest, are not always those we honoured most when living. They are frequently those we treated worst and whose careers seemed to go out in the blackness of the night of defeat. England beheaded Charles the First, and France burned Joan of Arc. Wash-

ington and Lincoln are far more popular to-day than they ever were while living.

The quickest road to immortality is not immediate success. If one would live forever in the memory of his fellow men, let him get himself put to death for something. The world makes its heroes out of those who love a cause well enough to fail for it; if need be, to die for it. It is in the moment of apparent failure and defeat that the man who dies for a cause is really strongest. It is not an idle warning that says, "Beware when all men speak well of you." The man who never provokes opposition or arouses antagonism, who leaves events as placid a pond as he found them, has his title clear to a swift and merited oblivion.

The successful cause is not always that which has the largest following. A cause may be dead and still muster a majority. Some people never read the death notices. A dogma may be as lifeless as the dust of a mummy, and still get itself recited in the creeds of the monkey multitude.

The cause which succeeds is that which can capture the imagination and enlist followers who are willing to die for it. The cause itself may not be the best, but if people love it enough to fail for it, it is not only alive but heir to the throne. The real enthusiasts of the world are these, and these alone have power to wake the dead.

Perhaps the most illustrious illustration history affords of the success of failure is Jesus of Naz-

ereth. His disciples talked mournfully about His death and said : " We hoped that it was He who should redeem Israel." ¹

They felt that their leader had failed and that His failure was complete, and they were discouraged. Not a shred of hope was left to hold them in from despair, not a star was shining in the sable sky that shrouded their night of disappointment. They had hoped, but they have ceased to hope. Hope is dead. Their prospects have suddenly shunted into a blind alley ; and the career which a while ago looked out upon a radiant future, along vistas arched with promise and lit with glory, ends as abruptly as it began.

Their creed has become a dirge. Not a note of triumph, not a shout of courage is anywhere to be heard. Their cause has found its tomb, for their hero has failed and their god is dead.

Jesus' disciples were not alone in their interpretation of Calvary. His enemies felt that the cross had finished a troublesome fanatic. The general public regarded the incident as closed. After a brilliant, meteoric flash across the sky, the revolutionary Rabbi disappears and there are no trailing clouds of glory left behind.

All the circumstances of the occasion seemed to confirm the general verdict. We now halo Calvary in the love light of religious reverence. As we look back, we seem to see it aflame with the glory of the Infinite. We interpret that transaction by subsequent events, and give to

¹ Luke xxiv. 21.

that brief stage eternal counsels and purposes for a background.

In reality, there was no halo there, no light of the infinite giving to Calvary a supernatural transfiguration. Everything was mean and shabby. A troublesome peasant who had defied the authorities and been run down by the officers was being legally executed. Whether justly or unjustly was a matter of little concern. The man was dead. He had been put out of the way. The circumstances of the crucifixion branded Jesus with failure.

Jesus seemed Himself to assent to this conclusion. He ceased to struggle. As He hung there on the cross, He was the picture of weakness. No light of courage shone in His eye, no flush of hope mantled His face. His voice is broken with defeat. The old ring of triumph and leadership is gone. He admits that God has deserted Him. In despair, He sobs: "It is finished." He can do no more. He has acknowledged defeat and fallen back into the void to be swallowed up of that gloom which gives a grave to all the wrecks and failures of time. It is the death of hope, the failure of divinity, the burial of God. From the view-point of the senses, there is no appeal from this verdict. Jesus failed. He talked of a kingdom, but it was the farce of power. He spent His life getting followers, but at His death, there were scarcely enough for pallbearers, and at the first danger-signal they forsook Him and fled. He spoke of saving the people, but could not

save Himself. Merely to say that Jesus failed is, from the human standpoint, to be generous to the memory of Jesus. It is to render a merciful verdict.

Nevertheless, if there be one thing absolutely certain to-day, it is that Christ's failure was His real success. The victory was going on under the very eyes of His disciples, but they lacked the vision to see it. They saw only the dust of the fearful conflict and concluded that their leader was defeated.

The fact is there was never so complete a victory. None ever succeeded so well as Jesus of Nazareth. When one thinks of the way He started and then of the dimensions to which His following has grown, when he tries to tabulate in statistics the results of Calvary and estimate the power of the cross among mankind, he is disposed to rank Jesus as the most successful leader in all human history.

Not only so, but if we are to name the crisis hour of His career, it was there on the cross, as He hung dying. When failure seemed absolute, then triumph was most secure. When defeat seemed irretrievable, His cause was unconquerable.

It was there, in His death hour, that He met and vanquished the last and worst of foes. When He said "It is finished," He said it not as a wail of defeat, but as the shout of victory. This was the Saviour's real view of the situation. He never, for a moment, wavered. He knew the

world thought He was failing and perhaps that was the hardest thing He had to stand. The sting of failure is this. It is hard to hold out when you feel that others have lost confidence in you. But Christ did not falter. He knew that He was right. He had not the slightest doubt about the worth of dying. He loved His cause well enough to die for it. He was willing for time to write "failure" over His career, and for His best friends to say : " We hoped that it was He who should redeem Israel " ; for even as they said it He was by their side again, risen from the grave, the triumphant refutation of all their fears.

The leaders of the world are those who are strong enough to seem to fail. Instead of worshipping appearances and judging eternity by snap-shots, they catch the vision of that divinity which may consecrate and halo a failure.

We are not to conclude that failure is essential to success. This doctrine of the success of failure is not a gospel to comfort shabby mediocrity and indolent self-indulgence. It is not an easy road to self-esteem for the riffraff of society. Because one tries and fails, he is not to put himself on the honour roll, with the reflection that he has gotten into the hero and martyr class. One should never be satisfied with failure. Indeed he must be unwilling to fail. A true soul finds failure a fearful ordeal. God would have us believe that failure is impossible for one who is faithful to duty ; for it is impossible. Truth is never conquered.

It always falls to rise again. Duty is forever invincible.

Certainly one is not to make an excuse of failure. It is no cloak for cowardice. He is very far from being either a hero or a martyr who says: "I have failed. Therefore nothing more can be expected of me." There are people who have failed and thank God they have. They are through with a disagreeable task. To such, failure is not a halo of glory but a brand of infamy. The failure which is sacramental is his who fails in the line of duty. The world calls it defeat, but the Recording Angel enters it as victory. As the years roll on and the mists clear and events shape themselves aright, it is seen that every stand for truth, every testimony for honour, every death for duty was triumphant.

Let the man who has failed in the path of duty study his failures at the foot of the cross. Let him sun his dying, withered hope in the light of Calvary, and he will find the sere leaves grow green again and winter turn to spring. He will learn that failure is not necessarily defeat and he will come to love duty enough to fail for sake of it.

The failures of such an one are eternal assets. They are divine values.

It was about the time Moses said: "I am a failure," that he became of some account to God. It was when Jacob gave up as a wrestler, that he prevailed. It is the stoop of the soul that renews it. It is through the defeats and failures

encountered in the line of duty, that the divine character is imparted and developed. Struggle brings us nearer to the heart of God.

He who has learned this begins to live in a divine way, for he worships a God who is not thinking of the gross earnings of his life, the bulk of his happiness, the utensils of his comfort, the statistics of his position ; but who is thinking of him and would give him a soul of courage and a heart of faith ; and that in the old way. He takes him through Gethsemane and out to Calvary. He lets him fail, but his grave is not his tomb. It is his throne.

XII

A FACE TOWARDS THE MORNING

"He only is advancing in life, whose heart is getting softer, whose blood warmer, whose brain quicker, whose spirit is entering into living peace. And the men who have this life in them are the true lords or kings of the earth—they, and they only."—*John Ruskin*.

No religion is of much account that fails to strike a note of optimism. The creed that does not declare for a spirit of cheerfulness is defective. The doctrine that puts a premium on gloom is a dangerous heresy.

People whose lives are developing in a divine direction are people with their faces towards the morning. They have caught on their souls the light that transfigures.

It is a significant statement Paul makes in his second letter to the church in Corinth when he says: "I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness."¹

After a season of serious reflection, he has reached the conclusion that it is his duty to be cheerful. He has tried the other plan and found it unsatisfactory. He says he is coming to Corinth "again." He had gone once before in heaviness. He had visited the city, with a doleful countenance. He had gone cast down and

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 1.

oppressed. His reception was not encouraging. The people seemed sorry to see him. The audiences were small. The congregations were not responsive. There seemed to be no great demand in Corinth for a preacher whose sermon was a wail.

He has learned his lesson. He has discovered the calamity of gloom, the worthlessness of pessimism, the disaster of heaviness. He says: "I will never do it again. I have made up my mind to this. I have finished with the religion of depression. It is without value. It lacks power. It has no message. It defeats itself."

He does not mean that there was nothing to make him heavy-hearted. He is not saying that everything was as it should be, that the church was perfect and every believer faithful, and that there were no divisions nor scandals among the Corinthian Christians. He was not a fool. He knew there was plenty of material for gloom. He knew well enough there were things to discourage and change cheer to pessimism, but he says: "I will not allow these things to depress me. There is another side and I am looking at that. When I come again you may expect me to wear a smile. You will find me in good spirits, for I have determined this with myself that I will not come again to you in heaviness."

It is not necessary to be heavy-hearted in order to maintain a reputation for piety. One need not wear a sad countenance to prove oneself of the number of the elect.

This thing of loading down religion with heavi-

ness is a mistake. This way of striking from the saint's calendar all gay moods and festal occasions is wicked. Gloom commands no premium. Its stock is always at a discount. Over against the religion of depression let us place the religion of cheerfulness. It is a good religion, whether we be preachers with churches, or teachers with schools, or parents with children, or doctors with patients, or lawyers with clients, or merchants with customers. Whatever one's work, let him live with his face towards the morning.

CHEERFULNESS IS A DUTY

Beginning at the bottom and considering the subject on the lowest plane, cheerfulness is a duty. It is an obligation. It is something we owe. There are certain things we ought to be, such as honest, just, pure, kind. Among these things we ought to be is a strain called "cheerfulness." It may not have occurred to a man that he is as morally bound to be cheerful as he is to be honest. If not, it is because he has not gone very far in the study of morals.

Cheerfulness is a duty we owe to others. I have no more right to unload my nasty moods and ugly humours on an unoffending public than I have to throw my garbage into my neighbour's back yard. It is the quintessence of selfishness for a man to come from business sour and cross and ill-tempered, and to inject all his infelicity into the stream of domestic life. It is a gross injustice for a teacher to unload her nerves on the

innocent heads of her pupils. It is a strategic blunder for a preacher who falls down to try to comfort himself by seorching his congregation. Each of us has enough of his own that is disagreeable, without being loaded down with his neighbour's. It is our duty to add something to the light of the world, rather than to increase its darkness.

Cheerfulness is a duty we owe to ourselves. Self-interest calls for cheerful moods. No one can do his best who surrenders to gloom. This way of seeing all the difficulties and sleeping with all the troubles and carrying all the burdens, unfits for life. It has been the ruin of many a career. Many a man has gone to pieces for no other reason than that he insisted on heaviness. Gloom makes everything harder. The story is told of a little girl who was at dinner, and just as she raised the spoon to her lips it was flooded with golden sunlight, pouring through a western window. As she took the spoon from her mouth she said, "Mamma, I have swallowed a whole spoonful of sunshine." Many would be improved by a little sunshine on the daily bill of fare. Sweetness and light will improve any disposition.

Cheerfulness is also a duty we owe our work, our profession, our business, the vocation in which we are investing our life. Whatever it may be, it deserves enthusiastic espousal. If we are not enthusiastic over it, who will be? If we go around sighing about the heavy and depressing character of our life-work, people will have

no respect for either it or us. We should give to it our best and let it fill us with light and hope.

By all means cheerfulness is a duty we owe our Maker. This is God's world and it is as beautiful a world as the Deity could make. The provision for our comfort is God's product and it is ample. Why should the children of a king go mourning all their days? If we are Christians, we owe it to Christ that we be cheerful Christians. If He can do no more for us than make us wail and look dejected, there will be little encouragement for those who are already dejected to turn to Christ for relief. Christ did not say to His disciples, "Ye are the clouds of the world, the gloom of the world, the dejection of the world," but "Ye are the light of the world." "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

But this plane of duty is the lowest from which to discuss the subject. The poorest thing to be said about cheerfulness is that it is a duty.

CHEERFULNESS IS A PRIVILEGE

Privilege is better than duty. Duties are what we are obligated to do, privileges are what we are permitted to do. Our privileges are our treasures. They are the things we seek. They enrich and beautify and bless and transform. Among our privileges is cheerfulness and without it one cannot be truly happy.

It is not the absence of seriousness. It is not to

be confounded with flippancy. It does not mean that one must give up his convictions and take a shallow view of life. His optimism is not to be like that of the ostrich which tucks its head under its wings when pursued and imagines that its enemy has ceased to exist because no longer seen. Indeed one must see all that is hostile. The true optimist takes the most serious view of life and for this very reason is convinced that he must be cheerful. He is saying "I must be cheerful. I cannot stand these things in any other way. If I am to live and win, I must move from the swamps to the heights. I must ascend to privileges."

This is the way the Bible looks at the subject. It does not regard cheerfulness as a duty but rather as a privilege. The three great occasions in the Jewish year were the feasts. They were the times of choicest and greatest religious privilege, but they were festival events. The people did not go around with doleful countenances, chanting a dirge, but with hosannas of praise and hallelujahs of thanksgiving.

Cheerfulness enables us to enjoy life. It doubles every blessing. One may have all the material for happiness, but if he lack cheerfulness, it profits him nothing. He may have friends and home and wealth and the opportunities for travel and the gratification of his tastes, but if he be without cheerfulness, they will profit him nothing. Of all the moods of the contented life, cheerfulness is greatest.

It puts the soul in tune. It gives the spirit harmony and grace. It is the music of existence. The poet Carpani asked Haydn why his church music was so cheerful. Haydn replied : " I cannot make it otherwise. I write according to the thoughts I feel ; when I think upon God, my heart is so full of joy that the notes dance and leap, as it were, from my pen ; and since God has given me a cheerful heart, it will be pardoned me that I serve Him with a cheerful spirit."

A cheerful heart not only sees and hears the beauty of the world, but sings it. Cheerfulness affects everything ; and all it touches, it makes beautiful. Sometimes you have seen a face whose features were homely. There was not a line of grace in the countenance, but there was a look in the face that delighted you. There was an expression that transformed the homely features and filled the countenance with beauty. It was the shining out of a cheerful soul.

Why be moody and morose when we may be cheerful ? Why stay in the swamps and be choked by the fogs and poisoned by the rank vapours of the marshes, when the sun-kissed heights are open ?

Cheerfulness is something more than duty ; it is something higher even than privilege.

CHEERFULNESS IS POWER

If we are out for power, if we are unwilling to reduce our capital, we must be cheerful. Cheerfulness doubles the effectiveness of personality.

It enables one to use the power he already possesses. Gloom clogs the wheels. Cheerfulness is like oil on the axles and cylinders. One can do better work in a cheerful mood, for he can handle himself to better advantage. We all feel this. When we are cheerful, we can do anything. The work is no trouble. Indeed it is not our work that is ever the difficulty, so much as our mood. It is not what we do that wears us out. It is rather worrying about what we do not do, but think we should. It is not overwork that breaks people down, so much as worry over underwork, imperfect work. If only we could be cheerful, our vocation would be transformed and work made a delight.

Optimism is essential to success. Gloom gets no audience anywhere. The thing for which we are willing to pay the price of admission must please us. If a book promises to make one melancholy if he read it, he will decline with thanks. The books we love are those that give us pleasant moods. Should a certain course of action offer whose issue is likely to depress you, you shun it as you would smallpox. We may be willing to endure a cross for the sake of loyalty to a great cause or a holy ideal, but not for the sake of being entertained.

Let two men of equal capital and ability start in the same business at the same time, side by side. Let their positions and establishments and opportunities be the same in all respects ; but let one man be cross and sour and mean while his

neighbour is genial and obliging and cheerful. We know perfectly well which door will be thronged and which man is doomed to make a speedy assignment of his assets to satisfy his creditors.

Hume said : "The habit of looking on the bright side of things is worth more than an income of a thousand dollars a year." While one cannot always be cheerful on even a thousand a year, especially when his salary is paid him in the currency of his own moods ; Hume is probably correct in his estimate of the financial value of cheerfulness.

Emerson says : "Do not hang a dismal picture on your walls and do not deal with sable and gloom in your conversation."

Dr. Talmage used to declare "Some people have an idea that they comfort the afflicted when they groan over them. Don't drive a hearse through a man's soul. When you bind up a broken bone of a soul, and you want splints, do not make them out of cast iron."

"Give us, oh, give us," cries Carlyle, "the man who sings at his work ! Be his occupation what it may, he is equal to any of those who follow the same pursuit in silent sullenness. He will do more in the same time—he will do it better—he will persevere longer. One is scarcely sensible of fatigue when he marches to music. The very stars are said to make harmony as they revolve in their spheres. Wondrous is the strength of cheerfulness, altogether past calculation its power

of endurance. Efforts to be permanently useful, must be uniformly joyous—a spirit all sunshine—graceful from very gladness, beautiful because bright.”

Cheerfulness is duty, it is privilege, it is power. There is, however, a still higher thing to say about it.

CHEERFULNESS IS POSSIBLE

It is possible for every one, whatever his temper or disposition or climate or circumstances or call, to be cheerful. This is a bold thing to say, but I believe it to be true.

I do not mean to say that one can always be on the mountain top. There will come periods of depression, occasional descents into the vale of gloom. Neither do I mean that cheerfulness will come easily or at once; but by hard, persistent effort the prevailing mood of life may be made a cheerful one.

How is it to be done?

Something will be gained by fortitude. There is virtue in the stoic's method, in the refusal to be cast down; in the stubborn and dogged negation of heaviness. I am not advocating the chloroform method of deadening the soul to painful sensations; nor am I commending the fool's philosophy which identifies virtue with calamity; or that peculiarly baffling interpretation of Providence which makes one's spirits fall as he prospers and rise as his afflictions multiply. When he published "Taxation No Tyranny," Dr. Johnson

is reported as saying to Boswell : " I do not think I have been sufficiently attacked for that work. Attack is the reaction. I never feel that I have struck a good blow unless there is a glorious rebound." To which Boswell replied : " What are you coming at now, sir ? I should think that five or six small arms in every newspaper, and repeated cannonading in pamphlets would satisfy you."

There are a few people who seem never so happy as when they are most miserable, but the majority of the human race is built on a different plan.

There is, however, such a thing as rising by sheer force of the will above the depressing effects of adverse conditions and remaining cheerful by the power of determination. At the battle of Germantown, General Nash, of North Carolina, had his horse shot from under him. The charge which killed the horse tore a hole in the General's thigh. As horse and rider fell, General Nash clapped his hands over the hole in his leg and laughingly said to his men : " Boys, I've had a devil of a tumble. Don't wait for me, but hurry on after the enemy." That is the spirit of the conqueror. A man with a will like that cannot be depressed.

Nothing can

" Circumvent or hinder, or control,
The firm resolve of a determined soul."

A still better thing to do is to cultivate the habit of looking on the bright side of things. Like any other habit, it is a habit that can be

cultivated. One can get in the way of looking for that which is disagreeable, or, if he choose, for that which is pleasant. He can cultivate the disposition of seeing, as soon as any subject is mentioned, the shadows, or, if he prefer, the lights.

Both are there. It is simply a question of which he will elect.

Life is like the ancient shield with two sides, one of gold and one of silver. The two knights fell out and fought as to which was right, one contending that the shield was gold and the other as stoutly asserting that it was silver. After both were worn out in the contest, they decided to look at the shield itself, and lo, both were right.

So it is in life. There is a bright side and a dark side. It is merely a question of which one prefers.

One may cultivate the habit of looking at the bright side. Perhaps this is the one thing of real value in Christian Science. Christian Science is not a religion. Its errors from that standpoint are palpable. But Christian Science is valuable as mental therapeutics. Some one expressed an aversion to calling on Mrs. ———, and said: "She wails so much; but I understand she wails less now. Probably her health is better." "Her health is better," was the reply, "because she wails less."

The practice of wailing is hard on the constitution. It is bad for the nerves. It is better to be cheerful.

It is not a question of what to think about. There are plenty of things over which to worry. There are problems of sorrow and suffering and pain and sin sufficient to drive us crazy if we allow them. It is rather a question of what we will think about. He is wise who counts his blessings.

The best of all the ways to be cheerful is the method Dr. Chalmers used to commend when he spoke of "the expulsive power of a new affection." It is the method of crowding out the gloom with the light. The way the seven devils were to be kept out of the cleansed house of the man in the parable, was by the angel who took up his abode in the house.

This is the method of the Gospel : Christianity proposes to make people happy by filling their hearts with Christ's joy and peace. It is the only effective method. We must go beyond our determination to be cheerful, strong as that may be. We must have more than the habit of looking on the bright side of things, valuable as is such a habit. If we are to be permanently and triumphantly cheerful we must have Christ. The song of divine grace must sing in our hearts.

As He was bidding them farewell on the eve of His arrest, Christ said to His disciples : "Peace I leave with you." As He arose from the dead on the morning of His Resurrection His salutation was "Peace be unto you." One must claim Christ's bequest of peace, and he will find cheerfulness not only holy duty and precious

privilege and mighty power, but he will find it a blessed possibility.

“Why is your face always in smiles?” asked Deicolus of Columbanus. “Because no one can take my God from me,” was the jubilant reply.

XIII

SANCTIFIED FOR THE STREET

“ I have led
A life too stirring for those vague beliefs
That superstition builds in solitude.”

—*Letitia E. Landon.*

LIFE develops best in its own medium, and the divinely appointed medium of life is the living.

The place for a religious man is not out of the world but in the world, among people, where the powers with which he is endowed may find employment, and the longings which cry in his nature may have expression.

The cloister was a mistake, a colossal blunder. It has taken man a few thousand years to discover that he was not meant to be a hermit : that he has nothing to fear but everything to hope from his kind.

Society is his salvation, and at least one-half of life is to live on right terms with his fellows.

The Hebrew prophet was ahead of his times but a true seer, who wrote : “ In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities.”¹

He seems to have a notion that one could find

¹ Ezek. xxxvi. 33.

a sanctuary on every highway, and that people are made holy not to dwell in a cave, but to live in a city, where life is intense.

Sanctification is the cleansing of the soul. It is having the heart purified. It is getting rid of the pollution of sin and of the stains of lust. It is having the mange of pride scoured out of one's moral nature. It is getting one's sourness sweetened, his acidity and acerbity mollified, his ugliness transformed. It is being made gentle and genuine and gracious and good and pure and holy.

It is a big undertaking. To cleanse even the best is no easy task. To make a saint one must do more than provide holy apparel. The process of sanctification is not a mere matter of vestments. It is not enough to make clean one's conduct. His character must be cleansed, his mind, his heart, his will, his imagination, his motives. It is no easy thing to manufacture a real saint. The counterfeit can be quickly and inexpensively produced, but a real saint is costly.

It requires God. If our moral and spiritual nature is to be purified, we must turn ourselves over to God for treatment. God is never in despair. No matter how stained and defiled the life may be, God can cleanse it. He can sanctify the worst. He sees the making of a saint in the worst of sinners. He says: "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

What is sanctification for? Is it the goal of religion, the end of being?

Is there nothing better than being good? Is there nothing beyond holiness? Has God finished when He has cleansed us from all our iniquities? Is sanctification the final act in the drama of spirituality? When one achieves sainthood, has he completed the curriculum of religion?

Many say "Yes"—if not audibly none the less actually. There is a notion that the chief end of religion is to make people good, to keep them from being bad, to keep them from doing bad things, to keep them from saying bad words, to keep them from going to bad places, to keep them from enjoying bad pleasures, to keep them from associating with bad people, to keep them from eating and drinking bad things, to keep them from having bad thoughts. If it can only make people good, religion is a success. If it can cleanse us from all our iniquities, there is nothing further to consider.

If this be the purpose of sanctification, God must set a very high valuation on human piety. Upon reflection, must we not reach the conclusion that God has a poor sense of values? This notion that religion is concerned only or chiefly with getting people into a state of sanctified spirituality, is a very low and selfish estimate of the uses of religion. Indeed there is no worse form of selfishness than spiritual egotism. It is the travesty and desecration of the best.

It would monopolize the Almighty. It would

reduce the activities of the Deity to a schedule and scheme for getting a few choice souls into an estate of immaculate purity, where they may be the envy of the universe, if not its despair. This is not Christianity. Christianity looks beyond the cleansing process. Goodness is merely an incident. There is something better than being good. There is something finer than getting into the gallery of the saints. On one occasion Paul said: "I could wish myself accursed for my brethren." He said: "There is something so high and fine and great that for the sake of it, I am willing to forego personal redemption." Evidently he believed in a goal beyond sainthood. There is something better than the promise of sanctification. It is the purpose of sanctification.

Sanctification is preparation—for what?

The common answer is the sanctuary. "I have been cleansed from all my iniquities, therefore I can now appear before the Lord in an acceptable manner. I have been sanctified, now I can worship to advantage, I can say my prayers with some hope of returns, I can read my Bible with profit, I can partake of the Holy Communion without sacrilege. I have been made holy, now I can climb to the heights of the Mount of Transfiguration, and dwell on the plains of peace, and breathe the rarified atmosphere of the triumphant life of privilege and assurance. I am a holy man, therefore I may now enjoy quiet rest, and holy meditation and blissful contemplation and perfect peace.

“At any rate, since I have been sanctified, I must be careful not to be secularized. I must keep away from the wicked world. I must shun dirt of all kinds. I must not allow my white soul to be stained nor my sanctified garments to be defiled. I must lead the separated life. Does it not say, ‘Come ye out from among them and be ye separate from sinners’? I must come out. The Lord’s seal is on me. I am one of His chosen people and I must not mingle with the multitude of them who have not the fear of the Lord before them.”

And so some would quarantine themselves against mankind. They are so solicitous not to be secularized that they imprison themselves from the wicked world. They seek holy retreats and pious solitudes. They take refuge in monasteries and convents and sanctified seclusions, where they may stay good and practice the holy life.

This is not the program of a real saint.

Instead of shunning it, the real saint seeks the secular. He is thrust into it. Sanctification is not so much preparation for the sanctuary as for the street. The city is a saner residence for a good man than a religious retreat.

“I will also cause you to dwell in the cities.” God seems to nullify Himself. He seems to make void His own work. “In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities.” That is a great day. “I will also cause you to dwell in the cities.” What a disappointment! What a wretched finale! The city is the very

incarnation of the world-spirit. It is the embodiment of all that is bad. The city imperils the good. Recently I read a book on National Perils, and the caption of one of the chapters was "The City." The popular estimate of the city is to regard it as a peril. It is the stronghold of sin. It is the place where all the harm is done. There iniquity is concocted and vice is at home. There temptation is impudent and incessant. The city is the place where the saint is destroyed and goodness laid low. It is the home of struggle and suffering, of poverty and want, of woe and sorrow.

Surely the soul of a saint will soon be choked to death in that atmosphere; the sanctified will soon become secularized. We are saying that the city is the last place for us if we want to be good. The very last place for the sanctified man is the street of sin. Let him flee temptation. Let him hark from the haunts of vice. Let him get to the country, into contact with nature, where the open fields and blue skies and singing birds and blooming flowers and all the other things shall whisper to him of God and help him to stay good. In the day that he is sanctified let him flee the town.

God says, "Seek the town." Instead of the sanctuary and the communion table, God says the market-place and the busy street. Instead of the open fields, He says the crowded city. Instead of a garden He says a slum. Man is sanctified, not that he may climb some Mount of Trans-

figuration or take an outing to the land of rest or cushion himself in the blissful repose of some sequestered sanctuary, but he is sanctified for the most secular place and the most secular occupation.

A genuine saint is a citizen. By a citizen, I mean not merely a man who wakes up on election days and hangs around a voting booth and talks politics. A citizen is a member of the community. He is not a hermit but a fellow man. He carries the problems of the city in his heart. He plunges into the thick of its activities. He loves its people. He does his best to fight the city's battles, and to protect its interests. He gives his all to feed its hungers and nurse its sickness and solace its woes and comfort its sorrows. He wears himself out in its service. This is the real citizen, and this kind of citizen is the real saint.

The man of the street needs to be a God-cleansed man. He needs the sanctuary to be sure. He must not dare adventure the city or appear upon the street until he has had his contact with God. Before ever he takes up the duties of the office, the shop, the factory, the school, the store, he must linger at the altar. The reason the street slays us is that we have neglected the altar. The reason the city destroys us is that we have gone there uncleansed, with all the stain and weakness of the secular upon us. The man whose work is the most secular is the man of all others who most needs an hour of wor-

ship and an altar of prayer. He whose life is most worldly is he whose need is most desperate for the sanctifying, cleansing and illuminating ministry of faith. But after God has cleansed him, let him not fear the secular. Let him seek the city.

The street needs the saint. It needs the man who looks beyond the sky-scrapers and who hears above the din and tumult of trade, the call of the Eternal. Commerce needs the entry of men whose standard of righteousness is from God. Politics needs the activities of men whose convictions are a part of their worship. Society needs the help of people whose pleasures are a blessed ministry and whose prayer life is not negated by their play life. Let us be done with the cant which shouts "wolf" every time the Church gets into the street, every time the saint becomes a man of the town and Christianity lays hold of real problems.

We have had enough of these tin soldier saints, these dim sanctum saints, these glass case saints, these self-centred saints, these mutual admiration saints, these private monopoly saints, who think God has nothing to do but to preserve them unto His heavenly kingdom. Let us have a few plain, ordinary town saints ; a few secularized saints ; an order of priests who are priests indeed ; a generation of Christians who are not too holy to be useful.

Religion, instead of taking us out of the world, is meant to take us into it. If Christ has cleansed

me, instead of running from temptation I must fight it ; instead of avoiding trouble, I must cure it ; instead of shunning suffering, I must share it. I must plunge into the game of real life. This was Jesus' way, and we must follow Him. He did not spend His time seeking religious retreats. He sanctified Himself ; but He did not say " Now that I am sanctified, I must get out of the world."

His sanctification was His preparation for serving humanity. It took Him into the street at whose end stood a cross. This is what Paul meant when he said he was willing to sacrifice personal redemption to save his people. He was following in the footsteps of Him who teaches that if any man will save his life, he must lose it.

Let us not be in too great a hurry to die and go to heaven. When we speak of being unworldly, let us be sure we get our words straight. What is worldliness ? Is it not selfishness ? Who are the selfish ? Are they not the people who will have nothing to do with others ? The selfish man is the man who will have no neighbours, no boon companions, and who repudiates all social ties and social duties. He is the real worldling. He incarnates the real world spirit. He is sanctified for his private profit and he thinks of heaven as a close corporation of which he is one of the controlling stockholders.

Christ is leading us not back to the garden but on to the town, not back to Eden but on to the New Jerusalem. He is beckoning us to a city.

“I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven!” This is the dream of Christianity for the future of mankind. God sanctifies us, not that we may wander through the daisied fields, but enter the crowded streets, not that we may withdraw into selfish solitudes, but with the Son of Man, toil among the people. He is calling us to service, to fellowship, to brotherhood !

“ I said, ‘ Let me walk in the field.’
 He said, ‘ Nay, walk in the town.’
 I said, ‘ There are no flowers there.’
 He said, ‘ No flowers but a crown.’

“ I said, ‘ But the skies are black,
 There is nothing but noise and din.’
 And He wept as He sent me back,
 ‘ There is more,’ He said, ‘ There is sin.’

“ I said, ‘ But the air is thick,
 And fogs are veiling the sun.’
 He answered, ‘ Yet souls are sick,
 And souls in the dark undone.’

“ I said, ‘ I shall miss the light
 And friends will miss me they say.’
 He answered, ‘ Choose to-night,
 If I am to miss you or they.’

“ I pleaded for time to be given.
 He said, ‘ Is it hard to decide?
 It will not seem hard in heaven
 To have followed the steps of your guide.’

“ I cast one look at the field,
Then set my face to the town.
He said, ‘ My child, do you yield ?
Will you leave the flowers for the crown ? ’

“ Then into His hand went mine
And into my heart came He,
And I walked in a light divine,
The path I had feared to see.” ¹

¹ George Macdonald.

XIV

THE VALUE OF AN EDDY IN THE STREAM OF LIFE

“For solitude sometimes is best society,
And short retirement urges sweet return.”

—*John Milton.*

IN life, as in music, there is value in a rest. The idea of the sanctity of the Sabbath, of the high obligation of a day of rest in the midst of the strenuous week, is not accidental.

A pause, now and then, is necessary to life's symmetric development. Even Christ, who lived life, after a heavenly fashion on earth, and who is our fairest illustration of the perfect life, was not above the need of rest.

On one occasion, He said to His disciples : “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.”¹

To those strenuous disciples, who from quiet fishermen had become busy apostles, thronged by insistent crowds and absorbed by incessant and exacting duties, Jesus said : “Get away from it all for a while to some desert place, where you can get your breath and eat your food unmolested.”

¹ Mark vi. 31.

It looked as if Christ were side-tracking them ; as if He were sending them to obscurity just as they were reaching the height of popularity ; as if He were throwing them out of the race the moment they were about to pluck the goal of success. What career was there for such men as these in the desert ?

A short while before Jesus had called these men to Him and sent them forth on a great campaign. He had equipped and commissioned them and sent them out. True, their equipment seemed rather meagre. Their baggage was light ; they were not allowed two coats. Their supplies were small ; there was not enough in the purse to pay for a night's lodging. They were told to go forth and preach repentance. It was an unpopular doctrine. They faced the campaign with vague forebodings. They were without capital and without reputation. What could they hope to accomplish ? But they went, and now they are back.

They have won. Everything has come their way. The results have been marvellous. They are intoxicated with success. They have worked wonders. Their message has proven to be most popular. The people have crowded to hear them. Even the devils have been subject to them. At their touch diseases have been healed. Their missionary journey has been a triumphal procession. It is wonderful what a man with nothing but the message and the power of God can accomplish. Nothing is too hard for him. He needs

only to proclaim the message and to exercise the power to carry the day.

They are telling Christ the story of their success. Their aspect has changed somewhat. Their tone is not quite the same. They are beginning to feel their importance. There is a bit of ecclesiastical arrogance in their accent. That trick is acquired so soon. They are saying to Christ: "The thing is easy. We can change this land. We have had crowds everywhere. Everybody is talking about us. Wherever you go, you will hear our names. Look at the crowds yonder. They are expecting preaching again." Then Jesus said that which sounded strange to those popular and successful disciples. He bade them pause. It was not what they were expecting to hear. It seemed to them the very last and worst thing to do. The crisis was at hand. The psychological moment had arrived. They had the ear of the public. Now was the time to strike. What was needed was not to relax, but to redouble their efforts. Christ says: "Quiet! Give over the whole campaign. Get away from the people entirely."

He saw what the disciples did not see. He saw the difference between publicity and power, between curiosity and conviction, between a crowd and a convert, between notoriety and success. He knew what the work needed, and He also knew what the workers needed; and so He told His disciples to leave the crowds and seek the solitude; to get to some spot where they

could be alone ; to get out of the roar and rush and struggle of the main current to some quiet eddy under a green bank where the waters were still and the stream placid and where they could rest a while.

He proclaims the value of an eddy in the stream of life.

Often His word to men is like that to His disciples on the morning of their missionary adventure. He sends them out into mid-stream. He says : "Go forth and work ; testify, heal, help, champion the cause of the weak, comfort the distressed, be diligent, be tireless, be industrious, transact the business of the world for the glory of God." Sometimes the vastness of the enterprise is overwhelming. Our gifts are poor and our equipment meagre. What can we accomplish ? But it is wonderful what any man or woman can do in this world with nothing but the message and the power of God. We go forth and try, and somehow the impossible again comes to pass. We find that the stone has been rolled away from the door of the sepulchre. We discover that God's word does not return unto Him void. Success surprises us.

Then just at the critical moment, when there is so much to do, when the fruit of the vineyard is fully ripe, and the fields white unto the harvest, and everything is calling for redoubled effort, Christ says : "Rest a while." He thrusts in between us and our work, and by His providence, shunts us to some solitude. He bids us turn our

boat out of the main current. He commands us to get out of the rush and roar and race and seek some quiet spot, where the willows hang low and the waters ripple in gentle murmurs on the quiet sands, and there forget for a while that there is anything to do in the world.

It is not always easy to be reconciled to the eddy. We feel that to be taken out of the thick of things is to fail. To one of active mind and vigorous stroke, the eddy seems an asylum of defeat. It is no easy thing to endure enforced inactivity. We feel that we should be up and on. Unless we are busy, life seems wasted and opportunity lost. It is hard to feel that we are living to much purpose unless we are in the midst of the whirling rapids, contending with might and main against the tumult of waters that drench us with their spray and thunder about us the menace and challenge of their compelling forces.

Christ, however, knows the value of an eddy. He knows the business of the main current, too. There are times when no one is more for the mid-stream than He. He was no idle dreamer. He lived a stirring life. He did things. He thrilled his age. He traversed his land over and over again, from border to border. Few but knew there was such a person as the Rabbi Jesus; and all who wished, had the chance to see Him. But Jesus also knew there were times when the worker should forsake the crowds and take to the desert; when he should let the work go; when he should forget that there are people tired

and hungry and sick ; when he should turn his back on the throngs of eager, interested, insistent, needy humanity, and sink himself for a while, beyond the reach of publicity, in some serene solitude.

Are there not occasions when what we need is not to be prodded, to be told to be more energetic, more diligent and assiduous, to rise earlier and work longer and be instant in season and out of season ? Are there not times when we do not greatly need a fresh dissertation on the charms and virtues of the strenuous life ? Perhaps we have heard enough about "the strenuous life." The trouble with the average life to-day is that it is a little too strenuous. There are many coming and going and there is no leisure so much as to eat. Humanity swarms in ceaseless activities.

The need is for a pause, a respite in the desert. The need is to get to some place where the telephone bell does not ring ; out of the roar and rush and struggle ; to some serene retreat where we can rest on our oars and listen to the lap of the waters as they rock the boat, and look up through the leaves of the arching branches into heaven's eternal blue, and hear the bird-songs in the boughs and the frogs croaking in the flags, while the blessed quiet and peace of brooding nature falls around the soul.

We need the solitude and quiet of the eddy for rest. Jesus saw that His disciples were jaded and tired. Perhaps they did not feel it themselves. One may be so absorbed in his work as to be ob-

livos of physical exhaustion. Christ's keen eye detected that His disciples were weary and He said to them: "You must rest. Your work is important; but just now something else is more important. Come apart and rest a while."

It was to be just for "a while." It was not to be permanent. Rest is not the regular program for this life. Work is the regular program. But Christ knew the value of a pause in the music. He would have these men rest long enough to give their worn bodies and weary brains a chance to recover; until they could get themselves in hand and make ready for a fresh campaign.

People sometimes need rest. We are made of the sort of stuff that gets tired. We are not made of iron and stone and steel, but of flesh and blood; and these are no match for machinery in a long race. The failure to observe the need for rest is often accompanied by disastrous consequences. The columns of the daily papers stare us in great head-lines with the announcements of frightful railway disasters. While all of these dreadful fatalities are not occasioned by requiring men to work beyond the point of physical efficiency, doubtless many of them are the direct result of driving flesh and blood and brain and muscle beyond human endurance. Men are told to work on when their eyelids hang heavy for lack of sleep and their brains are dull and sluggish from the prolonged strain.

Nervous disorders are largely on the increase, and no doubt a chief explanation is the failure of

people to rest when they need it. The body and brain are toned up with drugs and stimulants and kept going, until there is a breakdown. Then we are taken to a sanatorium where we are rubbed and dieted and dosed and massaged and electrified and pulled into shape to get back again into the main current, where we rush on until the next breakdown.

There are times when rest is as much a divine command as work ; when it is as much one's duty to quit as to go on ; when the place where God wants us is there where there are no tools and no audience ; nothing but desert and solitude.

“Rest a while !” Oh, thou blessed human Christ, who didst take our tired and weary human nature up into Thine own ; who at Jacob's well didst rest Thyself and by that act didst consecrate all human rest ; who dost look with tender interest on those who are jaded and worn with toil and dost thrust in between them and exacting duties, and say to the thronging crowds, “Stand back !” to insolent industry and noisy machinery and roaring, tumultuous trade, “Stand back ! give blood and brain and muscle a chance ;” and whose call to the overworked, where many are coming and going and there is no leisure so much as to eat, is, “Come ye yourselves apart and rest a while !” Thou blessed Christ of the road and the field and the shop, we thank Thee for rest—just for rest !

We need the solitude and quiet of the eddy for meditation.

Some things are missed in mid-stream. Some things that are most important, we overlook in the rush and noise and compelling competition of our busy life. There may be duties near at hand, but we lack the time to look around, and God must take us to an eddy to show us duties near home. Mr. Jacob Riis tells of a prominent philanthropist and Christian worker who came to him one day and begged that he would find for him some family of foreigners that his family might visit and make good citizens and bring to Christ. Mr. Riis found him a family. It was that of a Norwegian woman who every day scrubbed the office of this Christian philanthropist. There was his work, right under his eyes, but he was too busy to see it.

There are duties in the desert. It is a mistake to confound the quiet of the eddy with stagnation. There is abundant opportunity for heroism away from the rush and competition. A lad who was already a wage-earner and partly the support of his widowed mother met with a street accident and was taken to the hospital, where both legs were amputated. His mother stood by the little sufferer with streaming eyes. He mistook the cause of her grief. It did not occur to him that she could be crying out of sympathy for him. He supposed she was troubled because the income of the family was threatened, and with the unselfishness of a hero, in his crude, boyish way, he tried to comfort her by saying : "Don't cry, mudder ! Lots of kids gits settin' down jobs."

The little fellow had been cast out into an eddy, but it was his chance for heroism. And what he said is true in a sense he did not mean. There are "sitting down jobs"; there is work to be done in the solitude; there are duties apart from the busy throngs and the rush of things; and sometimes Christ takes us out of the main current that we may meditate on all this, and see the great chance in life which we were about to overlook.

He takes us there that we may be alone with Him. It is hard to get our attention. So many other things are clamouring for an audience at the same time. Christ's call is but one of a thousand appeals knocking at the door and seeking admission to heart and mind. There is not much chance for Christ with us, until we pull out of mid-stream into the eddy. He wants our undivided attention, and He would take us where we can hear and see. Have you ever stood in the midst of a roaring, rushing stream and noticed how difficult it is to hear anything but the noise of the waters? One summer day I was trout fishing in a wild mountain stream. My companion was our youngest child, a lad of seven. I placed the little fellow on a big boulder in mid-stream, with his rod, and told him to fish there, while I went a little further on. After a while I looked up and he was gesticulating wildly and shouting for me at the top of his voice, but I did not hear a word. The noise of the stream drowned all else.

Is it not thus with us sometimes in the stream of life? God is calling us. He is thundering His appeal to our soul; but we hear nothing but the noise of the waters about us. God must get us out of the roar and tumult, if He would make Himself heard.

He calls us to the quiet of the eddy that we may listen and learn. He would not have us misled as to what constitutes life. He looked and listened to those disciples making their report. Perhaps He saw they were about to lose their ideals. They were getting gross and materialistic. They were measuring success by the size of the crowd that followed them. They were concluding that because they were becoming popular, the battle was won, whereas it was just begun. And so, that they might recover themselves, that they might get back their own souls, He took them to a sanctuary of meditation.

Among the great paintings in Florence are the angels of Fra Angelico, which he is said to have painted when he was kneeling prayerfully at his work. A man who spends his time copying these angels says that he has little difficulty in the work when he is in a devotional frame of mind; but that, after a night at cards or a wine supper, he finds the work most difficult. He can get the outlines and colours, but after a night's carousal, it is days before he can get the expression in the faces of Angelico's angels.

The peril which threatens many a man, in the awful rush and contact of modern life, is that he

will lose his own soul, his ideals, his responsiveness, his aspirations ; and become hard and cold and stale. Christ calls us aside to the meditative hour, that we may learn anew what makes true success ; “for what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?”

He calls us to the solitude and quiet of the eddy for strength.

Publicity is a peril. The average life is shallowed by the crowd. The man who is constantly giving out, but who has no fountain at which to renew himself, is weakened. This is the menace which imperils a busy life. How little time there is given for fellowship. Under the constant strain and drain, personality is sapped and life loses its power and beauty.

Christ calls to the desert that He may renew us, that He may build up the weakened will and give tone and colour and resourcefulness to the spirit. The only way to acquire this is through contact with the Divine. The shallowed soul must go to the deeps. The tired spirit must seek the source of infinite strength. Man must touch God, if he is to be charged with new power.

It is true that “solitude is the mother country of the strong,” provided solitude be a sanctuary where the exhausted soul comes into contact with the eternal source of power. The life that is to be strong before the world must have seasons when it is alone with God. It has been truly said that “if chosen men had never been alone in deep mid-stream, open-doored to God, no great-

ness ever had been dreamed or done." It was from forty years of solitude in the desert that Moses went to his public ministry. John the Baptist emerged from the wilderness, when he appeared on the banks of the Jordan to the crowds that thronged him there. After his conversion Paul went for three years to the desert of Arabia Petrea, before beginning his world mission. Even Christ felt the need of a wilderness experience before entering upon His brief public ministry.

One must hearken to the desert call, if he would do his work well.

Oh, for a pause in the onward rush ! For an hour in quiet waters ! For a sanctuary where the soul can be alone with God !

It is not easy to attain. Christ said to His disciples, "Come to the desert," and they departed in a ship privately ; but the crowd was not to be put aside. The people rushed around the upper end of the little lake, and when Christ and His disciples reached the "desert place," they found 5,000 people there, and another long day of exacting duties.

It is not an easy thing to get away from work. It is not even easy, in this crowded, modern life to find the quiet place. The stream has few eddies.

Perhaps the Church itself might be made to minister more than it does to this need of our nature. A friend who is an extremely busy man and who carries large business responsibilities,

told me this experience. It was after an unusually crowded and laborious week and he was feeling the strain of his work. His brain was in a whirl and his nerves on edge. He said to himself: "I will go down to the church and have a bit of quiet there." And so on a week-day morning he came and sat down in a pew and spent a quiet, restful hour in the sanctuary, with his soul turned towards the Great Giver of strength and peace, and went away refreshed.

Perhaps there are many to whom, in the rush of this strenuous life, the open door of the sanctuary might offer the holy solitude the Saviour had it in His heart to give His jaded disciples.

If there are those who are burdened and sore pressed, and who could turn aside for a few moments in the midst of the day, and find in the holy spell of God's house the calmness they need, and go forth with fresh strength and a new inspiration, surely it would not desecrate the church to open the door.

Life must beware of the publicity that makes it shallow. Amid the crowding duties of the strenuous life, it is wise to listen for the call of Him who ever and anon says to the workers, "Rest a while," and to remember that He who calls to the solitude is the same who says to all who labour and are heavy laden: "Come unto Me and I will give you rest."

XV

THE WINGS OF A DOVE

“Wouldst thou from sorrow find a sweet relief?
Rouse to some work of high and holy love,
And then an angel's happiness shalt prove.”

—*Carlos Wilcox.*

THE pause is of value only as it is a pause. It must not become permanent. Sometimes we wish it could. We long for a solitude that shall be a final and lasting escape from all our troubles. We sympathize with that cry of the pestered and worn-out Jewish king, when he exclaimed: “Oh, that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest.”¹

In the midst of passionate protest and bitter denunciation, the awful tragedy of his situation breaks in upon him, the apparent hopelessness of it, the dull and sickening injustice of it; until, in a perfect panic of emotion, there escapes from his lips this sigh of a soul for repose.

He has fought desperately for the seat of power which he occupies. The story of his success reads like a romance. From the quiet and obscure life of an humble and unpretentious shepherd boy caring for his father's flocks, he has made his way by daring deeds, through war and

¹ Ps. lv. 6.

heroism, to the throne of a great nation ; and now, having reached the summit of his ambition, he finds it a storm centre of trouble.

He discovers that, to achieve peace and power, is but to multiply care and increase responsibility. He is finding what every man finds who has fought his way to the goal of his ambition. He finds that he has left repose and serenity and peace of mind and freedom from worry behind. For ever is it true that "uneasy lies the head that wears the crown." And yet, by some strange fatuity of destiny, by some unexplained but resistless impulse, people will persist in fighting for the chance to lose their quiet. They say : "Let us satisfy our ambition, and we will pay the price with the sacrifice of peace."

Yet it is something more than the cares which come with peace and power that trouble the king whose fevered lips and yearning heart sigh for repose. He is distracted with trouble. He is agitated beyond measure by the cares and worries of life. He watches treason daily growing bolder in his palace. He sees iniquity hurling itself down upon him like rocks from the mountain heights. Terrors rush upon him like an avalanche. His kingdom is rife with plots. His own son and his trusted counsellor are conspiring against him. The horror of darkness surrounds him. Fearfulness and trembling lay hold upon him. In the midst of his distraction he exclaims : "Oh, that I could get away from it all ! that I could get back to the quiet fields with

the flocks, with the music of the waterfalls, and the shining stars in my face and the open sky for my canopy and the wild winds singing their lullabies to my tired spirit."

As his soul muses, distracted over the situation, his attention is arrested by a commotion in the street. The people come running together, there are blows and shouts and the yelping of street dogs mingled with the screams of the frightened and excited populace. It was a common sight in the streets of a turbulent Oriental city. As David looks down from the parapet of the palace wall on this street brawl, suddenly he sees a dove emerge from the centre of the scene of confusion, from beneath the very feet of the contestants, and spreading its wings, fly away towards the serene altitudes and solitudes of the sky. As he watches the bird, he says: "Oh, that I could do a thing like that! that I could escape out of all this treason and strife! Oh, that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness, I would be a nobody the rest of my days; for the wilderness with peace is better than a throne of care."

Is it the prayer of a coward? Has the king lost his courage? Is this sigh for repose the sigh of a beaten and defeated man? The king is not afraid of his enemies; but his soul is sick of shams, of base ingratitude, of duplicity and vain-glory. The longing he expresses is deepest in

those whose devotion to duty is most steadfast. It is not because he is scared, but because his soul is tired of strife and his heart hurt with the ungratefulness and betrayal of false friends and his spirit weary of the empty show, that he lifts his tired face and troubled heart to God for rest.

Where is the man or woman in any walk of life, who does not sympathize with the troubled king, and who has not, at some time, uttered his sigh for repose? We try to be brave and steadfast to duty, but the clamour and tumult, the strife and injustice of the world gain upon us; and in some unguarded moment, the prayer for escape slips out of our tired hearts. Oh, to get away from it all! from ingratitude and disappointment, from the futile effort, and the vain and empty show. It distracts, it sickens and disquiets, it gets on our nerves and wears us out. Oh, for the wings of a dove, and rest!

As we pray, maybe for us as for the king, there drifts across the field of memory or on the horizon of imagination the vision of a green field on sunny hills, with the sheep grazing undisturbed; or a lodge in the wild woods amid the leafy forests; or a shelter by the seashore, with the roll of the sea, and the white foam on the quiet beach; or a cottage perched on a mountain top, high above the strife and tumult and folly of the restless world; and our souls catch at the picture, and we cry out: "O God, for its rest!"

It is something to pray the prayer. Whether

or not the dream ever translates itself into actual experience, it is something to be able to lift a tortured and tormented soul up towards the quiet face of the Infinite and say, "O God, my Father, help Thy tired and troubled child." The prayer is always ours. Nothing can take prayer from us. We may not be able to go away, but we can pray. The oratory is near at hand. It is in our hearts. In the thick of the conflict, in the midst of the tumult we may enter the closet of the soul's inner life and shut the door and pray to our Father in secret, "O God, for the wings of a dove, for rest, for the embrace of Thy strong arms, for Thyself!" "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee."¹

Are we traitors to duty because we offer such a prayer? Are we cowards because care drives us to His breast? Are we weak and unworthy because, when the hot fire scorches us, and the sharp thorn drives its poison into our blood, we feel the pain and cry: "Help, Lord"? The flame and the thorn are sometimes sent to drive us to Him. And so as I face my fears and confront the cares of life, I will pray without shame for the wings of a dove.

It is a prayer God declines to answer. He did not allow David to go to private life. He did not permit him to lay aside the crown and vacate the throne. Never again would there come back, for him, those sunlit, care-free days

¹ Augustine.

of shepherd-boyhood, with the murmur of the brooks and the bleating of the sheep and the scented fields and the white clouds drifting lazily on a blue sky. He must stay at his post. He must face the storm and fight his way through.

God does not give us the wings of a dove that we may fly away from trouble. He does not give us exemption. He does not take us out of the world. He wants us here in the world, where the tumult is greatest, where the battle is hottest and the opposition fiercest. We cannot go, we must stay. The gray days stretch on in the calendar. The hard tasks marshal out into the monotonous future until the hated line is lost in the far distance. There is no let up, no relief. We must plod on.

We may as well make up our minds to the situation. We are not here for repose; we are here for work. "To-day the song of battle." We are here not to rust out, but to wear out, to be patient, to resist, to persist, to do with our might whatsoever our hands find to do. If we fall, we are to rise again; and if we fall to rise no more, we are to fall with our faces towards the foe, with our souls refusing to surrender.

This is heroism. There is nothing more heroic than plain devotedness to duty. It may get no cheers, it may never appear in the headlines, but it is kingly, it is divine.

While the prayer for the wings of a dove is unanswered, it is more than answered. Let me explain what I mean by another dove scene in

the Bible. It occurred on the banks of the Jordan, where a preacher named John was baptizing a rabbi named Jesus. Jesus is on the threshold of His public ministry. It was to be the most tempestuous that ever surged around a human life. It was to be thick-set with tumult and conflict, with treason and betrayal, with opposition and injustice, until at last it was to reach its climax in the cruel death on the cross. As Jesus confronts the storm, He seeks that which will enable Him to have peace and rest and confidence amid its tumults. This is given Him.

“The Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form as a dove upon Him, and a voice came out of heaven ; Thou art My beloved Son ; in Thee I am well pleased.”¹ Christ has received what King David prayed for. He has the wings of a dove. Better, He has repose without going away from His work. God has bestowed on Him the strength which will enable Him to achieve rest in the storm.

With the wings of a dove, with the power which has come to Him in the form of a dove from heaven, Jesus moved out into the thick of the tumult, into the restlessness and strife of a sin-smitten world. Amid it all, He had perfect peace, for He had power. Indeed, so secure was He in His possession of it, that He conferred peace. It was the one thing the world could not take from Him. He left it to His disciples as His last

¹ Luke iii. 22.

bequest; and to all the tired and troubled of earth who pray for the wings of a dove, He says: Come unto Me and I will give you rest. All ye that labour and are heavy laden, come unto Me, and I will give you rest.

This is the way God gives the wings of a dove. He more than answers the prayer. He does not take us out of the world, but He equips us for victory in the world. He does not give us less work, but more strength with which to do it; so that we can toil on and not get tired; so that we can face our program with quiet nerves; so that we can do not less but more; so that we can find our leafy bower, our rest cottage in the busy street, in the din and clamour of work.

He does this by changing us, by transforming our characters. This is the first work of the Holy Spirit in a man's life. In another Psalm is this promise: "When ye lie among the sheepfolds, it is as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her pinions with yellow gold."¹ It is a picture of transformed and transfigured character.

God rests us by making work rest us, by making our duties our privileges, our troubles our consolations, our sacrifices our achievements, our losses our gains, our burdens our blessings.

He rests us by sharing our work with us. The Saviour is our yoke-fellow. Near the end of the tempestuous song, David says, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 13.

thee." He has discovered the true secret of rest, and as the song comes to its final note, he says, "O God, I will trust in Thee."

Is not this better than exemption? Is it not far better than throwing down your tools and quitting work and going off into Elysian solitudes? God gives us the wings of a dove, not that we may go in quest of rest, but that rest may come to us. He causes repose to descend and dwell about us as we work; He makes peace the garrison of our souls. Keep on praying for the wings of a dove, but be content for God to answer the prayer His own way. He will more than answer it.

"He was better to me than all my hopes,
Better than all my fears;
For He made a bridge of my broken sighs,
And a rainbow of my tears."

While it is an unanswered prayer, there will come a day when this prayer for rest shall be answered in a higher, grander, diviner way than we have ever imagined.

There came a day when the king had his wish; when his soul had its wings; when for the last time he said: "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended"; when a window opened towards the sunrise and the soul of a man who had been faithful unto death slipped out to meet the dawn, on the wings of a dove. The king had finished his work, and the soul, yearning for repose, was given its rest; not in

some lodge in the wilderness, not on the sunny slope of a green hill, but "in God's house forevermore."

This is the Christian's hope. There remaineth a rest for the people of God. Omnipotent love has built a world of quiet above the storm line, and some day we shall fly away and be at rest. He will take us in out of the tempest, up above the strife and clamour, above all the weariness of the fevered world, and our tired spirits shall rest.

Thank God for the dream, and, better still, for the reality. It will all come true. We are not to plod on, tired, forever. Up there, a rest remains. This hope sustains and comforts us in the midst of the conflict. I can go back to my work now. I can stand the strain a while longer. I can meet the buffeting tide with fresh courage, for yonder, on the horizon of hope, is the kingdom of quiet, the country of rest, the homeland of peace.

"There lies a little city in the hills ;
White are its roofs, dim is each dwelling's door,
And peace with perfect rest its bosom fills.

"There the pure mist, the pity of the sea,
Comes as a white, soft hand, and reaches o'er
And touches its still face most tenderly.

"Unstirred and calm, amid our shifting years,
Lo ! where it lies, far from the clash and roar,
With quiet distance blurred, as if thro' tears.

“O heart, that prayest so for God to send
Some loving messenger to go before
And lead the way to where thy longings end.

“Be sure, be very sure, that soon will come
His kindest angel, and through that still door
Into the Infinite Love will lead thee home.”¹

¹ E. R. Sill.

XVI

THE ALTAR AND THE CHOIR

“Unhappy being that I am ! Who will free me from the hands of the ungodly ? Who will shield me ? Who will come to my succour ? Whither shall I flee ? How can I escape ? I know what I will do : I will turn to heavenly things, and they shall do battle with the things of earth. Hope shall lead the forces of Heaven. Hope shall march against Sorrow and overcome her.”—*Savonarola, the night before his execution.*

LIFE is part a song and part a sob. It is half *jubilate* and half *miserere*. It is never far from a smile to a tear. Christianity’s finest symbol of the victorious life is a cross encircled by a crown.

The story of the ancient liturgy of religion is that “when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also.”¹

The ceremonial of worship consisted of two parts,—the offering of sacrifices and the service of song. The two went together.

It was the gospel of the altar and the choir. In the ancient temple there was an altar, a place where sacrifice was offered. Beside the altar stood the officiating priest, with reverent attitude and awesome ritual, laying upon the flaming hearth the sacrificial gift of the sinful soul seeking peace with God. The altar was the

¹ 2 Chron. xxix. 27.

shrine of the tragedy of religion. The story behind it was the tale of the ruin of the race, and around the altar surged the sorrows and woes and weaknesses of mankind.

In the ancient temple there was also the choir, the service of song, the great chorus of praise to Almighty God, whose mercy blessed the sacrifice and whose pity spared the penitent. The choir was the shrine of the ecstasy and triumph of religion. There the holy Psalms were chanted, which voiced the people's adoration of Jehovah. With sins forgiven, with hearts overflowing with gratitude, with sorrows comforted, and with woes and weaknesses cured, the hosts which thronged the temple courts worshipped God in holy song.

Life must have these two great shrines of the soul for its highest development.

It must have the altar, the sacrifice, the propitiation. True religion must have an adequate remedy for sin. It must cleanse the guilty heart and regenerate the dead soul. When the sinner comes with his burden of guilt, his load of woe, tormented by remorse of conscience and affrighted with the terror of an angry God, what he needs is not a creed that will set him to mortifying the flesh and mumbling phrases; but one that tells him that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins; that takes him to an altar where the sacrifice is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The sinner needs far more than a ritual; he needs a Saviour.

It must also have the choir. Christianity is the one musical religion of the world. The great musical composers have come either directly or indirectly under the spell of Christianity. They have gotten their inspiration from the religion whose altar reconciles man to God, and makes of sinners the children of the Most High. Heathenism has no song. Paganism and infidelity are not musical. It is the gospel of the love of God that sets the heart singing. It is Christianity's heaven that is filled with an innumerable throng, singing "the song of Moses and the Lamb."

The altar and the choir are related as cause and effect. It is the sacrifice that starts the song. If there were no propitiation for sin, there could be no forgiveness. If religion were only a ritual or a form of penance, it would depress us ; but because it is salvation, it thrills us, it exalts and exhilarates us, it fills the soul with melody and wakes the world with song.

Life is to be built around these two great shrines of sacrifice and song. God's temple is not so much these houses built of steel and stone which we erect as places of worship, as it is the building whose invisible walls are the life experiences of the immortal spirit. In each such life-temple there must be an altar, a shrine of sacrifice. If there is, there will also be a choir, a shrine where invisible voices chant symphonies of joy and peace and hope. These two shrines of tragedy and ecstasy express life.

They speak of worship and happiness. The altar stands for worship and the song for the happiness that worship brings.

The altar says that man must worship God. There can be no happiness without it. The Creator has built into our natures an undying need of Him. The soul cries out for God as the flowers cry out for sunshine or a child's heart for a mother's love. There are aspirations which soar away into the infinite and covet fellowship with the Eternal. "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!" He is poor indeed whose life has no altar; whose soul has no God, no reverence, no spot of which he may say, "This is holy ground"; no hour when with uncovered head and bowed heart the secret needs of his life are laid bare to the loving gaze of divine compassion.

We need God far more than we need bread or raiment. No man can be happy without God. He may choke his soul into insensibility, until he hears no cry, but he will not be happy. God is the centre of life. He has made us for Himself. Life is more than feeding the senses. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear and your soul shall live; . . ."¹

¹ Isa. lv. 2, 3.

"I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness"—never until then.

If one is unhappy, it is not because of food or raiment or work or wages. There is no song because there is no altar. He is trying to grow a flower garden on a barren, sterile rock. Let him get his soul under an eternal horizon, his pulses filled with faith in Jehovah; and, peering beyond the low banked hills and passing clouds, let him catch a glimpse of the everlasting peaks and the face of God. It is the soul with an altar that has a song. It is the man that worships God that is happy. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." The man who has not learned to enjoy God has not yet discovered the secret of how to enjoy anything.

It is also the story of atonement and peace. The altar stands for atonement, and the song stands for the peace purchased by atonement.

The altar says that man is a sinner. He has violated a holy law. He is estranged from God, and hostile to His kingdom. Before he can even worship God aright, his sins must be atoned for. Conscience says that this story of the altar is true. We know that our hearts are not right with God. Our guilty fears and evil lusts alike proclaim the need of reconciliation.

It is this atonement or reconciliation which Christ has wrought out on the cross. He has suffered in the sinner's stead. He is the sacrifice demanded. He has offered up Himself as a

sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God. He is the propitiation for our sins. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Christ was "brought as a lamb to the slaughter." He died for the sinner. If so, the sinner must have been in danger. His peril must have been real, eternal, for deliverance to have been purchased at so stupendous a cost. Man is more than the victim of circumstances. He is a sinner in need of the atoning merit of the Lamb of God.

When the merit of Christ's atoning sacrifice becomes ours, peace, sweet, satisfying, eternal peace, floods the soul. This is Christ's promise. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you."¹ The world's peace is the peace of compromise; Christ's is the peace of reconciliation. It is the peace of reconciliation that is musical. It is a song that can be sung only in sight of Calvary's blood-stained cross, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. Without an altar of atonement there can be no song of reconciliation.

The altar and the choir take us to a door draped in shadows, and reveal to the soul that has been reconciled to God the mystery of suffering and sainthood. The altar stands for suffering and the song stands for the sainthood found

¹ John xiv. 27.

through suffering. The altar is a place of pain. That ancient altar, dripping with the blood of its slain victims, was a gruesome sight. This modern altar, loaded with the groans and anguish and agony of human life, is a spectacle from which we would oft-times turn away. It is hard to suffer. It is hard to suffer pain. It is hard to suffer sickness. It is hard to suffer estrangement and adversity. It is hard to suffer the loss of home and loved ones. Suffering is a hard thing, but it is a holy thing. Suffering is the tragedy of the altar.

It is necessary. Somewhere in the temple court of a redeemed life this altar must stand. It is God's own altar. He stands beside it and administers the sacrifice. It pleased Him to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through suffering. In the same way, God perfects all His children. He calls us to suffer. If He calls us to suffer, suffering can never take us away from Him. It can never be a bar to fellowship with Him. Indeed, it is through suffering that He imparts Himself and His character to His people.

Hard by the altar of suffering rises the chant of sainthood. Suffering is the way to glory, the door to communion, the bond of fellowship. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." It is declared that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth." Suf-

fering is life in the shadows. The night seems to close down upon us, but we have "songs in the night." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Every soul that is to wear the crown of sainthood must somewhere along the journey wear the crown of thorns; but every thorn of that crown of suffering is barbed with the character of Him who wore it first, and as the thorns pierce, they impart Christ.

But even sainthood is not the end of salvation. Sometimes we think it is, and imagine that having entered into communion with God and acquired something of Christlikeness in character, we have attained the end of our salvation. Communion, however, anticipates conflict, and we soon find ourselves on a battle-field.

It is the story of struggle and achievement. The altar stands for struggle and the song for the achievement won by struggle.

The altar speaks of conflict and trial and temptation. It is not easy to be good and do right. One must contend earnestly. No victory was ever won without a battle. We are not to be dismayed when the war hymn begins and our marching orders send us straight into the thick of conflict, for struggle is still the story of the altar. We would like to win without struggle, but life does not come that way.

Life is ever the output of pain. Greatness is the product of discipline. "The trial of your faith is precious." Dickens, in one of his

novels, has an amusing character who was never so happy as when having a hard time. When things were easy and conditions comfortable, he grew despondent and was greatly depressed ; but when circumstances were desperate and difficulties piled up before him thick and apparently insurmountable, he became incarnate optimism and was as happy as an angel. The novelist has caricatured one of the profoundest truths of life. Difficulty is a real altar stair. The frosts of winter are necessary to spring. It is in the fire that metal gets its character.

It is better to battle than to dwindle. God wants us to be, rather than to have. He wants us to acquire fortitude and heroism and consecration and we do so through struggle. This is the song of battle. This was what Paul meant when he said : "I have fought a good fight." He was singing his battle hymn. Perhaps one may say : "He has little to show for it. Look at his poverty ; think of his treatment ; listen to that clanking chain of bondage." Yes, but look at him. Look at his faith, his courage, his sublime peace ! Look at the soul of him, and listen to him as he sings : "I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand." His face is shining with the light of heaven and his mighty soul is aflame with the glory of the world to come. He had his altar and he has his song.

There is one more chapter of life transfigured by the subject. It is the story of service and

reward. The altar stands for service and the song for the reward of service.

The altar life is the service life. It is the service of the life laid down. It is the service of the life that ministers and judges that because one died for all, then were all dead, and that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again. The altar speaks not of what we get, but of what we give; not of our gains, but our losses. The hero of the altar is one who made Himself of no reputation and became a servant.

This is the purpose of it all. All preparation faces the altar of service. Inasmuch as He laid down His life for us, "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." We are not to spare ourselves, we are to spend ourselves. We are here to be worn out, burned up, consumed. The lesson is hard to learn, but the teacher is divine. We would draw back from the fires of this altar. The heat scorches and the fierce flames terrify, but in their ashes is the only immortality that can satisfy the soul. It is he that loseth his life that shall find it. Like the swan, in the hour of death we find our song. In the life laid down we come upon our great reward. There is no reward sweeter than that which comes from unselfish service. It is not what we do for ourselves, but what we do for others that makes us happy.

It is just the old story of the way the birds

got their wings. At first God gave the birds their wings as burdens, and bade them carry the burdens. They obeyed, and laid their burdens on their shoulders and wrapped them about their hearts, when lo ! their burdens became their wings, and carried them. So it is with every life that in unselfish service takes up the tasks and duties God appoints. As we carry them on our shoulders and wrap them about our hearts, instead of weighing us down they carry us. Our burdens become our pinions, our duties become our privileges, our service our reward, our sacrifice our song. Glory is a flame lit in the altar fires of service. Heaven is the homeland of all who travel a thorn-path of duty to the cross-crowned hill where life is laid down for sake of others.

Thus life is ever just the story of the altar and the choir, of the sacrifice and song.

It is the story which Jesus, in far more beautiful fashion, has told in the Beatitudes. What is Christ doing there but surrounding sacrifice with song ; covering the slopes which rise, out of valleys of trial and sorrow and humiliation up to the sky-lined summits of the delectable mountains, with the invisible choir ? He takes the hard things of life and glorifies them. He hangs the horns of the altar with garlands of beautiful flowers. He makes the things which hurt us bless us, until in every throb of human pain we hear an angel singing.

“Blessed are they that mourn ; for they shall

be comforted." It is the old union of altar and choir. "Blessed are they that mourn"—that is the altar,—“for they shall be comforted”—that is the choir. "Blessed are the meek"—that is the sacrifice—"for they shall inherit the earth"—that is the song. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake"—that is the altar. "Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you"—that is the celestial choir.

The symbol of the Gospel is a cross; but not a cross by itself; not a lone, bare, gaunt, naked cross. The symbol of the Gospel is a crown; but not a crown by itself; not a proud, cold, despotic, selfish, pitiless crown. The symbol of the Gospel is a cross and a crown; a cross lying in a crown; a crown growing around a cross; a cross haloed by a crown; a crown won by a cross.

It is the old story of sacrifice soaking in an atmosphere of praise.

It is the ancient legend of the altar and the choir. The two must be left together in the temple of life, for we cannot have one without the other. We cannot have happiness without worship; nor peace without atonement; nor sainthood without suffering; nor achievement without struggle; nor reward without service. We cannot have the song without the sacrifice; the crown without the cross.

XVII

THE HEIGHTS OF LIFE

"So high as a tree aspires to grow, so high will it find an atmosphere suited to it,"—*Thoreau*.

"We do not count a man's years until he has nothing else to count,"—*Emerson*.

"As you grow ready for it, somewhere or other you will find what is needful for you, in a book, or a friend, or, best of all, in your own thoughts, the eternal thought speaking in your thought,"—*George Macdonald*.

"Great men seem to be a part of the infinite, brothers of the mountains and the seas,"—*Ingersoll*.

MAN is going somewhere. Whither? The ancient creeds recited as the goal a mechanical paradise or gehenna, according as man was good or bad; but these terminals hardly satisfy one who has an insight into the meaning of life.

Man is in a process of development. Where is this development to take him? He is becoming; what is he to become? He is ever struggling to translate his aspirations into attainments. When he has reached the summit of his attainments, where will he be?

Off there, somewhere on the sky-line lie the heights of life. How shall we name them and with what terms shall we describe their glories?

In a passage of unusual sublimity, the Apostle of the spiritual, the Evangelist whose symbol is

the soaring eagle, exclaims: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God. . . .

"Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is."¹

It is an inspired picture of the heights.

In the mail one day came a letter from my old home in Tennessee telling me of the adoption of a foundling baby by some young friends of mine. One morning a baby was found on a strange door-step, a little bundle of humanity repudiated by its own parents and thrown out on the cold charity of the world. The infant was taken to the Police Station and the morning papers told the story of the babe's desertion and discovery.

Two days before, a young husband and wife had stood beside a little grave in the cemetery on the hill and, with the anguish of their first great sorrow, had buried from their sight the dimpled face of their first babe; and then, broken-hearted, had gone back to an empty home shrouded in the shadow cast by a child's grave.

They were Christians. Their circumstances in life were all that could be desired, and they seemed well fitted in every way to be trusted with a child; but that strange Providence, which baffles while it smites, had taken from them

¹ 1 John iii. 1, 2.

their only child and left them desolate. When they read the story of the foundling babe they seemed to hear the voice of their own child crying from the little grave on the hillside and hastening to the station, they adopted the nameless waif and took the tiny stranger, forsaken of its natural protectors, to their hearts and home. It will grow up as their child, it will bear their name, and inherit whatever they may have to bestow.

They would seem to be running a great risk. They know nothing of the child's origin. They are in total ignorance of what it may inherit from parents who were either ashamed or unable to care for it. The child may grow up to be ungrateful. It may shame its benefactors, break their hearts with its waywardness and dishonour the name that has given it a home. But the love which adopted the child did not pause to consider all this. That young couple thought only of the homeless and unmothered babe, and with the vision of the angel face of their own precious baby before them, they opened their arms and said: "Let us have the child; we would adopt it, we will be good to it and treat it as if it were our own."

This is the picture John would paint on a heavenly canvas. This is the story he is trying to tell of the love of God. He is saying that God is adopting foundlings. He is taking the waifs of the world to his heart and home. He is not stopping to ask of the past. He is requiring

no guarantee as to the future. He opens his arms to receive them. He thinks of the thorn-crowned, death-marked face of His first begotten and best beloved Son and says: "Let Me have these orphaned and forsaken souls of the world, homeless and hopeless; I will be good to them, I will give them My name and treat them as My own." "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God!"

He then goes on to say what this love does for foundlings. He describes the career of those whom the love of God has rescued. We may call it "the story of the heights." They are the heights to which God lifts those whom He calls His children. There are three successive altitudes mentioned.

SONSHIP AND ADOPTION

We may call the first altitude "the heights of sonship and adoption." "Beloved, now are we the children of God."

God's love has just called us children; it now makes us children. It makes us what it calls us. This is the mystery of redemption. We are begotten as well as adopted. We are given the divine nature as well as the divine name, and experience what Christ meant when He said to Nicodemus: "Ye must be born again."

The young couple who adopted the foundling babe will learn to love it. They will not transfer the love they had for their own from the

child they have lost to the one they have adopted, but a new love will come; and the child will learn to love them, but it can never really be their child. Not a drop of their blood runs in its veins. Years hence, some one who knows the story of that fateful night may rudely break the dream, and the child discover that, after all, it has neither father nor mother, but is just a foundling nursed and cared for by human compassion.

Nothing like this can ever happen to God's child. Our divine Father adopts us, but that is not all. He first calls us His children, then He makes us what He calls us. He imparts to us His nature. His blood runs in our veins, His life throbs in our souls, until in the face of all the past and before all who would challenge our rights He permits us to exclaim: "Now are we the children of God."

If this were all, it would be enough to crown us with joy. It would suffice to ravish the soul with rapture. The gospel of sonship and adoption is a great gospel.

It comes to the waifs and wanderers of the earth, to the homeless and friendless and forsaken and says: "Let not your hearts be troubled. You are God's children. In your Father's house are many mansions and your Saviour has gone to prepare a place for you."

It comes to the poor of the world, to those whose homes are bare, where the children cry for bread, and want casts its awful terror, and

says: "Do not despair. You are God's children. Hope on. You are heirs to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

It comes to those who are smitten with sorrow, afflicted, tear-dimmed and desolate and says: "Be of good courage. God is your Father. He will not leave you comfortless. Let your Father wipe the tears from your eyes and tell you of a tearless, nightless land."

It comes to those who are weary in body and more weary in spirit, care-cursed and sore perplexed, and says: "Hope on. God is your Father. Listen! He is saying, 'Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.' Your heavenly Father will strengthen you with the right hand of His righteousness."

It is a great, a blessed thing just to be God's child. Let a man claim his birthright. Some time ago a woman died in an institution on Blackwell's Island, who was found, afterwards, to have been a descendant of an English earl. Her birthright entitled her to a high position, but she had led a dissipated life and died a pauper's death. With a name and a nature which unite us to God, shall we live like homeless waifs and die like paupers?

When low thoughts and base desires come, let me think of my Father and say: "No, I cannot do this, I am God's child."

When doubts and suspicions arise, let me stifle

them with the thought of my Father. I must not be disloyal to Him.

When temptations sneak in and Satan would drag me down, let me resist and say : "I am God's child, I cannot live a common life nor do a mean thing."

"Beloved, now are we the children of God." This is the song it sings. It is the song of sonship and adoption. Here am I in a world of struggle and conflict, of sorrow and disappointment, of want and woe and discouragement,—just a waif on a strange door-step in a winter world, but God has adopted me. He is my Father and I am His child.

DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

Sonship and adoption are only the first stage in the heights of life. The ascent continues. We may call the second "the heights of development and growth." "It doth not yet appear what we shall be."

I have stood on a projecting spur of a mountain range and looked backward on the road I have climbed and then far down into the valley below where I could see the farm-fields and the river. As I have rested there for a moment, I have felt something of the joy which comes with the heights; but as I have turned to continue the climb, I have found the way blocked with blinding mists and the higher ranges wrapped about with the dense folds of cloud and completely shut from view. I knew the heights were there

before me, but I could not see them. They did not appear. And so I had to plunge into the thickening mist and continue the ascent without scenery.

It is thus that John paints the second stage. The road winds through the mist. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," but the way is still upward and onward. We have not reached the summit, with adoption. Sonship is followed by development and growth. Here is the marvelous thing about the soul. It seems possessed of an infinite capacity. Man is ever becoming.

Where is the man who does not feel the struggle to become going on in his nature, the fearful conflict between the baser and the better self? He feels, within him, forces that would drag him down and he hears voices that would summon him to the heights. Like Paul, he sees the law in his members warring against the law in his mind, until, with Paul, sometimes the cry starts from his lips: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Where is the man who does not feel that there is more in him than he has expressed, more for him than he has ever claimed, a better message than he has ever uttered, powers of being and service whose leash he has not yet broken?

These unuttered longings, these unrealized ideals, these undeveloped capacities and unsatisfied ambitions and tethered powers are crying for a chance. They are the voice of the man's own soul clamouring for the heights.

All the discipline and struggle and suffering of Christian life reside in this second stretch of the road which we call development and growth. The way is often rough and steep, sometimes a thorn path, now a Gethsemane, somewhere a Calvary. There are hard passes and dizzy cliffs to scale. It is all for the sake of growth. It is to make us great, to enlarge our spiritual capacities.

This is the meaning of our unanswered prayers, our unsatisfied aspirations and unmet longings. We cry out for higher and better things and are crushed because they are denied us. We believe that somewhere up there above us are the realities which answer to our dreams, and we would that God would hand them down into our open, waiting, trembling hands. But He withholds that we may still ascend.

All this bewilders us. We cannot understand our sufferings and disappointments. We have no solution for the puzzle of existence. We are mystified. Of course we are. We are climbing in the clouds. We are in the zone of mist. We must walk by faith. We must push on without scenery. Sometimes we wonder if we have not lost the way. Again we are half tempted to give up and turn back. But as we listen, ever and again we can hear sounding through the mist the call of divine love, saying : "Press on ! It doth not yet appear what you shall be."

Some things have appeared. Sonship and

adoption have appeared. We have seen God redeem a prodigal. We have seen Him lift a wretched reprobate from the ditch and transform him into respectability. We have seen Him touch a criminal with the glory of redeeming love and make him honest. We have seen His winsome grace tame the savage brute and give new hope to the despairing. We have seen God save a poor lost sinner from his sins. Not once or twice, but repeatedly have we seen all this. It appears all around us and we are disposed to call it a miracle. So it is, but it is only the start. It is nothing to what God is doing yonder in the mist, where He is growing a soul into the greatness and glory and godlikeness that will fit it for heaven. But "the kingdom cometh not with observation."

We can trust ourselves with God in that zone of mist. He will not lose His child, nor suffer him to be hurt. He is working His own most gracious will in us through these experiences which we cannot understand. "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter."¹ When suffering smites us, and disappointment shrouds us and our feet slip and our souls falter, and we cry out with passionate longing for the unattainable, we must not give up. God is producing the stature of a soul. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." "For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly

¹ John xiii. 7.

an eternal weight of glory.”¹ Let us plod on,
singing ever under our breath :

“Then welcome each rebuff,
That turns earth’s smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go !”

REVELATION AND RESEMBLANCE

The third and last stage of the ascent we may call “the heights of revelation and resemblance.”

As I have stood on the spur of the mountain slope, with the open valley in sight below and the zone of mist rising above and concealing from sight the higher ranges, I have seen the summit of the cloud suddenly torn open by the wind, and the mountain peak emerge, bold and distinct, standing in a sea of mist and lifting its serene face against heaven’s sky of blue. This is the way John would paint the last stage in redemption’s heights. “We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” The top of the cloud has been blown off and we behold the serene summit peak of life standing out against the dome of heaven’s eternal blue.

We do not know all that is ahead of us here in the second stage of the journey, for God leaves the clouds on the lower heights. We do not know how much more of suffering and discipline, of hardship and struggle, of sorrow and unsatisfied longing are ahead. Well for us that we do not. We might falter and turn back. But we

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

do know what is at the top. He is there,—our glorious Redeemer. It is no empty dream, no wild vagary of fancy. He has shown Himself. Far down in the valley of life's sin and humiliation, before we had even started to climb redemption's heights, He came and showed Himself. His face was veiled in flesh to be sure, but the veil could not conceal Him. He said: "Look at Me and see what I would have you become. Behold what is waiting for you at the top. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the start and the summit."

He has appeared above all the blinding mist and mystery of life. He will appear and "we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is." What an hour that will be, when at last the mists have rolled away, and we lift our souls up out of the clouds of perplexity, and gaze towards heaven's unsullied blue; and there, serene and radiant, shining with the light of God, and haloed by the love which has guarded our way, we shall see the face, these long years we have loved and worshipped! Never sunrise so beautiful, never morning so ineffable and complete!

And that sight is for thee, soul of mine; for these dull eyes which have ached for the vision; for this troubled spirit, sick of the sights of sin and weary with hope long deferred. At last the King's face shines through the gloom, and I see Him and am satisfied.

Best of all I shall be like Him, for "we know

that when He shall appear we shall be like Him." This is the result of all that God has been doing for us and to us and with us and through us down there in the zone of mist. We were perplexed. We could not understand, but at last all is plain.

We shall be like Him in looks, in thought, in spirit, in character, in privilege, in power, in destiny. This will be heaven. Let us burn up our awkward programs of the heavenly life, and break our little slates and paint over our pictures. They are all inadequate. Here is what is coming. We shall be like Him, who is the chiefest among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely. We are to take on the features and lineaments supernal of the King of love ; and all this is for this poor, homely soul of mine !

The proof of it is that, "I shall see Him as He is." At last my soul shall get its sight, its eternal perceptions, its infinite capacity for seeing God. I shall see Him, not as they saw Him in Pilate's judgment-hall, spit upon and mocked by His enemies ; not as they saw Him staggering through the streets of Jerusalem under the burden of a cross with the coarse crowd shouting "Crucify Him" ; not as they saw Him hanging, broken and bleeding, on lonely Calvary ; not as they saw Him in the tomb with the awful pallor of death in His face ; but at last I shall see Him as He is, robed in glory, with all disguises torn off, with the mask thrown away, in all the splendour and majesty of godhood.

Such are the heights ; heights of sonship and adoption, heights of development and growth, heights of revelation and resemblance ! Is it any wonder that John adds : “ He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself ” ?

It is a great thing to be a Christian ; to have Jesus give a poor, lame, lost, orphaned soul a start ; to hear His call and to follow up the heights of sonship and adoption ; higher still through the blinding, baffling mists of development and growth ; at last to the everlasting summit peak of revelation and resemblance. The call is always like this. It is a summons to leave the swamps for the heights.

Yet I wonder if even this is all. When at last we stand on that loftiest peak of revelation and resemblance, where we shall see Him as He is and be like Him, I wonder if we shall not find heights towering higher still, and see, sweeping far out into eternity, loftier and even more majestic ranges of divine purpose to which God’s love would summon us, and towards which the life within would compel us.

“ I have climbed to the snows of Age, and I gaze on a field
in the past,

Where I sank with the body at times, in the sloughs of
a low desire ;

But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the man is quiet at
last

As he stands on the heights of his life, with a glimpse
of a height that is higher.” ¹

¹ Tennyson.

But the climb to the "height that is higher" on those far, dim slopes of the infinite, will be different, for the days of struggle and suffering and perplexity will all be over and the country will be home.

XVIII

THE CROWN OF LIFE ON THE BROW OF DEATH

“God’s finger touched him and he slept.”—*Tennyson*.

“*Ready to die*, this 5th June, 1568. Your Majesty’s very humble and loyal vassal and servant.”—*Lamoral d’Egmont*.

“O Emperor, they that are about to die, salute thee.”—*The Roman Gladiators in the arena*.

DEATH does not stop development. It does not even arrest it. Death is but an incident of life, a stage in the process of growth. It is as necessary as birth to the soul’s full attainment of its possibilities. Yet the fear of death is not a groundless fear. It is the verdict of the race that death may be a disaster, that it may bring condemnation.

If death is to be itself a climb higher along the altar stairs which “slope through darkness up to God” it must come as a normal experience in the life-program of one who has tried to be faithful to each duty at its time and to each privilege as it offered.

To seek death as an escape from duty, as an avoidance of trouble ; to shun it in order to keep out of battle, is to find death worse than a fear.

Let a man live his life honestly, bear his load patiently, face his foes courageously, take his

losses without grudging, endure his sorrows without bitterness; and when at last he nears the portal of death, he shall find it a gateway flooded with light, the entrance to a realm where hope has its fruitions and all good dreams come true.

The heroic figure in life's great play is he who is faithful.

It fell to my lot one fall to spend two days in Mercersburg, Pa. I had gone there to preach to the four or five hundred young men in the Mercersburg Academy. At the invitation of the headmaster, Dr. Irvine, I arrived Saturday morning in time to witness the Field Day exercises of a school whose exploits in athletics had made it famous all over the country. I was well repaid. The thing which provoked my profoundest admiration was an incident in the two-mile race. The track is a quarter of a mile around, so that the runners had to cover it eight times to make the two miles. Some twenty young fellows entered the contest, and the race was run in good form; but the lad who got my heartiest applause was not the one who won the prize. Indeed, he was the one who came out last. When the winner scored the goal, this lad of whom I speak was some three-eighths of a mile behind. As he came around the seventh time, the trainer insisted that he come off, but he declined. With no chance to win, he persisted in running the race to the end. He had entered for two miles and he was determined to run two miles. As he started on the last lap, the bleachers broke into

applause. I thought of the line from the Apocalypse which says : "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life;"¹ and I said to myself : "The lad has lost the prize, but he has won the race. If he will put that spirit into life, nothing can keep him down. If in the great race of life he will stick to duty and drive on with the same unswerving fidelity, to the last lap of the road and to the final tick of the clock, the great Judge of awards will give him the crown."

Paint this schoolboy incident on the larger canvas of life and you have the real hero of the world.

A man has run the long race. He has lagged behind his fellows, but he has done his best and kept on. He has persisted through countless difficulties. The road has been rough and the race hard ; sometimes up dizzy steeps and again through weary bogs and over hot, blistering sands and sharp rocks ; but he has kept on, a stride at a time, with his face towards the goal.

He has little applause, for he is a mere plodder. Few cheers lift at his tired feet and no crowds shout his name with wild huzzas. He is running a tame race, and again and again some fleeter-footed runner leaves him behind, but he plods on, his breath coming faster and harder as he nears the end.

At last he staggers across the goal line. He has put himself into the race such as it was. He

¹ Rev. ii. 10.

has been faithful unto death, and, gasping in the throes of dissolution, he turns his face towards the Judge. Then a strange thing happens, for as he dies he lives, as he fails he succeeds, as he falls he finds the Rock of Ages beneath his feet ; and out of the infinite, a hand is stretched forth to garland his dying brow with victory. Death has not defeated him, it has merely given the signal for his coronation.

God places the crown of life on the brow of death ; and He does it, not because He pities death, though He does ; and not because He has power to bestow life, though He has ; but because the death is the death of one who was faithful unto death and who can therefore be trusted with a crown in the realm of life.

The divine command is : “ Be thou faithful unto death.”

This sums up in a word what God requires. He does not ask us to be energetic beyond our strength, or generous beyond our means, or wise beyond the brains with which this poor head is furnished ; but, whatever our strength or means or brains, He does ask us to be faithful. He does not ask me to be another, but just my own plain, humdrum, homely, uninteresting, unimportant, unattractive self, but myself faithful. I may have seen some one I should love to be like, some one more clever than I, serener, more happily circumstanced in life. Oh, to change places, incomes, friends, duties ! It is not required. It is not permitted. Let me run my

race and run it to the end. Then there will be¹ but one question—Have I been faithful?

When at last the Master announces the winner in the race of life, it will be found that not many wise, not many noble, not many mighty have been called, but the Judge will say: "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."¹ "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."² Heaven's welcome plaudit is: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

What is it to be faithful?

It is to be full of faith. The man who has no faith is not faith full but faith empty. He is faithless. It is trusting God down to the end of the journey, through storm and sunshine, through adversity and prosperity, through good report and evil report, saying, even with the last breath, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

It is fidelity. It is being trustworthy as well as trustful. It is trusting God until men can trust me. It is being so loyal to duty, so devoted to truth, so steadfast to principle, that no lure of quick success can tempt me to be faithless. It means that I should rather be defeated than lie, that I should rather fail in business than succeed through dishonesty, that I should rather be broken in fortune and ruined in reputation than compromise my honour.

And it is all this, not for a day or a year, or a

¹ Matt. xxv. 34.

² Matt. xxv. 21.

decade, but for life, not merely when it pays but when it costs, not only when it is applauded but when it is hissed; it is "unto death." The trouble with so many is that we are spasmodically faithful. "Ye did run well; who did hinder you?" We are good for the first lap but we soon fall out of the race. We lack constancy, longevity, persistency. We have periodic sprees of fidelity. There is none so bad, but he has occasional intervals of revival, when his soul is stirred with the desire to do better. Under the influence of some rousing appeal or sublime occasion he becomes warmed and diligent for a season, but he soon grows cold and stiff again.

It is so easy to compound with infidelity for the moment, cherishing, meanwhile, the determination to return to the paths of virtue once infidelity has declared a dividend. It is such an easy thing to let down the bars into forbidden territory this once. A crisis is impending. Success is almost within our grasp. One false word will win, one brief resort to deception, one betrayal of a friend. Why not? After we have won we can repent and be good again. But that one act of infidelity is fatal. A railroad train does not need to jump the rails a mile to be wrecked; a single hair's breadth will do the business. A man does not need to be guilty of a whole dictionary of blasphemy in order to take God's name in vain; one profane oath suffices. One does not need to become a notorious libertine to violate the sanctity of the marriage vow;

one act of impurity is enough to desecrate that holy of holies.

Faithfulness unto death is God's standard for human life. On this He bases His judgments. As we apply this standard, our views on many things undergo a radical change. We come to see that the thing of value is not speed but endurance. The real hero is not he who makes the fastest schedule but he who lasts the longest. There are those who go up like a rocket and come down like a stick. It is the power to hold on that wins. Great Britain's most famous general once said that the difference between the soldiers of his country and those of another was not that the English soldier was braver than other soldiers, but that he was brave five minutes longer. It is endurance that wins the crown.

The thing of value is not achievement but fidelity. It is not what we accomplish but the way we accomplish it. It is our ideals, our principles.

It is not success that God looks at, but the struggle. Success is a cheap thing, it is merely relative, an affair of the calendar and census; but struggle is an affair of eternity, it is a spiritual asset. It is not appearance but character. God does not judge by the uniform, the clothes, the station, the accidentals of life, by what a man has, by his baggage; but by his character, by what he is.

The decisive element is not the present but the future. God has not finished at sundown. We

cannot pass a sane judgment without sufficient perspective. John Milton was the man who gave to the English language its one great epic and to the literature of the world one of its chief treasures. While John Milton lived, he was poor, and unsung. We must take all the ages into our calculation to get the right answer. The trouble is we are short-sighted. We must be patient.

The divine promise is: "I will give thee the crown of life." It is what eternity offers the faithful—a crown of life! It is a reward that appeals to the highest and best in our natures. It is not a cheap prize. God does not come with a toy, and try to bribe us with an appeal to the appetites. He does not say: "Be faithful and I will give you a crown of ease or a crown of prosperity or a crown of distinction or a crown of power or a crown of exemption, but I will give you the crown of life!"

What is the promise worth? What does it mean to be crowned with life by the hand of God yonder in the vast realm of the infinite?

It is a big world that we dwell in and we are all but smothered by a sense of our insignificance. The mighty stretches of even the natural world appall us. Some one has illustrated the distances of this vast natural world which lies about us in this way. He says: "Let us suppose a mustard seed lying on the ground, and, at the distance of forty yards, an apple. The two objects represent the relative sizes of the earth and the sun. But suppose this little solar sys-

tem of the apple and the revolving seeds to lie on the field in an English county, the nearest fixed star, calculated on the same scale, would be another apple lying in the centre of Pennsylvania." It takes three and a half years for the light from Alpha Centauri to reach our planet. Through holes in the Milky Way the telescope looks out into limitless stretches of darkness where no doubt there are solar systems so far removed that their light, travelling for countless centuries, has not yet reached us. In the midst of all this bewildering vastness, we are overcome with the sense of our littleness and feel like crying out to God: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?"

But, if it be possible, the spiritual world is vaster, and its mazes more bewildering. How are our tiny souls to adventure eternity? How shall we ever be able to find our way through the endless stretches and the rush of worlds?

God says: "I will crown you with life." You shall not wander the infinite orphaned, deserted, forsaken, frightened, bewildered, homesick; but crowned by the King of kings and wearing the diadem of life.

Life is the one sufficient equipment for all worlds. If there be life, it will make a way for itself. Christ had life and even the Cross and the Tomb could not block His way. Life will make a way for itself through the mazes of eternity.

The faithful will enter the infinite wearing the

crown of life; not hunted, defeated, driven of circumstance, badgered by want; but crowned and kingly, clothed with authority and wielding dominion.

This crown is the sign of the soul's kinship with the royalty of heaven. It is God's way of saying to the faithful: "I am your Father;" and to all the inhabitants of eternity: "This is My son."

And it is on all this yon plain toiler, plodding at his humble task, emerges, when at last the curtain falls upon his lowly part in life's drama. He has been faithful—that is all—faithful unto death, and now God places on his brow the crown of life.

Why should he fear death? It is his hour of coronation. Why should he draw back at the grave? Just beyond its shadow a throne seat is waiting for him, and across its mystic portal the real rulers of the world are about to acclaim him a comrade.

This transfigures the drudgery of life and makes each step in the long, hard race a stride towards a throne. We need not worry over results. Our one concern is to be faithful to the duty in hand. As we are, the path of duty is illuminated, the goal emerges out of uncertainty, and our future becomes "a city which hath foundations."

With the promise of a crown of life, one can afford to be reckless in the discharge of duty. What if his duty cost him his life? It is only

he who loses his life that finds it. As he steps into the shadow, death changes into life. It was this promise which carried Christ to Calvary and His Apostles to martyrdom and countless heroes, through all ages, to the block and stake.

Yonder, where the shutters are drawn and the people talk in whispers and walk softly, an immortal soul is passing out of time into eternity. His has been a commonplace life, but he has been faithful and now he has reached the end of the journey. The sunset has come and the shadows of evening are thickening. Between two worlds hangs the veil which separates time and eternity. On this side the veil, it is a house of sorrow. Loved ones are in tears and speak to each other in broken sobs and cry out to God for comfort.

But on the other side of that thin veil, the scene is far different. It is the hour of a great soul's coronation. There are no tears, no sobbing grief and heart-broken prayers, but the chant of victory, for a faithful soul is coming to its own. All the pomp and circumstance of heaven centre there. The face of the pilgrim has lost its death pallor and the eyes shine with the light of expectant immortality. God is once more placing the crown of life on the brow of death, and all heaven resounds with cheers for a real hero.

XIX

DESTINATION AND DEPARTURE

“Into the Silent Land !
Ah ! who shall lead us thither ?
Clouds in the evening sky more darkly gather,
And shattered wrecks lie thickly on the strand.
Who leads us with a gentle hand
Thither, oh, thither,
Into the Silent Land ?”

—*Johann G. von Salis.*

HEAVEN is the name the Bible gives to the destination of a human being who has become a partaker of the divine nature.

To such a being death is but the swinging open of the gate to heaven.

While the Bible speaks of heaven, it speaks of it by way of suggestion rather than description, in a way to capture the imagination rather than to satisfy the reason.

In one of the most confidential moods of His ministry, Jesus said to His friends: “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also.”¹

He was speaking of heaven. He was looking through the open door of death and speaking of

¹ John xiv. 2, 3.

heaven. Standing in the shadow of that presence which, despite our faith, still makes us fear, Christ dropped these blessed words of comfort into the troubled hearts of His disciples from whom death was soon to divide Him.

Standing on the threshold of death He proclaimed and promised heaven.

It is going out of fashion to make much of heaven. People do not think of it as they once did. They do not believe about it as they used to. It is a common thing to make light of it. It is too dreamy and far away, too misty and mythical and mystical to be much of an asset in real life. The hymns of heaven are retired, and the religion of heaven is discredited. Our age is too practical and our creeds too scientific and exact. In so far as heaven finds a place in our vocabulary, we are disposed to make it a present-day condition. We locate it on this side the grave. Instead of our going to heaven, it must come to us. It must get into present conditions and habits. It is regarded as a social millennium. It is repairing the damage done by sin on earth. It is bringing about ideal relations in real life. It is getting the New Jerusalem located on this planet.

All this is eminently Christian. Religion is a sham, unless it affect present-day and present-world conditions. It is very well to sing of "the sweet by and by," but faith in a heaven to come is a lie, unless it lead one to strive for heavenly foretastes and foretokens here. If the hope

of heaven affect nothing but hymnology and prayer, if it lead us to do nothing but "sit and sing ourselves away to everlasting bliss," if it fail to stir us to help the weak and nurse the sick and champion the cause of the oppressed, heaven is a pious fraud. If it be genuine, it must get down to earth. And yet we make a worse blunder if we conclude that heaven is nothing but a foretaste; and that this holy city, which comes down from God out of heaven, leaves no eternal triumphant city of God in heaven.

Man cannot give up his faith in the heaven Christ talked about as He looked through the open door of death. He cannot surrender his hope of the homeland. His heart pines for it and the thought of it makes every step in the long journey easier.

When we grow weary of our work, and worn out by conflict, and discouraged by failures, it is the thought of heaven that makes us live again. If we had to cancel from our creed the glorious hope of "the rest that remaineth for the people of God," the load would crush us.

When we stand at the bedside of the dying and watch the strange pallor as it spreads over the face we love, and feel the final pulse as it goes to sleep in the tired arteries, that which comforts us is the feeling that good-bye is but for a little while. We shall meet beyond the river. Heaven is just across on the other side of the silent ford. The parting will not be long.

When our departure draws near, and but a filmy shadow seems to intervene between time and eternity, the thing which slays the fear in our hearts and gives us perfect peace is the faith that we are going home; we are nearing our Father's house.

It may be old-fashioned to think this way about heaven, but living is an old-fashioned business, and the Bible is an old-fashioned book, and Christianity is an old-fashioned religion, and the heart has old-fashioned needs, and heaven is an old-fashioned place, and the sob of the stricken soul is still what it was when Christ hushed human sorrow with the hope of heaven.

The land of immortality comes down to greet us and across the dim border which separates two worlds, we catch glimpses of our destination.

Heaven is a place. It is somewhere. It is as much a real world as earth. It is along some line of latitude and longitude. It has a tangible and definite existence. It is a place. It is not a vapour, a dim idea, a holy dream, a pious aspiration, a devout fancy. It is not merely a state of mind, a condition of character, an attitude of conduct. Heaven is a place. We may not be able to define it, but what of that? There is much we cannot define. If our world were reduced to the geographical boundaries of what we are able accurately to define, we should be cramped for standing room. We may not be able to understand heaven, but what of that?

What do we understand? We do not understand ourselves. But while we may not be able either to define or understand it, this we can do; we can hope it. We can believe in heaven, and trust the statement of Christ, who rose from the dead.

Christ is somewhere. In His spirit, He is everywhere; but in His person He is somewhere. The Bible says He is at the right hand of God. Wherever Christ is, there is heaven. The angels are somewhere. They are not ubiquitous. They cannot be in two places at one and the same time. The home of the angels is the heavenly country. The redeemed of the Lord are somewhere. They are not wandering like lost spirits through the void. They are with Christ, and there is heaven.

Christ's resurrection proves the reality of heaven. It settles all that is unsettled about it. If it be true that Christ said what He is reported to have said, if it be true that He died, and if it be true that He arose from the dead as the Scriptures say, there can be no doubt of the reality of heaven.

If Mary saw Him after He arose from the dead, if the two women saw Him, if the two disciples saw Him at Emmaus, if any of the eleven saw Him at either of His appearances in the upper room, if Thomas saw the print of the nails in His hands and the spear-wound in His blessed side, if Peter and the other disciples saw Him in the early morning by the seaside, if the eleven

saw Him on the mountain top, if the five hundred saw Him at one time, if Paul saw Him and heard His voice that fateful day on the way to Damascus, if all of these or any one of these at any single time saw Jesus after He rose from the dead, if Jesus is alive to-day in any of His disciples, in this or any other world; then Jesus lives, His word is true, and heaven is not a fiction. It is not a dreamland, but as real a country as America or England. Heaven exists somewhere.

This little planet is not all. This dim twilight is not all. Some day the twilight will fade before the fadeless glory of eternity, and this narrow planet shall be exchanged for the place Christ is preparing. There is a land which satisfies our longings, where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest," where all our hopes are realized and all we seek is found.

Heaven is a place prepared by Christ. It is something beyond our own creation. We have a way of saying that every man makes his own heaven. This is true in part, but it is a very small part. If the part man makes is all, heaven is not much. If my heaven is to be nothing but the happiness I construct, the reward I earn, the peace I achieve, I shall be a pauper forever. We are not great at heaven building. We have made slow progress at it here in time. For some thousands of years we have been trying to bring some of our heavenly dreams to pass in human

society, but how slow our progress! We are poor architects of happiness. Only Christ can build the place we call heaven. He has promised to do it. He says, "I go to do it." It was what He said as He looked at the cross and peered into the shadows of the tomb and stepped down into the valley of the shadow of death. It was just Christ's way of saying "I go to prepare a place for you." It was what He meant as He snapped the bands of death asunder and rolled the stone away and came forth in the radiant beauty and glory of His resurrection. It was still Christ saying with the voice of a conqueror: "I go to prepare a place for you." It was what He meant as He rose from the slopes of Olivet on clouds of light to the right hand of the Most High. It was the ascending Saviour saying in notes of victory to His waiting, wondering disciples: "I go to prepare a place for you."

He has gone up, leading "captivity captive," with a full knowledge of our nature and needs and of all that is necessary to make us happy, to build there on the eternal firmament a place of habitation for His people.

Christ is preparing. He is getting things ready. When all is ready, He will take us home. What a home-coming it will be! Sometimes a man dies in his prime and we wonder at the strange Providence which cuts off a splendid career in the midst of usefulness. Perhaps if we could see the other side, a part of the mystery might clear in a vision of the place that was

ready for the home-coming of the King's son. Sometimes a little child is taken all too soon from the arms of parental love, and we are mystified by a plan which plucks the bud before the flower is blown ; but we may rest assured the place Christ prepares for His own is ready. No one arrives in heaven to find there is no room.

Heaven will not be a disappointment. It will satisfy. Christ knows best just what we need, and we can safely leave all the plans and furnishings of our eternal home to Him, assured that the heaven He builds will fill every measure of desire. It will be complete.

Of one thing we may be certain. Heaven will not be a purgatory. It will not be a place where people are to be disciplined by further suffering, in order that they may be purged of remaining dross and made fit to enter God's presence. Christ says nothing about a purgatory. The comfort He gives to a dying pillow is not the prospect of purgatorial torment. It is heaven. "That where I am ye may be also," is His word. Christ is not in purgatory. Having offered a perfect sacrifice for sin, He has entered into the holy of holies. The Christian when he dies goes where Christ is. Absent from the body is present with the Lord.

The Bible gives some glimpses of heaven. There will be no sin there. Sins are catalogued, but they are all kept outside the gates of the White City. Nothing that defileth or maketh a lie is allowed to enter. A man gets rid of his

chain, of his infirmity, of the sin which doth so easily beset him, of the body of death to which he has been bound, and which has been making existence a hell on earth. He stands up free and emancipated beyond the reach of temptation, and out of the peril of fall forever. That will be heaven.

There will be no night there, no more darkness, no blinding mystery, no baffling obscurity, no weary anxiety and perplexity. "Heaven will be the sweet surprise of a perfect explanation." All will be made plain. Now we know in part, but then we shall know as we are known. There will be no more sea, no more exile, no more loneliness, no more enforced idleness, no more limitations, no more separations and hardships and penalty. There will be no more sorrow, no more hurts, no more bereavements, no more disappointments. God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. Sorrow and suffering will so dog our steps to the very gates of glory that we shall enter heaven with the traces of grief upon our faces, but God will stretch forth His hand and wipe away our tears; and there will be no more tears forever.

We shall be with Christ, and if with Christ, with all who love Him, with the loved ones who have reached Him before us. My little seven-year-old boy was talking to me one day about heaven, and said: "But, father, you will be able to think about your family there, won't you?" Already in the child's heart that ques-

tion was asking itself which is ever on our lips when we think of the country beyond death.

“ When for me the silent oar
Parts the silent river
And I stand upon the shore
Of the vast forever,
Shall I miss the loved and known?
Shall I vainly seek mine own? ”

Blessed be God, the reply is an answer to the heart's prayer. The face of the risen Christ is our assurance that death can never so disfigure the face we love as to make us strangers. The flowers of this spring time lift up the same fair faces we knew in the spring days that are gone.

“ So after the death winter it will be,
God will not put strange sights in heavenly places.
The old love will look out of the old faces.”¹

Heaven is the place to which Christ will conduct us. He does not leave us to make the journey through the valley of the shadow alone. He comes for us. He is our holy escort. There is no danger of our losing the way. The perils which lurk in the shadows cannot frighten us. Christ has made the vale of death safe for all who enter it, trusting in Him. He walks beside us. “ I come again and will receive you.” It is the

¹ Chadwick.

beautiful way Christ has of transforming the dark hour. He has described how He comes. It is on the clouds of glory, and the holy angels are with Him. What a celestial procession! That is what takes place at death. We see only the dark side of the cloud; we are beneath it. But on the other, the heaven side, all is light and glory. Christ and the holy angels have come to conduct a soul to the place Christ has prepared. Death is transfigured.

He will receive us unto Himself. Sometimes we think of what a blessed thing it would be to have been with Jesus when He was upon earth; to have gone with Him from village to village, along the dusty roads, through the crowded city streets; to have spent the mornings and evenings in Christ's company as did His disciples. True those were the days of His humiliation. He was despised and persecuted, and had not where to lay His head; but to have been allowed to share even that with Christ would be a blessed privilege. Something far better awaits us. We shall be with Him in glory. Tired soul, this is what He says: "That where I am, there ye may be also;" on the clouds of glory, in the streets of gold, on the jasper throne. Sometimes we think what a boon it would be if Christ would do for us what He did for some of the people when He was on earth; if He would heal our sick, if He would fight off death when our beloved seem about to cross the river, if He would let us keep the child death so cruelly takes

away ; if He would lengthen out the years of our earthly companionship. We beg for that, but He has something far better to give us. He has the homeland, not for a few years of loving association but forever.

In 1865 Lord Francis Douglas, while climbing Mont Blanc slipped and fell to his death. His body could not be found, and it was supposed that it had fallen into the bed of the glacier. According to computations based on careful estimates from experience, the glacier should have discharged the body at the foot of the mountain in the summer of 1905. All that summer, the aged mother of Lord Francis was there watching and waiting for the body of her boy, but the body, to her bitter disappointment, did not appear. Broken-hearted, she had been waiting for years just to get a glimpse of the scarred face and mangled body she loved, and lay its dust to rest. She would have been comforted, if only that had been allowed her. But there is an infinitely better thing Christ has prepared ; not the dull dust and broken body released from the icy embrace of the cruel glacier, but the living, glorified personality in the bosom of the Father's love ; not for one hurried, agonizing glimpse as the heart sobs over the memory of what it has lost ; but forever and ever in the fellowship of heaven.

There is a legend of a lad whose little sister was desperately ill and who was told that if he could get one leaf from the tree of life in the garden of God, it would heal her. He travelled

far in search of the garden, and when at last he had found it, he told the angel at the gate his story and begged for one leaf from the tree of life. The angel said: "If your sister is healed, can you promise me that she will never be sick again, never again hungry or tired, that people will never again ill-treat her?" The lad said: "No, I cannot promise." "Then," said the angel, "I will open the gate a little and let you look in. If after you have seen, you still want the leaf, I will go myself to the God of the garden and beg it." The lad looked in and caught a glimpse of the glory of heaven. He saw the beauty and blessedness of the place, and as he turned away, he said softly to the angel: "I will not ask for the leaf now. There is no country so beautiful and happy as this. There is no one so kind as the angel of death. I wish he would take me too."

This is the Christian's hope. Amid the fragrance of Easter lilies and the music of resurrection hymns, the message slips in like sunshine through an open window; and to those whose forms are scarred with the wounds of battle, who have travelled far and are weary, whose spirits sigh for rest and whose hearts cry for home, it says: "This is your destination, the spot on which all the stars shine, the hour when every longing breaks into song." And yet we wonder if even heaven is a finished country.

Are there no vistas there? If life is tendency, heaven will not make its pulses dumb, nor lay its

glorious tides. We shall find that destination is but a new point of departure and that even in the full blaze of what we now call heaven, the soul will still "a far-off glory see, strange music hear."

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