COURAGE

by

Charles Wagner

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CHARLES WAGNER

AUTHOR OF "YOUTH"

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FOREWORD.

AFTER having read my book called "Youth," some of my friends, chiefly young persons, requested me to write a shorter work on the same subject; one which could easily be carried about and read, and which, above all, should contain a few necessary suggestions for a working ideal.

In the face of such a demand it was not possible for me to offer as an excuse the trouble it would give me. While trying to do what was asked of me, however, I have endeavoured to repeat myself as little as possible. The present volume is not, therefore, a summary of "Youth." It is a new work, which has its individual character and aim. I trust it may receive as warm a welcome as its predecessor.

C. W.

TO MY YOUNG READERS.

I KNOW you as if I were yourself. I have only to close my eyes to see myself at your age, living, hoping, seeking, loving, erring. Think, then, when you open this book, that you are meeting a friend a few years older than yourself. He is like you, only somewhat more mature and with a wider horizon. He is so interested in you that he would gladly become, at intervals, the table at which you write, the anvil on which you strike, the tree beneath which you rest to think or weep, in order to penetrate more profoundly into your mind.

These lines are not written for any particular class of young people. I have sought to speak of those things which are

common to all, being day by day more convinced that the nature of man is everywhere identical. However, I have not been able to avoid thinking rather more especially of those whose morning was gloomy and whose youth was hard.

Goethe declares in his idealised history of his life that "what we desire in our youth we possess abundantly in our old age." An astonishing saying, and one which seems inconsistent with truth; but if we look at it more closely, such is not the case. Man, indeed, applies himself with ardour to the pursuit of that which he desires; and, whether his ambition be noble or the reverse, it is seldom that he does not end by fulfilling it, in part at least.

Our life is eventually stamped by our ideal. No one, therefore, can watch the tendency of his desires too carefully. What we most often lack in youth is the knowledge of what it is wisest to desire. To wish for vain things is to take a will-

o'-the-wisp for our guide along the road. How many of us have wandered in this way after these uncertain lanthorns, which promised happiness and but led us into the swamps!

I should like to make you desire the things that are real, that are worth being loved and acquired by stress and toil; and among all these things there is nothing to be compared with force. Force is itself a virtue; and by virtue I understand every power that excites in us intenser life, and joy, and hope.

The history of ancient Greece tells us of a young man brought up among women, dressed in the garments of women, from whom, by reason of their timorous solicitude, they sought to hide the fact that he was a man. But one day the trumpet call to war was sounded in his presence. At once all the artificial trappings of his effeminate education fell, and his true soul stood revealed. Our every-day existence often has the effect of making us forget

who we are. It smothers us, according to our lot, beneath sparkling gewgaws or sordid rags, either of which are unworthy of us. But there are calls which awake the soul; may this book accomplish this purpose for you!

I should like to sound in your ears a clarion call that would fire your heart. I should like to reveal to you a vision of force, of benevolence, of consecrated manliness, after which it would be impossible for you to be satisfied with enervating pleasure, or to give yourself up to barren discouragement. Let us hope that my wish may be fulfilled, both for your own sake and for the sake of those who love you! And now I pray for inspiration and power from on high, that I may be granted the power to speak to you the word of life.

C. WAGNER.

ALL-SAINTS DAY, 1893.

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Some holy task or some great love to serve.

VICTOR HUGO.

COURAGE.

CHAPTER I.

HOW TO ACQUIRE FORCE.

THE chief concern of every living creature is to live. To live as well, as fully as possible, is our primordial instinct, — the eternal spring which is hidden beneath all our fleeting aspirations. It is the motive power which drives the world. Everything obeys it: the blade of wheat piercing through the earth, and greeting the sun for the first time; the little chicken just freed from the shell; the child opening its young soul to the influences of life on every side. It is true that man sometimes says that life is an evil, and that it would be better if it were not. This does not hinder the continuance of life; this does not stop the great invisible impulse which makes for existence; this does not destroy the

germs of the earth, nor the prodigious fecundity of the ocean. Life is: this is the chief fact of the universe; and the vast majority of beings not only accept it, but cling to it with transport or despair.

It is not enough, however, to live. From one point of view it is even a matter of indifference: the important thing is to live well. The question of living well or badly does not exist for those creatures who are guided by vague instincts, and who could not do otherwise than they do. On the other hand, this question is of paramount importance to man. An ant is an ant because it was born so; it fulfils its function, does its work, and occupies its place. It requires something more than to be born to become a man. For the man, his birth is but the beginning of a long and laborious development; and the development depends in part on himself, on the end which he has in view, on the enterprises which he undertakes. In consequence, there comes a time for each of us when it is well for us to consider what ends we should pursue, and how we should make use of the life we have received. Otherwise we run

the risk of losing it, or of dissipating it at random; and this cannot be a matter of indifference to any one. In reality, each man gives his life and expends his vitality for the thing that seems to him worth the while. He should be disposed, therefore, to enlighten himself on a point so important to him as this: "What is the thing which is of greatest value to man?" In order to live well, what must one possess before everything else? As for me I do not hesitate to reply that the most important thing to acquire is force; and that a man needs power above all things in order to live.

One may have bread to eat, amusements, joy, — one may possess every advantage of fortune and of person: without force one becomes the plaything of circumstances, the slave of the bread one eats, of the woman one loves, of the wealth that one possesses.

One may have intelligence and penetration, profound knowledge of men and things: without force his learning remains unprofitable, and his best idea but an unproductive seed.

One may have a conscience to distinguish subtly between good and evil: without force we

leave the world to the wicked, government to the unjust, and all our conscience only serves to make us sigh over the evils we are powerless to attack and to overcome.

On the other hand, you may be poor, deprived of amusement, disinherited by nature and fortune: with force you will transform these evils into good, these hardships into advantages, these enemies into allies. You may have but a limited education and small acquaintance with men and things: with force you will know how to make use of this rudimentary knowledge, and you will put into practice what little you know; you will apply the whole of your earnest life to the realisation of a few ideas which the curious and subtle would have pondered for a morning, and then abandoned only to dally with others. And, thanks to these few principles followed with perseverance, you will make your impression like the Macedonian phalanx, which, though small in number and simple in equipment, conquered the immense army of the Persians, who were gorgeous but pusillanimous.

If you have a conscience which is dull, but on the whole upright, unpractised in subtle analysis and showing you every shade of good and every refined distortion of evil, but a living, unflinching conscience, — if, in a word, you have force and the indomitable persistence of those who desire that good should prevail and evil disappear, you will become a stronghold of justice, and a battering-ram for the fortresses of evil. You will become a steady and redoubtable power, which will fly towards its goal like a bullet without stopping for anything on its way.

How will it be if you combine intelligence and learning, conscience and material resources, and place all these at the service of your energy? Energy is the queen of the world. Even benevolence, love, grace, everything that is charming or admirable, is of less value than energy. What is languid grace, love without courage, a feeble benevolence? Brilliant vices; nothing more.

Energy is the power of powers. When I compare it to that which is by the consent of many called Force, and which they claim to be

a superior principle, I am struck by the absolute pre-eminence of energy.[1]

What can force alone do? Can the horns of a bull check intelligence? Can the tooth of a lion rend the truth? Can prisons fetter liberty? Does the mouth of a cannon thunder louder than public opinion and the voice of justice? No; and just so brute force is of no avail against moral force. Where the latter begins the other ends. There is only one impregnable fortress, and that is a courageous heart. We can never fully describe all the radiance that shines forth from one solitary act of spiritual freedom. Every one who is a man trembles at the sight, for he feels that he has come in contact with the invisible world.

The night is black on the ocean; there are no stars, and the compass is wandering from the pole. The storm rages, and the sea runs high. There seems but chaos and a mighty

[1] M. Comte says, "La Force, proprement dite, c'est ce qui régit les actes, sans régler les volontés." If this definition be adopted, it would make a distinction between "force" and "power." Power extends to volitions as well as to operations, to mind as well as matter; but in English we also speak of Force as physical, vital, and mental.

conflict of the elements. Now and then a flash of lightning reveals for a moment all this wild grandeur. What can be greater?

What can be greater?

I will tell you: in the midst of this darkness, suspended over these black abysses, an intrepid pilot holds the helm. This man is greater than the ocean and the tempest.

Here is a poor old woman, almost infirm. Her youth was passed in the midst of ease, even of honour. She was surrounded and guarded; she was happy in her family life, and had known the happiness of being loved. Life smiled at her; but the Fates passed by her and stripped her of all. Not only is she poor to-day but solitary; more than that, she has been deserted, — but she is by no means embittered. She rarely speaks of herself. When you ask her to confide to you her griefs, she turns the conversation to inquire after the fate of others. In her eyes, dimmed with age, on her wrinkled brow, in the clasp of her little thin hand, there is such an expression of benevolence that even the most unhappy derives some salutary comfort. I do not know exactly what I experience,

or why, neither do I know the source from which this life draws its strength; but I feel certain that in this weakened body, within these four bare walls, there dwells a power before which all that is usually called great and strong in this world fades into insignificance. In this instance the courage seems more exalted than in the sailor of a moment ago, for the very reason that, looked at externally, the man was stronger than the woman. There is a moral courage which shines forth from the very absence of all resources of a material nature; but no matter what the degree or conditions, an exhibition of moral force brings us into the presence of a power which is not to be compared to any other.

Thank God, the sense of moral grandeur is not dead among us! Among so many fallen sovereignties this one at least has remained standing in universal esteem. Alas! Why should our admiration for it be mingled with bitter regrets? We yearn for it as a sick person yearns for health, an exile for his country. A secret sorrow, a poignant homesickness, creeps into our adoration. What is most lack-

ing to our time is the deep and serene calm which brings strength to the soul. Favoured in so many ways, we are poor and mean in character. Our moral fibre seems weakened; and this is the reason why at times our civilised society seems to me like one of those beautiful ships which science, art, and industry have fitted with marvellous machines and sumptuous arrangements for comfort, but which in the middle of the ocean unexpectedly runs out of coal; and then the magnificent ship is nothing more than a waif, at the mercy of the winds and waves.

Let us, then, before everything lay up a good store of motive force.

II.

THE VALUE OF LIFE.

For in Him we live and move and have our being: as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. —*Acts of the Apostles.*

We walk by faith and not by sight. — SAINT PAUL.

CHAPTER II.

THE VALUE OF LIFE.

MORAL force is not culled idly, like a flower from a hedge; it must be acquired laboriously, and sometimes must be mined, like coal, from the darkest depths. I shall indicate a few of the sources whence it springs.

One of these sources is the elevated ideal one forms of life. We are all somewhat indifferent about life, because we are so perpetually brought in contact with it; it no longer surprises us: just as certain mountaineers become insensible to the beauty of their native place, as the result of having it constantly before their eyes, and must leave their country and return to it as strangers in order to be struck by its picturesqueness and grandeur.

So it becomes necessary for us to rediscover, as if it were a novelty, the thing that we seem to have known for so long. This is not easy

to do. Although the majority of men look without seeing, they are not eager that one should point out to them what they should see. The things about them, and near them, leave them cold; and this disdain for what is near is but the reflection of the poor idea they have of their own life. Doubtless each man has a pride, a foolish pride, in being himself rather than some one else; but this pride arises from and is nourished by what is mediocre in us. The sense of true dignity is infinitely rare.

Proud as we are of our superficial individuality, we lack that pride which comes from the respect one should feel for one's deeper nature; and yet this is the sentiment which is the source of strength. The man who perceives what he is worth is in a much better condition morally than one who depreciates himself.

Who will give us that freshness of impression which will enable us to see all things as if we saw them for the first time? Such a one would make us feel in contemplating the humblest flowers what I might call the bewilderment of life.

And this we must have known. We must have stood, if only for an instant, on the threshold of the infinite, and have received, as in a vision, the revelation of all that is precious, rich, and unfathomable in every soul, and in all human life. Then only can we perceive the value of life, and love it and cherish it.

When the young man, in a moment which he can never forget, receives the revelation of his fatherland, with its history, its griefs and grandeur, some holy change takes place in him. He is born again to a new life; the idea of patriotism enters into his heart and ennobles him. From that moment he is capable of great deeds and of great suffering for the country whose child he is. Steeped like steel in a bath which increases his strength tenfold, and transformed so that he respects himself as he does his flag, he has grown to be more than an individual: he has become part of a whole.

An analogous transformation takes place in the man who has received the revelation of his human dignity. He is baptised anew in the fountain of life; he returns to his source; he

measures and appreciates how many heroic actions, patient sorrows, humble hopes, and infinite efforts have gone into this human life which he inherits. The soul of centuries has passed into his soul. The great hope which animated and sustained all this painful development of humanity during unmeasured time has breathed upon him. He has met on his path the Will which decreed that the world was, and that men were, and he has bowed to this Will. He comprehends, and this is the very essence of faith, that each man is a hope of humanity, a hope of God. Henceforth he will no longer rely on his own resources alone; he will have behind him all the impulse of the centuries, all the succour of eternity.

Oh, how culpable are those who depreciate humanity and vilify man, who take pleasure in rolling him in the mud! How their foolish pride blinds those who talk as if they had counted the stars, numbered the sands of the sea, penetrated the secret of life, reached the bottom of all things, only to find nothingness! They insult the hope that shines on the brow of youth; they extinguish the fire of his regard, and ex-

haust the force of his heart, soil its purity, and teach him to despise life. They commit the crime of crimes; they disgust man with his destiny when a profound sentiment for this destiny is the only thing capable of sustaining him, encouraging him and consoling him in the midst of its inexplicable hardships, mysteries, and temptations.

The man who is penetrated with a sense of the dignity of life carries this sentiment into all the details of his action and experience. These details do not seem to him indifferent or insignificant; he refers them to the whole. When one feels that an apparently insignificant action contributes towards the realization or hindrance of a great work, one's entire conduct is influenced. And it is an unfailing comfort in every difficulty, great or little, to know that the humblest effort is bound up in the complete work; that nothing and no one is forgotten or lost; that there are always a thousand reasons for taking courage; and that those are the least deceived who are the most hopeful.

I quote here a few lines which were not writ-

ten by a believer, but which have a greater value as testimony on that account: —

"Physical ills and moral ills, the sufferings of the soul and of the senses, the success of the wicked, the humiliation of the just, — all these things would still be supportable if one perceived the law and economy of them, and divined a providence behind them. The believer rejoices in his sores; he takes pleasure in the injustice and violence of his enemies; even his mistakes and crimes do not deprive him of hope. But in a world where the light of faith is extinguished, evil and suffering lose their significance, and seem to be only so many odious jokes and sinister farces. . . . There is no other key to the world but faith. And this is but too true!"[1]

If one were to ask me to state briefly for him the object of human life, I should answer: The end of everything is manifest in itself. This end is to become all that it can become, in conforming, with all the power of love, to the eternal design which seeks to be fulfilled through it. Man is created to become more and more of a man, to sustain his life and, — what comes to the same thing — to help others to sustain theirs in a normal growth. Now, the normal growth de-

[1] Anatole France, Le Temps, February 4, 1893.

mands the development of the whole being — physical, intellectual, and moral — in a harmonious reciprocity.

Man, then, is created to live on the earth a true and just existence, and to combat everything that stands in the way of this. Human affairs find their culminating point in justice, which is the supreme harmony. One might say that the end of man was to become a power that makes for justice. To believe in life is to believe that it is a struggle in which the victory will belong to justice. It is for us, then, to arm ourselves, to fight, and to suffer, if need be, but never to lose courage.

And afterwards? The Afterwards, like the Before, belongs to the Will which created life and man; it alone knows the secret of the world; and it must desire that that which is near to us should seem more important than that which is distant, because our responsibility is greater. The path of man is so made that he can see distinctly only what is beneath his feet, while none the less he must follow the direction that leads him to the Beyond. We must not lose ourselves in the contemplation of this Beyond,

under pain of forgetting to live; nor forget it entirely, under pain of forgetting why we live. Man has need

> "To realise, in striving, that his mortal toil
> Into the infinite is borne; that there it stands,
> While with the present hour eternity clasps hands."

Conclusion. Do what you should, what your higher interest and that of others requires that you should do, and then be content, and confide yourself to Him who knows why the worlds revolve! The fundamental dogma is belief in life; the supreme heresy is a lack of hope.

III.

OBEDIENCE.

Travellers, go say to Sparta that we died here in obedience to her holy laws. — *Inscription at Thermopylæ.*

It is dangerous to act contrary to your own conscience. . . . Here I am. I cannot do otherwise. May God help me! —LUTHER, *at the Diet of Worms.*

A democracy whose citizens possessed not manly characters and robust bodies would be condemned to obscure decay and shameful eclipse; but a democracy in which the license of unbridled wills threatened to disturb the social harmony and the established order of law, would be exposed to fatal outbreaks of violence and to disruption by anarchy. — P. POINCARRÉ, *Minister of Public Instruction.*

CHAPTER III.

OBEDIENCE.

THE first requisite to the realisation of the object of life is obedience. I know that this word is understood by few: almost every one regards it as the name of an enemy. It is especially repugnant to young ears; and many think that it is more hated at the present time than by preceding generations. It seems that no one will obey nowadays, either at home, or at school, or in the army, or in the atelier, or anywhere. It may be that a certain flagrant indocility makes us appear more opposed to obedience than our ancestors. At bottom, however, I believe that we are brought face to face with a permanent contrariety of human nature, a contrariety which is but the caricature of a legitimate instinct, — the instinct of liberty. There is innate in us an obstinate tendency to be ourselves, and to guard ourselves from

exterior influences. Servitude seems to us the lowest of ignominies, and we confound obedience with servitude. To obey, we think, is to capitulate and degrade ourselves. I have never been able to see children who would let their hard little heads be pulverised rather than bend them beneath a yoke without an emotion of secret pride. Their case is very serious, doubtless, but when one examines it carefully it may appear in another light. Often they are but misled, and are defending themselves against their friends, and resisting their saviours. They think that they must guard their moral integrity, and, in fact, it is owing to this noble sentiment that so many resources are often found in these obstinate heads if one succeeds in enlightening them. One who, while young, would allow himself to be flayed rather than yield, can become a power for good on reaching maturity. I am not pleading here the cause of the obstinate and presumptuous, who know better than their masters or parents, and with whom it is a detestable point of honour never to accept advice from any one; but I wish to encourage a feeling

of hope on the score of certain misunderstood young persons who excite great anxieties.

After which I maintain as a principle that the only way to escape servitude is through obedience, and that there is no purer source of strength. Obedience is the indispensable condition of a good life and liberty; in a certain sense one might say that obedience is liberty. I shall try to explain.

In everything there is an eternal law which it is important to discover, and to which we must conform. Outside of this law there are only anomalies, accidents, and destruction. There are laws according to which one drives a carriage, laws for the cultivation of plants, laws for the revolution of the planets, laws for the development of human life. He who does not know them, and will not conform to them, renders himself liable to the most painful lessons and to the most fatal errors. These laws are as yet only known in part. One of the great labours of humanity is to discover them; and the one among us who, by his activity and perseverance, has succeeded in discovering some one of them is justly considered a bene-

factor. All the experiences of the past, often hard ones, constitute for us a treasure which we could not have gained by our own exertions alone. It is given to no man to live his life as if he were the first man; consequently at the beginning of life we receive from the hands of others the rules of conduct to which we must conform. This is an advantage for us rather than ill treatment. There is no danger to our dignity in following the rule tested by so many generations, or in avowing openly that we are less wise than all of our ancestors combined. Docility and obedience, then, are excellent conditions under which to acquire the wisdom humanity has to teach us, and excellent allies with which to reinforce our personal experience. The man who misunderstands the part which tradition plays in his development makes the most stupid mistake, and deprives himself by his own act of the most valuable aid. This need not prevent each individual and each new generation from examining into the patrimony left him by his ancestors. On the contrary, the only way to value this legacy justly, and to make use of what is good in it, is to receive it with deference.

Obedience is not only the means of augmenting our strength by all the aid of the past, but it is a still better means of helping us in general to apprehend law, — law which governs individual will and caprice. It is the source of all order. Between law and fantasy there can be no compromise; we must choose one or the other. He who does not obey law gives himself up to caprice. To make my meaning plainer, I will compare the individual will, which governs itself according to law, to the needle which turns to the north, and the will governed by caprice to the weather-cock. The man without law is the plaything of his impulses, his desires, his passions. The pilot would imperil his vessel, life, and goods in steering by the weather-vane, while he will brave all the forces of the winds and waves in order the better to follow the route indicated by the compass.

Which is freer, he who allows himself to be tossed hither and thither by the waves, or he, who with them or against them, if need be, holds his steadfast way towards the goal?

There are many men, however, who mistake the most obvious slavery for liberty, and whose

independence consists in following their desires. This error is even so universal that it hinders the majority of men from seeing clearly into their own conduct.

There is but one path of safety through life, and that is the one marked out by law. At the beginning of life, law is exterior to us; we are taught it. Sometimes it hurts us, and we revolt; but he who can endure these first shocks through the help of obedience has served part of his apprenticeship to liberty. He learns at first to conform to the exterior law, and finally through experience he learns that this law has its foundation within himself, and that when he thought he was submitting to others, he was but obeying the dictates of his inmost being.

Once in possession of this inward guidance, he becomes emancipated from all external commandment, and from all human tutelage. He was a child; he has become a man, a free man, and master of himself. Liberty consists in conforming your will to the law which is at the foundation of everything. All who know not an inward law, august and inflexible, raised above

all the caprices of the individual or of the masses, are ripe for servitude. Obedience, then, is liberty.

* * *

What has just been said shows sufficiently what kind of obedience I would recommend. It is necessary, however, to attack and destroy one kind of obedience which is an unworthy caricature of the other. I wish to speak of that obedience which consists in placing one's intelligence and conscience in the hands of another, and becoming a passive instrument. No one has the right either to demand or accord this obedience; it is a crime. We know it, moreover, by its fruits. In the place of encouraging and fortifying one's initiative powers, it stifles them; instead of forming the conscience, it deforms it. It destroys the individuality, ruins the character, and renders the man incapable of governing himself. This obedience is not the mother of liberty, but of servitude, the great purveyor of spiritual death. It takes the place of the inward law. It is this obedience which has fostered in the world the

struggle against personal dignity and conscience in requiring men to submit despite the protestations of their reason and the legitimate revolt of their heart.

Whether this authority be shown in the government, or the church, or the home, it must be resisted. Like disorder and anarchy, from which, however, it pretends that it can rescue us, it is the enemy of all morality. The apostles of disorder, and those of blind obedience, despite their superficial differences, have much in common, and can be recognised by the same signs. They say, "We are the law;" and from this fatal confusion have arisen innumerable evils for society. We can never say with too much insistence, "No, the law is no one person." Law is not the caprice of an individual, nor yet of a government, whether it be invested in one person or many. The law is as far above constituted bodies as above isolated individuals. We must obey it alone, and no one has the right to command if he be not the interpreter and servitor of the law. And if obedience to the law is identical with that to the conscience, it is because the conscience,

like the law, is impersonal. It is the most intimate part of man, while, at the same time, it is the part most independent of him.

It is a deplorable error, or else an interested deception, to pretend that respect for the individual conscience leads to social disruption, and to the fanatic reign of personal desire. A man of conscience is not a force delivered over to the hap-hazard sway of his caprices: he is a force under control, but not controlled by the hand of man nor against his will. He has voluntarily submitted to the eternal law.

I know I am touching here on one of the points of ceaseless contention, but we must not weary of returning to it. Our life depends on the way in which we understand and practise obedience. Do not let us be deterred, therefore, in our line of conduct, either by the apostles of disorder who cry out against tyranny whenever obedience is mentioned, or by the upholders of authority to whom the idea of free obedience is nonsense. To those who are sincerely seeking the way, I should say:

Take ten men of whom each one wishes to command and none to obey. Take ten who

will blindly obey a chief. Take ten who obey through conviction. In no matter what action or struggle, the first ten will exhibit this inferiority, that their efforts will not be concerted. The second ten will act in concert, but they will be like so many inert forces held together by an exterior bond, and guided by an outside force; enthusiasm will be lacking. The last ten will act together, and with enthusiasm; they will march to their end like one mass, but a living mass, carried along not by the exercise of any exterior will, but by the innate action of all their wills combined, and by their united determination. Between these ten men and the others no comparison is possible. Their strength has not its equal in the world.

* * *

Having said this, no one can misinterpret my intentions in what follows: Obedience is the proclamation by the individual of the great fact of solidarity. To refuse to obey is to withdraw from the whole, to proclaim oneself superior to the organism, or to form within it a foreign element. There is no more serious schism than

this; in reality the effort is vain. Absolute disobedience would be an entire disruption of the bonds which unite humanity; it would be suicidal. For him who places himself without the pale of humanity, nothing remains but annihilation.

Obedience, on the contrary, is the voluntary avowal of the dependence of the individual upon society; it procures for him all the strength of union. The more absolute this obedience is, the more admirable it is.

There are times when, through reason and conscience, a man should consent to become a mere automatic subaltern and obey the command; but this is not reducing oneself to a machine. It is practising solidarity; it is realising that there is something greater than the great, which is worthy of every abnegation and self-sacrifice. There is a humble and obscure courage which is more difficult and of more value than the most brilliant exhibitions of personal valour, and this courage consists in effacing oneself. Among all kinds of energy this virtue succeeds in binding men together; it unites the members of a society as cement holds together the stones of a wall, and makes it one compact mass. By means of it, the in-

dividual becomes the community; not the stupid crowd that follows a master like a flock of sheep, but a disciplined army which has one soul, and which can, according to the occasion, resist like a rock, or advance like a torrent. The highest manifestation of life has always consisted in association governed by rules, and grounded on voluntary obedience; the best of those who have lived on earth have been those also who have understood to its full extent the happiness of losing themselves in the life of others, and in mingling their souls with the soul of the harmonious throng.

In the face of this demonstration of the all-powerful virtue of obedience, what becomes of the spirit of insubordination wherein each one disputes the password, criticises the law, and makes himself chief? What is attained by the exhibition of its impotence, its sterility, its incapacity to make ten men walk abreast, but a *reductio ad absurdum*, furnishing us with the proof that there is no safety but in obedience, however much it may displease those who hate the word! I fear for a young man who does not obey his superiors, who cannot unite with his equals for some common action, who will

not march in the ranks, conform to a rule, and bear the yoke with that inward pride which is the sign of a courageous heart.

* * *

The school of obedience is a good source from which to draw another kind of courage. This is no longer the courage of combat, nor of individual or collective effort, but it is that more difficult kind, of endurance and resignation.

It is necessary that man should accustom himself early to what is disagreeable. If he does not learn this, little by little, in the encounters of his will with wills that are stronger, and against which it is vain to strive, life, alas! will teach it to him and perhaps so suddenly that the lesson may crush him. Resignation is one of the forces of suffering humanity. Let us lay up a supply of it in the morning of life, when we have least need of it. We know that stores must be laid up before they are needed. In winter it is too late to fill the barn, and a general must not wait to exercise his troops till the moment when the enemy appears.

IV.

SIMPLICITY.

By two wings a man is lifted up from things earthly; namely, by Simplicity and Purity. — *Imitation of Jesus Christ.*

Do not despise your condition in life; for therein you must act, suffer, and conquer. — H. J. AMIEL.

CHAPTER IV.

SIMPLICITY.

HAVE you ambition? No? Well, then, acquire it! But let me tell you what kind, for all kinds are not good. First, I am going to risk astonishing and repelling you by describing a vulgar ambition. Very old men have told me that it was good to shake young trees.

For the majority of men, the object of their ambition is to rise; to rise, to become other than they are, to get away from their surroundings, to uproot themselves from their native soil; to rise, to be greater than those who surround them, to overtop them by a head, by a cubit or more if possible; to be distinguished, not to be like everybody else; to eat, dress, speak differently from others; to make themselves conspicuous, in fact, if only by a badge, a stripe, a bit of ribbon. This begins in the

class-room, where the object is to be first, and continues through life. It is absurd.

Of what good is it to rise, to be first, to be richer, to be more conspicuous by your dress, or your badges, if the human individual enveloped in these brilliant trappings is of no value in itself? Ambitious persons sacrifice reality to appearance. The more they are puffed up the more hollow and empty they are. I see them generally oblivious of their beginning, ashamed of their original poverty, of the humble occupation which they first engaged in. Many of them hide their origin, and do not like to have their parents spoken of because they were simple people of obscure condition. They have the souls of deserters. If it be their ambition which has bred these sentiments, this is enough to condemn it. Their ambition is puerile, foolish, vain, superficial, and above all inhuman.

Is it humane for one's happiness to consist in rising above another man and humiliating him, perhaps crushing him beneath one's feet? Is it humane to attach a value to what one possesses only when one is the sole possessor?

What is this manner of man who so closely resembles the wolf? In this way one comes finally to regard life itself as a quarry whence to snatch the largest piece of meat after fighting tooth and nail. The strongest and the most courageous is he who can fight best and get most for himself; and after he has worked hard, that is, conquered and bled his neighbours, he is proclaimed chief, and the others envy him. They would like to be in his place.

Is this the strength and greatness of man? Fie, then! In that case I do not wish to be great. The competition, the prizes, the competitors, and their methods, are all equally repugnant to me. If to kill and devour one another for the sake of riches, power, and distinction, be human life, I would rather be the first to be eaten than continue to gaze at such a spectacle.

But there is another life. I would hold it up to you as the object of your ambition; its dominant quality is simplicity. It develops generosity and courage to the same extent as the first begets cowardice and meanness.

This simplicity consists in the lack of show in

one's external existence. It results from the conviction that true grandeur lies within the man. To become better, more just, stronger, — this is the only progress to which he can aspire. He who knows this remains simple. The idea of dominating or crushing others does not occur to him, because he knows that there is no surer way of debasing himself.

He is persuaded that the best science is the knowledge of how to live well. To live well is difficult everywhere, and everywhere meritorious. Just as a painting representing a goose girl, a beggar, or a cripple, may have the same artistic value as one representing a Madonna, a hero, or a beautiful woman, so the noble life of a wood-cutter or a street-sweeper may have an equal moral value with the noble life of a sage or a statesman. The social condition is of little importance: at every round of the ladder it is possible to set before oneself human dignity and moral grandeur as one's aim; at every round of the ladder it will be found, on careful investigation, that the distance to be traversed is the same. The value of a piece of money depends on the metal in it; the value of a

man depends on the worth of the substance which makes up his moral being.

The man whose moral fibre is firm and fine will be what he ought to be, whatever his station, and he will think less of changing this than of fulfilling his duties. According to the occasion he will know how to command without pride, or obey without servility. The same qualities are requisite to make a good master and a good servant, a good chief and a good soldier. Before everything else they are men, and they know the significance of the word. He who does not feel this is a nonentity everywhere, and he who realises it is everywhere the equal of every one.

This is what I call the simplicity of the heart whence springs the simplicity of life, of taste, of manners. This simplicity is also the highest dignity, the most genuine nobility, the greatest force.

A simple man does not wish to rise by cutting himself off from his stock, to isolate himself by seeking to escape from the common law. He knows too well that he draws his strength from his roots. He remains forever

in contact with the healthy, broad earth whence we all are sprung, with life that is normal and not complicated.

He does not refine his table or his furniture, his language or his ideas. If it has been given to him to rise a few degrees, he glories rather in his origin than in what he has acquired. In heart he remains always with the lowly. He does not forget; he is loyal, and keeps in touch with them.

You may be sure that somewhere in his house there is a corner where he guards the cherished souvenirs of his past, and that he preserves certain patriarchal customs which nothing could make him renounce. Hence his strength, his health, his happiness, — the secret of his ascendancy over others.

When he commands he is sure to be obeyed, for he possesses the charm; and if he requires the accomplishment of something difficult, his subordinates know that it is not because he is ignorant of the difficulty and effort which it will cost, but because he has achieved it himself, and could do so again.

Nothing makes a man greater than this in-

nate nobility under a simple aspect. It will be to the eternal honour of great democracies that they have furnished numerous examples of such admirable lives; and the truth which such lives proclaim is so manifest that even in societies founded on absolutism, where external appearance counts for much more, there has never been any lasting dominion, personal influence, or power over men's souls, without the presence of this simplicity.

All really great characters have remained simple in some direction. Is it not better worth the while to strive for these heights than to be carried along the beaten track where the multitudes swarm?

The dangers which are to be encountered along the path of ordinary ambition are the same for all. No class of society is exempt; for it is not enough to be of humble station to love simplicity, and one may belong to the higher classes without rejoicing in luxury. The important thing is the spirit. I know some very rich people who are exceedingly simple, and by no means pleasure-loving or proud, and I know some poor people who dream of noth-

ing but grandeur, an easy life and amusements. Great is their disdain of simplicity; they have a horror of it. Their hatred of work is passionate, and what displeases them in the life of their more fortunate neighbours is that they cannot change places with them. To accomplish this they would do anything. Woe to him who is possessed by the ideal of an effeminate and enervating existence which is to consist only in strange sights, disturbing sensations and excitement! Moral gangrene has set in, and will devour him slowly, undermining all the living forces that are in him. Before long he will confound the good with well-being, and will come to look upon all privation and effort as a disgrace. From this to selling himself for small riches is but a step. A race of slaves are these frantic runners, chasing after Fortune's chariot to pick up the crumbs which fall from it. It is of little consequence whence they spring, what their names are, what their ranks, opinions, beliefs. There is one expression which describes them all: they are the dregs of humanity.

V.

THE INWARD WATCH.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. — *Proverbs.*

CHAPTER V.

THE INWARD WATCH.

VIGILANCE is one of the most interesting functions of civilised society. It is organised wherever there is any property to guard; for everything that exists has its enemies, and to secure its safety we must be ever on the alert. Round the universe the sentinel watches, and we hear constantly warnings and cries of alarm. Those who sleep are disarmed, unprotected; they fall a prey.

However little we may know ourselves, we know our enemies. Every one of us has them. The enemies of which I speak are all those causes of weakness and abasement which hinder us from being what we ought to be, and from fulfilling the object of our lives. In time of war the gravest danger is to have men in the ranks or the forts who sympathise with the enemy.

I do not hesitate to say that this critical situation exists for every man, and that our constant

peril arises from the fact that the enemy has spies within the place. Each man has within him a power that can destroy him. Without the inward watch the best will be lost. I am not one of those who cry out in alarm at every moment. By dint of saying, "Take care!" these perpetual alarmists destroy your confidence; but blindness and false assurance differ from confidence. Confidence is a great good; false assurance is one form of cowardice. Virility exacts that a man should take account of danger, should face it, and take measures against it.

Heredity, predisposition, and circumstances, which are so many sources of weakness, engender different tendencies and defects, according to the individual. The friction which these defects cause in our development is felt through our whole system. It is only necessary for one vicious habit to become established and expand in order to throw the whole mind out of balance. Then efforts, qualities, even virtues, are neutralised. There is a terrible fatality in evil. A man has no need to have all the vices combined, and to be lacking in every virtue, to lose his

equilibrium, and founder. There are no water-tight compartments in the inward life.

It is the great grief of every man who loves the good to feel within himself the possibility of evil. To love all that is noblest and best in life, to be ready to struggle and suffer for justice, and yet to see that, under certain circumstances, one would be capable of actions destructive of all one loved; to understand that it is possible to demolish, and that often only too quickly, all that one has spent years and much generous enthusiasm in building up; to condemn sincerely, and without a shadow of hypocrisy, certain ways of living, talking, and acting, and to be guilty of them oneself at other moments; to be the same man who detests the thing and does it; to find oneself in the position of condemning and hating oneself; to have to struggle against oneself, — this is indeed a difficult situation! How well we understand Saint Paul when he cries: "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do."

And yet this is inevitable. No character was ever formed except by this internal warfare and

in the midst of these battles of the soul. The best are those who suffer the most; their pure eyes see with greater clearness the contrast between what they are and what they ought to be. But if the elect of mankind are thus tried, shaken, cast amidst these gloomy struggles, and obliged to hold themselves armed in the breach, the necessity of vigilance becomes the more evident for us ordinary mortals. I should say to every young man entering life, "Keep watch on yourself, know yourself, and distrust yourself." May the step of the guardian who wakes resound, night and day, about the citadel of your life! And may this guardian not be like those dogs who neither bark nor bite, and who are silent for certain privileged persons. May this guard be incorruptible, and, if need be, cry to you, as the famous soldier to the Little Corporal, "You cannot pass!"

In order to increase our vigilance it is necessary to sharpen our sense of responsibility. Let us often try to picture to ourselves all the suffering and hope which is bound up in each of our lives, and let us say to ourselves that it

depends on us whether this suffering and hope be lost or not. If our own interest is not sufficient to make us careful, let us think of the interest of others. If we can say to ourselves that in remaining at our post, in being true, just, honest, pure, in returning good for evil, in drying tears, in arousing the discouraged, we do good, and that in neglecting our duties, on the contrary, we work for the ruin, the anguish, the perdition of others, — what reasons have we to watch! Everything that is confided to our hands is at stake! These are considerations which ought to be capable of taking hold of us, and of keeping us in that attentive and resolute condition of mind which we call alert. We tremble and we feel courageous at the same time. It gives to us that indelible sign of dignity which we see in the soldier who is on guard.

Why shrink from responsibility? Can we buy this great honour at too dear a price? Let him who is afraid listen to this: Do you know what degradation means to a soldier? It is to see his rank, his decorations, his epaulettes, torn from him; to see these signs of his former

value thrown at his feet! What is death in comparison with this dishonour? It is true that in the future this unfortunate soldier can sleep; he will never again mount guard; he will no longer cry, "To arms; here is the enemy!" he will never again make an assault nor hear the bullets whistling round him; he will have no more responsibility. — Very well; to declare that a man is irresponsible is to degrade him! Death were better.

The practice of vigilance creates in a man the habit of a conscious life, and the need of reviewing his deeds before his conscience. To be able to respect himself and remain in accord with this inner judge is his supreme desire; his greatest fear is to be chastised and branded by this same judge. In this fact lies the secret of all morality. The difference between a good man and one who is not, is simple: the first is a man of conscience, the second is a man who lives for the gallery. For the second, it is of little consequence whether the judge within him condemns him or acquits him; it has been long since he consulted him. His judge is the public; he watches himself only when it is

looking at him. As soon as he is alone, he is conscious of no restraint, no law. What disdain a man who lives for the gallery must have for himself! This perpetual actor attaches a greater value to the judgment of the least of his spectators than to his own judgment, and the man whom he esteems the least in the world is himself. When he is alone, he thinks that there is no one there; and he does not see, poor man, that it is as if he said, "I or no one, — it is all the same thing." Alas! from a certain point of view he is right; for of what value in the moral world is a creature who is capable of everything, provided that no one sees him?

We cannot be reminded too often of the necessity of an inward life. Two of the conditions of its development are meditation and solitude. When the noise of the world is stilled, and the dust of the human conflict is dissipated, the inward voice awakes, and the eyes of the soul discern all things more clearly. We must often retire into solitude, the more so as we are only alone there in appearance; for it is there that we encounter those whom I shall call our invisible allies: our comforting

memories, and those loved figures who encourage and sustain us.

Above all, we shall there indulge in prayer if we have the good fortune to know the value of it. When a man prays, he communes with his source; he rests from the flux of the world in the beneficent calm of the eternal; he restores and purifies himself; and perhaps he will never realise more clearly that he is not alone than in this solitude. Prayer is the sanctified retreat of the soul, the peaceful and elevated fortress which nothing can attack, where he leaves behind him all his sufferings, all his struggles, all dangers; where he takes refuge in absolute security. O Prayer, what source of strength can be compared to thee, and how can a soldier mount guard with greater courage than when he feels himself guarded by Him who watches always!

* * *

I cannot stop here without adding a few words for the vanquished. Who has never been conquered? Who has never stumbled? Who has never fallen? Oh, the lost battles, the morrows of defeats, the frightful awakenings

after a mistaken sense of security! Never scoff at a dead man, even though his death was due to a lack of vigilance! How do you know how you will die? Never despair of those who fall, beaten and wounded, but who still live! This is the time to run to their succour, to raise them, to bind them, to care for them. Every moral fall is frequently as much the result of accident as of mistake; and even if there has been error, this error points out the path of duty to those who remain standing, just as the weakness of the feeble creates duties for the strong. The best men have felt and propagated a sentiment of tenderness for those who have been vanquished in their moral struggles; perhaps the memory of their own defeats have made them more indulgent for those of others. In the life of each person there come critical periods, sometimes veritable moral maladies. One is not the same person as in days of health; weakened, wounded, they have need, above all, of intelligent care. Youth, especially, is subject to these perilous crises when everything depends on the treatment. He who now walks with a firm step can tell you that at certain moments on the way little was needed to

send him astray forever. This is, then, the place to recognise that pardon and clemency are powers of the first order. In this world, so full of suffering, struggles, and vicissitudes, man aspires after goodness as after a source of life. He who does not know how to pardon, and who does not recognise that he himself often has need of it, is either a hypocrite or possesses a hard heart. It was not in vain that the Just among the just, the Great Captain who struggled so valiantly against iniquity, and dealt such formidable blows to the wicked, insisted so strongly on pardon, and showed so much pity to the fallen.

Let us conclude, then: the pass-word is, "Be Vigilant!" If, in spite of all, an accident overtakes you, or even some serious disaster, let there be no panic, no useless regrets. Pick yourself up, reorganise your resources, cover your retreat, in order that the lost battle may not be turned into a rout. The best armies are those that do not become demoralised by defeat. For the man who knows how to profit by the lesson, to have been vanquished is oftentimes a source of strength.

VI.

HEROIC EDUCATION.

I am not to be pitied, Monseigneur; I die in the performance of my duty. It is you who are to be pitied, you who are in arms against your prince, your country, your vows. — BAYARD'S *dying response to the Connétable de Bourbon.*

Happy are the nations whose sacred sources of enthusiasm are not exhausted. — L. ENAULT.

CHAPTER VI.

HEROIC EDUCATION.

THE old stoics had this saying among themselves, *Nihil mirari*, — "Do not be astonished at anything." The sense of it is plain; it means that we must not allow ourselves to be overawed by men or things, to be frightened or disconcerted. A man should retain his self-possession, and be master of himself, amid all the impressions that he receives. This is certainly a good rule. It is in happy contrast with the fickleness of our moods and the neurotic tendencies of the times. Such a maxim is like a soothing and refreshing bath; after it, one's eyes are clearer, one's arms stronger, one's step more alert. Let us often repeat to ourselves this old saying which has reassured and sustained the courage of so many, and which fulfilled, for those whose device it was, the office of a sure and steadfast friend, who took them

by the hand in the hour of trouble, and said, "Be calm, have courage, be wise, and all will come out right!"

There is another way of translating the adage against which I wish to protest, precisely because it is so common. Our contemporaries adopt the *Nihil mirari*, but they translate it, "Let us admire nothing." If those who conform to the rule thus modified were old men, I should not permit myself to attack them. I should say to myself, "They are tired of life; to their old organs everything seems old; they have lost the faculty of admiring, as they have lost their sense of hearing, or the capacity to sleep, or the appetite of twenty." Such is not the case, however. Those who undertake to admire nothing are young men. To admire anything seems to them humiliating. It is all very well for children to open their eyes wide and stare at men and things with that serious and surprised air, which shows that they believe what they see. One must leave that kind of emotion in the nursery, with one's petticoats, one's last doll, and all the forgotten toys of one's tender years. A man must not admire

anything. Nothing should surprise or excite him. To admire is to be a dupe, to let oneself be taken in. A serious young man should not put himself in the ridiculous position of "swallowing" anything. To be able to say solemnly, in every situation: "Oh, I know that; that's an old story;" to be tired of everything before having experienced anything, — this is the pose of your young man. Among his comrades he who admires the least passes for the strongest-minded, and is almost sure to be the most admired; for if it be a servile attitude of mind to feel admiration, to be admired is one of the noblest delights of life. Thus a spirit has spread among youth, and in the schools and ateliers, whose ideal is to have no ideal. From this to respecting nothing and no one is but a step.

This spirit of belittling and scoffing is the order of the day; and one of the manifestations of this unfortunate tendency is that we meet together more willingly to cry down a thing than to honour an illustrious memory, or to do homage to a great citizen. To my mind, one of the worst misfortunes that can

happen to you when you are young is to be inoculated with this spirit of which I speak. If there be anything which is not young, it is this spirit. To feel respect shows the quality of a young man, as the bouquet of the wine shows from which province it came. Thus, wherever I discover an absence of respect, I say to myself, "That smells of vinegar." We must get rid of this tendency. It is a source of weakness, of decrepitude. It is an enemy, and one of the most dangerous.

We live through respect, and we perish through scoffing. Plato banished musicians from his republic because he wrongly believed that music enervated man's courage. As for me, I declare war against this spirit of mockery; I wish that it might be hunted down, and exterminated, like those parasites which are nourished in our marrow and blood. Let us chase the scoffer; and, on the other hand, let us cherish admiration, respect, and enthusiasm in all their forms, as among the elements of a healthy morality, and the source of strong wills. All that I have to say on this subject I shall try to say under the heading of Heroic Education.

What is a hero? He is a man of larger stature than his fellows, who has lived an intenser and wider human life than the majority; a being who concentrates in his mind and heart the aspirations of a whole epoch, and gives them powerful expression; or it may be that he is a man who appears above the crowd to accomplish one deed, but one so great, so fine, that it immortalises him.

When we study the history of humanity, we see heroes appearing at the beginning of every great movement. Their example is contagious; some virtue emanates from them and takes possession of others. It is their privilege to arouse enthusiasm, hope, and light. They are the saviours of hopeless times, the guides in dark days, the pioneers of the future, the pure and noble victims who die for justice and truth, in order to pave the way for them. But what influence would they have without the respect, admiration, and enthusiasm which they excite in us? It is by dint of admiring them that we become capable of profiting by their virtues. What is true of the hero, is true of everything that is heroic, to no matter what degree. Every-

thing that is great, everything that is beautiful, everything that is pure and sacred, penetrates to our hearts through our respect and admiration. These are the senses by which we perceive the high realities of the soul.

Man understands an example better than a maxim, and apprehends the good in action more easily than in theory. He needs to be taught how to walk. It is for this reason that, when young, he naturally seeks some one to imitate. We always follow a leader, and, whether we wish it or not, we are always disciples of some chief. The proof of this is to be found in the fact that those who exalt a lack of respect to the height of a principle, form a school, and run the risk themselves of saying, "Dear master" to him who is leader of it. Another proof is that a drawing or a newspaper article, describing and recounting a crime, and the circumstances surrounding it, becomes, in minds prepared for it, a suggestion for similar crimes. Shameful actions, above all, when they have been committed by prominent persons, act on the public mind like evil forces; they become for thousands of creatures an influence for depravity.

Does it not seem as if, at certain times, a breath of hate and disorder disturbed the masses and spread confusion? Does it not often seem, in the midst of venality, impurity, and the debasement of conscience, as if the moral air became vitiated, and one were poisoned in breathing it, as if the contamination spread as in the time of an epidemic? Happily, the contrary is also true. There are examples which purify public opinion, — acts of energy, benevolence, disinterestedness, which are contagious for the good.

I am not speaking here of our illustrious heroes, but of those obscure, unknown, unnamed heroes of whom the world is full. It is for them that I ask of youth eyes and ears to perceive, and a heart to admire. It is time to put a stop to this superstition of evil, to this invidious pessimism, propagated by conversation, by the press, by our novels, according to which there is nothing good anywhere in the world. The fanatic apostles of this superstition are so convinced of their belief, that when they meet a man of heart and generous action along their road, or in history, they prefer to impute to

him low motives rather than to accept them for such as they are. The result is that the majority are more and more disposed to find only thieves and rogues in the world, and to seem to wait with resignation the occasion to become such themselves. Out upon this school of degradation, this conspiracy for ignominy!

The good exists; I shall prove it to you. Suppose that you found yourself in the midst of a large assembly, in a big hall, and that all of a sudden your neighbour said to you, "Do you know that everything here, the floor beneath you, the galleries, the columns, the walls, are rotten?" Do you think that you would believe what he said to you, and that this objection would not immediately present itself to your mind: "How is it possible for this rotten edifice to stand beneath the great weight of this assembly? There must still be some beams to hold, some parts of the wall that are solid, some columns that are strong." Such is the case in human society. The proof that certain good elements still exist is that this society has not yet gone to pieces. If there were only untrustworthy cashiers, venal writers, hypocrit-

ical priests, bribed officers, dishonest employees, men without conscience, women without modesty, homes that are disunited, ungrateful children, depraved young people, — we should long since have been buried beneath our own ruins.

Where is this good, of which I speak, to be found? We must seek for it. Those who seek for it and are capable of seeing it, will find it. I urge many young people to investigate this unknown region. They will discover many salutary herbs which will serve them as elixirs.

The truth is, that no one has any idea of the number of good people who live about us. The amount of suffering patiently borne, the injuries pardoned, the sacrifices made, the disinterested efforts, are impossible to count. It is a world full of unknown splendours, like the profound grottoes lighted by the marvellous lamp of Aladdin. These are the reserves of the future; these are the silent streams that run beneath the earth, and without which the sources of good would long since have become exhausted, and the world have returned to barbarism. Happy is he who can explore the sacred depths! At

first, one feels profane, small, out of place. There are people of such a simple benevolence, of such natural disinterestedness, that one feels poor and unworthy beside them; but this is a grief which is salutary, a humiliation which exalts us. What can be better for a young man than to feel himself small and inferior in the presence of truth, of abnegation, and of pure goodness? If he is troubled, moved, bewildered, downcast; if he weeps; if his life, when compared with those which he sees about him, seems to him like a childish sketch by the side of a canvas of a great master,—so much the better for him. This humility is a proof in his favour, and places him at once in the path of progress. They say that young nightingales, whose voices are not yet formed, are very unhappy when they come into the presence of those older birds who fill the nights of summer with their music. When they hear them, they cease to sing, and remain silent for a long time. This is neither from a spirit of envy nor ill temper; but the ideal presented to them bewilders and disturbs them. They listen, they are intoxicated

by the melody, and while thinking, perhaps, in their little bird brains, —

"I can never hope to equal thee!"

they become so inspired that they end by singing in their turn.

Hail to the good listener!

VII.

DIFFICULT BEGINNINGS.

I was born like a weed between two paving-stones of Paris. — MICHELET.

Per angusta ad augusta.

CHAPTER VII.

DIFFICULT BEGINNINGS.

AMONG the many paths which lead to courage, one of the steepest to climb is this: I wish to speak of the hard life which falls to the lot of so many young people. We like to see a little brightness shed on the beginning of life. It seems so natural that one should have time to be a child, to know pure joy, to lay up sunshine in one's heart, as a gage of hope for darker days. How many are there, however, who have a happy youth? Very few indeed.

An old proverb, of a salutary wisdom despite its homely aspect, says, "It is better to eat our black bread at the start;" and it is not for me to gainsay the word of the prophet, "It is good for man to bear the yoke in his youth." But this does not authorise us to forget those whose early life is hard; for, alas, the beginning is often so long that one exhausts one's

forces, and succumbs; and their name is legion for whom this beginning lasts forever! If the poet Lenau says somewhere,

"My heart is given to the dear dead,"

I can say that mine belongs to all these suffering young lives. Their anxieties, their struggles, their servitude, the injustice under which they suffer, the blows that strike them, inflict on me a permanent wound. There is not one of their causes which I do not espouse, not one of their miseries which I do not feel, not one of their hopes which I do not greet with transport; and it is precisely for this reason that I would be to them, if only in a feeble way, a messenger of comfort.

Everything is not to be regretted in the misfortunes which we endure; the essential thing is that we seek to derive from them some profit for our inward life. In this case, they may fortify us; and if we say that certain contrarieties and privations hinder us from living, it is true, but only in part. Whence are sprung the best men? They come from the land of great sorrows and great tribulations. The paths

which lead to great heights are almost always obscure in the beginning. The easy grades are for those who descend; the stony paths and steeps for those who mount. The past, by its acquired inertia, runs easily. It is a man *arrivé*, who has his carriage and horses; but he drives towards the end as a funeral towards the cemetery. The future, on the contrary, advances on foot, and sometimes drags itself along on its knees.

Force, light, justice, benevolence, progress, — all these things come to us from those who have suffered. There are few good workmen who have not passed through long years of apprenticeship. When they tell you their history, you find that they have had to submit to hard words, blows, accidents, poverty; but you will also find that all these things, instead of discouraging them, stimulated them, enlightened them, formed them. It is only by means of hard blows of the hammer and chisel that a block of marble, whence a statue is to spring, is reduced. Man cannot perfect himself otherwise; and if he has stuff in him, if the seed be good, there is no need to fear the blows re-

ceived, or the corners chipped away. Even evil may be turned into good. I know eminent men who have great tenderness for young people and show much indulgence for them. Why? Because they have been ill-treated themselves, because they have divined in weeping the value of gentle words. Gladly they say to themselves, "I have suffered too much from injustice not to try to spare others." Such lessons are well worth the pain they have cost!

The difficulties which many encounter in their families from the character of their relatives, from the defects or vices with which they are surrounded, often darken their first steps in life. In every class of society are found children and young people neglected by those who should guide them, abandoned to themselves or to hired guardians, deprived of tenderness at the age when they have most need of it, lacking amusements, and incessantly rebuffed by cross words. Many have their lives complicated by the scandalous examples of those whose mission it should be to lead them

aright. They have neither that filial respect nor tenderness, which it is so sweet to feel, to guard them from the errors of youth. Their fathers and mothers teach them precisely the thing which they should avoid, and their unfortunate ideal consists in not resembling their parents.

I think of those who have suffered early losses, of the orphans whose very name excites sympathy in the world. For one who finds moral support, how many are crushed by this abandonment! Far from the warmth of the nest, they go through life accompanied always by a shadow. Who can count the struggles, the unknown tears, the secret anguish of so many young people? Who will seek them out in their loneliness?

There is a large class of young people for whom the greatest danger springs from their temperament. While others follow the right way without great difficulty, they have to struggle against evil inclinations, uncontrolled impulses, and humiliating penalties. Their conduct often resembles the gait of a furious pair of horses, who make their driver sweat blood.

Their reasons for discouragement increase; their good-will, though often great, is not sufficient to keep them in the right path. They have days when they believe themselves lost, when they despair, despite all their efforts, of ever becoming men.

Those who suffer in the domain of thought form, on their side, a group who endure the severest trials. Inch by inch they dispute the ground with their practical doubts and difficulties. These know the hunger and thirst of the spirit, the bitter torment of the unknown. They buy truth at the price of their peace, sometimes of their health and life. Each ray of light is a conquest after a bitter struggle. They know what conviction costs when one takes the trouble to acquire it for oneself, and when the tempter approaches them under the form of ready-made systems of truths, which it is sufficient to admit *en bloc*, with closed eyes, they say to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan!"

It is, however, in these different worlds, in these glowing furnaces, that manly characters, loving hearts, and great souls are formed. The

leaders of all human thought have, almost without exception, passed through them. What would become of humanity without these schools of suffering?

What makes these beginnings difficult above all else is poverty. I do not mean pauperism, nor that dark want which is without hope or help, wherein certain portions of society drag out a miserable existence, and of which I can only say this: it is a public shame, a disease which we must attack, relieve, seek to root out. It would be criminal to imagine that from this depraved *milieu*, where moral and material degradation are confounded, any force of character could spring. We must admit, however, that this hideous poverty is the exception. It is the sink wherein the social refuse, engendered by our carelessness and vices, falls.

There is another poverty. I refer to that to which one is reduced by illness, idleness, or perhaps the early death of parents, and which often creates such terrible situations. Or, again, I mean that poverty which simply consists in being reduced to the barest necessities of

life, and wherein one does not know to-day what one will have to-morrow. It is an honest and interesting kind of poverty, which is often concealed, and which is only known to those who have experienced it. It is indeed a hard condition for the development of youth. To eat until one is satisfied is rare. One has a lodging, but it is narrow and sombre. Everything is limited, — even the air, if one lives in the city. This poverty seems to be a sort of slavery, judged from the thousand restrictions which it imposes on our movements; and no one is so sensitive to this restraint as youth.

Want is not the hardest thing to bear in poverty, but rather the offences against the moral order to which it subjects us, and the indignities to which we must submit. I appeal to all those who have had to suffer for their daily bread early in life, and who have taken their degree in bitterness and contumely. Poverty is not what certain idyllic conceptions have represented it to be. It is a crown of thorns; but I hasten to add that everything depends on the brow which wears it.

Those who wear it as a burden and disgrace

hate it, and only find in it a lesson of degradation, bitterness, and envy. I do not condemn them; and if I plead extenuating circumstances, my plea can easily be turned into an accusation against those who are seated comfortably in the tribunal to judge them. I like better to think of those who bear their poverty cheerfully, and finally come to love it, as one loves the dreary beauty of one's native soil, disinherited by nature. These men are the strength of the world.

I have walked through the country of poverty as through a land of marvels. I have travelled through it, not as a tourist, but as a native, initiated into the secrets of the place, an enemy of the highways, a guest of unknown corners; and I have found the little flowers of these woods and fields more beautiful than all the delicate flora of rich gardens and hot-houses. Such is the poverty of humble people who are sober and laborious, economic and generous; the poverty of the workman who is proud of his state; the poverty of peasants and sailors who envy no one; the poverty of students who have only a bed, a table, and a few loved

books, but who live on the heights, and feel themselves richer than the masters of the world; the poverty of artists, not of those who know no other ambition but money, but of those who love beauty, and with whom the ideal is a passion; the poverty of scientific investigators, who forget the hour that passes, and the pleasure that calls, and, like hunters, follow the steep paths and precipices after the fascinating trail of the unknown; the poverty of the thinkers tormented by the infinite, solving the problems of the world and those of the soul, which are greater than of the world; the poverty of those who are persecuted for truth and justice, but whom nothing can move because they fear nothing but cowardice!

I can never tire of admiring this kind of poverty. I remember in thinking of these difficult beginnings that Christ was poor, that Homer was poor, that Spinoza was poor, that Luther was poor, that Franklin was poor, that the most exalted experiences of Claude Bernard came to him in a damp cellar of the Collège de France, and that the paternal house of Pasteur was a little farm in the Jura.

After seeing these instances accumulate beneath my eyes, I almost tremble for those whose life is easy. I fear for their energy in the absence of effort; for their liberty, because of the hard servitude which the conventionalities and prejudices of the world lay upon them. I fear for their heart, which for want of suffering may never know pity; for their judgment which may be warped and deceived by outward appearances. It is better to bring up children in the workshops than before the shop windows; for in the workshops they see the labour of man, while in the windows they only see the result, and the temptation to forget the labourer is great. It is a pity to forget the peasant while eating our bread, the wood-cutter while warming ourselves before the logs. This is a temptation which I fear for those who have been brought up in luxury. These, too, in their way, have their difficult beginnings. I am often struck by this, and would give them this advice: Seek suffering; submit to labour. Go and do your work in the world of the humble, and renounce for a while your privileges, which are but so many perils. Become poor

from choice. It is not the same thing as to be poor from necessity, but it is nevertheless something. If life calls you to command, woe to you, and to them who are confided to you, if you have not first obeyed, sweated, groaned beneath the burden! No man should send another under fire, not having been there himself! And from the young people I turn to the fathers of the rich classes and say to them, There are a number of excellent young people in your houses who are full of generous intentions, possessing within them the stuff necessary to become men. All that is lacking to them is a little poverty. You cannot refuse them this. Although it may cost you a little anxiety and uneasy solicitude, you should make them submit to it.

In the desert, or in the forest, the deer at liberty lead a life full of hazard and struggle. The tempests break over them, the bullets of the hunters threaten them, hunger torments them. The uncertainty of the morrow is the rule. Many of them perish; but those who survive are vigorous, warlike, inured to all fatigue. Take these same deer and assure

them against the changes of the season, the dangers of their adventurous life; give them comfortable stables; nourish them with discretion. There they are, at ease, with plenteous repasts and tranquil slumber, like the heirs of rich families. What becomes of them? Their tendons become soft, their eyes are no longer clear, their courage disappears. They become flabby, awkward, cowardly, contract vicious habits, — the result of *ennui* and a too tranquil life. If, by chance, they reproduce their species, their offspring will be only the shadow of their parents, and in the third or fourth generation, from decadence to decadence, they will no longer be able to propagate their species. Luxury will have exterminated them.

Human life presents exactly the same phenomena. Too much security and luxury are bad for man; he requires certain privations, dangers, and struggles to arrive at his normal development. Under these conditions his force increases, as well as his capacity for enjoyment. Open your eyes and look at the families, the generations, the peoples of the world. Wherever you find vitality, enthusiasm, pro-

gress, resources, moral, intellectual, and material, you will also find effort; but it often happens that families, like nations, forget this. After a generation of hard workers, their successors come, find comfort too near them, and set about enjoying it. They forget that there is no life except where there are difficulties to overcome, and that the only bread which is sweet is that which we have earned. Then they slumber in their ease, and the first signs of death are not long in making their appearance.

Do not let us complain, then, too bitterly of these difficult beginnings. The day when they will have ceased will be the beginning of the end.

VIII.

EFFORT AND WORK.

Soon rounded grows the back of him
Who 'neath no burden's heavy load,
But o'er the spade, is forced to bend.
And yet ere long the world would end,
If he should seek to lift his head.

JEAN AICARD.

CHAPTER VIII.

EFFORT AND WORK.

"Work, and take great pains,
'T is capital which is least lacking."

THE fabulist forgot to add that this is exactly the thing which costs us most. Taking trouble is what each one seeks to avoid, even when in order to do so, he must add to that of others. Along the sunny road where I am walking, a little ass is dragging a cart. How he applies himself to his task! His short, quick steps, and his strained muscles, show the effort that he is making. In the cart a large, robust man is reclining on the vegetables which he is going to sell in the city. The man is heavier than the ass, and probably stronger. How he can sleep there while the poor little beast struggles on is beyond my comprehension; but, there! he wakes and sits up. Now all will be right! He has perceived, undoubtedly, that the road ascends, and that he would do well to get out

No; he takes his whip, gives several blows to the ass, and then lies down again. What a brute! I feel a great desire to salute the poor, courageous little animal. While I continue my way, this revolting scene pursues me, aggravated by many touching incidents which my memory recalls; for such sights are not uncommon. How many people recline and doze while the carriage ascends! and it is not always beasts of burden, but sometimes human beings, who drag it. I will explain. In this world where we live, I see many people who hate to make an effort, and who are always ready to cast their burdens on their neighbours' shoulders. A great number of cowardly deeds are done for the mere sake of escaping trouble. Indeed, one might almost believe that effort is one of the greatest enemies of mankind, and the fear inspired by it is often so great that when men have to choose between effort and shame, they prefer shame. This is a grave mistake; we have no better friends than effort and work. He who seeks to ameliorate his life by diminishing his share of activity as much as possible, does not know what harm he is doing himself.

A man is of value only in proportion to the trouble he takes. He who does nothing is worth nothing. An ass who works is a king by the side of an idle man, despite those fine ladies and gentlemen who, when they speak of the toilers, say with disdain, "Those persons!"

A certain inertia, one might almost say an influence emanating from death, tends incessantly to neutralise and exhaust our vital force. Iron and steel rust; and every force, no matter what it may be, has beside it a principle of destruction which attacks it, and will ruin it unless it defends itself. Man is not exempt from this law. He must struggle against rust by the regular exercise of his faculties. We are condemned by an inevitable law to advance unceasingly under penalty of falling into decay. Movement is not only a sign of life; it is a source of life. To strengthen his muscles, to carry his body, to learn to use his hands, his eyes, to become accustomed to fatigue, to the rigours of the seasons, to the struggle against obstacles, to increase his intelligence by difficult exercise, to familiarise his will with opposition, to conquer his desires, his emotions, his

passions, in a word, to tame and discipline his whole being, — such is the noble preoccupation of any one who aspires to become a man. As soon as he applies himself to this task, which, I admit, is not without difficulty, he perceives how fortifying it is. Man fears exertion as he fears contact with cold water; but if he will conquer his repugnance, how much good and profit he derives from the alarming contact! What frightened him at first comes to be his delight. He is only at ease in the use of his forces, and in their free play. He understands that he who increases his power, increases his capacity for enjoyment, augments his physical and moral health; and nothing seems more delightful to him than to feel himself alert, enthusiastic, in possession of that vivacity which makes him ready at all times to give of himself. What he hates most is the somnolence, the weakness, the stupid and heavy ease of inaction. This ease seems to him stagnation, reminds him of the tomb, and nothing frightens him so much as that fine and destructive dust which settles over everything which has ceased to act, and slowly tarnishes it, smothers it, buries it.

The perfected form of effort is work. I would compare the man who aspires to live without work to the fish who dreams of the draining of the sea. Work is, *par excellence*, the element of life; and it is precisely for this reason that we must protest against the ordinary and low conception which the majority of men have of it. Some look upon work as a means of livelihood, others as a marketable article, which is more or less the same thing; but work is really something different, and something more. It is very easy to describe the attitude of those who think it a marketable article, or a means of livelihood.

If work is only the means of livelihood, it is evident that he who has no need to earn his living can do without it; and that, on the other hand, he who is obliged to work to earn his living will come to consider it a grievous necessity and burden; in which case, his work is hated or despised, and eventually he seeks to escape from it. In this way we succeed in creating in society two classes of incompetent persons: the first are those who do without work because, through inheritance, speculation, happy chance, or through the exploitation of

vice or theft, they have enough to live on; the second class works, it is true, but reluctantly. It is evident that between these two classes of men there is a wide difference: the first are parasites on society, the others are its productive elements. But what sort of a slave is the man who works without loving his work! I can understand how a man should refuse to perform certain tasks which are inhuman and degrading, and which undermine his physical health, and lower his intelligence. It is the duty of all honest men to struggle constantly against working oneself, or making others work, in a way detrimental to life and human dignity; but do we not arrive at this slavish labour precisely by means of the low conception we have of work in general? Any society founded on the idea that work is life would soon abolish all work that killed.

What I have said of work as a means of livelihood, I shall say of work as a marketable article. A marketable article is something that can be bought and sold, and that can always be bought and sold. When it has been sold, and the price paid for it, the transaction is

ended. I protest absolutely against this conception of work, whence can arise only hate and ingratitude. It is a disgrace to say to the workman, "You are paid for that, and I owe you nothing more;" and it is a disgrace to the workman to say, "I do this because I am paid to do it." Without doubt, all work deserves its compensation, and each man should be able to live by his labour; but to pretend that after these dealings all is at an end, is to reduce man to the condition of a mercenary, and to deprive him of his character of a free citizen. What shall I say? It is to degrade him lower than the nobler animals, and to put him on a par with mollusks and oysters, which possess few organs besides their stomachs. Work gives a man not only the right to eat, but the right to be respected, an equal consideration with whoever works, his share of all that is human. Let no one talk to me of the law of might. The might lies much more in the hardness of our hearts than in any economic necessity according to which he who works most is always paid least. If we remember that human labour merits something more than this cold pay, which is

often thrown at a man rather than given, the condition of those whose labour is crushing would soon be changed.

As for him who says, "I am paid, therefore I work," and who only works for that, he acknowledges that he sells himself. He avows that his motive is money, and that what he does interests him for no other reason. If he were paid, he would do exactly the contrary. And, in truth, it is thus that he reasons: "After all, one must live!" This is what many people say when they are criticised for the sort of work they do, for their shameful commerce, for their venality. A sneak thief said to me one day, "You know I must live." "Then if I paid you more than you can earn in this way, would you turn round and denounce other sneak thieves?" "Certainly, Monsieur." He was logical, and he who would serve two hostile powers at the same time, taking pay from both, would be still more logical.

This is the end to which the conception of work as a means of livelihood and as a saleable article leads us. Such ideas are a disgrace to mankind! They must be attacked like wild

beasts; and we must disinfect ourselves against them, as against the plague and cholera. But why all these considerations? Why should we make them here? I wish to show that work is the mainstay of life; and, in order to do so, we must first get rid of all the unhealthy and unjust notions which deform it, and hinder us from recognising its real character.

After this I will appropriate the formula which has been so badly applied, and I will affirm that nothing is truer, as has been said, than that *man must live*, and that man works for his life. The mistake consists in believing that a man lives when he has sold himself for a piece of bread, or for a little money; for, in truth, he who does this is twice dead. To live is equivalent to saying that one increases and grows in every part of one's being, in one's heart, in one's intelligence, in one's conscience, in one's affections, — in all that makes us better and stronger; and in every domain, nothing is acquired except by hard work, and nothing belongs to us except by right of conquest. Work is the great organ through which man assimilates his nourishment; and the more elevated, compli-

cated, and precious his life is, the more important becomes the kind of work he does. And the life with which we are concerned here is not that of the individual alone: all labour is done by the individual for the benefit of the world. Whoever fulfils any useful function should fulfil it with his whole soul, feeling that he is working for all. Human labour is a large co-operation wherein everything, from the simplest and most obscure manual labour to the most complicated, and from the most elementary intellectual work to the highest, is united in one effort and converges towards one end. Humanity works for life; that is to say, not only for existence, but for truth, justice, benevolence, which are its flowers. Whoever joins in this work is by this work ennobled. In this immense labour which we may compare to the construction of a beautiful building, he should apply himself to his task with the same pride, whether he be mason, sculptor, architect, or plasterer.

Work is a great revelation. It discovers to man his dignity and the value of everything

that costs him pain. The idle man is consumed by *ennui*. He despises others because he cannot respect himself. However sumptuous may be the outside with which he covers his useless existence, a secret voice whispers to him that he is at bottom good for nothing, or only good to be thrown away. The ant who works, the bee who gathers honey, the smith who strikes his anvil, the pupil who spells, every one who works and suffers, pronounces on him as they pass the sentence of death: "He who does not work shall not eat." And though he should sit down at laden tables, he dies of mental starvation. The source of life is closed for him. On the other hand, he who works feels himself at home in the immense living organism. The movement of the whole encourages him and sustains him, provided that he feels that his effort is useful to the whole. If any one thinks that artistic work is the only occupation which permits a man to put his whole soul into his work, he deceives himself. All work, provided that it be intelligent, honest, and useful, can be done with one's whole heart. And it is only under this condition that it becomes

profitable to society and to the labourer himself. I do not know if it is easy to understand what I am trying to say here; but I know that it is indispensable that one should understand it.

As for me, I know of nothing finer than a man who loves his work, who feels the poetry of it, its peculiar charm, and gives us the impression that he believes in it while achieving it. We call this working with conviction. The sceptics and the idlers pronounce this word with a malicious accent. They confound a man who works with conviction with one who is deceived. In reality, nothing is more inaccurate than their opinion, and nothing is greater than the things they despise. The essential thing in life is to arrive, despite fatigue, annoyance, and the thousand little contrarieties inherent in each state, to a comprehension of the inward meaning of the whole. This is the happiness and consolation of life. I have this idea so much at heart, and it seems to me so important, that you must permit me to repeat it once more, while making use of a simile.

To those who look at their work only from the outside, on the material and often common-

place side, it appears to them gloomy and colourless. It seems to have no meaning. It has neither charm nor value. It is like looking at the windows of a church from the outside, at the windows of old cathedrals that have grown dark and dusty with time. Everything is lost beneath a monotonous, formless grey. But cross the threshold, and penetrate to the interior. Immediately the colours stand forth, the lines are seen, the tracery becomes evident. There is the marvellous play of the sun through the sparkling stones, a feast for the eyes, a triumph of art. This is the case with human activity. We must look at it from the inside. We must try to penetrate sufficiently far into our career, our vocation, to perceive through the forms which, from without, seemed dim, the effects of a light which falls from the eternal heights.

Through all human effort, through the long and patient ingenuity of man and the obstacles of all kinds which he has encountered, the labourer comes to divine in part the secret meaning of history. The great work of the centuries can only interest him who takes part

in it. And further, the soul of creation only reveals itself to the toiler. He perceives everywhere effort and hope, and comes to understand the meaning of one of the most beautiful mottoes which the wisdom of the centuries has found: *Fac et spera!* "Work and hope!"

I stop here without having said all that I should like to say. It would be easier to count the stars than to enumerate the splendours of work. It is sufficient for me to have indicated them. Experience alone can make one understand the profound peace, the courage, the exuberant joy with which the heart is filled, when one drinks from this animating and generous source.

IX.

FAITHFULNESS.

I die where my heart is. — *Old Device.*

Woe to those who forget! They not only lose the value of their experience, but the sentiment of their individuality. They know not who they are, nor what they are worth. — EDGAR QUINET.

CHAPTER IX.

FAITHFULNESS.

SOME one has thus summarised the line of conduct of a noble human life: we must walk through darkness to the light, of which we have caught but a momentary glimpse.

This is scarcely the programme of the majority, which might thus be formulated: to conceive a mass of ideas, to approve and exalt first one and then the other according to the caprice or interest of the moment, to make schemes and plans, only to abandon them all and pass to others.

The great majority of men resemble those painters who have never finished a picture. They have portfolios and studios filled with sketches. If these sketches even revealed any unity of purpose! But this is exactly what they lack. The artist has made successive essays in most opposite styles. And none of these beginnings show any advance over their

predecessors. There is nothing but chaos and incoherence. At the end of such a life, the unfortunate man looks back and generally complains of his bad luck or of an unappreciative world. He sees with bitterness that others, with less talent than himself, have succeeded, while he, with all his ideas and genius, for he always thinks he has it, has arrived at nothing. There are a few who perceive that the enemy of which they complain resides in their own bosom; but it is too late to take advantage of this discovery: they cannot begin life anew.

And yet men have a sufficient number of examples before their eyes to teach them wisdom.

The patient and unswerving efforts which Nature gives to her work are so many lessons. Her evolution is accomplished with irresistible slowness and logic. Everywhere we perceive tenacity and sequence; never any interruption or haste. I am seated on the shore of the ocean. The sand left by the waves dries in the sun and then the wind sweeps it up, grain by grain, and piles it slowly into immense dunes until they become veritable mountain chains. What careful work!

It is coarse, however, compared with Nature's formation of crystals, vegetables, and animals. Nothing is accomplished without this rigorous economy of forces, each one fulfilling its office and converging towards its end with imperturbable calm. Why should a man seek to dissipate his energy, to divide it, to destroy it by lack of continuity?

Let us have unity in our lives. Let us do few things and do them well. How foolish it seems to say this! People will wonder why I dip pen in ink to write such platitudes. Has n't the whole world known this for a long time? This is exactly the unfortunate part of it. All the world knows it, and nobody lives up to it. We continue to dissipate our intelligence and good-will until we no longer perceive any effect from them. And so I shall not allow myself to be cried down by those who invoke the terrifying name of M. de La Palisse. I have a fixed idea, and I wish to make others understand it. My fixed idea is that steadfastness is the indispensable quality of every man who one day does not wish to be obliged to say: "I have wasted my life."

A man should not incessantly change with every impression of the moment, but should remain steadfast when he has once determined upon what is right. Of what use are the flowers if they do not produce fruits, and of good ideas if they are not transmuted into deeds? We must encourage stability, habituate ourselves to remain constant, and when we are sure that we are right, must fortify ourselves against invasion. Do not let criticisms or attacks disturb you.

Nothing is so difficult as to remain faithful. At each step of the way outside influences are brought to bear upon us to make us deviate or retrograde. And if there were only difficulties from without, it would not matter so much; but there are those from within. Our dispositions vacillate. We promise one thing with the best intentions in the world; but when the time comes to keep it, everything is changed, — the circumstances, men, ourselves; and what duty demands of us seems so different from what we had foreseen, that we hesitate. Those who will fulfil on a rainy day a promise which they have made on a sunny one, are few and far between. And

so we go on casting our hearts to the four winds, giving it and taking it back again, breaking with our past, separating ourselves from ourselves, so to speak. And when we look behind, we no longer recognise ourselves. We see ourselves in the days that are past as a stranger, or rather as several strangers. This is the more heart-breaking as man has at bottom a great desire for stability. This traveller is ever seeking a home; he covets a fatherland. From the perpetual mutability of the conditions of life he derives an impression of melancholy. To have a corner where he can lay his head, some place where he can settle down and take root, is the dream which he brings back from his peregrinations. But to gain this, he must build his house and cultivate his garden; he must have his love, his faith, his work, to justify his passage here below and enable him to lead a useful life and die in peace.

There is nothing like a steadfast man, one in whom you can have confidence, one who is found at his post, who arrives punctually, and who can be trusted when you rely on him. He

is worth his weight in gold. You can take your bearings from him, because he is sure to be where he ought to be, and nowhere else. The majority of individuals, on the contrary, are sure to be anywhere but where they ought to be. You have only to take them into your calculations to be deceived. Some of them are changeable from weakness of character; they cannot resist attacks, insinuations, and, above all, cannot remain faithful to a lost cause. A defeat in their eyes is a demonstration of the fact that their adversary was right and that they were wrong. When they see their side fail, instead of closing up the ranks, they go over to the enemy. These are the men who are always found on the winning side, and not in their hearts would be found the courageous device: *Victrix causa diis placuit, sed victa Catoni.*

But there are others who are fickle from vanity. It seems to them poor taste not to change. First, because it is monotonous; and in the second place, because it is a sign of limited intelligence. A man of intelligence, who has many resources, cannot be content with one idea, one

work; to be the champion of one cause. He must make the world believe that he has more than one string to his bow.

There is one kind of fidelity that is daily attacked: this is veracity. To break one's word is rather a sign of an open mind than of a low and dishonest soul. A talented musician who respects himself would not be willing to play only one tune. He changes both the tune and the manner. I regret that an ability to break one's word, fail in one's engagements, betray one's friends, is often described as clever, in a time when cleverness passes for one of the greatest qualities of man. All this is the result of a profound cause which I cannot sufficiently stigmatise: this cause is the debasement of man's promise. What is a promise for people who pass their days in making promises? When a thing has been abused to this point, it loses all value. How can you expect that a gossip should put his whole soul into each word he speaks? He drops his words as a tree does its dead leaves, and forgets them as soon as they are fallen. We are so accustomed to the emptiness of promises that a thing once

said is no longer sacred. Our word is no longer respected as a part of ourselves. That a word is a deed, and that after having given it we should become its slave, is an idea that is going more and more out of fashion. And this state of things is a source of weakness.

I am humiliated to be obliged to speak of another virtue, the sister of veracity; namely, honesty. It becomes as difficult to speak of either as to talk of the rope in the house of a man who has been hanged. Honesty, in fact, has been limited to the sonorous homage we pay to it in words only.

I am not a pessimist by nature. Honesty exists, I know. We have a thousand proofs of it daily. I am delighted to recognise it, and the good which I do not see consoles me for the many infamies which I see too clearly. But what frightens me is that honesty seems to be out of fashion with us, and that many think that to be honest has an air of imbecility, and no longer believe in it because they judge others by themselves. What also frightens me is the co-existence, in the minds of many men

who pass for honest, and are so in part, of two different standards of morality.

We have a morality for Sunday, which is upright, has clean hands, and would disdain to keep a penny that belonged to others, or to commit one indelicate act. And this is the morality which we teach to our children. But it seems rather too exalted for our own daily use. We shut it up in our chests and closets, like our precious plate which we use only on feast-days, and surround it with profound respect. For ordinary use we have an every-day morality, accommodating, flexible, elastic, which allows us to profit by sharp bargains and get out of scrapes. I have seen astonishing things, and what distressed me most was that no one else thought them astonishing. Here is one instance among a thousand. An honest man finds himself, after a series of misfortunes, in a compromised situation. If he pays all that he owes, he can liquidate his debts and emerge with a lost fortune, but with a clear conscience. He can also, by means of certain easy and customary combinations, so arrange his affairs as not to pay everything, and so keep a pretty

slice for himself and his family. His character does not allow him to hesitate; he chooses the first method. Very well; this man is called before the tribunal of his friends, of his neighbours, of his children, of his wife, and treated by them as a fool, a bad economist, a father without pity. "You wish to bring us to the workhouse! And what will your daughters do if they have no dowry? And who will receive us when they know that we have lost everything? Do you believe that your creditors will be grateful?" etc., etc. — Here is a man who is despised, and who, because he wished to remain upright, loses what is more precious than his fortune, — the affection and consideration of those belonging to him. But the very persons who now treat him so badly sang the praises of honesty when their interests were not in jeopardy. That was the time for their Sunday morality. To-day they make use of the other kind. They are like cats, who, according to the occasion, show you their velvet paws or their sharp claws.

A profound duplicity, a discrepancy between words and deeds, between appearance and real-

ity, a sort of moral dilettantism which makes us according to the hour sincere or hypocritical, brave or cowardly, honest or unscrupulous, — this is the disease which consumes us. What moral force can germinate and grow under these conditions? We must again become men who have only one principle, one word, one work, one love; in a word, men with a sense of duty. This is the source of power. And without this there is only the phantom of a man, the unstable sand, and hollow reed which bends beneath every breath. Be faithful; this is the changeless northern star which will guide you through the vicissitudes of life, through doubts and discouragements, and even mistakes.

X.

GAIETY.

Vous irez devant vous, — non sans buter aux pierres,
Non sans meurtrir vos pieds aux ronces du chemin,
Mais vaillants, refoulant vos pleurs sous vos paupières,
Et, — la plume, ou l'outil, ou le glaive à la main,
Le cerveau toujours clair, le cœur toujours humain, —
Ayant contre la vie à certains jours méchants
L'idéal qui sourit et la muse qui chante !

FRANÇOIS FABIÉ.

You pursue your way, not without stumbling against stones,
Not without hurting your feet from the roughness of the road,
But courageously, pressing back the tears that spring to your eyes, —
With your pen, your instrument, or your sword in hand,
Your mind clear and your heart kind,—
Having with you, as a charm against evil days,
An ideal that smiles at you, and a muse that sings.

CHAPTER X.

GAIETY.

I WOULD not hurt the feelings of those who weep for anything in the world. I would rather weep with them. I know too well what humanity owes to grief to experience any sentiments in its presence but those which are expressed on bended knees and with joined hands. This being understood, I shall be able to speak my opinion freely and to break a lance with the enemies of gaiety.

I picture Beneficence to myself with a smiling countenance, animated by an inward serenity which triumphs over all the difficulties of life, and even over its severest trials.

And evil appears to me morose, with a dismal countenance that darkens even the most brilliant joys. It is repugnant to me to see righteousness wearing the livery of night, and

going about attired in black. Black is the symbol of pessimism, the sign of nothingness. Consequently I distrust those gloomy moralists who preach righteousness with a sinister mien. They seem to me like brooms covered with dust, which spoil what they were meant to cleanse.

And what I say of these moralists applies equally well to all those who are trying to lead a righteous life. Discard your sombre air! Is it not fitting that the gay humour of brave men should bear perpetual witness to the splendour of righteousness?

It is a singular way of honouring duty, — that of seeming to drag it through life as a burden, instead of wearing it as a crown. A long and mournful countenance would lead one to suppose that you lacked confidence in the final victory of good, or that you still regretted the evil distractions and forbidden pleasures which you have renounced.

There are a thousand good reasons why you should allow the ideal which you serve to pierce through even the most serious cares.

Above all, I love a courageous gaiety, — one that can accomplish great deeds with smiles and

song, that gaiety of the soldier who makes the best of everything, seasons his thin porridge with a joke, laughs over his primitive bed, the inclemency of the seasons, and hums the tunes of his native country while firing his gun. This gaiety is attractive, is inspiring. Indeed, when you see people carried away by this enthusiasm, you can but envy them, and long to follow in their footsteps and imitate them. I do not know why this disposition of the soul touches me as well as inspires me. Perhaps it is because I have often witnessed it in most trying moments.

Here is a family who is suffering the greatest anxiety on account of an operation which one of its members is to undergo. The hour has arrived. The physicians are there. They approach the patient. Will you think them frivolous and hard-hearted if they are cheerful; if they conquer the heavy atmosphere of anxiety that rests over the house, and their own fears, and the numerous preoccupations which possess them; if they go to the invalid with smiles, with comforting words, with a gay humour? Would you say that these physicians were hard-

hearted, and had no sympathy for the poor creature whose flesh they are about to cut and tear? Will you not rather think that they do well, and be grateful to them for their gaiety as for a good deed?

When the relations in a household are strained, the members of different opinions, and a storm is about to break, would you be angry with any one who was calm, and discussed the burning questions at issue with delicate tact, and thus avoided an explosion?

One day after a little matinée given by some young people, two old women, who were very poor, came to me with tears in their eyes to thank me: "We have laughed so heartily. It is years since we laughed so. It is difficult to live when existence is so hard!" Then I understood that we must place Molière and Labiche among the benefactors of mankind, and all those who, like them, have known how to make poor mortals smile, who weep so often.

In reality, gaiety is a triumph: the triumph of mind over material obstacles. It is a ray of sunshine on a stormy day; a happy messenger

who comes to tell us that all is not lost, that hope remains, and will remain always in spite of all things.

Let us here consider for a moment all those timid and querulous persons and that large army of the crabbed who pretend to have the monopoly of seriousness, and who only caricature it. What do these people do? They embitter all disputes, and make every situation worse. They augment discord by their murmurs and complaints. They drown themselves on dry land. They throw sand into the machinery, where gaiety drops oil. When men of this stamp meet together in any painful situation, instead of co-operating with one another they accuse every one, cry out against men and God, and finish by censuring one another. What ridiculous creatures they are, and how important they think themselves! There are days when it would seem as if the world were created for their annoyance, and that all nature had entered into a conspiracy against their serenity. "Such things only happen to us! These things happen on purpose!" In every situation of life, they think themselves misplaced. To how

much better advantage they would have appeared somewhere else, with chosen companions who were more worthy of them! They do not know how to be rich or poor, well or ill, sad or gay. Coming in contact with them is like coming in contact with a porcupine, while they regard themselves as so many unfortunate victims, so many pariahs whom every one avoids.

Young people, do not imitate them! Such a spirit is the worst sort of impediment. Not only is it unproductive itself, but it sterilises everything about it.

Let me recommend gaiety to you. It knows how to be at ease everywhere. It is cheering, enterprising, pliant. It is not blind to obstacles. It has nothing in common with a continual flow of pleasantry, nor with that stupid optimism or naïve contentment of material people who seem to say: "My friends, I have eaten till I am filled, drunk till I am satisfied, may the universe make merry!" But if gaiety perceives obstacles, it knows how to conquer them. It has many means at its command, does not spare its fatigue; it is not discouraged by

wasted efforts, and knows the rare art of beginning over.

It is the duty of every man to cultivate a moral state which will render him equal to the emergencies of life. To devote ourselves to both our corporal and spiritual re-creation, is not only our privilege, but our duty. We must renew the oil in our lamp and polish the glass, or it will soon cease to give light. Recreation, pleasure, innocent distractions of all kinds, must not be relegated to the category of the superfluous, where the utilitarians would so gladly banish them, but must be classed with the necessary. It is bad for man to pursue his labour until he loses all pleasure and joy in it, and renders himself incapable of continuing it. Learn to husband your forces; stop sometimes, in order to start again with a firmer step; learn the art of amusing yourself and amusing others: it is one of the sweetest privileges of humanity.

And do not imbibe any scruples from persons whose virtue is gloomy, who know not how to laugh heartily, or sing gayly, or become children again for an hour by laying aside the

garments of worldly conventions. Cultivate joy without fear: it is a source of strength which God has created for brave hearts. Otherwise we would be obliged to admit that all the good things of life, its smiles, and whatever relaxes our nerves, cures our spleen, clears our ideas, were made for the wicked, the idle, the men of evil lives, who abuse life's enjoyments and degrade all that they touch. Would it not be absurd to believe this? Gaiety is the secret of the courageous, and one of their recompenses. They alone really know it, as they alone are worthy to know it.

XI.

MANLY HONOUR.

A UN JEUNE HOMME.

SONNET.

Lorsque la chair gouverne et que l'instinct rebelle
Donne à la volupté le sceptre de l'amour,
L'âme, vers les bas-fonds entraînée à son tour,
Y roule avec la chair et s'y flétrit comme elle.

Mais quand l'âme est maîtresse, et d'un coup de son aile
Loin des brouillards épais monte jusqu'au grand jour,
Elle ennoblit tout l'être, en son royal séjour,
Et prête au corps lui-même une beauté nouvelle.

Sois fort, sois fier, sois homme, et, sans la devancer,
Attends l'heure sacrée où tu pourras presser
Sur ton sein resté vierge une chaste compagne ;

Et l'étoile du soir, blanche au bord du ciel bleu,
Vous renverra l'écho de la sainte montagne :
" Heureux sont les cœurs purs, parce qu'ils verront Dieu."

Année des Poètes, 1892. (Sans nom d'auteur.)

When the flesh governs, and our rebellious instincts
Hand over to voluptuousness the sceptre of love,
The soul in its turn is dragged down
And wallows, and with the flesh is defiled.

But when the soul is mistress, and with the stroke of her wings
Flies far above the dense clouds into the clear air,
She exalts the whole creature by her regal presence,
And lends even to the body a new beauty.

Be strong, be proud, be a man, and do not anticipate
The holy hour when you shall press
To your virgin heart a chaste companion ;

And the evening star, pale on the edge of the blue heavens,
Will repeat to you the echoes of the holy hills :
" Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

CHAPTER XI.

MANLY HONOUR.

Is it true that honour has a different meaning for men and women? Does woman's honour lie principally in her modesty and man's in his courage? It does not displease me to make this distinction, and to acknowledge that this may be true. But then I beseech men to keep themselves pure for the sake of their courage. Is it not more manly to be able to resist one's desires and govern them than to be at their mercy? Is it a good preparation for the struggles and perils of life to begin by capitulating to sensuality, and holding out our vanquished arms to it, and bearing its yoke forever after with the docility of slaves?

Is not sensuality, on the contrary, rather a favourable soil for the growth of every vice?

One of the most respected teachers of youth in our time, and one who certainly could not

be suspected of monastic ideas, used to say to his young disciples: "If the opportunities of exercising your wills seem to you to be too rare in your ordinary existence, here is an excellent occasion for practice: try to govern yourselves honourably in all things relating to love. Seek to remain chaste. You will strengthen your wills by constant effort, and your vital power will be increased by your restraint instead of weakened by dissipation."

This is counsel which I echo with all my heart. I do not underrate the number of struggles, the amount of heroism, — the word is not too strong, — which will be required by the youth who seeks to follow it. I do not hide from myself the difficulties, even the disadvantages, of such an effort. And it is only after turning the delicate problem over and over again in my mind, that I resolved to advocate this austere line of conduct. More than one will feel he has not the courage to adopt it. Others will be conquered after hard and vain struggles. Others again will deride the idea as Utopian, and cite the physicians, not to mention the cynics and scoffers. But when there

is only one road possible, I cannot point out a second. And God be praised that this one is possible! Chastity is possible for a young man who has the courage to elect it; and from the physical point of view, the great majority of physicians will tell you that the disadvantages of it are not nearly so great as those of the opposite policy. Moreover, we have only to look at the youth about us. The physical condition of our young men leaves much to be desired in all classes of society, and exuberance is certainly not the dominant characteristic. Under what régime could it be cultivated to better purpose than under one which looked to the conservation of all one's vital forces? From the point of view of morality, the answer is obvious. For the sake of gratifying the desires of an hour a man should not lower his dignity and enter upon a path where he will be exposed to such degrading compromises and shameful possibilities. No matter how legitimate this need of our nature may be, it must be restrained and kept in its proper place. Woe to the man whose appetite governs him, and whose intelligence, conscience, and dignity

give way before it! Under all circumstances it is better to suffer than to degrade oneself.

I have always thought that to have a low opinion of masculine honour was a curious way of proving oneself a man. I would like to go a little further. What I recommend is not monastic chastity. Those who practise that, seek to correct Nature, whom they despise. I, on the contrary, would follow her while respecting her. Of all the mysteries which the Supreme Will has placed in us, none is more inscrutable than life itself. The transmission of life is confided to our care. It is from this point of view that I would like to make every youth realise that he is a man, and feel a noble pride in the fact and a profound sense of the responsibility resting on him. The source of life is not ours alone. We have no right to disturb it, defile it, or confiscate it. If each one of us owes himself to his country, and to humanity, from whom he has received everything; if the man who honours himself most is he who consecrates his intelligence, his labours, his fortune, his influence, to his country and to the salvation of his fellows, — he must not lose sight

of the fact that all this activity has for its aim and principle, *life*. What purpose would your best deeds serve if, by profaning the sources of life, you sinned against a good that was indispensable to the very existence of others? We forget too easily the sanctity of life. It helps a man to feel respect for himself, to feel that life proceeds from God, and that it gathers up in itself all the pain of the past and hope of the future. When a man understands this, he willingly sacrifices a fleeting gratification in order to keep it pure, strong, invincible, and to transmit it undefiled as he received it.

Hitherto we have only considered the subject from the man's point of view. But the problem grows more complicated when we study it from the point of view of the man's conduct towards the woman. And as we are considering it as a question of courage, no one will contradict me when I affirm that courage is the sister of love. All that is opposed to love is opposed to courage. Each time that you commit a deed contrary to true love, you are guilty of cowardice, not only towards yourself, but towards the woman. In proportion as true love is

generous, kind, and devoted, mere passion is cunning, cruel, calculating, and egotistical. It is not generous to contribute to the degradation of a woman even if she be among the least respectable of her kind in common eyes. She is always a woman; and just as it is cowardly to kick a dead man who can no longer feel it, so it is cowardly to add a jot to the shame of any creature, even if she be fallen so low that she is no longer conscious of it.

It is not generous to accept and take advantage of the love of a pure young girl and play with her sentiments, if one does not love her, and has no intention of making her share his life.

I am neither partial nor pessimistic, and I have no reason to exalt the woman at the expense of the man. But I cannot avoid observing life. And I am forced to avow that there is one chapter wherein woman shows herself to be man's superior in the matter of generosity and sacrifice: this is the sad chapter of forgotten and betrayed love. There, on the one side, I see much naïve confidence, forgetfulness of self, and true tenderness; on the other, many fair

promises, odious betrayals, cold and despicable calculations.

A man does not clear himself of such shame by going into the field and giving sad proof of his manliness with a few sword-thrusts or pistol-shots. The best measure of a man is his conduct towards woman.

These are a few points which I submit to the consideration of young men who are not indifferent to these questions, and who do not think that they can remain honourable men while trampling under foot all that honour holds most dear. Vulgar morality is very sure of its opinion. It proclaims its cynical ideas on chastity, woman, and love with admirable assurance. But I judge by the fruits of its doctrines: I ask an explanation of the world of degradation, suffering, violence, and despair which it creates. It cannot find a word to justify itself.

Let us turn to more cheerful considerations. I am going to speak of the compensations reserved for those who respect themselves and women. Though, if there were no recompense for the privations accepted for the sake of

honour, I should still see no way to avoid them.

But these recompenses exist. There is one, and the greatest of all, which never fails, and that is the consciousness of having done right: a lasting pleasure which is well worth a man's passing gratification.

But there are others. In the first place, all desires conquered transmute themselves into joy in living, the faculty of being happy. "Pure love is a fountain of poetry, joy, enthusiasm, as well as of power and courage. To those who practise manly chastity belongs pre-eminently the secret of virtue. Virtue is but the epitome of all the qualities that flourish in this high and holy atmosphere. 'T is here we find steadfast, unconquerable hearts, far-seeing eyes, arms that are capable of dealing mighty blows. To my mind, this concentrated vigour, this proud consciousness of dignity and strength, is the greatest recompense of all."

I go still further, and affirm that no love exists except for the chaste, not only because they alone know how to love who can, if need be, sacrifice pleasure to love, but because chas-

tity is the condition of love. Much that is called by this beautiful name is but a vain shadow. People say, venal love, as if the two words did not cry out to find themselves side by side! Where there is venality, there is no love. As soon as love is bought and sold, it no longer exists. So one says, sensual love, ignorant that one might as well say, stale wine or dead fire.

We can never affirm too explicitly that youth is the dupe of this sensuality which promises what it cannot give. This is one of the most incontrovertible refutations of so-called positivism. Love exacts the entire man, and what is noblest in us is most to its liking. To try to limit the innate luxuriance of this sentiment, which is a world in itself, to the narrow confines of sensation, is like trying to place the ocean in the hollow of a child's hand. And yet what man is seeking through all these miserable makeshifts is true love. One might almost say that all the errors of man, and even his corruptions, are only distorted manifestations of a profound need which lies at the bottom of every human heart: the need of

loving and of being loved. The poet has said, and he never spoke more truly: —

"If you wish to be loved, respect your love."

I wish I might persuade all those young persons who read these pages, that love is the conquest of the valiant; that one must first be worthy of it, and that one becomes so only by remaining pure. For the man who loves and respects love, a world of intimate happiness is opened where the profane may not enter: a look, a clasp of the hand, a flower, fills him with a joy which has no equal. Love reveals itself to him as the great mainspring of life, as the inexhaustible source of beauty, benevolence, poetry.

More than this, when a man is capable of love and worthy to be loved, there remains at the bottom of his heart, even during times of misfortune, neglect, absence, and the greatest sorrow, a divine ray, a penetrating perfume, like a breath of the spring breeze playing among the flowers and trees. The spring of life flows within him, and he is not at the mercy of things without. He can say: —

"My heart hangs no more on the rays of the sun."

Compared to these treasures which increase by use, of what value is the merely sensual gratification of those who respect neither women nor their own persons? We can appraise its value by studying their countenances, their discourse, their lives, made up of vulgarity, weariness, and indifference. Love, — they do not believe in it; they have never known it. Like that great philosopher who is said to have scoured the heavens with his telescope without finding God, they affirm that love is a chimera. For them the fountain of life is only an empty cistern or a foul sewer.

XII.

THE FEEBLE.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FEEBLE.

WHILE writing these pages for the benefit of those who are trying to become men; while urging them to cultivate their strength, to husband it, to discipline their nature, to respect in themselves the sources of life,—I have constantly made one sad reservation. An inward voice whispered to me: This is all very well for those who are healthy. Power is the attribute of people who are well. But what can you do with the sick, the infirm, with those whom an obscure and sad destiny has condemned to languish? I might have said, after all, that if I succeeded in persuading a few strong youths to arm themselves for the combat, my end would have been accomplished, and my recompense complete. But I have refrained from using this argument. If I have done so, it is not from a sentiment of commiseration for those whose existence is one long pain. This senti-

ment possesses me, it is true; and I know no more agonising problem than that presented to us by mutilated, broken, and deformed youth. But it is precisely because I have sought to penetrate this darkness that I have discerned therein certain glimmers of light. If these pages should ever fall between certain frail hands, under certain eyes that have often wept, I should be very happy if they were understood and brought a little light.

It is my conviction, and I have brought it back from the land of misery, as one picks the flower of hope on the edge of a precipice, — it is my conviction, then, that the feeble have a spring of moral force. And when all other sources fail, this one, like the source of tears, does not cease to flow. I would say to certain creatures who seem to be crushed beneath their helplessness, that they exercise a function of the highest importance, and that their weakness is a power of which the strong have need. This might be some comfort to them.

Let us notice, in the first place, that the man who is excluded from ordinary social intercourse by some grave infirmity is not necessa-

rily excluded from humanity. On the contrary, he turns with greater energy towards man's common origin. His suffering is a perpetual reminder of it. Active life classifies men according to their interests, their parties, their social positions. Their sentiment of solidarity sometimes becomes weakened. Secondary preoccupations become the principal thing. Before feeling themselves men, they feel that they are rich or poor, labourers or employers, politicians or clergymen, materialists or spiritualists. Some great trial, such as sickness, sweeps away all accidents of the surface and levels all conditions. Nothing makes us feel more strongly that we are brothers than misfortune. The invalid who, in the midst of his daily pains, comes to perceive that his moral sense has grown refined, and that he discriminates more delicately than others the thousand details unnoticed by them, soon discovers that although he may not be workman or physician or lawyer or notary, he has none the less his task to accomplish: it is to cultivate in those around him the sentiment of humanity. He soon perceives that he is being delivered from much servitude, and that this

chain, though it holds him in a way, brings him also a certain liberty. I have seen grief bridge abysses which no industry, no good-will, could ever have crossed. Unhappy men, suffering under the same conditions of weakness and dependence, are drawn towards one another by an invincible impulse; and whatever may be their worldly situation in other respects, — the one may be born of rich parents, the other of poor, the one may be cultivated, the other illiterate; or there may be a difference of religion and nationality, — that which unites them, namely, their common misfortune, is stronger than all that separates them. When two children of the same country meet one another at the antipodes, the fact that they are compatriots attracts them. In their mother-country perhaps they would never have known one another, though they might have rubbed elbows every day.

The great thing to be remembered is, that what unites men is stronger than what separates them; we are united by what is innate in us, separated by superficial circumstances. He who makes this discovery enters into pos-

session of a power, and becomes an element of force for others. No man, whatever his social position, can find a more useful task to accomplish than that of recalling to others the fact that we belong to a common humanity. The invalid can do this better than others, because, in the first place, he is a living example of what he preaches, and in the second, because every truth gains by being proclaimed by as feeble instruments as possible.

We pass to another region where the power of those who suffer appears even more clearly. In the mind of humanity, the man who is ill is an eternal and touching protest against the right of the strongest, because for any one who has a spark of nobility in him, no manifestation of victorious force is comparable to this feeble cry. Utilitarian morality, the scientific doctrine of the struggle for existence, of the extermination of the weak, may at certain times seem proved to coldly logical minds. But the presence of a weak and feeble creature, above all, when he is dear to us, is alone sufficient to confute all these so-called positive theories. Everything is then changed. Force can be opposed to

force, a person who defends himself vigorously may be attacked; but it is difficult to attack the feeble, to pursue those who are unarmed. Their weakness is their protection, and this weakness is at times so eloquent that it often wins the greatest victories.

Weakness, then, is one of the channels through which the revelation comes to man of the existence of something mysterious, something more puissant than any physical force. Rendered sacred by his feebleness, it was the helpless stranger who inspired these words which we cannot too often repeat to ourselves: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

The sick man has a special office to fulfil towards those who are well, for they also have their infirmities. Health indeed constitutes an infirmity of a distinct nature, inasmuch as it eventually incapacitates a man for enduring suffering. The impatient and instant discouragement of vigorous men when they are ill is well known. Can one blame them? They are but novices. They are only learning to spell the

alphabet of the language familiar to those who weep. There is an old anecdote which the blind tell to one another in their hours of recreation, and which recounts how, in a certain year, the fogs in Paris were so thick that the inhabitants had to get the pensioners of the Quinze Vingts, who were used to finding their way about in the dark, to act as guides. I do not guarantee the truth of this story; but what a lesson it contains! The strongest man may sometime have need of the cripple to guide him through the labyrinth of misery to which he is unaccustomed, and wherein he would lose himself. Are you vanquished and disturbed by momentary trials? Go and sit down by some one whose continual lot it is to suffer. You will learn many things by the simple comparison, and you will be less depressed when you depart.

And how will it be if these martyrs not only suffer, but have come to accept their infirmities and have learned pity in that hard school? They will commiserate and console you, and speak such words to you as they alone know how to speak. They will forget their great

misfortune in order to think only of your small one. Nothing in the world is so comforting.

When we come to consider courage, we cannot forget those who have given us examples of an almost superhuman courage, and whose long and patient endurance has almost exhausted suffering itself, as the anvil ends by wearing out the hammer. It is good for us to study this side of life. We then discover realities which have hitherto found no place in our calculations and plans. This weakness which fortifies, and this poverty which enriches, make a man pause and consider, and little by little his soul opens to the old and holy truth of which the cross is the eternal symbol: in suffering lies the salvation of the world. I summon the utilitarians, the apostles of might, the prophets of nothingness, the pleasure-seekers, before the tribunal of the feeble. For you they are as nothing; they do not exist. The survival of the fittest would demand that they should be put out of the way at their birth as useless and cumbersome. And if humanity were like the beasts, such might be the method of procedure. How is it that we have never been able to make up

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XIII.

FEAR.

The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? — *Psalm* xxvii.

CHAPTER XIII.

FEAR.

THE opposite of courage is fear, a strange and redoubtable power. We must not imagine that its sombre reign existed only in the times of ignorance and barbarism. Fear undoubtedly held preponderating sway in the primitive human world as in the animal world. To distrust everything and to fear everything; to have its eyes open to every form, and its ears pricked up at every noise, is the lot of the poor hunted beast. It was also the lot of man in the days when he found himself unarmed against animals more powerful than himself, and in the presence of the untamed forces of Nature. The amount of fright experienced by humanity in its humble beginnings must have been enormous. Indeed, fear is our most ancient enemy, and it is not yet conquered. On the contrary, I consider epochs of great refinement very favourable to its growth. Barbarism and extreme

civilisation meet at this point, as at many others. In all nations there is a period of fine vigour and confidence which corresponds to sturdy youth and strong maturity. A sort of natural intrepidity and healthy security characterise them at these epochs. But later they become superstitious, like certain old people, and everything frightens them.

The complications of life, factitious creeds, effeminate habits, extreme restlessness, the debasement of conscience, the ideal of an inferior realism which sets enjoyment before man as the aim of his existence, delivers him over to fear. He is afraid to suffer, to give up his ease, to be constrained to make an effort, and, above all, he is afraid to die. This is the fear of fears. The elder Cato knew what he was saying when he cried to his effeminate contemporaries, "We are too much afraid of death, of exile, and of poverty."

Woe to him who is afraid, for he will immediately find a master to take advantage of him! This, our weak side, being known, we are led by it as the bear is led by the ring in his nose. Fear makes slaves of us. Those who take ad-

vantage of man's fear are innumerable. Among them the most cunning are those who frighten men for the sake of reassuring them, in order that they may be regarded as benefactors.

There are systems of government founded on fear, religions founded on fear. Many methods of education have no other foundation And to crown all, there is a morality founded on fear. This morality reduces itself to this: the good is to be found where there are no risks to be run, no blows to be received, no money to be lost. Many men have no other rule of conduct. They may thus escape certain common vices, but they certainly escape being good men. To remain honest, to do good to your neighbours, to speak the truth, to have the courage of your opinions, — in a word, to do your duty, — cannot always be accomplished without running a certain risk. Good actions entail their consequences, and sometimes by no means pleasant ones. It is well to know this, especially when one is young. If a fear of consequences sometimes prevents evil, it much more often prevents good. No; fear is not a sentiment on which to found morality. It is

pre-eminently a demoralising agency. I submit this reflection to those who are to-day, and very legitimately, concerned with teaching hygiene to the young. There is nothing better, provided they do not exaggerate. By exciting an excessive fear of disease in the individual, they run the risk of not only making him die by slow torture, but of rendering him pusillanimous. An excessive fear of microbes, of contagion, of destructive agencies, is the beginning of cowardice. Take care that the man who is so exclusively occupied in running away from unhealthy influences does not end by fleeing from himself. Duty is very often unhealthy. The fear of catching cold, or even a more serious illness, must not hinder you from being men!

I wish to speak now of a form of fear against which no one can be too well armed; and that is the fear of ridicule. A proverb, which is essentially French, declares that ridicule kills. The creed of a great number of our compatriots does not extend further. We must get rid of this national belief as of a disgraceful weak-

ness. Ridicule only kills those who fear it. To be called ridiculous is not a sufficient reason for beating a retreat. Where is the idea, invention, institution, man, or act, that has not been called ridiculous? "You are ridiculous," is the last argument of those who have no other, and is the equivalent in another form of a blow with the sword, or an insult, both of which prove nothing and never can prove anything. All that is best and most sacred among our possessions, the purest glory, and the most incontestable merit, have been scoffed at. Ridicule is so little fatal that it has tried in vain to kill the things that are most ridiculous. Men of intelligence and heart have laughed at stupidity, vice, grotesque customs: stupidity flourishes, vice prospers, the grotesque parades itself. And sceptics, cynics, and impostors have railed at faith, virtue, truth: faith is not dead, virtue remains, and truth is immortal.

We must be rational, therefore, where ridicule is concerned, and must say to ourselves that each person always seems ridiculous to some one. At bottom, if anything is ridiculous, it is this foolish fear of ridicule. For he who as-

pires never to be ridiculous is like a man who wishes not to walk either with his right foot or his left, or to jump with both of them together. It is impossible to escape ridicule; we must contrive to be able to brave it with a tranquil conscience. Then we shall perceive the hollowness of this manikin that frightened us. He has no power against a person who is not afraid of him. Alas! we think too much about him. Youth sacrifices to this terrible divinity. If it only sacrificed its defects, I should not mind. But it sacrifices its good intentions, its treasures of confidence, its enthusiasm, its piety! To throw the gold which one holds in one's hand into the pit because the passer-by finds it a ridiculous object, seems to me too sad. Let us rise and recruit our allies against this spreading plague!

I conjure every young man to question himself very earnestly on the subject of fear. It is a question of life and death. Just as alcohol is much stronger than the wine from which it is derived, so is fear infinitely more fatal and injurious than the circumstances which evoke it It is better to fall a prey to beasts than to phan-

toms. How sad is a life perpetually agitated by fear! I pity the man who pursues his way like a hunted animal, hearing the cries of the mob behind him, and knowing neither repose nor tranquillity. For there is always some cloud on the horizon, some snake in the grass, some fire that smoulders, some robbers that threaten, some microbe lying in wait for us, some scoffer who is looking at us. We can say of fear as the believer said to God: "If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there."

There is no external refuge from fear, since its abode is in the heart. And it is there that we must attack it.

Young friend, examine your heart. Are you afraid, and of what are you afraid? Tell me what you fear, and I will tell you what you are, for the quality of the man is shown by the sort of thing he fears; but I will also tell you how to conquer your fear. And from what malady would you rather be healed than from that? Is there any joy possible for him who sees the sword of Damocles eternally suspended over his head?

Here is a little advice which may aid you to conquer your fear. I acknowledge that the means are humble; do not despise them, however. We must learn little by little, as the ancient soldiers said, to drag our carcass where it is afraid to go. There are nervous fears, and others which have their seat in the imagination. When we learn to perceive that the exterior reality does not correspond to the formidable agitation we experience, we have taken a step in advance. There is a profound psychological fact beneath the German expression: *Ich fürchte mich.* Translated literally, this means, "I am afraid of myself." And, in fact, the kingdom of fear lies within us. It is not the objects which terrify us, but the state in which we allow them to throw us. Recall the two characters in the "Magic Flute," both of them of terrible aspect. Their mutual fright makes them throw themselves at each other's feet at the same time, with the cry, "Spare me!" How heartily we laugh at the two fools! Yet we often resemble them in our insensate cowardice. Let us avow it humbly, and try to correct it. We must become familiar with what we fear; we must walk

around it, touch it, and examine it. What seems gigantic at a distance often seems natural at closer range. To fly from what we fear is not the way to lessen our fear; quite the contrary. Some are afraid of the night, like children. To walk alone along a road or through the forest frightens them. If such be their case, the best means is not to take to flight at the first noise heard or the first shadow seen. The more they run, the more they will be afraid. They will come to believe that the devil and his men are at their heels And in every instance it is the same. Woe to the fugitives! The greater the number, the greater the disaster, for fear, like courage, is contagious. It must be resisted as soon as shown.

We must make use of the same means for taming and calming ourselves as we use with skittish horses. As soon as they swerve from the straight line or even prick up their ears in a suspicious manner, we tighten the reins or touch them with the whip. This helps to reassure them. It is obvious that we must watch a skittish horse more closely than others. And when we know that we are impressionable, easily

frightened, likely to run away, we must distrust ourselves. Our imagination and our nerves announce events like those excited messengers who arrive out of breath to hurl some terrifying news at us. Half the time they have only seen from afar, and seen imperfectly. You must never believe them entirely, but reserve your judgment, control yourself, and await further details. A man runs into folly otherwise. A group of timid persons who exaggerate everything, and work on one another, resembles a crowd of madmen. A calm man in the midst of this saraband of epileptics seems like a gift from heaven. He has soon made the least excited understand that the situation is not so serious as they imagine; and even if it were, being panic-struck is the last way to meet it. Of all the helpful qualities possessed by a courageous heart, this of being able to reassure the timid, to arouse the despondent to courage, to bring a little tranquillity, order, and light into the chaos of opposing elements, is one of the most precious. The thing most to be desired, in time of peace as in time of war, in private life as in political life, is a steadfast soul.

But it must be confessed that all of these particular efforts, despite their relative efficacy, are but insignificant aids to help us to courage.

If the great support be wanting, the whole structure remains incomplete, and there is always danger that fear may destroy it at some unexpected moment. The great support is this: it is the birth in us of something that banishes fear, and this something is love. Fear has its roots in our egotism. The watchword of every one who puts his whole hope and happiness in himself is, Tremble. In this lower region of life where egotistical interests and aspirations reign, there is no moment of security. We must learn to love something outside ourselves, something greater and stronger. True courage, that which is not the growth of a day, and the result of mere physical valour, has its source in love. At the bottom of every genuine life lies the sacrifice of one's self. The courageous man is he who throws himself into the fray for the sake of truth, justice, the defence of the weak, the salvation of his country; it is he who, even when he has no formulated belief, perhaps, yet loves life because of the

higher good to which he can consecrate it. He feels convinced that life does not mean eating, drinking, and making merry, but that it is a consecration of all one is and has to those invisible realities which alone give meaning and value to earthly life.

If you desire serenity, a calm mind, a happy freedom from care, you must join your forces with those superhuman forces whence the strength of man is derived. When you have placed your standard higher, and your only fear is the fear of committing a cowardly act, you will be delivered from all lower fears. On that day you will understand what the man who has no God but himself can never apprehend. The man who is ready to die for justice is the only man who understands why he lives. The man who at every instant is ready to sacrifice himself through love, is the only one who lives and enjoys life. He alone is free who has given himself to God. The fear of the Eternal banishes all other fear.

All courageous acts depend on this disposition of the heart. The secret of all great energy

and the ascendancy which it acquires lies in the fact that behind the most trivial word and deed is felt a determination to go to the end.

I would like to finish with the words of a young soldier after his first battle. Some one asked him what he had felt, and he answered: "I was afraid of being afraid, but I was not afraid." The brave fellow! Let us try to be like him: let us always be afraid of being afraid, and then we shall never fear.

XIV.

THE STRUGGLE.

Ich bin ein Mann und trage ein Schwert. (I am a man, and wear a sword.) — HAUFF.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. — SAINT PAUL.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STRUGGLE.

I HAVE pointed out some of the sources of energy. Its use is sufficiently obvious from its nature, as I have tried to describe it. But it may not be without profit to add a few remarks on the subject.

Energy is meant for action. And as man cannot act except in some determinate way, either for the good or against it, all action inevitably assumes the character of a struggle. Every act is a conflict. Combat is the word most frequently heard on the lips of our contemporaries. Some of them welcome it; others curse it. I shall seek to open a path midway between these two extremes.

To put an end to conflict is impossible. Life is a conflict. As long as it lasts, conflicts will endure. There is no getting away from this. To counsel us not to fight is to engage us to abdicate and to declare that life is an evil. To

say that the struggle is undertaken for life, and to understand by that, material existence, is to affirm that life is the supreme good. This may be true for the beasts, whose greatest misfortune is to perish. But for man, life is not the supreme good; otherwise how could we explain that the best among us are those who are ready to sacrifice their lives for something which is to them of more value than life? How can we explain that there are circumstances for every man under which it would be cowardly for him to cling to life? How explain that the exaggerated fear of death is always a cause of servitude and debasement for mankind? How explain the consideration of the strong for the weak, which is the foundation of our modern philosophy? How explain the invincible hatred felt by the noblest of mankind for all violence, tyranny, and plunder? We cannot ignore these facts. In face of them, we cannot say that the low and brutal struggle for material existence is the law of the world, — one which an incomplete observation has mistaken for the central motive of the drama of history. The supreme struggle of any creature is for its supreme good;

and in the case of man, his supreme good is not life, but justice. The great and righteous struggle is the struggle for justice. All other conflict is but the imperfect image of this.

In speaking of war, properly so-called, I would like to add that it is rare for human affairs, and especially great conflicts, to present themselves under well-defined aspects of good and evil. But we can always affirm this: The essential character of a war depends on the amount of moral force and ideality interwoven with the material interests and necessities involved. It is an inferior kind of war that is undertaken for bags of rice, mines of gold or coal, and political intrigues. I would rather fight for the Holy Sepulchre. There was much more moral grandeur in the Crusades than in a large number of the very positive enterprises we are accustomed to decorate with the name of great wars. We may bring thousands of men into action, spend millions, destroy and sack cities, bring into play all our material and moral resources, and yet be animated only by miserable motives. We ought rather to call a great war one for which we can feel enthusiasm,

and one in which the stakes are such that a man can suffer and die without saying to himself: "What was the good of it?" When a man marches to death, the least he can ask is, Why? And yet this satisfaction is too often lacking to him. How many battles are worth the blood that is shed? If we could not say that they have prevented our energies from falling asleep, and have given occasion for precious exhibitions of courage and devotion, we should have no consolation. This is not a polemic against war in general. My intention is to show that this word has many meanings, and that we can neither condemn nor approve of the institution *en bloc*. The thing that strikes me painfully in the ordinary polemics against war is the utilitarian idea behind them, and also the frightful descriptions of all the suffering entailed. It is not the blood shed that makes war so terrible, nor the wounds, deaths, fears, and unspeakable catastrophes. For when these are endured for the sake of justice, liberty of conscience, or national integrity, who can hesitate? What hecatombs would not be better than the ignominy of slavery accepted through fear of suf-

fering? What horrors of the battlefield could be worse than peace at any price! We must not desire peace for utilitarian motives. It is not because of its cost that a war must be shunned; we all know that the best things are the dearest. Utilitarian reasons are very poor reasons. The end of utilitarian morality is meanness, corruption, and filth. Blood is better than mud.

I know all that can be said legitimately against an armed peace; I know the widespread vice engendered by militarism. But the question is not reduced to that. Who can tell us that this utilitarian age has not, despite itself, begot its own counterpoise in its military institution? Would our society, as it stands, be capable of creating a school of discipline, abnegation, and a tradition of impersonality, comparable to the army? Who knows if the nations, in their present state of rather low morality, are not called upon to watch one another and excite one another, in order to escape somnolence and decay? International peace will come when the world is worthy of it; at present, perhaps it would only hasten

universal decay. However that may be, no one will contradict me, I am sure, when I assert that the soldier is one of the most admirable figures in the world. When Saint Paul wished to depict a Christian armed for justice, he borrowed his terms from the equipment of the soldier; and Christ himself, the great apostle of peace, has said: "I am come to bring the sword."

But let us return to our subject, which is the struggle, while using the word in its most general meaning. As long as evil, iniquity, and violence exist in the world, every man worthy of the name will feel obliged to combat them with all the forces at his command.

Everything that we do, we do with this conflict in view. A good soldier, whether he eats, drinks, sleeps, exercises his muscles, enlightens his mind, or polishes his arms, does so with the aim of being the better able to fight.

He is not allowed to do anything that will diminish his strength. And the great question for each individual is, How will my actions count in the struggle for justice? — A man is not complete unless he is armed.

Nothing is finer than a combat, if it be a righteous one, whether carried on by the sword, word, or pen. For nothing is unimportant in it. Those who sound the clarion, those who provide nourishment, fulfil their function as well as the sentinel on guard, or the captain commanding the assault. One of the finest examples of human solidarity is exhibited by an organised struggle, wherein each man occupies his place and does his duty; wherein the leader and the soldier are confounded in one action.

Oh, what a valiant warrior is humanity, armed for justice, truth, liberty, for all those powers which deserve to be fought for! Oh, what a splendid school is that wherein so many veterans and companions in arms, united in all times and nations, teach the same discipline, the same devotion, and support proudly the same hardships under the holiest of flags!

Is it necessary to add that the indelible character of the great and good fight, and the distinctive badge of those engaged in it are, "Loyalty, Truth, and Courtesy"? It is important to distinguish between the cause of this perfect cavalier who is for me the ideal man,

and that of all the filibusterers, desperadoes, and brigands of the pen and sword. Down with all perfidious arms and rascality! I confess with infinite grief that loyalty and courtesy are fast disappearing from our combats. It is easy to see the reason of it. We are animated by party spirit rather than a desire for justice. And this is why, in almost all our struggles, justice is the defeated combatant. I conjure all young men who understand the necessity of righteous warfare to purify their arms and their intentions. It is a sin to believe that all things are fair in war, whether it be a war of nations or of ideas.

It is not necessary for the brave defence of one's country to regard the enemy as a wild beast, and forget that he is a man. He who is animated by these savage sentiments is, moreover, likely to feel them for all his adversaries, even when they are his countrymen. He is blind and fanatic, and ready to treat his compatriots as if they were foreign enemies. No nation is honoured in being defended by brutes; it is rather dishonoured and weakened. Fanaticism is like those dangerous explosives which

kill those who handle them almost as often as those for whom they are destined.

The same rule holds good in the conflict of ideas.

You are persuaded that you are in the right, and you attack what you believe to be dangerous errors in philosophy, politics, morals, and religion. And you do well. The worst attitude of mind is that which considers the for and against about equally balanced in all these questions, and thinks that intelligent men do not fight for ideas. But be careful not to imagine that the choice of weapons is a matter of indifference, and that arrows may be made from any wood. When one fights for the truth, one owes it to himself and his cause to be very scrupulous in all his proceedings. And the greater the energy of the attack, the greater the need of conscientiousness. The surgeon disinfects his instruments before using them.

I look upon any one as a malefactor who defends his political faith, or his moral and religious belief, without respecting his adversaries. The ruses, the calumnies, the pitfalls, the betrayals, by means of which one seeks to

advance a cause, always compromise it. Therein lies the secret of the impotence of so many causes that are genuinely worthy. Their promoters ruin them because they fight with unfair weapons. Society finally comes to be a confused *mêlée*, wherein unscrupulous adversaries exterminate one another, calumniating and dishonouring one another, under pretext of serving righteousness, liberty, justice, conscience. Who will deliver us from party spirit, that pestilential virus which is more devastating than deadly fevers and rabies?

A word of comfort now for those pacific soldiers whose hearts are troubled by the perpetual warfare in the midst of which they seem to be thrown. They deplore the fact that somehow or other they are always forced into the position of being some one's adversary. If their adversary were only some one whom they could attack without regret! But he is often respectable, and frequently bound to them by ties of blood or friendship. How hard it is to struggle against those we love and admire!

This is what I would say to these wounded hearts, — Be happy! You are in one of the

most favourable situations for the realisation of righteousness. The sentiments which these adversaries arouse in you will help you to contend with all probity, and to furnish to those whose eyes are upon you an example of what is rarest, — a loyal conflict. It is not you who created the world, and made struggle the law of all progress. You are neither sufficiently exalted nor far enough off to view the whole. Fulfil your immediate duty. It may be that you are attacking persons who are right in defending themselves, and who would do wrong to capitulate. Their duty is to resist, yours to attack.

This is neither contradiction nor sophistry. Let no one say, They cannot both be right. Undoubtedly if a man tried to sustain two opposite theses at the same time, he would be but a *dilettante*. But that two men should be right in upholding opposite ideas and interests is not only possible but necessary, and nothing is more profitable to justice and truth. One is on the right road to the discovery of truth when one is contending with a friend, and there is no danger of bitterness impoisoning the weap-

ons. Moreover, while fighting, they are still achieving two different parts of the same work. And thus one's grief is turned into consolation. It is well that two opposing causes, but two destined to complement each other in a higher sphere, should be upheld by men whose convictions are as strong as their good-will, and who are as fraternal as they are resolute. Do not fear that they will waver or defend their cause lukewarmly because they do not hate one another. The cause is in good hands. It will be better served than by fanatics who will forget it to treat each other as Turk and Moor, and who will drag their standard through the mire of personalities.

I have sometimes found great comfort in studying the lesson taught to us by a simple clock. Look at this clock well: it is an organised and perpetual struggle between the spring, which wishes to fly out, and the pendulum, which wishes to stop. If the spring were left to itself, it would fly off all at once. And the pendulum without the spring would not budge. The motive-power of the one has need of the inertia of the other, and *vice versa*. The admi-

rable precision of the mechanism results from the regular play of these two opposing forces. How many times, while watching this simple phenomenon, I have said to myself: When we contend for authority, liberty, individual integrity, solidarity, science, faith, for the property and right of the poor, are we not imitating this mechanism?

Just so the struggle between the classes, which exalts some and makes others groan, ought to become, if carried on in good faith, a co-operation for social justice. Let each one maintain his right, become the interpreter of the wants arising from his office, of the needs which his particular condition causes him to feel vividly, and provided that there be good-will, an understanding will result from the loyal opposition.

Each man, each tendency of the mind, each nation, has its rôle to play, its word to say in the world. It is for this that they are here. Among these diverse forces some are destined to take the lead. If they had no counterpoise, they would work so quickly that everything would be deranged. Society would be like a

clock whose spring flies off. Others are destined to act as restraints, to lengthen and regulate the movement. But if they acted alone, everything would come to a stop. This is why, whether they like it or not, they are obliged to struggle against each other; let us say rather, to work together, for their struggle is the very life of society. In this struggle, as in all other combats, there are risks to be run, property to lose, wounds, suffering, sacrifices to endure; and therefore I would like to end this chapter with this declaration: One thing only seems to me nobler than to deal blows for justice, and that is to receive them.

XV.

THE SPIRIT OF DEFENCE.

Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. — *Proverbs.*

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. — *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew.*

CHAPTER XV.

THE SPIRIT OF DEFENCE.

WHAT takes place in your mind when you see a powerful creature maltreat one who is weak and unarmed?

I feel a furious desire to run and attack the strong and protect the weak.

Take this instinctive impulse for your conscious rule of conduct. Follow it always without hesitation. It is a better guide than all the prudent wisdom of those who consider the risks before coming to the succour of the oppressed. If you do not follow this impulse, you will become the man of circumstances, the slave of success. You will be the accomplice of the strong, while waiting till he chooses a victim for you. A man, you will yet be worth less than the dog who barks at a robber regardless of blows, or throws himself into the water to save a life.

We speak of the right of defence; it is rather of the duty that we should speak, for the right may be renounced, and it is often more generous to renounce one's strict rights than to assert them with acrimony. But it is permitted to no one to sacrifice duty. I shall try to show to what degree defence is urgent and inevitable; not only defence of the feeble, but defence in general. This will not be a superfluous task, for among the many obscure points of human conduct there are not many more often misunderstood than this. The eagerness and ardour which characterise youth should be instructed on this point.

Not that we have need in general of being urged to defend ourselves. But it is important to know what sort of defence is in question, and in what spirit it should be undertaken. The majority of men are prompt enough at repartee, and extremely quick to take offence. Their sensitiveness is very acute. Every external shock produces on them the effect of a shot in the mountain gorges; the echo repeats it a thousand times and amplifies it until it sounds like the roll of thunder.

For the man whose chief idea is the importance of his little individuality, every offence is a crime of lese-majesty. He springs up at once; but look at him! Is it for defence? It is rather for vengeance. There is no likeness between these two. Vengeance consists of unclean and low personal elements which cut us off from it entirely. It inspires also a sort of infernal joy which the majority cannot resist, and whose attraction may lead us far. We have agreed to disapprove of the law of retaliation: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. This is a mistake. The law is not barbarous. It is a great advance towards justice. For to be content to mete out vengeance according to the offence is to give proof of moderation. How many people in whom the brute is easily awakened would gain by being led back to this law of retaliation! I know whereof I speak when I say that youth is not a time when one has least need to hear these truths. Rancour, although represented with wrinkled face and hollow eyes, embitters many young hearts. I do not intend to lend my voice here to the surly, the quarrelsome, the fretful, to those who have always

some vengeance to satisfy, some spite to pay off. I wish, on the contrary, to set them aside now, in order to avoid all confusion. They are the worst caricatures of the righteous defence which I advocate.

The first characteristic of a righteous defence is impersonality. It is not undertaken for the private account of any one, no matter who it may be. It is an act of justice.

Suppose some one has done you an injury: he may have been guilty of calumny, or theft, or some violent attack on you; it is not primarily your affair. You have neither to avenge yourself nor to ignore what has been done. But humanity and justice having been attacked in your person, you must take measures against the injustice. In avenging yourself, you would but increase the injustice. In allowing yourself to be ill-treated with impunity, you would share in the wrong done and encourage it. You would encourage it not only with regard to yourself, which would be the least evil, but with regard to the whole body politic. You would allow the enemy to make a breach through which he could enter and do harm to

others besides you. If it were not understood that a man would defend himself, the Golden Age of injustice and violence would begin, and all that is honest and pacific would become the prey of the wicked. We are therefore obliged to defend ourselves and our neighbours. The question is not whether he is concerned or I, but whether justice has been menaced and compromised, and must therefore be defended. And what I have said of the individual applies to societies and nations. To fall upon thieves, murderers, corrupters of youth, poisoners of the public mind or health, is not a right, but a duty. And what if I choose to allow myself to be robbed, to be attacked in the street, to be deceived? You have not the right to choose; for when you allow these wrongs, you compromise the right of others of whom you are not the master. You misunderstand solidarity. You establish in your private life a centre of infection, which will be propagated. It may chance that society has not the means to prevent your doing this; but I have the right to say to you that then you will become the accomplice of assassins, thieves, and sowers of immorality.

The same holds true for a nation: it is not your right to carry arms and to defend yourself any more than it is your right to defend your country; it is your absolute duty. A nation has not the right to allow itself to be dismembered, insulted, or even intimidated. If it does it from a pacific spirit, it becomes the accomplice of the enemy, and weakens the right of its neighbours and the general security.

Defence is a sacred thing. And it is for this reason that I think it sinful to discountenance it. However great my respect may be for a man like Tolstoi, I cannot help but find dangerous the paradoxes he asserts on this subject, and which may be summed up thus: "Defence engenders evil. The precautions which we take against offenders redoubles their animosity. A police multiplies thieves and assassins. Laws and regulations of all sorts provoke misdemeanours and crimes. A nation, by defending itself, but engenders innumerable new conflicts for the future. By giving up defence, we would do away with all attack and struggle as by enchantment." These theories are founded, it is true, on the words of Christ: "But I say

unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." But we may ask ourselves if these words should be interpreted literally. And we may remember that He who spake them attacked the Pharisees with great vehemence, and drove the money-changers from the temple with a scourge. Would it not be casting pearls before swine to use gentleness under certain circumstances?

And yet we must remember that the strongest weapons humanity has ever used in its struggle against evil have been patience, pardon, gentleness, and love. They have done more than vanquish the adversary; they have often converted him, which is more difficult. And if we admire the courageous champions who have given their strength in the service of a good cause, we must admire still more those who have aided it by abnegation, silent suffering, and the immolation of themselves. The highest palm belongs to them, and they alone have the right to teach us what is just in the way of defence, because they have practised it in its sublimest form. I think that we are true

to this spirit when we say: "It is an absolute duty to struggle against evil on every occasion, but among the means of defence we must choose the least violent, and only resort to the others in the last extremity." What we must especially never forget is the *spirit of defence.* This is everything.

Just as it is possible to wound more grievously by words than by the sword, and accomplish a work of hate under a gentle exterior, so it is possible to do good and heal by means that are often called violent. The man who resists me by fire and sword when I wish to do evil is doing a deed of benevolence, although he achieves it with redoubtable severity; and if I, who am working iniquity, could understand the motive that animates him, how much he suffers when he pursues me, overtakes me, strikes me, I should call him my benefactor, and should enroll myself under his banner.

* * *

I must be pardoned for insisting on this duty of defence. We have great need to be reminded of it constantly. I see persons everywhere

wreaking vengeance, and very few who understand veritable defence. The majority, when they themselves are not concerned, do not stir. Some of them excuse their inertia by saying: "God, truth, and justice are strong enough to defend themselves; they have no need of us." What gross error! The consequence of this reasoning would be the suppression of all activity. Why should we be here if we had nothing to do? Unfortunately it is through us that evil exists, and there is no hope that it will ever be atoned for and vanquished except through us also. God acts in humanity by human forces, as He acts in nature by natural forces. We may maintain, it is true, that no man is necessary, that the best may be lacking, and the work go on; but we must not exaggerate this way of looking at things. From another point of view, it is just as true and more encouraging to believe that we are needed. And it is a fact that many gaps, many empty places and terrible breaches are left by the loss of certain valiant and active men. Let us never say, then, that the good will be achieved without us. Let us say still less that the evil about us does not con-

cern us, when it does not touch us directly in our property or health. The world is full of so-called good people who reason in this way. When they themselves are attacked, they are the first to cry out for help. These good people should be classed with the cheats, thieves, and calumniators by profession. Their inertia aids in the growth of all these wrongs more surely than the most favourable conditions in the development of microbes. "Let us mind our own business," is a poor motto, for it is equivalent to saying: "My neighbour's affairs are no concern of mine."

Everything is our concern. The maxim, "Do not do unto others what you would not that they should do unto you," has for corollary: "Do not permit anything to be done to others that you would not have done unto you." It is good to feel thus. We try harder to become strong when we feel that some one is dependent on us. Among the happy periods of life, I count those when we are permitted to protect some one. To be there, to hinder a weak creature from being crushed, to act, to suffer for his sake, to espouse his cause passion-

ately, and to have no rest or peace until it is gained,—I know nothing finer than this.

In the Old Testament we read: "And God said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am." Everywhere where there is a just defence to be undertaken, a voice, always the same, calls each man by his name. Happy is he who can rise and answer: "Behold, here I am!"

Young friends, these are things to fill your days with useful meditations, and your heart with beautiful and noble desires, that will help to conquer the evil that is in you. Protect the feeble; protect the poor; protect those who are calumniated; protect the absent. It is ignoble to fight with a pistol against one who is armed with a stick, and, above all, when you are many against one. This is, however, just what we do whenever we take part in an attack on one who is absent. "The absent are always in the wrong." This is a terrible saying, for we must add: it is because there is no one to defend them. Do we understand that in saying the absent are always in the wrong, we are accusing the whole world of cowardice? We must

not submit to this shame. If you do not know the person attacked, show that you do not believe what is said against him until you have sifted the matter, and he has had time to justify himself. If you know him, and he is dear to you, speak up for him if he is worthy of it; if not, make those present understand that it is better to accuse people to their faces than behind their backs. Calumnies and untrue reports have reached such a pitch, both in public and private, that we must take some measures to protect ourselves against them. I have always noticed that one voice raised in the defence of the absent, it might be the voice of a young girl or child, carried great weight even against a multitude of accusing voices, or the silence of the indifferent.

Of all the absent, there are none so helpless as those who are absent forever: I mean the dead. We must defend the dead. When a man is once in his grave, his enemies are no longer restrained. They attack those whom he protected, — his wife, his children; they lay hands on his work. Every time that you have the opportunity of standing up for the rights of those

who are dead, do it. You will experience something in accomplishing this duty that you will gain in no other way. By respecting humanity until death and in death, you will come to understand that it is not enough for a man to die to become nothing. You will soon perceive that the best of what we possess has come to us from those who died for some holy cause. As, alas, there are living men who are dead, so there are dead men who still live! Their memory, their love, their spirit, will penetrate yours. They gave their life for the good of all; and from the mysterious Beyond they watch for others to take up the work which they left incomplete.

What higher grace can we wish for a young man than to feel within his soul the souls of the great dead awake?

Thus, step by step, the defence of justice leads us higher. It is a road that ascends; and when we have reached the summit to which it leads, we catch a glimpse of the infinite life.

XVI.

THE HEALING POWER OF BENEFICENCE.

For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. — *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew.*

The Gospel alone can restore to the soul, even to the most devastated soul, all the verdure of youth, the freshness of the impressions of childhood, and, if I may so express it, all its virginity. — ALEXANDRE VINET.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HEALING POWER OF BENEFICENCE.

THUS, step by step, we have arrived at the point when energy is especially made manifest in benevolence.

Undoubtedly the kind of energy with which we are concerned is always united with benevolence; otherwise it would be but an instrument of cruelty and of savage and destructive rage; but the benevolence is not always equally evident. When it dwells beneath the brazen armour of the warrior, it seems veiled; and it is more consoling to see it at its work, smiling and helpful. Let us dwell for a moment on this part of its mission.

It is solicitous for the victims of evil, for all who are struck down, vanquished, lost. It is to the honour of humanity that life seems to us more touching under its tormented and afflicted aspects than in all the plenitude of its force. Every one admires a vigorous tree, a beautiful

forest in tranquil majesty; but when the tempest descends upon it, shaking it, twisting it, tearing it, we take the part of the tree against the tempest, and its broken branches, its trunk that has withstood the storm, appeal to us more strongly than ever. And so it is at certain hours, our eyes are less fascinated by the rising sun than by some poor little light among the evening shadows, struggling against wind and rain. There are men who cannot resist a cry of distress. As gold attracts the thief, a carcass the vulture, so these are drawn towards misfortune. They have received, I know not by what dispensation, an ordinance which has made them saviours; and as others have been born to do harm and destroy, they are come to bind up the wounds and assuage suffering. Caring less to discover the origin of a catastrophe than to comfort those who have been overwhelmed by it, they have declared a pacific war against wrong. Its immensity does not discourage them; the insignificance of their efforts compared to the number of misfortunes and sins does not make them cast down their arms. In the eyes of sceptics, they are poor fools who are trying to

accomplish the impossible; the positive philosophers smile at their naïveté; but they take no heed, and follow the dictates of their heart. At their instigation, a work of philanthropy has been organised in the world which is solicitous not only for physical suffering, illness, and poverty, but for moral infirmities, weakness of the will, and anguish of the heart. Pity has its tradition like crime, and we should be initiated in it early.

I do not believe that youth should be crushed by the sight of sin and misery, nor that its horizon should be darkened by a too precocious revelation of the sorrows of the world. But it is equally bad to hide everything from youth. It is one thing to be overwhelmed daily with heart-rending recitals and startled by distressing scenes, and quite another to learn that there are beings who suffer, and to be initiated gently into the trials of life. A young man who has arrived at the end of his adolescence, and who has been guarded from all knowledge of suffering and death, is like a victim who has been purposely disarmed in order to be handed over to his executioners with more security. He

is ignorant of one of the primordial laws of life, the law of sorrow. This is a serious lack as far as he himself is concerned, and renders him less useful to his neighbours. How can one who is ignorant of grief feel compassion for it and relieve it?

There are many good reasons why we should bring youth into contact with sorrow. Grief matures and strengthens. It is through this baptism of fire that one really enters into the sanctuary of humanity. One is not a man until the waves of misery beat against his heart like ocean waves against the shore. Grief, moreover, has the power to purify us. A certain lightness of mind is incompatible with it. In fraternising with grief, we form a powerful alliance which enables us to live better lives.

Do not fear that it will diminish joy. This is a mistake. Joy, like everything human that is holy and great, only flourishes under the reign of the common law, and not under that of privilege or caprice. He who hopes to be the exception, and to escape from the common law of suffering and pain, narrows his life instead of enlarging it. He tries to cultivate joy in the

obscure retreat where egotism vegetates, and he might as well try to cultivate flowers in a cave.

Moreover, youth must do violence to itself in order to refrain from sympathising with grief. What is more generous than a young heart? What more ready to be touched, and to fly to the succour of others without looking behind? Life often turns to us a sour face; wickedness and ingratitude harden our hearts. Some of us grow thick-skinned with advancing years. But, in general, when we are young we have not had our senses dulled to the grief of others. There are days when we wish well to the whole universe, when we call down blessings on the unknown passers-by, when we pardon all our offenders, when our hearts are given to every one who suffers and weeps, when we should like to warm the feet of little children with our hands, and in spirit lay wreaths on the coffins of those who pass away without one friendly sign. And should all these sentiments be repressed? No, no. Do not resist your impulses to be pitiful. Help in the work of healing; do your share in the holy labour of hope and beneficence.

Who is better prepared for this task than youth? Youth lacks experience. But experience is acquired by contact with those who possess it, and certainly the unhappy are not avaricious of it. They fear no competitors. Moreover, to be lacking in experience is not to be lacking in means. For the work of pity, youth possesses such powerful means that they almost seem a special grace. We have been told that a flower or a spider has sufficed to while away the tedium of certain prisoners. Nothing is more effectual than contact with youth to charm away sadness, to sweeten and console it. Youth brings with it life and hope. Without much to say or complicated means, it does us more good than many official consolers. If one only knew what part a smile, a visit, a friendly little gift, played in certain humble and unfortunate lives, one would not be sparing of these trivial presents. The old rabbi, Hillel, a contemporary of Jesus, summed up all his teaching of youth in the one saying, "Be good, my child." How many things one would do, and how many things one would give up forever, if one took this device as a rule of conduct!

Benevolence, — it is what we sigh for, because all of us suffer. To open our eyes, to cultivate in ourselves the delicate sense of human suffering in order to divine it, to learn to touch wounds with a light hand, — why do so few men care to devote themselves to this task? It is, however, one of the most humane in the world. Why do we prefer to labour at the inhuman task of irritating and tormenting others, and causing their tears to flow? Be good, my child!

Along the dim path which men pursue, Benevolence alone sees clearly. To her, certain things are revealed which no one else perceives. And this is the reason why she proves all things by her simple presence. She is reassuring, and signifies to any one who suffers and grieves, were he among the least, "Thou art not forgotten." This is why man, wicked though he may be, has recognised Benevolence as something divine. And God never appeared to him more clearly than in the image of a man who, moved by pity for man's sorrow and sin, sacrificed himself in order to deliver him from both.

XVII.

SURSUM CORDA.

To honour God,
To love humanity,
Is to be a hero.
Triades Gauloises.

. . . HOLY FATHER! I give myself to thee to-day in the most solemn manner. . . . I renounce all masters who have dominated me; all worldly joys, and all lusts of the flesh. I renounce everything that is perishable, to the end that God may be my all. I consecrate to thee all that I am and all that I have, — the faculties of my mind, the members of my body, my time, and my resources. . . . Deign to use me, O Lord, as an instrument destined to thy service. . . . May the name of the Lord be an eternal witness that I have signed this promise in the firm and righteous intention of keeping it.

JEAN FRÉDÉRIC OBERLIN.

STRASBURG, January 1, 1760.

This was the point of departure of one of the noblest and most useful lives that have ever done honour to France and humanity. Jean Frédéric Oberlin, born at Strasburg on August 31, 1740, became in 1767 the "Catholic Evangelical Minister" (this was the title he gave himself) of the rude parish of Ban-de-la-Roche, in a valley of the Vosges. During nearly sixty years he was its apostle, civiliser, and benefactor; and he died there in his eighty-sixth year, on June 1, 1826.

In his thirtieth year, he renewed the vow he had made ten years before. In the decline of his life, on re-reading once more his "act of consecration," he added on the margin: "Lord, have pity upon me!" He was then eighty-two. He died four years later (June 1, 1826). The motto which he chose was, "Walk before God." In his will he wrote: "May you forget my name, and only remember that of Jesus Christ."

XVII.

SURSUM CORDA!

If the grain of wheat sleeping beneath the dark earth could foresee what it was to become, it would rejoice in thinking that it united in itself the labourer's toil and God's sun; that it was to be the bread of the future, as it is the hope of to-day. It would submit gladly to its destiny, and accomplish it with love, through its germination, its flowering, and maturity, to the grinding beneath the millstone.

If man could take account of what he is and what he might become, he would do the same. (I have tried, in this book, to show the magnitude of our destiny. I desire to set it forth again in a few brief words.)

What is a man?

A man is one who believes in life, in "the useful passing of the days," in productive labour, in the emancipating power of grief; one

who confides himself to the great Will which is at the foundation of all things.

A man is one who knows brotherly love, who cannot conceive of his own happiness apart from that of others, who is one with the whole, who marches in the ranks and loves humanity as he loves his family and country, with all the emotion of his heart and all the power of sacrifice.

A man is one who tries to govern himself, not according to his passions, his interests, or the caprice and violence of others, but in accordance with the laws of justice.

A man is one who knows how to fight and suffer for what is good, for what he loves, for what he worships. He is one who hates evil, and declares war against it without mercy, knowing well that our greatest enemy, and, in reality, our only one, is sin.

And finally, a man is one who knows how to die; who knows that in giving his life he is not losing it, but finding it: this is passing from the evanescent to the eternal.

* * *

Young soldier on humanity's field of honour, to your post! Do your best. Be valiant, be just, be confident! You are serving a good cause, under a good leader.

When the ancient Gauls were asked what they feared, they answered with superb disdain: "We fear only one thing, and that is that the heavens should fall!" If you are convinced of the inestimable value of life, your heart will become as firm as those of your rugged ancestors; and when you feel yourself tremble before some danger in the path of duty, some one who is greater than the heavens and all the visible world will say to you: "Fear not, for I am with thee."

THE END.