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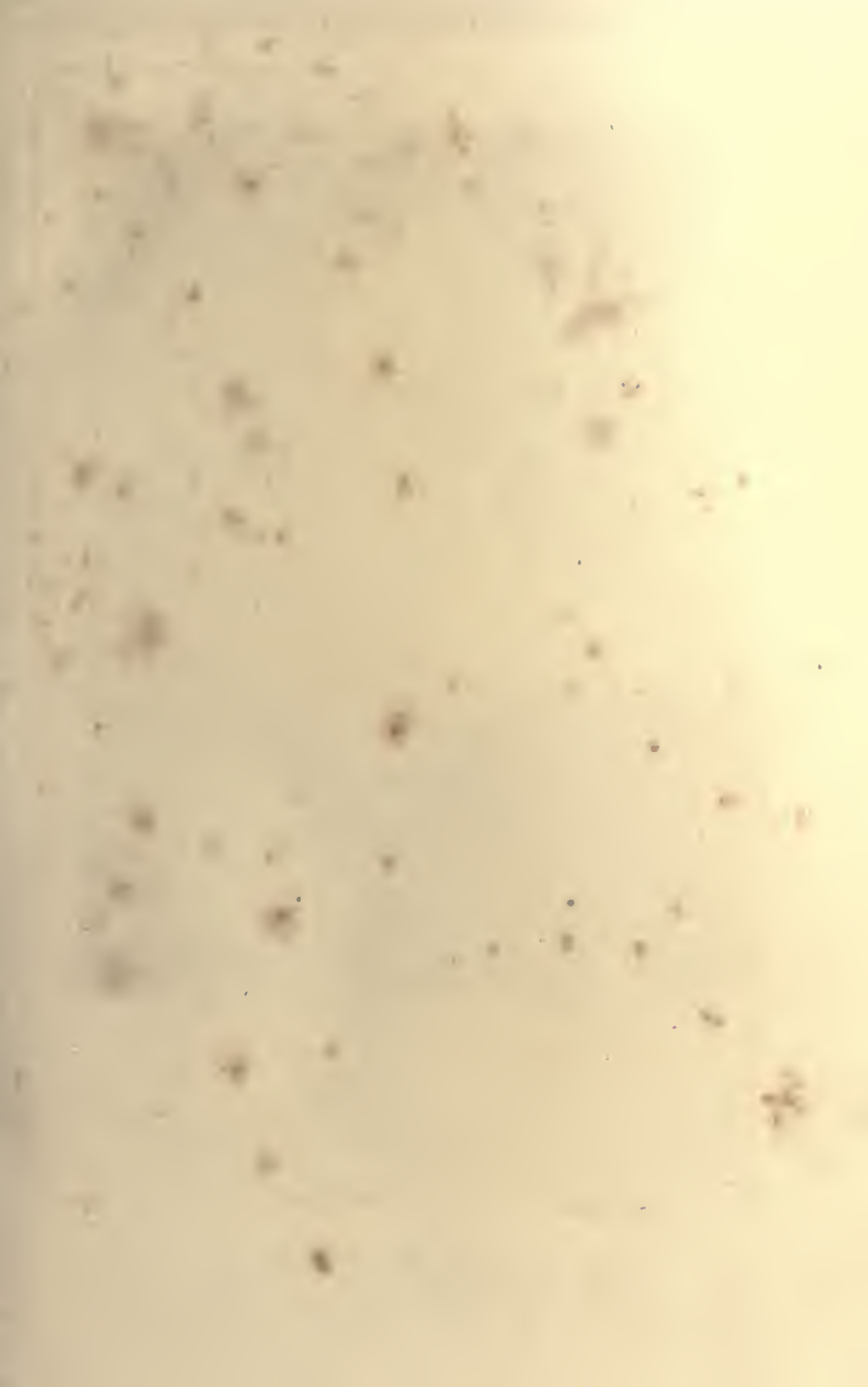
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THE ONWARD CRY

AND OTHER SERMONS







*Herbert Bell Ambrise.*

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*Stopford A. Brooke*

# THE ONWARD CRY

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY THE

REV. STOPFORD A. BROOKE



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1911

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK  
TO MY FRIEND  
THE REV. HENRY GOW,  
IN WHOSE CHURCH AT ROSSLYN HILL  
THE SERMONS  
HAVE BEEN PREACHED





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## THE ONWARD CRY

*March, 1910*

“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven ; and the first voice I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me ; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things that shall be hereafter.”—REV. iv. 1.

IT was a wonderful hour that thrilled into forgetfulness all his prison-pain, when the exile at Patmos who wrote this book heard, like many another prophet, the voice of the Spirit in his soul, so vivid was the inward impression, translated into a voice heard from the outer air and calling to him, “Come up hither, and I will show thee things that shall be hereafter.” And, from the spiritual height he saw the overthrow of evil force and evil law, and the new heavens coming, and earth reborn, and sorrow and sin departed, for the older things had passed away.

It was the passionate hope of his own heart that spoke and filled his soul with prophecy ; and, with the hope, and inspiring it, was that Divine Spirit who gives the wings of an eagle to the uplifting of the soul.

“It was not real,” our wise men say, “it was only

imagination." Yes, I reply, it was imagination, and for that reason it was truth and wisdom. It is in imagination's golden palace that dwell, like stately queens, the abiding truths of life. The form in which the vision was cast was, as in all works of our imagination, the product of the age, of the knowledge of the writer, of the transient elements of his intellectual world, of the prejudices of training—but the living spirit that inspired the ideas, the burning hope for a new heaven and earth which should not be ashamed, the vision of a perfect kingdom and its certainty in God—these, with the truths on which they rest, are as eternal as the things of knowledge are transient, are as wise as the things of the world's desire are foolish. Still, from age to age, with an undying youth, with faith and hope which never altogether fail it, the soul of humanity, renewing like the spring, hears the sound as it were of a trumpet from the eternal world. Its lofty note rings often clearer in times of sorrow than in times of joy. In all hours of national or personal gloom, when we are exiled from success, when the past drops away and the future swims before our eyes, the soul, like John in Patmos, hears a cry, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which shall be hereafter."

This is no flourish of rhetoric. It is historical truth. When Christ began to teach, Greece had died, Rome had begun to decay, Jerusalem was diseased. Gentile and Hebrew art, knowledge and religion, were exhausted or turning rapidly to ex-

haustion, when, in an obscure room, unheard of by the leaders of thought, unimagined by the power of Rome, a few poor men and women listened to the cry, "Come up hither, and see what shall be hereafter." A new spirit was poured out on mankind: old men saw visions and young men dreamed dreams. Who shall paint the passion of that early spring? Who could then dream of its summer and its harvest?

Then, a generation after, the wonderful hopes of Pentecost began to fail. Christ did not come in conquering power. The world's wrath, the world's contempt, the persecution of Nero, almost broke down the courage of the youthful Church. But again, in this hour of deep gloom and pain, out of an exile's heart, this book of triumph over evil, this prophecy of a glory to come, arose and cried: "Come up hither, fainting spirits, and I will show you things that shall be hereafter." Soon the inspiring hopes of the book became the consolation of the oppressed and faithful Church. The Christians rose out of their dismay to conquest of their terrors, and then to conquest of the Roman world.

Often, since then, the same experience has been repeated in the history of the kingdom. Desire of power, of wealth, of the flesh, entered into and diseased the Church of Christ, till the faith of Christ seemed to the scorner's eyes a failure and a shame. But the scorner looked on the tares, and not on the wheat. The undying heart of the love of Christ lived on beneath its apparent death; and when the evil seemed strongest and was weakest, the living spirit

of the lover of men concentrated its power in some self-forgetful man impassioned by love, and for the truth of love; and the Christianity men thought dead arose from the sepulchre with the glory of dawn around it and the angels crying, "Christ has arisen." Who that has watched the world has not known of these successive resurrections? Are they not written in the letters of mankind? One John after another, persecuted to another Patmos, has felt his heart swell with prophecy, proclaimed the regeneration of faith, and, listening in the darkness, heard the ancient voice, Come up hither, and see the new heaven and earth which a higher day of faith shall make for men.

We have been told for some years that Christianity is a failure, that Christ is dead. Many believe that—as if love of God and man, which is Christianity, could ever die; as if the life of Jesus, in its eternal humanity of love and gentleness, of forgiveness of sin, and doing of righteousness, vital with passion for the perfection of God and the perfection of man, could ever cease to be the master of mankind! Already we have heard the voice of the new hope, of the new spirit in the ancient faith; already many have in their ears the cry, "Come up hither, and I will show you the things of God the Father which shall be hereafter";—and the vision God now vouchsafes of Himself to us speaketh better things than this book of Revelation, and in a better way. The tribal pride which deforms this book, its national exclusiveness, its attack on the freer Christians, its



controversial violence, its image of God in fiery and plaguing wrath, its intolerant doctrine, its everlasting division between the bad and good, so that the bad shall never become good—sorrowful iniquities of devotion and of practice that have lasted to our time ;—these, weakening day by day for the last fifty years, are now perishing, snarling, barking, and biting to the last, from the vision of the future Christian teaching, from the faith and hopes of the new religious world, now rising into power, rooted and grounded in love. The life of Jesus has again stepped forth from the tomb of intolerant formalism and superstitious doctrine, and we shall follow it more than ever. Destroy Christianity! Yes, when you have destroyed the human heart.

This is the progress of the teaching of Christ. It moves on like any other vast body of truth, by varieties that embody portions of the whole, or by alternate ebbing and flowing, but at each tide its joyous and healing waters rise higher on the world of evil and drown it more and more. At each new prophecy greater and firmer good, clearer and simpler truth, are established. There is a steady progress. We can claim it in experience. It belongs to history.

Were this experience peculiar to Christianity, we might fairly doubt it. But a similar experience is seen in the moral, political, artistic, intellectual, and social worlds. They begin to move into a higher life under the impulse of some noble ideas, shaped by genius. These grow, quickly or slowly, into a splendid realization. Then the evils which hate the

ideas, and suffer from them, enter into them and pretend to love them. The ancient impulse decays, formalism and worldliness of heart corrupt and exhaust it ; the lusts of power, wealth, and sensual life gnaw at its root, and all its foliage dies. But then when all seems lost, when scepticism of human love and goodness has come into society, when vices seem to have choked all the virtues of the past, when nothing seems true but that man is wholly bad ; when art and literature have died, and science has become immoral and the slave of wealth ; when social life is mean or extravagant, soft, sensual, even cruel ;—out of the rougher, wilder regions of the earth, or out of the down-trodden classes of society, salvation, like a tempest, comes. Men prophesy of the good time coming—men who have heard, in the exile of their sorrow and despair, a voice from heaven in their soul, “Come up hither ; I will show you things that shall be hereafter” ; and in the passion of the vision, they not only see, but make a new heaven and earth from which the former things have passed away. It is reformation—it is often revolution. So it is when a great law-maker reforms government, when a great tyranny goes down to its own hell, when a great poet concentrates his age, when a new impulse falls like fire on literature, when a great scientific conception generalizes into one workable tool a thousand un-united observations, when a lover of mankind sends a fresh and living social thought through the nations, to burn the evil and to kindle the good.

So is it, I think, now, when from below, from the poor and working classes of this country—and, indeed, of many another land—there rises the prophetic cry for a new society, and rings a loud call to repentance or to doom in the ears of those who, deceived as of old by power, luxury, and idleness, have not done their duty to mankind.

Day after day the number, in all classes of society, increases of those who hear and obey the cry, "Come up hither, and see what shall be hereafter." It speaks well for England that it is so widely heard a voice, that what began among the poor has been listened to by the classes whose welfare is assured, and who know that they will have to sacrifice themselves. That is coming which will not pass away. There is a stir, an awakening, in the dry bones of society, a travailing of a new life in the womb of the world; for, as sometimes the image of the sun before it rises is cast upon the clouds of the horizon, so the spirits of great events precede the events. I am glad, before I pass away, to have seen the beginnings of a regeneration of society. I am glad to believe that it will be wrought, not, as of old in France, by violence and revenge, but by patient, constitutional work, in ardent faith and hope; and that the stones of its temples will be cemented by forgiveness, their halls built by justice, and their foundation be the brotherhood of man in the Fatherhood of God. Therefore, the vision that I see is not the fierce and destroying vision of the apocalyptic seer, such as

was fulfilled in the agony of France, of the rain of plagues, and of blood up to the horse-bridles, of hell opening her mouth without measure to swallow the ancient wrongs, but of the wrong-doers, in sorrow for their wrong, led into right by a people willing to forget and forgive.

These things of which I have spoken are in the course of history, and the vision I hope for may yet become a reality in the future of mankind. And, if it should be so, and mankind learn to live, perhaps for many ages, as brothers at last, in high interchange of love and work and of joyfulness in beauty—then a wider close of the fates of man than we can now conceive shall take reality. I seem to see, far off, after many ages have gone by, that the time will come when the whole body of humanity, having worked out of its being all the evil thoughts and emotions and their action which can possibly be wrought out in this environment of the earth, shall, fully spiritualized and at one with all the humanity of the past, be transferred to a higher world, where its complete goodness and love shall be easily attained. Then all mankind shall hear and obey the cry, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which shall be hereafter"; and never cease, through all eternity, to obey with joy that ever-recurring cry, and find, in that obedience, everlasting progress. This is the pentecostal vision an old man who loves humanity may well have now to lighten his pilgrimage to God.

These are large matters belonging to the idea of

the text. I turn now to apply the idea to our personal lives. I ask if ever, from time to time in life, we hear the voice, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which shall be hereafter."

There is such a time in youth when the first barriers of life are overcome; when those struggles towards form, with which our elders rarely sympathize, but which are so full of trouble, have been passed through; when the intellect begins to recognize its power, and the affections to desire forward with curiosity and passion; when the soul, having come into touch with the great and alluring problems of thought, thinks in its delightful ardour that it sees under a clear sky a clear path to their solution. It is a full and happy time, though many a sadness flies through it; and, amidst it, moves youthful energy on wings that seem to bear the soul upwards to a golden goal. We feel a certainty of victory, an assurance that we shall know all we desire; a conviction which is not vanity, but the child of the eager powers of youth, that the keys of the universe are in our hands. It is natural for youth to have this belief; it is a good thing to have it, for it quickens the beat of our heart and the speed of our feet—and we have a long race before us. Moreover, it is well in youth that we should think nothing impossible, for so we win, even with ease, conquests supremely difficult to the slow deliberation of experience.

But in the midst of this conviction that we can master the whole of life, that we are self-sufficing,



and have no more to know, have we not experienced, in an hour of self-retreat, how some undiscovered world of beauty opened before our surprised imagination, and closed again ; or some truth unfolded its secret like a fan to our expectant intelligence, and shut its leaves before we could grasp it ; or some great emotion flooded our soul, and ebbed away ; or some new thought gave us a sudden glimpse of a larger world—and in the experience has not youth's conviction that it knew everything departed ?

What is that ? It is the voice of a greater Spirit than ours saying to our spirit, "All is not yours. Come up hither, and I will show thee things that shall be hereafter." It is God our Father, opening out, from the unknown capabilities of our nature, His prophecy of the larger and fuller life which may be ours if we be true and faithful to His character. In that hour think and pray. Let love, courage, ardour in pursuit, faith in our high calling, some sense that we are not born for ourselves alone, reign within us then. Realize, and it is the most pregnant of all thoughts, that there is One in us and beyond us, who is educating us into conscious union with Himself, who calls to us continually, "Come, my child, with me into a larger, nobler world. With me, the Infinite, you shall never cease to move into the infinite."

Later on in life a different experience belongs to us who have realized in work many of our youthful dreams, who in the full stream of life's movement feel our ship answer to our hand, and keep at every

touch all our sails drawing. We know our work, and that we move the world; every hour is full, every act and thought tells on the whole of our labour. There is no room for other things; fancies have had their day with us, and love and theories; and as to God, He, in the stress of the world, is scarcely thought of.

Again we think that we know all we need to know; again we are certain that our present state is all-sufficient, more certain of this than ever we were in youth. We think we not only know, but have felt all we need to feel, that no part of our soul is unexplored. The solid vanities of middle life are wonderful.

But yet at times, only more rarely than in youth, a haunting whisper comes that the present is not so certain, that we are not so perfectly complete. We see for a moment—as by a flash of lightning in the dark—dim fields in our soul of which we know nothing, whose powers are asleep. We hear thoughts on the lips of a friend, or from some poem or music, which are beyond our apprehension. We touch some story of human life, the motives of which we cannot comprehend, which has to do with passions, or sins, or ideals of goodness, with heights of love and aspiration, of which we know absolutely nothing. And then, in a moment, all our life that seemed so solid trembles beneath our feet. We are swimming alone in the illimitable, and are afraid. We are such stuff as dreams are made on; and then, it may be, that dimly beyond the mist we discern as in a vision



the city of God, whose foundations are not illusion. O, then we know that we have realized only the thousandth part of that which we may become. We think, and often against our will, of an infinite world beyond our satisfied content.

That is a sudden cry, like the voice once heard in Patmos, "Come up hither, I will show thee things that shall be hereafter." It disturbs our life. We strive to ignore it, and the Divine sound of it seems to pass away. But it does not really pass. It comes again, and it finally concentrates itself into a long experience which may fill many years, which varies with varying characters, which does not occur in this world to all men, but which is certain to occur, in one shape or another, to every soul of man, either here or in the world to come.

How that experience comes and continues I will sketch in outline, and everyone to whom it is of interest can fill up the outline for himself.

After years of the unbroken, steady life of middle age, quite self-content, sure of its full knowledge of all it needs, our inner life is suddenly or slowly changed, sometimes upturned, as if it had been ploughed. Our outward life seems much the same. Its engine is on the lines, it is not difficult to keep up the fires; nay, the new motives which have changed us within may heap fresh fuel on the fires by which we drive our daily life. But though the world sees no difference in us, we know ourselves how different we are.

If it is good which has changed our life—some

thirst for righteousness, some longing for the infinite love or beauty, some desire to give ourselves away for men and women—then things are happy, and we know and answer at once the cry, "Come up hither." But the call and the answer are not always so quick as that, nor the experience so happy. For it may be a vast sorrow which has disturbed the soul to its depths and changed our life. Or it may be a slow, deep-scooping change of our faith, of our sight of truth, that brings pain and battle; or it may be the loss or betrayal of love, which we have to bear without losing love; or it may be some great popular emotion for the reversal of wrong, the wave of which swells into our quiet harbour. Whatever it be, it disanchors our ship and drives it out to sea. And we are changed. A new world is born in us. A voice cries, "Come up hither, and I will show you things that shall be hereafter."

But it may not be good, but evil which breaks up our self-satisfaction, or an impulse which ends in evil. A new ambition, a new passion, a new covetousness, leads us into temptation. And before we well know where we are, the storm is upon us; we are borne away into unvoyaged seas in our soul, to visit unknown islands, to find in our heart unexpected continents of love or hatred, of envy or pale desires, revolts against the just claims of God and man, wild hopes, wild despairs, even crime. We look on ourselves with amazement—we, lately so fixed, so steady, so self-complete! What are we now? We do not hear then the voice of God; we are too self-absorbed.

There is within us too novel a world of passion, labour and thought, of tossing joy, dark sorrow, excitement, exhaustion, pursuit, victory, defeat, hair-breadth escapes, all the wild turmoil of a tempted life. Are we not, indeed, like discoverers through unexplored lands, visiting in wonder and surprise regions in our soul of whose existence we have not dreamed before, not knowing from hour to hour what we shall find within our heart, our conscience, our brain—amazed at night, afraid of the morning.

God only knows who of us have passed through this experience, for these matters are not told to men. But He is with us, even in the evil days, though we see Him not, and often turn away from Him. Was not the father's love with the prodigal son, even in his riotous living? And when we begin to pass out of this, having conquered it, or exhausted it, or been exhausted by it, we look back, wondering, on all we have traversed; and seeing the vast changes wrought in a few years, and all the new things revealed to us by the battle, understand at last that our old certitudes of knowing all and having felt all were vanity and folly; that we have many things yet to know and feel; that there are unknown powers in us, yet unused; that, even in this strange way of overwhelming trial, we have heard a voice: "Come up hither, and I will show you things which shall be hereafter." We begin to be aware of the progress of the soul. We are convinced of our ignorance of what we may become.

Some, indeed, go through this experience and get no good of it. They either do not see what it means, or they surrender to the evil in it. They have put off, it may be for this life, their obedience to the voice of God calling to them to come to Him. They will have to obey it, no doubt with added trouble, in the world to come. But this much they do know, that they are changed. They are certain of themselves no more; and this is often the first step on the way to God.

But of the others who go through this experience they know they are changed for the better. They know how little they knew of themselves, and they seek to know themselves in God. They take with joy and humbleness all that, in the trial, has been revealed to them of God and their own soul, of their weakness and their true strength, of the hatefulness of self-desire and the loveliness of self-forgetfulness, of solemn duties and of divine love. These are they who hear the voice, "Come up hither," understand its meaning, and obey its uplifting call. They never think again that the present is finality. They do their work in the world, but are not altogether of the world. For now, they are always expecting, from year to year, to hear new things of God and man—to grow in knowledge of themselves, of their fellow-men, and of the infinite in their Father. It is true they often hear, far off, the pagan music of their past life, and stand listening, allured for a short space. But not for long. Their ear is now attent to catch a diviner music—prophetic songs of joy,

the distant music of successive revelations, of endless life in perfect love. And, strangely sweet in their ears, now thirsting for the glory which shall be revealed, they hear and understand the words of Christ: "I have yet many things to show to you, but ye cannot bear them now." In that way, life, as we draw near to its end, is set forward. The future is always the greater interest. We look forth, like the sentinel at the eastern tower, each day, for a fresher dawn, for higher knowledge of God's life, for a deeper feeling of the righteousness, beauty, and love of the life to come. The vision of the future does not interfere with the duties of the present—nay, it gives them keenness, pleasant hopefulness, and impelling faith. The enslaving regrets, dark memories, sins and sorrows of the past, are now forgotten, or changed into spiritual powers. The forward pull, the passion of our coming life nearer to God, is greater than the tyranny of the past.

At last, we come to die. The world fades away; its noise is fainter on the ear; and, in the hush of death, we hear, lovely and silver-clear, the voice of Jesus calling, "Come up hither." Fire and glory enter into us; but though, in that hour of redemption, these first splendours seem ineffable, we, as the days of heaven move on, shall know that even they are not all we are to know. The first unveilings of the resurrection are but the beginning of a greater, fuller revelation. Age after age, there are yet many things, in that multitudinous infinite, of God, of man, and of ourselves, to know, to admire, to rejoice

in, and to love. From eternity to eternity, in endless evolution, we shall hear and obey, with unabated eagerness, the ever-recurring call : "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which shall be hereafter."



## THE PATTERN ON THE MOUNT

*May 29, 1910*

“See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee on the mount.”—HEB. viii. 5.

THE reference in the text is to that crisis in the life of Moses when in the solitudes of Sinai, wrapped in the cloud that veiled the mountain-top, he spent, as the story tells us, forty days with God alone.

There, it seemed to the writer's imagination, all things were shown to the great lawgiver that he needed for his work ; there also, as the priesthood came afterwards to believe, the pattern of the tabernacle and all its furniture was displayed to him in vision. “See then,” said God to him, thus ran the tradition, “that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee on the mount.”

This is but a slight episode in a long and great story reconceived centuries after the presumed historical events by a writer of poetic and spiritual imagination, from ancient songs, traditions, legends, and fragments of history, and wrought together into a Saga with such a national aim as Vergil had when he wrote the “Æneid,” and with such a religious aim as would rivet into the hearts of the Jewish



people the deep relation God bore to them and they to God. Whoever the writer was, his knowledge and love of heroic human nature, especially in its hours of crisis and exaltation, was profound; and there are many examples in the tale of this knowledge and love, where, leaving aside his national aim and story, he tells of the personal passion of the hero, and of the working of his soul in hours of sore trial or uplifted joy.

This episode, on which I preach, is one of these. As conceived by the writer, it is full of wise teaching, and goes deep into the human heart. He imagined that Moses saw before him—in this retreat of his soul in a transfigured hour with the Eternal Spirit—the image of the work he had to do, its ideal, the pattern even of the outward form of it—a vision of uplifting beauty.

Whenever I read the episode, I seem to catch in it something more than the mere words imply. I feel, behind the story, the suggestion of a spiritual condition through which men and women frequently pass, in hours when they are carried beyond themselves into union with that higher world, where the Divine Spirit, speaking to our spirit, exalts it into the vision of Truth. This suggested thought, the spirit and the human life underlying this episode, is the matter of my discourse.

There are high and exalted hours—such as Moses now passed through—when, if we are of a religious temper, we are glad to be in the silences with God; or when, if our temper is not religious, some great

energy, vaguely felt, seems to speak with us face to face, when at least we think we see clearly what we are meant to do with our life, and are consecrated to that ideal. The experience comes to all who are awake to any duty, any aspiration. It comes in different degrees of vision to different persons and concerning different matters; but the higher and nobler the nature, the clearer and more determined the vision. To all the great prophets of the race, in whatever sphere they proclaim truth, such visions are sure to come with overmastering power. I seldom read the biography of a great man without finding the record of them; and though they are not so lucid or so close to reality in smaller souls, yet they are known by all who have any imaginative or spiritual life, any passionate love of truth. Their coming is one of the facts of human life.

I give one example, put into the poetry it deserves, from the life of Wordsworth. In his joyous, fresh, and fiery youth, he found himself alone on the moorland, and its heart and his own were then washed by the morning light and air.

Magnificent

The morning rose, in memorable pomp,  
 Glorious as e'er I had beheld. In front,  
 The sea lay laughing at a distance; near,  
 The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,  
 Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;  
 And in the meadows and the lower grounds  
 Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—  
 Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,  
 And labourers going forth to till the fields.

Ah, need I say, dear friend, that to the brim,  
 My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows  
 Were then made for me; bond unknown to me  
 Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,  
 A dedicated spirit. On I walked  
 In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.

It is a clear parallel to that which must have been realized by even the historic Moses. It is a parallel to which most of us, young or old, will find a resemblance in our lives.

In those uplifted hours, when thought is blown to its intensest flame, when impassioned feeling makes us forget the wants of the body, and the spirit breathes the air of pure ideas, the ideals of life are revealed to us. We seem to see the Divine pattern of things and truths which before were vague. Some glimpse of the perfect beauty, the perfect good, takes form before the eyes of the soul.

And often more particularly, more clearly, we are conscious of the idea—the phase of His divine nature—which God has entrusted to us to work out in life, the thing for which He made us, and sent us into the world, that part of His infinite nature which He has commissioned us to reveal to our fellow-men. The vision does not last. Again we are recalled to the round of daily life, for it is in our common life that we are to realize, as we can, the glory we have seen. But we have seen it, and as with Wordsworth, it still survives. We cannot forget it. The divine pattern of all we have to do and love has been laid before us, as it was before Moses and Christ.

And then the voice of God falls on our ears, "Make all things after the pattern showed thee on the mountain of your inspiration." It is the foremost struggle of all life to so work and live in this world that we may bring our life and work there up to the level of the ideal vision—be faithful to what God has showed us we may become. It is a grim battle, marked by a hundred failures; but what we have to do is to rejoice in the battle, even when we are beaten down; to realize that if the strife be hard, the spiritual glory is great; to believe that all failure is a revelation of the true way to accomplishment; to look, when we seem to be drowning, to the stars; to call to our side, in all trouble, the courage, fortitude, and faith of Christ; to despise and reject the temptations the world and the devil offer to us if we will only surrender our ideal; to follow the Divine vision, the gleam of God, the eternal loveliness and righteousness, though it seem to lead us to Gethsemane and the Cross.

It is true these visions are not always outlined clearly. They are not filled with clear details; they determine no fixed path in youth. But what is clear in them is the moral aim, the spiritual passion, which is to underlie our life. Later on, when we have found our work and taken our turn, they recur in middle life and in age, and then they speak with greater plainness; but, however downright they may be with regard to special points, it is always to the spiritual temper, to the high thought and passion of the inner

life, that they speak. They are inspirations, not directions.

And now I repeat more fully what I have already suggested. When we dwell on the glory of these inspirations, we must not forget that they are not to be lengthened out by any special cherishing of them so that we lose in them, or in seeking after them, the practical work we must do among our brother-men. They are for encouragement of life, for warning and for kindling, but they are not to be made into life itself. It is possible to exaggerate their value, to use them intemperately, to custom oneself to live always in this air of spiritual and imaginative excitement. When we do this, and leave the life of action for contemplation, we not only lose their true use, but we lose ourselves. They come to the worker, not to the dreamer. They are given that their exalted spirit may be applied to common life, shaped into active forms in the daily world; that their passion may be carried into the practice of love, and their imagination wrought into the commonplace till it ceases to be commonplace. When Moses had seen his vision, he left the mountain-top to embody his passionate experience in the governance of his people. When Isaiah and Ezekiel saw God's light in its terrible clearness, they went forth to press the righteousness of God into the conscience of the Jewish people. When Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration had been uplifted into vast communion with his Father, he left the exalted hour to heal the madman and to seek his death at Jerusalem. When Paul was



caught up into the third Heaven, he made the revelation into redoubled work for the Churches. The vision must always be shaped, or the power and beauty of it decay and die.

If that effort be not made, if we do not strive to make all things in our daily life into the pattern we have seen on the mountain of our ideal, we are more fatally affected than we should be if we had never seen the vision at all. The image of what we might have been, and are not, dwells with us as pain and misery, till in the mercy of God the pain drives us into effort again, either here or hereafter. If the young man, having lived his hour of inspiration, consume his years in dreaming of it, the time comes when the spiritual excitement is replaced in him by the sensual, or when the world and all the materialism of it conquers the cry of the Spirit of God in his soul. And, for the time, he is a lost man. If the grown man, weary of life's work, give it up to pursue ideal visions alone, or retires from the battle—"to be," as he says, "alone with God"—he loses the visions; he loses for the time God, and he loses himself. It is in the battle the inspiring visions come; it is in the crowd of men, and the work for man, that God is nearest and Christ beside us. It is when we are most engaged for and with others, through love and faith and pity, that we realize our true self most clearly and know ourselves in higher place. Not in pursuit of the Holy Grail, but in doing his work among his people, as the labourer to whom a space of land is given to plough, who may not wander from

the allotted field before his work be done, did the King, Arthur, see the visions that made the earth seem not earth and the air not air, and the light of day the light of God, in moments when he felt he could not die, and knew

himself no vision to himself,  
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One  
Who rose again.

At every point the command comes in. If you have seen the pattern, seen things as they ought to be, as they are in God, put them with all your soul and strength into as near an image of that pattern as you can. Form the inspiration into work for men and among them. The vision came of joy—fulfil its joy in healing another's sorrow. The vision came of a moment's inspiration—fulfil the inspiration by continuous inspiration of those who sorely need it. Give what you have received. The vision came of love in you soaring to meet its source in God. It must be wrought out in daily love, or it loses its link to God. Yes, all things in common life are to be made after the very pattern showed you on the Mount of Vision.

This is close to human life ; and illustrations are not wanting. The young artist in his impassioned dream thinks, even prays, that he may give up his whole being to the embodiment of the infinite beauty he has in the fleeting hour of his mountain inspiration beheld in man or nature, when God, though he may know it not, was with him in



the solitude of his soul. And he swears an oath to himself that nothing shall turn him aside from that exalted aim—not wealth, or fame, or any popular cry. Another, full of the passion of reform of the evils of society, dreams that he will bring to meet them the Utopia he has seen. Another, having seen the face of honesty and truth, having realized for an instant in the vision of self-forgetfulness the hatefulness of self-seeking, dedicates his political life to these high aims, and never means to lose them. Another, entering into business, resolves—having seen its ideal—to bring into it absolute honesty, never to touch the dishonourable thing, never to let the love of money waylay and rob his conscience, never to forget that his duty to man commands him, as a duty to God, to work his business more for the progress of man than for personal gain. Others—the scientific man, the theologian, the seeker for knowledge, the Christian minister—having heard for a moment the voice and seen the face of perfect truth, cry to their own soul, in that exalted hour, that they will follow Truth wherever it shall lead them, even to worldly loss and death; never be drawn aside from her pursuit by the desires of popular honour or success; never use their knowledge to do harm to men or to violate the character of God. One and all, they vow that nothing shall ever make them lose love, or injure their conscience, or palter with the truth, or pander to the world—that in all they do they will labour for mankind more than for their own advantage.

And the hours in which these resolutions come home to the soul, and are enshrined within, are those in which God has shown to them, on the lonely mountain in the Spirit, the ideal pattern, and bade them descend to the plains where their brothers toil, and make all things there, among men, after the pattern they have seen. But as life goes on, the vision they have had grows dim, and other aims attack its memory. The world will not have our ideas or dreams, and still less the ways in which we desire to work them ; and swift depression cools our ardour. All we dreamt and imagined is subjected to opposition, to pain, to the betrayal of friends, to our own betrayal of ourselves, to the inroad of passions, to the cool call of the world : "Make your fortune ; fling away your dreams ; agree with us ; come, do what everyone else does. If not, we shall tread you down, and, if you are resolute in opposition, break you." And, ere long, the artist may do his work only for money, surrender his idea to catch the popular demand, forfeit his love of beauty and truth for place and fame, and turn from true passion to dull cynicism ; and the reformer, disappointed of the following he hoped for, turn into the mob-leader, saying what men want, not what his conscience urges ; and the politician, finding unselfishness does not pay, set himself to make himself, and year after year surrender his principles for a place in his party, sweeping the truth he once loved aside with a laugh ; and the business man flirt with the harlot dishonesty, and speculate with money not his own, or treat men and women whom

he employs as mere counters in his game, and do a hundred dishonourable things, from which his youthful honour would have shrunk dismayed, with a smile of pity for his ancient follies. All is right, provided his house is full of society, and his purse of money, and the world at his feet in flattery. "I must play the game," he says. And even those who once loved truth before everything else, whose very duty and joy are in the search for truth—the philosopher, the physician, the scientist, the prophet, the minister of God—are infected by the poison of the world. They use their science to feather their nests with luxury and wealth; their philosophy to win a popular applause; and even in Church and Sect, their religion to rise in the world. It is curious when God Himself is made a stepping-stone to a position in society. The spiritual is devoured by the material.

It is piteous. The success we then win is a greater failure than the failures we make while we pursue the vision God gave us of old. Our soul is devastated for a time. We gain the world, but we lose ourselves and our God. And, worse still, we bitterly injure mankind. Our material success is spiritual failure, and that failure lessens the imaginative and noble elements in the world, makes those who are struggling for those elements feel as if their struggle was in vain, lowers the note of justice, truth, righteousness, honesty, honour, and love, in the eyes of humanity. Our success, when it bears with it the falsification of our ideal, is purchased at a

dead loss to humanity, and in us, with the misery of a dead heart.

It were infinitely better had we been true to our early aspiration, in spite of either failure or the false successes of the world—had we kept close to the pattern showed us on the Mount. It were a nobler fate for the soul had we preferred to be at home in the silence and the mountain strength with God to being at home with the noisier and the lower life ; had we turned with Jesus, when the kingdoms of the world and their glory were offered to him, and said : “I will worship the Lord my God, and Him only will I serve.” We should have then kept through the din of middle life, and through the slow increase of age, our youthful inspiration, and always tasted the animation and clearness of spring—ay, right through autumn and winter. We should have lost much the world thinks gain, but we should have gained those inward powers which, when the world leaves us, and its gifts wither in a winter of discontent, have for us immortal youth, and joy, and love. And the noble things for which we had lived, and which we had supported, through much tribulation, to the end—beauty, justice, goodness, honour, gentleness, self-sacrifice, truth, and ever living love—the things that are the character of God—would have been strengthened and made lovelier by us in the heart of humanity. No more divine success than that can be conceived, none more everlasting in us, in man and in our Father.

Take a more particular illustration. When we

are first in love, or, sometimes, before love comes, when we dream of what it might be, there rises, in the exalted moment of feeling, the vision of perfect marriage—of love made lovelier by the weaving into it of a mutual, but a differing, love of nature, man and God, of all this ever-expanding love knit together, each through each, into one harmony of thought, feeling, and work for others outside our home ; and within our home, for the education, building into character and fitness for their labour on mankind, of the souls whom God shall give us. Nay more, we look for increase of knowledge together, and together for love of beauty, for content at home and abroad, for separate duties done with constant sympathy, for quiet enjoyment of rest, one with another, and for a wise old age, wise in the deepening of the greater love ; two hearts, beating out with diverse harmony, their thoughts and impulses into well-shaped action for mankind. This was the pattern shown us on the Mount ; God's revelation of what love and life should be in marriage.

But its full attainment is not common. That ideal is subject to the accidents, chances and varieties of life, to the irregular incursions of the passions, to the gradual growth in one or the other of unsuspected elements hidden in the characters. It is disturbed by the sudden developments of the individuality which each claims as a right to be acknowledged. It is spoiled by the indulgence of temper ; by the power of unbroken routine ; by social excitements ; by sudden sicknesses and wear-



nesses of life; by the admission of the commonplace; by carelessness of courtesies or grace; by weakness on either side through overweening love; by reserve and by want of reserve; by fears and by familiarities; by continual claims; by making excuses; by jealousies, angers, petty falsehoods, and want of temperance—ah, by a hundred things. Every day, too often, attacks the bond, and the worst attacks are those made slowly, imperceptibly, through small unlovingnesses which grow, till, all in a moment, they become like a flood let loose from a dammed-up lake which overwhelms and lays waste the landscape and the villages of life. How many of us know examples enough of the death of romance, the decay of love, the disenchantment of the early dream.

It is sorrowful, and in most cases it might have been avoided. God had disclosed to us the very ideal and perfectness of marriage. We had seen the pattern of it on the Mount. We ought, in the conduct of the thing itself, to have remembered His revelation, and never ceased to work it into reality. No, to realize this image God has given you, needs steadiness, watchfulness, above all self-forgetfulness; needs daily courtesy; needs to know life and its wearing, and to fit your heart to meet it; needs to love Love in its essence more than anything upon this earth; needs to put that chapter of St. Paul's on Charity into the passing of every moment: "Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil." Is that true of our married life?

Heavy are the forces which besiege the fortress of love.

Remember, when they attack the vision which you saw of old, to violate its beauty as little as you can. But do not dream about it, realize it. And if you violate it, repair the violation before the setting of the sun with love, forgiveness, asking of pardon, doubled courtesy, watchful tenderness. Be worthy of the high vocation to which you have been called. And in the deeper, bitterer, more awful trials, from which God grant you may be free, think with tenderness, recall with love the vision of youth, and give yourself to proving it to be true in the Spirit of Christ Jesus. That is the secret which will keep married life still sweet in the air of romance, and even when heavy misfortune falls, restore it to enough of strength and beauty to make its sorrow into chastened pleasure.

These are some examples ; but the truth goes all round, into every phase of life, and right through the whole of life. We are made to conceive the perfect for which we are created ; and often we hate it, and rebel against the call the vision makes on us. But if we yield to its high charm, as we are likely to do in youth, we are shown, as in a glass, the ideal God has conceived of us, and the fulness of the special work He has, in loving distinction, given us to do for Him among His children. It has to be done against the ideas of the world, and that is a severe battle—but the worst of the battle is within, in the secret of the soul. For, there, we are



weak, like children, and are easily led away from steadfastness. Even when we have fought well in outward life, we are conscious within that we have not shaped ourselves into the image God has shown us of what we ought to be. What man who has ever loved the perfect pattern he saw when he was caught up into the solitudes of God has ever been satisfied with attainment? The image always excels the accomplishment.

That cannot be helped on earth. But, I believe, if we are faithful in heart, that we shall hear, as age grows on, more immediately the voice of God, telling us to be of good courage. "All is not done, my child, He says, "but all shall be done. Look backward now no more on the pattern you saw in youth or in the middle storm of life, of what I wish you to be. Look forward now. That which in the past was your impulse, in the future to which you draw near shall be your goal. The desire of the perfect shall pass into the fulfilment of the perfect. Come home to me, and live in me." Oh, happiness, if, when the hour comes for us to leave this life, we may be able to say, in grave humility, the dying words of Jesus, "It is finished"; and see him, in the glory of his risen love, beckon us into the eternal life, and, as we draw closer, hear his tender voice, "Come up hither, and I will show thee the things that shall be hereafter." That is one consolation God gives to us as our work draws near its close.

There is yet another comfort which comes to us from man. These are those who, having been

faithful to the pattern shown them on the Mount, through failures, fears and battle, know, at the last, that the love of mankind is with them, and will follow them when they are gone ; that they will burn like clear fire in the thoughts and affections of men, women, and children—a strength to the weak, a comfort to the troubled, a refreshment to the weary, wings to the strong, and good sense to the passionate, through the power of God in the work of their life. That is a great and humble consolation, and it is doubled if we can further hope to leave behind in the greater world of human life, beyond the circle of our friends, a spirit which may feed the torch of love and beauty, of imagination and pursuit of the divine, in a world where self-seeking, luxury, thoughtlessness, and a scorn of pity, tend to dim its guiding flame. If we may dare to enter into the secret of the soul of Christ when his death drew near, we may imagine that this was his deep comfort, that not only the Father was with him, but also the soul of mankind in boundless love and gratitude.

Lastly, many experiences will, by that time, have taught us that progress cannot cease. As we have sailed on, revelation after revelation has come to us: new islands of thought have been visited ; new mountains of aspiration have risen ; new stars have opened to us more of the infinite. We have been trained by life to continue pursuing, to believe that we shall live forever in pursuit. The love of the perfect in God, securing by its immortal energy in us eternal life, will bear us onward into the central Love

who was with us on the Mount of old, but who shows us now, not the pattern of divine things, but the things themselves. The approaches of death are dark and lonely. It is human to fear, and the imagination of the unknown often shakes the state of man. But death itself is nothing—a momentary pain, a swift dream out of which one awakes into reality of life, the flight of a bird through an arch of gloom into the sunshine beyond. Think nothing of it; think only that then the vision we have seen in youth, in middle life, in age, shall be shaped into attainment with a fulness of joy.

## THE PATTERN ON THE MOUNT

*June 3, 1910*

“See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee on the mount.”—HEB. viii. 5.

THE drift of the preceding sermon, which took this text as the introduction to its subject, was this: That in hours of exalted feeling, of high hope and aspiration in the soul, either in youth or in after-life, when we were isolated from the world by grave thought or grave emotion, God our Father, Spirit speaking to spirit, revealed to us the pattern of what our life ought to be, the archetype of that idea of each of us, which was in His mind when He sent us into the world to do His work among our fellow-men, and said to us, “Make thy life and all things in it after that pattern.”

To fulfil that call was naturally a severe labour, for the pull of self or the spirit of the world drags us away from it. “Strive to enter into the strait gate,” said Jesus. “In this world ye shall have tribulation,” he also said. For he knew the facts of life, and he was not one of those false persons who tell us that the way to God is a primrose path, with comfortable inns on its banks. He would not have

said, "Honesty is the best policy," in the sense it is often said in the world. What he did say was, That the austere struggle faithfully wrought, brought our soul daily into nearer communion with his soul and with the Divine Spirit of all love and goodness.

Life is, then, a patient effort to build our character and work through giving ourselves away for our brothers into a perfect building, after the pattern God has showed us, or will show us, if we ask Him. That is a prayer which is always answered. And the pattern is not the same as that shown to any other person in the world. The foundation, which is self-forgetfulness, is the same for all, but the superstructure—which is conditioned by our special individuality—is different for each. God is careful, if I may speak in that way, for our personal distinctiveness and for His own variety of creation. No human soul is the same as another any more than any leaf of a tree. And every soul has his own individual work to do, and his own perfect idea of himself existing in the mind of God. "Our life," said St. Paul, "is hidden with Christ in God."

Nor was that thought apart from the teaching of Jesus. I have always loved that phrase of his, "In My Father's house are many mansions" (varied houses for the souls of men). "I go to prepare a place for you." And I can well believe that the "you" was addressed separately to each, or that each felt that their Master thought of him as different from the rest, as having a different place and work



from all the rest of the world in the heavenly kingdom. Yes, God sends each one of us to do for Him a distinctive work, and chooses us for that work. And the work is to manifest in our life a distinct part or phase of the infinite love, or truth, or goodness to our fellow-men. None is confused or mingled with another. That is a truth to realize, and it blesses life to believe in it. For then we know we are not lost in the multitude, but that our Father has a separate personal relation to us, in which we are alone with Him, and He with us. And when Jesus, who felt this truth profoundly—it was the foundation-fire of his life—wished to express it for his disciples in all its intimate and minute wonder, he enshrined it in a saying of passionate poetry. “Nay,” he said, “the very hairs of your head are all numbered” by the Father.

Well, in those swift and exalted hours of which I spoke we see something of the divine distinct idea which God has of our life. Be true to the vision you have seen, as far as you have seen it. When you are true to what you have seen, another revelation of a life still higher will be made to you; and more and more, as you live faithfully till death open the greater vision, and we, who have, in spite of many failures, yet striven in humility to architecture our life after the Divine image of it in God, may, with a wonderful and grateful joy, hear the voice of our Master say to us, “Well done; good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of thy Lord.”

How shall we live that life? To answer a part

of that question—a part only, for the question is as large as life itself—is the subject of this sermon. It is a practicable life. Is it a practical one?

Its first claim is that it should be lived for the sake of others, not for our own sake only; and its foundation is self-forgetfulness, is love. And the world will not call that practical, but the very opposite. The doing of the duties which belong to the life according to God will not help us one inch towards the getting of superfluous wealth, or the winning of such power over our fellow-men as will enable us or tempt us to use them up for our own advantage. On the contrary, they will incessantly block our way to that worldly success which has put aside consideration for others, and forgets that we are the children of eternal justice and love. They demand that our life should do nothing which may violate in the smallest matter the character of God—that is, which will injure our highest conception of truth, justice, righteousness, pity, honour, and love—and we know if that demand will let us do a thousand things the standard of the world calls quite allowable when we are working for ourselves. When we live the life of self-forgetfulness, the world says, “This is not practical; it may be romance; it isn’t business. Self-forgetfulness, indeed! Where should I be, were I to forget myself?”

Well, self-forgetfulness makes no unpracticable demands. It does not ask us to forget the work we have to do in the world, or to bring our life into good trim to do it; but it does ask us to fill our work



and our life with the spirit of love and pity. It urges us to work with all our strength at our business and profession, for that gives us power to fulfil the duties God has called us to fulfil. But it calls us to remember in doing that work not our own wants and desires alone, but what others justly want and nobly desire ; and to forget ourselves in ministering to them, remembering how we may save, heal, comfort, and help them into peace and happiness. That is the spirit of Jesus in life, and our work in the world, day by day, is sweetened and strengthened by it. And when men say, "Where should I be were I to forget myself?" the answer is, "I shall be with Christ in the heart of God, and welcome in the heart of man."

The rich and self-seeking nobles and priests of the Jews made that ugly argument ring in the ears of Jesus. "Come with us," they said, "and you shall be called Rabbi in the streets of Jerusalem ; follow our ideas, and you may be High Priest. This is the practical, not the romantic thing. What you are doing is the doing of a madman : no sane man can abide your view of life." Yes, that is the choice we have to make between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of love ; between a life practical for ourselves and a life practical for others.

How are we to define the practical? that is, men say, the question. The world's definition of it lies before you. You may read it in large characters in books, in plays, in the Press, in the lives of the men who are praised and flattered by society. If to be

“practical” means laying up goods and getting a kingdom for yourself, then the life of self-forgetfulness which pursues the heavenly pattern is not a practical life. But if to be practical means getting a kingdom of happiness for others, giving all you can of good and love and truth for the sake of the growth of the human race in freedom, nobleness, justice and love, to increase its lofty faith, and lead its mighty hopes to accomplishment, then the effort you make to live this life is the most practical thing in the world, the thing best worth doing, and most sure of a divine success. I call that practical which increases the amount of progressive power for improvement in mankind ; and whether that view, or the view of the world, is, in actual truth, the more practical, why, let humanity judge. God has judged it already.

That way of life may not bring you the world’s success, but you will have its reward, its fruit after its own kind, the high spiritual things, which, in their fruitage, ennoble and develop the soul. The reward of self-forgetful love is a deeper and a wider love, not only what you sow, but, as in nature, fruit fiftyfold. One corn of love brings for than ear of fifty corns, and the soul reaps that bounteous harvest. The fruit is according to law. And as with love, so with the other spiritual powers. There is a matured delight in that which is pure, sublime, and beautiful ; in truth and all its forms ; in resolute virtue ; in the courage and peace of Christ, as unwearied in battle for justice as it is dreadless of death ; in union with

God as the source and end of these supreme powers. This delight will be the holiest, truest, and most active part of your being, and its joy does not only abide within you, but goes forth to make joy among men. It is the food of life, the charmer of our way, the strength of all strong things, the life-blood of morality, the comforter of the world, the fire which, in us and issuing from us, consumes evil and kindles good in our own heart and in the world we influence. That is practical enough for us. In that, we think we do not lose; nor shall we be much troubled if those who are raking up muck with their faces to the ground call us fools, blind to our own interests, as if, to us, blindness to our selfish interests were not the quintessence of wisdom. For here, in self-forgetfulness, in the happy power of living outside our own shadow, in the rapture of losing ourselves in nature, man, and God, and through that loss, in gaining them, is our romance, our poetry, our joy, our freedom, our divinity, our eternal progress, our endless life in the heart of life itself. There are those who would surrender that life for money, luxury, and success. It is the unhappy trend of thought and act at present. More than usual, in society, the golden calf is enthroned for the worship of England's soul—a dreadful degradation, shame, and sorrow. O, stand apart from idolatry: live in the mount with God; choose whom you will serve, Baal or the Lord God of Love. You cannot serve both, as some vainly think. For the day of decision is at hand, and God will divide with fire those who have

served mankind from those who have done it wrong ; those who have lived for love from those who have loved themselves. His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor. From England, Europe, Asia, and America He will gather the wheat into His garner, and burn up the chaff with fire. O, judgment delays, but when it comes, lightning is not more swift.

Now, let me bring all this nearer to daily life, and illustrate the building of such a life from the architecturing of a noble building by a great architect. The first thing he does for his building is to frame it in such a way that it may fulfil its use, and do this in the most permanent, the most complete, and the least expensive way. It must minister at all points to utility, answer to all the purposes it has to fulfil. And that is our first duty in up-building our life to meet the pattern shown us in the Mount : to make it useful for the men, women, and children who will share in it, at home and abroad ; to make it a life under whose roof they can shelter in peace, refuge in sorrow, and have a sweet and tender light ; whose doings shall be chambers where they can live in honesty, in whose ordered gardens we ourselves can do our daily duties with ease, pleasure, and dignity, solidly, securely, unbrokenly, without waste of time or power, and in whose chapels, when each evening falls and each morning rises, we may find a quiet place in which to consecrate to God the labour and the pleasure of each day.

That is the first thing, but the second thing is to

make it beautiful with love, to ornament its usefulness with the beauty of the Lord our God. It is just so with the building of a great architect. Utility is his first object, but his second and his higher object is to adorn it beautifully. Unless it be lovely as well as useful, it awakens little pleasure: none of that greater pleasure which adds colour, joy, consolation, all poetic feeling, to the life of men who daily pass it by; which kindles the imagination of those who stand below its arches and see its soaring towers, who, when they look on the stories carved on its porches and emblazoned on its windows, think of the nobility of sage and saint and warrior, remember the past intelligence, work and joy of those who have left us their noble souls in stone, and who speak from their work, as with a living voice, of the faith they had in man and God, of their honour for the past, their happiness in the present, and their hope in the future, of humanity.

That is the spirit which in the architecture of a noble building helps, develops, and rejoices men. And it lies in the ornament. It should be the same in our life. Life should be fully and nobly ornamented, made so lovely with the loveliness of love and graciousness that it will draw men into admiration and imitation, awaken in them silent and poetic pleasure, such a pleasure which ends in love, and which, being love, cannot rest till it is shaped into action which expresses the pleasure of loving. That is the spirit which, wherever it breathes in daily life, advances and adorns the progress of mankind. The



useful life must be made beautiful with noble thinking and sacrde fire of feeling. The moral life must be wrought in and out with the grace and tender charm which Christ had, and which brought men, and women, and children to his teaching, in sweet content, and grateful rest, until the moral demand was merged in passionate love of the beauty of righteousness. Your teaching, work, home life, marriage, pursuit of knowledge, pursuit of business, keeping house ; your social life, your philanthropy, the reform you advocate, the manual labour you exercise, your association with your friends, workmen, servants and employers, ought, one and all, to be lived with such grace, courtesy, gentleness, thoughtfulness and lovingkindness, that men may feel as if they were hearing sweet music. Every kind of Divine ornament should be lavished upon them. Life should be a lovely art as well as a science and a religion. And this high ornament and beauty, springing out of love and all its offices, and wrought with the chisel and the pencils of humility, meekness, mercifulness, simplicity, temperance, a quiet spirit, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, will bless the world, comfort, exalt, enkindle humanity from age to age, give it faith and hope in itself, minister to its noble pleasure, and lift yourself daily and hourly into closer likeness towards that ideal of your life which, when you were in the diviner mood, God showed you on the Mount of Vision.

And now—still holding fast to my illustration—

what are the qualities this adornment of life should possess?

1. It should be lavish. In a building raised by a great artist all the parts that are useful are done at the least expense, consistent with solidity, endurance, and fitness for its purpose ; but the ornament is lavish. No expenditure is too great for it ; no inch of stone fitted for ornament is left without it. So we cannot in life spend too much trouble and affection on the beautifying of our common work. Our acts, our manners, our ways of speaking, our home life—we cannot be too lavish in them of grace and love and tenderness and thought, of meekness, humility, of esteeming others better than ourselves. The law of love is this : “that the more you spend of it, the more you have of it.” Parsimony, then, in lovingness is the denial of love. Lavish its ornament on all you do. The more richly you make the useful beautiful, the more you will bless mankind.

2. Then see that this ornament be visible. The fine sculpture lavished on a palace or church in the days of the great architects was not put, as so much modern architecture puts it, under the roof or out of sight, but on the lower parts of the building, where all the passers-by could see it ; and the loftier ornament was so boldly carved that it could be seen and understood from below. And those who are content in life with lonely dreaming of excellence, who keep their graciousness for their own contemplation and pride, whose tenderness is too delicate



to be expressed, whose love is for their own admiration, who ornament their soul within but do not ornament their life without with love—they are like the architects who place their decoration too high to be seen. They give no pleasure to mankind. The true artist of life, who builds for God and man, makes his life charming for the sake of men ; makes visible what he has within ; expresses, even in the smallest act and in the lightest speech, the love he feels, the kindness he wishes to bestow, the grace of Christ he loves, with the purpose, or, rather, the hope, of giving some joy, some inspiration, some quiet and silent comfort, to all who pass him by. He makes the beauty of love visible ; he takes it in and out among men.

3. What he does in this fashion is also varied. The poor architect repeats his ornament over and over again. We see the same curls, the same festoons and figures, the same heads of beasts, run along the whole face of a building in vile monotony. And there are people who are content to do what is good, and to be kind, always in the same fashion. Their manner does not alter itself to suit different circumstances and different characters. They meet the troubles or joys of their children, their friends, their workmen, with the same monotonous, conventional kindness. It is much, but it is not the highest. Had they a full heart of sympathy, they would feel each person in a distinct way, as God feels us, and change the ornament, the manner of their love, to suit the new circumstance and the new

soul. Their lovingkindness would be as varied by the passion of their sympathy and insight as the ornament is on every panel of a great cathedral porch. Love is one, but its shapes are infinite in variety and change. I do not say, "Strive for variety," for that may end in self-consciousness. But get into self-forgetfulness, and then you will get into the hearts of men, see their differences, and fit yourself to them; and then the variousness of the forms of the beauty of love, in its play on various character, will be yours without an effort. That will be natural; and all your work, like the work of a great artist, will be the expression of your delight in God's character and in the heart of man. No self-consciousness will then beset you in the work you do. It will be the natural, impulsive expression, made beautiful by love, made various by sympathy, of your pleasure in the lives of others, of your pity or delight in them, and of your passionate feeling for the whole labour of mankind towards that image of humanity which God keeps in Himself for final fulfilment. That will be a life nobly architected, useful and beautiful alike, beloved of God and man, ever nearer and truer to the pattern shown you on the Mount of Inspiration.

Finally, this was the life of Christ our Master. The pattern of the perfect life of love, which God had showed him as he walked in the inspirations of youth among the fields of Nazareth, the high and sacred thoughts which filled his soul as he went down from the lonely village into the great

world ; the more solemn dedication he made of himself to the mighty ideas which he saw when he was baptized into the new kingdom ; the solitary hours in the desert when he realized the great temptations the evil spirit of the Jewish world would offer to his mission ; the first rapture of his first labours among men ; the sacred and uplifting communion with his Father when, after those first efforts, he went up into the hill-top at night to be alone, and continued all night in prayer to God—these were the hours in which the Divine pattern of his life and work was laid before him, its cost counted, its duty and joy accepted.

And self-forgetfulness was its foundation, and the saving of man its practical aim. In that he cast aside the evil forces of the world, in that he chose war with them, not yielding to them. “I will save the world,” he said ; “I cannot therefore save myself.” So began the architecture of his life. Use and duty were the first with him. To live to organize his life for use ; to fit it for his purpose ; to make it fit to follow that purpose to its end ; to build it so wisely that men of all nations and climes might shelter under its spiritual principles ; that every type of character—women and men and children, wise and learned, rich and poor—might find in it rest and peace and redemption—such was his first and mighty labour.

And then he made it beautiful. It was jewelled with lovely work of act and speech from end to end. The way he did things, the words he fitted to the

things done, seem, like all perfectly beautiful work, easy enough to say and do. But there was that behind the deeds which lifted them above all other work in beauty, which made them so beautiful that men cannot read of them, after centuries, without divine emotion. A power flows from their spiritual loveliness which seizes on the heart; a spirit breathes delight and comfort from them. The stories he told were as lovely as the deeds. Immortal grace and tenderness, love, thought, and beauty, fill the little tales which he left to man. The symbols he used were as finished in beauty as the rest. The building of his solemn life was, indeed, ornamented with the perfect work and creation of love from foundation-stone to cornice. And this ornament was lavish, visible, varied, and natural. It does not seem, as we read the Gospels, that Jesus, with that ever-welling fountain of lovingkindness in him, could have passed a moment of the day without pouring it forth in graciousness on the world. No recess of life but was made lovely by some flower of his kindness, some touch of sympathy. Men and women knew they could not exhaust his love, and he rejoiced to give with a lavish hand.

Visible it was! This was no retired hermit nursing a dainty affection for God and man in his study or his cave, but going in and out among men, among all classes, all his life a brother of humanity; his life lived in the open air, in the fields, on the lake, in the villages, in the streets of Jerusalem, in the throng of the temple courts; with the publican and

the outcast on the highway, with the Pharisee and the noble at the feast—everywhere at home with men, before the eyes of men. And varied also was this lovely work of love. The impression that he met all who spoke to him with a distinct sympathy, with an insight which, seeing the difference of the man, spoke to that difference, varying the form of his lovingkindness to meet the special character, with all the readiness and plenteousness of infinite love—that impression, when we read his story, is profound and true.

Utility and ornament, practical power and beauty born of self-forgetfulness, and for the salvation, comfort, peace, and joy of man—that was the plan on which the great cathedral of his life was built. And till the end, when he said he had finished the work given him to do, he never ceased to bear witness to the pattern shown him on the mount by God his Father.

Oh, may we so architecture our lives! Day by day be true to the pattern shown to us, in growth, maturity, and age; and if at any moment we fail or fall into despair, thinking that we have to do too much for the weakness of man, we will turn then to our brother, who, in trouble greater than ours, was true to the ideas of God in him, and believe that humanity has realized its aim, its union with God. What Christ Jesus has done, we yet shall do; what life was his, shall yet be ours. Nothing shall separate us from the divine ideal of our life, which abides with Christ in God, and waits for our arrival.



## THE EXPANSION OF RELIGION BY SCIENCE

*Whit Sunday, 1905.*

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, thou thou visitest him?”—HEB. ii. 6.

IT is no wonder that all the new work which Science has done in the last fifty years has thrown into a state of disturbance the religious life of men and women, or rather the thoughts at the foundation of that life. The only wonder is that there has not been more disturbance; that the mass of people in these islands still hold fast to a religious life; that many who have been forced to give up their faith, desire, if they could, to get back to some religion in whose ideas they could believe; and that those who have completely thrown it overboard are so much fewer than they boast themselves to be. Moreover, within the last ten years or so there has been, and at diverse points, a reaction among men who had given up the spiritual towards the reclaiming of it as a necessity, not only for personal life, but for the progressive life of humanity. The despair which so many felt twenty and thirty years ago of the fate of Christianity, of any religion, has ceased,



and is exchanged for an increasing hope, and for a faith which year by year affirms itself more resolutely. A change has begun which has life in it, and it is wise to declare and celebrate it—at least, to draw attention to its slow and steady uprising, not only among practical men of all ranks, but also among those men of science whose work initiated the disturbance of religious thinking. They began it, and it was continued and intensified by the work of historical criticism on the documents of religion. With the latter I have not to do to-day. With the new aspect religion has taken, owing to the discoveries of Science in the physical world, this sermon has to do.

The cause of half of this religious disturbance, of that which men thought was the overthrow of religion, was the new discoveries which Science made in the physical world. They overturned a number of conceptions which lay at the root of popular religion. And the disturbance and unbelief did not arise from any perversity in human nature, as orthodox persons said, or from any strong repugnance to what we mean by the spiritual life, but from the clashing of proved truths of knowledge with certain long-established doctrines of religion which had been mistaken for religion itself. When these were proved unbelievable, men said religion was destroyed. But what was destroyed were certain intellectual forms into which religion was cast, not religion itself.

While the human heart beats truly and passion-

ately, the religion which the life and teaching of Jesus gave to the world is indestructible. The love of infinite Love ; the love of the love of man to man ; the love of the invisible Beauty, Justice, Mercy, and Truth, embodied for our worship in an Eternal Father ; this universal Fatherhood of God, and its correlative truth, the universal brotherhood of man ; the immortality of all thinking and loving beings in God's infinite immortality of thought and love—this, which is Christ's religion, is not destroyed, and never can be destroyed. It has only begun to shake off its inadequate forms, and day by day is reclothing itself in less exclusive beliefs—wider, deeper, more universal than ever before it has been possible for it to accept. The chief characteristic of these fresh forms of faith is their freedom from limitations. They have shaken off all excluding doctrines. Their creed and confessions contain no clauses which limit the love of God, the salvation of Christ, the immortality of man, the brotherhood of mankind, the incarnation of God in man, the inspiration of the Spirit, the priesthood of all men who sacrifice themselves for men—the original goodness, not the original sin, of all men.

This is the mighty change which is being wrought in the form the Christian religion, even Christian theology, is taking. It has not been wrought by the churches or the sects—they are still, for the most part, in opposition to it—but by the discoveries of Science in the realm of physics. The cause,

then, of this expansion of religion has, curiously enough, been the same as that of the disturbance. The immense change of thought concerning the universe, which the discoveries of Science have created, has made a complete revolution in our conceptions of the universe. So immense and far-reaching has been that revolution that it has penetrated far beyond the scientific realm. It has entered into our daily thinking, passed, like a new force, into literature and art, into social and national movements, and, of course, into religion. Briefly stated, it is the indefinite expansion of the universe.

All our ideas of space have been almost infinitely extended. All our ideas of time have been almost infinitely extended. All our ideas of matter have been indefinitely extended. All our ideas with regard to size, both on the side of greatness and smallness, have been almost infinitely extended. All our ideas with regard to the number of things in the universe have been infinitely extended. All our ideas with regard to the history of man's development, of the evolution of our own earth, of every planet, of every star we see, and of those we do not see, have been immeasurably extended. There's no end to the infinities of the universe. We live, and move, and think, and feel now in the illimitable, and know that we do. This immeasurable expansion of all that we call the universe is the actual creation of a new heaven and a new earth for the observation of our thought and imagination, and for the religious spirit in man.

We were like men sailing on a narrow lake, shut in on all sides by encircling mountains, who thought that what they saw was the whole world. We are now like the same men, who suddenly find themselves sailing on the great ocean, and who know that in it and beyond it there are lands which it would take them ten thousand years to see and a million years to know.

There has never been in the whole of human history any expansion of the areas the mind can overtravel so tremendous as this which Science has lately made, and instead of ceasing to extend, it is still extending, not only upwards to the infinitely large, but downwards to the infinitely small, to that point where we may feel that matter, so inconceivably divided, merges almost into thought. No wonder there was disturbance in all the realms of human intelligence and emotion. No wonder, then, that men, even those who made this new world by their discoveries, were and are in a condition of confusion. A portion only of these infinite ideas has been assimilated ; very little of them has been applied to political, social, artistic, or religious life. The larger import of them remains outside of common thought and ordinary action. We are only on the threshold of a world, all whose views will be as different from ours as the conception we are now beginning to have of the extent of space is different from that which was held in the Middle Ages, or even a hundred years ago. We who are old may prophesy it, but not behold it, save with

the intellectual eye. But those of you who are young, open your eyes and hail its rising sun with joy. Welcome it, above all, when it sends its expanding spirit into religion, even into theology. For the passions of the inward spirit of man, and the faiths and hopes of man, and the shaping of them into theologic ideas, have already expanded, and will have to be further expanded in proportion to our expanded ideas of the universe. Every one of the doctrines of religion, every one of our spiritual beliefs, will have to add infinity, universality, an illimitable and inclusive range to their conceptions. The idea of God, the ideas of His life, love, power, and order, will have to be made wholly different from what they are at present—larger, grander, more universal. All the limitations theologians have circumscribed His workings with will be dissolved into the smoke and mist they are. The same expansion will be given to the doctrines of salvation, of the future life, of all the relations of God to man and of man to God.

People and churches have scarcely begun to make these necessary changes yet ; they are too confused in mind. They have not understood, as yet, what physical science has done in the expansion of the universe for thought ; and till they do, they cannot reorganize their religious thought up to the level of the new universe. But the time will come when there will be sufficient knowledge to do this work, and when all the limiting doctrines, which are out of intelligent harmony with the illimitable universe we



are beginning to know, will be swept away. Then God, and all He thinks and loves towards us, will be understood and felt by man to be of equal universality, equal infinity of love, truth, justice, and mercy, with the infinities of the universe which is the Creature of His thought.

That will be a change the full import of which the most imaginative of us cannot as yet conceive. To have all our doctrines concerning God, and concerning our relation to Him, as universal, as illimitable, as all-embracing in love, justice, knowledge, and thought, as we have at last proved this physical universe to be in extent; to reconceive His soul—if I may use that human term—as not only up to the level of the infinitely expanded universe which Science has revealed, but as beyond it in the infinities of love and beauty and truth, will be so enormous a change in the thought of mankind about Him that, when it is actually grasped, there will be a religion for mankind as universal and as illimitable in its ideas as our notions of space and time, of creation and existence, of matter and thought, and of their workings, have now begun to be.

At present, however, the old religious world is mixed up with the new; the revelation of Science is troubling the exclusive ideas of theology; and there is a great confusion of thought, a noisy babble of half-formed ideas, which is quite inevitable, and through which we shall have to make our way.

I do not remember, not even in the sixties and seventies of last century, when things were lively



enough, such a turmoil of thought in matters pertaining to religion or opposed to it. It is like a seething pot in which a hundred different elements are bubbling up and down, jostling blindly against one another, each believing in itself and disbelieving in all the rest. A multitude of religious experiments and theories are made. As many are the irreligious theories and experiments. Old superstitions are revived, various kinds of spiritualism shout for recognition, ancient philosophies are reborn, new philosophies are invented. Ethical, social, humanitarian creeds, in which man is all, God nowhere, and immortality rejected, hustle one another, and contradict one another from book to book, from review to review. The name of them all is Legion, and their nature hot. The partisans of each are as vigorous as if their views, in this confusion and noise, had any chance of permanence. Yet it is the confusion and seething of a new life, not the confusion of dissolution. Therefore, do not be troubled with it all. It is quite natural it should be so. The circumstances account for it. Work through it with patience, hope, and faith. It will do no harm, but good, to human progress ; it is, indeed, a part of that progress. Out of it all will arise a new creation of the religious life. Nor be troubled concerning your friends who are tossing about in this troubled sea of multitudinous religions, who either cannot find their way to the truth of God, or who do not as yet care to find their way to it, or who have thrown all the faiths overboard.

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The infinite love of God is with them. They are, though it is unknown to them, living and sharing in illimitable Love and Truth and Justice. And the world which belongs to them, and will be consciously theirs, is not this little earth of ours, and the small humanity upon it, which they think is the only existence, but a universe of spirit and life as immeasurable as the universe which Science has disclosed.

O, those who have denied immortal life all their days on earth will be glad to have it when they have it, and to expand with it. They have thought that man was the only being that existed ; but they will be as much pleased as amazed to discover, when they have left behind this little episode of life on earth, as short in comparison of their actual life as one flash of the shuttle through the loom, that they are in brotherhood with inconceivable myriads of other beings, who all have their source, their home, and their end in God their Father ; to each of whom they are inevitably related, with each of whom they are at one, because truth, justice, goodness, and love are the same to these other spirits as they are to us, and come to these, as to us, from the same Being.

We need not trouble about our friends' fate, or about our own. The time will come when all of us shall realize that we are in as illimitable a spiritual world of love and goodness as we have learned the physical world to be, alive in infinite eternities, amid myriads and myriads of living and intelligent

spirits, in the midst of an evolution flowing like a river from glory to glory, conscious parts of a life which is eternal in joy because it is eternal in love.

In your patience possess ye your souls. That is the first advice I give you. The best would be to have faith in the love of God. But if you cannot as yet believe fully in the infinity of His love, at least you may possess yourselves in patience. This is a lesson which is also taught to you by the discoveries of Science. It took myriads of years to build this earth of ours from its spiral of flaming gas into a sphere, on the cooling crust of which water could lie and flow and do its carving work. It took millions of years to lay down, and lift up, and wash away the strata of rocks of which the surface of the earth was made. There are thousands of worlds in which the same slow work of building and unbuilding is being done.

Be patient, for the universe is patient. When we realize how long, how slow, is the growth of all things into any perfection, it seems the last absurdity to imagine that our life, as some say, should arrive at a conclusion in sixty or seventy years, and as absurd that our spiritual life should settle itself into peace in a few years, and that too now, at a time of almost unexampled upheaval and disturbance, when knowledge has given an immeasurable shock to all past thinking, and is moving in all present thought like an unquiet earthquake. It is our business to know where we are, to recognize that we cannot expect to be always at peace in settled

faith, and to endure this hardness as good soldiers of humanity. If we cannot yet have a steadfast faith, we can have love. Everyone can love his fellow-men, and help those who, with us, are in trouble, often in dismay, whose houses of life are trembling in the intellectual and spiritual tempest. That, at least, can be done ; it is always possible to love and do the work of love. It is the best waiting and the best patience. It is waiting on the Lord, even if we do not know the Lord. For the Lord of the spiritual universe is Love, and the most rigid unbeliever in God is actually with God, and God in him, if he be a true lover of men.

And in the end, to such a worker of love, there will be an answer of peace. Believe me, there is little need for haste, as there is no need of despondency. There is an infinity before you in which to grow into an ordered mind, a settled conscience, a clear knowledge of God, a noble security of love, a certainty of truth, an infinity of spiritual life vaster and more illimitable than that of the universe which Science has revealed to you. Be content, and make patient your soul. Your soul is itself a piece of that infinite life, and has all its qualities ; and the first of those qualities is infinite love, of which, though at first we may possess but a grain of it, the development in us is endless and inevitable. Its smallest cell contains in its intense life the powers of its greatest extension. Therefore, possess your soul in patience. That is the first wisdom in the present state of things.

The second wisdom at this time is to accustom ourselves to walk by faith, and not by sight, in the invisible rather than in the visible. That, too, is advice which the new Science brings to us, and which we may transfer from its intellectual to our spiritual life. We are carried by Science into the invisible, the impalpable, the immeasurable ; into distances of time and space beyond our apprehension. Our senses only tell us of things as they are related to us, but nothing whatever of the things themselves. If we drew conclusions as to what things really were from the evidence of our senses, our conclusions would be false. On the other hand, that which we know most surely and believe most fully we know nothing about through the senses. The atomic world ; the impalpable, invisible forces in which energy is variously conditioned ; the intolerable reaches of time we are asked to conceive ; the great generalizations like the theory of gravitation ; the almost inconceivable distances and speed of starry realms in space too far for our assisted sight ; the pin-points of light which are in reality masses of flaming gas larger than the whole extent of our solar system ; the uncountable worlds of living creatures that people with the infinitely small the water and the air and the cells of animal and vegetable life—of all this we know nothing through the senses, but we are convinced of them through reason and imagination, supported by experiment. The deepest realities of the physical universe are in worlds beyond the senses. We walk in them by faith, resting, as all faith does, on imaginative reason,



working in realms of thought beyond our perceptions.

Well, all our faith in a supreme intelligence, a supreme love, and a supreme righteousness (who is the source and end of human intelligence, love, morality, and worship), is based on similar grounds to those of our faith in the invisible worlds of which Science informs our thought. I do not see God, I do not touch Him; I look on what is going on in the world, and it seems often to contradict an eternal love and justice; but in every movement of conscience in me and in mankind He streams into my moral nature and makes known His righteousness; in every impulse of love in me and in mankind I feel His love and know its eternal supremacy; in every imperative of justice and pity in me and in mankind I know His living will; and I believe in Him in spite of all apparent contradiction, such apparent contradiction as the senses bring to the theories of Science. And then, when I know Him as Love and Justice, as Thought and Goodness, as Pity and Peace, as Joy and Beauty, I am satisfied that the fate of the whole of the human race and of every individual in it is safe in His hands. So that when Jesus and all the prophets of the race say to me, "God is a Father, and treats every man as such, and will hold us all in His life for ever and for ever," I answer: "I believe it. I walk by faith. I should indeed be a fool, after all that Science has taught me in the physical world, if I walked by outward evidence in the spiritual world."



There is yet another advice. Try and get a rational notion as to man's place in the universe, and your own place as one of mankind. And, for that purpose, take the new knowledge as one of the means by which you may form that rational view. It is the habit of some persons at present—who have certainly no disbelief in their own predominant intelligence—to exalt man to a unique and undue place in the universe, and, at the same time, to make him worthless ; to first make him an object of worship, and immediately afterwards of contempt. They tell us, or allow us to infer, that beyond man there are no living beings which have intelligence, love, moral sense, imagination, the capability of reasoning or of creation ; no spiritual beings, no hierarchies of loving, rejoicing, and worshipping servants of one another ; no God who lives, and loves, and shapes. Nothing but man ! There is nothing but humanity to worship. To man alone on this little world we are to devote all our thoughts, all our work, hope, and aspiration. That is, were it not so exclusive and so narrow, an amusing position ; quite a similar position to that taken up by the old astronomy which made the earth the centre of the universe. Try and correct that irrational view by thinking of that which Science has made known, that this earth is one of the smallest of the planets moving round a sun which is itself so small among its great brethren that it scarcely counts at all, and that it is but one among innumerable worlds in immeasurable space. And then imagine, if you can, that the earth is the only place where any

living being loves, thinks, obeys, worships, or creates ; that man is the sole creature in this immense universe ; that, in fact, he is the universe, and that God is made by his thought, and has no existence beyond his thought ; that we are to worship man alone, to find in him all we need think of, work for, or desire.

This is a little too irrational, a little too limited. Face to face with the revelation of Science, it is positively incredible. We are not alone in the universe, and never shall be alone. We need not worship ourselves in mass, a worship which would inevitably degrade us.

And, indeed, on this theory of religion we are already degraded. The very persons who exalt man into this place of centrality and uniqueness in the universe are those who finally put him with the beasts that perish. This is the natural punishment they win when they put him up into an impossible position. We are informed, with the austere conceit of philosophers whose life is spent in the study and the laboratory, far from the battle of human life, that this centre of the universe, this sole thinker, feeler, and creator, is to end in an absolute cessation of thought, emotion, and of power to shape thought and feeling outside of himself. We, when we die, and the whole of humanity when the earth is dissolved, will become nothing more than part of the wild and whirling dance of atoms and sub-atoms, out of which the earth and we were originally born. All the thought, love, goodness, beauty, and joy that has been and will be is, as such, anni-

hilated. All personality perishes for ever, and all it has made. Life, self-conscious life, the one certainty which enters the material universe, life and all its astonishing evolution, ceases to be, and for no reason at all, in the most irrational way possible. It is not common sense. This is man's absolute degradation ; and not all the arguments in the world will ever persuade the common heart of man, at its lowest point of intellectual and spiritual progress or at its finest, that this would not be degradation. The better, wiser, more loving, more thoughtful, more impassioned, more capable we become, the less will be our acquiescence in such a fate for man, and the greater our revolt from it.

When you are troubled by this bold, bad assertion, made without one vestige of any kind of decent proof, think of what science has told us with regard to the evolution of man. It was not only 6,000 years or so ago that he began in an arbitrary fashion. He is the end, the flower, at present, of animal life, developing from point to point through myriads of years in ever-increasing complexity and power, from a beginning so remote that we cannot conceive it, and yet without one serious check in the evolution. At last we are here, and we have arrived at powers which lift us above the animals, some of which powers they possess only in germ, but we in flower—powers of thought, of love, of morality, of art, of literature, of knowledge, of creation, of spiritual life and emotion, such as make our history a wonder, a problem, a progress ; tragedy, such as might break

the heart ; joy, such as might overtop all tragedy ; an infinite world of passion, intelligence, and aspiration—and having reached this development, which prophesies more and more development, we are to have no more of it. The animal has passed into the intellectual, the passionate, the imaginative, and the spiritual, and these—of whose imperfection we are conscious as we are conscious of their glory—are now to be cut short of their further evolution. Having got these powers with such infinite trouble, having realized that they look forward and aspire ; all the work and all the expectation is to be broken up, and to go back to the mindless, loveless whirl again ! O, no, this lame and impotent conclusion is not the rational inference from the history of evolution. Do not believe a word of it. Man is the child of God ; God is infinite, and the child is infinite in the Father.

Finally, these are beliefs, with all their correlatives, which are adequate to live along with the new conceptions of the universe. They strike the same octave in the mind. The moral and loving idea of God in them is on a similar level to that of the intellectual idea of Him as the Conceiver of the universe. In them, also, the conception of humanity is on a similar level of thought to that which knowledge has given us of the universe.

That, at least, is something to arrive at in the midst of our confusions. For no intellectual straining in the world is capable of making the orthodox idea of man or of God—or the modern idea which

denies to man and the universe a God, and abjures man's immortality in God—equal in reach or in nobility, or even vaguely in harmony with the new universe which Science has disclosed. The orthodox believer and the heterodox unbeliever, as they stand hand in hand together, both Arcadians, in a charming brotherhood of denial of universal and infinite love—on that one point at least in harmony—the one with his eternal hell, and the other with his eternal death for man—are, one or the other, out of tune with the ground-ideas of Science.

It is the prevalence of these narrow and limited views about man and his place in the universe which at this time is doing so much to hamper and detain the moral, intellectual, social, political, artistic, and spiritual progress of mankind. Belief and unbelief, religion and unreligion, lag behind in equal dimness of sight and insight, fighting blindly with one another, wrapt in as thick a mist as that in which Arthur's last battle was waged at Lyonesse. And a pitiful spectacle it is!

And all the time, outside of the fray, the light of infinite love is shining fair. Its winds are blowing, its waters flowing for the freshening and freedom of mankind, and the thoughts of God, like birds in happy woods, are singing in our ears. Spring is with the humanity we love; thoughts and faiths and fires of joy have been born in men, as they were born of old at Pentecost. And outside the gloom and battle of contending philosophies, parties, and creeds, work and life for man, such as we have only



dreamed of as yet, is taking reality and goes forth to renew the world.

To these thoughts and to these fires of love Science has opened a new life. It has revealed to us an infinite, immeasurable universe ; and everything it has said of the physical realm, when transferred in idea to the spiritual realm in us, has cried, and cries, hour by hour, to us : "Lift your idea of God, lift your idea of man, lift both together up to the same high level on which knowledge has placed the idea of the universe." And that, by God's grace, is what humanity means to do.



## FROM NATURAL TO SPIRITUAL RELIGION

*February 26, 1910*

“The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.”  
—ROM. i. 20.

Joy, peace, and light are the things we most enjoy in Nature, and the deepest lessons we learn from her are those which these qualities bring to us. They are always present in her kingdom. In a moment we can have them if we have the heart to feel them, and the spirit which can claim them. But if our spirit be oppressed with wrong-doing, or our heart troubled by a self-indulgent sorrow, we do not receive these gifts from Nature—we impose, on the contrary, our sorrow or remorse on her. We turn her joy into pain, her peace into storm, her light into darkness. The river mourns, we think, as it ripples over the shallow; the quiet cloud seems to gather the thunder in its breast; the sweet sunshine is bitter in our eyes. We have laid our own burden on the innocent world. We strive to force the whole creation into sympathy with our travail. And so much is this the habit

of many that they have made the mistake of thinking that Nature has no reality, no life, except in their life. "We receive," they say, "from her only what we give; her life is only the eddying of our living soul." Yet, even while they hold that she is but the projection of their own mind, they still talk and write of her as if she could speak to them and feel with them.

This is an example of the truth of things being too much for the theory. According to the theory, there is no outward Nature at all; so that when they say, as they frequently do say, that Nature sympathizes with them, they are, in reality, saying that they are sympathizing with themselves. It is also plain that this notion, were it true, would be fatal to any conception of Nature as pervaded and developed by a living Being who takes in it a different form from that He takes in humanity; whose thought and love in her are different from His thought and love in us; who can speak to us from Nature, impress us from her, in a different fashion from that in which He speaks and impresses us through human nature, and who opens to us from her doings different secrets of His being and a different life of His from those He reveals to us through humanity. This latter conception of Nature was that which Wordsworth held, and it is a high and noble imagination of her. His idea was: That since God is in Nature in a different way from that in which He is in us, Nature has a life peculiar to herself and distinct from ours.

She may therefore be conceived as able to give of herself to us, and perhaps to receive from us something of our life.

This dim conception pervades a great deal of the work of modern imagination in poetry, fiction, and the arts. It is plain that it represents a whole world of vague experiences. If, then, this conception have any reality behind it, it would be strange if Nature could not bring us some truth, some help; if the form of God's life which abides in her could not speak to that other form of God's life which is in our hearts. And it seems that she can do so, but only under conditions—conditions we must fulfil in order to gain any good from her.

When we live the life of joy, or peace, or light; when our hearts are open to receive through self-abandonment and humility; when we are free from the world, and longing to lose ourselves in beauty, truth, and purity; when neither greed of wealth, nor false love, nor vile remorse, nor selfish sorrow, nor vanity, nor mad endeavour, overwhelm our inner being, then Nature answers our life with her own stream of life; then she sends her deep quiet to restore our heart or to increase our peace; then, by kindling in us new thoughts, admirations, sacred fears and loves, by infinite visions and strange surprises, she rains upon us showers of the light whose source is on the hills of heaven.

But when we are in opposite conditions to these, enthralled by evil passions, sorrows, or selfishness, she says nothing sympathetic to us, and we are

deaf to her voices. She may be distressed (if I may express what I mean in that human fashion) by our ugly and disordered condition, but the way she has then of meeting us is not the way of sympathy. What she does, or seems to do, is to display before us a condition of things opposite to ours. She shows us all her forms of joy when we are in sorrow; she spreads her infinite quiet before our petulant restlessness; she opens out her serene order before our tangled soul; her renewal of life before our hateful apathy; her wise destruction of exhausted forms of life before our base contentment with decay. She pours out her wealth of life before the death of our soul, her steady certainties before our wavering doubt, her contentment before our greed and recklessness, her unbroken obedience to law before our rebellious self-will. No sympathy whatever with our diseased soul—only silent rebuke. This is her way; and it often makes us wild with anger. But she will not relax a jot. And her hope is—or rather, the hope of the life of God in her is—that perchance, when we are tired of our wrong-doing, sick of our self-communion, we may, induced and inspired by her display of truths opposed to our follies, bring our life, God's Spirit working with us, out of this troubled, disordered, and foolish condition into that harmony with her which enables her to speak with us as a friend, and not as an enemy.

But till we change, she will not be kindly. We may weep out our very heart upon her breast, and

she is deaf to our complaint ; and, making no mistakes herself, she has no pardon for them. No storm of passion ever made her temperate heart beat faster. To do her own will never occurs to her. To waver, to lie, to err, to be unjust, is to her impossible. She is severe order, lucid peace, living joy, impeccable light. And the order means overthrow of all disorder, and the peace means the expulsion of selfish war, and the joy means that sorrow ought not to be, and the light that all darkness is doomed. And this inexorable opposition of her Being to these things means suffering to us who cause them, till we get rid of them. And it is well for us that this revelation of absolute order stands for ever before us. It is severe, mighty, terrible teaching for us who are so disordered ; and, hard and bitter as it often is, it is salutary. It ends by driving us out of disorder into harmony with her order, and then we know her as she is. Her joy, her peace, her light belong to us ; her incessant ravishment is ours. Nevertheless, we have some refuge from her apparent hard-heartedness. In those hours when we cannot fulfil her conditions—and many are such hours in our tormented life—we turn away from her and seek our comfort among men and women, with those of like passions, sins, and weakness, who have known our pain, disorder, and darkness, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We are driven from Nature to humanity ; we want the sympathy of our own kind.



## 76 NATURAL TO SPIRITUAL RELIGION

In like manner—and the analogy is interesting—we are driven from a merely natural religion to a human religion ; from a religion which is only moral to one which is also spiritual ; from a religion founded only on ethical or physical law, or what seems law, to one which brings us into contact with a personal Love and Righteousness, who has to do with us as a father with a child. There we are lifted from morality into love, from conduct to aspiration, from the possible to the ideal.

That in which natural religion and natural morals most fail is in help for sin, help against the flood of the passions, as well as in sympathy with the sorrows, errors, disease, and weaknesses of men. Natural religion and morality do well enough for those who are steady in soul, happy in life, naturally good, who are untroubled by the passions. The conceptions of a rigid order in which we are contained, of a moral imperative, of inviolable sanctions, are in themselves right and true, and they endure. They suit some of us very well, and we must all confess their power over life. But they are not enough for us. They do not console the miserable, bind up the broken-hearted, deliver the captive of evil, save us from sin by infusing us with the love of goodness, strengthen the weak, supply hope to the despairing, bring peace to the tempest of the soul, or redeem the lost. They are powerless against the misery of man. And when in the stress of life the storm is let loose upon us, and the earth, which we thought secure,



rocks beneath our feet ; when out of the unintelligible comes a cry of mockery ; when weariness has driven us half dead into the wilderness, and our own wrong-doing tightens its coils around our heart ; when we are miserable in the knowledge of the crime and pain that seem to devour, like that incessant eagle, the Promethean race of men ; when our own fierce problem is doubled by the problem of the fiercer sorrow of the whole of mankind—then there is no sufficient answer in natural religion, no sympathy or healing there for us. As deaf as Nature herself is this natural religion to the wild, tormented discord, or the still, sad music, of humanity.

Then, as from Nature to Man, so are we driven now from this abstract, to that human, religion of which Jesus, our Master, spoke, and the thoughts of which he embodied in words and deeds that have not failed to bless, to heal, and save humanity. We find comfort now in God, not only as an unknown energy, but as a Father of our souls ; not only as divine Order, but as divine Love ; not only as rigid justice against wrong and error, but as one who, when we repent, rejoices and falls on our neck and kisses us, and leads us home into righteousness by love ; who, though He cannot take away the punishment which is the necessary fruit of mistakes and sin till it has done its work, yet brings our soul to bless the suffering which has led us to know and confess the glory of righteousness ; who will not free us from the cost of struggle by the immediate

release which leaves us weaker than before, but will pour into our hearts such love towards Him that we count all striving noble, all punishment an impulse to good, all suffering latent strength and joy, and all the training these pains give us a preparation for victorious immortality. Heart to heart, He speaks to us. Hand in hand, He walks with us. Love in Him answers to our love, strength to our aspiration, personal communion to our loneliness, consolation to our deep distress—"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the floods, they shall not overwhelm thee." This is near and dear to us—personal, loving, the part of a Father to a child. This is God living in man—the light, the peace, and the rapture of the soul.

Nor is this all. Not only have we a Father with us, but a Brother born for adversity. We have Jesus by our side, the lover of the human heart. He leads the host of struggling humanity; each soldier of the Cross may feel his hand upon his shoulder, hear in his ears that tender voice: "Be of good cheer in tribulation; I have overcome the world. Thou, too, my brother, shalt also overcome." He, among the sacred and victorious choir, has entered into rest, but, like all his brethren, he has with him now the memories of human life, and his sympathy with us is full, and eager, and conscious. When he was here, he knew us well, and knew our life. A man of sorrows he was, and acquainted with grief, tried in all points like as we are, troubled in soul, needing the comfort of prayer to God; crying to

his Father in all his speechless sorrow, yet bidding God's will be done; in loneliness, content to abide in God, in grief made strong by faith, in work unflinching, though all forsook his side; in death at peace, in defeat victorious, in the midst of hatred always loving, in the midst of love always at peace, and in righteousness so true and beautiful that all the lost and weary fled to him for refuge from their wrong, all the innocent and happy nestled in his arms.

This also belongs to our religion, to follow him and love him, to be a man and play the man like him. And mighty is the motive power of this twofold love—the love between the Father and man His child, the love between us and the Captain of our salvation, our leader, friend and brother—Divine love and human love! Mighty it is to subdue sin, conquer false passion, to heal the broken heart, and recreate the ruined life, to bring peace, spread light, establish life, and accomplish joy.

Only a pure and righteous love like this can overcome the baser loves of life; only desire like this can bring quiet and governance to the lower desires which waste and deceive the heart. The passions of self can only be expelled by a higher passion, not less, but more intense. Only in the realm of a religion which is at once Divine and human, in which God and man, our Father and our Brother, claim, the first our worship, and the second our following, and both our diverse love, can we attain at last that deep, inward harmony of being in which

we are not only attuned to the beauty, peace, and joy of Nature, but also in which our soul hears, with even a greater joy—beyond the wild cymbals of human desires and human pain, clashing harsh discords from age to age—the ultimate music of undisturbed and pure concert into which God will finally harmonize humanity.

There is another analogy I may lay before you to further illustrate, even to strengthen, the main thought of this discourse.

When, wearied with work in the great town, we have sought the refreshment and stillness of the country, we have often had the very experience of which at first I spoke. We tired, after a time, of the solitudes of Nature and fled back to the towns again, where men were brought together to forge the engines of human life, to work, endure, and conquer; where our fellows in the past had created new worlds of art and law, of religion and science. Or, if we did not quite flee to the towns, we sought those places in Nature where some great human memory ennobled plain, mountain or river; where great deeds have been done or great men had lived; where history thrilled the scene with her suggestive voice, speaking of sacrifice or faith, of fortitude or courage, of death for duty or liberty.

That is often our experience. We seek refuge from the turmoil of the city in the mountains or by the mystery of the sea. Solitude, then, releases the nervous storm; the quiet of the silent land relaxes the strain of thought. In the light and beauty of

the world we forget the darkness of our heart, and the commonplace of our lives. The vast order of Nature, stealing into our disorder, quells it into sleep. Even the sorrow for mankind slides from the heart.

But before long such solitude wearies us into restlessness again. We begin to feel a chill about the heart. This is that half of our being which finds no response in Nature asking for its food. We are starving for humanity. So we drift, like the rivers, from the lonely hills to the plains where the people labour and the cities where they think, ourselves embodying in our action the wide principle of which I speak to-day. For in our common, daily, half-unconscious ways lie hid all the truths we need for a true life. We have but to open our eyes to find them by our side.

Restless, then, among men to get into the silences of Nature, that we may hear what our great mother has to tell us as we lie upon her knees; restless, when we have heard her tale, to get back to humanity again; desiring and undesiring, building and unbuilding, content neither with Nature nor with man in this incessant to and fro; joy, peace, light coming, then flitting away before almost we know that they have come—what does it all mean?

It means that, born of God, we are restless till we find both nature, and humanity, and ourselves in Him. Everywhere, at every time, from birth to death, we are dimly conscious of our source in God. The river flows far from its native fount, and, swollen



by a hundred streams, may seem to lose—so changed it is—the memory of the wells from whence it came, the consciousness of their primal clearness. But it is not so. Amid all the elements added to its stream its first clear wave is mingled, and is the parent substance of the whole. The living, rock-born water of its immortal spring is omnipresent in it. And often, as I stand by a great stream at night, even by the tragic washing of the Thames in London, I think that in the silence and the dark the sorrowful, stained river is remembering the sweet meadows where the seven springs break lucid into light; incessantly longing for their unforgotten purity.

So, however diverse and distant be the wanderings of the soul of man, however stained and mixed its thought and passion, it never wholly forgets its fountain-head, nor ever ceases to belong to God, its immortal source. He is mingled with all the waters of our life. Those who imagined, with a mystic truth, that the soul lived apart from the daily life of the reckless or worldly man, as the Palladium on its hill-top apart from Troy, and desired good while its possessor never thought of God, had a conception which may run close to truth. Whether we recognize it or not, God lies deep in our soul, and calls us to be at one with Him. We ignore our soul, put it far away as on a hill-top, but we cannot loose ourselves from it altogether; it visits us at times, and to us it brings with it God who abides within it. Without our will, often against our will, our nature cries for God our Father. And we shall never be satisfied, or

allowed to be satisfied, till we are in conscious union with Him from whom we flowed, and who for ever flows in us. And the pain, or rather the restlessness, of all humanity is, at its root, the inevitable cry for conscious union with that eternal life of God which is eternal love.

This is the truth we preach, and it illuminates the subject of this sermon. Nature and humanity are forms in which God has clothed Himself for us, and in each form we see and feel Him differently. Different in each are the modes of His thought, His love, and will. And we run from one to another seeking Him. We find Him in each, but are still strangely uncontent. When we have heard all He can say to us in Nature, instead of satisfaction it seems as if our longing were increased. The heart is made all the hungrier. More, more! we cry, and of a more perfect kind. The something we have received impassionates us for the whole. Then, when we fly to man, we think we shall gain more of God; and, in truth, in work for our fellows, in living and dying for them, we do in part allay our thirst, we do find more of God because we find more of love. We are closer to Him than we were in Nature, but still we seek for more. Then we pursue the satisfaction of our want in noble business, in knowledge, art, literature, in the realms of beauty or of discovery man has found. But if we win a satisfaction there, we feel, at the end, as if we had won nothing; our hunger is as great as ever. More and more! we cry. I desire to fill and fulfil my

soul. And we go back to Nature, and again are driven back to man, ever imagining in this limited to and fro that we shall be content, and ever uncontent. But Nature and humanity do not give us enough ; it is God, their source, we need—God who extends far beyond these two finite forms of Him—beyond Nature as we see her here, and humanity as we feel it here. The more we fix our thought on these alone, as men have tried to do, the greater is the rebellion of the soul crying out for the infinite more, for the whole of Deity. We want, and we will have, the illimitable ; the perfect goodness, truth and love. God Himself who abides in us cries out in us for Himself ; the Spirit maketh intercession for us. The derived fire demands the eternal fire ; the drop of the water of God's life, which becomes a stream in us and takes the stains of earth, desires its kindred ; moving onwards without rest till it join the immeasurable ocean of His Being, till it purify and complete itself therein.

True Being is union with the unchangeable, the infinite, the eternal, the imperishable ; with the all-creating, all-possessing Love, whom we call God and who, because He is absolute Love, is also absolute Life.

Oh, how shall we, creatures, it seems, of a day, attain this wondrous end ? We attain it by loving, by losing ourselves in love, by claiming our indestructible union with the eternal Love within us, and living that love into act and speech among our brother-spirits here or elsewhere. That is to know

God, to be His child, and live in Him. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. And that is how Christ Jesus saw and lived the matter ; that is why he said, " He that drinketh of these waters (of all the waters Nature or humanity give us) shall thirst again ; but the water I shall give him (the water of God's being, union with absolute Love) shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." There alone is satisfaction for us, children of the infinite—in the union of our little fire of love with the eternal glow.

" I and my Father are one," said Jesus. There it stands clear—the end of man ; not finally in union with Nature, or in union with humanity, but in union with immortal Love.

We unite ourselves to Nature, by science, by art, by feeling—it is well ; it is right to do it ; but we may not be satisfied with that—and we are not. The source of Nature is our true end and aim.

We unite ourselves with humanity. It is well ; it is our duty, our work to do that ; but we may not be satisfied with that, and we are not. The source of humanity, He in whom humanity lives and has its being, is our end and aim. In Him, in the absolute Love alone, shall we find our rest. And then we shall have, as we never had before, all the essence of Nature revealed to us, and all the quintessence of humanity, and more, infinitely more than we can as yet conceive. In the endless ages, in which, at one with Love, we shall live in endless

pursuit, endless creation, and therefore endless joy, we shall never know satiety, the sadness of weariness or the torment of self-thinking. Self-forgetfulness shall be the air we breathe, and every breath is then eternal pleasure.



## THE HOLIDAYS OF THE SOUL

*February 20, 1910*

“Come ye yourselves apart into the wild country, and rest awhile : for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.”—ST. MARK VI. 31.

IN this heated, overpressed world in which we live, where the disease of overwork is more dangerous to millions of rich and poor than a plague, where so few have the heart to rest awhile, it is human and comforting to listen to this phrase on the lips of Jesus. We are told that the disciples had no leisure ; there were many coming and going ; and they had not time even to eat. And Jesus, looking on them, saw how weary they were, and felt with them, being himself weary ; and called them away from the crowd of men to take a holiday. “Come ye into the wild country and rest awhile.”

Only awhile ; for first in his soul was the work his Father had given him to do. The hour of rest was necessary, but it was not to be continuous. Work was the rule of life, relaxation was the exception. But the exception was needful in order to fulfil the rule—a piece of wisdom men forget. I wish all great cities, all hives of labour, understood that better. I would it were deeply engraved into the

vestries, School - Boards, the municipalities, the employers of labour—that work, done from eight to twelve hours a day all the year round, even with the break of Sunday, slays the soul and body of thousands of men and women, takes the heart out of them, and is eating away the intelligence, the imagination, and the health of England. No real holiday, no true refreshment, is given to the poor workers of this country. They have not leisure even to eat. No one looks on them with pity and says, “Come ye into the wild country and rest awhile.”

Something has been done since I was young, especially with regard to children, but much remains to do. To divide life more fairly between work and rest ; to so change society that overwork should not exist ; to put an end to idlers ; to so fill the life of men with knowledge, and with the power of perceiving what is beautiful, that all holiday, all relaxation, should minister to the noble development of individual character and to the increase of the good and happiness of others—that is one of the aims which, resting on steadfast principles, should grow in the minds of politicians, municipal bodies, leaders of public opinion, business men, manufacturers, and workers all over England. It is ten times more practical, more wide-reaching in its aim and its good, than the greater number of the aims which are pursued at present by the political parties and commercial interests of this country.

But I only touch on these social and political matters. We meet here on this day to think of what

is spiritual, of God our Father who rules our inner life, of sacred duties, of peace and love in the soul—the cry of which for some food and strength is drowned during the week by the loud whirring of the wheels of work. Of these I wish to speak within my subject, and chiefly through the analogies which exist between our holidays and the holidays of the soul.

Of course, the first thing everyone feels on a holiday is the pleasure and the use of change. "I want a change" is one of the universal cries of human nature. It has come down to us from the higher animals. They feel it and fulfil it. It was heard among men when language began ; it will be in the heart of the last indweller of the earth ; and it will continue and be answered by God our Father in the endless humanity beyond. Yet its cry is for the most part ignored by those who impose overwork on themselves, or on the workers of the world. None feel it so deeply as the poor labourers in the country, and the hard-driven folk in the great cities of the earth. Dull sameness, steady monotony, is their most cruel curse and pain. The minute division of labour, the employment of machinery which makes men machines, the demand that only one thing should be done over and over again, necessitates monotony. Harnessed in the morning in the old harness, they pull their cart over the same road every day and enter the same stable at night, and dream the same dull dreams, and wake to follow yesterday, and to think, sick at heart, that to-morrow

and to-morrow will, for fifty years, renew their drudgery, unless they are fortunate enough to die. This breaks down the soul in the end, and then enslaves and diseases the intelligence. I think that the conscience also suffers. When a new duty suddenly intrudes into this set, mechanic life, it is not met with any alertness or clearness. It is a surprise, a shock, and it confuses and disenables the will. As to the imagination—that river which makes glad the city of the soul—it stagnates into a marsh, and evil weeds grow in it, poisoning the character. Monotony of work, unbroken by change and rest, is the fruitful mother of imaginative immorality.

Then, not only to save the health of the body, but also the health, purity, and clearness of the great creatures who abide within us—the will, intellect, conscience, love, and imagination—men must change for a time their activities and their place, and set free their life from apathetic work and its tyrannies. We need not idle; there is plenty to do on pilgrimage, plenty to receive and think on; for the difference of all things we see on our travel stirs our nature into novel movement. The sense that we are not only one dull person, but many men in one, awakens in us a vague and stimulating surprise. A host of new impressions makes us conscious of new capacities of thought and of feeling. We feel that the world we believed to be so commonplace has infinite novelties for us, unknown forms of usual ideas—a delightful variety—room and food for a thousand imaginations

and a thousand lives. It is a mighty comfort to be convinced that monotony is not the rule of the universe : that our creation of it and our slavery to it are violations of the natural course of things.

This is a strength to thought, an impulse to the will, a medicine for the soul. No life-plan but should assume this truth as one of its constituents—to be realized for oneself, still more to be realized for others. Moreover, the result of which this holiday-change is a cause passes by a side-wind from the body, the intellect, and the soul into the life and desires of the spirit. The change, the consciousness of the variety of the world, stir in the yearning spirit the hope of endless spiritual change ; bring with them the prophecy of an infinite variety of being, in which there shall be no sameness, no apathy, and no satiety. The faith, to take one example, of an impassioned immortality is deepened by just variety and happy change, is weakened by uniformity and monotony. Great hives of mechanical labour lessen that faith. Wanderings on holiday often reanimate it. Half-consciously it steals into the mind, as one tender or lovely impression from nature, history, art, and association succeeds another. "What," we think, "such a host of new ideas, feelings, impulses, dim awakenings, vast suggestions, to come to an end when I die—to have no meaning, no aim ! It is incredible. I must, I will continue." Yes, in this crowd of new impressions, in the expansion of the soul on holiday, we are frequently uplifted, even in a momentary passion, into that higher plane of living



and intelligence in which immortal life claims us almost irresistibly as its children. Those who disbelieve in that life have some trouble, in a fruitful holiday, in beating back its suggestions. Those who believe in it feel it then, through strange surprises and captures of the soul, more deeply than before.

For all these reasons, then, remember when work has laid too tyrannic a hand upon you—and there are many who suffer in that way among the class who can take holiday—to escape from it, to organize your plan of life to include change, to drink the air of another life. Get into the wild country and rest awhile.

There is little need, perhaps, to press this on those who are fairly well off. But there are thousands in this country to whom a holiday seems impossible. For all the reasons I have given, and most for the reason of human love, open, as far as you can, the world of holiday and leisure, the deep blessing of change, to those who are decaying of monotony. When you look on the weary faces of the heavy-laden workers and labourers in town and country, be kind to them, as Jesus was to his disciples. Take care that your servants, your employed, receive their due of rest. Arrange your life that they may live a little in a stimulating happiness. It is a fruitful leisure more than more employment that the working classes want. Their deepest need is expansion of their intellect and their soul. Help the poor to holiday. Open your heart and purse, and say to them, "Come into the wild country and rest awhile."

Well, this which is true of the outward life of men has sometimes its analogy in the life within. There are those whose life of the soul is set for years in a grey monotony of thought and feeling—sunless days within, shrouded in apathy ; weary duties done with joyless hearts ; reiterated troubles that, like the crowds in a great city's thoroughfares, tread down the gardens of the soul into grassless rock. In that sad way many live, and pitiful it is—more pitiful than other lives that seem more bitter and more cruel.

The cause of this drear weather in the hidden life lies sometimes outside its sufferer in besieging circumstance, but more often in the slothful, sullen, or selfish temper of the soul. For, indeed, if we are justly impatient with ourselves, if in the weariest hours we hold fast to loving, if we desire to awake and rejoice, and believe that God meant us to have joy within—that this is our right and that we mean to have it—the hour comes when we have our chance, when the Bridegroom comes down the street, and the holiday of the soul arrives with music, love, and light.

I have seen a hundred times this resurrection from the grave. A new piece of work is suddenly given to a man, fitted for his nature, and bringing with it eagerness ; a change of place or duty opens joy to a young girl's heart ; an unsuspected love comes to us, like the spring on wintry woods ; a book reveals to our morose heart that we are not alone ; even a desperate trial, which upturns the foundations of the soul—all make a new world, a new life within us, so

that, aroused and kindled by the revelation, we can never feel apathy again. These wonders of change are the rescuers of life, holidays of being, which, whether they be stormy or still, make a new heaven and a new earth for men.

What has made them? Or, rather, who has made them? They are not the children of blind chance; but of that heavenly Father, whose love sees the secrets of our soul, whose will is to bring us to perfection. Be ready for them when they come, else, when they come, you may miss their light and life. All weary men and women hope for them. Let the hope be active! Let it, that is, keep the soul, even in dark monotony, alive; alert to get the good of any change; keen enough, at least, to begin to grasp what may be thought and done in the new air. And for this—even in the worst sameness of life—keep love in you from sleeping; keep it, no matter how deep your apathy, in some sort of action. That can be done; and then you will be so far awake, and your light so far burning, that you will hear and salute with joy the cry which changes long waiting into bright activity. "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him." The holiday of the soul has come.

So goes the holiday of the soul with some: it is a change from apathy to activity. With others, it is a change from turmoil to peace. In outward life we know how that takes place—at least those of us know who have lived in a great town. The physical noise of a huge city is perhaps its greatest curse. But

greater than this, in its effect on life in general, is the turmoil of passion and thought which meets and mingles there. No sea in a raging cyclone is more tossed and torn, heaves and falls more heavily, than the wild ocean of London's thought, blown over by London's passion, in inconceivable variety and incessant movement. Were this to be translated into outward noise, the tumultuous wave of its sound would lay the town in ruins. The overwhelming tragedy of it appals the heart; the tumult of its battle deafens often the powers of the soul. And, from time to time—and frequently in the case of men and women who are deeply involved in the strife—imagination, conscience, the great virtues, the primal duties, the eternal, invisible ideas by which the spirit in us lives, and above all the will to do right, are, when they have lived too long in this confused tempest, like sailors after days of hurricane. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end.

Then we wish to hear and obey that which the disciples heard, "Come into the silent country and rest awhile." And there, if we are quiet indeed, and yield to the soft approaches of the eternal things; if we do not carry the city's life with us, our soul is washed clean, as by a swift and crystal stream, of all these noises. In the solemn movement of Nature's life—so still, slow, strong, consistent, firm; so obedient to order; in all its variety so deep-set in unity; all its powers at ease, and its mightiest powers the most stormless and beneficent—our body and soul are

healed into peace, restored and made sane again. The true relations of things appear again in the stillness, the things of true importance are disclosed again. The just aspect of life is again clearly reflected in the mirror of the soul. The conscience repairs the breaches in its walls. The higher reason recovers its flexibility. The affections are calmed and purified. The senses receive their impressions temperately, and the imagination, moving among all these like a wise king, co-ordinates them into a living organism. And we return with the memory of right and peaceful things, of an undistracted ideal of life, to keep us sane and at peace in the midst of the madness and the tempest. And at last, if we have striven for quiet, originality, grace, truth, beauty, and God in us, are born again.

So it is in outward life, but for far too many of us, in these days of troubled thought and shaken morals, there is in our inner life a much closer analogy to this than is befitting children of the Highest. There is a great city in our souls, as tempestuous often as London, when, in some hour of apartness, we look upon it. It has been built, day after day, since we began to have a personality ; and day after day, now, new thoughts, questionings, impressions, new passions, aims, duties, temptations, pour into this inward city, set up their houses in the suburbs, or invade the ancient houses ; and some are built for lasting, and others for swift decay. And there, in the streets of the whole town, what a press and what a turmoil ! Noise of furious desires



driving furiously, troubled thoughts hurrying by, clash of conscience and passion, of self and self-forgetfulness, of the will to do right and the will to do wrong, of contrasts as great and battles as confused as those that oppose one another in the storm and stress of London. And as the strife deepens, and the rushing crowd within, crying, claiming, and pursuing, hurries us along with it, sometimes into a very hurricane of silent passion, we seem to forget our separate being and to be at one with the soulless movement of Nature, having no duties to man and no childhood to God. No eye beholds that inward city, save the eyes of God, our merciful Father; and when, in our weariness of its tempestuous folly, we feel that He is looking gravely at it, we appeal to Him, ashamed of its disturbance, and desiring His peace. We appeal for freedom from unrest, for good government, for a holiday of the soul from anarchy. Yes, from time to time, one and another of us are led or driven at last to hear and obey the voice of Jesus, Come to me, weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Come into the far country of love and righteousness with me; forget the haste to be rich, the follies of gambling and barren pleasure; free your soul from false passions, from the tyrannies of the material, from the fruitlessness of fighting philosophies, and rest awhile. That will be the spirit's holiday.

We cannot, while we labour here on to the city of God, enter into the full holiday of the soul, but we can secure something of its peace by watchfulness

of thought for it, by resolution to live in communion with God, and in communion, not with ourselves, but with our fellow-men. We can determine to live in love. That is the magic spell which opens the gates of divine peace and beauty. No matter how full of work and of the world we are, we can keep, deep in the heart, the conviction and love of the spirit's immortal powers secure and active. We can cherish the ideas and duties of eternal Truth, Righteousness, Justice, and Love, and live at times in that secluded valley, far among the solemn hills, where the great ideas have their dwelling in a creative quietude. We can in heart and mind ascend to our Father, and walk, in the midst of the business of the world, with the voice of Jesus in our ears, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

It is not ill for the youth and girl who go forth into the stir of life to drink of the waters of unblamed excitement, to be filled with their bright youth and to enjoy it; but in the swift movement of it all take sometimes a holiday for the soul. Think of the quiet country of God of which you are a child. Do not forget to walk and muse sometimes beside the sorrowful river of humanity, that you may remember your brotherhood with the suffering world whom your Master loved even to the death, so that in the transient joy you may not forget the things of love and goodness which are eternal—so that, when the time comes, your youth may pass into noble womanhood and manhood justly

and harmoniously developed for the service of God and man. And when, having ended youth, you have entered into the full life of the world, take with you the same power of meditative withdrawal into the silent country of the soul, there to rest awhile. We are involved in the turmoil of politics and business, in the quarrels of parties, the discussions of Science, the battling of philosophies and religions, in the flame and roar at times of war and rumours of war, and in these noises the voice of quiet things is not heard. To be involved in them is our fate, and often our duty. To be wholly absorbed in them is neither our fate, our duty, nor our wisdom, for half of these passions of the world are as transient as the clouds of summer, and as harvestless, if they are as noisy, as the thundering waves. It would not be right or possible to call men and women altogether away from these loud interests nor to call them useless. They are part of our life, and through our mistakes and our successes in them, through our experiments in them, and through our passage through their transient forms, the solid work of the world is slowly done. But still, let there be times of quiet in the silence of God. Seclude a holiday for the spirit, when you may recall to consciousness the deep foundations of life, understand what is transient and what endures, divide what is important and needful from the needless and the unimportant. O, hear the voice of God speak to you of the infinite, the invisible, the goodness which cannot die, the faith which conquers, the hope which is not ashamed, and

the love which creates for ever. Your work, when you take it up again, will be all the better—less noisy, more fruitful, less tyrannic. Let the world slip for a time; wonder and wander with Christ into the spirit's country; make a holiday for the neglected soul.

Indeed, God our Father sometimes makes it for us, if we delay it too long—if we are either too hot in the world's battle, or too disturbed by the wars of the intellect and the heart. There have been times in life when we have been strangely surprised, how we cannot tell, into an hour of peace which we know to be divine. Some waft of feeling; or some inward music, touched into melody of thoughts unknown before; or some vision, like those in happy sleep, of mankind in a perfect world, flits like a wandering angel through the soul; and suddenly, inexplicably, its questionings are lulled to rest, the mad desires of the heart are touched to peace. Faith returns; love overflows the spirit; our selfish cravings cease to sting. And hope, as in a glass, shows what we shall be when we have yielded our will to the will of righteousness. Ah, then we know whence we came and whither we are going; and a great peace, as it were of an immortal summer, warms and fertilizes the soul; we seem to walk with Jesus in sweet weather through the fields of Galilee. The hour does not often come; but it is our little inward holiday, our voyage, while on earth, to the heavenly country, our walk by the river of life pure as crystal, our earnest of the benediction that shall be.

Wordsworth, who loved the quiet things of God,

who was not troubled, when his youth had gone, by the roar of the inward city of doubts and sorrows and desires, thought of these hours of spiritual holiday as recollections of the Imperial palace whence we came. They made for him

Our noisy years seem moments in the being  
Of the eternal silence ;

but we, to whom the peacelessness of life is nearer, do not, like him, look backward to childhood, when they come, in order to catch their glory. We look forward, that we may capture the joy of their peace. The immortal sea we then behold is not that which brought us hither, but that to which we are bound. In these surprises of God, when there is holiday from the battle, we feel, it is true, like the children the poet imagined, but, also, like children who have been men ; who have fought, and now are released into peace. We hear the voice of Jesus, "Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give to you," and in the vision, looking forward, we already enter into God.

Hence, in a season of calm weather,  
Though inland far we be,  
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea  
Which brought us hither ;  
Can, in a moment, travel thither,  
And see the children sport upon the shore,  
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

Lastly, in that great holiday in which the troubled labour of life shall close, in its play, and its peace, there is no idleness in the play and no slumbrous-



ness in the peace. When I think of its play, I think of incessant creation. Of all the real holidays of life, when joy and ease are greatest, when the sun of being is warm, and the sum of life is full, none can compare with those rare days when we saw into the heart of the thing we loved, reconceived it in the imagination, and then shaped it, with full power, into form—days when we were creators. One hour of such work is worth more than years of other work, and yet, it is so full of joy, keenness, swiftness, and childlike ease and pleasure that it may well be called play. When I think, then, of the holiday to come, I think of continuous work done in this creative happiness. This will be our play beside those eternal waters.

And when we speak of creative work like this, we know that it is done in living peace. When we labour here, it is our inability to shape perfectly what we have imagined, the barriers which limit our thought and passion, that make us restless, out of peace. When these inabilities are gone; when we create at speed, and the form is beautiful; and when, seeing our work, we rejoice in it, we shall then have rest—the rest which lives in swiftness. That is the finest rest in the universe—the rest of creating love. It is the holiday that remaineth for the people of God.

## THE EARNEST EXPECTATION OF THE CREATION

*June 20, 1909*

“For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.”—ROM. VIII. 19.

THE ancient legend said that when from the box the maiden rashly opened all the ills that afflict mankind flew out to play their cruel game, hope remained behind to do her healing work.

The English poet said that when God bestowed all His gifts upon His creatures, He held back one—the gift of rest. For so, at last, God said, when man has enjoyed all the joys of earth, and found no peace, his weariness “will toss him to my breast.”

The ancient and the modern thoughts—hope amid miseries, restlessness amid joy—combine in the thought of St. Paul. He saw in his soul the passionate aspiration of the whole creation, the earnest expectation of a world of glorious liberty; in which there should be no misery to need hope, and no incompleteness to feed restlessness; when the groaning and travailing immortality of mankind, imprisoned in the womb of his mortality,

would fulfil its time and break forth into life and joy.

He felt this earnest expectation in his own heart, recognized its meaning, its source and its fulfilment ; and from the point of thought this feeling placed him on, he felt the same passionate expectation in the whole creation. Beneath the material universe he beheld the spiritual movement towards fulfilment ; in the growth and movement of animal and vegetable life, he saw the secret march of the same idea ; and finally, from the heart of labouring humanity, he heard the wild, silent, spiritual cry for perfection that proved to him, as he listened to its sorrowful music, that the passion which he felt within his own heart for release from evil was also beating in mankind. Standing thus on the verge of two worlds, he saw the conditions of things in heaven and in earth, and interpreted their relations each to each—the Creator loving the creature, the creature longing towards its Creator.

In the term “creation,” or “creature,” he included the physical world, the animal world, and the world of the human soul. To him, and even more to us, taught by science and by art to look deeper than the ancients looked, there appears to be, in the things of the natural world, a yearning after completion, a desire to realize each his own ideal form ; as if there were, in the whole and in each part of the universe, not dead matter, but an actual life, struggling for ever to realize and accomplish its fulness of being. It seems to us as if each thing felt

that only then it could get into the circle of the Divine harmony, in which alone it could act with entire rightness and fitness ; get quit of the pains of the struggle for existence ; and, completing itself in love, enter into freedom.

The crystal, building slowly, perhaps consciously, its atoms together, strives to perfect its form according to its nature. There is that in the plant which seems to urge it to fulfil itself in the flower and the fruit. But these earnest expectations are again and again deceived. Everywhere there are apparently thwarting powers. The crystal is attacked by other crystals which confuse its development. It breaks up into an angry mass of troubled angles. Want of light, of soil, of rain, spoil the nature and the growth of the plant. It is attacked by other plants which force it to struggle with pain into a maimed existence. Both the crystal and the plant are made subject to vanity, but they do not give way any more than we do ; they strive to overcome, and it is pathetic to see how often the crystal conquers a certain beauty, and the plant gives birth to an imperfect blossom, in spite of baffling circumstance. And the pathos is not theirs only, it is also ours.

In all this, which runs through the whole of the natural world, we are impressed with the sense of an unsatisfied passion in it, of the sorrow of a restricted development. "There is," some German has said, "in material nature an element of life, a yearning of that which is bound, which, like the Memnon statue, unconsciously sends forth a mournful symphony

when the ray touches it from above. Yes, it seems at times, when we are alone with Nature in her silence, as if she were a spirit who begged for deliverance, as if she entreated some gift from us, so that not to understand what she longed for cut us to the heart."

This is what St. Paul heard coming to him from the heart of the universe, and his words represent a truth, but not the full truth concerning Nature. The spiritual universe of which Nature is the form is indeed alive, but not in grief and longing. Nature is one of the forms of the eternal life of God, of His thought, of that incessant self-giving of Himself which is absolute life and perfect pleasure. Conscious or unconscious, joy thrills in Nature's life. To that joyous life St. Paul transferred the longing passion of his own heart, and heard it beating in the whole creation. To him and to us Nature will always seem to weep, to long, to labour to a far-off perfection, until we ourselves are perfect. We impose on Nature the yearning of our own spirits, and then we cry : "The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the unveiling of the sons of God."

Again, this unconscious longing for redemption from the imperfect seems more apparent in the animal creation. Whoever has seen in the eyes of a suffering beast that dim appeal, a beseeching protest against its pain, has also had the thought that there is in them all a yearning for release, a dim, half-unconscious hope and desire for higher life. And this



awakes in us such pity and sorrow as God Himself may feel when He looks at us struggling with inevitable pain and unable to express to Him the depth of our sorrowful remonstrance. I cannot tell whether we only imagine that animals endure and desire as we do. Our ignorance of the real life of the animals we live with and hunt is one of our most strange ignorances ; but it is not without reason that the Apostle thought that they travailed to express some longing for a fuller, happier life, something of a struggle to reach onwards in pain to a world where pain entered into pleasure.

But far greater than these dim expectations was the expectation of the soul of mankind. St. Paul, through his passionate sympathy with humanity, felt that surging like a billow against his breast as he moved through Syria, Greece, and Rome. The time had come when all men who thought and felt, among the free and the slaves, desired, and with a certain passion, to find a fixed foundation for life, to realize a ground for the demands of their conscience and their spirit, to find the source of their ideals and see their goal. Indifference and drifting had passed away. There was, indeed, everywhere in the Roman Empire at this time a revival of religious thinking, questioning, aspiration. St. Paul felt this universal cry, and believed he possessed its satisfaction. "The earnest expectation of the creature," he cried, as he looked on the Roman world, "waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

It was high time, for the world had exhausted

nearly all its religious ideals when Christ came, or—shall I say?—the forms the religious ideas had as yet taken. They had passed in Imperial Rome under the bondage of corruption. An educated contempt for them had led to a scepticism among the upper class, in which all moral sanctions were removed into the realm of the indeterminable; and this had led to a morbid superstition among the uneducated by which a thousand gods were invented, till all religion had become a jumble of dishevelled fancies; and between the two the kingdom of death and slavery was set up on high in the greatest city of the ancient world. Yet, in the long passage from the earliest natural religion to the atheism and superstition of the Roman Empire when St. Paul was alive, there had always been in men, not only a sense of debasement, but a longing to be freed from it, a groaning and travailing among men towards a new birth. The great poets and philosophers and reformers threw this blind and voiceless travail of the soul into shape, and, in their work, men realized what their own ignorance desired. Dreams of a glory yet to be revealed entered into the heart and the life of the nations; the earnest expectation deepened; the ideals of humanity enlarged century by century—but one by one they failed. The Hindoo sought for union with pure thought, or with rest from self-desires, but found that the senses were too strong for him. The Persian sought to obey pure good, but, failing, expressed his failure in the creation of a power of evil, all but equal to that good.

The Greek sought to realize a perfect harmony, and to fit his life, through temperance, into it, so that all his being should be at one with itself and with the universe; but his aim was broken up, save among a few of a noble genius, by the multiplicity of the modes of being in the universe forcing him to multiply—till he became confused into disharmony of being—the means by which he strove to realize his hopes. The Roman saw everywhere a divine order, and endeavoured, by a submission to it, to grasp the perfect life, to realize it in Duty, but found, with torture to his inquiring soul, that the disorder of the world was too mighty for him.

All failed on earth to realize their earnest expectation. And were there no life after death, no further hope for them, the misery with which we should look on the fruitless aspiration of mankind in history would indeed be bitter. But that is not our faith in this place. What is begun on earth is fulfilled beyond the earth. No true aspiration is forgotten of God. No longing of the spirit of those we call the heathen has been left unsatisfied. Their education has gone on without a break, and long since has brought them into peace and truth. It was necessary for them, as individuals, that they should go through the great strife for truth and its pain on earth, so that they might be strong enough to see and grasp the mighty truth beyond. It was necessary also for the world of man and its progress that by the failure of the aspiration of the heathen people to realize the fulness of good, mankind should be brought to the

point at which it would cry aloud for higher ideas and be able to understand those ideas when they were disclosed. Out of the noble failures of Jew and Greek, Oriental and Roman, arose that low, solemn lamentation weighted often with morose protest against the sadness of the world ; that sense of the vanity of all things ; that yearning and crying for a new life and for peace in tender and imaginative souls ; that accusation of fate in sterner souls ; that stoic acceptance of it in others—which we find pervading all the serious ancient writings, and which translated itself to St. Paul's ear as an earnest expectation, as a cry for a higher revelation. He, apart upon a higher platform of spiritual life, and feeling the same passion, only with full knowledge of what it meant, interpreted to them their want and its solution.

I possess, he cried, the answer to your desires. I bring to you the knowledge of a God who has revealed the true aim of man, and His own aim for man and His love of man, in the life and love of a Son of man whom He filled full with His Spirit, that men might know what the Godhead was, and what His love of righteousness—even Jesus Christ whom I declare unto you. And in his life and death not only the true Godhead is revealed, but the true Humanity to which you strive. It is he who has shown you what is the end of all your longing—even union with God and man by love ; who, in his sacrifice of love for men, even unto death, and in its results on life, has disclosed the meaning of pain and struggle on earth, and proved that they pass into

strength and peace and joy. This man, now raised by the power of God into perfect humanity in union with God, is the image and security of what you shall be if you live his life here, or when you come to live it hereafter. In oneness with his oneness with pure Deity, which is oneness with perfect love, your most exalted hope shall receive full satisfaction, and your most passionate ideal full realization. Perfection has been your aim. In him you shall attain perfection. The bondage under which you groan, the sin and weakness you hate, the restlessness which drives you like a goad, shall pass away when you love and follow him who is Love itself. This is the kingdom you have long desired in vain. It is yours when you believe in God's character revealed in Jesus Christ, and live in it by love.

And the heathen world listened to the teacher. Its vague passion realized its aim, and became the longing to become the sons of God, to be united for ever with the being of God, and that in a way which not only the poor and the ignorant, but even the philosophers, could understand. They heard that God was indeed their Father who loved them, and that they could become—nay, that they were—His children. They heard that they had in Him a Saviour from sin, and could certainly attain to righteousness. They heard that God was within them, soul of their soul, spirit of their spirit, and that He would be part of their daily life; and all their life was at once sanctified. They heard they were eternal in God—and, instantly, all the ills of life



sank into nothing. They heard that it was not a cold and ruthless fate that ruled them, but an educating and a tender love; and when they suffered, they heard that suffering saved the world, that to suffer and to die for truth was immortal joy; was to be at one with Christ who was at one with God. And they heard that in God's Fatherhood, in union with God, in salvation, in immortal life, in coming perfection, all mankind might share. In all these noble things they were brothers one of another—nay, all nations, kindreds, and tongues were at one in a communion which transcended national, social, and family ties. The world was one brotherhood, passing to perfection in God the Father. At once the unconscious longing found its aim, and became conscious; the earnest expectation of man went forth towards the Kingdom of God. So, in history, did this expectation realize itself.

O, men and women, we have heard these truths for nigh two thousand years. Are we living in them now? Have we realized them, and become their children? In us we have the same longing as all the Roman world; the same vague aspirations and earnest expectation; the same desire for perfection, for freedom from self, for a new birth within—restless for ever till we find our true being, out of our self, in our Divine Original. When are we going to find it?

When we live without God in the world we are unconscious of the meaning of our restlessness. We seek to satisfy our longing for the happiness which

is the first aspiration of human nature, in the visible, the temporal, and the transient. In pleasure, in wealth, in fame, in folly, we strive to quench the thirst of the soul. With entire ardour we devote our life to these and other fleeting aims, and when we have found them we ask ourselves, Am I now happy? and we are answered from the depths of our soul, No, thou art as empty and as needful as before. Then we seek in something else the treasure of peace, but again we are disappointed; and so, from one object to another, we drift on, ever thinking that it would be otherwise with us, and ever finding, when we have grasped the object of our longing, that our soul is still parched with its ancient thirst. It is God saying to us: "Not there, nor there, but in me alone is the fountain of true life, which whoso drinks will not thirst again."

Sometimes our soul answers, and we escape into a true life, but often enough we come, when the eagerness of youth is chilled in middle age, to the impotent conclusion, since so much effort has failed, that there is no satisfaction whatsoever to be found. Then we determine "to renounce all faith in happiness and peace, blunting and deadening, as far as possible, our still inextinguishable aspirations; and then we call this insensibility the only true wisdom, this despair of salvation the only true salvation, and our cynical knowledge that man is not destined to blessedness, but only to this vain striving with nothing and for nothing, the true understanding."

'Tis a sad and foolish conclusion, and many there

be who in this modern society proclaim it as the wisdom of life, and preach it as a Gospel. But the growth of scorn, the denial of aspiration, the disbelief in good, are not happiness, and within men know that well. For deep below, in their secret heart, in hours of silent self-communion, they are conscious of that unquenchable thirst, and in that are not altogether dead, nor doomed to death. The only real death, the only loss of all share in the Godhead, the only absolute nothingness of the soul, is reached when a man does feel full satisfaction in anything except in union with God the Father.

Sometimes, however, we do not pursue happiness in the world, but nobler things. We give ourselves to the pursuit of knowledge alone, or lose immortal cares in love of beauty. Our life is then devoted, but devoted to the transient; for the knowledge of earth passeth away, and the beauty of earth. Our life is then noble and has noble fruits, but its nobility is not eternal in us; half our being remains starved and useless; and the cry of the mere seeker of knowledge or beauty at the end is this: "Vanity and vexation of spirit." From the writer of Ecclesiastes to the Faust of the German poet, to a thousand hearts to-day whose complainings are on every wind, there comes that cry, that long outworn regret.

In such regret we find at last the work of God upon us, striving to make us conscious of our true desire of that for which we truly thirst. In our conviction at last of the death in us of spiritual aspiration, even in our loud cries that there are no

such aspirations, no spiritual world, no life to come where we may find peace or perfection—cries that are often an angry resistance to confession of the want that pains us—in the sense that we have lost something which was of vital need to the completion of character ; the longing that we have striven to crush again and again appears, and in the night passes us by like a phantom, weeping and wringing its hands, crying: “What have you done with me?”

This is God telling us—and He will make us hear His voice in the end—that there is no peace for us, that we know nothing, not even our own corner of facts, that we see no beauty truly till we find Him ; till we know our knowledge in His truth, and our beauty in His love, and ourselves in Him.

These are they who wait unconsciously, like the heathen, for the kingdom of God, ever imperfect till they attain it ; never truly themselves till they are joined consciously with the Eternal.

On the other hand, there are those in whom this desire for God is a conscious desire. They know what their soul is saying and what it means. To some, the voice of God is clear, and they answer Him at once : “Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth.” These are blessed, and they bring with them, when they love men well, blessing to the world. They do not travail much ; their longing, their earnest expectation, is quiet, sober, continuous, deepening day by day, knowing its end and happy in the knowledge. Their life is full of love, for they see the perfect love, and many of them do more to

bring men to God by a passive charm than by an active energy. They have their place and do their work. Their expectation is steady, but not impassioned. They influence their own world—the quiet, temperate souls of men—and there they reveal and teach the truths of the kingdom; but they do not enter into the storm-tossed lives of men. That is one form of this consciousness of the aspiration of the soul to God.

But there are other forms of it and other ways of reaching its goal. Far away from their peaceful harbour there are thousands out on the great sea, battling for their lives in the hurricane or in the deadly calm, among the shoals, wrecked or drowned in the night; taken captive by fierce temptations, swept away by wild impulse, battered or maimed by doubt following on desperate trouble, and driven into guilt or shame. These, in their misery or passion, suddenly become conscious of their soul; know what the want and restlessness in their nature mean; understand that it was because they did not understand it that they were forced into the wild experiments which, breaking down into folly or sin, have left them desolate. They have learnt the truth, and they resolve to be free from the curse of always seeking their own interest, or following their own will, or yielding at once to their passions; determined at last to escape from sin, not to be the slaves of the perishable and the material; to be the victors, not the victims, of the present. There are many of us who have come to God in that



fashion, conscious, at last, of their soul and their Father.

It is no easy striving. It may be desperate almost. It is an old legend that an Eastern plant, when torn up by the roots, utters so inexpressible a cry that none can hear it and live. If we could see the suffering of some who root up a sin, or the worldly habit of a life, we could scarcely bear the sight. They groan within themselves, waiting for the redemption; nay, the spirit of God Himself, so close He is to us, makes intercession for them with groanings that cannot be uttered. The old life fights to the last gasp with the new. That which they would they do not; that which they would not, that they do, till at last the cry of intense longing for freedom and God is wrought out of them: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" St. Paul had gone through that, and passionately he describes it.

When we are in earnest, like him, God does not allow that trial to pass beyond endurance into despair. The new life slowly gets the better of the old. Nobler excitements than the old bring new passions, new intensity, into our nature, and these do not exhaust but kindle energy. The contest becomes easier, and has its own pleasure; victory draws nearer day by day. There is suffering, but with it, linked to it in some strange but vital way, there is the sense of an ineffable glory to come; till, suddenly, with a flash of spiritual light, we see, through this experience, the meaning of the Cross

and of the Resurrection of Jesus. It seizes on our heart. We are crucified with Christ, yet partakers of his glory. We know whence we have come, and whither we are going ; whence our earnest aspiration came, and in whom it is fulfilled. We ascend to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God. Then the wild cry of St. Paul passes away for ever, and with him we answer : " I thank God who giveth me the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Finally, being conscious of the meaning of the longing in our soul, we interpret, like St. Paul, to other men the meaning of the expectation within them ; and, as we do this work, our thoughts and action change. We have been absorbed within, fighting for our soul, and if that were to continue, we should end in a religious selfishness. But now, in this spiritual progress, our desire is no longer for ourselves, but for all men, that they too may understand and reach the kingdom. We seek for the world's redemption, and in this higher hope which has succeeded the personal longing with which we began, we feel that the joy of any one member of the whole creation can only be perfect in the joy of the whole body. We are not troubled now with the fate of our own souls ; it is contained in the life of the whole in which we lose ourselves by love.

So it comes to pass in us, that as our life draws near its end, and our battle is over, we walk with a divine hope and faith in us of a day of the Lord, when the aspiration of all humanity will be fulfilled

in God ; such hope and faith as St. Paul had when far away he saw the full manifestation of the sons of God, and which urged him, as it urges us, out of ourselves to live for others, in daily self-forgetfulness. We see the whole creation, groaning and travailing, made subject to vanity, and at times it seems more than we can bear. But a mighty God, who is omnipotent Love, is in us now, and we are conscious of Him now. Faith springs into vivid life in us. We see the future glory ; the vision of accomplished redemption shines on our heart. We know the absolute victoriousness of Love. There is, we are certain, and with a great joy—

One God who ever lives and loves ;  
 One God, one Law, one element,  
 And one far-off Divine event  
 To which the whole creation moves.

## FIND ME OUT

*February, 1910*

“Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun : because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it ; yea farther ; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.”—  
ECCLES. VIII. 17.

THE luxurious and cultivated gentleman who entertained his leisure, perhaps in Alexandria, by writing the book of Ecclesiastes in order to purge his bosom of the yellow gall that floated there, and read it to his wearied circle of literary friends at opulent banquets, thought, you observe, in this text, that the secrets of life were insoluble, that it was no use trying to get the better of them. And this, as well as other matters, made the world to him a vain world in which to live.

It is true that the secrets of life are many, and that we contend with most of them in vain. We die without solving a tenth part of them ; and if we have not tried with all our might to get to their core, we die almost as ignorant of their solution as we were when we were born. The battle to uncover them is hard. If we fight it, we are often wearied

out, so tired, when the golden bowl is broken at last and the pitcher by the fountain's brim, that death is a refreshment. But if we do not fight it, we are so bored that we die thirty years sooner than we need.

We have, then, no easy time of it in life, and we were not sent here to take our ease—to eat, drink, and be merry. Some do that only, and they violate one of the first laws of life. They are civic cheats, dishonourable citizens, for they impose on others the work they ought to do. They plunder humanity. They make the life of men and women who do not take their ease twice as hard as it ought to be. But even if all did their share of work, we should not have an easy time. I never said we had, though I have been accused of optimism. No, indeed. What I have said is that life is an incessant battle, and that we are ridden in it like horses whose riders are flying before a prairie fire, with the spurs driven deep into our flanks ; but that, if this were not so, we are so lazy, so indifferent, that our intellect, imagination, conscience and spirit would not be developed ; and, moreover, that if the result be full and fine development, if we are made at last into veterans of love and law, if we are brought into the arms of God, we ought to be willing to suffer for the sake of the conclusion. Life of every kind suffers, agonizes rather, to reach its flower or its fruit, to win its reproductive force and use it, and we are not, in our painful struggle for a noble end, out of harmony with the rest of the life of the universe. Only our life transcends the lower life of plant or animal. We are conscious of



a goal ; we conceive the perfection of that in us which we know is imperfect ; and surely, if we can reach such perfection, it is worth the struggle with all its suffering, and we shall at last confess this with joy. Even on earth, at least in the spiritual world when we believe, we can say with St. Paul that we rejoice to be crucified with Christ—and when we can say that truly we can reproduce in others our belief and our love.

But if we are not developed, but destroyed, as is often said ; if, after battling hard for our term of years, we are to be blown out like a candle in the socket ; if there is to be no more of our thought and love ; if this futile fate is to be the fate of all the warriors and workers of the race, of all the poor fools of God—why, then, the game is scarcely worth the playing, the battle not worth our sword-drawing. The writer of Ecclesiastes then is right ; there is no farce more absurd, more mean and odious, than the history of the human race. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity !

“ All is secret,” said this writer ; “ nothing can be solved—and this is a miserable thing.” One answer to that I have already given. It is not miserable ; it is all the better for our lazy inactivities that so much is secret. Another answer is that all is not secret ; much has been solved ; and this was true even when Ecclesiastes was written. It is truer now when the world is some 2,000 years older—true in science, in history, and in our own lives. We have beaten back a good deal of the skirts of darkness in the physical

world, and science labours on with joy. We have solved, as we have gone on, many political, social, and artistic problems, and we are on the way to solve more. The right organization of humanity and its life opens before us like a fan.

And in our own inward and secret soul, if we have fought faithfully, we stand, as death draws near, as we look back on all that has been, not in the dead darkness, but in the twilight of the dawn. We have sinned and failed, suffered, endured, but we have conquered a divine personality. We have wrung that solution out of the secret of life. That, for many of us, stands clear. God is in us, and we are in God. Part is solved—why not the rest beyond the dimness of this world? So we wait, and we see, as we draw near to the end, a hand upon the curtain. When it is right it will be drawn back, and, with the clash of its mighty rings, we shall be flooded with light.

Moreover, it is owing to the existence of these secrets that our life has its interest, is rescued from monotony. How dull, how woebegone, would be the game of science, politics, philosophy; how colourless, how transient all friendship, love, and art, if in them we did not meet day by day the unknown, the undiscovered, and hear its low laugh of challenge! Our curiosity and our effort to satisfy it is the maker and the supporter of life; and were it all satisfied, were there no secrets, our life would be a half-despair. If God were even to tell us, The time will come when you shall have found out all the secrets of the

universe, when the unknown shall lie behind you, no tidings could be more dreadful.

It is well indeed for us, as we are, that we conceive of God as infinite ; and we conceive infinity just because we are what we are. It is well that we conceive of beauty, truth and love in Him as infinite ; for then we know that our insatiable curiosity will always have its pleasure in infinite pursuit. Age after age, our intellectual, emotional, and spiritual being will never be without allurements and desires ; and the farther we penetrate, the keener will be the desire, the more impassionating the allurements, the deeper the life and the rapture of life.

But, passing from these side issues, there are two great secrets apparently outside ourselves which beset us here—the secret of Nature and the secret of humanity. Or they may be one secret with a two-fold face, for we never can quite tell whether Nature is in herself incomprehensible, or whether it is our own secret which we transfer to her—whether, when we discover her laws, or rather the ideas on which she is built, we are not in reality discovering the laws of our own being. Yet work as we may on the outside of things, there remains in Nature what seems an inner source and life—a kind of spirit at which we cannot get. Life is there : life handling and modifying matter ; entering it, and then leaving it to enter other phases of it ; a spiritual energy of which we know nothing but its products—the transcendent thing behind the universe, the energy of God ; life which in its last expression is love. We conceive

that ; we cannot prove it yet : its secret is unsolved. Science, it is true, has found out many of Nature's surface secrets, and we are enabled to be more comfortable, and to protect ourselves better. Moreover, the deeper researches of knowledge into the infinitely great and the infinitely small of that which we call animate and inanimate matter and its movements, are a great interest and amusement to us, and help us to deceive the way, to relieve the menace of life's monotony. But when science and we have done our best on the apparent universe, we are still confronted with the secret of Nature. She looks into our face, and, smiling, says : " Yes, that is very well indeed ; you have found out what I say to your perceptions, and why I say it in that way, but what am I myself ? What is the real thing, independent of your perceptions ? Am I really life, or is life only known through me ? Or am I anything at all by myself ?" And then a little ripple of laughter runs through the universe.

That is the real question. What makes, what lies behind the universe ; what is Nature ? Science only plays on the surface of that ; leads us up to it, and abandons us at its gate. Sometimes it calls it the unknown behind all things. Sometimes it says in a passion that the question " does not exist," because it shuts its eyes to it, or has tried in vain to solve it. And then the lookers-on at science are a little amused, for they know that man has always been pursuing that secret, always convinced of its being, always driven by it like a goad, and always in his effort to

solve it, or to express its essence, making half the philosophy, half the religion, and half the art of the world.

The effort to solve this secret has made every Nature-myth, and in that form has run like a river through the stories of the world and all the religion of the world. Through every description of Nature in poetry it seems to rise like a veiled figure, and to call on us to lift its veil. Its curious smile peeps from behind every Nature-philosophy. It gives to every religion a special note, heard high and keen and alluring, among all the intellectual jangle of doctrines and creeds. It is one of the strange, undefinable elements which, below all the accurate imitation of Nature in art, rises up in the work of the great painters, sculptors, musicians, and architects, and which gives their work its mystic cry, its spiritual attraction, its something which is not in imitation; but the imaginative charm of which beckons us on into a world beyond the senses, where things do not appear, but are. And the greater the artist, the more of the allurements of the secret of Nature appears in his work. We feel it, though we may not shape our desire of it, like the artist. What do we hear in the sound of the sea, or the wind in the tree-tops—what, which does not strike on the mortal ear, but, arising from the sound, strikes on the heart? What looks at us from the mountain range against the evening sky, and from the eyes of the morning?—what from the whole, and from every part of the whole? We cannot tell; but we know its charm, its fear, its thrill—the



secret which beckons, disturbs, enthralls, allures, and feeds imagination.

We seek that secret, in its thousand forms, all our life long with a passionate ardour. There are few things which more kindle our desire, insist on our pursuit, and are more full of the wild satire of secrecy. No disappointment in discovery chills that desire, nor does old age weaken it. Even when the fool plucks at the bedclothes in death, he babbles of green fields.

And then I am told that of this secret we are to know no more, and find out no more, than we can do in the flutter and flutter of sixty years—sixty years!—a sigh, a breath, a dream by the camp-fire, the flight of a bird through a summer room, the lifting of an eyelid. This I am told, and asked to believe that it is not a ridiculous assertion—asked to think that a problem, which I see is so vast, is laid before a creature so ephemeral; that he has only sixty years in which to answer a question which sixty millions of years, at his rate of life and with his powers as they are, would not be able to answer.

Why is the infinite laid before us if we are so finite, or why do we conceive the infinite and then whistle ourselves down into unconsciousness, out of all power of conceiving it, in a few years? A man must have lost every vestige of feeling for all that belongs to the powers of imagination, to every art, as well as to every religion, before he can be satisfied to be the victim of that absurdity. Our sixty years leave us only on the first step of the great flight of

stairs which leads up to the Temple door. We gain but an inch on the ascent.

I hope we shall move faster in the far days to come. I think, if we make ourselves worthy pursuers, we may, when death opens the way, move onwards more rapidly than on earth. We are so hard bestead here that I think we shall be pushed on hereafter under happier conditions—find out more easily, and have more life in the finding, when we cross the river. But even then, however much we discover, there will always be enough of the secret of Nature—which is the secret of God's creative thought—to make eternity delightful.

But even beyond the secret of Nature in interest is the secret of humanity. There is a tragedy in it which is not in the secret of Nature, which gives to it an awe, a dread, a bitterness, a solemnity, often a noble and purified dignity, which do not belong to the problem of Nature. It clings to us, looks into our eyes, forces its question into every day, into every corner of our heart. What is man, whence does he come, whither does he go? What means his long sorrow, what the agony of the world? What means also my bitter pain, what my undeserved misery? Where have those gone I loved? Is all their love extinguished?

Where is all the love, and thought, and activity, of all the world; are they dead or alive, useless or at work, ruined or rescued? O, there are a million personal, national, universal questions in this one question. Think of the thousand phases of the

secret hidden in the life of Europe, raising their heads in every book, in every newspaper, and all running up in the end into one great cry, "Is there a God who loves man, and will bring him to peace in a continued life? or is all the trouble plunged into eternal night—a wide, grey, lampless, deep, unpeopled' silence?"

This is the secret which, like that of Nature, makes excitement or makes despair. It thrills us into faith and hope, or it chills us into pessimism, or it hardens us into grim endurance. On one side, it cries for immortality with eternal love directing; on the other side, it implores annihilation.—"Let the universe," it cries, "have done with this cruelty, this mad absurdity."

Which is the answer to the secret, we ask, when we are tossed to and fro like a rudderless ship in our sorrow, our doubt, our failure, or our sin? How the question worries and stings and drives us on! How fierce, as it presses home, is our anger, our dissatisfaction, our contempt!

And then at last how weary we are of it all—weary of the insoluble, weary of the mental lash and of the passionate wrath of conscience and of love, in rebellion against the secret—till we cry, "Let it alone." But in that is no solution. That state of heart and mind is even worse than the trouble.

There are many persons of a lofty moral temper, but not of much imagination, who are content with the answer of annihilation, and who can live noble lives, living and giving themselves up to work for a

perishing race ; and honour and gratitude are due to them, though it be hard to understand them. But the most part of those who believe that all the men and women in the world are snuffed out at death, and who have not this high morality, naturally do not care to take much interest in mankind. They are content to live for themselves and their friends alone, and they form that large class in society, both among poor and rich, who are thoughtless, indifferent to others, and busied in their own affairs alone, the existence of which class is one of the greatest dangers to which society is exposed. They lower day by day the standard of justice and charity and morality in society, in politics, in literature, in art, and push the nation towards decay. They have no check beyond this world, no sense of God or of men as children of God and their brothers. How can they have, when they think in their light fashion that everyone they see in the streets, and hear of in the world, and meet in their rooms, is living with as little certainty of continuance as the flies on the window-pane?

The belief in annihilation brings forth in the mass of men no good but evil fruits. And, as an answer to the problem of humanity, it makes the problem deeper by deepening the evils of humanity.

Take the same statement in another form. When a nation or a set of nations has no excitement about the end of man ; when universal death is contentedly looked on as the end ; when society is fixed down into the visible alone ; when there is no eternity felt

in love ; when duties are only for this life, and the hunger of the perfect is unknown ; when there is indifference to misery because misery is to close in everlasting death ; when we are believed to be only matter, diversely arrayed by circumstance, then—and I appeal to history—the nation degrades. It loses imagination, its love of beauty withers, its art decays, its pursuit of knowledge grows cold, its love of discovery dies out, its fighting power is enfeebled, its chariot sticks fast in the mud of luxury in the upper classes, and of a slavish habit of soul in the lower. Its wealth increases on one side, with base accumulation or reckless extravagance ; its poverty, with misery, increases on the other. Vile diseases attack its heart, and it slowly rots away, till its chief excitements are sensuality and gambling.

But when a nation holds that there is a solution in a future life to be found of the problems of humanity, that man is consciously to rejoice for ever in a conscious life, that sorrow will end in the strength of joy and sin in the conquest of eternal righteousness ; when it believes in God as the Father of men, and that all shall finally be at one with His immortal love, then the nation is set into quick movement, hope bears it on, and faith enchants it. Justice and truth and charity, having their roots in the eternal, grow and prosper ; pain and sorrow are nobly borne, for they end in resurrections ; war and peace are noble ; while the imaginative pursuit of everlasting life and the ideas by which it lives—entering as power and glory into knowledge, art,



literature, and government, into the redemption of poverty, misery and pain—lift the nation into an ennobled and ennobling life and make it a saviour of the world. Yes, when the world believes that the answer to the secret of humanity is to be found in God, giving eternal life in eternal love to every soul of man—yes, even when this is believed to be true only of a limited number, even in this maimed and inadequate belief—the world moves on; the nations throw off disease; the earth wears the beauty of promise; young men see visions, old men dream dreams, and, in the very teeth of our deep perplexity, youthfulness, vigour, joy, and the power of conquest are alive in the heart of man. Under the pressure of the belief in death as the solution of the human secret, man loses all that exalts him. Under the pressure of the belief in life as the solution, he wins all that exalts him. By their fruits you will know the beliefs, whether they be true or not.

And now, what of ourselves, not as nations, but as persons? The secret of humanity as it comes to us now, charged with the certain hope of an answer in everlasting life, with an infinite future before it, sets our whole life on fire. We know we cannot answer its multitudinous foldings and unfoldings in our little sixty years, but we feel within us the power to penetrate the whole, and we believe we shall have endless time to pursue and penetrate it, for we shall be at one with the endless love who is ever-eager life. Our sixty years are then filled with passion,

imagination, pursuit, creation, with growing righteousness, with doubling and redoubling activities of love, with hopes that shall not be ashamed, with joy leaping upwards out of all sorrow, with grateful quietudes in age, and with peace in death that passes understanding.

Then, lastly, there is a third secret—the secret of ourselves ; and it is probably this unknown within us which is the most important factor in our conception of the secret of Nature and the secret of humanity. If we could solve our own secret, know clearly what we are, even who we are, we should perhaps solve the others—at least, all that is painful in them.

Take two phases, for illustration's sake, of this secret. We seem often to sit apart from ourselves, to be able, as if we were a separate being, to look on and wonder at ourselves. And this strange other self, outside of us, as it were, asks questions about its companion, its other self. As if on a hill, it sits apart, and sees its own figure move along the general way of human life to the unseen goal where broods the mist. It sees itself, working, walking in careful thought, playing, fighting, looking up to heaven, groping on the ground, laughing, weeping, living, pursuing, striking down some of its comrades, clinging to others, and it does not seem able to give any reason for half the things its other self performs. It asks, "Who is that man? What is he doing? Why does he do that? How can he care for this or that? Why does he love that man, that woman? Where

is he going ?” And, all the time this detached self is arguing of the doings of its companion, we know, or another part of us knows, that the two selves are in our single personality. That is but one phase of our secret, nor is it an uncommon experience.

Again, we look into our soul, and are dimly conscious of large tracts therein of which as yet we have no cognizance—tracts of intelligence or passion over which we have never moved ; feelings, thoughts, lives, of which we dimly understand we are capable, but which we have never touched ; waste lands, untilled, unknown, which we have never explored, but which a new love, a new book, a new duty, a new event may whirl us into in a moment, and create for us therein another life, with a new earth and a new heaven. Life is full of such strange revelations. If what we are seems often unknown, what we may be seems even more unknown. All we know is that we are more than we know, that in our soul are infinite capacities, an endless series of lives, boundless possibilities of evil and of good. That is another phase of the secret of ourselves.

And then we are told that to that secret—only two phases of which I have sketched—no answer is ever to be given, or ever can be given. This measureless secret, whose phases differ in every man, is a purposeless problem, necessarily flung together by the dance of atoms, and to be resolved into that dance again. In every man and woman born into the world, this game in which we suffer so bitterly, by which we are so profoundly excited, out of which

so much that is dear to man has been evolved—has been played by the atomic clash, and we and all our puzzles are only a part of that. It has seemed so real to us, so terrible, so beautiful, so true, so tender with love, so noble in thought—and yet it has, in the end, no more meaning for us than the steam which comes from a kettle! Well, of all the unintelligent theories ever invented by the understanding, that is the most devoid of intelligence, the most unthinkable when our reason is in good order. And of all the wonderful forms of credulity that is the most credulous.

It is not only want of feeling, of imagination, of spiritual conscience which declares that death closes the book of our secret, it is want of intellectual power and insight. Even the understanding has to submit its eyes to be bandaged by its own pride before that conclusion be accepted.

No, the single yet multitudinous being which we are is not destined to that fate. As we grow older, unless we have had no seriousness, we know more and more of our own secret. What we are, what our powers mean, what the puzzles of our being suggest, the kindlings in us of a light and life which shall be hereafter but cannot be here, bright shoots of everlastingness—these are more and more revealed. There is a progress. Behind the darkneses of life we dimly see a glory grow. We do not love less but more, yet we are not made despairing by trouble. We know by the experience of our soul that if we fight on we shall win the day—that is, we learn

to know ourselves in God's love, and to find out ourselves in going out of ourselves to help our fellows. To forget self is to be intensely conscious of personality.

We are convinced of an education within us, a development, a future before us. That has begun which must fulfil itself; and in that thought all notion of death being the conclusion disappears like a cloud in the sun. The secret of the soul is in the hands of eternity.

Finally, if these things be true, if the secrets of Nature, humanity, and our own soul open steadily, allure us, and, in the allurements, educate us; if, through their action, we are moulded into true soldiers of mankind, and in death are worth, for use, a hundred times more than we were—what has done this; or, rather, who? Who but a Will of Love and Righteousness; who works us towards love and righteousness, and out of whose infinities pour like streams the secrets of the universe; not that we may despair and die of them, but rejoice, and hope, and live to find them; and who wills that we shall pursue them with rapture for ever through the fulness of His love.

That was the secret glory of which Jesus knew. Not a sparrow fell, he said, without his Father's knowledge, not a hair on our heads but was numbered by Him. So, in his symbolic way, he told us that God was immanent in the universe, and immanent in us; that at the back of the universe was not matter but thought, consciously ordering,



playing, evolving ; that in all humanity was love, moving one and all through the ages to eternal life in love ; that in each personal soul God labours, His spirit moving in mine, claiming me as His own, training me for higher life—with me, O strong Comforter, in every trouble of life, rejoicing with me in the hour of death, and living in me for ever in the world to come.

When we are conscious of these truths, all the pain in our secrets is dissolved. Our soul rejoices in its own secret, for it knows that the infinity of God has made it, and loves it. That personal knowledge opens to us the secret of humanity. What is true of us is true for all. The end of mankind will be a passion of delight in which the pain will be forgotten ; a perfection of love in which the sin and sorrow will be drowned. And then at last we shall know that the secret of Nature is incessant ecstasy, and that the puzzling secret of it lay in our transient incapacity to realize what joy could be.

Therefore, living and dying, and in the life to come, I will pursue and overtake and divide the spoil of secrecies.

## THE FOURTH PSALM

*June 19, 1910*

“Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness : Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress ; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame ? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing ? Selah.

But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself : the Lord will hear when I call unto Him.

Stand in awe, and sin not : commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.

There be many that say, Who will show us any good ? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.

Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep : for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.”

It is often the case in life, though men and women complain of it bitterly, that trouble doubles itself. We complain, but complaint is useless ; it never heals the wound, and it takes away our strength to meet the trouble. Moreover, that one trouble should succeed another is part, oftentimes, of our common lot, and we should be prepared to meet

this common trial. It is at our peril if, like lazy Governments, we are not ready to meet an enemy, or the certain result of bygone folly.

It may happen, then, that having worked with some faith and fortitude through a long and dreary time, and having emerged with a sound ship out of the tempest, even while we praise God for our peace, we are called on to face another storm. Clouds gather from another point of the horizon, menacing a new tempest, and before we have had time to set our resting ship in full order, the sun is hidden again from our eyes, and, unrested, we have to renew the strife.

This is a fate which often happens to seamen on the ocean. It is no less frequent on the ocean of life. Then, like the seamen, we know that the time is come, not for complaint, but for fighting the long days through, contending, not so much for life, as for keeping true to the heroic character, to our divine origin, to the life within us of fortitude, faith, hope, and love. We may die, but we must not die unworthily. If we cannot say with any hope, "I fight for a life's conquest," we can say, and the Heavens will accept that war-cry, "I strive for God and my fellow-men. I will leave behind the record of a good battle, of love that never failed, of faith that never despaired." That is the right and noble temper of the soul. It is also the wisest temper. If you have to fight a long battle, this is the spirit which gives you the best chance. It is certain to secure the victory of your soul over evil. It may

secure victory for your life over all misfortune, and send you forth young again, alert and joyous, to begin a new career. Complaint will not do that; courage will.

This case which I have put was the fate, I think, of the writer of this Psalm. "O God," he cries, "Thou hast of old set me at liberty when I was in trouble. But now, again, new trouble surges over me like an angry sea. Slander and vain talking make free with my reputation; my honour is blasphemed, and my good name, dearer than life, is the mockery of the world. How long, O Lord, shall I endure—how long shall this trouble last? Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness."

How did he escape from the new trial? What was his courage? On what did he repose when he was half-despairing? In what spirit did he fight his battle? The whole case is laid before us with wonderful clearness. Everyone in trouble feels its interest.

First, his conscience was unrepachable. He claimed that he was righteous. God of my righteousness—that is his cry. The Lord hath chosen the man who is godly; when I call on the Lord, He will hear me; that is the answer he boldly gives to his enemies.

So, in the darkness of his trial, his conscience was clear. He could call on God to vindicate his cause. This untroubled conscience—on the whole untroubled, for who is altogether right?—is the deepest root of courage, fortitude, patience, and good fighting. It

is the consciousness of wrong-doing that makes the darkness of trouble, darkness that may be felt. But the consciousness of duty done, and righteousness preserved, of being able to say to God, "God of my righteousness," suffuses the blackest darkness with a growing light. It prophesies, nay, it secures our victory.

There are some fortunate souls who have lived all their lives in a natural rightness, whose conscience is clear of those darker sins that weaken and degrade the powers of life. When trouble comes on these, wave succeeding wave, they have at least this consolation, and its strength, "It is not any self-degradation, no wilful wrong which has caused my trouble. I have been on the side of God my Father. I have walked humbly with Christ, and borne his yoke." And well it is for them in the day of their pain; and well it would be for us in our sorrows, if we would so live when we are prosperous and happy, and so resist the temptations of happiness, that, when the evil days come, we may be able to say justly, "Hear me when I call, God of my righteousness."

Others are not so fortunate, and these are the greater number. They have swerved from righteousness. They look back, out of the gloom of the stormy day, and know that they chose wrong, and did it deliberately, because they liked it best. They knew they would suffer for it, but they thought their pleasure worth the suffering. "I do not care," they said; "I will have my own will; I must have my day."

Then when the fruit of their passionate self-indul-



gence came to maturity in the bitter dust and ashes of satiety—that strange and dreadful punishment—they repented, and strove to do the very opposite of that they had done; accepting their punishment as just, as proving that God had not abandoned them. “Merciful Father,” they cried, “burn up my evil; give me the pain that consumes my evil and kindles good. Be my righteousness. Hear me when I call.”

These are not like the first; not so happy in themselves, even when God has answered their prayer. But when they have lived through their wrong into right, they have this consolation: their life may be of use, even of more use than the former, to the sinful and the weary. The Very good, who have scarcely known temptation, sometimes tend to be harsh to the guilty, intolerant, unforgiving, unsympathetic with the outcast and the sinner; walking with the Pharisee and not with Jesus. But we who have known in ourselves how weak men and women are against the onset of the passions; we who have done and suffered from wrong and escaped, as by a miracle, from its evil, have won the grace of pity for poor mankind. Our trouble has taught us how to love the weak, the guilty, the victims of life. We have grown into kindness. We make the excuses God makes for frailty. We are sorry for men when they break down, and touch them as gently as Christ touched the sinner. This is the great mercy which our Father gives to us when we have repented of the wrong we have done, when we have conquered in the strife. We can then help those in like difficulty.

We can say to them, "My brother, I too have sinned, but God has made me strong to live with righteousness. Take courage, He loves you well; victory is possible; you, too, may beat your evil out of your heart in the power of Jesus Christ. God has forgiven you: forgive yourself. God has been my righteousness. He will be yours."

If we have gained through repentance—that is, through the conquest of evil—this blessed power of loving and helping sinful men, we may, even though we have sinned deeply in the past, call, like the Psalmist, upon God in the day of our bitter trouble, claim the same words for ourselves as the more righteous man—"God of my righteousness, hear me when I call." And that is a mighty power and comfort for us in the day when the earth shakes and the heavens seem to fall.

Men may say that such a self-confidence is wrong. So it is, if we think we have gained it by our own power. If that be our position, we are in deadly danger of fresh wrong. Sin lies, then, at our door, waiting like a crouching beast to spring upon us, and rend our heart.

Oh, nothing lays the heart more open to disaster and evil than vanity of our own righteousness, or the deadlier pride which cries to heaven, "I stand here in my own strength; I have won this moral height by my own power." Alas! that voice is the voice of one who has already begun to fall. Surely, surely, we cannot have lived long and intelligently on this curious surface of ours, if we have not yet begun to under-

stand that there is nothing in the world so weak as pride—no, nor so near to all the vices. Pride in oneself is the queen of evil. The seven deadly sins draw her chariot, and trample on all our virtues as her slaves.

This was not the Psalmist's state of heart. His righteousness, he thinks, is of God within him. What he has won of good has been won by the inward energy of God combining with his energy. "Were it not," he cries, "for Thy Divine spirit, I had been lost. Thine is the conquest, then, and Thine the power, God of my righteousness."

In that humility is his security—is our security. Not security against pain or trial, or the fierce trouble of the battle. God does not take away from us the suffering which ought to ennoble character. But security against the power of evil to overcome us, against the despair which, through our trouble, threatens to degrade the soul; against the power of trouble to lessen love, to make us hard and cynical.

It is not we alone, then, who fight the battle. The Master of Righteousness fights it along with us. Nor are we left loveless to meet our enemies' hatred, or the cruelties of life. Everlasting Love is with us, and His love permeates our soul with love. And, when we love, no evil in the whole world can overcome us. Love turns all evil into good. Therefore, feeling in us the righteousness and love of God, we look to Him out of the darkness, and gloom and fear vanish in the vision. Our very self vanishes away. We see nothing but the glory of God—God our righteous-

ness—and this is the utter annihilation of pride in our morality. It is the chief cause of the insecurity of our goodness—and it is now dead. Within us then abides security—the security of humility. We shall keep, we now know, our righteousness, for it is not only ours. It is ours, within the omnipotent righteousness of God our Father. The works I do, said Christ, I do not of myself: my Father who dwelleth in me, He doeth the works.

Again, this security is not only felt from within our souls. We feel it confirmed from without. It has its roots in eternal law, external to us. We are now convinced that the universe obeys, and is directed by, an ever-acting law of righteousness; and that if we are on the side of that law, nothing can ever shake or injure the powers of our soul. “The Lord hath chosen to Himself,” says this writer, as he felt this majestic thought moving through his spirit, “the man that is godly. When I call on the Lord, He will hear me.”

Yes, when we do the will of our Father, we are masters of the whole power of the world to disturb the soul. No injury can touch us to the quick. Nothing can finally hurt the inner life. A thousand troubles may fall on us, but the soul remains unconquered. It is at one with the righteous law of the universe. Who, and what, can shake that secure repose? This is the faith which makes life victorious. But it does more than secure the soul. It exalts it, lifts it into a splendour of thought and passion. For it fills us with so great an imagination

of the wonder and infinity of righteous law, and of its excelling beauty, and of Him who is this righteousness and order, and makes them live beyond Him, that we are ravished by the glory of this vision into uplifted love and worship. The soul is exalted into an ideal reverence. "Stand in awe," cried the Psalmist, as he felt this thought flashing through his mind. And to stand in awe before the vision of God—awe traversed incessantly by ardours of joy and love in what the soul has seen—is the exaltation of the soul; the changing of the soul, as St. Paul phrases it, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Reverence—to stand in awe and sin not—is the enrichment of the spirit. For reverence is one of the comrades of love. It is, yet more, one of the roots of knowledge. It is also the temper which enables the imagination to perceive and to love beauty; and beauty, in the true world, is always married to righteousness. Such an enrichment is the exalting of the soul. When wonder and love, knowledge and beauty, are the indwellers of our little world within, and stand with awe here, in this life of ours, before God, before nature, and before humanity—then, from the smallest as from the greatest things, spiritual ennoblement will stream into our soul.

Once more, when we have this faith in God as our righteousness, when we can say as the Psalmist said, "God is mine and I am His," we are quite at ease before our enemies. We make no angry efforts to right ourselves in the sight of man such as this



writer, feeling that he was unjustly accused, might have used against the slanderers of his honour. You hear this noble, quiet temper of trust in God in his words, "I will commune with my own heart, and in my chamber, and be still. I will offer the sacrifice of righteousness, and trust in the Lord." He leaves his quarrel in the hands of God's justice.

It is the right way to meet the trouble of man's injustice. Let us commit ourselves, in peace, to Him that judgeth righteously. What man can do or say we need not care for: we only care what God will think of us. Our sole desire is to offer to Him the sacrifice of righteousness. Therefore, though all society be against us, we will not strive or cry against its injustice, nor cause our voice to be heard in the street. We will walk with Christ in the silences of trust. To make a noise in self-defence is to distrust our Vindicator. Oh, wait in all trouble on the Lord, abiding in the still fortitudes of the soul, content in voiceless service to do the will of God. There, and not in angry self-defence, lies conquest; there is the enduring power. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. But yet, remember, waiting on the Lord never means, if you can act, inaction. Sloth is not waiting on God, nor indifference, nor unreadiness. It means, in the days when you cannot fight, to have your loins girded, and your lights burning, and your soul on the sentinel tower awake, and looking for the dawn of God.

Thus, when trouble after trouble arose, wave suc-

ceeding wave, thus felt this ancient Hebrew, when all the world was against him. How fresh, how true, how clear, with what a weight of comfort, teaching and suggestion, his voice comes down to us who live in a world more restless and more vain than his, where, if we are less outwardly troubled, we are more inwardly disturbed. Think of his experience and use it. When you are in deeper and deeper trouble, try his way.

And now the second part of his experience begins. We see in the close of the Psalm the results of the work he has done upon his soul.

He introduces these results in a poet's way, by a new motive, which is yet in harmony with the main theme of the lyric. He fancies that he is being comforted by those sympathizers whom to-day we should call pessimists. They are not his slanderers, but he is as indignant with them as if they were; because, not believing in eternal good, they would strip him of his only comfort. Where, where, except in that which they dare to deny, in the sovereignty of goodness, shall he find strength in this day of trouble? There is nothing now to help him but trust that at the centre of the universe there is an immortal will which will secure for all the perfect good.

So he pictures their attempt at comfort, then his answer to them, and ends with the description of his gladness and his peace. As he closes, the storm of trouble still rages without, but within it has wholly died. All his soul is happy—still as a summer evening. "Fool," say these sympathizers, "there is

no good. Who will show us any in this world? There is no joy, no truth, no justice on this earth, only selfish cravings that we share with the brute. The world is made by the will to get on, to live, to multiply, to have the better of other wills. Every man and woman must be selfish. Your slanderers but follow nature. You, who try to be above nature, to aspire to a fancied good, to sacrifice your life for love, will be forced to be like the rest. The good you seek is a phantom. You will never attain it. The only peace is in accepting the badness, as you call it, of the world ; in making a mock of it, and in getting out of it as soon as you can into the silence and inaction of everlasting death. Who will show us any good ?”

This is the consolation which, nowadays, is offered by many to our troubles. What is likely to come out of it? What progress, what development? What nobility of temper, what heroism, what love and courage, what work, self-sacrifice, what final triumph of the soul in the battle of life, are the children of that theory? It laughs at every motive that encourages these virtues. It builds up within our lazy life weakness, contempt for good, decay, and chiefly philosophic vanity—that root of fatal mischief to mankind. It settles us down into a bad temper with the world, into degrading contempt of the history of mankind. It makes us an ape and tiger, with other apes and tigers. It quenches God, or if we conceive Him as having made the world, we hate Him. Indeed, in this scheme of life, to hate

God, if we confess Him, is the best righteousness we can conceive. This is the cowardly and bitter life this theory establishes.

How shall we answer it better than in the words of this old writer? When I hear this jargon, I say: "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." Whatever be our sorrow and our trouble, however dark the tempest of trial, our soul is our own, and so is God. God our Father pours into its recesses the light which is not on land or sea. He loves us, and His love is light. He is just to us, and His justice is light. He is making us good, and to be good is to be suffused with light.

And if He has done this for us, we are sure He is doing it for all men. In spite of pain, through every pain, His love and truth move on, and will finally make out of individual pain universal pleasure. On all mankind, when He has wrought them in many centuries through difficulty and battle into veteran soldiers of righteousness, He will pour His sunshine. In this high faith there is eternal joy and peace. God has lifted up on us the light of His countenance, and we love and honour men who are His children, to whom He gives His light.

This was the writer's consolation, and it is ours when the darkness of life is deep. Then he looks round again and sees how many are happy and have prosperous lives, even men who are not good. Corn and wine and oil fill their stores, and the greater their store the more it multiplies. This, he thinks, is a curious problem to which he sees no answer, and

it is a problem to which those who suffer desire a reply. There is no direct reply. The Psalmist does not seek for one.

But he falls back on the temper of his soul, and finds in it all the answer that he needs. "Shall I lose my peace in the restlessness of complaint or anger? Shall I think God unfair because He blesses their increase, and seems to bear hard on me? Shall I be envious because their lot is better than mine? No; I will keep my soul clear of base things. I will rather rejoice in their happiness; for in that temper I shall best bear my adversity. What do I care for these problems, born of discontent or envy? Why should I care, for I have joy within? God has poured gladness into my heart—gladness in loving, gladness in goodness, gladness in that clear spiritual light in which I know that all trouble is part of noble education." This is his answer, and it is sufficient; and these are the high spiritual results which have emerged from the battle of the Psalmist's soul.

Then at last—and may this be our blest experience—all is rest. The storm within has been made a calm. We have reached our haven after the tempest, and the ship of life lies under sheltering cliffs upon the glassy waters. Soft are the airs and still the evening sky above the soul, and from the land beyond the music of the heavenly host is heard. "I will lay me down in peace," the poet cries, "and take my rest. It is Thou, Lord, only that makes me dwell in safety."



So let it be with us, in this our later time, when trouble is doubled on our head. And then, when after many days the last and loneliest trouble arrives, and the house of earthly life, dissolving, feels wave after wave of weakness break in that final storm upon the outward man, and the great shadow creeps on, while as yet its under edge is not coloured with the rosy dawn which rises behind it, in that cold hour between the old and the new, when the known is gliding from our grasp and the unknown is rending the husk in which the new life lies as yet unfolded, when all that is outward is undergoing this supreme disturbance—within, as before in the lesser storms of life, there is unspeakable peace. The light of God's countenance is lifted on the waiting soul. The eyes of faith are radiant with it. Gladness beyond all earth's measure fills our heart, and in the silence we say our kind farewell to earth. The coming life arises even in the arms of death, and immortal joy begins its reign. Light deepens, infinite Light. Then, on the very verge of the eternal day, in that swift passage from the life of earth to the life of heaven, even while we die, we cry to our Father: "I will lay me down in peace and take my rest."

## THE SIXTY-SEVENTH PSALM

*July 3, 1910*

“ God be merciful unto us, and bless us ; and cause His face to shine upon us.

That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations.

Let the people praise Thee, O God ; let all the people praise Thee.

O let the nations rejoice and be glad and sing for joy : for Thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations on the earth.

Let the people praise Thee, O God ; let all the people praise Thee.

Then shall the earth yield her increase ; God, even our God, shall bless us.

God shall bless us ; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.”

It is almost a certainty that this Psalm was written after the Exile, and when the Temple at Jerusalem had been rebuilt—one of the hymns of the new service in the new building which itself was the symbol of the new-born nation. The destiny which the later Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel had imagined in their lofty hopes for their people had been now fulfilled. Israel was again a people, and sat upon her ancient seat. She might well cry, “The hills stand about

Jerusalem : so standeth the Lord round about His people, from this time forth for evermore.”

It was then a time of national rapture, and the word is not too strong to express the thing. We may find a parallel to it in our own history, at that excited hour when the Armada was scattered from sea to sea, when Spain was humbled, and all enemies in Europe tried to become friends to a people that had risen like a young lion from his sickness, and confronted the world with conquest in his eyes. A whole outburst of great literature followed on and recorded England's joy in this mighty deliverance. Every church in the land rang with hymns of praise ; and this was one of the few times when the chanting of the *Te Deum* for victory in war in the house of the Prince of Peace was justified, for the victory of England was the victory of right over wrong, the victory of humanity over oppressors of humanity.

Just so it was now in Jerusalem. In her regenerated life lay hid the new life of the spirit of man. In her triumph over her foes so superb a joy excited her that a new psalm literature, and afterwards a new type of Hebrew literature, arose. Especially they needed new hymns of praise to express their exultation and their gratitude, to serve as religious records to posterity of their freedom and their faith. A whole series of these were made, and of them all the sixty-eighth is perhaps the most complete and the most finished. It is true it seems too much broken up, and the connection between its separate parts does not easily suggest itself ; but if

we, like the congregation who sang it, had known what all its allusions meant, and had heard it alternately sung by the priests and the people, we should recognize what a noble piece of work it is, as noble in art as it is in feeling. Week after week new poems were written and sung in the Temple services. Among them all, however, there was no concluding Psalm, no Psalm which occupied the same position as the parting blessing which the minister gives in our services, no dismissal hymn. This was a want the fulfilment of which could not be long delayed, and here in the sixty-seventh Psalm it is fulfilled. This was the blessing, the parting hymn. The best confirmation of this statement is that the Psalm is an expansion of the ancient blessing—a remnant of pure antiquity—which Aaron is said to have been instructed to give to the assembled tribes in the wilderness when they were dismissed to their tents. This is it, and you will hear its repetition in the first words of the sixty-seventh Psalm: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Num. vi. 22-26).

A good poet, when he finds a phrase honoured by antiquity, and which expresses exactly his feeling, has no hesitation, but rather delight, in taking that phrase and developing it to fit new circumstances. It is like a great musician who takes a popular theme, and works it up, under the impulse of similar feeling in himself to that from which it

originally sprung, but with additions which suit a changed time. The old shepherd song which Handel wrought into the Pastoral Symphony exactly illustrates what I mean.

The fine literary quality of this lyric is not then lessened in beauty, but increased by the borrowing of the opening phrases. Every Israelite who heard the well-known words in the outbreak of this song in the Temple saw, as he listened, the glories and victories, the marches and campaigning of his people, from the times of the deliverance from Egypt to this last glory and deliverance in which he was now living. In this way the emotion of the past was brought into and added to the present. Nothing, as art, could be better done.

The place, then, of this Psalm in literature is a high one; and everyone can feel that, when he thinks that it has extended its power far beyond Israel, beyond all local use and circumstance. It has been used for centuries by the Eastern and Western religions, by Mahometans and Christians, by the most diverse peoples of Europe, by the thanksgiving services to this day of Greek, Roman, and Protestant Churches, to express the blessing of God and the gratitude of man for the help of God in times of national trouble and joy, in social and personal success and defeat. In this universality of use and application, in this freedom from the private and particular, we have another note of good literature. Along with that we have another note of the best lyrics—the note of noble simplicity. The ideas are great,



as large as God and humanity, and yet they are expressed in the clearest, shortest, the most uncomplicated manner. There is no imposed ornament. The thoughts are their own ornament. And lastly, flowing through all, and caused by the memories invoked, by the deep emotions represented, and by the emotions which were naturally correlated with the mighty thoughts, there is the necessary note of the greatest lyrics—profound and noble passion—intensified, not by additional thoughts, but by the repetition of the same thoughts again and again. Weak thoughts do not bear repetition, but the mightiest do bear it—nay, the more they are repeated the more glorious they appear.

And now, I will go swiftly through the shaping of the lyric.

It begins with that loud uplifted outburst which characterizes the finest songs of the Hebrews—one loud cry for the blessing of God to rest upon the people, and that blessing to be the light of His countenance. Then it passes from Israel to all the world. If Israel be blest with God's light, which is righteousness, all nations on earth will know His way and His delivering power: "that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations." Then the largeness of the vision of God, and of all mankind in Him—for in a rush of thought and praise like this the poet loses Jewish prejudice—thrills his soul into yet a greater emotion, and all the nations are heard by the poet praising and thanking God: "Let the people praise Thee, O God: let all

the people praise Thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy." A magnificent vision, and well worthy of the redoubled phrase: "Let the people praise Thee, O God, let all the people praise Thee."

But why should they praise? What is the deep foundation of universal praise? That is the next transition. And the answer goes back with an intense simplicity to the very roots of all national happiness, to Divine justice done, to noble government by justice. All blessedness for peoples is held in that. "O let the nations," He cries, "rejoice and be exultant; for Thou shalt judge the people righteously, and guide the nations" into justice. And then the thought and the sight of all the nations justly governed stir him into a further excitement, and he repeats—and in this the whole congregation no doubt broke into chorus—his former phrase: "Let the people praise Thee, O God, let all the people praise Thee."

And now, in the sixth verse, one touch of local colour flashes in, to fit and enhance the universal joy with a particular blessing, to come home to the hearts of all men and women in the Temple—one touch, no more—one blessing now happening in the present to enhance the universal sense of blessing. "Already earth gives us her increase, and God has blest us."

There had been a famine about this time; it is alluded to in the prophet Haggai; but now the rains had come, the earth had broken forth into singing, already the harvest was waving in the valleys. It was a prophecy of more and more of blessing. "Bless

us, O God," the poet breaks forth again, inspired by this fresh aspect of the old thought. "Continue Thy blessing ; Thou art our God ; and we are Thine."

It seems, then, as if all had been said which was needful. But the poet is not quite content. What has been said has in the last phrases only taken thought of Israel ; "Bless us," he has cried, "bless us, our God ;" but now there is something more. He has learnt to think of and feel for other nations than his own through the experience of the Exile. Therefore his thought expands ; it were well, the impassioned artist feels, to knit once more, as in a final chord, the universal to the particular, to pass from Israel to all the world. "God shall bless us," he cries, "and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him."

This is the literary work of the Psalm—this its lyric analysis. But matched with this work, and, indeed, its soul, is the national morality, and the personal spirituality, of the Psalm.

I. The national morality. No men have seen more clearly, and laid down more exactly, than the Prophets and Psalmists of Israel the moral foundations of the life of nations. Milton saw that when he said, by the voice of Christ, extolling the Prophets in contrast with Greek sages,

As men divinely taught, and better teaching  
 The solid rules of civil government  
 In their majestic, unaffected style,  
 Than all the oratory of Greece and Rome.  
 In them is plainest taught, and easiest learnt,  
 What makes a nation happy, and keeps it so,  
 What ruins kingdoms, and lays cities flat ;  
 These only, with our Law, best form a King.

And the laws expressed in the poetry and prophecy of Israel are still as vital for the health of nations as they were in the ancient days. A mighty God is in them, and they grow not old.

The temple of God is the nation in which we live. "God be gracious to us and bless us," ought to be the prayer of every Englishman, and its importance ought, in our minds, to transcend every personal prayer. The more in all our prayer we are swept beyond the personal into the national, the better for our moral life, the better, also, for our spiritual being. But then we ought to have a clear idea of what we mean by God blessing us as a nation. It is not in things material that His blessing lies, not in increased wealth, not in our commerce covering every sea, not in the force of our armies—but it is in the light of His countenance being lifted upon us. And the light of His countenance is in the increase of those things in us as a people which bring light. It is in the increase of truth, in the knowledge and reverence of truth. And first in moral matters—in the full development of the power by which the national and civic conscience sees truthfully and clearly the differences between right and wrong, even in the most obscure cases, and beholds right as beautiful and wrong as deadly. And, secondly, in the full development of the power by which the intelligence is illuminated to discern and discover what is true in all the spheres of reason and knowledge; and when the truth is sifted clear, to have the will to revere it and to follow it, no matter into what strife and

pain and loss of worldly profit our following it may lead.

This is to have the light of God's countenance shining on our nation and our lives—moral and intellectual light. They are both Divine. They issue from the eternal source of truth. And the nation in whom they inhere is blest of God.

But moral and intellectual light are not all. We are not only conscience and intellect; we are also spirit. And as in the spheres of conscience and intelligence, truth is the light of God's countenance, so in the sphere of the emotions, the imagination, and the spirit, love is the light of God's countenance. That a nation—in all matters which belong to Art, to Literature, to the relation of classes, to the relation of labourers and landlords, of workers and capitalists, to the way in which the poor and oppressed are treated, to the fashion in which the diseases of the State are looked after, to the necessary wants of the health of the whole State, to the spiritual ideals of life which inspire a people to pursue after noble ends, to the hopes and faiths by which the spirit of a people is kept close to magnanimous aims and to noble and kindly manners and to imaginative creation, and most of all to religious aspiration—that in all these matters and their practice the nation should be ruled by love and not by self-interest; that is to be blessed as a nation of God; that is to have the light of His countenance shining on a people.

Then, when this is the rule, when the violation of it is the exception, it is impossible for a people to



think of itself alone. The vision that all nations should be as blest of God as we are breaks upon the soul of a people, and the vision creates the work which pertains to it. Every man and woman's thought and feeling pass beyond the shores of the country to which they belong. As they subordinated their personal blessing to the blessing of the whole people, so now they subordinate national blessing to the blessing of all nations. They conceive of all mankind as one people, and desire that it should be blest. "Let Thy way," they say, "O God, be known over all the earth, Thy salvation among all nations"; and in the glory of this universal feeling, in which the whole is greater than the parts, in which the parts are only perfectly blest when the whole is blest, in this hour when all particular wishes are drowned in the universal wish, the outburst of the Psalmist is the noblest expression of the people's heart—"Let the people praise Thee, O God; yea, let all the people praise Thee, O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy."

This is the temper fitted for the time in which we live, when an international union, a comity of nations, is at least conceived by many, and is becoming year by year more possible. It is for that conception, beyond, yet including, all personal and national progress, that we should live. It is by that more universal view that we should rule our thoughts and actions. To live for light all over the world; for the stablishing of truth and love in the conscience and reason, the emotions and spirit, of all peoples;

to settle back all this endeavour on our faith in a universal Father of all men and therefore their universal brotherhood—this ought to be the deep foundation of our life.

O were it so, then should all nations rejoice and be glad. Then truth and love would take outward form as even-handed justice to all. "Almighty God," we should then cry, "the nations are jubilant, for Thou dost judge the folk righteously." This is the one thing we want to-day—the doing of justice in the national, civic, and social life of the State; and perfected justice is the shaping into government of truth and love. The curse of all peoples is injustice. The ground of all quarrels and wars between classes and peoples is covetousness, and covetousness begets injustice. Wherever there is misery and poverty, and disease and crime, and national decay and oppression, at the bottom of all the iniquity and misery against which we are contending to-day lies injustice—the devil of the world. At the end of all our struggle against evil and misery and shame, against all the diseases of States, sits Justice, the true master of mankind. To do it, to work for it, to attain it all over the world, ought to be the central endeavour of our lives. When it is done and attained, then will the dreadful crying of humanity pass into singing. Then shall the nations rejoice and be glad.

We look round and it seems centuries away. As we read of the vast wrongs which Governments and Powers are doing to mankind and see, even here in England, the vast misery which tosses around us like

a dark sea, whose warring waves are human lives, we are often heart-broken with despair and pain. But, in the midst of it, we, at least, can ourselves do something. We can believe in a righteous Master of the world, who will not free us from the struggle, lest He should pauperize our intelligence, our conscience, and our spirit, but who, through reiterated experience, is leading all into goodness. It is a faith which has a mighty power. It prevents all despair; it kindles all work; it tells us that misery ends in moral strength and holiness; and therefore in joy and beauty. It is the victoriousness of life. This we can keep within.

Others may talk of necessity, of inexorable law, of tendencies in human nature which will have their ruthless way, of humanity helpless in the grip of its own desires, and weave a hundred theories and philosophies around their rigid and ice-bound beliefs; but we will believe that above their necessity and their laws, and the evil will in man, above all that is true in their theories—and much is true—there abides a will which is ruled by love, and whose will is the only absolute law. In that will we are contained; and it will master, for good to man, all the evils of an apparent necessity and apparent law. There is only one necessity. It is the love of God. There is only one law in the universe. It is the law of love, and God is love.

And without, in our own daily life, we can ourselves do justice, first, asking ourselves what justice is, and winning a clear view of what it means, and

then doing it, no matter at what loss to ourselves. Our general notion of justice is punishing people, and especially those who interfere with our profit or pleasure. But that is mere legality, not justice. The justice which is here considered is much more taken up with getting things right for the oppressed and the weak and even the criminal than with getting them out of our way or punishing them ; and there will not be one of our profits or our pleasures with which it will not at first seem to interfere.

To get full justice done, in the present state of society, means a steady change of the conditions of society, and a complete reversal of the temper and spirit which has the chief apparent power in it. And this temper, which is now ruling in all classes—the temper of “ Everyone for himself, and the devil take the hindmost ”—is a mother out of whose belly crawl day by day a thousand reptiles of injustice. Against that temper we have to carry on an internecine war, and one plain, practical way of doing it is for each one of us to do away with injustice in our own lives, never directly or indirectly, by our own act, or by our thoughtlessness or indifference, to do what will injure the life or lessen the goodness, leisure, or just pleasure of another, on any pretext whatever, and least of all under the pretext of any form of paternal government. We can so act that all who come into contact with us shall say: “ We praise God, we are glad and rejoice, for we are judged righteously. We know that God is just, for we have met loving and just men.”

Then—at least before us, who are thus living—the larger vision will open its gates. Every local improvement, every step forward, every change from a famine of goodness to an increase of it—and many are such changes in the present time—will strengthen our sense of God's justice, and our faith in the new heaven and the new earth. "God shall bless us," we cry. "He is our God, and He will never leave us to immortal evil. Here in England the time will be when justice, springing from love and truth, shall be done from end to end of the nation. And far beyond our nation, to earth's remotest shore, "all the ends of the world shall pay God homage." What homage? Why, that of man educated in truth, trained by love to do justice. "Trained by love," for, indeed, if we wish to get down to the very roots of the whole matter, it is love which is the foundation of all true justice, as it is covetousness which is the foundation of all injustice.

Lastly, that which was written for the nation to express its praise, to record what God's blessing means for a people, may well be transferred to the great nation of the personal soul, to the city of God, the Jerusalem within, where God only ought to reign. We have within us tribes of thoughts and feelings, sometimes at peace with one another, sometimes at war; crowds, in the great city of our character, of prejudices and desires, of selfish aims and loving impulses, of roving joys and settled sorrows, of a thousand thousand daily wanderers in the streets of the soul, as multitudinous and excited



as the swarm of gnats on a summer day. We lodge within all classes and kinds of qualities, the nobles and burghers and labourers of our various powers. And with these a huge unregistered populace of passing desires, hopes, aspirations, dreams, resolutions, fancies, upleapings of subconscious life—some destined to swift death, some to eternal being. And over them all, in the vast fortresses of this inward city, abide the great Ideas—the kings who govern our inward city into order; and elsewhere, in other fortresses, the great passions who inspire our life nobly, or oppress it with fierce cruelties. As various, as great, as populated, as complex, as fond of good government, as near to revolution, as ordered, as anarchic, as wise or weak, as steadfast and impulsive as any great nation is, is the nation in each man's soul. When we realize this, when we know what we are, and how deeply we need order, the order which comes of righteous will and love as our King, our passionate cry is, in this hour of conviction: "Be gracious to me, O God, bless me; lift up the light of Thy countenance upon me. Let me have truth within to rule my conscience and reason, and love to rule my imagination, my affections, and the outgoings of my spirit unto Thee, and let the noble results of these be inward justice—justice done to every power of the soul, so that not one of them be in ill-health, or impoverished, or stained with sin, or unequally nourished or neglected; but that the whole population of the soul may know the righteous way of God, and do it, each member

of it in proportion to its capacity, with all its might, and so understand what God's salvation means, and the kingdom of God within." Then our whole inward being is praise. "Let all the tribes of the passions and the thoughts, of the desires and the aspirations, praise Thee, O God; let all the nation of the soul rejoice and be glad, for Thou hast made Thy righteousness our master. Thou dost govern us into harmony with Thee, and peace with ourselves. We have already felt, again and again, deliverances, as it were of a starving folk from famine. Again and again, when the soul was hungry and thirsty like a desert land, a new harvest has enriched it, the parched land of it has given us increase. What has once been will be again. Thou wilt extend Thy blessing from year to year, and beyond death into eternity. God shall bless us, and all the ends of our soul shall reverence and love Him."

Even here on earth we may reach something of this glad attainment. But it is not final. We are not content with earth's attainment. That which is here begun continues beyond this world in endless evolution. There is no end to our progress, our enrichment in love and righteousness, in truth and power, in intelligence and creation. Infinite life and beauty expand before the soul. Yes, all that great country shall give her increase, blossom with flowers, and bloom with fruit.

Vast tracts and lands of thoughts, of noble passions and of powers, unknown as yet to us, unsuspected

even by our aspirations, await our discovery of them within us, and their own development. We are dimly conscious of their hidden existence, as the dwellers on the skirts of a great continent are of its unknown interior.

The time will come when these shall be discovered, worked, developed, tilled, fertilized, and added to the country of the soul. Over them God will rule in justice ; over them the blessing of His love shall flow like sunny air ; their wilderness and their solitary places shall blossom like the rose.

What He blesses now within us is as nothing in extent and beauty to that which He then will bless. All the ends of the expanded and expanding soul shall rejoice and be glad. Infinite increase, infinite blessing, is the destiny of the people of our spirit. It is also the destiny of the mighty nation of mankind. It shall be glad and sing for joy, for His way shall be known at last, His saving health among all the multitudes of humanity.

## THE DREAMERS

*February 28, 1909*

“He that observeth the wind shall not sow ; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.”—ECCLES. xi. 4.

MANY years ago, travelling in North Italy, I came to Mantua, and, staying there for a day, had a curious experience. When I had seen the palaces, I went down, as the sun was setting, through the massive gate on to the long bridge which stretches, for at least the eighth of a mile, over the lagoon to the mainland. That great water throws its arms half round the city, and it was almost scarlet that evening, save in the shadow of the bridge. I sat on the parapet halfway across, and looked into the water where the shadow fell, and where the river Mincio, whose swift motion keeps the lagoon always clear, passed by underneath and waved the long grasses, through whose tangle the fishes darted to and fro. I could see down into the depths of it, as if I were looking through moving crystal. And the solemn, silent, transparent water flying forward like a living thing, and the silent, solemn town whose life had passed away, and the lonely desolation of the waters, entered into my soul, and I felt as if the whole world

and myself in it were like a dream. Then, as I gazed down, a white film seemed to grow out of the water, and then to dissolve and leave the water clear; but there was nothing in it now of what had been—no grasses, no fish, nothing but a clear mirror. And shapes began to form in it, and to become pictures; and, like a dream procession, very swiftly, but with marvellous vividness, all my life, from childhood upwards, seemed to pass by in the lucid water. I had no will in this. Each vision came as it would come in sleep, from without myself; and, as sometimes happens in a dream, I wondered what would follow, and did not know. And many pictures there were of scenes and events I had forgotten. The water knew more of my life than I knew myself, and thought more wisely concerning it than I.

As the later years went by I did expect what was coming, but even then that apartness of my surface-consciousness from the things seen in the water, which was characteristic of this experience, was continuous; and the events of these later years of life were presented in a different way from that which I expected. I was incessantly surprised.

At last it all vanished away. I raised my eyes, and saw again the deep river flowing, and the wavering weeds, and the wide lagoon, and the grey city walls red in the sunset, and heard the low wind clatter the reeds together. But the impression of the dream remained; I have never forgotten it. And when, an hour after, I looked again into the stream hoping to see another vision, the water only reflected



the clouds above, and its depths were unchanged. Yet, "what I have seen," I said, "I have seen."

Is that, perhaps, a part of what life will be like hereafter? Shall we look, as it were, into clear waters, in that far-off land, at our life on earth, and see it pass by, and scarcely know what it is, and be surprised by it; see it as if it were a dream—as, perhaps, half of it is—and scarcely recognize ourselves in it as ourselves, and yet seem to know that it was all true, but so far away that it is as if we had read in an old book the story of another life like our own? Is it possible that we are here so much the stuff that dreams are made on that, when we waken into the more vivid life, we shall see all the past of earth like shadows in the water? Or shall we then, when we thus half remember, half dimly see the events of bygone life, be surprised to find all those events different from that we thought them to be when we were involved in them—so different will be the light of that other world, so different the feeling in our hearts by which we see them? If that be so, I can well imagine that the revelation might change the aspect of the events, that hours we thought all sorrowful here might seem there full of joy, and hours which here we thought crowned with delight might there seem dark with pain.

Or shall we be so alive, so full of clear thought and breathless feeling, so borne forward on a stream of exultant life, as to know that all we lived on earth was dreamland in comparison; and, striving sometimes to recall the vision of the past, find ourselves,

in the rushing stream of the new life, of fresh joy in work, of noble passions seeking splendid ends, unable to see again, or careless to see again, what once seemed so eager and so sweet that we could not believe it to be a dream? It may be so ; I can well fancy it ; for so it is sometimes in our life on earth. The past becomes like visions in the water. When we see it, it is not what it was ; and if the new be keen, we cannot, though we strive, see, after a time, even the vision of the old.

It was thus I thought with myself as I returned, and as I thought, an answer seemed to come from One who was wiser than I, and who spoke from the centre of the soul. "Be satisfied," he said ; "all life moves like a river onwards towards infinite good and love. What will be still better than what has been ; the shadows of earth become the substances of heaven ; dreams end in realities ; love is deeper, enjoyment keener, and the work by which we know we live more delightful, in that infinity of beauty which makes the universe, and then unmakes it, to make it still more fair."

Long afterwards, when I recalled this episode of life, I brought it home out of its phantasy into contact with our daily life, and I thought I would make a sermon for the dreamers of the world, who are many more than we imagine, because the dreamers do not talk of their dreams.

They live in the outward world and share in its life, quite enough for all their friends to care for them. But everything and every event in their life

passes into their soul, and becomes therein something different from what it was without, collecting round it different scenery, different imaginations, a confused crowd of emotions, so that, though they are awake to outward life, they sit, as it were, upon a bridge, and, looking down into the clear water of the lagoon within, see, not indeed only the events of the past, but those of the present pass before them, soft, dim, and visionary, and even the cloud-castles of the future in the waters of the soul. This is their most real, most conscious life, and around it their hopes and fears most gather; in it, far more than in actual life, their imaginations play and their passions move, till, as their days go by, they begin to lose touch altogether with outward life, and the visionary becomes the actual, and the actual the visionary.

Not seldom, also, that happens which I illustrated in my story. The shadows within these dreamers are, to their surprise, different from the real things which the shadows ought to represent. Some change in the waters of their soul, for which they know no reason, for they are ignorant in their dreaming life of their own nature, breaks and changes the images, and in a moment they are in the midst of a new world which amazes them, and sometimes so entrals them, that they lose touch with the world without them, and even end, at intervals, in forgetting it altogether. The unexpected is therefore frequent in their lives, but when it comes and challenges work for it, or use of it, they sometimes will not answer

this challenge, because it would take them out of their dreaming into action. But if, coming, its impulse is not rejected, but is cherished within, the whole past of their lives is forgotten for a time, as if it had never been. The new engulfs the old ; and day by day they sit still, watching and wondering at the novel thoughts, emotions, imaginations which arise out of the unexpected event or idea which has collared their imaginative life ; seeing one phantom procession of possible action rising out of the water and passing on and perishing, to be followed by another and another, till at last, and often too late for real change, they are awakened into grim reality by some rough shock from without, and know, to their dismay, that they are in a world which calls on them to act and suffer with their fellows who will not endure that they should dream or imagine life to be a dream.

This is a sort of life which is quite natural to the young, and many more live it than we think. To have some of it, to be capable of it, is no harm, but often good. To have nothing but it, may be allowed for a little time to youth ; but to permit it to go on so as to shut away the sense of outward being, or to increase so as to usurp not only youth but all that manhood and womanhood are bound to do ; to carry, like Hamlet, nothing but dreams into the drama of life—is misfortune, sets all life wrong, and ends in tragedy. It isolates these dreamers from the world of men, and, beginning with idealism, closes with selfishness. It unfits them for any work,

though at its origin, its crowding imaginations should be fruitful sources of work. It has a way of making dim the clear outlines of right and wrong, of what is useful and not useful for mankind, of what is beautiful and not beautiful—which is one of its most unhappy characteristics. All is shadowy; nothing is known clearly for what it is; the true causes of things are not seen, and the results of thought or act are not realized. The future is never sternly questioned, and the present is enslaved by itself.

When these dreamers are pushed into the real work of life, they are all astray in it; far more likely to go wrong than to go right, for slipping into wrong is easier than standing fast for right. So, like a stream, they take the line of least resistance, till they find themselves, like a stream that is absorbed in sand, in such a desert of trouble, that they must either give up life or stop their dreaming; and the first is actually easier than the second. They are lucky, if, placed face to face like Hamlet with the stern demand of duty, they are not set into wild confusion by it, and find peace, as he found it, only in the certainty of death.

This experience, however, belongs to after-life, and I speak now chiefly to the young. There are many things of which the dreamer dreams when young, and one of these is Nature. There are those, and happy are they, who take all Nature's beauty freshly, as gay with her as she is with herself in spring, who are loved by her, and return her love without self-consideration, as wisely joyous with her as the birds who



do not dream. But these who dream are different. They enjoy the natural world, but they keep their joy for themselves and hide it within them; and they think that they are finer souls than others who live frankly, in unself-conscious pleasure, with Nature; that their peculiar joy is far more precious. The impulses they receive from Nature they brood over, and weave into them so great a crowd of their own special thoughts, feelings, and questionings that the impulses lose their freshness, and their origin in Nature is forgotten. Then they return to Nature, not to enjoy her at first hand, but to find in her new food for their personal dreaming; and are disappointed if she does not reflect their moods, if she meets their pleasure with gloom or their pain with sunshine. "Give me," they cry to her, "myself back again to me." But, for the most part, she will not answer their prayer, and gives them something else. If they are wise, they take it; but if self-dreaming has got too strong a hold upon them, they are wearied with her unreflecting gifts, turn away from her, and go back, petulant or even sullen, into the depths of their own personality. At last Nature ceases, save rarely, to say anything fresh to them. They are too wholly occupied with themselves.

This is a sorrowful business, and if we are conscious that this habit is growing upon us, we ought to take its cure in time. We cannot altogether get rid of this part of our character, nor would it be wise to do so, for fine dreaming may be put to fine uses. But we should not let it master us in this

fashion. We ought to get what we dream about Nature into some form useful to others. To break through our reserve ; to tell others about the beauty we see and love ; to make those who cannot see as well as we, see with our eyes ; to teach them how to admire and love, that is the right remedy. Let us put our dreams into words, realize them without ourselves, no matter how commonplace the form may seem to us. It is not what we think of the form which is the important thing, but whether it will give pleasure to others. This will set you free from the danger of self-isolation ; and then, so powerful for good is self-forgetfulness, your dreaming, which has its good and the loss of which would do a wrong to life, will not be spoiled. On the contrary, its pleasures will increase, its use develop, when it expands beyond yourself. It will lift itself into the imagination which creates. You will have animation—that quality the dreamer so often needs—animation born from the sympathies of other human souls with the loveliness you have taught them to see, that animation which the birds have in spring when they sing with all the rest the joy of living. When you go then in solitude to Nature, you will be so freed from self-consideration that you will receive vividly and freshly all her impulses, and be able to make new things out of them. A livelier green will play upon the meadows, a sweeter mystery brood in the woods ; and in a joyful surprise your dreaming will pass into shaping, and phantom fancy into living poetry.

So far for Nature-dreaming ; but in another world of thought there are those incessant dreams of what we shall feel in our coming life, or what we shall grasp and do in thought, which are the natural food of young imagination—dreams of that love which will satisfy the heart in its deep centre ; or of the power which will accompany a noble fame, or win our ideal hope, or attain clear truth ; dreams, unless we live above them, that fall into the commonplace. There, in the clear water of the soul their visions pass us by, and that is all we often see of them.

And then there are other dreams not for ourselves. We dream of all we shall do for men, and are thrilled with our inward excitement. Whatever castle of good we build in dream seems already built in reality. A hundred projects for usefulness, for giving pleasure to others are conceived, discussed, changed, elaborated within, but remain unvoiced, untested. No one knows how teeming is our mind, nor how pleased we are to sit and watch these dreamings pass us by in the waters of the soul.

These are noble dreamings ; but when the noon or afternoon of life has come, where are they ? Where are all the visions in which God seemed to speak to us in the morning of life, and in and out of which, like the Rose of the Blessed, celestial ardours flew ? Vanished away, for the most part—vanished, like that procession in the waters ; and if we try in some recollective hour to find them, they are not found ; and the depths are troubled where they were.

Why should this pitiful thing happen? Well, just because we have allowed the dreams to remain only dreams; never forced them into form, never embodied them in act. They are so lovely we fear to give them reality, lest their beauty should become less delicate at the touch of the world. We will not realize love, lest we should discover that its actual life is less fair than our ideal of it. We will not put our ideals to the test, lest the form we give them should not be adequate to our conceptions. We will not set to work to search into truth, lest we find doubt, or error, or a lie, and so spoil our faith in the full attainment of truth. We will not actually work for men, lest we should be repulsed and our love be checked; nor bring our theories into practice, lest they should be found inadequate to regenerate the world; nor build any of our castles, lest we be forced to limit our building to one, and lose the pleasure of building all in dream. This is the failing of the character that loves to muse, to dream. It is either afraid of realizing, or slothful in shaping, or over-sensitive; or thinks too much of itself, and not of men and women beyond itself, save as they are scenical properties in its visions. Then the more it retires into itself, the more sensitive it becomes, and the more sensitive the more vain. Vanity, silent vanity, gets hold of it. Into that foolishness, the sensitiveness of self-retirement and dreaming finally changes itself, and it is the most difficult of all vanities to disperse, because it never comes out to the light and the wind,

never, like the dreams themselves, risks the chance of reproof or criticism, or opens itself to the test of publicity.

At last this dreamer, now quite lazy, persuades himself that it is not laziness which possesses him, but a fine and noble reticence. What he thinks, or feels, or dreams, is too dainty and too fair for the coarse world ; to expose it to criticism will injure its delicate bloom ; to shape it even is to make it earthly, to lose its opalescent vapour of beauty ; to test it by a full expression is to disbelieve in its perfections ; and then life, which might be made so great, and beautiful, and productive—for those who dream in youth have powers to move the world—ends in emptiness, barrenness, and selfishness. All is lost, nothing done ; even the power of fine dreaming passes away in the general atrophy of the soul. And when in some moment of self-conviction and regret we strive to win back the aspiring passions of youth, the early freshness of imagination, we see no visions in the water, only the dull surface ; and hear nothing as the night falls, but a desolate cry in the soul. Therefore, early in youth, be not self-satisfied with the inner world of thought and feeling ; never be satisfied till you have realized some of its dreams in action in the world for the sake of your duty to your fellow-men.

No dream has any lasting beauty till it is shaped into form, nor will it, even though the form you give it be less useful or finished than you desired—that is, if it fail to do all you hoped—lose for you its beauty, because of the failure of its shaping. The



effort to shape it will give it, in the imagination, a greater beauty. Inadequate form given to an ideal conception only makes us love the conception more, and intensifies our desire to give it a more adequate form. The life in the conception deepens in the effort to give it form. To beget thought into its Logos is always a delightful thing. The enduringness of our passion for our thought is secured in our struggle to create it in the world. Embody, and your inner life will become not less but more beautiful. Laziness, selfishness, vanity, will not deform it, nor minister to its slow decay. On the contrary, its power to think justly, to feel nobly, and to shape itself beautifully, will develop day by day. Moreover, and it is a pregnant truth, the natural end of all your dreaming aspiration is to accomplish itself in action ; and things set in the way of Nature, moving in harmony with natural law and on its side, grow and live toward further growth ; and even if they do not grow easily or fail for a time to grow, or are hampered in growth by untoward circumstances, yet in the end, if we have the determined will to shape our inner life into outward form, the life they have established by growing wins full development ; it conquers by using evil circumstances.

Lastly, the spiritual power of all dreaming lies in embodying it in sacrifice—that is, in forms of love which will help, comfort, strengthen, and save your fellow-men. The more beautiful your fancies are, the loftier your ideals, the deeper your philosophic thoughts, the more poetic your imaginations—the

more you are bound to shape them for men, to give them away, to let common humanity see and enjoy them. When you have done that, new thoughts will be born in them, new emotions will gather round them, wider aspirations, diviner hopes, a greater glory of imaginative faiths, and dreams, vaster than you have yet imagined. For then the mighty dreams of universal humanity with whose life you have now inwoven your own life—humanity, which itself broods on its own heart, and sees its fortunes pass by in the clear water—will mingle themselves with your personal dreams, and expand them into greater conceptions than of yourself you can conceive. Power will redouble itself within you, for the stronger impulses from the humanity without bring to you their own powers and add to you their energy. Work will grow, life will accumulate. With great delight you will realize, not all you have dreamt, but enough to help, set forward, impel, and charm the world.

That has been the way of all the great souls. It was the way of Jesus, our Master. He was the Dreamer, but he made his dreams take form. For thirty years he dreamed among the hills round Nazareth and in its flowery meadows, and then he went forth to shape his dreaming into the saving of men. He loved, but he realized his love. He saw the beauty of Nature, but he used it to interpret God to man. All Nature was a parable to him, of which God with man was the interpretation. He filled his soul with visions of the salvation and glory

of the human race, with the ideas which should lead it to the golden year, to an indestructible union with God the Father, and he gave up his whole life and died to make them known to men. Out of his dreams he built no cloud-castles for his own delight, but the true City of God, in whose vast temple humanity would love and worship, and live the life of God. Let him be your Leader, the Master of the dreams of the soul.

Then, when the sun of your life is setting and you try to see in the still lagoon of your spirit the visions of youth once more, you will not see the waters troubled, but, deep within, the dreams made into creations ; the finished towers and noble buildings of that City of God within you, whose walls are salvation and whose gates are praise.

## ILLUSION

*February 13, 1910*

“Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.”—ECCLES. vii. 29.

No one can say how large a part in life illusion plays. We are led on from youth to later years by some idea of whose fulfilment we dream, by some desire for knowledge or beauty, by a hope or an affection we determine to realize, or by some theory which we imagine will reconstruct our little society or the whole world, to complete which theory in practice we devote our life. Then, when we have done all that we can do, and idea, hope, love, and theory are brought as far as we can bring them, all is often taken out of our hands. We stand like the alchemist over the crucible into which we have cast all our possessions, waiting for the mystic Rose of life to open its golden leaves, and what comes forth is not what we expected or desired, but something altogether new and different, often the very contradiction of our hope and expectation. There has been something which has mixed its disturbing elements in the original elements we used, or some-

one at the back of our effort who has taken a secret hand in the experiments, and modified them into a conclusion distinct from our hopes or adverse to our views. Then, full of anger, we dash the crucible to the earth, and go forth from the laboratory of the will, embittered or despairing. Is this chance, we ask, or impersonal law, or God, who has done this wrong? If it be chance, we answer, there is nothing to be said, only we are indignant at belonging to a world of chance. If it be a result of blind but inevitable law, there is no remedy, but we are no less indignant. Why are we left ignorant of the law? Nature does not forgive our mistakes. "We have failed," we say, "for want of knowledge," but the confession does not make us less bitter when we know that we have been checkmated, and have no time to play another game. And if there be a God who has done this, if there be really a will at the back of events who has brought us, through all our work, to dead loss and disappointment, why then, He may call it education, but we think it elaborate irony. We see in it no education at all, but plain destruction. Is He amusing His leisure with the drama of our life, or perhaps, on a larger scale, with the tragedy of a disappointed world, and ringing down the curtain when He has purified His soul with our illusive pity and our real terror?

There are many who think that, few who say it. And, in truth, the pain and anger that prompt the reproach are natural enough. It is bitter, when



we take down the scaffolding, to find that the house we have been building is quite different from that we hoped it would be, that someone unknown has been at work upon it and changed it, someone of whom we took no count. And instead of asking ourselves, "Is it possible that this unexpected thing is the true end of my first desires and hopes, the real house itself, the proper goal of all my work?" we fling away from it in a rage. "My idea," we say, "my plan, has not come out, and because it is not mine it is wrong. I will oppose it, I will destroy it." Then we waste the rest of our life in attacking the strange result which has emerged from the egg we cherished, instead of trying to understand what has happened, and saying to ourselves, "This would not have emerged had it not been in the order of things. There must have been something wrong, something out of harmony with the law of the universe, in my work, otherwise my idea would not have been shaped so differently from my expectation, and the fault of my disappointment must be in me. It cannot be in the course of things, unless there be no law therein. Therefore, I will ask, "What is the fault in me? Let me learn that, correct it, and life will be right, and I content." Do we do that in life? Do we act as we would in a scientific investigation? Oh no! We throw up the sponge, and pass from fury into sullen gloom. "Life is over," we cry, at the very moment when, if we were wise, it would, in reality, be beginning.

Still, I am sorry for these folk. What I have

sketched is one of the worst sadnesses of life, one of its ever-recurring problems. And the remedy of the sadness and the solution of the problem are both difficult. If we assert that chance has done it, or the automatic action of natural law, or an ironical God, there will be neither solution nor remedy. But suppose we were to ask, Have I done it, I myself? Have I introduced into my work elements which have spoiled my original idea, which were against the Divine laws of the universe, so that my conception of my work was changed and degraded, and its results broke those laws? Is that the truth? Or is it possible that God has made it right in spite of me, and that I am angry with the right thing because it is not my own wrong thing?

To ask these questions firmly, and answer them sincerely, would go far, I think, to remedy our trouble and solve our problem. There are really no deceiving illusions in life. What has happened is a matter of plain law, not, of course, of physical, but of spiritual, law. For we are now talking of ideas, spiritual ambitions and hopes, intellectual aims, imaginative plans of life, aspirations to reach the heights of knowledge or beauty, deep desires to live for the bettering of the world. Why, we ask, when we have been lured on through life by them, do they suddenly break down, perish, and leave us naked to the blast of despair, or lashed by our failure into a fury with life and God?

Perhaps I can answer part of that problem best by

a presentation of the problem as it appears when we contrast Christ's idea of the Kingdom of God with the idea of it held at his time—first, by the Jewish people ; secondly, by John the Baptist ; and lastly, by his disciples during his life and after his death.

In the education of the Jewish people, the idea of a Kingdom of God grew into an over-mastering prominence. Beginning with gross and material forms, it developed in the teaching of the prophets into the idea of a Kingdom where every citizen was to be righteous under the rule of a righteous God of the Jews. Then the idea was further developed. It was conceived that the Eternal would send on earth a King, anointed to build up the Kingdom on earth and from Jerusalem ; and further still, that when the Kingdom was realized, the golden age would come when the wolf of war should lie down with the lamb of peace, and the knowledge of the Lord, spreading from Jerusalem, should cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. From century to century these vast national thoughts, always accompanied by their attendant emotions, led the people on to live their life with passion, inspired and united the nation, animated their struggle, refreshed them in sorrow and captivity, and bore them on eagle's wings above oppression. They were the very life-blood of the nation. But they were not only national, they were also personal. The Kingdom expected was to be one of righteousness, and none could share in it who was not righteous. That demand of the idea

made it individual as well as national. In this way the national idea was driven home into each citizen's private life, both men and women, and became their personal impulse, strength, and comfort. This was the religion of the Jews.

Surely, we think, God will accomplish this conception. And, in spirit, it was accomplished, not for the Jew alone, but for all peoples. But, when the fulfilment came, it was not what the Jews expected, but something so different that the Church and the people as a whole rejected it with scorn and hatred. The Messiah they looked for turned out to be no victorious King, but a suffering man. The righteousness he desired was not in outward observance of the law, but was the inward union of the soul with God, purity of thought, love of the whole world. The Christ kept no high court at Jerusalem among nobles and priests, but wandered homeless through the villages with outcasts and fishermen, and was loved by sinners. He won no triumph over Rome, but was crucified like a felon. He did not bind the Gentiles with links of iron, nor exclude them from the fold of God. His servants did not fight, and he so spoke that it seemed as if the hated Gentile could, if he loved, be as much a child of God as the Jew. "If this, then," they cried, "be the Messiah and the Kingdom, the glory is departed from Israel. The national idea of more than a thousand years is destroyed." Yet it was really fulfilled. The fulfilment of centuries of expectation came, and they could not see it.

Is there no piteousness in that story? Had not Jesus felt the sadness of it he had not been fully human. And the day when in his fleeting triumph he looked down on Jerusalem from Olivet, this sorrow, this national grief, was deep in his heart. "If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belonged to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes;" and, so deep was his compassion for this apparent irony of fate, that he wept over the city; and the tears were those not only of a personal but also of a national sorrow.

Why did they not see? Why, when the same kind of thing happens in our lives—why do we not see? Why, when the thing most needful for us arrives, when the real fulfilment of all our dreams emerges and claims our acceptance, are we disappointed? Why do we reject it, oppose it, abhor it, cry out that we are defrauded of our hopes, that life is failure, our house left to us desolate?

O, it is not that inexorable law or chance or a cruel God have intervened, but that certain false elements have been brought by ourselves into our ideas, plans, and hopes, and have corrupted them, set them out of harmony with love, truth, and justice, and materialized them. And these elements have become dearer to us than the ideas themselves, on which we have engrafted them.

Take your lesson from this old history. What we call "the world" had got into the Jewish idea. Outward, not inward, things had mastered the Jews, unspiritualized their original idea. Desire of con-



quest, lust of fame, lust of riches, love of splendour, greed of power over the bodies and souls of men—these, with all their wicked train, had reversed the very foundation of the first noble conception; and when, by Jesus, it was restored and expanded, the Jew hated it, because it overthrew the false conception. And now think in what state would the world have been if God had supported the Pharisaic, materialized, and priestly idea of the kingdom—if Jesus had chosen the world, yielded to the greed of power, and claimed the material kingdom as his own! Had God permitted that, He had not been a Spirit. Had Christ so falsified the true idea, he would have sacrificed the whole future of mankind. There was only one thing to do: to disappoint the Jew, to make the worldly and the selfish fail, to reassert the spiritual idea, and to die for its truth.

And you, when a similar failure has come on the ideas and hopes of your life, have you ever asked yourselves if you have let the world, the lust of success or wealth, the pride of life, the desire of power—and with these, the neglect of love—mix themselves up with the ideas which, when you were young, were unspotted by the world? Has the artist lost his passion for the ideal beauty in a desire for wealth, or for pleasing the popular desire? Has the politician sacrificed his idea of bettering this class or that, or all mankind, for the sake of fame or place? Has the public man who devoted himself of old to the good of his city let the full realization

of his plan drop because it will lose him popularity? Has the professional man let a lower standard of honour creep into his business than he had originally for the sake of wealth? Has the scientific person allowed the material things on which he works to stifle the spiritual or the imaginative in his soul, and maimed his nature? Has the philosopher permitted his intellect to outgrow his soul? Has the religious teacher lost his early enthusiasm in formalism, or in ostentation, developed intolerance, or indurated into indifference?

If that has been so, you have no one but yourself to blame for the broken inward life which will be your fate, for your restless, discontented heart, for the chilled spirit within which your worldly success has frozen. Least of all can you blame God your Father. He is doing His duty by you. At any cost, even though you turn away from Him in cynic anger, He will make you feel within that you are out of harmony with spiritual law. Restlessness and disappointment, anger, sense of failure, will beset you. The conceptions you have now of life and its aims will be set by Him face to face with the true conceptions, and you will be bid to choose. You may choose the world and crucify the truth, or by God's grace you may choose the spiritual idea of Jesus—"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"; "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." O love not the world,

neither the things that are of the world. But whichever you do, God was right to place the matter before you.

No pity for a saddened, broken life within will make God turn aside from proving to you, in the silent depths of the soul, that the life which lives only to get its own will, to win power and wealth, to make the kingdom you desire a kingdom of the world, is inwardly a life of failure, a blind and decaying ruin. Over it the tears of Christ fall. "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

Yes, ideas, hopes, efforts, which have become tainted by the spirit of the world, are disappointed. And more than disappointed—their taint carries with it inability to see their true fulfilment when it comes, sets us into opposition to that fulfilment. We hate the unexpected result, and crucify it. The conscience, made insensitive by selfish aims, cannot see good, or sees it as evil. The spirit, living in a selfish atmosphere, cannot love Love. Nay, when it sees Love, it cries: "Haro, haro! there's the devil! Out, out!"

This is a sorrowful end for a man to reach who has once cherished pure and loving thoughts, who once saw into the Kingdom of God. We hear men and women complain that God has forsaken them; that faith has gone from them; that they do not care to pray; that all their hopes are chilled, their aims unreached: there is nothing but failure

and disappointment. And God, they say, has deceived them.

And all the time the true life is by their side. The true fulfilment of all they once loved they may have in a moment if they will give up the lust of the world in their heart, clear their life of covetousness, desire no selfish power, and look beyond the formal conventions of morality and religion to the simple truths and reckless action of the love of Christ.

This the Jews would not do, this we will not do: and then we take to hating the true kingdom, to crying out at God, to rejecting the "unpractical" life of Christ, which is to reject love. And the life of the soul is ruined for a time. Selfishness reigns where love should reign; and with selfishness bitterness comes, and the restless heart and inward disappointment, and the hardness of pride, and indifference or misery in the silent depths of being. The result is not God's fault: it is our own.

This was one type of the time, and of all time. But there was another set of persons, who, because their idea of the kingdom was too limited, were also disappointed, but yet were themselves saved from the ruin which befell their ideas, because their souls remained untouched by the spirit of the world.

The best example of this type was John the Baptist. He looked for an outward kingdom. He desired the overthrow of the Gentile. His king was a conquering king—king by absolute justice, moral righteousness; whose fan was in his hand, to thoroughly purge his floor, to gather the wheat

into his garner, but to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. His notion of the kingdom was limited to the Jews; his children of the kingdom were but a few. The rest were destroyed. Illimitable, infinite Love was not his king. The kingdom was a close body; the king was not a father.

How ardent, how inspired, was his beginning! With what faith did he look forward to the fulfilling of ideas which he saw burning like the stars above the pools of Jordan! A few years pass by, and all his hopes are chilled; no fulfilment satiates his passionate desire; the stars have died out in the sky; and he, the wild eagle of the wilderness, is slain like a dog by the anger of a woman. A broken, scorned, and disillusioned life! And John himself, for a period at least, must have felt that piteous disappointment, as, for a moment, also, did his parallel, the prophet of Florence.

But surely not always. We may call no man unhappy till he dies. And John, though the kind of kingdom he hoped for did not come without him, attained it within. Deep in his own soul he realized an inward victory. He was sure of the triumph of righteousness. The message Christ sent him opened his eyes at the last to the glory of love. God did not satisfy his servant's early hopes—hopes too limited, too formal, too Jewish, too inflexible, to form the basis of a kingdom which was to be unlimited in extent, of no special nation, freed from all forms and formula of doctrine or ritual, and fluid enough to penetrate into every kind of character, to



adapt itself to every nation and climate, and to find in each a new and vital life. The kingdom the Baptist desired would have failed to satisfy and embrace humanity, would have lost the universal in a particular aim. Therefore he lost his outward hopes ; but his righteousness saved his spirit, and still makes his life a power among men. His particular idea was lost, his personal soul was expanded.

Nor does he stand alone. There are thousands whose hopes and aims are disillusioned, and for similar reasons. They have introduced intolerance of other ideas, other aims, into their own. They have made their work exclusive ; limited the designs of God to the enclosure of their own fold ; considered only their own nation, their own political party, their own church or sect ; bound down their thoughts into rigid formulas, clung to terms which separate them from others ; lost the fluidity and universality of great ideas ; fixed wide human causes into the limits of party.

God dissolves their hopes, disperses their aims, disappoints their ways. Their life is failure, and they suffer bitterly. But what else could the Master of Life do? The welfare of the world must be first—beyond any single man's personal happiness—in the education of man by God. Had these men, who had overspecialized, overformalized, made too limited, too exclusive, their ideas of the kingdom, been allowed to realize them, they would have put back the progress of man. It was fitting they should fail. Moreover, even for their own good, it

was wise their ideas should come to nought. Otherwise they could not learn, through their failure, that they must enlarge their thoughts, and expand their soul.

When, then, some of you, conscious that you have been righteous, complain that your effort has been balked, your life-aim disappointed, ask yourselves if you are certain that your special view, when realized, would have been to the advantage of the whole ; whether it was too limited, too exclusive, too tied to fixed doctrine either in religion, philosophy or politics, too much formalized in practice, too much only for your own party, sect or church—unfit to match with the education a universal Father is giving to all his children.

And if in the wisdom you win, like the Baptist, from the failure of your conceptions, you confess in the silence of the soul that your limitations were mistaken, as all limitations on high conceptions are, you have no need or right to be unhappy. Fall back on God within you ; accept the teaching He has given to you. Let your own ideas go with a sigh of farewell, and follow others more human and wider than your own—follow them into greater and greater expansion. For no noble, loving conception ever ceases to expand. It is incapable of limits ; infinite in inclusion.

Even if the knowledge should come too late for you to fulfil the wider thought, too late, as John found it, for this life, why, even then, you need not complain. You have clung to righteousness,

and, like the Baptist, you will not die without seeing the face of God, even in the prison of your failure ; nor without the unspeakable and exalting joy of having learnt that love is illimitable, and God's Fatherhood unconfined. It was learning that which poured immortal light into the prison of the Baptist. It will flood your old age with the radiance of Eternal Love.

And now, take the case of the disciples of Jesus. They, too, lost all their hopes of a world-kingdom to be established by Jesus. Every thought of it they cherished was proved to be an illusion. The true kingdom was lived before their eyes, and they did not see it. When he died, they thought, "All is failure ; our life is over ; it has been all a dream."

Their disillusion was greater, even, than that of the Baptist. Yet they escaped from their distress into a victorious hope and faith. They were able—and this was a wonder—to change their ideas, to leave the old and grasp the new with vital joy. They began, continued, and brought to intensity a new and growing life.

What enabled them to reverse all their old ideas, to put aside their ancient prejudices? What opened the doors of their soul at Pentecost? How was this wonder wrought? Well, they had a possession, a quality, a power the Baptist did not possess. They were filled with the passion of a lofty and constraining love. They could feel the infinitudes of love. They lost themselves and all the world in

love. They had been, day by day, penetrated by the loveliness of love, as John, the iron ascetic, was not until he came to die.

And this saved them when their hopes were deceived, and their life seemed a drear illusion. Their hearts had been softened, thrilled, expanded by a mighty affection for the person, the character and life of their Master, who, now that he had departed from them, became in them essential Love itself. His death, which had seemed the climax of their despair, was now in them the image and the seal of the immortality of the love of God. And with that in their mind and spirit, a new life, radiant with power and joy, with expanding faith and hope, opened before them with all the impulsiveness of the woods in spring. The past, with its false conceptions, vanished away. Illusion broke into a rapture of reality. Love had cleared their heart of follies. They could throw aside the past, accept the present, and live for the future. For a great love opens the soul to new ideas, expands it in a day, prepares all its chambers for the easy reception of a spiritual revolution.

These men could not be mastered now by one idea, as the Baptist was. It is one of the powers of love that it prevents that mastery, that it sets free the mind from exclusiveness. Nor were they blinded by conventional opinions, by legal or ritualistic doctrines. The shreds of these ancient and limiting views did not endure, and the disciples soon opened the Church to the Gentiles. The swiftness

of the change was a wonderful thing, but it is another of the powers of love that it burns to dust, and in a moment, the sapless formulas of conventional theologies. So it came to pass that when the ideas of a new life dawned on the disciples, their souls, filled with a personal love of one who had been Love itself, leaped to meet the novel thoughts, rejoiced in their light, and, dying to the past, entered into new being. It was not intellect or morality which enabled them to work this wonder. It was that they loved their Master, and that their Master had revealed in life and death the infinitude of the love of God the Father.

This is no solitary instance. It has been repeated a million million times. Have you not observed that certain people who have lost all they desired, whose early ideals have been disillusioned, so that nothing seems left to cover the nakedness of their lives, seem to be able to take up fresh work with a certain brightness; can in time throw aside the paralyzing influence of the past; open their minds to new thoughts, new plans, and have at last eagerness, even joy in life—saved, even though their life, when it was broken, had reached its middle term. They are changed, even when they do not confess the change; curiously widened, softened, liberated, in sympathy with new thought; quickened, interested in men and women, not one bit soured, depressed, or in despair. In common life, in imaginative, in religious life, this wonder happens again and again.

We may be sure that it was some great love, or



a deep lovingness in them, which has rescued them, enabled them to spring off their own shadow, set them free from the past which oppresses them, and opened to them the future which allures and excites them into life. They, too, have their Pentecost.

Lastly, I have laid before you this little bit of history. Receive and live its teaching in this apparently illusive world. Below all its illusions the eternal truths of God's character abide in an infinite, self-conscious Quiet; powers which grow not old, radiant of life, and from them righteous action is for ever streaming. There is no illusion in their being and becoming. Live in them and know and love them. Then, while they do not take you out of the world where your work lies, they will remove that spirit of worldliness out of your heart which destroyed the faith and hopes of the Jewish people, and hid from their eyes the true kingdom when it came. Life in them and for them forbids illusion and secures reality.

Then, they are illimitable. Live, as the Baptist did not, in the illimitable. You are destined to a boundless expansion. Always breathe its air. In a world where exclusive theories and doctrines lay their restrictive hands on thought, on science, on politics, and on religion, keep yourselves clear of all their limits. Before you lies infinity—love's infinity. Abide in that; prepare yourself for its boundless progress, its boundless joy. When you live in that vast world, all is true; there is no illusion there.

For then you are naturally living in love, such

love as, filling the disciples' hearts, enabled them, out of the darkness of death, to fetch ardour and joy and life, to lose defeated illusion and to gain victorious certainty—such certainty as this: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

## THE PATIENCE OF JOB

*February 21, 1909*

“Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”—JAS V. 11.

THIS patience of Job, on which our Scriptures dwell, is worth a little thought and discourse. It is plain that the Christians of the time of the Epistles thought him a patient person, and the long tradition that his temper of mind was patient has come to us, and is accepted by us.

Yet all his conduct conflicts with a common religious notion of patience, as laid down in many sermons, hymns, prayers, and religious literature; and that to so great a degree that if this pious notion of patience be the only true one, then Job was a very impatient person, and the Apostle exceedingly mistaken in thinking him patient. For what did Job do when heavy trouble fell upon him? First, he was silent for many days in a grim confusion of anger and misery. Then, waking from this tempestuous trance, he cursed with an elaborate and finished curse the day he was born, and his life; then, when his friends came to mourn with him, and argued

about his misfortune as proving his sinfulness, he turned fiercely upon them ; met them with wrath and scorn, and claimed that he had always done the right. There are few in the religious world who would be likely to call his language the language of a patient man. Then, he challenged God to prove that he was unrighteous, using words which were thought to be impious by the grave religious men who listened to his reckless passion. Anything more unlike the modern idea of religious patience, as laid down, for example, in the *Christian Year*, cannot well be conceived. Is this "to lie still and bless the rod" ? Is this to bend, uncomplaining, before the will of God ? Is this to repress all anger, self-righteousness, passionate questioning of God ? Is this to be the gentle recipient of our neighbour's opinion as to our misfortunes ? Is this to accept with humility the statement that we suffer because we have sinned against the Lord ?

Not at all ; it is to act and feel in a very different way. There is but one phrase of his at the beginning of his speaking—before he had been irritated by the religious lies of his friends—which has the note of our teacher's idea of patience, and which contains all that is true in that idea, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord." And to the thought and emotion which underlies those words Job, in spite of all his wrath and confusion, was throughout true.

The first and finest element of his patience, and of ours, in the midst of the troubles of life appears in

that phrase ; but those words are only one and a passing form of a single idea, or rather a single belief, which, as Job's trouble went on, expressed itself in many forms, and in some which seem to contradict any quiet resignation. That one belief—and it is the root-element of true patience—is this : the conviction that God is just, the faith that it is impossible for Him to do wrong. “Whatever happens,” Job thought, “to me or to all the world, He is right ; my woes are contained in His order, in His will, and both order and will are righteous.” “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” That wild question reveals in its momentary doubt the depth of his belief. It was this that made him say, “The Lord gave and hath taken away ; blessed be His name.” It was the doubt of this, intruded into his soul by those maxim-mongers, which maddened him into those grim challenges of God ; it was this that he maintained from point to point as the struggle deepened. “I do not understand,” he cried, “anything that has now happened to me. I cannot find God in what has been, nor in what is ; there seems neither justice nor love in all my world. But though I do not comprehend, though everything I suffer seem unrighteous, I will maintain, I will believe, that God is right. Heaven and earth may perish, and I with them, but, as long as He is just, nothing I care for in the depths of my soul has really perished.”

This is the spirit of the whole book, and this is the root of the true patience. The root of patience is



faith in eternal, absolute right ; and perseverance in that belief is the patience which Job possessed, and which the New Testament writers praised. It endures and deepens when mere resignation breaks down under continued trouble. It borrows its power from the eternity of right itself, it shares in the quality of that in which it believes ; and if the troubles were to last a thousand years, it would live on in unyielding perseverance. It will in certain temperaments keep silence and endure in quiet, and if the soul within such men does not get slothful, their patience is good ; and, indeed, it is that kind of patience which wins the approval of pious persons. But there are many, and indeed the greater number, who are not of that temperament, but are hot within and without, either in thought or speech, and these, when they break out, are condemned as impatient. But at least—and this I dwell on in this sermon—they can claim, if they hold fast to faith in God's certainty of justice, that they have the patience of Job. Their patience will go through doubt like a tempest, but it will go through it ; it will be grim with wrath within, and even curse with Job ; it may rage with man and challenge God, and claim to be good under accusation of sin, but, deeper than all doubt and anger, its faith clings to the certainty of the justice of God.

This is a true patience ; and to keep it is worth all the struggle, the torment, and the passion which Job created and underwent. Indeed, it is the only consolation really worth having in dire trouble. Human

sympathy is good. It is well to feel that God loves us, that we have One who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but deeper even than these—for enduring comfort and strength, for the fortitude and fortification of the soul, for the final victory—is the firm belief that all that has happened is right, is contained in God's everlasting justice, belongs to a righteous order, and therefore ministers to our good and the good of the whole world. Our woes and wrongs are within law, or of law. God ordered them, for He could not do otherwise. He could not change them without doing what would violate His root-ideas, and therefore what was unjust to the whole creation.

This, I say, is consolation ; a stern, but a real comfort, worth a man's having. The one thing which is the death of consolation, unbearable, the poisoned root of our worst pain, is that the Will of God should be conceived as capricious, as arbitrary ; that we should think He could be moved by prayer or by sacrifice from His just purpose, or changed so as to work a miracle to relieve our personal pain. What would, then, become of the rest of the world ? How could we afterwards depend on Him ? What is His love worth if it is subject to impulse ? What is His pity worth if it can be bought by sacrifice, or depend on petition ? No ; the love, the mercy we have, we have when it is just that we should have them, when they are in accord with what is right for the whole universe, and it is they only which are worth our having. Justice to the whole often needs our suffer-

ing, and it is part of our true patience to believe that. In immutable justice, which, indeed, is one form of eternal love, we can trust for ever, because of its immovability. "I the Lord change not, therefore, ye sons of Jacob, ye are not consumed." And our steadfast trust in it, spite of all the misery and madness of life, is the true patience; even though we may sometimes curse our day and fling our religious friends to the winds, and challenge God Himself to prove us in the wrong.

Suppose that we are punished for some wrong or error, some guilty or innocent violation of law, and eat the fruits of our own devices—and bitter they are, apples of the Sodom shore. There is only one comfort in it. It is according to law. God has not done it because He is in a fit of arbitrary anger with us, but exactly in the same way as He makes corn come out of corn, and thorn out of thorn. Law, not caprice, has punished. And this is comfort, stern comfort, but it brings with it a hope that no weaker comfort brings—a sure and certain hope. For then we know that we have only to change our devices, to do the opposite of our sin, in order to get, also by the same just law, another kind of fruit, what men call reward—not by any means the removal of pain, but the fruit in the spirit of our spiritual effort—the ennobling, the purification, of the soul.

Again, we have done right, and suffered for it at the hands of the unrighteous world. "What," we say, "is this just? Why am I afflicted, tortured?" There is one comfort worth having, and it is the

same. It is according to law. The order of the universe of spirit requires it. There is someone who is better for my pain, and there is something which it sets right. It is just, and for the sake of mankind; it is needed for their redemption. It is not the blind caprice of Nature. "Therefore we pray, 'God my Father, not my will, but Thine be done. Better I should suffer than that universal justice should be delayed or hampered in its work upon the whole.'"

Once more. Those whom we have loved have been taken from our grasp, and our life seems to have left us with them. "We have served God well," we say; "is this His answer? Then I have cleansed my heart *in vain*, and washed my hands in innocency." There is no comfort, but a deeper misery, in that thought. But there is a grave comfort when we believe that not in caprice, or in a fanciful testing, does the bereavement occur, but with the knowledge of a far-seeing justice. Our loved ones were taken from us according to law; we could not have kept them; their hour had come to die; and if they perished by law on earth, they are still subject to that just law in the other world. In the all-wise hands of absolute Right we may safely leave them, and our own life also, and our sorrow. He will do what is just and fitting for us, for them, and for the whole.

There is comfort in being sure that these sorrowful things must have been; that God could not have changed them without changing Himself; that, if He had changed them, there would be no surety in

His love, no possibility of trusting Him ; for how could we trust His love, or repose on His justice, if we did not first trust His order ? Better the worst of pain than the impossibility of trust in an all-embracing certainty, than leaning on possible capriciousness ; better the most desolate of solitudes than not to be able to say : “ I know He will not change His order ; I know I can depend on Him ” ; for then there is no solitude in our soul. Then we can say with Christ, “ I am not alone : the Father is with me.”

This is rude comfort, but it is true. It wears well. It is fit for all weathers—for the sunshine of life as for the shadow of death ; for strength in weakness, and for energy in overthrow. And to keep to the faith on which it is founded, through trial and temptation, through sin and doubt and anger, through wild impatience and self-scorn, through a thousand storms—that is patience, the highest patience in the world. Job had it, and may God build it up in us !

I turn now to another edge of the subject, and it is suggested by the apparently impatient elements in Job's patience. That patience was plainly coincident with that which the religious world often calls impatience. That world may give it that name, but it is really a part of the true patience, of the perseverance of faith in God, and of the right action of that faith. Patience such as I speak of frequently demands impatience. Suppose that your life has been righteous as Job was, and you know this as he knew it, and that out of the clear sky of it, and into



your peace, the tempest suddenly breaks, and all the costly argosies of life go down in the night. They sink to the bottom like a stone.

If, then, while in your misery, you cry out, "Let the day perish wherein I was born; and the night, let tenfold darkness seize it"; if, then, your friends tell you that you must have sinned deeply because you suffer so deeply, that the anger of God is proved to be on you because of your doom—then it will not be patience to lend an ear to them, and with bated humility to say, "I have deserved this; this is justice in punishment; God is angry with me." That is not patience, but superstition. It is yielding to the maxim of a false theology, that where there is suffering the person who suffers is guilty of sin—the maxim to which the Cross of Calvary is the overwhelming contradiction. The true patience is to then maintain (and with indignation against liars) that you have not been unrighteous, and to maintain it, not for your own sake, but for the sake of God's justice; for if you suffer, as a sinner, when you have not been a sinner, then God has been unjust. "I know," you will say in sturdy faith, "that my suffering does not prove my sin. God is not angry with me. Were He angry with me, He were unjust. He loves me, though I suffer; He cannot be unkind to me. There is some other reason for my pain but that of sinfulness in me. I suffer because He needs to save others through my endurance of pain, or because He loves some others better than He loves my happiness on earth. He trusts that I shall feel

this, and that I shall chime in with His work. And if I do, a vast happiness for me will hereafter come out of my sorrow—the happiness of knowing that my pain has blessed the lives of men ; that the cross I bore has saved the weary, the sinful, and the lost.” That would be the patience of Job, patience of the right sort, and it is coincident with a fierce impatience of theologic lies.

Take another case. Suppose you have done wrong, and are suffering from it, and know that your suffering is a just result of your wrong, is it patience of that right kind, the root of which is belief in a God who lives for righteousness, to sit down mournfully to regret the past and to endure the punishment ? No ; the proper patience, then, is to be impatient with a condition which is apart from right-doing ; to be incessantly curious to find out quite clearly what the punishment means, sure that it is not only the exact result of a wrong, but also that it points, as exactly, to the right thing which will balance the wrong ; to get out of the sphere of the lash as fast as possible ; to give up all regrets for the past, and to be eager only for a noble future ; to abandon wailing for your sin, and to gird up your loins for the race to goodness, and that with a certain joyfulness ; never to be quiet till your world of barrenness which is your punishment is changed into a world of fruitfulness ; till you have changed yourself into a different man, and found yourself again, or for the first time, in union with the righteousness of God.

Or, again, suppose you suffer from circumstances

not of your own making, as Job suffered, and that they are, like his, desperate. Is it the right patience to accept with meekness, as they call it, the evil day, or to lie, gravelled into stillness on the roadside of life, crying, "I am wounded to the death: God has made my life impossible"? No, not at all. That is distrust or despair; it is not patience. It were better to curse your day, for that is natural and alive; to be enraged with circumstance, and go to war against it, for that has some faith in a goodness in the universe. This is patience in the garb of impatience. It is the living soul within you all on fire to get into the sunshine again, and belief that there is sunshine; it cries out against the overthrow, or rather against that within us which is inclined to think the overthrow is final. It declares that fate, that fond invention of our sloth, shall not have its way with us; that we will conquer it in the end, and win a greater happiness out of its darkness. It fights to the last, as the Patriarch fought, and it makes the latter end of life, as this book of Job understood, better than the beginning. In one word, it believes in a God of Righteousness, and that we are His people; and that God is certain to allot spiritual victory to those who will not yield to adversity, because they believe. "He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved."

Or, to take a similar case, but with a difference—if we are in one of these deadlocks in life with which we cannot wrestle at all; which we cannot battle with in the way I have just now recommended;

where there is nothing we can outwardly do. Is our soul within to share in our enforced inaction without? Are we to do nothing within but indulge in the oyster-like patience some religious persons impose on our living soul? It was not the way of Job. He kept himself, his mind, his affections, his spirit, in full liveliness. After his seven days of grim silence, he broke out into intellectual and spiritual argument; he clashed accusation against accusation; as a wrestler he wrought with his friends and with God; he changed his premises, he grouped his several conclusions into one. Again he left the field of reasoning, and appealed to the natural affections; again he appealed, beyond them, to the vast conceptions of the human spirit; he spoke of eternal justice, of absolute truth; he challenged God Himself to make an indictment against Him. There was no inward power of mind, of the emotions and of the spirit which he did not employ to the full, with an indomitable impatience towards freedom, from the deadlock in which he was involved; believing, with a mighty perseverance, that God had not abandoned him, and that the time would come when He would vindicate his servant. Therefore, he kept all his powers alive; kept them in training against the day when the path of life should be clear again.

That is the lesson. If things are so desperately involved that you cannot act, that you must wait, do not wait in that fashion which lets your mind, soul, affections, or spirit get out of training, and

which so many call patient resignation ; but while you wait, fall back on your inward life, and there exercise all its powers. Call on the reason, the affections, the imagination, on the insatiable curiosity and outreaching aspirations of the Spirit, to 'live and work ; believing that, because justice is at the root of the universe, God will vindicate your cause if you do not go to sleep ; that the time will come when a new life will open before you, when waiting will be over and action called for. And if in that faith you so live within, in a resolute eagerness to get into clear air again, you will finally go forth into the coming day in good trim, loins girded and lights burning, with all your faculties and powers, mind, imagination, affections, spirit, in such good training that you will be able with joyous force to grasp and use the fresh and happy opportunity.

The patience of slumbrous resignation will never help us to that end. We lie still then, during all our life, consumed and self-consuming. But the patience which does not rest, which sharpens into keener life the mental and spiritual powers, consumes, not our soul, but everything within us and chiefly the sloth of resignation which prevents us from going forward into life. It clears the way, as they say the Indians do, by burning down the brushwood in which they are entangled.

Lastly, if we act in this way, and with that kind of patience, we shall secure, if there is to be deliverance from our trouble in this life, every grain of the



good of that deliverance for mankind, and for our work.

If there is to be in this life deliverance, as was the case with Job, from the overwhelming, we shall pass out of it then twice the men we were before. All our work—and we shall be eager, like ships released from the deadly calm for work—will be done with reduplicated powers, and with a joyfulness which will inspire our fellow-workers. Our faith in God, and in the certain destiny of man, will then have a tenfold energy. Men will see conquest in our eyes, and will take courage for their lives. And we ourselves, conscious of victory won by faith in God, and of the eternity of His justice and love, will be sure of ourselves in God, happy in the humilities of victory, and certain of immortality while we labour in mortality.

And if, as is sometimes the case, there is no deliverance in this life from the evil day, and we die in the midst of our sorrow and pain, yet we shall die with every power in us ready for the world to come, alert for its work and its joy, fitted to let loose every energy of reason, love, and of the searching spirit, upon the splendours of the life to come. And more, our patient impatience of sloth and of the degradation through pain of the powers of the soul, will be left behind us, as inspiration and a ministry of strength and courage to those who will hereafter have opportunities denied to us, and help them to win success in the labours we could not begin, or only just begin.

This, then, is a vital part of patience as I take it. It is not the submissive notion of it to which we are most accustomed, but it has the advantage of being useful, and of being true to the high instincts of the soul. And it penetrates into, and acts in, every sphere of life. It is the patriot's patience in an oppressed country. It is the martyr's patience when he stands for truth against the world, in science, in art, in literature, in social or political questions, in law, and in religion. It is the sceptic's patience who has a passion for truth. It is the sufferer's patience who wishes to live on into joy and action, as he ought to wish to do. It is the patience of the seaman of life when his ship is tossing in the hurricane. It is the patience of the prisoner of life when circumstance has shut him into darkness and inaction. It is the patience of the striver for light when he cannot find God. It is the patience of the dying whose lonely thought looks forward to the eternal life of active thought and perfect love. It is the patience of which we have the story in this Book of Job. It may not be the patience of the saints who have always been at home with God. That is a quieter and a more solemn thing, but it is a patience which suits men well who are not yet saints, and who are fighting, through life and death, within and without, towards the light and truth, the righteousness, justice, and love of God.

## FREEDOM FROM THE ELEMENTS OF THE WORLD

*July 5, 1908*

“Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all ;

But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world :

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”—GAL. iv. 1-6.

THERE is not a trace in the work of St. Paul of any interest in natural scenery. He passed by the hills of Greece, and saw the olive terraces among the rosy rocks, and sailed over the dark blue sea through the island paradises. Not one word, not even one metaphor, suggests that he was stirred for a moment by the radiant beauty of the world. But he drank in at every pore the human life around him. The landscape of the soul, its passions, sorrows, temptations, its freedom and joy—this was his interest, in

this his eagerness. All classes were his friends—King Agrippa, the Proconsul, the philosopher, merchant, soldier, the rich Roman and the beggar at his gate, the labourer and the slave, all men and women—for all were Christ's, and he had the message of Christ to give them. Wherever folk congregated, and of whatever nation, on the Athenian hill, in the market-place of Corinth, in the synagogues of Antioch, in Cæsar's palace, in the prison on the Palatine, in the streets, by the river-side where the women washed—there, in the crowd, like his Master, he loved to be; to console, to inspire, to redeem, to teach the Gospel of Christ. And there, among men, he found the motives and the illustrations of his appeals to their spiritual life.

Here, in the text I have read, he uses the terms of the old life of the market-place of a Greek town. We see the slave leading the boy to school, and the boy, when of age, set free from tuition. We seem also to see the servant asking for his freedom, to hear the pleadings, to be a witness of the ceremonies of adoption and emancipation. The terms of the old manners and customs are in our ears, and yet they are not quite strange to us. They still live on in our Christian use of them, in the new force that St. Paul's new conceptions gave them. Nor should we gain anything by disusing them, though the customs they enshrine have passed away.

In his use of the common doings of men as images of spiritual truths, St. Paul built upon a belief that there is no natural or customary

dealing between man and man which is not evil that does not image the relationship, or some of the relationships, between man and God. The parables of Christ were founded on the same belief. How does God feel and act towards men? Look into the common doings of man to man, of man with the animals, and you will know. You see the shepherd seeking the lost sheep, the gardener digging round the roots of the fig-tree, the woman leavening the meal. What have you seen? You have seen God's love seeking the wandering soul, God striving to awaken the barren life, God pouring a few great ideas into the world. Men ask, "How does God feel, act, and deal with us?" Seek the answer, said Christ, in the humanity around you, in the ways of loving fatherhood, of noble masterhood, in the relation of friend to friend, in the customs, manners, and thoughts which have been accredited among men by the experience and respect of generations. Beneath them all lies an answering, echoing fact in the spiritual world. St. Paul built on that, and the result is that, though the terms he used have changed their original meaning, they remain alive for us in their spiritual meaning. He made them the image of enduring truth. They speak to our souls to-day, and the soul replies. That this should be so, suggests and illustrates the continuity through the ages of the foundation-ideas and emotions of the human race. At root—no matter how its outward forms, in classes, nations, climates, change—it is the same humanity.



No thought is more interesting, more fruitful. Here, in the easy usage of the same terms by St. Paul and by us, we touch the deep unity of spiritual feeling in mankind. The terms themselves are obsolete. They are the witness, like the boulders and carvings on the rocks of an age of ice, of a world of thought and manners long since passed away. But when we use them of our spiritual changes, we feel at one with the men and women who used them of their daily life. We seem to grasp their hands, to look into their eyes, across the gulf of time. Yes, there is a deep humanity which does not pass away with the passing years. In the unchanging depths of the human soul we best realize eternity.

Think on Paul looking, in some Galatian town, on the redemption of the slave, the adoption of the son, and seeing in them the image of the soul freed from the slavery of sin and the bondage of the law ; and taken up into the freedom of Christ. Centuries before he lived, the same things had been done, and the same emotions felt by those who were set free. The continuity of the emotion was unbroken. "Even so we," said the Apostle, "who are in bondage to the law receive the adoption of sons" ; and our emotion, when God sets the soul free, is in kind the same as the slave felt in the market-place of Egypt a thousand years ago. Centuries have passed since Paul wrote these words. The customs the words embody have ceased to be ; but not the emotions which accompanied the doings. We feel

in the spirit the same delight, the same gratitude, the same uplifting sense of liberty, St. Paul felt when Christ set him free. In the same words we image our spiritual enfranchisement. "Even so," we cry, "we were slaves, but now are free; once we were far from God, now we are His sons." Yes, ages pass, a thousand customs sink into forgetfulness, but not the one human heart. There is change of the outward, decay of forms, but the life within, the deep central ideas and emotions of humanity, are unchanged and undecayed.

It is this we are tempted to forget. We are tempted to take our own temper, the temper of our time, for something special, unknown before; to lose the sense of the continuity of human effort and aspiration; to cut ourselves off from the past, and limit the outgoings of thought to our own little circle; and then, having drawn these barriers round us, having put ourselves into the prison of the present, we are angry and astonished, when, in a moment of aspiration, we realize that we are unable to escape from the prison walls we have ourselves built round the soul. Baffled by the elements of modern life and tied down to the daily round of work, or social duties, or fashion, unable to let loose the soul, we are in bondage to the elements of the world. Life is no longer free or joyous. We cannot bathe every morning in the fresh dew of a new day. We have ceased to feel that humanity, like love, ought to be always young. O, many, in this modern world, pass across the stage of life,

slaves of discontent and weariness, sick of failures they have not the energy to repair, of hopes which have turned to listlessness, of passions they have exhausted. They wish to throw away their life, or are tired of pursuing and not finding, declaring that there is nothing to find ; enslaved in bondage to the difficult elements of the present world ; no faith in work, in victory, in themselves, or in God. It is no extraordinary bondage, nothing out of the way ; it is simply bondage to the elements of life alone. It is then that St. Paul carries us back to this far-off time, and sets us in the market-place, and shows us the boy under his tutor, and the slave under his master. "So we," he says, "were in bondage to the elements of the world." Again, he shows us the boy freed from his governor and come to his heritage ; and the slave emancipated. "So we," he says, "being in Christ, are free ; we are at liberty, being children of God ; we have come into our true heritage. The chains of the law are gone ; the limiting elements of the world are no more. Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has set you free, and be entangled no more in the bondage of the world."

To us, what are these elements of the world? They are multitudinous, and they are different to different persons. But I can speak of a good many of them in speaking of the bondage our spiritual life is in to the past, the present, and the future.

1. When we come to middle life, we look back often to the past, in hours when we question ourselves ; when God asks us if we remember Him.

We recall then our early innocence, our early aspiration ; and we contrast this with the present, when aspiration has grown cold, and innocence is dead. It seems to us that we shall never get innocence back ; and in truth we never shall. But we can get goodness, which is the victory over evil. That, however, is a trouble ; and instead of trying for it, we linger round the vision of the past, rely on its purity as the only goodness we can reach, paint its beauty, sigh over its loss, till our religious life becomes a sad retrospect or an æsthetic contemplation. And out of that no life arises, no impulse comes. We are mere dreamers. This is part of our bondage under the elements of the past.

Again, as we look back, we see evil as well as innocence—the sins to which we yielded, the passions in which we indulged. Our secret guilt, our dishonour, haunt us like ghosts—nay, meet us face to face with a terrible reality. The habits of past ill-doing pursue us. We fly, but they come after us like wolves, hungry to devour us again. We hear their cry ; and if we have no spirit higher than our own in the sledge of life with us, we are in despair. “What use,” we say, “to drive so fast. I am sure to be overtaken.” The reins drop from our hands, and the wolves seize us again. This is to be in bondage to the elements of the past.

2. As to the present, what a world it is ! It was large enough in Greece and Rome when St. Paul was alive. It is a thousand times larger now. And in proportion to its largeness is the vast demand it

makes upon us. We have scarcely an hour, if we are in the movement, for quiet thought. At every moment we are receiving things so multitudinous that we cannot pause to ask what they mean ; and the more we receive, the more we are asked to give. In older days men could retire from the press, put what they received into order, generalize it, and create a law, a philosophy, or a poem. Now we are frittered away by a thousand interests which we cannot harmonize, which confuse and irritate us. We have lost power and volition in the disorder of the present ; and we are ourselves part of the disorder. This is our bondage to the elements of the world of the present.

Again, society as a whole makes now increasing claims on us. It bids us accept its rules, its ways of thinking and feeling, its maxims and moralities. The mere multiplicity of its claims is so great, that if we do not yield to the fixed social arrangements, we are thrown out of the circle of work. And as we yield to the pressure, we begin to feel as if we were only a piece of a machine ; we seem to lose our individuality, and we hate to lose it. We gain social force, no doubt, political and commercial force ; the whole body of society, of party, of business has more power, but we gain this at the expense of individuality. Our very thoughts seem lost in the mass of other men's thoughts, till we despair of thinking or acting any life of our own. This, too, is bondage to the elements of the present world.

3. As to the future, we are in bondage, not to its



elements, but to our thoughts of it. Unable to find good in the present, we listlessly wait on our idle hopes of a good to come, as if any good came to the dreamer and the idler. "It may be better to-morrow," we say, "meantime we will take our ease. Why should we weary life with vain effort? Let us lay down our oars and float with the stream. It may be that round the next reach of the river life and impulse may be given us, or if not then, why at the following turning." In this temper thought does not fix itself on things; they, and all they mean, seem to glide away from us like bubbles on the stream. What thought we have plays round the future, and leaves the present alone. Feeling and effort are to be exercised in the days to come, not here where we are. Life is thus lived in dreams, and drifts we know not where. Nor do we care. Anything is better than a moment's action now—anything better than to rise from our sloth and strike one good blow in the present for God or man.

But sometimes the future is not our hope, but our despair. We are overpowered by fear of the unknown, of the inevitable trouble the future is to bring us. Our work will break down, we think, under the pressure of events. Nothing we can do will help against the fate which will turn it all to dust. And then our life—what illness, what misfortune, what new passion, sorrow, horror, may come into it, break it to pieces, and all that we have done and thought pass into nothingness! Nay, may not all work be transient? What lasts in this changing,

illusiv world? Why, then, should I toil and think in the present? Let me live my little life, enjoy if I can my little time, and then sleep for ever. That is to be entangled in a yoke of bondage to the future.

This which I have laid before you is modern society paralyzed, bound under the elements of the world. One cry breaks its slavery—"Abba, Father." There is one freedom from it—the freedom of the children of God. When we are delivered by that faith, the past enslaves us no more; the present and the future are in our power; for they are our Father's, and we are His for ever.

We see the past in a different light, and mourn no more over the loss of innocence. We lost it because it was our Father's will that we should attain a higher thing—the goodness which is won by the conquest of evil. He was in our innocence, but He is still more in the goodness He enables us to gain. Why should we regret a negation like innocence, when we can reach a positive like goodness? Why regret ignorance of evil when we can have, with all its adventurous battle and vivid life, the knowledge of evil and of good, and the knowledge that by our Father's grace we have overthrown evil? To attain that experience disperses our slavery to the regrets for departed innocence.

Again, when we feel bound to the sins of the past, we are not only set free by belief in God's forgiveness, which is the main thing, but we look now with different eyes upon the evil of the past. We see now that, since we were children of God even when

we did not know it, there was goodness also in the midst of wrong. We see it glancing through the evil. God our Father has been with us, even then ; even in our sin. The little goodness He then enabled us to keep may grow into a full goodness, now that we know He is with us. Moreover, looking back now in the light of our faith, we see how in our darkest hours we were saved from utter ruin by His intervention in the soul. "God was my Father then," we cry ; "He thought of me and wrought in me, though I did not know it. I know it now, and my knowledge changes the remorse that enslaves into the penitence which aspires." We forget the past, and, freed from its wrong, run forward after Christ into more and more of goodness. Moreover, as, in this new light of our childhood to God, we think of the evil of the past, we realize how much of it is dead.

There are whole kinds of wrong-doing which we do no more, which we do not care for, which we even hate. Even some of the wrongs we have done to others seem, in some strange way, to have been changed, as time goes on, to a kind of good for them. And, in ourselves, many sins, in our struggle with them, have passed, not only into hatred of them, but into a deeper realization of their opposite goodness. When we think these thoughts we cry : "Abba, Father, I am freed in Thee from the bondage of past sin, free to work, free from barren regret, from paralyzing remorse, free to live for Thee, and for man Thy child."

Moreover, the past has slipped from us into the hand of God. And He has worked out of it strange things. Our acts are ours, and we suffer for them when they are wrong; but there is an unlooked-for result which is God's alone. We have suffered our punishment, but in the punishment He has strengthened other parts of our nature, other than those in which we sinned, and brought new beauty, new tenderness, new powers into our life. As we realize this, we ask with wonder, "Who has done this? Who, while I knew it not, has been working in me? Who, while I was trying to destroy myself, has been seeking to build me up into nobility?" And we answer, in the new light, "It is God my Father." As we believe it, peace falls on life; the past is conquered; its imprisoning elements chain us no more. We are free to follow Christ into a risen life.

Then, as to the slavery of the present, the new thoughts we gain when we can truly say, "My Father is God, and He is the Father of all," are so delivering that the weight of the disorder of the world, and of our loss of individuality, drops off our shoulders. For, first, we gain not only the thought of duty to our fellow-men which one can have without any belief in God, but of this duty as a part of our duty to God; that is, men are not only our brothers, but our brothers because they are all children of a Divine Father. He is with all men, in all this mass and multitude of confused and clashing interests which seem to us so entangled, so disordered.

He sits at the centre of the infinite web, and holds unentangled all the threads. There is order where our half-sight only sees disorder. And this faith makes us quiet in the midst of the turmoil; undissipated, undistracted in the midst of the multitudinous interests and calls of the present world. We have a foundation and are at rest. Nor are we hurried any longer. We can stand aside, when we like, from the restless haste of life, and think of and feel the great and reposeful things beyond these noises; and hear, far off, the spiritual world within this material world "in measured motion draw after the heavenly tune." We have time and will to drink deep of the peace and loveliness that live beyond cities and books and the clash of parties in the sacred stillness of the woods and hills. And when we go back to work, refreshed, we are not again confused. God will direct our work, and show us what is best to do. He that believeth shall not make haste. There is no need, if God be ours, to learn so much more than we need to learn, or do so much more work than we ought to do, if we wish to keep ourselves fit to continue working to the end. We may set ourselves free from the slavery of work which drives so many to disease and uselessness, and live to work like free men. We must always pursue knowledge and beauty, but not with the desperate haste of those who think they will perish when they die. We have in God an eternity in which to work—infinite knowledge and beauty which we shall pursue



with joy for ever. Our Father will teach us all things, and see that we do all the good work we can, not only here, but in a life to come. Therefore, satisfied that out of the storms and intercrossing of things as they are, the whole is evolving itself in order to an end in God, we sit down steadily to our own work, without haste, and do it freed from the trouble and bondage of the present. The world is a world of order to us when we know that we and all men are God's children.

And as to the loss of individuality under collective pressure, the thought of God, my Father, is instant liberty from that. When we know that we are children of God, we know that our separate personality is secured for ever. Self-development becomes then a duty we owe to Him. For He has sent each of us into this world to show forth a distinct phase of His manifold Being, and work it out in the world for the sake of our fellow-men.

The moment we recognize our distinct character as given to us by God our Father, we are set in opposition to the tendency of the present world to lessen or crush our individuality. We feel, if we allow ourselves to become a repetition of others, if we slavishly follow the settled conventions, if we live only by the maxims of society, that we are faithless to our Father's calling, not doing the special work He has allotted to our character. Others may lose themselves in the mass, in bondage to the world. But we may not. We are free to become, and to remain, personal sons of God.

We work for the collective whole, but our work is best done for the whole when it is done out of our own special personality. We get into union with the whole of mankind, but we remain ourselves ; we give ourselves away to our brother-men, but at the same time we realize in our child-relation to God our separate personal being. It is even true that the more we take the lives of others into our own, the fuller, the stronger, becomes our individuality. So, in this matter also, we are freed from bondage to the elements of the present world.

Finally, there is the bondage we are in to the thought of the future—a bondage of vague waiting and questioning, or of fear of what may come—and both produce an inaction of listlessness or inability. These things enslave life. But when we know God as our Father and Friend, when we receive the adoption of sons, what a difference in life! The Spirit of God, in His eternal activity, cries in our heart, “My son, I am with you. I am essential life, and good, and joy, and action.” “What! God in my life,” we cry ; “in my house, in my business, in my work, in my daily movement. It is inspiration, impulse, power. The listlessness which enslaved me has vanished away. Ardour, and force, and joy have come into my work. Where my Father is there is no real failure, no dreaming, no drifting. I am free to act, I must act ; I rejoice in action, and every action has its clear end in a future which God illuminates for me.”

And with this all fear of the future departs for

ever. We know now that all the years to come for us are filled with God our Father. Over them rests His providence, His order, and in them moves His all-controlling love. They may bring to us sorrow and trouble ; they are sure to bring to us pain, decay, and death. We might well fear, with great distress, if in all this inevitable we had no helper, in all that loneliness, which increases as life goes on, no strong companion ; and the fear of this would be a great bondage.

But when we can say, "I am His, and He is mine," we are set free from this personal dread. We know that whatever comes, we are in the hands of a Father's love ; we know we shall be kept not from outer but from inner evil ; strengthened in character through pain ; quickened into higher life by trial ; made tenderer by sorrow ; more fit by trouble to help others, to console, to exalt, and to empower them. We know that we shall do the will and work of the Father of men, and be of use, whatever happens, to the world. We wait no more in idle hope ; we fear no more. Our work has certainty, inspiration, continuity, and joy. It is contained in the eternal work of God, and moves in the eternal mankind that lives in Him.

This is the freedom of the sons of God from the elements of the world, and a noble, high, and joyous freedom it is. The past, the present, and the future are in the power and the love of God our Father, and therefore they belong to us. We are masters of their evil and companions of their good.

## THE WISE VIRGINS AND THEIR LAMPS

*February 7, 1909*

ST. MATT. XX. 1—13.

THIS parable, though some have said it was added at a later time to the Gospel, cannot justly be taken away from the sayings of Jesus. It has all the marks of his way of thinking, his manner of teaching, his character, and his style. It has no doctrinal peculiarities, such as belonged to later invented stories or discourses. It has no limiting elements; everything is left out which would prevent its applicability to men and women at all times in history. It is very simple in phrase and invention. A child can understand it as well as a wise man. Its spiritual truth is represented by that which was commonly seen by its hearers. A wedding feast and procession were continually occurring in the streets and houses of the Jews. The main points are clear; special and temporary ornament is excluded. Finally, it appeals to common sense and the facts of life at all its points; and yet the whole of the story is heightened and pervaded by a certain imaginative passion, by a spiritual fire which makes it unforgettable. I have

no doubt that it comes direct from the voice and emotion of Jesus.

Its main meaning is clear. It is one of the parables which pressed a certain prudence upon the disciples, and on us—the duty of looking forward and preparing for a revelation of the kingdom of God, of being ready for new light and life from the Father of light and life. The main force of it is in its last phrase, “Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not the day when the Son of man cometh.” And it is not unwise to think of it at this time when the elements of the world, as St. Paul called them—the social, political and intellectual ideas of men (in science, religion, and literature)—are seething together, without as yet any clear form, but incessantly desiring and seeking it ; when we may expect, and, like the virgins, are waiting for, the coming of the Bridegroom—the revelation, in each of these provinces of thought, of the clear form of the ideas, which will for a time, till they are in turn superseded, rule the thoughts and actions of men.

What, then, was the prudence, the prevision Christ urged on his people? It was not the common worldly prudence of which we hear so much, the careful looking forward to the gain of pelf, and place, and worldly honour. He told his disciples not to worry about these things. “Take no anxiety for their morrow. Your heavenly Father knows how much of these is good for you.” It was, on the contrary, his own prudence which he urged upon them, and that prudence, when it nailed him to the



Cross, was certainly not the prudence of the world. Nor was it prudence for their personal salvation, which would lock up their will and desire in their own souls, isolate them within themselves, and so prevent them, first, from watching for new ideas of God ; and then, from doing loving work for their fellow-men. A selfish prudence, even for our own salvation, was not the prudence of Christ. But the prudence he did urge on them was one which should make provision for the new spiritual kingdom which he was bringing to men. It was taking care that they should be alive with faith, and hope, and love, and therefore ready to take their active part in the work of the kingdom—and that work was the redemption of man. That was to be their first object, and, in doing that work, they would best win their own redemption. Their salvation was involved in the salvation of mankind. He who first saves others saves himself.

Therefore, he cried in this parable, “take care that you keep burning in your hearts the lamps of love for men, of faith in God the Lover of men, of hope for the resurrection of the world from the death of sin to the new life of righteousness. A new revelation is coming to the earth. Watch for its coming, as the virgins watch on the housetops for the coming of the Bridegroom. Prepare your souls to welcome and work the new ideas. Let your whole life be set forward in expectation ; be in good trim for a great change.” This is the central meaning of the parable.

What change? Well, Jesus thought it was a

time of crisis in the religious history of man. "The kingdom of God is at hand," was the cry with which he began his ministry, and the thought and passion of it burned in his heart from the days of Nazareth to the day of Calvary. And here, in this parable, he told his disciples that at any moment that doctrine of life might get clear, which, received and believed, would regenerate the world. But it was not yet clear. The dawn was in the sky, but the sun had not yet risen; and he described in this parable the transition. As he looked round on the world of Palestine, he saw many who were eagerly but vaguely gazing onwards in faith and expectation of a revelation; who had in their souls the lamps of hope and a righteous life burning; ready for new ideas, but ignorant of them, and therefore often weary of waiting. These were the five wise virgins who kept their lamps alive, but sometimes slept for weariness of spirit.

But he also saw multitudes who were unready, who did not care to look forward; on whose ears fell unheeded the news of the kingdom; who had allowed the lamps of love and faith and hope to die out; who, instead of watching for the future, were wholly wrapt up in the present world, drifting through society like the Sadducees; eager for power and wealth in an earthly kingdom like the Pharisees; drowned in religious formalism like the lawyers and scribes; or idling in mere amusement; or caring for nothing but money; or demoralized to the bone like the common crowd of Jerusalem. "What,"

they cried, "is this future kingdom to us? The present is enough. Let us eat and drink and be merry, and then sleep off our surfeit." These were the foolish virgins.

Again and again Christ sketched these persons: like those, he said, before the Flood; like those in Sodom before the fire; like the blind who lead the blind; like the labourers in the vineyard who slew their master; like the children playing in the market-place; like the man who hid his lord's money; like the man who built his house upon the sand—too like—only too like—a great part of our society, hungry for place and power, seeking on earth our only kingdom, slaves to the present world; truckling to the great gods of cash and fashion; glad only when we run glittering like a brook in the open sunshine of the world; clothed in purple and fine linen, and Lazarus at our gate, and God with Lazarus and the devil with us; gambling with wealth which we owe to man, and of which we rob him; taking our sensual pleasure and our fast life where we can; eating and drinking and making merry to excess, and the fiery rain ready to fall on our society and our souls; flirting with immorality like careless children; curious of strange sin, of uncommon luxury, of reckless extravagance; pursuing money as if it were good-fortune to attain it, as if it were an eternal possession, and, when we get it, storing it up or gambling it away, as we gamble our true life away; not using it for man or for the State, save in a thoughtless impulse of charity. Or, if not

engaged in this accumulation or extravagance, idling our days away, hiding our talents in the earth of sloth, too lazy to use them for man or God; not able to say when each night falls, "I have given help, strength, or comfort to anyone, or done any work which will live in the spirit of the world"—life a mere dream, and we a flitting phantasm in it—and all the time the cry, "The kingdom of God is at hand," is ringing in the heaven and on the earth, and the hour when our folly or our wisdom will be proved drawing near and nearer, inevitable in judgment. "Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet him." The testing of the nation is always at hand. At any moment a war may try the character of every man and woman in England; at any moment a new discovery may change the face of social life; at any moment a new thought, bringing with it a national passion, may revolutionize society, art, science, literature, politics, and religion; at any moment a political crisis, which will perforce involve all our lives, may demand our decision, and cry to us, "Are you for God or Baal, for justice or injustice?" These are the coming of the Bridegroom—hours of sifting and decision, when the foolish are divided from the wise, and the door is shut upon the foolish. Too late! too late! That is one of the terrible side-thoughts of the parable—most true, most miserably true, to the facts of the life of men and women.

Such a change is coming on us, but it has not fully declared itself. We are in its slow approach-

ings, just as Christ's disciples were. A whole class, like that of the Sadducees, has put all spiritual religion aside as superstition, and is content to act only for the present world. Some of them are in earnest and work for humanity; they have some oil in their lamps. But, beyond this earnest centre, the rest are content to amass riches, to eat and drink and have pleasure, to get on in society, and drift at ease to the sleep they imagine will be dreamless.

Another class has a formal reverence for a steady, legal morality in life, and with that are content. As among the Pharisees of Palestine, so among them there is an earnest, thoughtful, active, ethical centre, whose lamps burn with the oil of good conduct. But beyond these, a large number are as intolerant as the Pharisees were—rigid in formal righteousness, neglectful of mercy and justice, having a great eagerness to condemn the fallen, and no eagerness to pity and uplift them. Love, the first source of light, without which moral conduct is of no enduring worth, does not burn in their lamps. A still greater number have only a surface morality—a morality of conventions, of legal judgments, of social maxims, of obedience to formal rules which will keep them respectable—while their inward life, the life in which God's will should be supreme, and should pass as a spirit into their business and their home, is utterly neglected; no aspiration, no passion for eternal love, no home beyond the world; dead while they live, for they are dead to love. Oh, when the Bridegroom comes, what will they do?



When their social law is shaken as by an earthquake, where will they be?

For, indeed, the times are in process of change. The old ideas which ruled society are slowly decaying, and the new are growing. We are waiting for the Bridegroom on the housetop of the world. Everyone is conscious of that, more or less. And, instead of looking and working for the new, the greater number are making a desperate fight for the old. The Sadducees and the Pharisees of our social order, as it has been understood for some centuries; the scribes and lawyers of to-day; all the class that desires to retain its privileges undiminished, its monopolies untouched, no matter who suffers from them; its possessions unfringed by any claim from the State, no matter how great are the public diseases that cry for healing—are now up in arms for their self-interest. I am amazed by their conduct, for a kingdom is coming which will call their self-interests unpractical, since they are against the interests of the whole State; and will demand of them, if they would be admitted as citizens, that they should subordinate their particular interests to those of the whole people. The Bridegroom is coming to our society. I see the torches. I hear the cries drawing near. Are we ready to meet him with the lamp of self-sacrifice happily aflame? If not, the door will be shut upon us. Half our world—nay, more—is in that condition. Another part is awake and watching, and it is well for England that it holds those who will not sleep in selfishness, but keep

the lamps of love, justice, faith, and hope burning in their hearts, and giving light to men.

It is a transition time which has lasted long, too long for our impatience. Yet it moves, and every movement sets forward the day of the kingdom. Transition cannot last for ever. Nowhere in history do we find that such a condition is permanent. The hour comes when ideas, long in solution, crystallize into clear form. The men are born who can use them rightly and make them work. Then, issuing from them, new excitements traverse religion, philosophy, art, science, law, business, and society. Winter is followed by spring, night by the rising sun. We already feel—we have felt for years—the advent of a new and impelling mass of thoughts, with all their accordant emotions. As clearly as Jesus proclaimed a new kingdom at hand, so may we. Many will be blind to it, many will hate it, many will be asleep and continue sleeping. But those who watch for it will be awake. They will suddenly hear a great cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go forth to meet him."

And when he comes, how shall we meet him? That depends on how we have waited and watched, on how we have tended the lamps of our spirit—faith, hope, love, pity, justice, truth—the lamps of God's character within us. He comes, as I have said, in a new set of ideas, or of old ideas transformed by a new spirit. So came Christianity. And when the ideas are fully come, they go like fire through all society and all the spheres of human

thought and action. And the world knows of them by the war they instantly create. The peace of exhausted ideas and their forms in society is forthwith broken, the sword of thought is drawn. Action follows, all men are eager, and the battle of the new with the old is set in array and joined. And each side, no longer vague in judgment, knows clearly its purpose and its goal. Even the sleepers arise after a time and are sucked into the contest. Old men dream, with a new spirit in them, the dreams of their youth ; young men prophesy ; the neglected workers, the enslaved, the commonplace folk, the poor, the ignorant, they too are set on fire by the spirit of the time. Principles, not maxims, seize on men ; what is of duty, not what is expedient, is done ; formalism is driven from its ancient thrones in religion, art, politics, law, and society ; what is spiritual more than what is moral, what is imaginative more than what is called practical, rules life ; greater even than interest in the present is interest in the future. The battle deepens, till the victory is won, and society, accepting the new conceptions, begins a new era in history, enters a new kingdom.

It has not come to us as yet, but it draws near. We can but watch for it, and work in its approaches. How it will form itself, what it will do, of what kind will be its victory, we may imagine, but we cannot tell. Its outcome and its shaping are in the hands of God, and of the men whom He inspires. But one thing we can say clearly ; one thing

we can know and act upon. We can say how we should prepare ourselves for its coming, of what temper and spirit we should be to meet that day of the Lord; what powers should be nourished into energy in our souls; what oil should be in our vessels to keep our lamps alight; what watchfulness should be ours. And this I can urge on you, as Jesus urged it on his disciples, for the sake of the human race. That is the point of my urging.

Light, then, the Lamp of Truth in your soul. Be true to all you know of the character of God. Be true, whatever temptation the world may offer you, to your own soul, to the principles and convictions you believe in. Stand for them against the allurements of wealth, and the fashion of society. Dwell, as in a fortress, in the truths you know; your constancy will help the world. And, for your outward life, keep burning the Lamp of Justice. With your children, with your friends, with your dependents, in your public business, be strictly just to them rather than to yourself. See all sides, put yourself in the place of others, when you judge; and never, above all, let your justice violate the higher law of love. Lay all your ideas of justice, in all your dealings with men, open to the eyes of God. "Is this, my Father, what Thy justice will approve? Is this the way in which I would myself desire to be judged?" When you make these lamps burn clear, the Lamp of Righteous Conduct will be full of oil. Your conscience will

not bark at you, and men will be bettered by your work for them.

So much for morality. But the child of God, the disciple of Christ, has more lamps than these to keep alight. There are, first, the lamps which burn for the illumination of the human race ; and secondly, those of the personal life of our own spirit. And of the first, there is the Lamp of Hope. It is not of personal hope I speak now—we have enough of that—but of hope for the human race. It is hard, and hardest when our own fate is hard, to hope for the redemption of man, when we know, only too well, the story of his misery, weakness, and wickedness. Nevertheless, cherish this hope, and, in the teeth of all that seems to contradict it, cling to it with passion. Its elements lie deep in our nature ; they seem incapable of decay or death ; and for so ineradicable a power in us, there ought to be a reason in the constitution of things. Moreover, hope for mankind works wonders when we live by it. Despair of it works evil ; action directed by it works good. That at least is proved fact. Live in that hope. It will make a sunshine in the days when life is dark. It will make you love and help your fellow-men. You will reverence and honour them, for they are contained in this hope. Even in the outcast and the lost you will see the trace of good, for, to you, all are children of an illimitable love. Keep that lamp burning in your soul.

Then, there is the Lamp of Faith in God. I do not speak now of faith in Him for ourselves, though



that, indeed, is needful, but of faith in Him as the Saviour of the human race. I call that lamp faith in the sovereignty of God ; that faith, which, in spite of the awful perversion the Puritans imposed on it, was the source of their strength in character, and of the moral force with which they impressed the nations. We change their sovereignty of avenging justice, of might making right, into the sovereignty of love. To us God is love, and His justice is a vital part of love, from which all possibility of vengeance is excluded.

For all the noble uses and ideals of life with your fellow-men, and for their future, this faith in God as the sovereign Father of all His children, and in His direction of all nations into final union with His Love and Holiness, is the lamp whose flame gives us courage to live, eagerness to work, and power to console and exalt our brothers. There is always, if God directs the world, a kingdom of God at hand whenever the world's life seems exhausted. His eternal life breathes freshly through the sin and decay of the peoples, and when one cycle is finished another begins in resurrection. That is the inspiring, comforting, exalting faith which pours new life into our own soul, and into the arteries of society. Feed that lamp night and day.

And need I speak of the Lamp of Love, without whose light and warmth the other lamps die out ? It is the spirit of their being, the kindler of their brightness, their chief nourisher in their depression and faintness ; and, if they are momentarily ex-

tinguished by the storm and darkness of life, their re-illuminator. Never let its flame diminish in your soul within, and in your life without. It is God within you, Christ within you. While you keep it, you keep in touch with the Eternal, with the Infinite, with all the universe of spirit, with universal humanity. Let its light shine with tender brightness on your home, on your friends, on your society, on the comfortable and the poor, on ignorant and wise, and on your enemies. Let its light be like the sunshine of God which falls on the good and on the evil.

But even this is not enough of love. Let it expand to a larger scope; its essential difference is expansion. Love your country as a citizen should love it, and sacrifice your personal desires in order to heal its diseases as a State, and to promote its progress. And then, also, love the whole race of man; and the clear, practical way to take that statement out of its vagueness is this: Love, and sacrifice your life in the service of, the great ideas by whose power and prevalence the advance of man to higher and higher life is attained and secured. When, loving these, you live and die for them, you love the human race. That was the life and death of Christ.

Lastly, in the personal depths of the soul, where we are each alone with God, light and cherish the Lamp of Aspiration. Light it from that eternal fire which in the innermost shrine of the soul burns upon its altar. It has been lit by God Himself; it is a part of His immortal fire, and for time and for eternity it never can be quenched. We are, by

it, of God, and from God ; and it will, when we have done and suffered all, fly back with us to find itself in conscious union with His eternal fire. There is no nation which has not felt this Divine fire moving in it ; there is no man, however dark his way, who has not been at some time conscious of its flame. We have, by it, the right to claim kindred with the Highest. Claim the right, illumine from that fire the Lamp of Aspiration. Aspire within, in thought and with passion, to nothing less than to become at one with the character, will, and love of God your Father. Day by day let your aspiration deepen, till, in great humility, it seems to touch the infinites of truth, of righteousness, of mercy, of knowledge, of ineffable beauty, and of universal love issuing for ever into lovely creation. For there is no end to what we may become. God Himself has said it by the voice of Jesus Christ, "Be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

## LET YOUR LOINS BE GIRDED ABOUT AND YOUR LIGHTS BURNING

*December 31, 1905*

“Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men who wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately.”—ST. LUKE xii. 35, 36.

WHEN Christ said these words, he thought perhaps of the night of the Passover, when in Egypt the Israelites waited in fear and expectation for the call to go forth from slavery into a new life. They stood, their loins girt up, their dim lights burning, from sunset to midnight, and remembered their past in Egypt; and their dark memories awakened in them the hope of deliverance and joy. They looked forward with a passionate eagerness to the wild chances of the future. But for the present they stood still.

In something of the same feeling we stand tonight, but with most of us, on this last day of the year, it is an hour of shadow, enduring or transient. It is natural to the soul, at anniversaries, to see, as we look back, what has been sorrowful and failing, rather than what is joyful or victorious. It is also natural, at such a time, to look forward with hope,

for hope cannot die in man. Tossed, then, between the two, between retrospect and prospect, we, like the Israelites, stand still, waiting, as it were, for the call to go forward. The anniversary, nothing in itself—to-morrow will be like to-day—is yet important by the thoughts it creates in the soul, by the temper it awakens in the imagination. What that temper is, with what thoughts and emotions we meet the time, that is the vital, the important thing. Are our loins girded about in the soul, our lights burning, and we ourselves like those who wait and watch for God? What is the true temper of retrospect, of prospect? That is the question I try to answer.

It may be, as we look back on the year, we look back on deep sorrow, or on some inner darkness in the soul. We may be living in it now, and are to-day waiting, like Israel, in a half-despair. Sometimes we think that this inactivity is the inactivity of courage, of noble endurance, and are content to lie still, crying: "There is nothing to do; I cannot see my way; darkness is here within, and I accept it." That is not the right temper of his soul who is a child of God. It is the ignoble temper—not at all the patience of the saints, but of the slothful. Our duty is to arise and light our lamps. While we lived in sunshine we did not need them; but now, in the midnight of the heart, awake to kindle them; exercise the soul in the effort; change, with the exercise, the temper of the soul from apathy to eagerness, from despair to hope, from self-thinking to love, from evil dreaming<sup>r</sup> to righteous act.



Light the Lamp of Memory. Remember all your sunshine ; bring its soft and tender radiance into the darkness of your life. Think how good God has been to you in the past, how much He gave you in the innocent days of childhood, in the years of boyhood and youth, when you loved so much and dreamed so brightly, when endless aspiration brought with it endless pleasure ; in the later life of manhood and womanhood, when, in spite of failure, we realized so much that we had conceived.

And how much more of sunlight we may remember if we will, how much of quiet joy distributed over life ! How well we have been loved ! How faithfully we have been trusted ! How pure was the sunlight of gratitude on our way ! How we have been led on, by the love in the sheltered home our mother and father gave us, to live, and to love living ; to friendships which made life tender and bright ; to the days when youthful love made all the world romantic ! As we think, by the light of memory, on all we have lived, we see grow out of the darkness on the walls of the soul a hundred pictures of happy days ; when thoughts were born which changed the whole of life ; when imagination first awoke, like a king, and took command ; when the love of beauty grew into passion ; when Nature, in many a holiday in the woods, among the great mountains, and by the loud-resounding sea, deepened with her own joy our joy in human companionship. We see the pictures move before us ; and our pain is soothed, our darkness thrilled with light.

And then deep gratitude arises to soften the pain of life. No companion can be better for us in the darkness. The worst evil of pain is the bitterness it engenders, which, cherished, hardens the heart ; and gratitude is the cure of that disease. It does not only soften, it strengthens the soul—nay, it is, when it recollects good and nourishes love, one of the roots of spiritual courage. To remember what God and man have done lovingly for us, to even compel ourselves to look back on it, is our first duty in the gloom of retrospect. Light the Lamp of happy Memory to-day.

Then, in the gloom of waiting for new life, light the Lamp of Meditation. In the rush of the world we have but little time for that study of our life which we know we ought to make. Serious in our business, we are not serious with ourselves. A man ought to know what he is within, where he is, what he has become, and whither his soul is going. And now, in this pause of life, he may well turn his eyes within. It is not always good to examine ourselves too closely, for it makes us think of ourselves too much, and deprives others of our thought ; but it is good now and then, and it is good now as the year closes. Light your Lamp and look within. All the materials for meditation are there—the events, feelings, acts, and dreams, the good and evil, the pain and pleasure, of many years. When we have read and generalized the tale they tell, we shall know enough about ourselves to have a firm ground on which to build our

work for man, our life at home and abroad, and our aspirations to become at one with the character of God. Light the Lamp of Meditation. It will be an effort, for you are enfeebled by gloom; but the effort opens the windows of the soul, and lo, the darkness is retreating before the dawn, and when the sunlight comes, there is no more need for self-meditation. Its work has been done, and action should take its place.

But along with this Lamp, light the Lamp of Sincerity. Meditation on one's life without sincerity is more evil than good. If we deceive ourselves with excuses for our wrong-doing, what hope is there for us? If we weave a shining veil of sophistry around our selfishness, or pretend to have done our duty when we have not, then our meditation will only double our ignorance of ourselves, and increase the drift of our nature towards a greater weakness than before. Oh, when you look into your soul, judge a truthful judgment; as severely as you look into your business when you dread its failure, with as great a severity look into your soul.

Then, when all this is done, it is easy to gird up the loins of your mind for a new life, for a new year, in eager readiness. The time, when on our gloom the sun will rise again, is never far away, if our lights are burning and our loins upgirded; but if we cherish our gloom, we cannot see the sunlight when it comes. We have put ourselves in prison, and blocked the windows; we have let ourselves be

paralyzed by misfortune. A new opening in life discloses its path to us, and it is no use : we have blinded our eyes with selfish tears.

Or we are not blind, but unready. The call comes ; God bids us go forth into a new work on which His sunlight falls. We see it, and wish to do it ; but our loins are not upgirt ; we are encumbered with some wrong-doing, or with regretful looking back, or with some tyrannic passion, or with hopelessness, or with petty anxieties ; and while we are trying to clear the soul of its burdens, the light fades, the opportunity is gone ; and all our life long we are sorry.

Therefore, be like a runner waiting for the signal, his garment accinct, alert for the course. Put off the spirit of selfish greed, the old and sordid cares of making money, and pushing your way in the world, and getting into society. What of them is necessary you will get, if you are not choked with anxiety about them. Stand clear of those cares, in contented detachment.

Put off the wrong thing you have loved so well, which encumbers your life ; the pleasures of which are now changing into pain, the licence of which is now changing into slavery.

Put off the habit of looking back on the past with wild or slumbrous regret ; put off the memory of things lost for ever, the hopeless loitering round the graves of bygone hopes and love, the bitter weeping for the dead ; and be upgirt and ready for a resurrection of life. How can we go forth into the new

morning, or hail, like the Israelites, deliverance, or follow the risen Christ into the sunny fields of Galilee, if we are encumbered with the grave-clothes of the past? Nay, let the dead bury the dead; and do this work now, without delay, while you wait for the Bridegroom's cry. To-morrow the way may open, the call may come, the sunlight break upon your life. If you are not ready, look for endless sorrow. Take care that "work and will do not awake too late."

And now, having lit the lamps by whose light we look back on the year, so that we are alert and ready to move forward the moment the Bridegroom comes, what remains? We have to wait with patience; but if the patient waiting is to be without a recurrence of despondency, it ought to be a waiting in faith in God our Father. We are content to wait if we know that He loves us, and will never leave us or forsake us. A strange, inspiring certainty comes with that belief. It makes the lamps of memory, of meditation, of sincerity, burn brighter in the gloom. It enables us without a pang to cast off every weight, the sin which easily besets us, the anxieties which confuse us, the regrets which drag us backward. It tells us that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. It tells us that we are not alone and lost in the big world, but loved and cared for, with a special love and care. Our life, we feel, is in the hands of One whose chief desire for us is our perfection: and with the thought, the deepest gloom is irradiated, the longest waiting



filled with happy expectation. At any moment the sun may rise, the ocean paths be clear, the new land be seen, where we shall be at home. We wait, not for new sorrow, but for new revelation. An outer impulse, like that which breaks the buds of the beech, or cleaves the husk of the larva of the dragon-fly, strikes our soul, breaks through the dull crust of habitual thought, touches the imagination into life, opens the eyes of the spirit to see wondrous things out of the law of God in the world of men. It may come in a hundred ways, but in whatever way it come, it is the doing of God our Father. A new love, a new friendship, enters our life and enlarges our heart. In some solitary session in the woods or on the mountain-side, listening to the streams in morning light, hearing the murmur of the infinite in the sea as evening falls, God in Nature smites the soul, and bids it arise into life and joy, consecrates us to new hopes and new work. A sudden recollection of our youth recovers for us our ideals, and fills us with a fresh and more enduring hope to realize them. A deep emotion from a sacred sorrow, from the multitudinous voice of a great congregation praising the Lord, from some book we chance to read, from some story we chance to hear of high self-sacrifice, uplifts the soul, reveals to us of what we are capable, tells us that we are infinite and eternal in God, and cries to us to be worthy of the high vocation with which we are called. These, and things like these, break in upon our waiting, if we wait in the Lord. And when

they do, all life is changed, restored, renewed. The gloom rolls away, the sun arises. A new revelation has made all things new.

This, then, is the temper and the spirit in which we should look back and look forward at this time, but chiefly forward. It is well to look back a little that we may take warning, but most that we may concentrate our experience and register its teaching. But when we have done that, it is better to look back no more. The child of God sets his soul forward. The future is always the greater interest. The past abides with us so far as it is good. What was tender, gentle, inspiring in it, what was of love and lovely, we keep and cherish. These memories move us on to nobler ends. But its enslaving regrets, its sins, its failures, we have done with for ever. God has forgiven us, we may forgive ourselves. The present, then, is ours, and we fill it with faithful duty, hope, and faith. And then we set forward our soul; we follow our Master into a new life as we pass into the New Year.

This is our outward life. But within we stand upon the prow of the ship of the spirit, expecting new knowledge of ourselves, new knowledge of God our Father, the dawning of a fuller truth, the sunlight of a purer righteousness, the powers of a deeper love, the hearing of the happy voices of the world to come. Sunlight within, truth day by day more clear—that is our prospect—the sunlight of goodness, the sunlight of love, the sunlight of the spirit of Jesus. And then, as the warm sense

of being at home with God deepens, we glow all through with the light and heat of His nature, and begin to imagine clearly what it will be to live at last with Him in the far future of the heavenly sunlight, when the joy and love we feel on earth will be mingled with no sorrow, and our soul, dilated, shall see the universal light in which all spirits think, and the universal love in which the spiritual world is kindled, inspired, and urged into creation.

This may be our spiritual life as the years pass by, and we draw near to death ; our happy life, if we have truthfully wrought righteousness, loved one another well, and believed in God with fortitude. And when at last we enter the valley of the shadow of death, He is with us ; His support is our comfort, and His Fatherhood our peace. The past, then, has faded into a dream ; the present is so mingled with the future that we seem already to be in the coming world. We enter it with our loins girded and our lights burning, and with infinite faith, waiting for yet a greater revelation. The darkness falls, earth slips away. "Father," we cry, "into Thy hands I commend my spirit" ; and lo, the final light of God and the landscape of eternal love. There is no need to light our lamps there, for the Lord God is the Light of that world. There is no need there to wait for the Lord : the days of our waiting are over. But there, since Love is the King, our loins shall always be girded for the joyful work of eternal love.

## ONE OF THE "ASIDES" OF JESUS

*June 14, 1909*

"Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, and one Shepherd."—ST. JOHN X. 16.

THE parable and the conversation which precede this text are, I think, built up by the writer of the Gospel from certain sayings of Jesus which he well remembered, or which were handed down to him. There are phrases in the passage which I do not believe Jesus used, which are quite outside of his character, and which bear evident traces of later controversy, such as this: "All that ever came before me were thieves and robbers." There are other phrases which bear so clearly the stamp of the universal mind of Christ that they are unmistakably his own, and among the others they stand out as, in a Roman gallery of sculpture, among many copies of Greek work, the few veritable masterpieces of Greek art appear in undeniable beauty. One of these are the words of my text. They have the infinity, the universality, the loveliness of phrase, thought, and spiritual passion which belong to the divine genius of Jesus. They

were not the invention of the writer of the Gospel, nor do they belong to the time at which he wrote. They were said by Jesus, and they were said to his disciples while he was with them in Palestine. There is a distinction in them both of thought and beauty ; and on their beauty I dwell before I pass to the prophecy of their thought.

There are some places on earth so beautiful that whenever we think of them we are lifted into the temper of a poet. Nature has worked in them like an artist, and they speak to us not only of the spirit of intelligence which abides and works in her, but of the spirit of Divine order, and most, of the spirit of loveliness which rejoices to shape itself in her. We seem, in seeing these landscapes, to enter into the soul of Nature, and to realize that she, like us, possesses imagination. And when we revisit them, allured again and again by their beauty, it is not the old impression which we then receive, but another, altogether fresh, as if the place had many moods and many capacities of character. Indeed, this is their specialty—that they always seem new, awaken new thought and passion in the heart. Above all, when we become conscious of their astonishing variety, of their change, and of the stream of numberless impressions proceeding from them, we begin to realize the infinity of Nature, and seem, in realizing that infinity, to be conscious also of an infinitude in ourselves. We become aware of an infinite in us as well as of an infinite in Nature ; and these two infinites—ours and Nature's—rushing to-



gether in our spirit, lift it into that world of creative imagination, in which new thoughts with their attendant emotions are incessantly born in us, like stars which, as night deepens, glow one after another in multiplying multitude out of the violet sky.

There are sayings of great men that are like these landscapes, and act on us in a similar way. Born suddenly and in perfect form, out of the inmost powers of these men, the sayings seem to come from the central soul of things. And when we hear them, they pierce down to the very heart of our nature. They touch in us that portion of the divine spirit which lies so deep in our consciousness, and is so seldom stirred. Being of the infinite, of the veritable thought of God, they awaken the infinite in our spirit. Being creative, they make us for the time creative. A rush of thoughts attends them, and of the emotions that follow the thoughts.

Who can measure the multitude of thoughts which have arisen, in innumerable souls, from this saying of Jesus; and the multitude of emotions flowing from them, which passed into innumerable acts? It must be as dear to many of you as it is to me. Has it not always lifted us into the world of imaginative emotion, creative thought, and eager action; touched us with some far-off gleam of divine beauty, sent into our wondering soul the kindling, strange, and joyous sense of that infinite world of perfect love of which we know so little and feel so much, until, as the words sank deep, our heart cried out, "This comes from the eternal God. I see His

light, I feel His life"? Yes, in this saying there is infinity and its power. We seem to stand, as we hear it fall from Christ's lips, in the very heart of him; and to see with him, far in the future, the infinite landscape of a redeemed humanity. Out of the impregnable love of his being we feel issuing the boundless power of his Father to redeem us all, and then—with an expansion of our whole thought—we behold with joy, as he beheld, the infinite result—one flock, one Shepherd.

All this is clearer when we think of the origin of this saying. Christ has been speaking of himself as the Shepherd, and of the flock and fold of his sheep among the Jews, of those sheep who were near to him, who had followed him, and were his own—the Apostles and disciples. And then, as it seems to me, he paused, and was silent for a time, and went apart, perhaps, a little from the disciples. And while they watched him, wondering, there rose in his eyes, and on his lips, that far-off look, that wonderful smile, so inexplicable by the Apostles, the look and smile of one who saw opening before him an infinite future and the work of the infinite Love. Then, while they marvelled, suddenly, as in soliloquy, these strange and beautiful words fell on their ears, the revelation of his inmost soul, the prophecy of an illimitable redemption: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, and one Shepherd."

No tongue could tell the beauty of the face of

Jesus, the wonder of his eyes, when this secret joy rose from the depths of his heart, and transfigured him. One flock, one Shepherd, for the whole world!

The words fell strangely on the ears of the Apostles. They would have fallen still more strangely on the ears of the Jewish priesthood, who thought that only those who obeyed them, and held their law, were the children of God. They would have said, still more fiercely than they had already said it: "He hath a devil and is mad." And, though that spirit has been modified, it is still alive, still malicious. Still it is amazed if it hears it said that God may have other sheep beyond its fold. Still it turns with wrath on those who, like Christ, believe that outside the limits of this Church or that sect there are men and women who will be saved. When that spirit is bitterly exclusive, in the voice and acts of men, it creates one of the worst conditions in which the soul of men can be. It is framed of want of love, and till men repent of it, the voice of Christ cannot be heard by them. To many now in Church and sects who denounce the heretic and exclude him from salvation, the pitiful cry of Jesus comes in vain: "Why call ye me Lord, and do not the things that I say? Other sheep I have that are not of this fold." I pray you to watch against this intolerant and condemning temper. Even the most liberal are in danger of falling into it. They may admit the heretic into the fold. But they draw the excluding line against the immoral. They shut out the sinner,

the publican, the harlot, from the fold. They are ready to forgive the errors of the intellect in belief; they are not ready to forgive the sins of the Prodigal Son. Watch, I say, against this excluding temper. Keep close to the heart of Christ, when he looked out on the Gentile world lying in wickedness and loved it, when infinite hope for it filled his soul, and say to yourself, "Other sheep God has, which are not of my fold."

The lesson is of greater weight as we read on. The moment Jesus saw in his mind's eye the distant sheep, he felt himself bound to make them his own. "Them also I must bring."

Is that always the voice we hear from the professors of religion? True, they have churches, sects, missionary societies, which do good work among those who have no religion, and among those who are quite careless, here and in heathen and foreign lands. But many limits, many conditions are laid down, within which it is necessary for salvation that those who come in should include themselves. What do these societies, churches, and sects say to those who choose to remain without their doctrines and their ritual? What is the voice of many in the Church to the Nonconformists? What is the voice of many Nonconformists to those in the Church? What is the voice of both of them to the heretic and the atheist, to the sinner and the criminal? One hears the cry only too often, even in these tolerant days: "They must be condemned, shut out from the fold, for the honour of Christ." These people, they say,

have their chance. They hear our truth. If they will not come into our fold, and repeat our shibboleth with the right pronounciation, their blood be on their own head. The sheep not of this fold are not the sheep of God.

Who is right? Christ, or those who speak in his name, but will not think his thoughts? Is this excluding cry in tune with Christ in this prophetic hour? Nay, it is the very opposite of Christ. "Them also I must bring," he says; "they shall be mine. I will love them till they yield to me. Through all the desert places of mankind, over hills and plains and cities far removed from Jewish lands, I will seek them and bring them back; and all the angels in heaven will rejoice with me over my sheep who were lost and are found again; for they shall hear my voice. As deep as the imperative is in my nature which forces me to bring them, so deep is the imperative in their nature which necessitates their hearing my voice and answering it at last. If they do not answer me in this world, they shall answer me in the world to come. No living soul shall finally resist the pertinacity of the love of God in me."

O, what fine daring, what conquering faith in himself, in man, and in God the Father of men! There he stood, poor, quiet, only a few now left to him, unknown to the great world, despised and rejected of men, his name known afterwards to Roman, Greek, and Jew only as one who was slain by Pilate as a disturber of the peace; yet deep



within his heart the divine confidence was supreme that all the world of men, past, present, and to come, should hear God's voice and be folded in God's goodness. There was more majesty in his soul, more power, in possession of that thought, than in the vastness of the Roman Empire.

And what infinite intelligence! Higher far than the thought of Newton, when he struck into form the idea in obedience to which all the motion of matter is regulated, was this universal conception, this mighty generalization of Jesus, when, looking forth on the spiritual universe of man, and, it may be, a vaster spiritual universe outside of man, he said, "There shall be one flock and one Shepherd." There has not been since then a single philosophy of mankind which has not been contained in that, which has not been one of the lower forms of that conception. One mankind, one Shepherd! We have had enough of the first of these, enough of the unity of mankind, preached to us, but not practised. When shall we, we who have laboured to realize that unity for so long, and in vain, rise to the completing thought of Christ, and say, "One Shepherd" also? Till we realize our brotherhood in God's Fatherhood we shall always fail to make our brotherhood a reality. The world is waiting to fulfil the completion of the thought of Christ, to add the belief in one Shepherd to the idea of one flock, to conceive the unity of man in the unity of God, the brotherhood of man in the Fatherhood of God.

This was his faith, his confidence. It was a conviction, based on his faith, that he spoke in this matter the very thoughts of God concerning man. He made God our Father, and though a Divine Father (as we feel we ourselves may do in our human fatherhood) may justly, in order to form their characters into nobility, put His sons and daughters into a state of struggle with evil, against difficulty, towards perfection ; yet His nature as a Father contains the natural duty of saving His children from final evil and its corruption. There is an imperative in the Fatherhood of God. He must bring back His wandering children. It is not a matter of choice, but of necessity. He would cease to be the Father whom Jesus revealed to us if He did not save all His children. "I must bring them," He says by the voice of Christ. "They shall hear my voice. There shall be one flock, one Shepherd."

And this view of God's relation to us is supported by intellectual considerations, once we have assumed the existence of an infinite Intelligence, Love and Goodness, who has brought us into being. When we believe in one source of intelligence, and will, and love, and right, we must hold that all the intelligence, will, love, and goodness which we know are in humanity have come from Him, and are a part of Him—yes, and also all the conscious life in us. We are the offspring of God, and we have lived because His life is in us. How, then, can that which has come forth from God be finally

divided from Him? Can the divine things be turned into devilish things for ever? The rivers which streamed into us from the perennial fountain of God's love and goodness, are they lost in an ocean of malice and evil? Is it credible? Is it possible? If so, God is not the God whom Jesus conceived, nor is He omnipotent Goodness who suffers eternal evil. The beings who are part of Him; whose will, in its cause, is part of His will; whose intelligence is, at its root, His intelligence; whose love, goodness, and power, however they have been mixed by us with wrong, are part of His love, goodness, and power—are they to be the servants of evil, or to be changed into evil for eternity, or to be utterly destroyed? That cannot be without the servitude to victorious evil of what was once divine; or, if we believe in annihilation, without the annihilation of what once was a part of God. These things are impossible. From God, always God's.

The time will come, then, when evil shall be no more. It is a faith which is, in us, a divine power of perseverance, as we follow Christ, contending against evil. We know that the evil in humanity is finally to perish, by the grace of God, and that man shall be perfect as He is perfect; we know that public wrong, and selfish villainy, and every organized oppression which enfeebles and degrades mankind, are sentenced to decay and death. We are certain that our prayer, "Thy kingdom come on earth," will be fully answered in the end.

For ourselves, it is true, we are not freed from pain or from sin ; we are disquieted by temptation, troubled with evil-doing, sometimes in deep gloom ; but always, at the root of our thoughts, we know that our feelings do not alter God's truth, that the evil in us is to be destroyed, and we gain strength to strive and not to yield. We often live a strange and double life. While one part of our nature is torn with sorrow, another and a higher self within us seems to be rejoicing. We feel the life that shall be redeemed in the midst of the life that is as yet unredeemed. In the consciousness of sin we are conscious also of the immortal righteousness which is now hidden for us in Christ in God, and which in the future shall be ours. We feel the same for mankind. We see a twofold humanity—one struggling here, tortured with many wrongs, stained and rent with evil, sometimes victim, sometimes tyrant, coming, it seems, to hopeless defeat, in its unweariable battle ; yet, as we look, the vision of another yet the same humanity grows from dimness to brightness before the eyes of our faith in God—the humanity hidden with Christ in God, victorious at last over evil, at rest in union with the love of the Father, God Almighty—one flock, one Shepherd.

This is one of those supreme thoughts which, shaped by Christ, we cannot prove, but which we love. We cannot demonstrate their truth, but they come home to the heart, to the inmost being of man. In all ages these infinite conceptions, to which the intellect is deaf, have moved into action, inspired

into imaginative creation, the souls of men. Even in other matters than those of religion, our souls have touched these infinite splendours of thought and feeling, and have believed in them and acted for them. In some solitary hour on the hills, when Nature has seemed to breathe like a living creature, has not the thrill of some conception of her, and God in her, greater than we could grasp, but which seemed to bind her life and ours and God's and the life of the universe, all together, swept through our soul like a spirit? Have we never heard, it may be only once, some phrase in music which seemed to lift for an instant and then close the curtain which shrouds the perfect beauty, the perfect harmony of perfect order? Have we never felt, in some hour when noble passion has lifted our life out of the daily commonplace, not our own particular pain or joy, but the longing, the labour, and the passion of the whole race embodied, concentrated, condensed within us, till self passed away, and we were, for a moment, all mankind? Yes, we have felt these or similar things. We know what an infinite thought or passion means. We know that these are the glimpses which have most told on our lives, which have acted on our sloth and fear and worldliness like fire; which have kept us true to our immortality; the revelation of which has been the fountain light of all our day, the inspiration in our pain, the steady gleam we see burning on the horizon as day by day we sail through storm and calm to the haven of God. And this thought of Christ, "One flock, one



Shepherd," is one of these. By it all the spirits of the dead and the living are bound together in one mighty expectation of the glory of God's love, which shall be revealed when the great Shepherd shall gather all His sheep into one flock, and all the sheep shall know their Shepherd. Then will all divisions perish; all excluding creeds, confessions, trusts, all those forms of faith which set men into different camps, which cover the world with crowds of walled-in folds where sects and parties of religion call themselves the only sheep of God, and whence they banish, or fight with, all the rest. Then shall be only one fold, and that will be uncircumscribed, the love of God. Then will be only one flock, and it will be the human race. Then will be only one Shepherd, and He will be, as He is now, the Father, of whom Jesus thought when, in triumphant and prophetic joy, he said these words.

Again, it has been said that, if that hope of a perfected human race, perfected in love, be ever realized; if in the heavenly life there be no differences of opinion, no intellectual clash and opposition, no kindling oppositions of emotion, no excitement, no pursuit—heaven will be dull. On all sides, for different reasons, we hear that common objection. But those who make it forget that the heavenly life lives in love and by love. Love is its life-blood, the air it breathes, the power by which it thinks and feels and acts. And where there is love, incessantly, by its nature, passing into beauty—love, that ever-changing, ever-moving, ever-

various, ever-aspiring passion, always inventing new forms of itself, always creating new delights to satisfy its eternal desire for variety, there never can be monotony. The spirit of love is an inexhaustible energy. It moves on, not into less, but into more love; not into dulness, decay, and death, but into sacred excitement, joyous creativeness, and intensity of life. To love always, as God loves, is to be for ever new within oneself, and to make the world without new at every moment; and when, in the one flock, there is the one spirit of divine love, there will be no apathy, no set grey life, but infinite beauty kindling infinite pursuit, infinite joy and infinite variety. Moreover, every separate character in this one flock will have its distinct pursuit, its separate development, its singular delight and life in love. There will be an innumerable variety of human character held in the inconceivable variety of the love of God. "In my Father's house," said Jesus, "there are varied mansions."

This is the active, eager, impassioned heavenly life to which we look forward. And we believe in it because we believe in God, the Father of the flock. In Him lie all the ideas by which the universe of Nature exists and moves, and these shall be ours. In Him lie all the infinite sources of personality; which, divided, modified, and growing through matter, by circumstance, and in varying change, have resulted in all the personalities of the spiritual universe, and these are of illimitable variety. In Him, folded in His

infinite Being, are the perennial springs of love, of intelligence, of will, of truth, of right, of power, of creation, of changeless law; and at every pulse of His infinitude they flow forth in new and varied streams, making, at every moment of eternity, the two universes of matter and of spirit. And He is our Shepherd for eternity, our Life, moving for ever, with all these powers, in us, in incessant giving, incessant quickening. When that is true, can there be one instant of monotony, one touch of dulness in the life to come? "In Thy presence is fulness of joy, and at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."

Finally, what was it which most filled the soul of Jesus when he said these words; when, standing apart, he looked far away, beyond this world, into the future, and into the spirit of God? It was triumph and joy, the triumph and the joy of love. We think of him too exclusively as the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It is true, great was his sorrow, profound his pain. But in another part of his being, deep within, in the central chambers of his soul, victorious joy was always present. He saw the joy which was set before him, and in its glory he endured the Cross. He saw with rapture all mankind as one flock under one Shepherd. He saw, he felt his Father's love in himself, in all the world; and in his deepest trouble there was always a deeper joy. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—a blessed truth for us in sorrow and in grief—but also a man of those delights and

acquainted with those joys which, born of faith and hope in the love of God, make all the sorrows of this world as dust in the balance, death the door to life, and the future of humanity victory, happiness, righteousness, and love.

## MY FATHER AND YOUR FATHER, MY GOD AND YOUR GOD

*April 18, 1909*

“Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”—ST. JOHN XX. 17.

I DO NOT mean to enter into the somewhat barren question how far the story told here of the Resurrection morning and Mary Magdalen's meeting with Jesus is a narrative of actual fact, as many still maintain, or a symbolic story in which the writer expresses his view—the spiritual, mystic view taken throughout his Gospel—of the risen life of Jesus, and his relation, after death, to those who loved and love him. There are many who hold that this is such a symbolic story, and that it is not historical. There is variance then with regard to its historic truth, but no variance with regard to the spiritual application of the story. Those who take it as fact and those who take it as symbolism agree that it has a profound spiritual meaning, and the matter on which men agree is the most useful to dwell on and expand. The critical question seems scarcely worth examina-



tion by serious men. It engages and detains the analytic intellect, out of whose exercises comes, it is true, a certain peering pleasure; but it tells us nothing of real importance, nothing which has to do with the conscience or the spirit, nothing which has to do with the grave matters of human life. When, on the contrary, we look into the story as containing—under its events, as some say; under its symbolism, as others say—profitable and imaginative truths, what do we find? What did the writer of this Gospel mean to say and to teach, when, long after the death of Christ, when St. Paul and St. Peter were dead, when Christianity had begun to be a new power of life in the world, when the ideas of Christ had expanded, through his spirit in men, into higher forms than his disciples had imagined were contained in his teaching? That is the question we ask ourselves to-night.

The first thing to be observed is the writer's view of what Jesus thought of womanhood in his kingdom. He has already expanded in his Gospel the image of the mother of Jesus, and of his tender relation to her; he has gathered many images and thoughts round another Mary in the story of Lazarus, and in two other lovely tales he has pictured womanhood in a close, tender, and subtle intimacy with the Master. And now he isolates Jesus, not as in his earthly life, but in his spiritual and exalted life, with the Magdalen, with a womanhood which had been sinful, but which had been redeemed from sin by love. Her sins, which were many, were

forgiven, because she had loved much. The very first person who saw Jesus, according to the writer of this Gospel, was a loving woman. In that pre-eminence which he gives to her he enshrines his view of the profoundly important position of woman in Christianity. It is quite in accordance with the whole spirit of St. John's Gospel to lift into this lofty place her who loved the most. Others had come to see the sepulchre—other women, Peter also and John, but they had gone away. Mary alone lingered. Hers was a deeper love than all the rest had felt—that passion of sacred love which is born of redemption from dreadful shame and woe into unutterable forgetfulness of shame and woe in the love of a redeemer, found and grasped for all eternity.

She could not leave the place. We see her, in the writer's imagination, alone in the garden, isolated for the vision of Jesus. "They have taken my Lord away, and I know not where they have laid him," so she spoke aloud in her solitary pain. And then a voice behind her said: "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" And Mary, thinking him the keeper of the garden, answered: "Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Then Jesus spoke her name. "Mary!" he cried; and the ancient tenderness in the well-known accents made known the truth. She turned and saw him, and said, "My Master," stretching out her hands.

There is nothing more true and human in all the

stories of love in the world, more lovely and more natural. Whatever criticism may say, its beauty remains untouched ; but beyond the beauty of the tale, and enshrined in it, is the writer's high view of the place, the equal place, of womanhood in Christianity. When St. John tells us that his risen Lord showed himself first to a woman, and spoke first to a woman, and made her his messenger to the Apostles and disciples, we are also told of the resurrection of womanhood into a new life, equal in the eyes of Jesus to that of his Apostles.

Modern religions of humanity have but attempted to develop the position into which the religion of Jesus had, when this Gospel was written, uplifted the woman ; and, as usual, when the unconventionality of Jesus is not at their back, they have done this with limitations. The woman who has led an evil life is not placed, even after repentance, on a level with others, is sometimes even left outside religion ; her sins are not always forgiven ; she can do little, if anything, for humanity. In many sects of religion, as well as among unreligious ethical circles, the women who do good, whose influence impels mankind, are removed from the universal in which Jesus meant them to be placed, and reduced to a particular type, sometimes almost to a private clique.

But Jesus, in the belief of his followers, while he left them one type of womanhood in his mother whom the Churches revere as the image of the purity, lovingkindness and nobleness of motherhood, did

also leave behind him among his followers, as this story made more than half a century after his death plainly manifests, another type of lofty womanhood, a passionate, repentant, and loving sinner. It was a bold thing to do, and it illustrates the unlimited inclusiveness of the teaching of Jesus. There is no exclusion whatever of any kind of womanhood—no limits such as society imposes, such as the sects and Churches have often imposed, are laid down by him. He takes the two extremes—his own mother and the harlot; he companied daily with both, and he made them both his own. In so doing, he claimed as his all the womanhood which lay between them. He bade all womanhood rise into an individual, eager, noble, world-wide work, and he gave them world-wide work to do. He made their position glorious and effective in the eyes of men. It was impossible, when men read the words he had first spoken after his death to the Magdalen, that any man who believed in him should ever again ignore or despise the sinfulest of women, much less the purest and the noblest.

Who carried, in this writer's view, the first, the foremost message of Jesus to his disciples? who saw him first? who first heard his risen voice? A woman! and when Jesus is made in this story to choose her to bear to the disciples the most important of all messages—that in which he enshrined the whole of the new spiritual position he was now, in his risen life, to occupy towards them—we see

with extraordinary clearness what John the writer believed to be the doctrine of Jesus concerning womanhood, what he himself thought of the place of woman in the new kingdom of Christ. She was made, at the crisis of the great change which made Christianity into a Church, which carried it from the fields of Palestine into the whole of the Roman Empire, its first angel, the messenger to the Apostles of the spiritual truth which was now and always to rule the rest of their lives—"Go, tell my brothers that I ascend unto my Father and your Father."

This John told of Jesus ; and he alone tells it. This was his own belief concerning womanhood in the kingdom of Christ ; and he records it as the belief of the Church long after the death of Jesus. The Greeks did not give this high place to womanhood. Plato, it is true, makes Socrates learn the last divine wisdom of love from a woman, but she has scarcely the air of a real personage, and her talk is reported at second-hand. Elsewhere woman is silent, save as an isolated priestess. The ordinary woman had no voice in the ancient world as the messenger of high truth, as an equal citizen of the city of God. Marcus Aurelius, Buddha, Mahommed, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, John the Baptist, did not place women where Jesus placed them. None of them enfranchised and ennobled the enslaved half of the human race. But Jesus did ; and his deed is one of the fountain-heads of the progress of the world.



It seems strange, then, if this was the meaning of the Evangelist, that he should write that Jesus said: "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father." But the phrase is full of meaning. It embodies the clear view of the writer of this Gospel with regard to the risen relation of Jesus to his followers—a spiritual not a sensible relation. There was then a view abroad, that it might still be a visible and tangible relationship, for many men believed that Jesus was soon coming to set up his kingdom on the earth. There was another form of this view—that the kingdom was to be a Jewish one, having its seat in Jerusalem. It would take in the Gentiles, but only as second to the Jews—a national not an international, a particular not a universal kingdom. In fact, the earthly relation of Jesus to his followers was to be renewed, only in a more splendid, an imperial form.

The Evangelist's answer to these views is contained in these words: "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father," and the spirituality of Christ's universal kingdom is proclaimed in them. "Touch me not," Jesus said to Mary; do not imagine this is the return I promised, nor this sensible communion the communion I said I would have with you. Not till I have ascended to my Father, not till I am lost to the sight, touch and hearing of the earth, shall you really know me as I am now to be known—not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. That was the vital and vitalizing meaning, and the truth, in this word of Jesus.

The true communion with the dead, who are alive in God, has nothing to do with the senses that deceive; with time that fleets away; with the earth which perishes. It is invisible, immortal, imperishable, spiritual. The sacred dead, and Jesus above all, are to be felt, not seen; loved in the spirit, not in the sense; known, as no earthly relationship can make them known, in the uttermost depths of consciousness; interwoven with every fibre of our life by their incessant spiritual pressure upon us. We can feel all through St. Paul's Epistles what his union was with his Master, Jesus—heart to heart, life to life—so intimate a communion as never yet existed between two persons in the earthly life.

We are held back here from perfect communion with one another by the incursions the body makes into the life of the soul. The nerves, the senses, the appetites, the differences of constitution, of temperament, trouble intimacy and communion. The material always confuses and limits the spiritual. Therefore Jesus, now spiritually alive in the other world, of whose substance this world is the grotesque shadow, said to Mary: Touch me not; not here on earth, or through anything of earth, is my love most yours; only through interfusion of spirit with spirit is perfect love attained.

And, I may say, as an inference from this, that this communion between Christ and his people is no isolated thing. The truth of it extends to those who love one another truly. There can be a vital communion between us on earth and those whom

we loved, but whom death has transferred to the life beyond this earth. Spirit can touch spirit, heart can live with heart, across the gulfs of space and time. In the infinite, impalpable ether of love, thought meets thought, feeling feeling, in unrestrained communion. Life weds itself to life, and the barrier death seems to have made is a shadow that has passed away.

We cannot always realize such communion, nor would it be wise that we should. The things of this world wrap us closely round, and we must take our share in them. The senses send to us their impulses from Nature and man, and we must use them. The movements of the social, political, and intellectual worlds call on us to do our duty in them; and when we are involved in these we cannot realize our communion with the dead. Indeed, if we are wholly engrossed in them, in the material world of getting on, we cannot feel the life which is ever rushing towards us from the world beyond. But if we do not allow ourselves to be absorbed in self and the transient things of earth, if we keep apart from these matters a spiritual and imaginative life within, a sacred country of the soul, where the skies are clear and full of stars, and the angel voices are heard when the spirit is attentive, there will be times when the soul will feel the impact of those we loved on earth come to us. They will involve their being with ours, and we shall know and rejoice. And in the strength of that revelation, we shall live in a great peace for many days.

There is yet another meaning of the phrase—  
“Touch me not.”

It was to tell the disciples that while they knew their Master only after the flesh they could not understand that his work was now unlimited by time or place, and had in it the omnipresence of Spirit; was equally unlimited by the divisions of earth, and wholly independent of them. Not till he had ceased to be a Jew, but was the representative of universal humanity, could they know that he belonged not only to the Jew, but to every nation under heaven; that in him and his love all men were brothers, united in a bond which was not only social, nor of a class, nor of rank, nor of one Church or sect, nor of one colour, nor of one nation, but human and only human—universal in one Fatherhood, in which all were equal, all were brothers. This was the new relation of Jesus to humanity in the mind of the writer of this Gospel; and it was now an eternal relation. “Touch me not”; I do not belong to time or place. And the Christian Church had now come to understand that Jesus was born into a world where time was drowned in eternity, where space did not exist. Out of that arose such phrases as this, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” a timeless Power and Love in the hearts of all the future, and all the past, and all the present, a universal Spirit in mankind.

When we reach upwards to, and abide in, this universal truth of the Spirit, how paltry, how even irrational, seem all the religious divisions and wars

of this world, the doctrines which divide us from one another, the negations which condemn those who differ from us, the theological difficulties by which we harass and torment our own lives and the lives of others. They are but smoke, and the flickering flame which puffs and dies. Above them there is the universal brotherhood in God which contains these foolish particulars, excels them, and in the end will absorb them into its eternal wisdom. There we should strive to live, and there we shall be at peace.

And now comes the message itself. "Go, tell my brothers," it began. We have seen, in considering the phrase "Touch me not," how the relation of Jesus to men was changed, after his death, from the particular to the universal, from the finite and the transient to the infinite and the eternal. The mighty leap of this idea from earth to heaven, from the material world which hemmed the disciples round, to the spiritual in which all earth's limitations were dissolved, might have overwhelmed their heart, and made them feel that they had lost touch with Jesus. In this immense extension of their thought of him, they might have felt alone and lost, as at first universal thoughts make us feel, for we are weak through over-personality. Therefore the universal idea in the message was bound up and began with a cry of memorial and personal love. It was not disciples now, or friends, that Jesus called them, but brothers. In this vast spiritual life the love of earth was not lessened, but increased. The tie of



friendship which had knit them to Jesus was raised into the tie of brotherhood. The new word was the proclamation of his undying personal love for them. The life he had now, they also were to have. If he was universal and eternal, so were they to be. His God was their God, his Father their father. When Ruth in old times wished to express the greatest of all loves, the love which rose beyond the ties of country and of home, she cried, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God"; and the phrase was the sign of the intensest union of love which the Jew could conceive. When the Apostles heard it delivered to them from Jesus, they knew that he loved them with an infinite affection; they were alone no more, and no more dismayed.

And we have the right, when we believe that this was true of Jesus and his friends, to extend the same belief to embrace ourselves and the friends and lovers who have left us to live in the other world. It enables us to think that the ties of earth are eternal. The brotherhoods of love on earth are brotherhoods in heaven. The deep affections of earth are continued in heaven.

We rejoice to hear it. But is every love of earth to partake of the eternity? The answer to that grave question is contained in the last part of Christ's message to his disciples; in the reference of this brotherhood and its eternity to God, "I ascend to my God and your God." That is the true ground of any eternity in human love—indeed, of its certainty on earth. That it should be able to say "my God and your God";

that those who love on earth can link God and His character to all their love ; that their union should be a union in holiness, purity, truth, lovingkindness, and an unselfish life ; that there should be nothing in the conduct of their love to prevent them from feeling that they can enter together, hand in hand, into the being of eternal good ; that was the condition, and is for ever the condition, of the eternity in heaven of the loves of earth.

It is even the condition of the continuance of earthly love. Sooner or later the friendship or the love of earth is spoiled or ruined, if we do wrong for its sake ; if, so far, we take God out of it ; if we cannot say, as we act, "I offer this which I do for another, I make this sacrifice, to God the righteous." Sooner or later earthly love or friendship is fleeting, however deep it may be, if we cannot say one to another, when sorrow or trial test our love, or when some other passion rushes into it, or when death threatens it, "we abide in my God and your God, in His truth, righteousness and love."

That high communion is the root of an everlasting love ; which, in all the storms or in the monotony of life, will keep true and faithful ; and which, when one of its partners comes to die, will say, with eyes eager with eternal affection, sure of eternal renewal of love, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

Lastly, when that is said, and the personal love we so dearly want is secured in a common union with the eternal Father and with the eternal brother-

hood of Jesus, we cannot think that all is said. It would, indeed, be unworthy of us if we did not carry our thoughts beyond those of personal love, if we did not expand all we have learnt in our own life of love into a more universal conception of it. We cannot think that Jesus limited his brotherhood to his disciples, or the union of man to God to the few who knew him. That was not what the Evangelist thought was in the mind of Jesus. He had a vaster view of his Master's meaning ; he conceived Jesus as the man, in whom all the race was contained, in whom all mankind was the child of the universal Father ; and this was the idea John heard Jesus express in this message, "All men, as well as you, are my brothers, and I carry them up with me on high, and make my Sonship theirs, in union with my Father and their Father, with my God and their God."

This thought of universal man bound up for ever in Jesus with the universal Father is the thought on which all high and noble theology rests everlastingly, is everlastingly to be wrought out in this world and the next. No doctrine of God and man, which contradicts or violates its infinite love, can or will endure. We may be sure of that, however the theologians enrage together, or the priests imagine a vain thing. Yes, all the future of religion, all religious life in a nobler society, all that worship in common to which we look forward, when there will be no more divisions among men, when religious folk shall be no more the worst sinners against the

brotherhood of man, when man, having realized his universal brotherhood, shall have also realized a universal Fatherhood in God, shall, on the foundation of this mighty conception, be built up into a mighty temple, in which all nations, kindreds, colours, and tongues shall adore and love, praise and pray to one all-embracing Love ; and all men and women, rejoicing in eternal love and communion, shall, every morning that arises and every evening that falls, in the labour of every day and the rest of every night, say always to one another, " My God and your God, my Father and your Father."

## THE ETERNAL LIFE

*Easter Day, 1909*

“He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”—ST. JOHN xi. 25.

PHRASES of this kind, frequent in the Gospels of Jesus, have been largely taken to mean that his disciples, after physical death, should rise into eternal life, and no doubt that meaning may be attached to the words. But that was not their primary meaning. That meaning, on the lips of Jesus, was a spiritual one, and belonged originally, not to the life to come, but to this life. When Jesus said to the messengers of John the Baptist, “Tell him that the dead are raised,” he meant that he lifted the spiritually dead into a new life. When he declared that those who came to him should never die, he spoke of that life and death of which he told when, in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, he made the father say, “This, my son, was dead, and is alive again.”

I do not say that Jesus did not often speak of a personal life, after this life, in another world; on the contrary, that was one of his firmest convictions, and, indeed, it is a clear corollary from his statement that he created a spiritual life in the souls of living



men ; but I do say that in all the passages where, in relation to the spiritual kingdom, he speaks of death and life, he is speaking of the death and life of the soul in this present world.

What, then, did he mean? He meant that whosoever, believing what he taught, left behind him the spirit of self and the practice of sin, left death behind him, and passed into union with that everlasting life which is the life of love—the life of God. He was raised from the dead.

That is our Easter faith, our Easter certainty. That there are such resurrections in this world is not a matter of doubt, but a matter of experience. That men rise out of graves of evil here, and are reborn into a new being—into goodness, love, joy, and righteous activity—that, at least, can be demonstrated. And, in all cases, the resurrection is made as Jesus declared it was made, by the recovery of love, which feels, “ I will live no longer for myself. I will live and die for others, because I love them.” Men may call themselves what they please—atheist, agnostic, unbeliever ; it matters little if they live in this way of Jesus. They have risen from the dead. They belong in spirit to that great Easter company who are alive with Jesus Christ.

Therefore, let all who love their fellow-men, and live in that love, keep this sacred time together, in heart and spirit, even though they do not confess Christ, even though in opinion they may be divided. But let those who do confess Jesus as their Master, and who love their fellows on the same ground on

which he loved them, that they are the children of God whose life is absolute love, be knit together at this time, by a deeper, dearer bond, which neither trouble, failure, nor death, shall sever—risen children of the eternal life, and brothers for ever in it ; and cry to one another the ancient welcome with which the Christian disciples hailed one another on Easter Day—“Christ is arisen.”

And then, when thus welcoming one another, we feel that Christ and mankind are one, a nobler vision, the vision of a far-off day, brightens before us—when, in the fulness of a redeemed mankind, we shall say to one another, filled with the joy of a greater Easter, “All humanity is arisen. All love, and are loved. All are in God, and God in all.”

Alas ! the fulfilment of this happiness seems far away. Year after year comes the spring, but year after year the winter. Age after age mankind clothes itself in the joy of a new life of thought and feeling. The harvest of these Pentecosts is reaped ; and then there are years of wintry evil ; bitter storms and frost are at the heart of humanity, and man’s eternal summer seems a dream. Yet, the day will come ; it is the hope, the impulse, the inspiration of the nations. We live by faith in it.

Meanwhile, if we would believe in it, or realize it for ourselves, so that our life may urge on its advent, there is but one part to take. It is to follow him whose new-born power in a new life was secured by his death of love ; to forget ourselves in the life of humanity ; to leave that land of death where we

nurse and indulge our own desires alone; to rise into the life of heaven on earth, the life of saving, blessing, comforting, and strengthening men, women, and children; and to rise into its heaven here—here, on this sorrowful earth of ours. This is the Easter of the soul. This is to rise with Christ.

Those are the dead, in the meaning of Jesus, who live only for their own desires—only for getting, not for giving. God looks on them as dead, and man, in the future, will confirm his verdict. They corrupt the State in which they live.

To live for the appetites alone, to please the senses in lonely self-indulgence, in social dissipation, in lazy pleasure, is to be dead in the sight of God, and in the serious judgment of mankind. To live for solid comfort only, shutting our windows lest we hear the cries of sad humanity; to live for work alone, without one thought of the just duties which, in and through our work, we owe to our fellow-men; in plodding selfishness, without ideas, hopes, or faiths beyond the circle of our own family—this, too, is to be dead while we seem to be alive. To love knowledge and beauty, but to love them only for the pleasure that science and loveliness give to oneself; to have no care to make effective for the interests of man what we learn and rejoice in; to keep our knowledge only to feed our own brain, or to collect what is beautiful without one desire to spread it beyond our solitary pleasure or our social pride in it—is that to live? Is that the risen life of love? Science is good and art is good, but held

only for self-pleasure or self-pride, they are turned into things of death. Unshared, ungiven, they lose their life. Their savour dies, and our interest in them.

These are a few examples of the dead state of the soul, but there is another which comes closer to our personal life. We are often dead to man and God in our love or sorrow, or in some passion which isolates us, by which our life is seized and enslaved. We do not care then for material things—nay, part of our self is really lost in the life or the memory of another. So far, we are better than those who think only of their own life. But the betterness is not worth much, for we are still isolated; not with ourselves only, it is true, but with one or a few persons alone. The rest of humanity is shut out, and all the duties which we owe to men. The ideas, truths, and great causes, for which we are bound, on pain of spiritual death, to live and act, are lost by us when we are thus enthralled by a single passion; and the enthrallment often increases till Nature is only used to illustrate our own joy or pain, and God only exists so far as He is used to minister to our absorbing feeling. As to man, I have said, he does not exist at all. This, too, is a death in the soul. It is not always an ugly or a base death, but it is to go through the world without a sense of duty, or of any feeling for the life outside ourselves.

There are things which must be done for our fellow-men, calls made on us as citizens of a great State, or of a small town; other calls to take our

part where questions of world-wide importance arise, on the just decision of which large human interests are involved; and most of all, there is the call of Christ on us to love men and women more than ourselves, and give them what we can—the call of the Father on His children to live for one another. These fall unheeded on our ears. For, wrapped up then in a single love, a single sorrow, or a single memory, we will not listen to them, and sacrifice all humanity and God to one woman or one man, to a child or a household, to the sorrow we indulge for the loss of another, or to the devouring passion for another which we have allowed to master our life. Alas! if one of these isolating things tyrannize the soul, and we cannot obey these demands beyond our passions, we are not alive but dead. And we are punished by our love losing its romance and charm, by our sorrow becoming disease, by our passion becoming torment. Yes, if personal love shut out the larger love or hinder the expansion of love, it changes into selfishness, and selfishness is the death of the soul.

In the name of God the Father, on this Easter Day, on every day in the year, Jesus calls on these dead folk to rise from the grave into the life he lived—into union with God and with mankind. And the life is the life of that working love which seeks no reward but that increase of the power of loving, which is the natural fruit of the sowing of love; which forgets, and at last becomes quite unconscious that we want anything for ourselves. O, charming



life, full of joy and movement, that makes every hour charming ; which, freed from that self-thinking which shuts us up within, can now receive through the open windows of the soul all that is lovely in Nature, man, and God ; which, seeing, with eyes purged of self, the truth, righteousness, mercy, justice, and love of God, receives them eagerly as the natural and rightful life of the soul, and is filled with them, to its exceeding blessedness. The joy of God is in its movement and desire.

It is a life which can be found, though here it is subject to many reactions. Man can live outside of himself, and it is his destiny to do so fully. At times, in our experience, we have touched its ecstasy. There have been hours in our lives when we have forgotten our cravings, when we have been so swept out of self-thinking that we have felt all men, all the universe, all God in us ; and then we were, for the moment or the hour, at one with the life of God. Whoever gets beyond himself gets into God ; and men and angels say of him : " He is not here, he is risen."

We may not reach that fulness of life here, but we can begin to realize it, and realize it daily more and more. There is a resurrection-freedom for those who have passed from the death of self-desire into the life of love. " We know that we have passed from death into life," said the Apostle, " because we love the brethren." And, indeed, it is a new life. Hopes, and fine imaginations, new plans, fresh interests, unknown powers, enkindling faiths and ideas, push

upwards in the heart, like flowers through the grass when spring unbinds the chain of winter. Our youthful aspirations, which lay wounded or dead on the battle-field of the soul, arise again, and, rising, leave us to live in others and for them; and then return to us, to bring us tidings of other lives and other joys and sorrows than our own, till we are so full of the passionate being of humanity that we think only of ourselves as part of the whole, and bound to the whole in love. Then, having this resurrection life within, which we know will grow, in spite of all our failure, into more and more of God, a larger vision than that of our own resurrection life opens before us. We see God moving through the whole past history of mankind and in the present history of the world. We see the great movement towards the far-off goal of good, in spite of all the sin and misery of man. We live with our fellow-men by faith in that. We find the words and thoughts of God, here and now and where we are living, in the actual world of East and West; and love them, rejoice in them, and work for them. And in the noble imaginations which inspire men now; in the aspirations which they feel and the truths they live by now; in the impassionating work of science and polity, art and religion; in the ideas which thrill the nations into progress; in the contests by which the ideas are cleansed of their false forms; in the aims which the poor and neglected cherish, and for which they battle with undying resolution; in the dreams which the workers of the world

believe, and which illuminate the sadness of their lives ; in the vast, titanic struggle of the spirit of humanity towards light, what do we now see? We see God, His everlasting energy, His working thought, His shaping love. And, seeing this, now that we no longer see ourselves alone, we are risen into that higher, wider life with Jesus, which looked forth from his dying eyes on the cross over a redeemed humanity, and bore the certainty of that redemption of all mankind into his eternal life on Easter Day.

This is the full resurrection life, and, living in it, we are purified from sin. Sin ceases to exist in its atmosphere. Whosoever thus loves God and man, and not himself, grows more and more into the Divine goodness, as it were without knowing it. We become a part of truth, of justice, mercy, purity, meekness, patience, long-suffering, humility, and peace—eternal, glorious essences, native to God. We are theirs, and they are ours. If they are immortal, we are immortal. They must perish before we, in whose being they are now inwoven, can lose our personal being.

This, then, this consciousness of immortal, divine powers having become part of our personal being—powers which have the necessary endlessness of goodness and love—creates in us, not only a belief in our personal immortality, but an abiding sense of it. To this we have been led at last ; and this was indeed the conviction of Jesus.

The spiritual resurrection of the personal life

on earth from the death of self-love, self-desire, guaranteed to Jesus and to us the immortality of that life if a God of goodness and love existed at all. For then the very being of God has become part of our will, our character, memory, imagination, intelligence, conscience and spirit—of all that makes us a person ; and the deep intimacy can never be severed. No death can touch the life of God in us. If it could, death could touch God Himself. This was the thought of Jesus: The Divine life I know in me, so he thought, must make its own form after death in union with all my personal powers. I, in whom God is, here in my personal soul on earth, must, beyond this earth, continue to have God in me for ever. While He lives, I must live. "God," he broke out with a passionate cry, "is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him."

It is the natural conclusion, but because it cannot be demonstrated, like a proposition in Euclid, it has become the fancy of some, among other theories, to assert the continuity of the race, but to deny the continuity of the individual ; and, in the end, a conclusion they often find it convenient to forget, the continuity of the race ceases. All humanity perishes as if it had never been. "After death," they say, "we are dead for ever. There is no thought, knowledge, love, in the grave whither we go."

We are thus pinned down to the grindstone at which we labour now, without one hope for our future except the comfortable permanence of our

decay and our dispersion ; without one aim except that we may, by our work, make the world better for those who shall live after us, but who, like ourselves, are to perish in a puff of dust, till death be all in all—a sweet and delicate conclusion.

I do not think that a more futile theory ever engaged the attention of men. It has a noble, unselfish sound, and because it does keep in it the element of self-sacrifice, it lives. Otherwise, its want of the higher reason, and its violation of the noble emotions, would have killed it long ago.

Even its unselfish aim, as it is called—life lived only for the bettering of the world—breaks down. The better world will not be made by the preaching of universal death. Neither conscience, nor intelligence, nor lovingness, nor the sense of beauty, nor aspiration, nor worship of any kind, nor the inter-communion of mankind, will be promoted by the prophecy that every one of these good things is doomed to certain extinction.

Moreover, those who really need bettering are not saved, but condemned by this view. In fact, it has nothing to say to those who most need betterment ; to the immoral by birth, to the victims of society, to those born to fell disease, to the criminal and the hopelessly poor, to the weak or tortured souls in the world. It does not bring one drop of water to cool their burning hearts. It leaves them to die on the roadside. It helps those likely to be of use ; but the rest ? They are of no use, they say, to the future ; let them go out. And they forget that ages



away they will have to say, when time has brought us to universal death: There is no future even for those who have been of use to man; They also—with all humanity—go out into nothingness.

But this is against natural pity, against those natural instincts of justice, which, for the true betterment of the human race, ought to be maintained; against the deep feeling in civilized man, that the wrong of Nature should be set right, the good of Nature developed, disease made into health, and torture replaced by peace. This is a just demand; and if it be unfulfilled in the order of the universe, if these unfortunates perish in their misery, injustice is the lord of the world. That is a conviction which, if the deniers of an immortality where justice is done could possibly get their way, would spread far and wide, as it has done to some degree of late, and finally settle into all hearts. There, it would poison the very springs of life; and civilized society would end in an organized league of the strong against the weak, in so villainous a world that, if nothing could be done to cure it, it would be a mercy to extinguish it. Universal selfishness would be enthroned, and the standard of that kingdom would bear this inscription: "The devil take the hindmost." Were the faith in immortality now to die, with all its hopes—such as we hold now when the belief in eternal punishment is despised by intelligence and loathed by the soul—with its reliance on Divine justice, with the emotions which it en-

shrines, cherishes and satisfies, with the faith in a God of love which its denial absolutely destroys in the conscience and the heart—why, then, the comfortable, the healthy, and the prudent would, no doubt, have the heaven they want on earth ; but the others—the misery-ridden, the hopeless poor, the victims of disease and crime, would know in that scientific society what they do not know now—what hell means on earth. As to the true civilization—that which consists in the prevalence of loving-kindness and brotherhood, in the love of that which kindles and elevates the imagination and the ideals of the soul of man, in the mastery of the spiritual over the material life—that would be lessened year by year, till it only lived in a few who should wander in poverty and live in faith and be crucified at last.

I have no quarrel with those who discuss the question, or express their doubts, of immortal life, *when* they are conscious of the sorrow the absolute removal of this belief would bring upon the human race ; or when their aim is to find, if they can, some clear grounds for assenting to it, for they desire it to be true. Such men illuminate the subject, and in their minds reverence for the wants of the soul is foremost. But I feel indignation with those who, ignorant or careless of the yearning of humanity for fulfilment of justice, of joy, of its ideal aspirations, of life out of death, of the love of earth in higher love, of union with the absolute truth, beauty, and goodness, project their own hardness of heart over

the whole world, and advocate annihilation as a gospel ; eager to proselytize, proud to pervert, anxious to marry to corruption and death the wonderful human race.

This it is difficult to forgive ; but God forgives it, though He must be indignant with it. He knows, as we know, that the time will come when the trouble these disturbers of human love have given to mankind will be repaired ; and when they themselves, awaking in the other life, will repent, with a healing sorrow, for their work ; and, in the repentance, rise into a higher being.

Yes, death is no destruction. It is the expansion of life. There are many who have seen, in the very hour of mortal death, the first arrival, the first gleam of that loveliness of life irradiate the face of the dying, immortalize the eyes with its dawning light. And those who have seen it, and heard what is then said—when the living spirit is already half freed, breathes already the larger air, has stood on the threshold of exquisite life, and looked in, and known, and then, in the to and fro of dying, returned, at intervals which we call consciousness, to earth, with the brightness of the eternal life illuminating their speech and countenance—can never forget that revelation. They have seen and heard, in broken words, in smiles that are not of this earth, the vision and the music of the heavenly life ; the resurrection of those they loved into the infinite life of love. And when the face, that had so long been troubled with pain, sinks into peace,

and the eyes are closed, and the whole world of love that we have known is still—still as a windless heaven—we look on the quiet thing, and say, with the joy of Easter Day: “He is not here, he is risen. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living”

## AS SERIOUS, YET REJOICING

*December 2, 1906*

“As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.”—2 COR. VI. 10.

WE are told that life is serious, and, indeed, we are foolish when we strive to put that truth aside. Also, God, in his idea of human life, intended it to be a serious thing, and, in the continuous working out of this idea, has taken care that we should not forget that life is serious. He has so settled matters that we must fight for our lives, for our character, for our knowledge, for our religion, for everything we hold dear, like men who keep a post on some wild borderland against a host of foes.

He has made the world very difficult for us, and I am content for myself and for all men that it should be so. It proves to me that He respects the creatures He has made. He does not think, it seems, that paternal despotism is the best method to make good citizens for the spiritual kingdom. He does not leave us without the help of His grace, spirit speaking to spirit, for we are His children; but the help is that which a father gives who wishes to make a man of his son, the help which He gave to His well-beloved Son, not one of whose difficulties



or pains He removed from his path. Fight on, He said, and overcome. When at Creçi Edward's noble son was hard bestead, he sent a message to his father to ask for help. And the King answered: "Let the boy win his spurs; I will not send him a single man." It is the answer God gives to our prayers for help as long as we have still power to endure and to contend. He does not take away the sorrow or the trial, but He does give us communion with Himself; and His love and spiritual strength make us feel that He trusts us and believes in us. This is the true assistance which does not pauperize our character. What better answer to prayer can be conceived than the inspiriting cry, "Be strong and very courageous"? What better answer than the consciousness within us, that we are trusted to do His work? This kind of a God makes the seriousness of life. Whosoever believes in Him and knows Him, cannot be indifferent or lazy, or given up to selfish indulgence. And to evade duty with all its pain is then a coward misery.

That is one aspect of the Christian life; yet there is another. It is its brightness and its joyousness, its eagerness in battle, its hope in the storm, its certainty of victory. There is a joyousness in fortitude and good fighting, which every great warrior or honest soldier has felt, which is ours when we follow the banners of the Lord of love and holiness. There is even a quiet gaiety in our soul when, freed from the power of sin, from the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches,

we know that we are far above these enslavements. There is a delight in felt communion with eternal Love, which the world cannot give or take away. Yes, it ought to fill our hearts with ardour and thankfulness when we are bid to win our spurs, trusted by our Father, treated like noble children and not like pampered slaves. In our seriousness, there is then no dulness, no querulousness, no evil mournfulness. The seriousness of a true soldier of Christ should be capable of play, of gracious happiness, of the joy of inspiration, of that gaiety of heart which goes to battle as if to a feast, of rejoicing evermore, as he said who of all the Apostles suffered most, thought most, worked most, and fought the hardest. This is the mingled cup of Christian life, its shadow and its shine.

How they may exist together, and also of the wrong seriousness and the wrong joy, I speak to-night. How grows, and what is, the seriousness of life?—that is our first question. We had, unless we were most unfortunate, a happy childhood. Our pleasures were many, and we made them for ourselves out of the slightest things—by that creative power which is the blessing of childhood, but which we lose when knowledge and the world enslave us. In childhood, our soul, being alive and wondering, made all the day a wonder. We had no science to blind us to beauty, no criticism to prevent us from loving, no convention to destroy our self-forgetfulness. We were nearer certain truth than we are now, because we were innocent of the half-truths by which society

exists. But this could not continue. Not thinking of ourselves, we had not then gained the sense of personality ; and in the course of Nature, we must gain it, if we are to do our work in the world of men. It was not possible, then, for us to remain in this childish brightness. We were bound to become self-conscious, and conscious of humanity beyond us ; of a duty to ourselves and a duty to mankind. Then came seriousness into life. Therefore, after a time, we felt the need of sympathy in our delight, of others to share in our pleasures. We ceased to be sufficient for ourselves alone.

This was the first shadow of the great world of human life without us falling backward on our hearts. When we called for sympathy we became dimly conscious that there were also others, beyond our self-sufficing joy, who would ask our sympathy and demand our help. And then the questions began, in incomplete and misty forms, to which we have striven all our life to find an answer. For what was I born ? Who am I ? Who are men ? Whence have we come ? Whither are we borne ? What must I do among this world of beings like myself ? Mankind has had a beginning ; will it have an end in death, or an end in life ?

And with the coming of these questions, however dimly, to the child, the innocent gladness of impersonality departed for ever, and the seriousness of realized personality began. Then, mingling with others, claiming the sympathy of others, we became conscious of a difference between us and them, and

then of a difference between each of those we met and all the rest, till at last the variety and vastness of humanity intruded on our early isolation. And the problem, thus started, was doubled by our education, by our experience of society and its passions. Nature, too, and her incessant influences beat on our heart, and multiplied the questions in the soul. The child's face grew serious then; the boy, the girl, sat apart and thought. Who has not seen that strange, wild, lonely musing, as of one alone in space, on the countenance of a child? Personality, self-consciousness, has come upon us. What is it all? What is its source?

It is God beginning to speak to His child, to waken his being by communion. It is His voice crying to the soul: "Recognize yourself, that you may be able to give yourself to me." We do not then know His voice nor Him. We scarcely listen. There is a vague wonder of the invisible in our heart, and little more than that. But what has been done remains. We are children no more, and our eyes are serious enough. The first thoughts, the first outgoings of the soul beyond itself, who can forget them finally? Dimmed in after-life, they recur in age, when the turmoil and the folly are left behind.

Time passes on, and our youth begins, and finally sends us out into the world to take up the work we have chosen, or to enter an idle society. And by this time we are wholly wrapped up in self-thought. Everything we do, we think, is preparation for an end. Every new thought is a new wonder, and

seems sometimes to have infinite extensions ; and every extension it has is filled with thoughts of ourselves and what it means for us. But in this condition, all the thoughts and their emotions are as yet unco-ordinated. They are centreless, and clash with one another. Sometimes one possesses us altogether, then it is driven out by another, till, in the confusion, we know not where we are, or what we are. Hopes and fears also, duties and passions, actions and silences, thoughts of our own, thoughts given by others, contend within us, and lead us hither and thither. Now our way seems clear, the next day it is dark ; now the world seems at our feet, again the world mocks all our effort ; to-day we believe in ourselves, to-morrow all is failure. Nothing is ordered, nothing continuous. Our hopes, aims, ideals, duties, feelings, all the populous world of our thoughts, are like the books of a library while they are lying about the rooms, unclassed, in disorder, waiting for their order on the shelves. It is a condition we have to battle through, and its seriousness is deep.

As to mankind, we have then but little to do with it. We are entirely occupied in getting ourselves into order. As to God, we have but dim conceptions of Him. Sometimes, in the silences which are characteristic of this time, we seem to touch Him or be touched by Him. But for the most part, He seems far away, in an infinity of which we know nothing, and for which we have no care. We think we have no time, 'midst of the surging crowd within,



to consider whether He has anything to do with us. The first thing is to secure our own personality, to harmonize and concentrate its forces, to get our passions into control, to shape our thoughts into effective tools, and then to get to work.

Is God angry, as some say? Oh, it matters little to Him whether we think of Him then or not! He is thinking for us, watching for us with love. There is nothing good or useful, imaginative or intelligent, which we do or dream, of which He is not the vital cause. It is He who has disturbed us, He who is moving us to realize our life, who, underneath our ignorance of Him, and among all the active confusion, is leading us to know ourselves and harmonize ourselves, so that, at the last, we may know Him as our Father, and harmonize ourselves with His love and righteousness.

Well, how serious it all is! No play, no pleasure then within; no quiet joy at that time; no brightness, save that which is born of youth's indelible animation, and that is more physical than spiritual. Within, though we carry a happy face and air, we are more serious than we are ever perhaps again in life. Every hour, when we are alone, seems weighted with vast issues. It is no wonder our youth is so self-important. We feel as if we were a universe.

But this also passes, and the time comes when, leaving our youth behind, we enter on manhood and womanhood, find our work in life, and settle our life within. We have harmonized our active powers; and they, set to the same labour, driven

by the same motive, pursue steadily our aims. And our inner life of thoughts is now like that room of which I spoke, with all the books now classified, ranged on the shelves, ready, at a moment, for use.

At first, then, there is brightness enough. We are so well ordered that we have time to play, time to think of our fellow-men, even time to think of God, of diviner things than the pursuits which engage the world. The force and eagerness of early manhood and womanhood are with us, and its ardour is often so great that it has energy for serious work, and plenty over and above for play. And could we continue in that way, and grow at the same time in righteousness and love, it were well, indeed, for us. But alas! though there are those who keep that golden mingling of cheerfulness and seriousness, of work and play, they are not many, at least, in the great concourses of society. The world gets hold of us. We want to make a fortune, to rival our friends, to get the better of our competitors, to reach the higher levels of society, to strive for a fleeting fame, to have our name heard in the streets. We grow weary of slow and steadfast work, of simplicity and quiet; and, not content with the gracious pleasure of loving play with the beauty of Nature and man, we seek the noisy, injurious realms of excitement and of show; and in that seeking we lay waste our powers.

Then all real life is over with us for a time, and we pass into the false seriousness, out of which no

joy is ever born. For the end of these strivings and livings is heavy dulness, or angry satiety, or consuming restlessness. We work ourselves to death, or excite ourselves to death ; and both are much of the same temper, and have similar results. And we lose our soul. Imagination bids us good-bye. The ideals which charmed our youth close their wings and die. The spiritual world, either of beauty, holiness or love, is seen no more at all. Immortal life is only a dream, a folly, or an interference. Conscience, in matters pertaining to wealth or position, ceases to act. Whenever love and selfishness meet, love is the loser. And of course when love perishes, all sense of God, except as a vague avenger, also perishes. And, lastly, in this false, material seriousness concerning base things called practical, joy, enchantment, the sunshine of youth, all power of play, have vanished away ; and in later middle life, dulness, deadly dulness, sets steadily in, like an overwhelming tide of heavy waters, on these sad, poor folk. There is no brightness, no eager thought, no vivid movement in the heart, no delight in lovely Nature or passionate mankind ; and as to play, it is forgotten that there was once such a thing upon the earth.

There we lie, in the stagnant harbour of self, all the anchors of life down ; all our business on board our isolated ship, and all our pleasures done mechanically ; and the dry rot in our timbers. Now and then, it may be, a faint movement from the ocean-swell without rocks at its moorings our ship

of life, and we think for a moment of the great sea without where the fleets of humanity, sailing through tempest and through calm, are calling on us for sympathy and help. But the momentary thought is put by. Not for worlds would we tempt the open sea, or sail, unsatisfied, to find an undiscovered land ; or lose our comfortable, droning self in rescuing the storm-tossed mariners of mankind. "Let them," we say, "take care of themselves. Am I my brother's keeper?"

We surrender thus the true life of a man, the only life which, in high battle with the tempest, and in the love of those who sail with us towards the goal of God, is always accompanied with a noble joy. In its place, we choose stagnation, dulness, decay, and apathetic death. No fate is more lamentable.

Is there no way of escape, no means by which we may retain the eagerness of youth, the happy strength of our first years of work in the world? Is it impossible to have joyfulness in labour, an inspiration urging with delight in the heart, the pleasant capacity for play, even when life is made grave by pain? Yes, there are many ways, and I will speak of the best, of those which, once secured, bring many others in their train.

The first of these is to gain in youth, as the guides and stars of life, some great ideas which we believe to be truths, and which we love with all our heart and mind and strength. It is to be faithful, increasingly faithful, to these all our days, and to die with their eternal powers in our soul.

Some of these ideas belong to our life as citizens, and as brothers of our fellow-men ; others carry us beyond men into our relation with God. Of the first I mention one, that you may feel what I mean. "Every man, woman, and child, every society, every nation, has an absolute and first right to full self-development, and this is the proper definition of freedom." To be filled with that conception and with others like it to overflowing, to work for them all one's life, to submit to their rule all our selfish desires, is the glory of life, and brings into it eagerness, movement, noble pleasure, the power of gracious play, and living joy in thought, emotion, and action. That is the great result of their possession. But here, in this place, I do not dwell on these human ideas alone. Our chief thought here is for the spiritual ideas, for those that belong, not only to man, but to man in communion with God. And the first and greatest of these, from which all the rest follow, is this, "That God and man are to be for ever at one ; that He is the Father of all and that we are His children ; that we can never be divided finally from Him ; and that, since He is immortal Love, we shall also be immortal in perfect love, and in the exalted joy that flows from love. That was the main conception of Jesus Christ. It was by that he lived, and redeemed, and blest ; it was in rest on that truth that in the midst of sorrow and mortal pain the secret depths of his heart were filled with peace and joy ; it was in full belief in this that he died for love and truth ; it was by the power



of this faith he rose into eternal life and love with his Father. It is by that truth he lives now and loves, and with us who love him; having himself conquered sin and pain and death, and made us their conquerors.

That is an idea, a truth, carrying with it all its high emotions, which brings to the inner and then to the outward life joy in the midst of the deepest pain, strength even to smile in trial, a delight in battle, and a joyful hope when we look forth on the long-suffering struggle of mankind to find goodness and peace at last. This idea, and its noble children in thought, bring to inward life the breath of the divine immortality of joy in which they were first conceived by God our Father. And we, living in that divine air, are animated and exalted, and the light of joy is in our eyes. Then, from the soul, it passes into outward life to brighten it, and to extend its brightness into the life of others. It enables men and women to play graciously and lovingly with life, to have pleasures which ennoble themselves and which bless others; and in the storms of life to cheer their comrades into fortitude and hope.

This possession of divine ideas, and willingness to sacrifice all selfish desires for them, is a power of brightness in the seriousness of life.

Another is the conviction that the law of the universe is love, and that we are to be on its side. All the rightness of our life among men, all union with God, all the following of the life of Jesus our

friend and brother, depend on our active obedience to that idea. All the suffering of the world results from man's disbelief in it, from man's disobedience to it. All the joy of the whole world, past, present, and to come, has arisen and will arise from obedience to this law. It is the central energy of the spiritual universe, here on earth, through all the starry spaces, in the heavens of heavens where the great communities abide, and in the infinite will of God. Wherever it is obeyed, joy is present, leaping like a fountain.

In daily life it creates the habit of living and thinking for others rather than for oneself, of the active desire to give and bless, of help and sympathy, kindness and graciousness, of self-forgetfulness. With the practice of it, grace and joy and brightness illuminate the face, speak through the manners, irradiate the speech, make beautiful the commonest action, and adorn the trial days of life with unexpected flowers. There is nothing more enchanting than the brightness of one who is not thinking of himself; and it is even more beautiful in the midst of trouble than it is in the midst of pleasure. It is always quick for gracious play. It has most strange and sweet responses, always ready to give the best it has. It endures in illness; it conquers decay; it makes old age as beautiful as youth; it passes through death with an exultant knowledge that it will be for ever with a Love higher than its own. Love never faileth. He who loves can play, like a child, on the verge of eternity. Nay, he is

always at home in eternity. The true lover is himself eternal. He is in God and God in him, and God is Love. Therefore, whatever be the seriousness of life, even when it is most grim, the lover is always the possessor of joy, for joy and beauty are, I repeat, the natural and necessary forms of love.

Lastly, when we look forth on the aspect of the world of men, it has an awful seriousness. It almost breaks the heart to see and know the misery and wrongness of it all. They are caused at every point by the absence of love and the presence of selfishness—that is, by the almost universal disobedience of men and women to the law of love. Is there no end to it, we ask, nothing but fruitless death, no chance or certainty of escape, none of redemption, no life to come in which this spiritual death of man will itself decay and die? If there is nothing after death, then no argument I have ever heard can reconcile the moral sense to the fact that myriads of men, women, and children, once innocent, are born to dreadful sin and bitter misery. Life, to the meanest thinker, ought then to be hopelessly joyless. But if there be an immortality to come, in which every personality will be wrought out of selfishness into love, then the evil of this transient life of earth is so slight in proportion to infinite life, that we can still be happy; knowing that, for us and for the human race, the passage through evil is the means of conquering a great and singular being.

Therefore, the third means of joy in the seriousness of life I give to you is the belief which Christ

proclaimed, and singularly revealed, "That every soul of man was the indestructible child of God the Father, and was destined to become, in a progressive education, in this world first, and then beyond this world, immortally at one with Himself; at one, that is, soul and spirit, with everlasting and essential Love." Take this truth into your hearts. Then you can live in hope and work in faith for mankind. Then you can love all men, even the cruel and wrong, because they are destined in the end to become loving and righteous. Then you can bear the pain of the world. It is but for a moment in contrast with eternity, and its curse will pass when pain has taught mankind that selfishness is the only creator of pain, and love its only destroyer. Then, having laboured to teach love, we can die in peace, looking for the redemption of the humanity we have loved and love so well.

These truths I have laid before you make joy in seriousness, brightness in gloom, sunshine in the storm, peace in sorrow, even, at moments, the power of loving play. There is an indestructible, communicable energy in love, which conditions itself everywhere it moves into an infinite joy. And the joy, like the love, never ceases to expand. Expansion is of its very essence. Therefore harmonize your souls to that inconceivable delight. It is not destined to be always inconceivable. Our hidden life in God waits in certainty for the reality of its glorious conception.

## THE PAUSE BEFORE PENTECOST

*May 31, 1908*

“Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.”—ST. LUKE xxiv. 49.

IN the history of the education of the world by God, and in the spiritual history of the individual, there are times when, before a new turn is given to the education by a fresh revelation, there is a pause; a time when nothing seems to be done, when there is in the hearts of men sometimes confusion, sometimes contemplation; when faith and hope are in a twilight, when some men are in despair and some men pray; when the old life and thought has come to an end, and no new life or thoughts have shaped themselves—a parenthesis of silence between the old and the new—but, during which, even in those who despair, there is a vague, trembling, eager expectation of coming light and life, a waiting hope, a thrill such as moves in the vegetation of the earth when spring is coming. Such a pause, which often occurs outside the spiritual world in the history of art, politics, wars, literature, national development, was the short space of time between the day of the Ascension and the day of



Pentecost, and on this Sunday after Ascension it is worth our while to think of its history, and its analogies.

The history of it is briefly told. Not long after the words of my text were spoken, he whom they had loved so well was taken away from the disciples. The visible manifestation of Christ was succeeded by the invisible, the Word made flesh by the indwelling Word. Voice was no longer to answer voice, but spirit to touch spirit; and the new communion was higher, deeper, more powerful, more vital for their growth, than the old. While they lived with him on earth, they were like children whose personality is merged in another. He solved every question, every difficulty for them. They had no personal trouble; they made no personal effort. That solitary responsibility which, in its struggle, develops power and strengthens character was not theirs. They were blind to the ideas of Christ; their talk was the talk of childish men. It was, indeed, expedient for them that he should go away, and come to them again in another fashion, as an inward Spirit of life, of divine intelligence, and of moving love. He came in that noble way, and the change was wondrous. They were indeed endued with power from on high. But the change did not take place immediately. Ten days apparently elapsed, while they tarried in Jerusalem, before the day of Pentecost.

In the growth of Christianity there was, then, a pause, marked by this Sunday, between the Ascension, the last act of the dispensation through the

visible Christ, and the coming of the invisible Christ, the first impulse of the dispensation in the Spirit; and in that pause the ideas of the new Christian life were seething together in the souls of men, combining and working towards the point when, taking clear form, they were to issue into an active life in the disciples based on a victorious faith in Christ within them—who, tenfold more alive than he was in Galilee, urged them incessantly into the telling of his Gospel to all men as the salvation of the world. When the silent work of this pause had closed, they broke into speech and power.

Such a pause, longer or shorter, occurs before every new revelation. The silence of winter precedes the spring. It is a law of the development of all revelations in the education of the world, in art, law, science, and in the spiritual world, that the new truths are contained in germ in the older revelation. The truths of the teaching of Christ lay hid in Judaism, and in part, even, in heathenism. As the time of his coming drew near, even one hundred years before he came, its germs began to quicken under the old soil. Vague rumours arose of a Son of man; unconscious prophecies grew up among the nations of a redemption of man; a multitude of unformed theories were started; crude conceptions of a kingdom of God, with crude creeds attached to them, were invented, and decayed, and died. Even among the heathen nations there was a strange revival of religious feeling, and a search for a spiritual deliverance, for peace within. Hopes, fears, excitements on

religious matters multiplied among men ; doubts and truths were more sharply outlined ; new questions arose and demanded solution. Opposite theories of life clashed together—the pessimism of *Ecclesiastes* and the optimism of *Daniel*.

Then, when the Revealer preached his Gospel, the germs, whose stirring of the soil had produced this spiritual trouble, shot up into full growth, took form and flowered. The new revelation was delivered in a few years. But coming and flowering so quickly, it also contained within itself germs of further truth, afterwards to be developed. “I have yet,” said Christ, “many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now.” A higher manifestation of his truth was at hand. “When he, the Spirit of Truth, shall come, he will guide you into all truth.” And before he came, there was this quiet pause of ten days.

The pause of the world before Christ’s coming lasted about one hundred and twenty years ; the pause before Pentecost lasted only a few days. But, then, it belonged only to a little band of men and women ; it was individual, not national. Naturally, the time of the pause was brief.

Moreover, Christ’s teaching had curiously prepared the minds of the disciples for a rapid development within their souls of a new order of things ; for a mighty change, soon to take place, in their view of the truths he had taught. That teaching was full of hints of what was coming—hints calculated to stimulate thought, to awaken spiritual passion. The whole range of the parables on the

kingdom of God, such as the Mustard-Seed, the Leaven in the Meal, were intimations of a universal kingdom. The disciples did not understand their import then. It dawned upon them now ; it rose into full sunlight after the coming of St. Paul. Again, he scattered such seeds of thought as these : "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold : them also I must bring " ; "Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham in the kingdom of God"—phrases which looked forward to the admission of the Gentile world into the kingdom.

On the other hand, lest germs like these should come to maturity before their time, he apparently contradicted himself : "I am not sent save unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." I cannot describe how this kind of suggestive and seemingly contradictory teaching—and there are many more examples—must have excited, confused, aroused, quickened, and kept in continual disturbance the minds of the Apostles. They must have been always looking out for something more, always in the attitude of expectation, dimly conscious of meanings to be unfolded in the future. They vaguely felt an infinitude in the ideas presented to them. They were every day receiving shocks from Christ. There is something half sad, half humorous—of that humour which slides into pathos—in the way they express themselves : "This saying is too hard," "We cannot tell what he saith," "That be far from thee, Lord." It is the fate of those who live with men of genius

who are making the future ; much more it was the fate of those who lived with Jesus.

Of course, this was only one peculiarity of a teaching, the greater part of which was as clear as the day, but it is the part which has to do with my subject.

The last shock, taken with the circumstances which accompanied it, was the sharpest of all. On the day when they saw him no more on earth, when he was sure to concentrate the meaning of his life into a few words, he said: "Go ye into all the world and preach my good news to every creature."

Think for a moment what that meant. It meant the overthrow of the whole fabric of Jewish thought. It struck at the prejudices, the traditions, the experience, the direction of the national history of a thousand years. The exclusiveness of the Jew, his solitary right to God's love, the localizing of the seat of religion in Palestine, were rendered nothing by the words—All the world! The Gospel to every creature!

If ever words were spoken which should work an entire revolution in religious thought, these were they. And Christ saw the blank wonder of the Apostles, pitied them, and added to his words the saying of my text, "Tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high."

There are many analogies in Nature, in history, and in our own lives, to such a pause. It is so before the coming of the hurricane. A deadly calm broods over the sea and in the air. The sea breathes



heavily, as if some living thing were in its depths struggling for deliverance. A listening fear steals out of the dreadful pause into the hearts of men, till, out of the appalling silence, rushes in shriek and foam the spirit of the wind. It was in some degree the state of the little Christian company while it waited for the wind of the Spirit. They felt the great movement of the revelation before it came. The depths of their soul were troubled. Fear, hushed expectation, danger, menace, desperate trial, were, they knew, at hand. But with the fear they presaged a coming power to meet the strife. Their ship would battle with and outlive the hurricane.

Take another analogy. There are times in our mental history when the whole basis of thinking is changed. New ideas are born within us, and, with our grasp of them, life, nature, the history of the world, put on fresh garments, and we see them with different eyes. New ourselves, all things without us become new. But before these new ideas have become actual powers in life—tools which can be used, principles which master all our action—we are conscious that there has been a silent, quiet time, during which we neither thought formally, nor could act at all, but when things within settled down for themselves, crystallizing independently of our will. There was a pause between the receiving and the realizing of our ideas. We could not at first grasp or retain our novel thoughts. They seemed to glide to us, and then away from us, like swallows on the wing. We saw only outlines of them, shadows, not

substances of thought. We strove to keep them, to shape them, but felt at last that there was nothing for it but to remain still and let them develop themselves. Our wisdom was to be passive for a time. That was our pause.

Then, suddenly, we knew not how, a light came, a wind dispersed the mist, and we understood where we were, and what a revelation had come upon us. A last touch was added, and behold! we were in another world of thought. We saw the law; we grasped the principle; all our drifting imaginations were coordinated; we felt power to act and joy in action; and we slipped on to fulfil our ideas, like hounds released from the leash, like a ship long becalmed in harbour, which feels at last the land-wind in its sails, and flies to meet the ocean labours, and to reach its port at last.

It was just so with the intellectual and spiritual history of the Apostles at this time. It was the season of their pause. New and mighty ideas were struggling for form within them: universal salvation for Gentile as well as Jew, for the slave and the poor as well as for the noble and the rich, for those who obeyed and who disobeyed the law; a universal fatherhood and brotherhood of men; emancipation from ritual and form, love and not law the master of life; an infinite spiritual kingdom that reached over all time and beyond time into eternity; an unconfined worship in the spirit, limited to no place. All barriers were removed. God and man were eternally at one as Father and child.

By these ideas they were intellectually stunned, spiritually astonished. They could only vaguely feel them, and they had no force to apply or use them, even when they partly grasped them. They could do nothing but wait and pray. Nevertheless, the ideas were doing their creative work within the disciples. In the inaction of these ten days, the ideas which were to regenerate society; to rekindle the thought and the imagination of the world; to build up a new order on the ruins of the old; to recreate religion, to establish a universal Church—were germinating into life in the soul of the disciples. The whole spiritual world was hushed while they thought and prayed. Then came the fire and light of Pentecost, and with them power. Nothing is more wonderful in history than the change which took place in these men after the Spirit had come upon them. From fearful they became brave to audacity. They stood firm against priests and kings, against the whole force of Rome. From childish followers they stepped into leaders of men. From men who did not think for themselves, they rose into the founders of a great Church, the directors of councils, the organizers of a world-wide work. From slow-minded persons, they changed into men, who, possessing pregnant ideas, brought them swiftly and with ease to bear on masses of men. Success was written on their labours. They had power, and the power changed mankind. And, in truth, their work went beyond the spiritual world. For there was also a pause in the intellectual

history of mankind at this time. The intellectual, even the imaginative, movements of Greece and the Roman Empire had decayed. Philosophy lingered, but it had no vital message to the worn-out world. The intellect, the imagination, the passion of the world, were waiting for new life. It came with the rushing wind of the ideas of Christianity. New thoughts, spiritual, but capable of infinite intellectual expansion, flexible as wax to any national mould of thought, passing easily from their spiritual form into all kinds of social, political, philosophical, and artistic form, and attended by passionate emotion, awoke from their inactive pause the imagination and intellect of the world. From Pentecost dates not only the spiritual, but the mental and imaginative history of nearly 1900 years.

This is the historical significance of this time in the year's calendar, and it seems interesting to emphasize it for religious thought. To emphasize it still more, I will bring the subject home to our own spiritual lives, and to the time in which we live. In both there is frequently an analogy to this pause in the story of the education of the disciples of Jesus.

There are often such silent intervals, in this time of swift and free religious discussion, in the souls of men. Few moments are more solemn in our lives than that in which we feel that the old forms and opinions in which we have been brought up have no longer any vital meaning for us. We cannot build

our faith on their foundation any more. We cannot lie to our conscience and persuade ourselves that we are satisfied with our ancient creed. We long for truth, but we look only into darkness. The old things are gone, and there is nothing in their place. An army of new thoughts, troops of conflicting feelings, are wandering in confusion in our mind, and we cannot array them in order, or command them, or use them. We are deprived of all power over the city within. Act, men say, but how can a man act till he has realized some aim? Love, they say, but how can he love till he has, at least, vaguely defined the object of love? Believe, they say, but how can he believe when he is incarnate doubt?

He must, in these sorrowful hours, pause and wait, as the sailors wait before the outflashing of the hurricane, as the Apostles waited before Pentecost. There is nothing for us then but to follow the command of Christ. "Tarry in the Jerusalem of your heart till you be endued with power from on high."

Only remember that in the hearts of the sailors there is courage and hope to battle through the storm, and, in the Apostles', waiting, prayer and supplication. You may not be able to pray, but you may be resolute to win toward the light, not to give up desire to find truth. The voiceless, passionate yearning of the spirit of man for light—what a power it has! No man, in whatever darkness, strove with his whole nature towards light, and lived in love for men and women, who did not in the end



bring to his side, in Pentecostal revelation, the Spirit of Truth.

If you can yet believe in God, though all your creeds have tumbled into ruin ; if still you can feel the love of Christ, though the doctrines men have built up around his person exist no longer for you, let then your attitude in these waiting hours be that of the Apostles—the attitude of prayer and supplication. Throw yourself, with the claim of a child, upon God, the Father of lights. Give yourself to the following of Jesus, in and out among men, in love of him, in expectation of his kingdom in your heart. Then, in time, the mighty wind of the Spirit will clear your heaven of clouds. Fire will fall on your soul and kindle your life into the activities of love. Your Pentecost will come.

Yet there are others : those who cannot pray, who despair of truth. "I cannot pray," they say, "since I have lost all faith." Naturally, but remember that it is not faith in doctrines or creeds which is then required, but not to give up the battle—to hold fast the secret hope of victory which arises, like a prophet, in the darkness of life, and urges you to answer its call with courage. To yield to that urging, to cling to its hope as the sailor clings to his rudder in the hurricane, is all God asks of you then. We cannot spend our time of doubt in prayer like the disciples, but we can at least refuse to give up the strife or to despair of light. "I will trust," we can say, "in spite of all, that there is an eternal Truth who wills truth, a Love which is the

master of the world, a righteousness which is more than a developed tendency in man ; and if I cannot as yet get as far as that, I will at least keep the impassioned desire of my soul toward these things, and not towards their opposites.”

I do not believe such prayer—for such perseverance towards the light is prayer—can remain unanswered. Your waiting will pass into assurance. The Spirit of Light and Life will come, rushing to make you at one with His joy ; and with fire in your heart and on your tongue, you will cry out with a quiet happiness : “ I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

Lastly, there is yet another analogy. We are in the midst of just such a waiting time in the religious history of the Western world. The entrance into thought of a few scientific conceptions has for the last half-century forced all religious thinking into new channels, and made as great a revolution in religious thinking as Christ’s conceptions made in the Jewish and heathen religions. All the marks of a time of disturbed preparation for a new revelation, a new representation of the eternal ideas of Christ, are, and have been for a long time, seen among us. A new epoch in the religious life of mankind has not yet shaped itself into form, but is steadily growing into shape ; when religion and the sciences will reconcile themselves by mutual concessions of unnecessary oppositions ; and find out that their truths are not truly opposed, but different sides of the same shield, of that one Indivisible Essence, the living Mind of God.

Meantime, there is great confusion of thought and passion ; of vague fears and hopes ; of new philosophies, soon exhausted ; of new religions which attract for a few years and fade away. Some are angry with the new conceptions and defend the old. Some fling away the old with contempt. Some rush into extremes of denial or of assertion. Others say there is no religion save in the social improvement of the world. Some take to superstition and credulity ; some to virulent criticism ; some to claim that there is no decision save that made by the intellect of man. I need not describe it all, but it is plain that the confusion must end in clearness. It cannot last as it is. It is too foolish, too tumbled a condition. We are waiting for light and life ; and beneath it all, and in this is our finest hope and consolation, some things emerge, prophecies of what is coming, expectations of the soul of the world waiting for realization. There is an active, passionate desire to find and have truth, which has extended from merely intellectual pursuit of intellectual truth into a pursuit of spiritual truth. Men are asking eagerly, far more than ten or twenty years ago, whether God lives for men, whether Christ be still the master of the soul, whether we are only natural or supernatural beings, whether we are mortal in humanity, or immortal in love. Deep below the mere surface questions of doctrine and ritual, these greater questions are crying aloud for light in the souls of men, and the cry is passionate. It is not confined to persons of imagination or of keen feeling. It has extended to men of

science, to natural philosophers, to men who, not long since, brought everything to the bar of the understanding. They, too, want room for the spirit—they, too, pursue the ideas which have their goal beyond this world; desire the ineffable love, presage their God. And more and more the whole body of men who think and feel are becoming—while they are still interested in the matters of the pure intellect—still more interested in the matters which rise into the spiritual world, and call on the subconscious powers of the soul to pursue after God, to find redemption and peace for the spirit of man, to grasp the consciousness of immortal life, to understand and feel the spirit of life in Jesus Christ.

They are waiting in this long pause, like the disciples, for those ideas to take full shape which will harmonize religious with scientific and critical thought. They feel in the air the faint wafts which herald the wind of a coming revelation.

We may not all live to feel this Pentecostal Spirit enlarge and bless humanity, but at least we will tarry in the spirit of the Apostles within the Jerusalem of our soul, praying for the rushing wind and the tongues of fire to make a new spiritual life in our nation.

Let us pray for freedom from doubt through the discovery of truth. Let us pray for that noble national faith in God, which, preferring truth, justice, love, pity, self-devotion, and purity to wealth, does infinitely more than the "unexampled prosperity" we are so fond of to make a nation

strong at heart, noble in character, victorious in great human causes, and of a splendid inspiration in the history of mankind. Let us pray for light. Whatever confusion we have, let us at least rest on this : "God is the Lord who sheweth us light." And be patient while you wait. The sun arises slowly, but it rises ; and for us the dawn is brightening in the sky. Our days of waiting will close in a new creation ; and a new Pentecost fill England, fill the world, with the Spirit of the Lord.



## THE SPIRIT OF PENTECOST

*June 7, 1908*

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.”—Acts ii. 1.

IT is not on a day like this, when, from time immemorial, both in the Christian and Jewish Churches, men have kept spiritual festival—a day full of emotion, when the Christian Church was born into its active life ; full of remembrance of Christ Jesus ; full, too, of all the great hopes which mankind has cherished—it is not on such a day that I am likely to enter into the historical criticism of the details of the story, of what is doubtful in it, and what improbable. Nevertheless, I shall say nothing in this sermon which may not fairly be said to have an historical foundation.

On this feast-day of the Divine Spirit in the soul of man we prefer to lift our hearts into the faith, worship, hope, love, and noble joy which were kindled in the hearts of the little band of Christ's disciples. The new life which came upon them shook and filled with fire their house of life ; a mighty rushing wind of hope and joy dispersed the false ideas of their past, and poured into them true

ideas for the future ; words of flame came to their lips which were to enkindle the soul of the world ; and love, unquenchable by suffering, unwearable by opposition—the love of God and man in Christ, that Spirit of immortal power—changed all their being, and, through them, changed, and still avails to change, the world.

The change which swept them into a missionary life was not so sudden as it seemed, was natural rather than supernatural. The same change, in kind, has occurred a million million times in the souls of men, and has been named conversion. It is common, but as it occurred this day it was not common. For it then belonged, not only to the history of the personal souls of the disciples, but to the history of the world. It was the beginning of the Christian Church. The same in kind, therefore, with countless other conversions, and as natural as they, it was amazingly different in the degree of its importance, and of such vast results that it has seemed to belong to the supernatural.

I have pictured the Apostles' state of mind as they waited in Jerusalem, their inward confusion, their steady prayer and hope in the midst of their confusion, the slow crystallization of the ideas Christ had given them, and at last the breaking of the ideas into light and power at Pentecost. The sudden realization of such growing ideas seems to be surprising. It is, in reality, the natural result of a long series of states of the soul, changing and developing day by day. It is like the flowering of

a plant in a single night, which seems so wonderful, but which is the natural result of many processes of growth, continued from seed to shoot, from shoot to branches, from branch to leaves, and finally to flower.

Pentecost was for the Apostles the flowering of the ideas, the seed of which Jesus had sown, the foliage and blossoms of which he had daily quickened, nourished, and excited into life during his ministry. On a certain day the faith which accompanied these ideas reached its point of expansion. The house where the Apostles had met continually for prayer seemed to tremble with the rush of a mighty wind, and lights to burn upon their heads in that hour of ecstasy.

Men have called these phenomena unreal, imaginary creations of the excited soul. How that may be I cannot tell; but one thing was real, no mere imagination—that God Himself was the cause of their deep emotion; that Jesus, from his heavenly life, came surging into their spirit with overwhelming power, and filled them with his love, with the passion of his humanity, with a spirit which drove them forth to preach his Gospel. They felt that the truth they now possessed was fit to redeem and to overcome the world. That, at least, is history. It is certain they won this prophetic passion; that it drove them forth to preach Jesus and the resurrection; that they breathed their faith and love into others, and those into more, until the little band became a mighty army. And one quotation from

the prophet Joel, put into the mouth of Peter, expresses the emotion and results of this day of Pentecost—the vitality, youth, joy, intense activity of the early Church; their boundless hope, their consciousness of the Divine power of their truths. It spoke of the outpouring of the Spirit of God on all flesh; of the sons and daughters of men breaking into prophecy, of young men seeing visions, of old men dreaming dreams, of the servants and handmaidens filled with the Spirit of the Lord, of a great notable time coming on the earth.

So, then, the coming of the Spirit was no dream. The heart of the story is historically true. Yes, God was in these men and the life and work of Jesus. They were born into power. In a rushing wind of inspiration, and with fire on their tongues, because of fire in their hearts, they went forth, in a rapture of faith in Christ, to save the world; and then it was not only the little house in Jerusalem which was shaken, but the whole Jewish and Roman world. Its paganism and its philosophy were dissolved, so mighty is the Spirit of the living Love when He renews the face of the earth.

What was it which the Spirit brought them, what faiths, what convictions? What had wrought this mighty change? The first conviction was that Jesus had risen into an active, personal life with his Father in heaven, alive for evermore, conqueror of death and sorrow, freed from the burden of the sin of earth, and powerful to forgive and redeem it. His death had therefore meant not failure but victory,

not limitation but expansion of being. And this life of his was not confined to the other world. It had the will and the power to live in the disciples, inspire, direct, comfort, and strengthen them. They were nearer to him than they had been in Galilee. He was closer to their hearts than he had been when he was with them day by day. He was now a living, loving personality in their every thought, desire, and emotion, continually loving and beloved. This set their life on fire, their souls into peace, their daily thoughts into exalted joy. In it, suffering, sorrow, and persecution were turned into happiness and strength. In it the natural pleasure, affections, and charm of love were doubled, and gifted with eternity. He is alive with God, they felt—alive in us ; and when we die, we shall be with him for ever—a mighty faith, which, instilled into the heart of the world, was fitted to heal the sin and sorrow of humanity. That was one of the convictions which fired them on the Day of Pentecost. It fires us now when we possess it ; it changes life from root to branch, and bids it burst into flower. When it claims the kingdom of our soul, it is our Day of Pentecost ; and when we come to die, it will be our victory.

Along with this faith the disciples gained the conviction of a divine power in them. Power, courage, might, strength, conquest—these are words which fill the writings of these men. They felt with them the omnipotence of God. It is strange to hear the fishermen of Galilee speaking like kings



of men, like high-priests of humanity, as if the whole world was theirs, fearless also and careless before all earthly power, masters of all the common dreads of men, rejoicing in suffering, welcoming death as if it were life, conscious of infinite capacities. "I can do all things," said St. Paul, "through Christ that strengtheneth me." It was not their own power which now they knew and felt ; it was the power of Christ within them, the Divine power of love, the same power which had borne their Master through his ministry, his death, and his resurrection ; and which, glowing in them now, made them kings and priests of God and of humanity—a power which, rooted in love, was therefore freed from selfish desire ; which rejected such earthly power as earthly kings and priests desired ; which abhorred the powers of force and fraud and terror ; abjured the conquest of the bodies and wealth and intelligence of men, and wanted nothing from them but faith and love, hope and purity.

This was the first time in the history of the earth when Love was declared to be the greatest power ; when, with divine boldness, its power was set face to face with the powers of armies and wealth and superstition, and declared to be their enemy, their master, and their overthrow. It was not the empire of Rome, nor the priestcraft of Jerusalem, nor the wealth of great nobles, which were finally to rule humanity, but the love of Jesus in the hearts of men. He was the mightiest of Kings, who had died on the cross for love of the children of his Father. He

was the greatest Priest, who had sacrificed himself. He was the wealthiest of men, whose only wealth was the love he felt for men, and the love men felt for him. And he, with all this everlasting power, was now a living, loving, personal Presence in the hearts of the disciples, and felt by them as an urging, driving, constraining, rejoicing force, crying, "Go into all the world, tell my good news to rich and poor, slave and noble, Gentile and Jew ; bring them through me to the Father."

Among many other powers flowing from this central power of Love, they took two especially with them—the power of forgiveness and the power of peace.

Deep down in the heart of man lies the sense of sin. We may ignore it, or treat it lightly, or explain it away, or forget it for many years ; but it rises in reproach from time to time, and often it is a torment and a fear. If we have done much evil, it rushes at last in thick darkness upon us. We feel as if we were possessed by devils, and cry out in despair. If, on the contrary, we have lived a decent life, we still feel, when in a retreat of thought we are alone with ourselves, that we are out of harmony with the universe, that He whom we call our God is not at one with us—and then we know our need. To this vast disturbance in the heart of man Christ Jesus brought, through the Gospel his disciples went forth this day to preach, the power of forgiveness. "Oh, poor sinner," they said, "weighed down with a curse, God loves you, God forgives you ; love Him in return ; believe

in His forgiveness, and you will sin no more. You cannot sin if you love Him who is infinite goodness. Jesus died and lived to reveal this truth to you. Come and live with him, and love his life, and he will save you from yourself." And the message fell on the misery of simple men like rain upon a dry and thirsty land ; as now it falls on us, when, out of the depths of the lonely sorrow of our sin, we cry : "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Deeper even than the sense of sin in man lies the desire of peace in the satisfaction of his aspiration to perfection. There is that in the profoundness of the human spirit which thirsts for ever till it finds the infinite ; peaceless till it fills itself with the very life of God. In a thousand rude and often evil ways men strove to satisfy this deep desire—in war, in hunting, in building cities, in establishing states, in the pursuit of power, of wealth, of luxury, in good and evil love, in sensualism, in asceticism, in the arts, in learning, in the attainment of pure wisdom, in the fierce search for all knowledge, in the passionate search for absolute beauty—and found no peace. When they reached the goal at which they aimed, they knew themselves to be as restless as before. The longing at the root of their nature still cried for its food ; still urged them on to pursue and overtake ; and they, wearied inconceivably with fruitless effort, fell into carelessness, cynicism, apathy or despair, and bid their deep desire be still. But it would not be still. With sharp and restless cries, it claimed its satisfaction. All over Greece

and Rome and Palestine this undying thirst of man for peace in the perfect was fierce and eager in the hearts of men. In every town the young men, both poor and rich, haunted the lecture-rooms of the philosophers who claimed to bring them peace. Even the poor, the slave, the ignorant, cried from their misery for some blessedness within.

All over our larger world, in truth ever since the beginning until now, the same hunger for infinite peace, for satisfaction in perfect good and happiness, cries out of the depths of the heart: "Fill me to the brim with life, with life so strong and deep that I may know I am at rest."

It was a wonderful boldness which sent the disciples of Jesus forth from the Day of Pentecost, declaring that they brought peace and its power to this universal longing in the nature of man. Come unto Christ, they cried, and he will give you rest. All the waters of knowledge, beauty, wealth, and power, will never heal your thirst, but the water he will give you will be in your soul a fountain of everlasting life. You will never thirst again when you have drunk of it. And the water was the infinite perfection of the love of God, revealed in Jesus. For nothing will ever satisfy man's deepest desire but absolute perfection, nothing will give him life enough but the everlasting life of God, and the life of God is Love.

To bring that to man was in the power of the disciples after Pentecost, and no wonder they were inspired with joy.

Again, along with this conception of a living Christ within them, bringing, with his presence, power, there was an impassioned, personal love for him—a love, the depth and range of which they could feel, but not express. It was this that lay behind the conception of his presence with them. It was this that was the driving power behind the other spiritual powers they brought to the world. It was the soul of their missionary work. It made the Christian Church. It was naturally strong in the Apostles who had companied with Jesus, who had known his tenderness and love. But it was even stronger in St. Paul, who had known him only in the spirit. Through his journeys, perils, to the hour of his death, it was his passionate love of Christ that moved, supported, vitalized his life. And he was as certain of the love of Christ for him. "The love of Christ constraineth me. Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?" This was the overmastering element which seized on men and women. They loved, as if they had known him personally, one who had made his whole life spring from love ; who died for love ; who, now alive, asked for their love so that, loving him, they might love their brethren as he had loved them.

This was also of the Spirit of Pentecost ; and though individual religious life may be lived and inspired without this love of Christ becoming ardent, there is one thing which will not have great power without its fervent feeling, and that is—religious work among men. Preaching, teaching, missions,



conversion of the outcasts, redemption of the lost, building up and knitting together of religious communities, fail to secure a lasting success, unless they are driven and inspired by a personal love for a Master, who has realized in his life the perfection of our nature, whose love makes our hearts glow with love, who is to us the image of that Divine love which abides and shines for ever. We need now to recover more and more of that personal devotion of the early Church for Jesus which was in the rush and fire of Pentecost. It is that which will kindle our preaching into power, clasp our associations together, convert the sinner, raise men from the dead, seek and save the lost, pour life into our missions, and fill the churches of this land. We want in religion a man to love whom we may feel to be the revealer of the heart of God in humanity. If men do not take Jesus, they will take someone else. And I should like to know who can suit the human heart so well. Ah, when many say to me, "Turn aside hither, take this leader, follow this ideal," I will make no reply, but move in love and reverence to meet that quiet figure who stands on the worn highway of life, among the children he blesses and the outcasts and the sinners he redeems; with infinite love in his unfathomable eyes, and say, "Lord, to whom shall I go? thou hast the words of eternal life." We may be all unworthy of the Pentecostal Spirit which went out to save the world, but, at least, we know where it is, and whence it flows.

Lastly, there was one other conviction which filled the disciples on this day. It was the belief that the risen Jesus was to come shortly to overthrow all evil, to establish a golden age of love and righteousness. The hope of a perfect humanity, of a kingdom of justice and peace, was no new thing. It had been sung by prophets among the Jews, by philosophers in Greece, by Roman poets ; and now, the Spirit that burned in the Apostles at Pentecost did not disdain but emphasized this ancient and vital hope of mankind. It drove them forth to preach the restitution of all things, the New Jerusalem, the coming of Christ to make a new heaven and earth. The prophecy of this fell like healing dew on the hearts of the slave and the sufferer, the sinner and the peaceless seekers for peace. Out of their misery they were then borne, as on a rushing mighty wind of the Spirit, into exalted hope and joy. A glorious time was, they believed, at hand, when God should gather together all things in Christ, when the prophecies of the human heart for centuries should be fulfilled in everlasting life with everlasting love. This is the impassionating cry in the greater number of St. Paul's Epistles. This is the deep and thrilling voice in the splendour of the Book of Revelation ; and no earthly tyranny, no mortal pain, no trial, could discourage the Christian who held that faith, or chill his work for God.

They were mistaken in the nearness of that restitution ; the form they gave it was material, not spiritual ; it was only by slow degrees that even

great spirits like St. Paul came to understand that the golden year for man was to be slowly developed through history. But they were not mistaken in their faith that the full redemption of mankind is finally to be wrought out by God. That faith, in a hundred forms, and after a hundred disappointments, is still a fire in the breast of man, burns even in those who do not acknowledge Christ. It filled the souls of the disciples on this day.

Whenever it burns clearly in men, no spirit is mightier than it is for good and work. It has both the domains of human energy in its sphere, the domain of passion and the domain of practice. It bids depression be ashamed ; it cannot conceive of sloth ; it calls all things possible ; it removes mountains and casts them into the sea ; it considers the ideal real, and makes it real ; it sings in prison and despises death. For it, there is nothing but life in the world. This was the spirit in which the Christian leaders went to their work, and it is in St. Paul's Epistles like triumphant music.

To that exalted hope and faith, which seems the last absurdity to the understanding with its head down in the dust of the miserable facts of the history of man, the inner spirit of humanity answers as the heart of the lover to the voice of one he loves ; and, as long as that is true, it does not matter a waft of wind what the understanding and its votaries declare. All the great poets and prophets who have had supreme power over men have declared the coming of times similar to those the Christians hoped for and

prophesied ; and many lovers of wisdom and of men, who were not supreme, have glided into these hopes in moments of loftier inspiration, and reached, for the time, supremacy over the heart of the world.

And what nation that has ever done great things has not been full of this faith in man's future when it did them? And what nation that has lost this faith for a time, or among whom it is decaying, has not sickened for that time, enfeebled its true powers, or fevered them into false creation? And, most curious of all, inasmuch as we are told by persons whose wisdom is self-confessed that this faith perishes with the advance of intelligence, is the fact—that where this hope does fail, the higher intelligence of the man, the society, or the nation fails with its failure. The power of analyzing, comparing, arranging facts, of calculating, observing, may increase ; but imaginative work, reason in her loftiest mood, insight into world-movements, knowledge through love of the heart of man, the power of creation—all that makes a great polity, a great literature, a great law, noble and lovely art, all that exalts and consoles a people—decay as this faith decays ; and would wholly perish, were it not that humanity always rebels against its loss, and reasserts its right to believe in its eternal life, in its final joy and righteousness, in the answer God will give to its cry for perfection when He who sits on the throne shall say, "Behold I make all things new."

This hope and faith are ours, and they ought to inspire us, as on this day they inspired the disciples, with

the spirit of power, and love, and courage, and joy, and a sound mind. Then, in the midst of an idle, luxurious, faithless world, fighting its boredom with vain pleasures, now excited, now apathetic, fearing death and hating pain, hopeless of salvation for itself, and for the unhappy world below its easy materialism, we may proclaim the Gospel of humanity—the mighty truth that Jesus brought to be the light and life of man, that men were the children of God, and that His Fatherhood, in infinite love, would redeem them, one and all, for ever. Then we shall see the great visions which make suffering into stored-up pleasure, and mortal death immortal life ; dream the divine dreams that are truer than all waking life, that prophesy the new heaven and earth, and by the passion they create redeem the baseness of the world. For on them follows unfaltering, eager, loving work, sure of victory, done among men and for men, in the spirit of a living Christ, and for the love of God the Father of men.

This was the work the little Church at Jerusalem now began to do, and did till the heart of the world was changed. These are the convictions which came with the Spirit into the souls of the disciples on the Day of Pentecost. That they came is history. They made a new world out of the old. Many since have been their vicissitudes, but they have never died. They grow with the growth of mankind. Immortal youth is theirs.



## DAYS OF JUDGMENT

*June 26, 1910*

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”—REV. XX. 11.

WHETHER we believe in God or not, it is plain that there are days of judgment, when nations and men are sifted, wheat from chaff, folly from wisdom, weakness from strength; days in which warning is given or punishment exacted, destruction administered or salvation gained. At any rate, there is an order in the affairs of man. Those are blind who can read history, and not see that there runs through it as clear a chain of moral law as there runs through the physical history of the globe a chain of physical law. And again and again, in both histories, times of crisis come—days, as we may call them, of judgment—when the chain is knotted, when the long series of antecedents and sequences produces an eruption, when the river of human life takes a new channel, when the old ideas of society are judged, brayed in a mortar for destruction or re-creation; when new ideas are formed and established.

A crisis comes—a judgment, as a prophet would say. The moral order of the world, violated, exacts its penalties ; or obeyed, brings its reward. Nations and men—for what I have said is as true in our individual life as it is for nations—are judged. They reap what they have sown, in progress or in overthrow, in peaceful or bloody revolution, in the revelation, clear as the sun, of what is wrong or right, true or false. And men, looking at these days of judgment—as, for example, on the French Revolution or the American War—say to themselves, “ Verily, there is a God who judgeth the earth ” ; or, looking into themselves, when in the inner life a crisis comes, say also to themselves, “ Verily, there is a God who judgeth me.”

Slowly crawls, like a tiger, judgment upon evil. Slowly ripens on the tree the fruit which is the lawful result of the seed of good. And both are sure to reach their goal. The eternal law is in them both ; and when their sentence declares itself to a man, or a nation, it is a day of the Lord. Then for us in our little lives, and for peoples in their lives of centuries, is the great white throne set, and the books opened, and on the throne One, from whose face earth and heaven flee away, and there is no place for them.

The writer of this book seems to believe in the actuality of what he painted here. He drew his imagery from the Roman tribunals, where he was accustomed to see judgment administered. The white marble throne, the accusers on one side,

the defenders on the other, the open books, the judge, the attendants, were in his experience; and he transferred them to that last judgment of the whole world in which he believed, when Christ should come with the host of angels, and the dead should rise; when time should be no more, and the eternal doom be given.

To us all this material business is symbolism, not an outward reality. But when, leaving aside the writer's possible belief in these material things, we look at the ideas which underlie his words, at the thoughts out of which this symbolic picture grew, we touch, not material things, but spiritual realities—truths which were not his alone, but which all the prophets and poets of the soul have felt, which have been told in a thousand myths, clothed in a thousand legends, painted in a thousand pictures, sung in a thousand poems, and found in every high religion, pagan, Christian or theistic; truths which are rooted in human nature, and in God. We do not believe in a visible coming of God to judgment with all this pomp and circumstance of terror and of love, nor in any fixed date, nor in any vast assemblage of the risen dead for a final division into good and evil; but we do believe in the spiritual realities out of which grew into form this symbolic image of a last day. We believe in wrong being overthrown and right established, and that there is One who does this work. We believe that there are days of the Lord, judgment days, when whole nations and we ourselves are summoned before God and humanity to

answer for our deeds. We have seen them in history ; we feel them in our lives. The approaches to them may take years to accomplish. The results of them may take as many years to fulfil themselves. For two centuries at least the ideas which made the French Revolution were growing into Europe. Its results have been working in European history for more than a century, and we have not come as yet to their conclusion. But in the midst was the outburst into terrible shape of the ideas—a day of judgment—when the white throne was set, and the sun was darkened, and the moon became as blood, and the stars fell from heaven, and He was there in judgment, before whose face earth and heaven fled away. In the midst of the long years, there is a turning-point in which all the judgment is given, and all its results are contained.

Take another example. For many years in the eighteenth century England had grown more and more unmoral ; her Government and her public men more and more corrupt ; her Parliament servile, degraded by place-men ; her upper class profligate, thoughtless, selfish ; her poor enslaved, neglected, sunk in misery ; her middle class tolerably decent and working hard, but wholly unrepresented ; her King the obstinate enemy of the roots of English liberty. And then she tried to force her tyranny and a fiscal slavery on her greatest colony.

Then came a day of judgment, and our country was brought to the bar of God and of humanity. And the great doom fell, and we were overthrown,

and justly overthrown ; and a mighty nation was born out of our overthrow.

The results of that day of the Lord, when the white throne of justice was set up, took years to fulfil. Out of it was born, for us, reform in public life, in public morality, in public men, in political representation, in the true conception of monarchy, and in a steady development of civic freedom. Nor, thank God, have we ever lost the lessons that great judgment pressed into the national soul.

I take distant instances, but in our own memory we have seen judgment. What of the Civil War in the States when the vast iniquity of slave-breeding was overthrown for the whole world's instruction? What of the destruction of the Second Empire in France, when that which was founded on murder, developed by corruption, rotten to the core, was devoured by the vultures? What of the vast humiliation which the abomination of Russia's government suffered at the hands of a nation they despised? These are national judgments when the earth and heaven of wicked Governments flee away before the face of the Judge of all the world.

It is the same in our personal lives. No eye, even of our dearest friend, is aware of the times when, at a crisis of our life, in the lonely city of the soul, God sets up His throne, and we appear before Him, and the books are opened, the books of our life, of our deeds and character, of our consciousness of what He knows of us and we know of ourselves ; and on them shines the inevitable light of holiness, and



we are judged. Day by day these silent judgments take place all around us. We know nothing of what is moving in the men and women whom we meet in our home, in business, in society. Nothing in them seems different from their usual life, save perhaps a touch of bitterness in speech, an unaccustomed restlessness in act. Could we lift the veil, we should see heaven and hell in contention there within—accusing, pleading, defending; the sun darkened, the stars fallen in the skies of the soul, heaven and earth fled away, time departed, the day of the Judge come at last, and death and life in His decision.

Who is so righteous in this congregation that he has not had his day of judgment, small or great? Oh, it is well that God does not leave us to ourselves; that when His time is ripe, our lives confront us with their evil, when He judges us, and we judge ourselves. Else we love our own will so much, we might be lost in wrong. This day of judgment is no dream, no symbol. It is a deep reality.

That which happens then to us and to nations is here expressed in symbolism. The form may be mistaken and is impermanent, but the idea lives independent of any transiency in the form. It is easy to separate from the idea any part of the form which the intellectual atmosphere in which the writer lived has given to it; it is easy to isolate clearly the idea which has ruled and created its imaginative clothing.

Whiteness is the symbol of righteousness. The

throne is the symbol of the kingship of righteousness. And that which men feel most clearly in the days when a nation meets a great crisis is the absolute authority of righteousness and justice. Right is being done, men cry, and it is absolutely right it should be done: wrong is being overthrown, and it is absolutely right to destroy it. We agree, the whole universe agrees. All political subterfuges, excuses, casuistry, diplomatic expediencies, have been extinguished in the white blaze of righteousness. The world in which they acted has fled away before the face of justice. There is no place for it. We thank God for the judgment in which at last we see clearly what is just and good for ourselves, for our people, for all mankind.

We see as clearly in our own hour of judgment. Then we know that there is but one authority to whom we owe obedience, before whose dazzling throne all that is dark in us stands forth dark, in whose light our inmost self is laid bare—no gloss, no subterfuge, no excuse, no subtle colouring possible. Our lies are seen as lies, our selfishness as selfishness, our death as death. It is a terrible hour. "Look at your life," cries the great Voice, which, thundering night and day within, is heard by none but our own soul; "look, and tell me what you are." And, stricken with dread and shame, we see and know ourselves in the white light of the righteousness of God.

There are those who hate that revelation, and who cry, "Depart from me, terrible Goodness. I

know that Thou art King, but where Thou art is pain, and I wish to keep my pleasure. Take from me the light of Thy throne ; give me back the darkness in which I did not know how wrong I was. I will have my will, were it as black as tenfold night ; but I cannot have it while Thou art there. Depart, that I may be satisfied with my sin." This is the cry of many, but even in the degradation of it, they know the sovereignty of holiness ; they know they must give way to it at last.

But there are others, blest in their misery, who, seeing their darkness, are yet more moved by the revelation of God's righteousness than by the sight of their sin. Repelled from themselves, they are irresistibly drawn by the beauty of holiness. "This is the true King," they cry ; "this the throne which shall for ever glow and shine in me. Lighten my darkness, O Lord. Disclose my evil ; make me see the blackness and hatred of it ; glow and burn in every chamber of my heart ; purge it through and through with fire. I deny, abandon, all the past, and live and die now only in the white fire of Thy righteousness. And if I suffer, pain shall be gladness if it consume my sin. O God, in this Thy judgment-day, what wilt Thou have me to do ? Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth."

Then the pain lasts till the guilt is burnt away, for punishment is not remitted, but with the punishment is heard the voice of our Father : "Thy sins are forgiven, sin no more. Do the good which is opposed to the evil thou hast done ; and I, within

thee, throned on holiness, shall be no more a terror of judgment, but a constant peace of love."

What else? What is the next symbol? "From whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them." The writer meant that actually. But the idea mastered the material image; and his words express to us who reject his materialism the spiritual thought that all things without disappear to the soul when it is face to face with God.

And this is true. In the midst of this material life of ours, in spite of the masterful demands of the body, of the work of the world, of society and business, when in the soul there is a day of the Lord—made by sorrow, by some dread call of duty, by some deep strife in the spirit, by overwhelming destiny—when the inner life meets revolution—then, nothing of earth or heaven is left for us in that hour of sifting and decision. When God comes home, all things else disappear. The soul is alone with Him in an empty world. There is no place for earth's doings and passions, for business, ambition, even for love beyond all measure deep. The daily work we have done for years, our social life, our home and all its ties, are for the moment all devoured. Our earth and heaven have fled away.

Nature says no more to us. The loveliest landscape in the world, the dearest place thrilled with associations that are like songs, are dead to us. The awful hour has burned them up. Even time itself is no more. The ordered succession of hours and

days is gone. We are in eternity, when one day is a thousand years, and a thousand years one day—alone with illimitable Deity. It may be terror that we feel or reverent awe, dreadful sorrow or solemn peace ; but whatever it be, there is nothing present but the infinity of God. From His face our earth and heaven have fled away, and there is no place for them.

Out of these days of judgment we come with new knowledge. We have seen ourselves as we shall see ourselves at death, stripped clean of the transient and the outward, of all that hides our real self ; apart even from the purest and most blessed things of daily life. We know what we are ; we know that there is One to whom we belong, and who will claim our personality for Himself, more vitally hereafter than even He has claimed it now. Even though we resist that knowledge and cry out upon its claim, we are, nevertheless, changed men. These days have done their work. Never again will this outward world, nor time, nor anything material, have their old power upon us. They are not the realities we thought them. Nor ever again will the ambitions of the earth, or passionate desires, or fame, or wealth, or social place, or love, or home, be what they have been, our very all in all. We have seen the moment when they fled away before the presence of God. We have felt the eternity in which they are the stuff of dreams.

This is the revelation, and if we understand it, we know what it means. It means, "Set aside



for ever all motives, desires, thoughts in your life which cannot enter into the presence of righteousness, truth, and love, which are not capable of eternal expansion ; and bring all your work into union with the character of God. Do your work in the world to the full, but let His righteousness and His love be its master, its motive, and its end. Bind up into His character all that in your life you wish to keep. So, when He is alone with you, you may see these things of yours in Him, and find them yours for ever.”

Then, when the final hour comes, and death is with you, and you gather your soul into courage and faith to meet the inevitable hour ; when, alone with the love of God, you see earth and heaven flee away, and time dying, pulse by pulse, like the light of sunset ; and the darkness grows, and all the world's love, life and business disappear—you will have no fear or sorrow in that deep solitude with your Father. You are accustomed to solitude with Him, and it is not solitude. The words and joy of Jesus Christ are yours. “I am not alone. The Father is with me.”

Lastly, I have left some pregnant words to the end. “The books were opened, and the dead were judged out of the things written in the books.” That also is imaged from the Roman courts. The accused, brought before the judge, had his record examined. There his past life was written down, and this, with the fresh accusation, were the materials of judgment.

It was once believed that on the day of the Great

Assize this would be the case ; and art and the practice also of European courts have so carried out the symbol, that this is by many still believed.

Books written ! Accounts of our lives registered by recording angels ! We smile at this scenery of a judgment by the Spirit of all spirits ! Yet there are books, not material, but spiritual, as spiritual as the judgment, where all our thoughts and acts are written ; and some of these we write ourselves. Nor is it only when we are dead that these dread registers are opened. At every moral and spiritual crisis of our lives, while we are yet on earth, the soul reads what these books contain, or hears their awful record.

One of them is written in the infinite knowledge of God. In His Spirit we are floating while we live ; and as waters receive in vibrations the record of every changeful movement of those who dwell in them, so God feels in Himself the jar of every evil thought and act of ours, or the musical harmony of every righteous and loving thing we do. In that immeasurable sensitiveness to good and evil, all our lives are written down.

If we could but realize that overwhelming thought—that all our wrong or right is written, as in a book, in the consciousness of God—how many careless wrongs we do to men and to our own soul we should avoid with awe, with hatred of their evil. Watch, then, lest ye enter into temptation. Watch, that you may enter into good. For, as sure as death, in the deciding hours of life, in this world

or the next, the book of God's knowledge of your whole life will be opened, and its record will be your judgment according to your deeds.

It may be that He will pronounce no sentence, but leave you to sentence yourself. His spirit will touch His intimate knowledge of all you have thought and done, of things remembered and things long forgotten, into your consciousness, and you will yourself read the book of God's knowledge of your life. And out of that great silence which always lies at the back of our souls, a voice in that day will come with a cry, "There is yourself; judge yourself." I trust that God may be more merciful to us than we shall then be to ourselves.

There is another book. It is that which Nature has written by her impressions on our souls. It used to be said, fancifully as I think, that as every action and word, even every thought, caused a ripple of vibration in the ethereal element that permeates all cohering matter or in which its atoms float, so it might be possible that we might hereafter read all that we had done and thought preserved for ever in these indestructible vibrations. It is a speculation, too vague for any practical influence on us.

But Nature, so closely knit to us, speaks to our soul, and in the varied impressions she makes on us at different times we have a record of our changes, our moods, the state of our soul from year to year. We walk by the sea alone, and its murmur reminds us of our childhood. How different is it now with us! We see the stars in their infinity as we

walk home, some clear night, when we are old. They are not the stars we knew, when in youth we dedicated ourselves to Him who set them in the heaven for our aspiration. They leave us cold. We come back to the village among the whispering elms, and to the stream we loved, where our deepest love was felt, our deepest sorrow borne, where Nature brought us sympathy with our joy and comfort in our pain. We remember all we felt. Could we feel it now? Is the beauty now as soft and piercing as of old? No, the impression it makes is different, infinitely different.

We visit, after many years, a place we loved, where a great happiness was ours, where, it may be, our life was crowned, where every scene in the landscape was enchanted—and now we hate the place; our past happiness seems a root of misery, and wood and stream and hill—as beautiful in themselves as they were of old—shoot into our eyes and heart arrows of pain and grief. Nature has kept our past and pours it into us. But when we read her book, we read also, awakened by her, the record of the long results that have followed from the joy, the crowning of life, the enchanted scenery which were ours of old—and the record may be hateful.

In these, in a thousand thousand impressions of this kind, compared with other impressions, Nature writes her record on our soul of what we were, what we are, and what we may become. It is a book which, in our days of judgment, is opened and laid before our spirit.

More solemn, and more clear in our experience, is another book. It is the book we have written at home, in society, in our business life, on the hearts of men and women. We print our thoughts and doings on those we live with ; on thousands whom we shall never see, but whom our work has influenced. We die, but this writing of ours does not die with us. Its power for good or evil still continues. Its book still speaks to bless or curse. Even on the whole race, so closely are we bound together, something of us is written. Our book is there, in prose or poetry, in song or tale ; our unconscious literature, fraught with joy or pain to men, with good or ill. All that we have openly said or done lies written on the souls of men. The deed you did yesterday, good or bad, where is it now ? What is it doing now ? It has gone into twenty lives already. It may be working in two thousand, ten years hence. It is irreparable : its results are inevitable. It follows you for ever from soul to soul. The word you spoke yesterday—harsh or loving, true or false—where is it now ? In how many is its message written ? It cannot be recalled. From clime to clime it flies, and a hundred years hence it may be found in a distant land doing its evil or its good in the lives of men or women. And who can tell whether even a thought itself, once shaped, may not take form and fly from our silent grasp of it into reality, and shape itself in the thought of others, and live and work in them ?

Think of that ; it is not mere speculation ; but



think more of what clearly lies at hand. Ask yourself what are you writing on the souls you touch in daily life? What have you imprinted on your children, your friends, your companions in business or work, your employed or your employers? What have you written there this year? A beautiful, loving, truthful book, or a record you will shrink from reading when judgment descends on your life? For that book will be opened to the eyes of your soul and to the eyes of man, and out of it God will judge. Nay, more, man will judge. Humanity keeps that record of your life, and God will say to you in the awful silence of your spirit, "Look, and read, and judge yourself." Does that fact make no appeal? It is true that what you have already written on men cannot be recalled; but life is not over yet, and you may swear to God and your own soul to make all your writing for the future noble, loving, true, and fair.

There is yet another book. It is our own character. Daily and hourly we are writing ourselves down. We bear about with us, in the character we have made, the whole volume of the past. In everything we do and think in the present, in the way we meet every circumstance of life, we go on forming that character. Our book is there, and it will be opened in the hour of judgment.

Into contact with that character, to exalt or lower it, to expand or narrow it, we are bringing other characters. It is a drama, then, that we are writing. What scenes and acts are there, what slow ap-

proaches, what swift conclusions, what hurrying passions, what sudden calms, what sins and sacrifices, what unforeseen developments, what a swift interchange of acts and thoughts, what a strange mingling of fate and free-will!

With the Power that moulds us beyond ourselves we cannot interfere. We can only trust, and we do trust, that He is love. But we have room enough to will that the drama we write shall be loving and noble in act and thought, and the conduct and end of it worthy of a child of God our Father. The end may be tragic. We may perish in earthly sorrow, but so did our Master Jesus. But, happy or tragic, we can leave on the spectators of our drama a deep impression of goodness and pity and love for the salvation and inspiration of mankind.

Write therefore lovingly the drama of your life, the history of your character in touch with other characters. If half its acts have been written, and it be ignoble and uninspired as yet, let it be wrought out, for the rest of it, into solemn, tender, and beautiful form. For that book will be opened at our Judgment Day, and God will say—Read the drama of your character and judge yourself therefrom.

These, then, are the books of judgment, to be opened whenever, in life or in death, the day of proof arrives, and the white throne is set, and God lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and earth and heaven flee away, and we are alone with Him. Then may our Father grant

that we be found true to His righteousness, crowned with His love, settled into His truth ; our spirit, like Christ's on the Cross, fit to be commended into a Father's hand ; and the books we have written on the knowledge of God, on the vision of Nature, in our soul, on humanity, and in our character, be worth reading by the eternal eyes of Perfect Love ; and we ourselves not smitten with grief and pain when God vindicates Himself before us, but satisfied with His infinite truth, unafraid in union with His Love, and enraptured with the vision of His Justice.

## THE FLOWERS OF THE FIELD

*March, 1900*

“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”—  
ST. MATT. vi. 28, 29.

It is somewhat strange to hear from the lips of him who spoke so resolutely of work this tribute to the flowers that do not toil or spin. These lovely, silent, unworking things, which produced no food for man to eat, but which only gave pure pleasure, whose faithfulness to their own nature of idleness and beauty was their greatest charm—these also had their needful place, as Jesus thought, in the world. There are things, then, we may do for God and Man which differ from labour and producing, from fighting for right and pressing onward to the goal. There is another side to every shield; and if what Christ says about work be one side, what he says in this place is the other.

It is a good lesson. No man who has found the convex should be content till he has also found the concave of the shield. None should be so carried away by his excitement about one aspect of truth, as

not to ask himself "Is there no converse to that which I now believe, which is not its contradiction, but its supplement? That I must find, and assert as strongly as the other!" Indeed, all justice of thought lies in that effort. Moreover, the wisdom of life, and its toleration, are holden in it; and in the case of the teacher like Jesus, his power over many minds, his understanding of various moods.

This was the method, or part of the method of Jesus. If, in this case, we follow it, we must not only say "The worker is faithful and blest, and saves his brethren, and he who does not work is an unfaithful servant," but also "Those flowers of humanity are blest and bless mankind, who neither toil nor spin, but are beautiful by loving." But then, the human flowers that are of no clear outward use ought to have beauty of character and live in it; and theirs should be the unconsciousness of love, and the loveliness of self-forgetful grace. Could Christ have pictured to himself a vain, self-conscious, selfish flower, unwilling to give its blossoms away; complaining that it could not move from its place, unfaithful to its flower-nature, he would not have told us to consider it, or praised its beauty. The flower that blesses the world gives its beauty away unconsciously, desiring no return. It is at once the Apostle and the Martyr of the love which makes its beautiful array.

If the flower-natures among men and women do no work, they are bound to give pleasure. If they give none, they lose their flower-spirit; they cease to



bloom and are cast away. If they give it, if they love, they console and charm the world. This is their good and happy work. And perhaps what they do in this way, in a world which, above all things else, needs to be charmed from sorrow, needs the consolation of love, is better in the eyes of the Highest, as it is certainly in the eyes of the human race, than the unremitting labour which thinks too much of itself and too little of its neighbour.

Take that for your comfort, you who are not made for heavy work. There are men and women, youths and girls, who are unfit for the severe work of the world; who could not meet its serious battles with any power; but whose souls are fair with love; tender, bright-hearted persons, gracious, gentle, gay, and full of sympathy. The rough, bold, bad world is often hard upon them, and only too often they half despair. "I am no good," they say. It is a foolish saying. Is your life loving? Is it gracious and uncomplaining, delightful to those in the house? Does it make men and women happier? Do they forget their pain as they sit and talk with you? Then God approves you, and man is grateful. You are one of Christ's flowers of the field.

The actual flowers of which he spoke were worthy of his quiet meditation. "Consider them," he said; and there are none who love a country walk in spring and summer who do not obey the delicate command of Jesus. The beauty of the grass of the field enchants the wayfarer as it enchanted Christ. So lovely, he said, were the flowers that even Solomon

in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them. God is so lavish of the royalty of beauty, that He flowers in every meadow of the earth a thousand thousand kings, each fairer than the king of all the Genii, for the pleasure and refreshment of the child, for the poor wanderer, for all the children of men.

The lily and the wild rose of Gennesaret, if they could have been conscious of their unproductive life, might have thought, "I am no good; I do not produce food, like corn, for men." But they knew not how much they did. They did not imagine that we—centuries after they bloomed and died—would see them through the words of Jesus, and take comfort for our life when we thought of them. Nor were they conscious of all they did for their Praiser. It was surely something to have refreshed the weary eyes of Jesus; to have brought new thoughts of his Father to his heart; to have lifted his sorrow for a moment; to have filled him with wise and tender imaginations. They did nothing, but they charmed and comforted; and they charm and comfort us, and our little children, in the same sweet and gracious way.

Moreover, though they were not made to be of active use, yet they could be used, and used without harm befalling them. There was no need to pluck them and throw them away, as so many do in reckless rudeness. Jesus used their beauty, but did not, in the using, destroy it. He took them up into his work; pointed with them his high moral; adorned with them his gospel of life.

We hear their lesson still. All these years it has endured, and I would we could balance with that lesson the insanities of our overwork. Humble, gentle, unstriving, making no noise, rejoicing in their life, growing obediently within their limits, true to their own nature, yet with the beauty of unconsciousness of self, the flowers blest the gazer, though they did not toil for him. They died in a few days, yet they lived in the memory of man. Oh, what in all the world is so everlasting, or sinks so deep into the soul of man, as the quiet loveliness of love ?

So there are many who are not made to do active work, but who, if they will, may comfort and bless the weary and heavy-laden, and all the hard workers of the world—flowers among the thorns and thistles of the earth! Let them but be true to the fair and gentle nature God has given them, and grow in graciousness through sweet-scented days to the flower of a loving life, and they need take no troublous thought of toiling or of spinning.

Let those who can do good work with all their strength. It is their duty, and ought to be their pleasure, and great is their high reward ; as high as their punishment is deep if they do not toil and spin. But these others, these of whom I speak, let them live obedient to the law within them of kindness and quiet and beauty ; faithful to a natural brightness, which, if they have lost, they may win again ; bringing to life fair colour and sweetness ; impelling the household through self-forgetfulness and humility ; comforting and uplifting without knowing what they

do—and even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them. They are not workers, but they do as much good ; and when the throne is set and the books are opened, their lives will be acknowledged and their crown be ready.

Alas! there are many who do not understand them, and who trouble their lives by vain conceits ; those chiefly who think labour greater than love. These will not confess that there can be any use in those who only shine, and blossom, and make loveliness ; who are gracious like the grass of the field, not fruitful like the wheat. These rude and vain persons wish to force their own kind of labour on the flowers of mankind, and, not succeeding, then despise them. Martha is always crying out, “ Master, speak to my sister, lest I serve alone. Make her do my work. What I do is useful. Of what good is her sitting still ?”

Yet one thing was needful then, and Mary sat still to choose it. And though she only loved and was quiet, her story has moved the heart of humanity to noble and needful ends from generation to generation, nor will it ever be forgotten.

I have known households where busy folk, cumbered with much serving of labour or knowledge, have not recognized the blessing and power of one loving, gay, gentle, and imaginative person in their midst, and, indignant with her idleness, have forced upon her work she could not do, and worn away her delicate life until she died. It was too late then to feel, as bitterly they felt, what it was to lose the

garden of the house, the happy, stormless, sweet-scented place, where, after work, they walked and talked, and knew not how they were refreshed or why they were so happy. It were wiser had they left in peace her whom God had made for their good and pleasure, whose work was the work of the lily and the rose ; and who herself, without their knowledge or her own, was the inner life of their labour. She fled away, for force and wearying tread into death the flowers of the field. It is a sorrowful affair when the vanity of our work so blinds us, that the only thing we can do with our flowers is to break or kill them.

There are others who do not drive the flowers of the field into work, but who despise them. "These people are no good," the full-fed worker cries ; "they never do anything, they cannot do anything ; why, they are like children. Life seems to them all play, gaiety, and brightness." Why not? They were made by God for that. "Oh," they go on, "there is no sense of sin in them ; they have no feeling of the sorrow and crime of human life ; they dare not visit its dark caverns into which I go with my lamp. In the midst of man's misery they live lightly like flowers, pretty and sweet, and tossing in the summer wind. I cannot but despise them. Yet it is strange they win so much love ; more even than I win, though I spend myself night and day. I do not understand it ; for their life is nothing, mere loveliness and laughter. I ask them to leave their lightness and their garden by, and come with me to the



dark wood and desolate moor, where the lost sheep wander. Then I may cease to despise their life; accept them, give them praise. But they cannot, or will not, come."

The one answer to this contemptuous strain is the answer of Jesus, "Take heed lest ye offend one of these little ones" (it was not of children only that he spoke), "for I say unto you their angels do always behold the face of my Father in Heaven." Have we, who speak so boldly of the uselessness of these, ever thought whether Jesus despised them, or his Father; ever looked into that question? He answered it practically enough. Whom did he most often choose to show forth the character most fit to enter the kingdom of God? He chose children for that revelation; for in them, when they were natural, innocence was fair, and faith and trust were frankly felt, and unconsciousness of self shone in their eyes. Their heart was open. Fresh enjoyment lived in them, natural lovingness, simplicity of feeling, tender gratitude; and their play was on the steps of the throne of God. This was the temper which entered the kingdom, and though Christian manhood adds much to that, the original temper is never lost, and in old age it recurs in full. Christ—he in whom the eternal Child for ever lived—was true to himself when he loved and praised that temper. And when you find it in the lives of men and women whom you know, be glad of it, and keep and guard it as a precious boon.

There are plenty of persons who work night and

day, oppressed with the pain of the world, and weary with their fighting. England is crowded with these, but in England there are not too many who have the blessed gift of the childlike heart, who can make us taste the air of early innocence, who lead us into the garden of lovingkindness when we are weary with the cruelties of life ; give us roses washed with the dew of happiness, when the sorrow of the world lies heavy on our hearts ; who believe in us when we doubt ourselves ; who, when we are tormented with self-thought, can teach us unconsciousness of self ; who, when we are wearied with the dryness of facts incessantly analyzed, can bring us in a moment, by their smile and look, into the magic world where wonder is always present, and imagination sees the face of God. With them, we shall learn another lesson than that of assertive labour. When we walk in their garden and begin to love its flowers of the heart, we shall come slowly to understand that these lives are precious as fine gold to the labour of the world ; and gratitude, not contempt, will fill our soul. Our monotonous work gains, from such communion, new ideas ; an atmosphere of charm attends our labour through the day, and rescues it from dulness. Refreshing thoughts will cheer our toiling and spinning, and add to it the grace it sorely needed. And then humility and gentleness, born of this soft intercourse with the flowers of human love, redeem our work from the dryness or rudeness which impairs its influence on men ; and from the pride which, when it repels men

from companionship with our toil, isolates us into uselessness at last. So will our nature be completed. And then we shall understand what unconscious work these do whom once we foolishly despised. Then, too, in the deep repose which follows when we have added to our busy manhood the heart of a child, we shall know what Christ Jesus meant when he said : " Learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly of heart : and ye shall find rest to your souls."

Next, there are our duties to the weak flowers of the world. Those of them of whom I have as yet spoken are in themselves well and bright and gay—good-fortuned folk, healthy of mind and body, workless but unselfish—daffodils in the wind—a jocund company.

There are others who cannot work if they would—sorrowful-hearted folk, ill-fortuned, shut away from life, sick, or whom weakness has laid by. These also do not toil or spin. What of them? Are they flower-hearted? Are they arrayed in fairer garb than Solomon? Yes, it may be so with them, for the beauty the flowers of the field wear is more spiritual than splendid, more in inward grace than outward glory ; more in that temper of the soul which makes them happy in solitude, when they are seen by none, than in a happiness derived from admiration. Those who are unable from illness to do work, or who from want of quick intelligence or practical energy cannot join in the activities which surround them, are not left without their duties. It is their duty to live the flower-life, and not as many

of them do, from querulousness, self-brooding and ill-temper, to live the life of the thorn and thistle. They can make their life fair and sweet-hearted, refreshing to all men, by arraying their souls in the beauty of Christ, by being clothed with gentleness and humility, and lovingkindness, and thoughtfulness for others. That is in the power of the most sick, the most delicate, the most troubled, the most wearied.

Many of the loveliest and most comforting flowers of the field of the world, who most inspire and most impel, are among men and women whom weakness of body never permits to leave their room, or whom want of cleverness has forced into retreat from work, but who have in their character the love that never faileth. I speak for the comfort of those who are sorrowful because they cannot toil or spin. The greater interests of life are not yours, who are ill and weak, to share in ; you cannot live keenly in the present, or act strongly for the future ; but you can bring all the beauty of self-forgetful affections to adorn the sick-room where you live, as the daisy and the violet do, when they tuft with their sweet clusters the rocky ledges of the forest. You can cultivate the little corner where you are, so that it shines with the lily of thoughtfulness and the rose of sympathy, like a cottage garden in the south. It is possible to make your sick-room a centre of household happiness ; where all the rough places of outside life are made smooth, and the visitation of the day is healed by your gracious gentleness ; where tired men and women are cheered, solaced, enlivened and inspired ;

and whence they go forth again into the turmoil of labour, with dew upon their souls, eager once more to do their duty. Those who have much to do with the storms of life owe debts they never can repay to many who lead the quieter and the fairer life, who sit in their rooms and never join in the rush, but who are happy and sympathetic and give freely of their brightness. There is a "blest security, a serene permanence that some of these possess ; a continuity of natural and simple goodness, only to be compared to the daily life of flowers," which often does more for the great, slow movement of the world to happiness than the hardy labourers who toil and spin all day. There is a wondering childlikeness, a wild-flower charm, an appealing grace, a sacred insight into the truth of things, in these secluded souls which is of infinite value to a weary, confused, and troubled world, overwhelmed with the burden of its toil. There is a steadfast sympathy in these retired flowers of the field of life, which, like the grass which spreads everywhere its green solace over the waste places of earth, soothes the sadness, and cures the apathy of toil, with its untiring faithfulness. These pleasant flowers of the spirit—which, if you love and forget yourself, may be yours in sickness or when you are apart from the world's work—are in their place as enduring and as useful as the active work that all men praise. They are ministers which are not known. No loud applause attends their silent, hidden grace, but they are at one with the life of Jesus Christ, and with the love of God the Father.



Their result cannot be calculated in figures ; but everywhere they grow in the living heart of humanity as the wild flowers in the grass, as constant, as lovely, and as universal.

When they who have led these lives are gone away, then we know what they have been. We remember love more than labour, and there is no tenderness of memory as deep as that we feel towards the sick and aged who have lived gently, uncomplainingly ; who have loved us with an unbroken love, who have not thought of themselves because they thought so much of others.

There is a passage in some Essay of Sir Arthur Helps which speaks of those who have lived as I have described, and who have now gone into the heavenly world : " Let the memory of the social delight of the high communion they gave, of their earnest sympathy, let their heart of friendship and their power of loving which made them see so much, and see it so truly—the fireside their presence made brighter, the haunt of nature their interpretation clad with new beauty, the thought, the sentiment, the grief to which they came nearer than anything but prayer, the souls they uplifted into strength, the right-mindedness of childhood they encouraged in the midst of worldliness, the simplicity of life they made so beautiful, the graciousness they instilled into rough hearts, the content with loveliness which instructed the blind in loveliness, the sweet scent of a beauty which was no fatal gift, the pleasure they had in being the agents of pleasure, the sacred

influences of quiet holiness or of gladness, the impression they made around them that God was near, the silent voice with which they spoke of the reality of purity, the eternity of truth and love, until we shook sin and ill desires away, let there be a hundred other things say whether they have lived in vain."

It is a lovely picture of what the flowers of humanity may be, if they honour their own flower-nature. For these toiled not nor spun, yet they were arrayed in the very beauty of God.

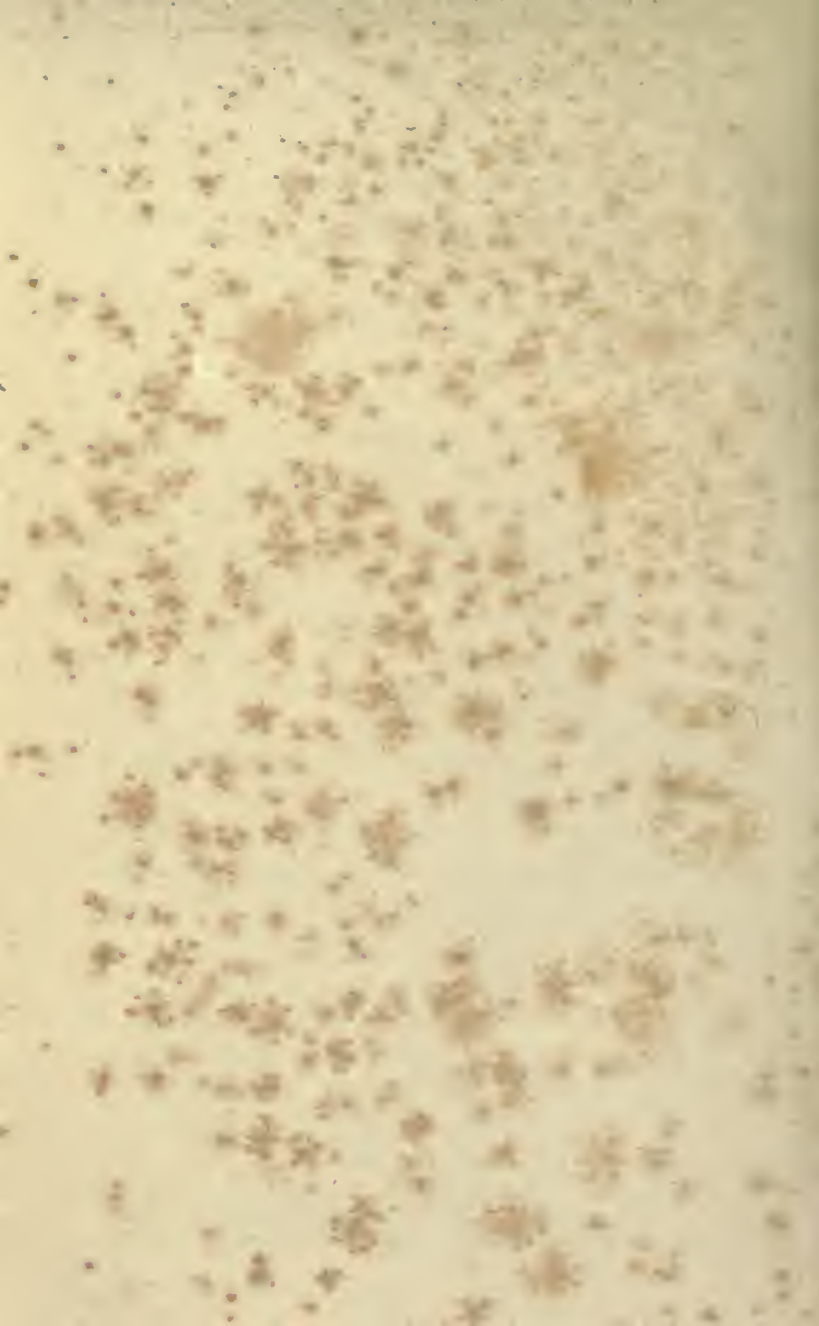
Lastly, it is the active work of Jesus on which men chiefly dwell; but if you look, in the quiet hours of the heart, into his life, you will find as much of that side of life which the flowers of the field of man are forced to live, as of the other. How quiet it all was, how gentle, how unknown! For thirty years his feet brushed in silence, doing no work such as men call work, through the meadows of Nazareth, where the flowers grow more thickly in the grass than in any other part of Palestine. As he looked on them day by day they taught to him their secret, and well he lived their lesson. Rarely he talked of work, save to those who loved themselves. To love and to draw men to love one another—that was his work; and it is the greatest that is done under the sun, as quiet as a flower, as fair and appealing in the eyes of men. Mostly, it was the daily sweetness of his life which healed the heart of the world; the forgiveness and the pity which he gave to the sinner, the infinite faith he had in the goodness of man as his Father's beloved

child; the tender hand he stretched out to those whom the religion of his day cast out; the way he had of seeking the lost sheep; the tender appeal to the weary and heavy-laden; the soft promises he made to the broken-hearted, the captive, the oppressed; the lovingkindness which blest the little children and enchanted motherhood; the pity which, in the teeth of the world's reproof, loved the sinful woman and the publican into goodness and joy again; the compassion which came when his disciples were weary, and brought them into the grassy wilderness to rest; the sympathy he felt with them when they lived a joyful life with him; the pleasure he felt upon the lake and in the fields and in the little birds; the imagination which he saw in the flowers, and the sheepfold and the vine stock; in the supper, and the sower; in the lost money and the treasure seeker; in all Nature and human life, parables of which God with man was the interpretation; the simple, natural life of wandering from village to village, lived far from the noisy world, whose preaching was from the boat, on the lake, and the grassy ridge of the hill and the well by the roadside; the companying with working men and fisher-folk, with the poor and the outcast; the deep wells of love within him, out of which arose, like healing waters, such tales as the Prodigal Son; the love he had for women like Mary, and men like Lazarus, in their village home; the comforting of all the world of man with the Fatherhood of God—this and much more was the full half of his life, the

life of one who neither toiled nor spun as men now toil and spin; the life of the flower of the field, and even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed with that eternal beauty.

Enough lies in the other half of his life to inspire all the workers of the world; but for those on whose life I have dwelt to-day—who cannot toil or spin—this part of his life is for them to follow. Love it and live in its loveliness; and there will be for you, though you may do no work, such happiness, and such use, as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined; and how near you may draw to the spirit of Jesus Christ no tongue can tell. It may yet be a wonderful and unexpected joy for you, if in the hour of judgment, you see the Master of the heart of man speak to the noble band of workers among whom you think yourself unworthy to be, and hear him say, while he looks from them to you:

“Consider these lilies of the field: they toiled not; neither did they spin, and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them.”







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