

# Supreme Hours

*A selection from sermons,  
prayers and verse of  
W. G. Tarrant, B.A.*

# SUPREME HOURS

SELECTIONS FROM THE SERMONS, PRAYERS

AND VERSE OF

W. G. TARRANT, B.A.

EDITED BY

ALFRED HALL, M.A., B.D.

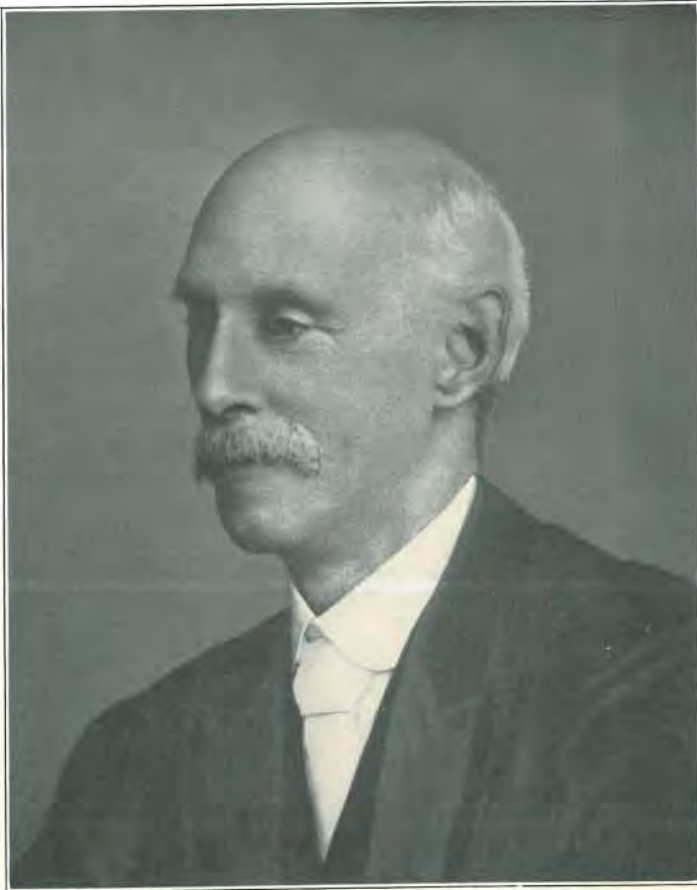
WITH

*BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF HIS LIFE*

*AND WORK*

BY

W. COPELAND BOWIE



[1920

*W. G. Tarrant*

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## PREFACE

MR. TARRANT'S sermons were mostly delivered from a few notes and his prayers were extempore. Consequently, no manuscripts have been available for this volume, except those of a few poems. For a time it was doubted whether under the circumstances a volume of this character ought to be published. Were there not times of inspiration in the pulpit when his best thought was uttered and caught only by his listeners? Were there not moments when his spirit was in communion with the living God and found moving expression? Was it possible to convey to the reader with any clearness the spirit of a preacher who ministered without ostentation or desire for fame to a group of earnest people? These and many other thoughts passed through the minds of those who are responsible for sending forth this volume. It was finally decided to publish prayers and poems which were not to be found in any previous volume, and extracts from sermons which appeared under the heading "The East Hill Pulpit" and were intended for circulation in the locality of his ministry.

It has not been, therefore, without misgiving that this volume has been prepared. The present

writer remembers distinctly the first service he attended which was conducted by Mr. Tarrant. The prayer was so spontaneous yet the language was so marked with beauty that he and friends afterwards wondered whether it was written or was the outpouring of the spirit at the moment. The fact that no prayer has been found in manuscript makes it clear that he was not in the habit of writing his prayers. But such prayers as some of us heard could have come only from a man with a worshipful spirit, whose mind was steeped in the language of devotion. The prayers in this volume have been gathered from the column in the *Inquirer* known as "The Quiet Hour."

Just over eighty sermons appeared in the series of "The East Hill Pulpit." Some of these were concerned with contemporaneous movements in the religious life of the country and were of passing interest. The rest dealt with the principles of religious faith and moral ideals. It would have been easy to choose a dozen or more of these, which were well worthy of publication *in extenso* in book form. But after reading a few of them it became apparent that a truer idea of the preacher and his message would be given if extracts were made. The result is a series of sermonettes, which, though selected passages, are mostly complete in themselves, and will, it is hoped, suggest fruitful lines of thought. They are in their chronological order.

Some of the poems have appeared in the pages of the *Inquirer*: others were found in manuscript. The only one previously published in any volume

is "The Amulet," which forms a fitting close to the volume. This is taken from "Songs Devout," which has been drawn upon extensively for Church Hymnals.

The biographical sketch is appropriately from the pen of his friend, the Rev. W. Copeland Bowie. No one was more intimate with him in work and thought. Together these two men laboured strenuously for four decades to further the liberal faith, which they discovered independently in early manhood.

I have to thank Mrs. Tarrant and Miss Dorothy Tarrant, M.A., for their help in supplying the material; the Rev. Charles Biggins, M.A., B.D., for having lightened my task considerably; and Mr. H. G. Chancellor, President of the National Union of Unitarian and Liberal Christian Lay Preachers, who has shared the responsibility of selection and given valuable hints.

It will be obvious to the reader of the following pages that William George Tarrant was a man who looked out upon the world through kindly eyes and met his fellows with a friendly spirit. His understanding of others was quick and his sympathy was profound. A man with a big heart, he was able to sustain those in sorrow, and his work as a pastor must have awakened gratitude. He was widely read in literature and was also closely acquainted with contemporaneous movements, especially in religion. Being free from all bitterness of spirit, he was able to make comments on the issues of the moment which were illuminating and weighty but never provocative of ill-will.

P R E F A C E

He was gifted with the power to interpret liberal religion to the people. He was thankful for life, which he regarded as a great gift in itself, and he urged others to face each day as a short pilgrimage of the spirit. This will be evident from his words. It was no less evident in the man. Life with its opportunities, its companionships and its adventures awakened within him the abiding faith that the universe is the expression of Eternal Love, and he bent his spirit in worship and service. May the pages which follow help to keep his spirit a little longer with us!

ALFRED HALL,

Sheffield,  
November, 1928.

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## SUPREME HOURS

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND APPRECIATION

BY W. COPELAND BOWIE

WILLIAM GEORGE TARRANT was born in the military barracks at Pembroke, July 2nd, 1853, where his father, Matthew Tarrant, was stationed with his regiment. The knowledge and experience of a father's love were denied the child, for soon after the birth of his son he was ordered to proceed to the Crimea, and he fell at the siege of Sebastopol in 1854. The youthful widow went to reside with her own people at Birmingham, where she eked out her small army pension by doing needlework for her neighbours. The boy was only six years old when his mother's death in 1859 left him an orphan. A paternal aunt took him to her heart and home, and mothered him with an affection that never lost its warmth while she lived. From his seventh to his fourteenth year he attended the Free Industrial School, Birmingham, to which he was sent by the Patriotic Commissioners.

On leaving school he was apprenticed for seven years to the silver trade, and he soon displayed

considerable skill as a craftsman. Many years later, preaching at the Church of the Messiah, he was entertained by one of the wealthy Unitarians of Birmingham, when he noticed on the dinner-table articles of silver which his own hands had fashioned : he took natural pleasure and pride in pointing them out to his host, who in his turn was delighted with the news.

Engaged as a silversmith during the day, his evenings were devoted in large measure to reading and study. Classes at the Midland Institute were diligently attended, and examinations in mathematics and several branches of physical science were successfully passed. Meanwhile as Sunday morning teacher and worshipper at the Church of the Saviour, of which George Dawson, a famous liberal preacher, was minister, a fresh impulse was given to his thought and life. Dawson's successor, George St. Clair, perceived that young Tarrant possessed ability, industry, teaching-power, and a fund of common sense. He was of opinion that the silversmith had the stuff out of which a useful Unitarian minister might be made. A brief residence in Sheffield brought him into contact with Eli Fay, at that time minister of the Upper Chapel, and, acting on his advice, he sought admission to the Unitarian College, Manchester (then the Home Missionary Board).

In 1879, at the age of twenty-six, Mr. Tarrant became a student for the Unitarian ministry. Rapid progress and distinction in his studies secured for him a Scholarship, founded by Mr.

Henry Tate, which enabled him to proceed in 1881 to Manchester New College, London, where he remained two years. Martineau, Drummond, Carpenter and Upton were his teachers, and continued while they lived his beloved friends. He graduated at the University of London in 1883, taking the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

On leaving College he was appointed minister of the recently formed congregation at Wandsworth. The London District Unitarian Society, led by several enthusiastic and capable laymen, of whom Mr. David Martineau and Mr. S. S. Tayler were the most active, was then in the heyday of its missionary zeal. Wandsworth proved the most successful venture of the Society, largely due to the ministry of Mr. Tarrant. The Sunday services were held at first in a small hall at the back of a house facing East Hill, with a side entrance from Tonsley Hill. The present building was erected in 1885 and opened for public worship by Professor Carpenter. Wandsworth was Mr. Tarrant's only charge, where his ministry lasted until 1920, a period of thirty-seven years. Gradually a congregation was gathered of men and women to whom the deeper meaning and purpose of human life and the beauty and majesty of the Divine Presence were made impressively clear. The congregation passed through infancy and youth and attained maturity under the fostering care of a minister who was always a learner as well as a teacher, and whose solicitude for its highest welfare never waned.

Mr. Tarrant's cheerfulness and understanding sympathy were infectious. Young children as well as elderly people instinctively felt his friendliness, and became immediately responsive to his kindly thought and word. Busily occupied, he always made time to call at homes where there was illness or sorrow. Nor were his visits confined to members of his own congregation. He was an ever-welcome comforter and inspirer of the sick and the lonely.

His sermons, usually delivered without manuscript, were the manifest outcome of a sincere and devout mind. They displayed no sensational qualities of style or delivery. Quiet and meditative, they dealt for the most part with the great verities of the moral and religious life. There was nothing of the priest in Mr. Tarrant. By the cultivation and exercise of his powers of thought and feeling and will, man could attain true happiness, and find God above, around, and within his own soul. Illustrations were drawn from life and literature, while the Bible provided an un failing source of instruction and inspiration. The variety and freshness of his discourses were remarkable and impressed those who had regularly heard him preach over a long period of years. Clear and attractive reading in a natural voice is not too common in the pulpit. It was a pleasure to hear Mr. Tarrant read the Scriptures or a passage from a favourite author.

The sermon, however, was not the most characteristic feature of a religious service conducted by Mr. Tarrant. He possessed in an unusual

degree the gift of prayer—a gift which is becoming increasingly rare among educated men and women. The listening worshipper could not avoid feeling that here was a man to whom prayer was natural and spontaneous. Here was evidence that the human spirit may commune with the Divine. Perhaps youthful contact with George Dawson, whose prayers were wonderfully touching and impressive, was not without its influence in nourishing Mr. Tarrant's fine devotional spirit.

Sermons at the best are fugitive productions. The words of even the greatest preachers do not linger long in the memory. With hymns it is different. Many of them are also fugitive; but some of them live. Several of Mr. Tarrant's hymns have already found their way into the collections of various denominations. That a few of his hymns will tune the lips and touch the hearts of worshippers in many churches and lands in years to come there is little doubt. In "Long ago the lilies faded," "Come, let us join with faithful souls," "The Light along the ages," "With happy voices ringing," "Go work in my vineyard," he will be remembered and his verses cherished. Perhaps the best known of all is "The fathers built this city," which has been widely adopted, both in this country and in America, for use on civic occasions. The hymn, "Thou Law without, Thou Life within," doubtless expressed his own personal silent thought of God.

His general knowledge covered a wide range. There were few subjects about which he did not



know something. Experience gained in early life in the handling of tools made it easy for him to do odd jobs about the house, big or little. In the cultivation of his garden he showed knowledge and skill. Flowers, fruit and vegetables were successfully grown in his plot; an hour spent in digging, planting or pruning, before or after the day's allotted tasks, was thoroughly enjoyed. His sermons, hymns and prayers bore witness to a Wordsworthian love of nature. On foot or on bicycle he made himself familiar with the beauty spots of Kent and Surrey. He could identify birds in field or wood by their song or twitter; and the naming of tree or flower or weed seemed to give him no trouble. Fond of music and no mean singer himself, it occasionally fell to his lot when visiting a small congregation to take the place of choirmaster as well as preacher. He was naturally a lover of great literature. He had an intimate knowledge of Shakespeare's plays, Scott's novels, Wordsworth's poems, and a discriminating appreciation of the writings of Tolstoy, Shaw and Wells.

Mr. Tarrant never neglected the duties of citizenship—more difficult to remember in London than in other parts of the country. He was ready to co-operate with people belonging to any denomination or to none in promoting the welfare of the community. He took an active share in the management of Board and Council Schools, where as chairman of a group of managers he was esteemed and trusted by the teachers and beloved by the scholars. As was fitting, he

served on the committee of the Borough Public Libraries. The past history of Wandsworth was studied and attention directed to episodes of abiding interest. The old Huguenot Cemetery in East Hill aroused his keen sympathy, and he succeeded in obtaining funds to erect a Memorial in the cemetery for which he composed a suitable inscription. He followed the developments and twistings of present-day politics with a wistful eye, perplexed at times by the inner and outer conflicts of parties and the vacillating attitude and temper of electorates. Wandsworth did not offer a very promising soil for the growth of the type of Liberalism which he desired to prevail. An ardent Temperance advocate, he encouraged the formation of Bands of Hope for young people, and supported voluntary and legislative efforts to lessen the dire evils of the traffic in intoxicating drink. International friendship was dear to his heart; he missed no opportunity of removing misunderstandings and furnishing facts which tended to purify and strengthen the bonds which link the nations of the world in a common brotherhood.

In the pulpit and on the platform Mr. Tarrant was well known to Unitarians up and down the country. Through the weekly columns of *The Inquirer* he became known to a wider public. For nearly twenty years (1888-97, 1918-27) he was the editor of this important organ of Unitarian Christianity in the British Isles. Only those who have had experience of the ceaseless round of drudgery involved in editing a newspaper where

the planning, a large part of the writing, the proof-reading and endless correspondence fall upon the shoulders of one man will be able to appreciate the industry and resourcefulness of Mr. Tarrant. It has also to be remembered that until 1920 the work of editing the *Inquirer* was combined with his ministry at Wandsworth, attendance at numerous committee meetings, and various local duties. Fortunately, a careful, methodical use of his days and hours, a quick and ready pen, enabled him to get through a mass of work which might easily have overwhelmed another man. His editorship was characterised by intelligence, sobriety of judgment, and good feeling. Like a sensible Unitarian he abstained from gush and sentimentality. But he was no dry-as-dust writer. Gleams of humour, frequent in conversation, occasionally escaped his pen. Satire and irony he considered unbecoming in a religious journal. If now and again he had poured a little scorn on self-important purveyors of ecclesiastical and theological nostrums, some of his readers would have rejoiced; but he preferred to treat them with a charity that never failed. He was unwearied in upholding and presenting Unitarian Christianity as a reasonable and vivifying religious faith—broad, generous, catholic, but not insipid. With those employed in printing and publishing the *Inquirer* he was on the most friendly terms: his cheery presence and greeting were welcomed by all his fellow-workers.

Mr. Tarrant lived too busy a life in the world of affairs to attain eminence as a scholar or

thinker; but he was a diligent and rapid reader, and his reading covered a wide field: he could give a careful analysis and critical interpretation of what he had read. He had no leisure to write a big book, but his literary output was considerable. The files of the *Inquirer* contain many admirable unsigned articles and reviews. "Daily Meditations" and "Night unto Night" have had a large and long-continued circulation among lovers of devotional literature. "The Beginnings of Christendom" (1893), "Our Faith" (1899), "Bee Songs" (1905), "The Story and Significance of the Unitarian Movement" (1910), "Songs Devout" (1912), "Unitarianism" (1912), "Home Prayers for Young People" (1914), "For Girls and Boys" (stories from the *Inquirer*, 1924), are a few of the small books he wrote. During the terrible years of the War he compiled a little volume, "For those who Mourn" (December 1916), which brought comfort to many a stricken heart and home. For the Sunday School Association he edited two annual volumes of "The Helper" (1901-2). For the British and Foreign Unitarian Association he prepared several tracts and pamphlets; and he was one of the editors of the first and subsequent editions of the Essex Hall Hymnal.

To enumerate all the Unitarian institutions and societies with which Mr. Tarrant was connected would involve transcribing several pages of the Essex Hall Year Book. From an early period of his ministry at Wandsworth until within a few weeks of his death, he rendered invaluable

services to the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. He was an excellent committee man—quick to perceive essentials and to pass over trivialities, ready and willing to take more than a fair share of work requiring time for deliberation. He preached the annual sermon in 1904; delivered the Essex Hall Lecture in 1910. He spent a few months in South Africa in 1911, where he founded a Unitarian Church at Johannesburg which, had there been no war, might have become well established. Canada and the United States were visited, and meetings of the International Council in Europe were attended as a representative of the Association. He declined more than one invitation to be nominated as President, preferring to remain an ordinary workman at Essex Hall.

The following are some of the Societies he served: The Unitarian College at Manchester, of which he was one of the Visitors, the Presbyterian Board with the College at Carmarthen, the London District Unitarian Society, the Ministers' Pension and Insurance Fund, the Sustentation Fund, the Sunday School Association, the Temperance Association, the Unitarian Historical Society. For many years he was secretary of the Holt Fund and of the London Chapel Building Fund. Elected a Trustee of Dr. Williams' Charity in 1891, it is doubtful whether in the annals of the Trust anyone rendered longer and more conspicuous voluntary service than Mr. Tarrant.

His brother ministers trusted and loved him.

In times of difficulty they would turn to him for counsel, when his sound judgment and practical good sense were readily placed at their service. He possessed the self-mastery and reticence which enabled him to listen in silence, and to hesitate before passing a verdict which might possibly disappoint or wound a friend. He could not endure bombast or pretence in the ministry of religion; but he was patient with honest feebleness, especially when it was combined with an eager desire to do better work. When consulted about filling vacant pulpits he was studiously careful to point out what to him seemed the strong points in a minister's personality and career, and to extend a large-minded charity over idiosyncrasies of thought or manner.

Mr. Tarrant was a lover of little children and young people. He believed in the Sunday School, and taught and worked in it throughout his ministry at Wandsworth. The drift away from the churches of elder scholars, and of the sons and daughters of those who did not attend Sunday School, gave him serious concern. When schemes for celebrating the Centenary of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in 1925 were under consideration he devised, through the *Inquirer*, a "Harvest of Youth," by means of which 2315 young people were enrolled as members of their respective Churches, whose names are inscribed in a Centenary Roll kept at Essex Hall, London. He hoped that this incentive might open a new era in the attachment of young men and women to Unitarian Churches.

There is no need to dwell upon his attitude to controversial theology. Christological theories are the storm-centre of modern religious thought. They had only a passing interest for Mr. Tarrant. As knowledge widened, and experience deepened, the whole intellectual framework of orthodox Christianity, along with some earlier types of Unitarianism, fell to pieces, past repair. But while much of the current phraseology applied to Jesus was to him empty of meaning, admiration and love for the man of Nazareth—call it discipleship if you will—remained through life.

To the consideration of what may be called the ecclesiastical polity of Unitarians he brought a keen and dispassionate mind. Freedom as the avenue to truth and progress he would safeguard at all cost; but he was impatient with mere vapourings about freedom which led nowhere. He wanted to see useful things done, not idle things talked about. He knew that the souls of men could not be fed on the negations of orthodoxy; and he was not afraid, therefore, to make religious affirmations: his only concern was that the affirmations were true and good. While the proposals for amalgamating the Unitarian Association with the Conference of Churches were under discussion he was uneasy lest the Unitarian movement should lapse into a vague and sapless liberalism, gradually lose its driving force, and cease to have any distinctive missionary aim or purpose. He had confidence, however, that the wisdom and good sense of the general body of ministers and laity would avert the

dangers he so clearly foresaw; and he gave willing and valuable help on the Committee which drew up the scheme for the union of the two bodies.

A year after his settlement at Wandsworth Mr. Tarrant married Alice, daughter of Mr. Henry Stanley of Manchester, a prominent member of the old Strangeways congregation from the days of Brooke Herford's ministry onwards, and an acceptable lay preacher in the Manchester district. In everything he undertook he was encouraged and aided by his wife. The joy and comfort of home-life were always his. A daughter, Dorothy, two sons, Arthur George and Stanley, made up an alert, industrious, happy family circle.

Busily engaged in work up to the last, he fell ill early in November 1927. A grave trouble was diagnosed which developed with unexpected swiftness. He suffered no pain, and died peacefully in his sleep on January 15th, 1928.

There will be general agreement among those who knew him that Mr. Tarrant was an optimist of a rational, not a sentimental type. An atmosphere of bright contagious hopefulness usually surrounded him; but, as with most thoughtful men, there were hours when darkness clouded his vision; happily the light was never long absent, and its rays, generated from within his own soul, enlightened those who came into personal contact with him. His sermons, prayers and hymns touched and influenced his hearers because they came straight from the mind and

heart and experience of a living man; while his own character was continuously enriched by freely bestowing his gifts. He was one who sought "to walk daily on earth as in his Father's Kingdom."

Mr. Benson Lawford, a member of his congregation with whom he often took country walks, composed the lines which follow in commemoration of the funeral service, which was conducted by the Rev. Percival Chalk, at the Unitarian Church, Wandsworth, on January 18th. They make a fitting ending to this sketch of Mr. Tarrant's life and labours.

"Wise man, fine preacher, well-loved friend of all,  
Who knew the ardour of that fire divine  
Which in and through you splendidly did glow,  
Sadly we gather here in your old church,  
To bid the earthly frame a last farewell.

The voice we loved is silent: now no more  
Your cheery greeting sends us on our road,  
Rejoicing at the welcome clasp of hand,  
At all times free to proffer friendly aid.

Most natural 'tis to mourn: yet, were you here,  
Methinks you'd bid us up and play the man,  
As you have done throughout your vigorous life.  
So let it be: but, Master, ere we part,  
Once more upon our sober way to wend,  
Take this poor tribute from a laden heart—  
Across the void I greet you, dear my friend.

MEMORIAL TABLET

Members of the congregation and other friends subscribed towards a Memorial to Mr. Tarrant which included a Tablet placed in the Unitarian Church, Wandsworth, with this inscription:—

IN THANKFUL REMEMBRANCE OF  
WILLIAM GEORGE TARRANT, B.A.  
FIRST MINISTER OF THIS CHURCH, 1883-1920,  
WHO DIED AT WANDSWORTH, JANUARY 15TH, 1928,  
AGED 74.

GREATLY BELOVED BY YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE,  
HE ABLY AND JOYFULLY SERVED THE COMMUNITY  
AMONG WHOM HE LIVED, AND THE UNITARIAN  
DENOMINATION OF WHICH HE WAS AN HONOURED MEMBER,  
WHILE THE UNIVERSAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH HAS BEEN  
ENRICHED BY HIS HYMNS OF PRAYER AND PRAISE.

On November 12th, 1928, the Memorial Tablet was dedicated and an address delivered by the Rev. C. J. Street, M.A., LL.B., Joint President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (1928).

PRAYERS

O thou, in whom alone is our eternal rest, we thank thee for the thoughts of peace which thou givest us amid our passing time and the weakness of our mortality. Strengthen us now in our faith in things unseen. Let it not be in vain that we bear the name of Christ, in name alone that we are Christians, but let a true discipleship confirm our purpose of brave and honourable service, of love that is unwearied in well-doing, and of humble consecration of our lives to thee. O God, our times are in thy hand; let our hope and trust be evermore in thee. Lead us to greater faithfulness and more joyful faith. Whatever the coming days may bring, let them bring us nearer to thee.

Almighty and everlasting God, make us each ministering spirits to one another, tears mingling with tears, and joy with joy. Soothe the pangs of disappointed hope and of effort that has seemed all in vain. We would enter into holy fellowship with all we love, both far and near; and also with our beloved Dead. May we be still haunted by their presence, and inspired by their memory. Control unruly desires; subdue unholy feelings; o'er every wounded place pour the balm of healing; o'er troubled waters may the dove of

peace brood. If the shadows deepen, may trust grow deeper too. Let no terrors daunt, no thing of fear have power to make us quit the path appointed us to tread.

O Lord most merciful, beneath thine eye the secrets of our hearts are open, alike the hidden faults, the silent prayers, the sorrows none other may share, the hopes and longings that we cannot speak. Good for us it is to dwell in the sweet and solemn consciousness of thy nearness and thy perfect insight, and in all times and in all places to know our great Friend and Helper is at hand. With humble thanksgiving we would drink anew of the springs of holy inspiration and divine comfort. Make clean our hearts from every dark and evil thing, heal our infirmities, strengthen our will, and through thy mercy may we still go on to learn the wisdom that makes perfect, the peace that abides, the gracious spirit of Jesus Christ.

Into the calm of communion with thee, O God, we gather with grateful hearts. Thou wilt hide us from the strife of tongues; thy greatness will be our stronghold, thy goodness our source of peace and joy. Let not our ignorance of the far-off issues of life discomfort us; but keep us faithful in the present hour to all the high duties and spiritual leadings by which thou dost visit us. Our pathway can never lie outside thy providence, and with thee on our side no harm can assail us. As little ones in our trust, tender-hearted in our love and sympathy, manly and

brave in our battle for truth and justice, may we pass all our days; and so be guided through things lowly to the glories of the perfect life.

Eternal God, that blessest the springing of the seed and the ripening of the fruit, unto thy keeping we commit all our doings and our sayings, and pray thee of thy fulness to fill them with the strength of life, and to bring them unto the fruition of peace and righteousness. When we are weakest, show us thy gentleness; when we are most eager to do great things, show us thy wisdom that works in silence, waiting patiently, using lowliest means, oft making souls perfect through suffering. Renew in us the mind of Christ, and lead us in his footsteps, both here in the troubled years of time, and there in the eternity of blessedness and peace.

Lord, in whose kingdom they abide who serve truly and love much, may this be ever our heart's desire, that we may be numbered with thy saints, and wear upon our souls, purified by thy discipline, some radiance of the glory everlasting. When around us the world is unlovely, and sordid things are done, and evil abounds, let some ray from thee break through upon us; comfort us with hope, and hold us steadfast in duty. When we strive and toil, and all seems in vain, help us to be patient. When companions are denied, be thou our helper; when our beloved depart from us, be thou our peace. Bless all our labours and

make fruitful the seed we sow in pureness of heart. And at all times let thy mercy and thy majesty so graciously beset us that new songs may be in our mouth from day to day, until that endless Day, when, in the kingdom that is perfected, we shall unfailingly serve thee and love thee, redeemed from all evil and every sorrow, praising thee evermore.

O Lord, we beseech thee that into our hearts may be poured such full, strong life that we may daily rise into victory over every evil thing, and pass through this world of trial and temptation unharmed. Thy help is all we need—shine in upon us and reveal the ways by which that help cometh. May we never yield to the wayward mood that seeks hither and thither for its own pleasure, but may we sit patient at thy gates, waiting for the appearing of thy divineness in the midst of things most lowly. Breathe from the fields of spring upon us, speak to us in voices of nature, lead by the light of true and holy affections, and let the beauty of our Lord be upon us evermore.

O Lord, whose love hath treasures that no heart can conceive, open our eyes and purify our affections, so that we may no longer feel ourselves outside the gate of heaven, but even now may enter there, where abideth fulness of joy. To the valiant soldier of the faith, brave but weary, grant a season of sweet repose. To the bruised and broken spirit reveal thy gracious comfort. Strengthen the weak, make calm the mind dis-

turbed, hallow the struggling will, set free every finer faculty, remove the burden from every soul. In loving may we know thy love; and as we whisper peace and hope in the ear of the mourner and the troubled one, speak thou anew to us. Lift up thy children from the dust and teach them thine eternal truth and goodness. May thy blessing descend on every home, and old friends take on new bonds of fellowship. Comfort the lonely; succour the fatherless and bereaved. And in us all may his peace abide who went about doing good, who blessed the meek and comforted the sad, and proclaimed the boundless Love of the Father.

O Lord, our God, in the consciousness of thy nearness our minds are raised above things mean and unworthy; thy presence, inwardly felt, stills the strife of tongues; thy protection becomes our support; thy love is our joy. Come, then, upon us in holy power, flood our whole being with new energy, and point us the way we should go. Amid the many cares and duties of the day may we be wise to discern eternal issues; and being found faithful in these few things, call us in thine own time to all higher work which thou hast for us to do. And if this is our life's highest work, to be humble, patient, diligent, true, open our eyes to see it; and of thy mercy keep us from falling.

O God, we bow in our lowliness and ignorance, with the prayer that thou wouldst lift us from the dust whereunto our souls do cleave. The

passing of our days so swiftly, the waning of things once so great in our eyes, the opening horizon before us so full of new and perplexing problems—these things trouble us, and we have nowhere to turn for help but thy presence. Could we but live ever thus, feeling thee close beside us, what fears we should escape, what sinful moods we should avoid. Mercifully show thy glory unto us, radiant in the physical world, tender in human love, perfect in the discipline of the souls that wait upon thee. Guard us in every word and work of ours, shelter us in time of storm, lead us along our appointed way, and at the last grant us eternal peace.

O God, who hast been unto fathers and mothers in years past a strength unailing, be thou unto their children a constant guide; and so may thy love mingle with ours that in every home there may be an increase of the heavenly treasure that years cannot diminish or death take away. May thy lonely ones, all known of thee, know a new peace in the sense of thy nearness; may the sad be comforted; may the sinful be cleansed of every stain. And when no longer in this world we meet, give us all, we pray thee, to enter the Light beyond these shadows and to dwell in the Love that is for evermore.

Through all life's tasks, and troubles, and mysteries, as well as in times of pleasantness, teach us, Lord of all, daily to discern thy working more and more. May our hearts' vision of thee, the one perfect, abiding, all-



merciful God, never be dimmed, whatever be our lot. In prosperous seasons, and in times of adversity; in the hour of strength, and in the night of pain; in dull days, when the world is dreary and those around us seem harsh and evil; in sad days when our conscience is afraid because of remembered sin; comfort and inspire us with thy continual help. Lift us from the dust; clothe us in the love that thankfully enjoys, the peace that trustfully surrenders, and the faith that commits to thy tender love, all our past, all that we are, all that we shall be.

O Thou who givest us our life, give us wisdom to use life well. May we every day find that, with each onward step of time, there is an upward step in character. May there be no day in which we are not victorious over some temptation, over some evil; no day in which we are not heroic in some endurance or achievement; no day in which we are not imitators of the divine example. Teach us every day how to find our life in the things that are known to us and which thou art putting into our hand. May we know how to be content with such things as we have; may we walk as children of God ever beloved, walk as in thy presence, and live as seeing thee who art invisible.

Grant us, O Lord, the quiet mind, the lowly self-regard, the lofty aspiration of souls that truly seek to be thine. Through all our words and deeds may our light so shine that thou mayest be glorified. And that this may be so, quicken

our ears to catch the voice of the beloved Master as it pronounces blessings on the pure, the peaceable, the merciful, the forgiving; as it calls us to follow him in all the sweet services of love and duty. If we at any time grow weary in well-doing, help us the more, and in thy strength we shall rejoice. If we mourn over things dead and evil, put thou a new song into our mouths, even thanksgiving for those things of life and good which we richly enjoy. And so by thy love made manifest to us, make us glad in the midst of troubles, hopeful in the hour of defeat, and blest with the peace of the beloved Son.

O Love Eternal, who hast taught us also to know love's sweet way, let thy light shine through all our affections and friendships, and keep them bright day by day. Let no cold shadow of estrangement fall upon our lives, whom thou hast made for each other, but make us to be to our beloved as at our best we mean to be. And so may we use well these opportunities of time, bringing gladness and good wherever we go, that thy light may be ever clearer about us and within; until in thy leading we all come to the life of love undimmed, in that Presence where for ever is fulness of joy.

O thou who hast called us in thine own way to use thy gifts to us for others' good, may all who teach be thy scholars themselves, learning day by day more truth from thy creation, more beauty, more patience and hope. Help them with thankfulness to discern whatever is good

and beautiful in little children and in all who come around them for guidance and encouragement. In times of trial and of weariness refresh their hearts with a vision of harvests that yet shall be, when the seed thou gavest them springs up into fruitful life in the days to come. And so may young and old, teachers and taught, be led aright through all the perils of this world, and at last together enter into the joy of their Lord.

O Giver of Good, who art ever with us, filling our years with countless blessings, we bring thee at this time our sacrifice of deep thanksgiving; and we pray thee now to crown all thy gifts with an outpouring of the Spirit of Remembrance, that we may more truly perceive and more constantly and devoutly acknowledge the great things done for us and for our fathers in the days that are past. So may we be redeemed from the hardness of a selfish care and a faithless fear, and be set forward on our way with a heart of quiet trust that the God of the fathers will be ever with the children, unto all generations. O, thou Father in heaven, pardon what is wrong in us, pity what is feeble; and as thou hast wrought great things for thy people, so may great things be wrought through them, until the whole world is won for thee and all mankind live in peace and truth together as the people of God, in the spirit of thy son, Jesus Christ.

O thou who givest us our life day by day, we thank thee for the light and hope that dawn newly upon us. Help us to walk in the light,

with a clear and upright conscience, doing to the utmost of our ability each several task that is committed to our charge. Thou knowest our infirmities, alike of the flesh and of the spirit; keep us from ignoring our danger of stumbling, but save us also from a mind too anxious, seeing that thou art ever near to guard our footsteps, if we but look to thee. So from day to day may we go on diligently and trustfully all our appointed way, even to the end; and then may thy light cheer the eventide.

Heavenly Father, in these quiet moments of our spirit's life, when we have shut the door and are alone with thee, grant that we may seek earnestly, and not in vain, that strength, that light, that inspiration, which is only to be found near thee. And when from this holy Presence we go forth again to the scene of our labours, our duties, and our trials, may we feel that Presence ever near. When we are strong, may we work as for thee with our whole heart and mind and spirit. When we are weak and wounded, may we lean on thee, and in patience wait, till the power of action calls us again to labour. When clouds and darkness gather around us, may we endeavour to pierce the screen, and seek the light which we know lies beyond it. And when the lengthening shadows falling across our path of life warn us that the end draws near, may our heart's prayer be, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."

O tell us again, thou tenderest of all Voices, the great things that we so often fail to recall amid the fevered rush and noise of the world around us; tell us once more that our paths are all known, our troubles all shared, and our longings for goodness all welcomed by the Holy One who is ever near to us, and who would have us draw ever nearer to him. When we and all that we do seem all but lost in a creation so vast, in a stream of being that is from everlasting to everlasting, whisper again within us the assurance of our birthright among the immortal sons of the Ever-Living Father. So shall the common uses of earth and the familiar changes of the sky, a ceaseless fountain of universal life, help us from hour to hour in our labours and our cares, bringing about us and our work and our homes the vesture of wonders divine, the sense of blessings that are infinite.

Bless fathers, mothers, children, O great Friend of all. Keep alive in the hearts of busied men the loveliness of their early wondering love for the lives put into their keeping. Soothe and sustain the home-making women who grow tired with the thousand cares of home and the clashing of wayward wills; may their altar flame still be fed secretly, so that in patience, watchfulness, and ceaseless kindness, they may show their little ones the life they would have them lead. Bless the young hearts whom thou art helping to believe in the Father in Heaven through belief in their father and mother on earth. And

bless the lonely, who hunger for human love, that they also may show forth in their lives some rays of the beauty of the Lord.

Lord God, we need thy help in our burdened life. Thou hast given us to see the far-off goals of the Right, the Pure, the Just and True; wilt thou not guide us thither, sustaining us in the long and toilsome way, lifting us up when we stumble and fall? Not in our own strength can we do anything as it should be done; but "thy grace is sufficient"—in that thought may we have peace, and hope renewed, and hearts brave to endure.

Lord of all the worlds without, rule thou in all the worlds within; so that every one of us may be preserved in the peace that abideth where thy law is loved and thy will obeyed. Show us continually more and more of thy beauty as long as we live, so that ourselves also, raised into that heavenly vision, may shed in our measure its radiance upon earth; and unto thee be the glory for ever.

O Lord and Father of us all, teach us all this day as we need. Teach the weak in judgment and the transgressors the shame and evil of their ways; teach the tearful and stricken in their affliction, and the prosperous in their joy. Teach such as fail for lack of a higher inspiration the inspiring faith of thy Son, and such as are perplexed in their anxiety to deal prudently, the path of wisdom. Teach the complaining patience,

the envious content, the cross-grained charity, the self-engrossed to look upon the things of others. And that we and all thy children may better learn the way of Life Eternal, even while yet we walk this earth, may the whole Christian Church better learn at this time from Christ its Master the truths and comforts of the spirit, and with power and freshness impart them to the world. So may thy kingdom come, and thy will be done, for ever and ever.

O Giver of good, we also would give good according to our power. We feel our own needs, but would not blind our eyes to the needs of others. Forbid it that our thoughts should be so centred on ourselves, even on our own spiritual struggles, as not to see the cares and troubles of those by our side whom we might help, and guide, and cheer. All our power to give must come from thee; now, therefore, we humbly lay ourselves before thee that thou mayst pour into our whole being life more abundantly. Thus may we and our brethren around us rise nearer to the goodness divine. Thy will be done in us, and by us, and for us, evermore.

We thank thee, O God, for the endless renewing of life. Thou that art never weary of setting us free from the bonds wherewith we have bound ourselves, make us to walk in this new day without fear or any kind of bondage. Open our eyes to receive new light; open our ears to hear the voices that are calling us to make the

world new by the power of love. Fit us for the task that is assigned us, and endue us with the spirit of that heavenly kingdom which is to come upon the earth, where all shall be brothers and men shall be the people of God.

To thee, O Lord, who hast given us this wondrous life, moulding us out of the dust of earth and the light of heaven, making us man—with infirmities innumerable, and yet with loves and hopes and dreams unspeakable—to thee we turn as flowers follow the sun. Lord, while we only know of thee that thou dost bless us, thou knowest us altogether, alike in our frailties and our longings, in our sins and in our prayers. To thee we turn; oh, may thy sunshine fall now into our very heart, and cleanse it, and glow within it, and thence pour forth again in all that is help-giving and good. Then, when thy flower's little season is over, may its seeds remain for seasons yet to come and its secret for ever abide safe with thee.

O God, who art perfect and "our Father," let the remembrance of thee be more and more a help to us in our weak and imperfect life. May it remind us how imperfect we are; and then, being made humble-minded, we shall be kept from words and deeds that vex and hinder our brethren, thy children, around us. And still, in our lowliness, may we be resolute and brave and joyous; and, being led on from strength to strength, may we come at last into the full shining of thy perpetual presence, and live as in

thine own Life Eternal, and be channels of thy Love in all wise and beautiful ways, now and for ever.

O thou who didst set our mortal feet upon the path of life, prosper thou our travelling by thy continual guidance and help. To the clever and young give wisdom to look well to their going, lest they fall into a snare. To the stout-hearted give a song, that they may march cheerily through the wilderness, and triumph over every testing way. To the weary and worn whisper thou thy secrets of perpetual companionship and perfect sympathy, as of One who knows all and for ever loves them. And, in thine own time, our Father God, bring all thy travellers home.

O Thou who hast wonderfully given to each one of us power to help those with whom we live, give us also such wisdom that we may use our power aright. In speech and action, in thought and life, may ours at all times be an influence for good in this world, cheering the brave-hearted in their fight for what is true and right, and comforting them with hope renewed whenever they suffer defeat. So may the beauty of the Lord grow around the path we tread, and thy kingdom be established on earth more and more, until we all come to the peace and love of Christ.

O Thou who in thine own mysterious way hast called us into this world of mingled joy and sorrow, help us, we pray thee, to accept

loyally such discipline as thou dost appoint for us. O God, thou knowest that we suffer most just because we deeply love; we are most disappointed because we aspire to the highest and best we know. Save us from despair; let us not try to find our peace in indifference. In thine own time make perfect thy will concerning us; thou wilt not let thy best gifts, the loving heart and tender conscience, betray those who most do treasure them. Guide us, and aid us in our daily life, so that at last we may share and rejoice in the triumph of thy kingdom, when all shall do thy will on earth as it is done in heaven.

#### THE LAST PRAYER.

O thou who sendest the Sons of Men into this breathing world clad in weakness and helplessness, yet so that hearts are moved towards them from the first in pity and yearning, and soon perceive a surpassing loveliness in their innocence and opening life, grant unto us ever to see that beauty in the buds of humanity that shall be a prophecy of glories to be unfolded when the full flower blooms. And so may we adore thee, the Giver of Childhood, that we may come at last to worship thee perfectly, even in our own being, so long as we shall live; and when thou dost call us one by one to a new birth in worlds unknown, may we be fitted by the lessons and loves of earth to live the heavenly life in all its fulness, with the blessed of all generations for ever and ever.

## SELECTIONS FROM SERMONS

## PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

"I speak as to wise men: judge ye what I say."—I Cor. x. 15.

As Unitarians we trust in the living God, living in this age as really as ever in the past, the Source of all life, the Inspirer of all onward effort towards higher excellence in body and in mind. Human intellect, we confess, must come short of the great reality which we name God. The boundless universe does not more absolutely dwarf this tiny planet than the full being of God transcends the thought of Man. And yet in the boundless universe the tiny earth has a place of its own; and man's intellect, humble though it be, is able to conceive something of that Eternal Spirit in whom "we live and move and have our being." We trust the report of our faculties when they tell us of an all-encompassing order, an irresistible energy, and an all-pervading beauty that ranges from the grace of a snowdrop to the majesty of the midnight sky, and finds its inner counterpart in the loveliness of true thought and the grandeur of a noble character. When we speak of God we mean Him whose idea and purpose thus become evident to us. He is for us not "the last term in a logical argument," but an inseparable element of the enlightened consciousness.

Of this Divinity, that thus holds our minds to Him as the stars are held together by the power of gravitation, we find that there has been a progressive revelation. The infant at school cannot grasp the lessons of the university student; and primitive man, as the representative of the race in an infant stage, had naturally and inevitably other ideas of God than we—other and inferior. But when we say "inferior" it is not by way of boast; it is rather to acknowledge our indebtedness. For all along the years there has been accumulating the wisdom which men inherit to-day. Gradually but surely there has been in men's minds an unveiling of the supreme good, the truth, the glory, the love of God. And the process is going on, revelation is not sealed. Here to-night, where in any mind a new glimpse of truth comes, a clearer apprehension of what was dim, a surer grasp of what was timidly hoped, God is manifesting Himself to you. In different ways we "learn what God is like," as Faber sings: the common fault of Christians is that they have taken too narrow a view of revelation. For us there is no limit but the limit of our understanding. Doubtless, when we can understand better, we shall see infinitely more; and where we now confess our perplexity we shall—like the child that at length understands its father—only wonder the more at the admirable glory of all. But even now, "being evil," we recognise good around us in countless things; especially in the lives of men, whether seen by us or spoken of in biography or history. Thus daily experience becomes a revelation to us;

and ancient record is for ever a fount of new instruction. And while we gratefully use all means of uplifting and edification, we, with religious people generally, acknowledge especially the preciousness of private and public prayer, in which we can pour out our thanksgivings to God, and renew in devout communion the holiest affections and noblest purposes. We also gratefully use the Bible, for in it we find a store unequalled of practical wisdom, of high inspirations, and of sustaining thoughts about God, the Heavenly Father. There, too, we find the records of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who is himself a transcendent revelation to us of the love that redeems and sanctifies mankind.

## LOVE, JOY, PEACE

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.”—Gal. v. 22.

As when a stream issues from the repose of some sunless cave to leap hither and thither down the rocks, flashing and curving and making music on the hillside, so the latent glories of human nature break forth when, obedient to the law of its life, it accepts its destiny and escapes from sluggish ease into the strenuous activities of “the spirit.”

Bring tints wisely together, and you get the resultant glory of a picture, ranging from the simplicity of the purpled violet to the complex richness of the autumn fields. Bring sounds and pauses together, and you get melodies and harmonies that triumph, that soothe, that hallow the

listener's mind. Bring souls together—and as the soul is higher than the luminous patch of matter, far above the vibrations of reeds or strings, so out of this combination a new something manifests itself, of which all the beautiful results of other combinations are but types and shadows. If “the eternal spirit,” which we seek restlessly at first, and perhaps fitfully, but more persistently the more we realise the temporary character of all else, were simply a neutral force, a kind of inevitable gravitation acting upon our minds, as the physical gravitation sways the planets in their courses, still we might marvel that such systematic order and dignity had been produced. We do not find ourselves in the presence of a neutral unsympathetic activity, which by a series of lucky accidents results in adjustments that move us to admiration. Whatever mysteries belong to that which binds the elements of the world around us into this combination or that, we find, when its work is—if I may use the phrase—“translated into terms of consciousness,” that it gives forth *Love, Joy, Peace*, a priceless music, a glory above the passing pleasures of creature life, as the shining stars are above the gaslights of the city. These are the fruits of the one great Spirit in us; where “the spirit” is energetic in man, there abound *Love, Joy, Peace*.

It is better to have these things than to talk learnedly about them; better to know the joy of loving than to guess all the reasons why it is the finest joy on earth. There is no pleasure like giving pleasure. There is no joy like creating

joy. As to the joys of our creature life, grateful as they are to our senses, they are manifestly localised and individualised. What you partake of them is yours, and your neighbour's is his. But the joy of love, the fruit of "the spirit," is actually increased by sharing. Like fire, it is a product that produces its kind, and loses nothing in the process, but gains. This is indeed the miracle of feeding thousands with the smallest store. The Lord of all breaks this bread of life for us, and the multitudes are filled, and there remains more than there was at first. Did you ever teach a willing child, or the pathetically hungry mind of man or woman? Is there any lesson on that subject more fruitful to you than the lesson you gave? Did you never comfort a tired heart, and not feel the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, in your own heart, the more at the close than when you began? Surely, if one man's experience interprets all, as I think it does, there is no joy in all the course of man's seventy years so sweet, and full, and pure, and strong as that of kindling the fire of true life in another, making his lamp to burn a little more brightly, putting into his heart courage, truth, the manliest manliness.

#### FORGIVENESS AND REDEMPTION

WHEN we see a great majority of the followers of Jesus so extremely jealous of his honour that they will have as little as possible to do with us Unitarians, though I hope we love him as truly as they do, I turn "back to Jesus," from his fol-

lowers to himself. Surely we may depend upon this, that he was less anxious to be championed, defined and adored, to be called "Lord, Lord," than to get people to trust the divine Power and to obey the divine Will. If we do that, we are in his "Kingdom of Heaven" already; and we are his disciples if we love one another.

So we stand gratefully looking to his light, as seen in his plainest and simplest sayings and in his life of doing good, as well as reflected in the devoted lives of those who kept closest to his lead. We have set aside the old Jewish and heathen notions of a propitiatory sacrifice. We do not think that Jesus died to win God's forgiveness for us, but that he lived to inspire us with perfect trust in the Fatherly pity and sympathy amid which it is good to feel we live, in spite of all that tries us and at times saddens us. We feel that the one thing he specially desired was that men should live in willing service of one another, mercifully, forgivingly, peacefully. Does anyone think that life such as his—I mean as to its spirit and aims—a life of doing good, and being good, is nothing to the world? Does anyone think Jesus Christ existed in vain? He will not think so, if he will but set himself earnestly to follow that life. If you can only fasten on a tiny bit of genuine Christianity and embody it in your own daily life, it is sure to verify itself as a blessed thing for you and those around you.

Come, search experience through, and see whether a case can be found of a man putting in thorns and getting grapes from them. Where



is there a jot of evidence, apart from the superstitious practices and traditions of an unenlightened age, that I can do a bad thing, and yet by priests, professions, or prayers can have things be as if I had done right? There is simply no such evidence to be found, and when you come to the working side of life, and leave off trying to salve the guilty conscience with remedies that are no remedy, you find everybody, the most pronounced substitutionists included, acting on the conviction that such a theory will not work. You must do right in order to get to the right result.

What, then, about *forgiveness*? Do we believe in it? Certainly; for day by day we breathe the prayer to be forgiven, and, I hope, we practise the noble duty of forgiveness towards others. I hope we are willing often to put up with the offences of others, knowing, as we do, that we all offend; and when anyone who has wronged us, even shamefully, convinces us that he is truly sorry for it and desires to be at peace with us, far be it from us to be unrelenting and drive our penitent brother away. Let us forgive thoroughly and from the heart, else how shall we look for that sweet peace that comes when the sinful heart, turning penitently to the Father of all, casts itself on His mercy and help, and feels that all will yet be well? Just as in the body the healing processes set up as soon as the disturbing thing is removed, so in the spiritual life a new start is mercifully granted when the evil is cast out. There is no more room to doubt the one fact or the other; our common experience verifies the assurances of

the wisest prophets of every age, that with the Eternal there is "plenteous forgiveness," that to every soul truly penitent there comes the gracious assurance that "the Lord willeth not the death of a sinner, but that he should turn from his wickedness and live," and a voice that says, "Go in peace, sin no more."

Does this, however, imply that the consequences of former ill-doing are averted? Only in so far as the new resolution, the changed feeling in the offender's mind, is the source of a new consequence, which checks and modifies the total result in his personal life. Outwardly, it would be sheerest folly to expect that penitence, however deep and sincere, could in itself secure anything. It must be the new life of obedience to the "law" that alone can secure the fruits of obedience. To return to Christ's own figure of speech, the thorn having been planted, it cannot bring forth grapes, be the erring planter never so sorry about his folly and sin in planting it. The only way to get the grapes is to uproot the thorn and put in the vine. Or, as George Eliot says: "It never will rain roses; if we want to have more roses, we must plant more trees," and trees of the right sort.

As to man's being "the author of his own spiritual fortunes," there is just as much truth in that as there is in saying that the gardener is the producer of the roses, and no more. If the gardener did not plant rose trees in his garden there would be no roses there; and if he did not attend to the soil, and secure the proper amount of moisture and keep the way open for the sunshine

and fresh air, his plants would dwindle. He does his part certainly, and it is a right manly and worthy part, if he is a wise worker. But who is so blind as not to see that he is really only a co-worker with that SOMETHING that he has to reckon with? He plants the tree, but the law of its growth by virtue of which it becomes covered with leaf and blossom is the thought of another Mind. The sunshine and air and rain and earth, with their invigorating and sustaining properties, are the contribution of another Worker. And how indispensable these are need not be said, nor how proper it is for the thoughtful man to turn with lowly wonder, gratitude, and dependence to this great Helper through whose wisdom and beneficence alone the man's own work comes to success.

THE CHURCH MILITANT AND THE CHURCH  
TRIUMPHANT

There was a time when some who truly loved good and hated evil were shut out of fellowship, because to belong to Christ's Church you must be enrolled in some visible organisation claiming to have the only true creed, the only true sacraments. Now we say, being taught by long and painful experience, that the Church of Christ is the most inclusive society of all, and none of us may presume to lay down its limits. Who are we, and what is our knowledge of the inner lives of men, that we should usurp the awful functions of the Judge, and separate the sheep from the goats? Surely it is more wise, as it is more profitable, to look not for the marks that

exclude, but for those that most certainly indicate the character of God-fearing good-seeking men! We may not belong to any outward and visible Church Militant, but we humbly trust to belong to that which, in its very vastness invisible to man, is seen of God who knows all His children. And we recognise as fellow-members of this magnificent army all who in any way are building up the bulwarks of the city of God, all who teach truth, who bring peace, who serve faithfully, who love purely, who increase the world's life in that which is life indeed - its virtue, its beauty, its wisdom and goodness.

No human mind can adequately conceive the range and intensity of this warfare of evil in which we and all the Church Militant are engaged. Within all the busy life of the world around there is the personal life of each one; and there is a hidden struggle, alternating between victory and defeat, in countless souls. We cannot see far into these secret experiences of other lives; not for slight ends we may be sure has the Eternal thus severed soul from soul, and dropped around each the veil which only He can always enter. But while the Christian infers something of others' warfare, he knows his own, and it is upon the issue there on his private battle-field with wrong that he knows his share in the final triumph of good will depend. Is he to be "saved so as by fire," to be snatched an unwilling brand from the burning, or will he say, "Weak though I am, here by God's help will I stand, and upon these little years which make up my island of time in the

ocean of eternity, God shall find in me at least a faithful watcher, a sentinel not asleep at his post, but one that, be the issue of victory far off or near, does all a man's part, a Christian's part, the part of a child of the Eternal Father, to bring it nearer " ?

That a soul may be defeated on that private battle-ground, that this Church Militant whose battle is after all the battle of individual soldiers each in his place, may thus be shamed in him is but too certain. But this great cry breaks from the heart of all who ever felt God as a reality in their lives, " Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, though I fall yet shall I arise ! " There is the great Resurrection, the perpetual Easter, the rising again of souls that know their lives are " hid with Christ in God. " Put forth in the anguish of conscious defeat, that cry is the surest token that defeat is not for ever. " Faint yet pursuing, " is the motto of many a sad, struggling spirit. There might be a worse ; for to pursue implies a belief in the end ; and the end, far off as it may be, is nothing less than that glorious consummation, seen by prophets, sung by poets, lived and died for by the whole Militant Church in all ages, when sin and evil and death shall be no more ; but God, the perfect God, having won all souls to Himself, shall be All in All.

Upon that far-off glory, which may be nearer for us than we may think, let your gaze rest quietly to-day. There are some things so simple, as this is, that men are reluctant to believe them. They want some strange thing, like poor Naaman in

the old legend, who looked for some chiromancy and imposing ceremony. So men go groping about for assurance as if with candle-lights, seeking to verify the strange reportings of obscure folk in a dim age. Oh, blessed are they that have not seen and yet believe, that have learned to trust implicitly in the ultimate victory of good, whether taught by this method or another.

For me, as, I believe, for many thoughtful people, it is increasingly difficult to peer about the empty tomb for the flesh and blood that never could and never can inherit the kingdom of heaven. It is ever more natural, ever more helpful, to look upon the intelligible life of Christ than to ponder the perplexing marvels spoken about him, perplexing and often more provocative of doubt than helpful to faith. So I drop the candle and lo ! the very heavens seem light as day around me. Can I believe that a mindless world somehow generated the love, the pity, the sublime faith and the tender wisdom of Christ, and that the cross of Calvary put an end to it all ? Can I imagine the long succession, the wide array of the world's splendid believers in good, workers for good, passionate lovers of good, was given forth by a capricious power that, capricious as it was, still left enough seeming method in the sequence to deceive them all from age to age, and that this Church Militant was doomed to utter nothingness, to no fruition, no eternal end that should crown the work of time ? To ask such questions is to appeal to what is sanest in us to judge of the sanity of the God who is over all.

Firmly, then, plant your feet as on a rock; upon that basal thought, "evil shall *not* be the ultimate victor," and at once the problem, in theory so difficult as some find it, begins in practice to solve itself. Standing there, how strongly, how earnestly, you can fight the good fight! Each successive encounter, each valiant attempt to live one more good day, to do one more good deed, to say another true word, to spend another hour of loving life, puts on new value with this regard. Not only is each a precious piece of life's gold, current here and now and known at once for genuine, but it bears an image and superscription that is common to all, the image of the all-conquering King and the superscription, "For Time and for Eternity."

"AS HIS CUSTOM WAS"

"As his custom was,"—Luke iv. 16.

WE are told that the planet on which we live is kept true to its orbit around the sun in virtue of two vast impulses, one tending to drive the globe straight on through space, and the other tending to pull it towards the sun. If either acted alone, universal ruin would come upon all things terrestrial; but they continue from moment to moment true to the law of their being, and by their joint operation the earth swings safely on in the perfection of its yearly course.

Each individual life of man may be said to manifest the result of a similar pair of factors. One

is the vital energy of the original impulse with which the child of man is launched into this world. The other is the power of the habits which control and direct this original stock of force. By the co-operation of these two the man's destiny is shaped as long as he exists upon earth. Each has a profound bearing upon the success or failure of his existence; but, as every reasoning mind will see, the honour or dishonour of a man's career depends on the second of these two factors rather than on the first. For it is of this that he has more command, and it is concerning this, therefore, that he is more responsible.

The geographers tell us that when we stand upon some hillside and glance with delight across some widespread valley, now clothed in all the glory of the Spring, we are not to think that the hollow was cleft asunder by some mighty convulsion, and the sloping sides smoothed by giant hands. Here and there may perhaps be found a chasm that has been rent by earthquake or volcanic action; but for the great majority of valleys on our beautiful land this is the simple truth, the agent that hollowed each was a little stream. You see its representative still there, shining like silver under the green branches below. That little stream, finding its way over the surface, at first in a tiny dip of the soil, has, by constant working in countless years, at last worn away the hollow and drawn (as it were) after it the rills that every shower has made upon the sloping sides. It is so when we look at any truly beautiful result in

the life of men. I come now and again into homes that are rich with the unpurchasable treasures of a true home-life. I ask, what brings this sweet valley of comfort and domestic blessedness here? and the answer is, not that some good fairy waved her wand over the house yesterday, or last year, or at any time, but that from the first day on which the father and mother began their home-life together, right on while the children have been coming into it and growing there, the stream of wise and kindly habit has flowed onward day after day. Only that, a little current of thought and purpose, quite unpretentious, a little stream of harmonious good-will and ceaseless effort and love deepening as it went, only that and nothing else would do it. Not all the charms, not all the benedictions that fancy or piety could devise upon the wedding day, could have wrought this blessed result; but the sweet custom of many days has done it.

I say again, it is not the most gifted, if they are wise, who spurn the thought of obedience. Rather, the gifted man will tell you that the work which you ascribe to the free play of his genius was, in some strange way, imperatively laid upon him to do. The best works are always so. If we cannot say the poem wrote itself, we are certain the thought demanded expression. Beethoven, as the story goes, once heard a poor girl painfully trying to play one of his pieces for her toiling brother, and the poor girl was blind and stumbled sadly over the notes. Moved by a noble impulse, the master, accompanied by a friend, entered the

humble room and played the music himself, to the delight of the lad, but especially of the girl. And then, when his heart was surcharged with the joy of giving joy, and the candle had flickered out, and the shutters were opened to let in the light of the moon, he sat again at the instrument and found his fingers straying into the opening of a new and glorious composition, to be known to men afterwards as the "Moonlight Sonata." It was no freak of inexplicable powers; the musician played that beautiful theme because he must. A mightier Musician was playing upon him, and the long-disciplined nature of the mortal answered the call of the Eternal who found him ready in that hour of manly sympathy and loving-kindness. "The words I speak," said Christ, "I speak not of myself."

#### OUR FAITH IN JESUS

IF I turn to the opponents of Jesus, they will certainly not lead me by any flattery of him. Their testimony is that he was "a friend of sinners." I cannot find that they charged him with sharing the sin of the sinners who found in him a friend. No one said that he was extortionate like the "publican," or that his life was foul and base. The offence was that he mixed with those who were thus guilty and reprobate. If you think of it, you will not suppose that the moral atmosphere of sin could be pleasant to him. It is not agreeable to us to be in the company of those whose æsthetic tastes are so

depraved that there is no refinement about them. How much more repulsive must an atmosphere of moral and spiritual degradation be to a holy soul! It must have been a sore puzzle to those who, while they did not share his spirit, could not wholly deny him to be a "good man." The downright offences that were charged against him were just such as a great, generous, free nature might expose him to, using the Sabbath with large liberality for the higher service of man, and looking upon the temple, sacred as it was, as less honourable than the human tabernacle of the Holy Spirit. Assuredly such a nature was friendly to sinners, not because sin was less abhorrent to him than to others, but because he believed in humanity, and loved people in spite of their sins. He believed in goodness so much that he knew it would conquer every soul, if it once had its way with them; and so he would not despair of any, even the worst. How he delighted in people! One of the most familiar scenes is that where he took up the children, anybody's children, into his arms to bless them, knowing well, as he kissed them, that with all their capacities for good and for evil, they were to be believed in and that they also would know and love goodness some time. How tender he was to the wretched outcast, trodden underfoot of everybody! What a faith he had in our poor humanity! If we believe in him, we shall share his faith, difficult as it is.

The variety of men's thoughts about Jesus is very striking. To one of our poets, Edmund

Spenser, he stood as the type of the true, wise governor of the world and the human soul. To other poets, as Byron and Shelley, he has been rather the type of the breaker of vain idols, a kind of spiritual anarchist. To another older poet, Dekker, he appeared to be "the first true gentleman that ever breathed." To Napoleon the chief thing remarkable about him was the air of unhesitating imperative in his commands. John Stuart Mill found him to be at least unique; a modern Russian writer thinks he is so like everybody that therefore he is the true Christ. So everyone reads in his own spirit-language the secret of this great life. Let us fearlessly do the same. The important thing for you is not what Christ is to me, but what he is to you and what his life does for yours. Do not let that fact go.

When I read how men have departed from it into the most remote fields of speculation, when I remember how they have persisted in talking *about* Jesus, and what he was as a supernatural being, and how they have discussed whether he was a second God, or the only God; whether he was of similar substance with the Father or the very same; whether he had two distinct natures in his one personality, and how they operated in him; whether and how he pre-existed; how he atoned for sin, whether to God, to the devil, or to an abstract Righteousness and Justice; and where is his true fold and who wields his prerogatives on earth; when I remember all this, I seem to see him standing there, so kind and yet so kingly, so great and yet so gentle,

looking over a gulf that might easily be spanned if men were wise, and speaking to Christianity as he is said to have spoken to Jerusalem of old: "How often, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." I seem to hear him say: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Suppose, then, we do turn to him, and seek the clearest tones of his voice, his voice and not another's; suppose we reverently but firmly set aside for this hour all that the churches have said as to his message and its meaning, all the comments of apostle and evangelist, and listen for ourselves to his plainest words: what shall we hear?

These are the words we hear: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the peaceful, the meek, the pure in heart." Are we troubled, as what earnest soul is not, because of the consciousness of sins? The message comes, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." Do we long, in the midst of things temporal, transitory and perishable, for "eternal life"? He bids us love God and love man; on those two commandments hang all the law and the prophets, "do this and ye shall live." Are we troubled as to how we should act? He tells us to ask our Father in simple trust for guidance, and assures us that God will as certainly give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him as we shall give food to our children when they ask it.

Why should we be anxious and fretful? There is a providence, he tells us, taking care of the ravens, clothing the lilies of the field; how much more will that care be given to our lives? Why should we not then live simple, straightforward, brave and happy lives with that Father, so great and good to us?

These are the things Jesus tells us. How different from some of the things we often hear where people think more of believing things about Jesus than of believing in him, in his life, his spirit, and his words.

#### THE DUTY OF CHEERFULNESS

"Put on, therefore, gladness that hath always favour before God, and is acceptable to him, and delight thyself in it: for every man that is glad doeth the things that are good, and thinketh good thoughts, despising grief."—2 Hermas x. 19.

It is worthy of notice that while the Christian Religion, by which I mean the religion of Jesus, will assuredly make life more serious to us than anything else can do, it will, when properly understood and genuinely embraced, also make it more glad, more cheerful and bright. Just as one may sometimes see two streams unite, and their differently tinted waters flow side by side a good while before they entirely mingle, so the two tendencies, serious and cheering, of which I speak, may be traced in the Christian literature of the earlier times. If the currents are now blended altogether, if the freshness of the early years is somewhat gone, let us not for-

get that both influences are still there; both the seriousness and the gladness appeal to us. Jesus, we say, was a "Man of Sorrows." True; the troubles of this weary world found him ever ready to sympathise with and to share the griefs of his friends, and of all mankind. But you know he was also so frankly a sharer in the joys of the friendly circle that his critics blamed him as a lover of feasts. At times he rebuked the impenitent with solemn sternness; but he also fondled the children in his arms, and I dare say sang to them, just as we do, snatches of tunes to make their eyes smile and their little hearts dance. The two streams of seriousness and gladness were evidently there, in the fountain-head, not opposed to each other, but concurrent, entirely harmonious.

Look at St. Paul, too, whose name is the second greatest in Christian history; he comes up before our minds naturally as the aged missionary, with the care of all the churches upon him, vexed by scores of foes, haunted by misgivings, troubled by bitter regrets, living in a stormy world of criticism, questionings, misunderstandings, downright opposition. And yet you know how cheerily this man could write. "Rejoice always," he cries; and as if once saying was neither enough for him—and it probably wasn't—nor for those who should hear him, he says, "Again I will say, rejoice." He had learned, he says, to be content, whether with much or little.

He had an infirmity of health, apparently incurable. Poor Paul! Yet why pity him?

That weakness of the flesh opened a way for him into a feeling of the tenderness and sufficient grace of God which no robustness of body could have revealed to him. And since the days of Paul, how many others have learned the secret as he did, and in their trouble have found "a deeper peace not known before"!

And here, in the second century, is Hermas, with the same message of mingled seriousness and gladness; and I take these words as giving the reasons why he would never allow that the Christian's seriousness should be sad and gloomy. First he says, "Gladness hath always favour before God, and is acceptable to Him." Good things are not things of chance, but find their due place in the divine order, which we are gradually discovering. But, secondly, Hermas says, "Every man that is glad doeth the things that are good, and thinketh good thoughts"; that is, he becomes more useful to the world, and he lives in the purest spiritual atmosphere. There are considerations here well worth our best attention, for I suspect that there is not one of us but needs at times all the help possible towards "putting on gladness."

"Exercise yourself," says the Apostle Paul, "unto godliness." Precisely; godliness comes of exercise of body and mind, of discipline, moderation, self-mastery and self-control; it comes of fresh air for the lungs and for the brain, of fresh, pure emotions for the heart. Keep the faculty in you well occupied. Carry a little perfume of good thoughts with you



wherever you go. Have some music in yourself, else you will be fit, as Shakespeare says, for all kinds of bad things of which I had better not give the catalogue. Think of others; give yourself more to them. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver," not only of substance but also of soul; and He shows His love by adding to the cheerfulness and the power to give. Take courage. "It was not Antoninus," said Emerson, "but a poor washerwoman who said, 'The more trouble, the more lion; that's my principle!'" Yes, and that's the washerwoman one would wish to know!

Above all, be thankful. "In everything give thanks." "Cleave to the sunny side of doubt," says Tennyson; cleave to the sunny side of everything. Some things are dark enough, I know. You have some very dark clouds to sit under; you might say yours are the very darkest in this world, only that other people too have their shadows. Help them to think of the sunny side of things, by showing your sunny side when it is most needed. Thus God is revealed in us, and by us.

#### "ICH DIEN"

"Through love be servants one to another."—Gal. v. 13.

ONE of the most familiar mottoes is that of the Prince of Wales. For more than five hundred years that motto under the crest of the three white plumes has told all the world that its bearer is a servant. Whether all the Princes

of Wales have been true to the profession, "Ich Dien," or whether, on the contrary, some of them have not used their position to lord it very unworthily over things and people, is an inquiry which we need not now pursue. Unhappily there is often too much inconsistency between the badges men wear and the conduct they display. Otherwise, it would be difficult to find any motto more appropriate either for a prince or for a plain citizen than the words, "I serve." Less haughty and defiant than those which are inscribed beneath the royal arms, they are, in fact, more dignified and manly, when we know what true dignity and manhood are. The proudest title to honour that can be worn by any man is that his life helps all and hinders none. It is true that the idea of service may be degraded into that of servitude; but the two are essentially distinct. The true servant consents to serve; the slave is compelled against his will. The latter case necessarily involves bitterness, shame, and the spirit of revolt. The former knows nothing of these things, but gathers more and more around it a sense of richer and fuller life, of powers usefully exercised, and of affections gained and deepened.

The advice of the Apostle Paul is that all should be servants to each other; and this advice is the more striking because it comes in the midst of a passionate address to his readers to fight for and maintain their freedom. It may be especially commended, therefore, to those of us who are, like Paul, in love with liberty, to whom there is

no duty so welcome as that of breaking "every yoke," and who continually appeal to men around us to cast away the fetters of thought and the heavy weight of old tradition and custom. We do well to stand fast in our freedom. We do better if we win others to be free. But we do ill if we use our freedom as "an occasion," as St. Paul says, "to the flesh," a means of gratifying our own selfishness and self-will. We do worst if, while we glory in our liberty, we forget that every one of us, whether we think of it or not, wears a badge of service, just as the Princes of Wales do. Every sign we give that we are aware of the difference between right and wrong marks us out for the great warfare. Every moment of enjoyment in things noble and beautiful, every impulse that draws us to the side of the good and the wise, every applauding word or look we give to the hero or the saint, pledges us as truly as if we put pen or seal to paper. No man is indifferent, nor can he persuade himself that he is so, except by ignoring the plain facts of his own life. We are all glad to be helped. Our lot would be most miserable if we had no service from others; and in the act of taking their service, we pledge our own. It is unreasonable, unmanly, and at last ruinous to the individual himself, that anyone should try to make a one-sided bargain in which he should do all the taking and none of the giving. Society is not made so; and society is the maker of the higher individual. Service for service is the only honest policy. A great influx of strength and peace

and nobility of character results from the efflux of willing service. "Ich Dien," said the lowly worker those many days, one after another; the youth at his studies, the girl in the home, the teacher, the parent, the fighter for the truth, the champion of unpopular justice, the friend and lover of his kind. In ever so lowly a way he served on, looking to far greater ones who look on; without a murmur taking the form of a servant; putting aside unworthy allurements with the words, "I Serve"; warding off annoyances and offences with the same significant motto; and now, clearly seen at last, though really there all the while, a far Greater One is perceived girding Himself and serving him.

If that Divine Servant has not so come to a man, as Jesus puts it, if the infinitely wise and always wonderful services of the Creative Spirit, whose work is never ending, should have been hindered by the man's unserviceable moods and contrary conduct, we know well what happens. Age comes on and finds that man, in spite of the calendar, still immature, unripened, harsh, unlovable, no true Man at all, but a spoiled one. He has played the despot so long in the days of his strength, that his temper of despotism now mocks his feeble limbs and his failing speech, and he goes down the vale of years, threatening and grumbling in his impotence, needy with the most piteous need, in want of ever more and more love and patience and generous pity, yet self-charged with a force that checks the sympathy of others, and makes it hard to help him at all.

Such final ruin is not the sudden change of an hour or day; nor need it be seen at its worst degree to be yet really there. Every day, every hour spent in the ruining spirit of unserviceableness and proud disdain of the wants and claims of others brings its proportion of ruin upon him, as flake after flake of snow descends, each by itself insignificant, but altogether at last overwhelming and irresistible.

U N E X P E C T E D F L O W E R S

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall blossom as the rose.”—Isa. xxxv. 1.

GRANT that the wilderness is there, grant that it is a wilderness, and that you would rather be in a garden. Grant that things need patient perseverance, and much courage; and then, having granted all this, give to things just the patient perseverance and plentiful courage they need. If the road lies across the wilderness, it is better anyhow to keep to the road than to wander into worse things. Remember, if there are few flowers, or none at all, by your wayside, that you are not there to get flowers, to enjoy nice things and have a happy time of it; you are there to march straight on in the path of duty. It is certainly not agreeable to suffer restriction and give up delights; it would be worse to suffer shame and give up manliness.

If you cherish the right mood in the heart, I can tell you what may be expected from Him who made the highway and planned it to lie

across the desert, and who has put you there to travel onwards for a time. This is what you may expect: after a little time, or longer, but certainly to every faithful soul, the wilderness will be glad and the desert shall smile. How it comes about is less valuable to know than it is to be sure of it as a fact. In the hands of faithfulness and courage are seeds that sow themselves from step to step as a man goes, and from the unconscious sowing of to-day, to-morrow's stage of the journey gets some unexpected beauty. To-day's patience flings its beauty over the rough edges of to-morrow's pain; and, as the foot that travels much grows hard, impervious to hurt, so the man who has been brave finds himself less tempted to be otherwise as the days go on.

If ours be the path in the wilderness awhile, let it not be made more sterile by our stubbornness, pride, hardness of heart, rebelliousness, or folly of any kind. It is always “the redeemed” who walk in the paradise that was a desert. To the slavish, the Lord is a hard master; for the soul set free by divine love, not outside but dwelling within the soul, for the soul that is gracious in its measure as God is who sets it free, the fitting song is ever “O taste and see how gracious the Lord is.”

“It shall blossom abundantly,” sings my poet. I take the reference to apply not only to quantity but to variety. The flowers are of many shapes, sizes, and tints. I should like to feel that there is not the least homeliest satisfaction, the tiniest profit of good, resulting from a man's going on

in his work, or standing up erect in his place any day, but that this is really one of God's flowers; no mere accident of a soul-less Universe, but a message to me from one whose meanings I am learning, however slowly and imperfectly, to understand. I want a practical theology, one that "works." Of theoretical theology the world has had enough and to spare. I should like to get my theology right home with me, to have it not only for Sunday use or contemplation, but for every day. The only wise way is to lift up all these things, work, play, talk, silence, reading books, writing letters, getting and losing, enjoying and suffering, to a real place in the soul's life with Him, who is not the God of a shrine here and there, but a Presence all the way by which we travel. Regarded in this light, we shall never think life a wholly dreary thing; at least, that day or hour will not be held all cheap and trivial which He does not disdain to use or to allow. If we can be wise so to think of life, it may still have its lonely paths and arduous steeps, but it will not be a desert without a flower; and they who see these blossoms of the spirit around them shall surely go on with singing all the way unto the Zion, where everlasting joy shall be on their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

## WELCOME, GREAT DAY!

"This is the day which the Lord hath made."—Psa. cxviii. 24.

WHAT Day? "Write it on your heart," says Emerson, "that every day is the best day of the year." Let this man who, as Matthew Arnold said, is "the friend and aider of all who live in the spirit," be your friend and aider. Take his advice. Write on your heart as he says. You will very likely not be able to read the writing with equal clearness at all times and under all circumstances. It depends on the way you write, the intelligence with which it is done, and whether you use a true "permanent ink." Some writers not only puzzle other people with their scribble (more shame to them), but they cannot even read what they have written themselves. If you write what Emerson tells you, it is worth writing very distinctly once for all, and then you must practise reading it. You will be surprised at the progress you will make, if only you will persevere. You will find the days "that the Lord hath made" to be by no means so exceptional as you have sometimes thought.

It is usual to discriminate days as men used formerly to discriminate places. The people around Jesus, the *best* people, too, of his time and country, had a fixed idea that there was a special hill in a special city where, somehow, the presence of God was specially located. Jesus, you know, said that all specialism was a mistake. Universalism is the word of the Gospel, the

Universal Brotherhood, the Universal Fatherhood, the Universal Salvation. The Spirit-God is present to all human spirits who seek Him truly. And He is ever present. In our generation some of the best people go on talking of Sunday as "the Lord's Day," as if the others were not His. Perhaps, after all, they are too sadly right; certainly, a good many people betray little evidence of the sacredness of the six working days. When they have put that writing indelibly on their hearts, which Emerson bids them, these things will be altered for the better.

It was natural in olden times for people to cling to special places as their sanctuaries, and it was better to have some sacred spots than to have none at all. And so when we, in our ordinary way, distinguish between our days, now jubilant with peculiar joy and then, just dull "as usual," it is natural and in a way inevitable. It is a good thing to reckon one day in seven "the Lord's Day," if no other. It is not a bad thing, so far as it goes, if one recognises any special day in the year as one that "the Lord hath made." It would be a bad, a desperate thing, if no day at all touched a man's heart in this manner, and made him feel what a good and wonderful thing life is.

It is a poor fiddle that hasn't one good note in it; and it is a poor soul that is never moved to gladness in being alive.

I understand it takes some pains to make that wonderful instrument, and the better the violin, the longer and more lovingly the cunning

Italian or German fingers had to labour on it. What secrets of selection of materials, and pondering on shapes, and loving patience in testing the work from stage to stage, are locked up in the finished instrument! A good man takes no less making, and here two are at work, the man himself and the divine Helper, whose help surely comes as the other worker goes on sincerely.

Those who are learned in these things say that the good violin gets ever purer in tone for being played on by a master. The unconscious instrument cannot choose: we can; or, rather, we are able to submit ourselves willingly to the one Master. And the more frequently we do so, the more we throb with the pulse of our highest aims and purest affections, and the nobler will our nature become under His touch. You make the most of this day, perhaps in spite of trials; the next day will be better for to-day's efforts; better if that is to try your strength, for you will have got grit and sinew into you beforehand; better, surely, if it is one of the calm and shining days, for who so much desires the haven as he who has felt the storm? Who so genuinely delights in rest as the man who has toiled hard?

Thus, you will approach the state in which actual experience will echo and verify the writing on your heart, and you will not only say, but know, that "every day is the best of the year." You will understand what the Scripture means that says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Then the blest unity of our existence with God will be

realised. "The great day of the feast of life," says Emerson again, "is that in which the inward eye opens to the Unity in things." "All His ways are judgment," says the song of Moses. To see this clearly and to live by its light, is this not to be saved, to be rescued from the gloom of ignorance and the folly of sin, to be at peace with the Eternal?

✓ MAX MÜLLER

"Walk with wise men, and thou shalt be wise."—Prov. xiii. 20.

EXPERIENCE supports this saying of the sage. If we "walk with the wise," we grow into their mental likeness. There was an old master of English prose who said of a certain rich-natured woman, to know and love her was a "liberal education." Of course, a mere acquaintance with the wise is not enough; we must desire their society, and cultivate it as much as we can. If the busy cares and duties of the week prevent our "walking" with them as much as we should like, we should the more thankfully accept the opportunity by such occasions as the present, when for a little time we think quietly about our wise men and their work.

As the study of words shows the vast brotherhood of races seemingly quite distinct and separate, so the study of religion reveals an essential unity beneath all differences of belief and worship. Max Müller tells us, as he surveys the sacred literature of the world, that there are traceable at least five fundamental agreements among them

all. They show us (1) that an intuition of the "unbounded," the "infinite," the "higher than man," is universal; (2) that, in the presence of this "higher," men are made sensible of their own weakness and dependence; (3) that a belief exists everywhere in some sort of divine government; (4) that the distinction between good and evil is felt; and (5) that a hope persists of a higher life, however differently conceived. These elements do indeed exist in different degrees of intensity, and are associated with different forms of culture and morality; but, like the primitive roots in language that reappear in modern dialects, these religious elements tell us that in very deed men are brothers in the spirit, meaning at heart the same things, and that they ought to live brotherly the whole world over.

If we are willing to "walk with the wise" who teach us these things, with the prophet-minds that lead mankind out of the "house of bondage" and error, and into the "Lord's land" of truth and spiritual freedom, we ought to be in every way the gainers. We shall learn anew what a wonderful, awe-inspiring thing our life is, where the common speech of every day is so mysterious in its origin, persistence, and growth. We shall perceive more clearly how true it is that men are made "of one, to dwell on all the face of the earth." The brotherhood of nations and of religions will find in us convinced believers, such, let us hope, as will live in the spirit of their belief. And while we realise with the poet Whittier that "all souls that struggle and aspire"

are sheltered beneath the "white wings" of the one "Holy Ghost," we shall be reassured that no single life is left out from that divine protection. We too, each one, however lowly, belong to the Father of all.

#### THE REALITY OF GOOD AND EVIL

"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil."—Deut. xxx. 15.

WITHIN all this talk of Heaven and Hell, whether in sublimest poetry or baldest prose, there lurks a confession of a great conviction. This conviction is not established by formal logic, any more than the conviction that the world is a real world and not a dream. It is a conviction which, however much it has been enforced by authority, and stamped upon the mind by the teaching of early days, is independent of authority and comes freshly to the mature mind long after childish things have been put away. Men of races widely different, of temperaments and experience as diverse as they can be, have shared that conviction. It claims a right to be heard as one of the deepest instincts of our nature; and there is no more ground for refusing it a hearing than for discrediting the claims of beauty and of love. It is the conviction that the widest conceivable gulf lies between the character which is good and that which is bad. This gulf is not only one of differences in present condition, but, since things ever flow onward into the future, it

marks the separation of two streams of result. Whatever philosophy may say as to the rise of our consciousness of good and evil, we cannot bring ourselves to think that goodness and badness have no real importance for us. Man may have flattered himself with egregious fancies as to his own value to the Universe. He may have formed very erroneous notions as to the history of the earth and the nature of the forces that shape it. But he would cease to be man, were he ever persuaded that there is not an essential difference between right and wrong, or that he is not bidden by an awful authority to follow the right and shun the wrong. Here we come to an ultimate fact of our conscious life; and when men speak of heaven and hell as the future states which will be inhabited by those who choose the right and the wrong respectively, they are but putting in a concrete form their conviction that for the righteous there must ever be peace and blessing, and for the unrighteous misery and torment.

With this conviction I am through and through persuaded. Were it otherwise the world would be, not simply a problem with difficulties, but a self-stultifying madness. If life has no meaning beyond the fleeting sensations of our short days, if the tale of human thought and human virtue and human aspiration is like one "told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing," then, indeed, to think is worse than to be stupid and gross; to suffer like a hero is to play the fool; and to yearn for holiness is to pursue the hollowest

bubble of the brain. Who will think so? Who will not rather say, "Though I know not how or where the working out will be, I believe this is but the beginning of life, and its beginning is fraught with eternal consequences"? It was thus the greatest and strongest thinkers of old concluded, and in many ways they pictured the diverse destinies awaiting those who passed on to the Unseen.

#### THE CATHOLIC FAITH

WE are surely sensible enough to be ready to welcome goodness whencesoever it comes, whether from friend or foe, from allies or opponents, from those we like or from those we cannot help disliking. But let us go farther, into the great faith that more goodness lies latent in every human heart than we have ever seen. This is the true Catholic faith, that man, being the child of God, cannot wholly lose his diviner part, and may everywhere ascend towards perfection. On this day, Trinity Sunday, it is appointed that the ancient chant be said or sung which men call the "Athanasian Creed," and which sets forth the dogma of the Trinity in all its incomprehensibility. Let us not breathe a word that should hurt the feelings of anyone to whom that creed may be dear; but while he forces his lips to declare that unless we or others profess that never-yet-understood and never-to-be-understood mystery, we shall, "without doubt, perish everlastingly," let us rather say there is but one thing

needful, one true and all-conquering faith: it is faith in goodness and truth, everywhere, in the Universe at large, in the life and being Supreme, and in man, the child of the Eternal. This is the Catholic faith, and well for us if, professing it with our lips, we live by it day by day. It is the one creed which in various forms lives in all the creeds that ever had life in them. And it will be our fount of life within, and the spring of our work without, as often as we accept it as both the warrant of our own high calling and election, and the assurance that all men, of whatever sect or party, in so far as they let the good that is in them shine forth, are members of the true Church and family of God.

#### "IN THY PRESENCE IS FULNESS OF JOY"

IT is not alone the feebly beaten in life's conflict who have dreamed of a coming haven of rest; though to many such that thought has come like an angel from God Himself, to succour and comfort in the dark hour of trial. The keen, the learned, the powerful of intellect and mighty of will, have joined to crown their conceptions of this world by that of an unseen reality in which they as sharers in the spiritual essence will have a due participation. The master mind of Plato, the dominant will of Paul, the wise, the tender, the majestic soul of the Lord Christ himself rested in the blessed hope of everlasting life. And if these be the types of true men, fully sensitive to the mighty Power which has brought



man into being, men endowed with a stupendous potency to subdue the world of thought and to stamp their conceptions ineffaceably on the mind of the race, theirs is no childish fancy to be lightly rebuked or to be merely scanned with idle curiosity.

Yet, let none of us drift on through life merely pinning our faith to another man's thought and experience. Let us thankfully accept all the help that comes to us, but seek to be ourselves so "full of life" that we may enjoy and perform all the best that this stage of existence renders possible, and still press on to heights undiscovered, the greater sphere where our present failures will be left behind. We must fit our minds by habits of reverence, true worship, daily habits of duty and self-culture to grow larger, so that when we humbly pray our Father for the blessing which this felt Presence alone can give, we shall hold up hands which may be largely filled. Thus only can we through His great Love attain unto the quiet rest which is laid up for the people of God; and thus these passing cares and griefs will gradually lose their disturbing influence upon us, until in His goodness and mercy we find an abundant entrance into a Kingdom which grows not old.

THINGS KNOWN

If our religious and moral convictions rest upon hearsay, however respectable, they can possess but little worth. Not until they have

somehow come into actual contact with our life can these things be said to be truly known. Historical traditions come to us from without; religion and morality have their springs within. The accounts of how men felt and acted in the years long ago, the story of their lives, and the record of their words, may all be exceedingly suggestive. They are, in fact, among the most useful helps to an intelligent and spiritual man. But we do ourselves a serious wrong if we do not remember that God has His own messages for each one of us. If we do not catch those messages, I fear it is all in vain that Samuel or Isaiah or St. Paul or St. Augustine or Martin Luther had witness borne to them of the truths of God. The child must learn to use his mother-tongue, to think in it and express his own thoughts by it, before there is much hope of his appreciating what the gifted writers of old have written in it. So a man's heart must be already in possession of the key; otherwise all the talk about religion will be a mere empty and unsatisfying puzzle.

Valuable as the sympathetic aid of a brother man is, useful as the record of antiquity, each soul lives its own life with God; and it is there, in the secret life, that the solid basis of spiritual knowledge is laid. Every day we live is eloquent of things that we can never honestly deny. If the worldling knows the value of pleasures and luxuries, and shapes his efforts very earnestly and persistently to gain them, none the less surely the self-observing mind knows that every day brings its alternatives of good and evil. The

man knows that Duty is a fact in his life, and that the more faithful he is to it the more blessed his life becomes. He knows that whatever other people do or say, he cannot excuse himself if he deliberately chooses to do wrong. I heard the captain on board ship chaffingly tempt a teetotal passenger to drink. "Your wife will forgive you," he said. "But I couldn't forgive myself," said he. Every man holds a court of justice in his own breast. There is a solid core in his thought and feeling which he cannot dissipate into a hazy doubt without parting with his manhood. He knows that, however it may be with him to-morrow or in any future, here and now is the reality of life; here and now he must honour truth; here and now he must aim at the best thing in his thought, his speech, and his work. There isn't the least doubt about that.

## EMERSON AS AN INSPIRER

EMERSON, himself a genuine living man, inspires by the revelation of the great possibilities of life, every life, yours and mine.

Mark how he specially discerns this greatness in even the humblest "young man asking his way" to victory over this big world, or, we ought to say, with it.

"So nigh is grandeur to our dust,  
So near is God to man,  
When Duty whispers low, 'Thou must'<sup>†</sup>  
The youth replies, 'I can.'"

These are the lines which Oliver Wendell Holmes said seemed the moment after they were written "as if they had been carved on marble for a thousand years." They do, indeed, point to an immortal dower of human nature.

What is it that makes the fountain rise and sparkle in the sunshine? What pushes the green grass through the mountain side and the delicate corn blade through the clod of the field? What pierces the tough skin of the twig and emerges in the bud, expanding that into foliage and blossom, and crowning all at last with fruit and seed? What is the ONE persuasive Might that, through all the changes of the changing world, works upward and onward always into the innumerable miracle of creation? We have variously named it. We men, in different ages and climates and languages, have chosen what best syllables we could for it, and all earnest souls have meant the same. Blessed be those who make for us the wisest suggestions, such as "Our Father," "Love," "Life Everlasting!" But most blest the man who feels that when he does what he ought, he, even he, is become a channel for the purposes of God. His deeds are as the fountain, orderly under the laws of a spiritual gravitation; they are a bud, a blossom, a fruit of the Eternal Mind. His days say along with his lips, "Thy will be done." And it is done. Duty is hard, but the youth can do it. For there are resources illimitable, says Emerson, at his disposal. Try it! "Trust Yourself." That is the "iron string" he harps on. Are not you

too a man! "Hitch your wagon to a star." Was there ever such a steed to draw! "Let us not lie and steal," he urges. "No God will help. We shall find all their teams going the other way."

## IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

"Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself."—Prov. vi. 3.

You occasionally find yourself, I am sure, confronted by different duties, competitors for attention. "Shall I do this first, or that?" Experience soon gives discretion, and a man's own heart, we are told, often gives him more counsel than seven wise men. By all means use discernment; "Do the next thing," says Carlyle; but then it is added by someone, "most people have no next," meaning no sequel to follow what a good Scot calls the "first" thing. At times we cannot be at the thing we would; yet there's a good thing to do. "Mine hour is not yet come," said the Master; but it was always his hour to do good to someone in some way. St. Paul waited at Athens for his fellow-travellers. He wanted to get on with his journey. Perhaps the time seemed lost, and his eager soul fretted at delay. But work came to his hand; going round that famous city he was not idle. He saw the statues of Zeus, and Apollo, and Aphrodite, and Athenæ, and so on; and they became a gleaming text for an ever-memorable sermon in the Arcopagus. That was the thing to be done

at that moment, and he did it. Of the great painter, J. M. W. Turner, it is said that he spent a long summer afternoon sitting by a placid pool into which he cast pebbles. On being rebuked for idleness he said, "No, I have learned what water looks like when you throw stones into it." The busy mind had been at work all the time, though the body rested; and fresh store was laid up for hours to be spent in the studio. The famous preacher, Henry Ward Beecher, told a company of students that he often went down on Saturdays to the wharves and watched the ships, and the bargemen, and all the bustle of the harbour; he was not idle, though to-morrow was Sunday. Rather, it was to steep his mind in actuality, to see what human life really was like, and thus to be able to speak straight to human hearts, instead of spinning out abstractions on his own study table, that he loitered by the rippling docks.

Such men are ever doing something; though it may not appear the supreme task of life, it is the appropriate task for the present piece of life, and it prepares the way for the greater things.

## THE CHILD'S RELIGION

A VERY few propositions are all that the child requires for its theology. Just as in regard to civil life the child's view is quite amply filled up, if in a general way it knows that under the sovereign all the people in England must keep the laws, and that the father stands as its own

protector and guardian amid all the many, many people of the country; so in regard to theology its mental horizon is sufficiently extensive, for long, if it feels that under the great Father and Ruler of all the world, whose laws are to be obeyed in all things, from sowing the seeds of flowers to guiding a steamer across the sea, or guiding a life through temptations and difficulties, its father and mother and others close around it day by day, are to be obeyed and loved as the representatives of the Heavenly Father's Will, and agents of His love, who do His work for the children in all sorts of good things. Much modesty and reticence are required here. The child's thoughts are often very swift and vivid, and he will take any slight anthropomorphic hint you give him with an avidity that will probably startle you. If you don't want him to talk rather shockingly crude things about God, you must refrain from suggesting them as far as possible. With very little children just a quiet and very reverent word now and again about the Creator's works and ways is enough; a well-chosen hymn (let it be well chosen), speaking of happy trust and dutiful aspiration, should tell such a child nearly all the theology it needs. With the older children who have the right to be taken into closer communion of intellect, their growing familiarity with the conception of unseen forces at play in the world of nature, gravity, heat, electricity, and so forth, will help them to understand better what you mean when you speak of the Divine Spirit who acts upon men's minds and

consciences everywhere and who will become more and more felt by them as they take up the responsibilities of life for themselves. This is the root of all religion, and if the root be in the child, never be afraid of its growing forth in its own way.

“DO THYSELF NO HARM”

“Do thyself no harm.”—Acts xvi. 28.

You see a disputed point arise between two men. One of them is getting angry; his flushed look and hot and passionate speech betray him. He does not perceive that instead of his argument being helped by all that heat, his unreasoning passion tells against him. A generous indignation undoubtedly has its right place in our nature, and when we deliberately arrive at the verdict that this or that is bad, we do well to be angry with it. But be wise and wary, lest, before a true verdict is arrived at, your prejudices have blinded your eyes, or distorted the facts so that you do not see them aright. Remember the facts are as they are; neither your preferences nor your aversions can alter them, but passion and prejudice will alter you for the worse.

In the “nine rules” which the Emperor Aurelius drew up for his guidance in case anyone offended him, we find the last recommended trying to bring the wrong-doer gently to his right mind, by showing that we are not meant to fall out and injure each other, but to understand

and help each other; and to say to him, "I shall certainly not be injured, but thou art injuring thyself, my child." The man of ill-feeling must feel ill. The wilful peace-breaker can never be called the "Son of God." And what is true respecting one passion is true of all. Human passions exist and have their proper function in us. But beware of subjecting all your conduct to their blind guidance. Beware of acting unreasonably, for that must be unmanly, and must lead to doing harm to yourself.

## SUPREME HOURS

"Behold, the Lord passed by."—1 Kings xix. 11 (compare Job ix. 11).

God has a way of visiting all of us, even the most lowly. At the root of all fertile religious life lies the thought, "He that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is His name." Men apply their little scales of measurement to each other, and call this one high and that one low. To the Eternal nothing is so dear as impartial beneficence; and in His love He affords every one of us the consciousness of things beside which earthly distinctions fade away and become insignificant. To each in turn come times of great joy and seasons of special grief; who shall say which of these is in the end most blessed? Every soul has its experience of solitary combat; it grapples with difficulties, fights with temptations, rests in peace after hard-won victory, or feels in secret anguish the shame of easy defeat.

In every land, the geographers tell us, there are lines to be drawn dividing between its river systems; on this side the rainfall finds its way into one basin; on that side the drops trickle and flow, it may be, into quite another sea or ocean. The critical line may rise as high as the mountain top, or it may be merely on the upper levels of a fairly even country. But, high or low, the watershed is there; and it makes no difference whether high or low to the ultimate destination of its streams. In every life there is a spiritual watershed, its times of high experience, occasions where the destinies divide and fall to this side or to that.

So far as we have ever realised the "passing by" of the Lord let us rejoice with the hymnist of the *Magnificat*. If ever we have been exalted on seeing the glory of this world, as we have watched the sunshine and shadow marching along the breast of the mountains, as if the angels of God were in procession there before Him; as we have seen the lake slumbering in peace or the river as peacefully gliding on its way; when the thousand times ten thousand flowers of earth and stars of heaven have sung together of the Creator's love and majesty; then surely for us the Lord was passing by. Some of you have treasured up in your grateful memory other hours when beauty like a rose burst through the calyx of the commonplace, and wooed your soul into delight, into tenderness, and into something akin to awe. Now it has been the sound of melody sweet as a breath wafted from "a bank of violets,"

or of harmonies richly blending so as to express without words the heart's unutterable things, its passionate raptures and its yearnings. Again, it has been some fresh opening of human thought to you, either in a book, or a speech, or an eloquent face; and then, with the new world of wisdom revealed to you, those memorable lines of John Keats recur, which he wrote upon first reading Chapman's "Homer":—

"Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men  
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

If I speak rather of such experiences than of those deeper sanctities which come to all sooner or later, it is partly because we constantly need a reminder that not alone in the things universally recognised as "religious" does the Lord visit us; and partly also because of those deeper sanctities, it is never easy to speak much and still be quite natural and sincere. If, however, we have come in any degree to realise that the Lord's special messenger to us, at least upon most of our days, is chiefly by way of a still small voice—a voice, alas, too often unheeded by us, immersed as we are in getting and spending—then we may prepare ourselves the better to meet Him, who, though Elijah perceived Him not in the great and strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire, was indeed there also, and is assuredly passing by us when life's heroisms are upon us.

"Lo! He goeth by me," says Job, "and I see Him not; He passeth on also, but I perceive Him not." Pray earnestly for the understanding mind. Know that your life, so sweetly human and lowly for the most part, has its sacramental hours, and be ready for them. So when in such hours the "Lord passes by," whether in this form or that, you may be aware of it, and be uplifted from your trouble and weakness, and may be strong again; you may get new joy, new consecration, and go forth as the prophet did, no longer desponding, nor angrily jealous for the Lord of Hosts, but calm in the assurance that His wise and gracious will shall be done on earth even as it is in heaven.

## FOREGLEAMS

"Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me."—Mal. iii. 1.

NOTHING comes "all at once," though we may say so, and though it may seem so. Foregleams point the way. Some people would speak of "coming events" casting "their shadows before them." We will not talk of shadows now, but of "foregleams."

Foregleams announce the dawn of every day, and days make up all our life. Freshly with every morning the message comes, "Little by little, I will lead you." The weary traveller who has journeyed all night sees at last a faint suggestion of change at the rim of the darkness. The horizon gradually lightens; dim tints follow each

other up and along the east, each tint more certain and decided than its forerunner; till there is a rosy flush in the heavens, and the clouds pass from purple to crimson, and thence to the gold of the morning, and so to the dazzling silver of the full daylight. In mountain lands, they tell us, and some of us have seen, the shadows still lie heavy in the valleys while peak after peak blushes, glows, burns under the messenger rays of the sun. Even the untravelled townsman who crosses London Bridge in the early hours may see that, while the barges rock dimly below on the river-tide, the gilded metal flames out on the top of the Monument, and the golden cross on St. Paul's shines bright above the mists to announce, as it were, to the mighty city, that another vast day of life, of toil and duty and pleasure and sadness, has come from God to men.

Foregleams tell of the dawn of intellect and of character in each of us. Sometimes they seem to be all but miraculous—surely they are always miraculous!—sometimes the young life puts forth this sign, and that so swiftly that all who look on are amazed. A little Mozart showing so soon his mastery of harmony, his fertility in melody; or a youthful Mendelssohn no less marvellous even to his parents; a budding poet who, like Pope, lisps in numbers, for the numbers come, or, like Tennyson, is seen even as a child to be thrilled with nature's sublimities. These are, indeed, foregleams that no one could miss. But not all geniuses so strikingly display the prophecy of future years. Sir Walter Scott, as

every slow boy knows (and gets comfort from the knowledge, I hope, for we are not all made to be *quick* boys), Sir Walter was a "slow boy"; and the great John Milton, though he was indeed of singular promise, did not give his fulness to the world till his later years. There is variety of speed as well as of output, but the order is the same. First the promise; then the fulfilment. All of us who are teachers or parents live thus on the earnestness afforded of the time to be.

If upon this one planet there has come to be so much that is great and glorious, so much beauty of organic and inorganic form, so rich a variety of physical forces so marvellously intertwined, if so much love and wisdom have grown incarnate here in men and women, if so much energy of mind and soul has been developed, so much art, skill, sense of order and of law, all that is most Godlike, how if this, all of it, is but a tiny foregleam in the infinite heavens of that still dawning Day that is to be! How vastly greater must that revelation be when the soul shall mount to worlds unknown and see enthroned there, not a terrible Deity whom to see is to fear, but the same dear Love and Graciousness that has loved us and been gracious to us here! What splendours of Beauty, what wonders of Truth, what treasures of heart's dear Love, will be there when these terrestrial foregleams are justified of their message, and the great Day of God has come!

Why should our hearts be so hard, our senses so dull, as not to receive God's prophets with

grateful, understanding welcome? Are there no foregleams in your own experience? Dear boy, dear girl, is not your young heart dancing with joy at the thought of the good and beautiful things you will yet see, and the good life towards which you are growing, a good life made certain by your love of goodness and duty now? Dear comrade on the march, is not your older heart filled with a wonderful peace, and a happy stillness, as you realise afresh that God is Love; that He forgives you to the uttermost; that He wants you more than you can know that you want Him; that He will always love you, in all your years, in all worlds, better than you can know?

#### GOD'S WAYS AND OUR WAYS

"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways."—Isa. lv. 9.

WHEN the declaration is made here that "God's thoughts are not our thoughts" and His "ways are not our ways," though the difference between them is much vaster than we can think, still it is a difference, so far as we can judge, in degree rather than in kind. The prophet emphasises here rather one aspect of that difference, and he uses the most exalted language to indicate it. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." But as if to show that the difference is not one to stun us into abject dumbness, he has already indicated

the character of the contrast he has in view. He does not point to the infinite power: any comparison there would crush us. He does not suggest the unerring wisdom: that might put a stop to our blundering efforts altogether. It is the Magnanimity of God that moves him to this declaration of the difference between men and their Maker. The words, happily for us, are familiar:—

"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found,  
Call ye upon Him while He is near.  
Let the wicked forsake his way,  
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
And let him return unto the Lord,  
For He will have mercy upon him;  
And to our God,  
For He will abundantly pardon."

Then follows the contrast: "*For* as the heavens are higher than the earth," God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours. *Higher*—but who will say that in this respect they are absolutely *other*? Nay, the very fact that the divinely good shines divinely good to us when we see it, shows that we have kinship with it; we have the key to the message, we can read it, our own hearts know the code; the gospel of forgiving love falls like the light of the sun upon a photographic plate already sensitised, and the image it leaves there was already potential in our very nature, limited as that nature is, and seemingly so far from the Divine.

Magnanimity—"greatness of mind," that is what the word means—was regarded by the ancient



Greeks and Romans as a lustrous quality, making its possessor truly great. The Stoics, before the time of Christ, knew well that true greatness did not lie in the power to inflict injury or even punishment, but in that loftiness that can feel injury but will not stoop to revenge. The same thought has prevailed wherever and whenever the ape and tiger in humanity have been tamed or cast out. On the other hand, we significantly describe the temper that is always on the look-out for offences, and never tired of exacting penalties for the slightest of them, as a petty one, i.e. "*petit*"—"little." The man may have the law on his side; it is a pity the law hasn't a man on its side! For the worth of a thing here is how much of a true man there is in it; and the worth of a man is how much of the Divine there is in him.

Men's faces grow radiant with various light. Here is the face of the man who has won the prize in the race. "Hail to the victor"—he ran well; let him wear his laurel, and not without modesty enjoy the pride of his triumph. Here is the face of one who has power of utterance, in speech, or music, or form, or colour—one of God's voices in the world—let him rejoice, not without awe that the great Spirit that bloweth where it listeth has resounded through him the authentic notes of truth and beauty. Here is the face of one who has his opponents at his feet, their power is broken, their pride humbled in the dust. Now, if he will, he may in one swift stroke pay off old scores, and if he be a

fighter only, you may see the light of a splendid wrath in his eyes, as he strides to take satisfaction over his foes. But the stories of the ancient Hebrews show us one face more glorious than all these. It is that of a man who, as the story tells, knew what it was to excel in manly feats, yet his glory did not shine forth at its brightest in the games and upon some field of athletic strife. He was no poet, or musician, to earn the plaudits of the listening clan with his song. He might have been the triumphant avenger of long-standing grievances; for he was Esau, the elder son, who had been supplanted by the treachery of a mother and a brother; he was Esau, the wild rough rover of the desert, whose own red right hand was the only maintainer of his rights wherever his path lay. But, when that careworn brother Jacob, burdened with the very fruits of his prosperity, and the more anxious by reason of worldly success, bowed prostrate before Esau, humbly depreciating his well-deserved wrath, you know how that divinest light of all came upon the rugged, storm-beat, sun-tanned face. He took no revenge. He uttered no reproach. He "abundantly pardoned." Well might the amazed suppliant, still doubting that such a thing could be, brokenly gasp those strangely significant words, "I have seen thy face, as one seeth the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me."

Yes, even "as the face of God" shines the face of the truly magnanimous, large-hearted, abundantly pardoning man.

I say, then, this spirit of magnanimity has been long and widely recognised by men for the glorious thing it is. The difficulty that our prophets and teachers have had has been to get us to believe, truly and simply, that God can be as magnanimous as a man, that He does forgive, that the Divinest of Divine things is just this Love that welcomes back the repentant wrong-doer, that blots out all the enmity in a moment and blesses the penitent soul with infinite peace.

## FISHERS OF MEN

“Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.”—Mark i. 17.

THESE are the first words recorded, in this earliest form of the gospel narrative, as addressed by Jesus to special persons. They show us clearly that he had the fine skill, not uncommon with teachers who know their business, to approach men by their open door, by a pictorial reference to the things that were most familiar to them. We see in other stories about him the same method. He meets a rich young man who having “great possessions” is evidently very conscious of the fact. The appeal Jesus makes to him is shaped accordingly: “Come; I’ll put you in the way of the best kind of wealth.” To Martha, who was so keen on “seeing to things” and putting them right, he turns the matter in another way: “Come; I’ll show you one thing that must be attended to.”

When he accepted the invitation of the hospitable Pharisee, and an outcast woman found her way in and shed tears of penitence at the Master’s feet, to the disgust of the respectable host, Jesus took the opportunity of giving him a lesson in hospitality. “See what this poor woman has done: what did you do for your guest?”

And so here, meeting two fishermen, Simon and Andrew, and making up his mind to call them to be among his followers and co-workers, he says: “Come; let’s fish for men.” Perhaps if he had met the pearl merchant on the outlook for special prizes in his particular line, he would have put it thus: “Come; let us find the most goodly of all pearls.” Or if he had joined a company of shepherds resting on the slopes of one of those hills in Galilee that I remember so well, he might have made special use of the story of the “ninety and nine” that were safe in the fold and the one poor lost sheep that had to be found. But, after all, there are things more precious than the goodliest pearls, and his own question is, “How much better is a man than a sheep?” So it is well put here, “let us fish for *men*.” There is no finer thing to catch.

The GREAT ANGLER is no “Satan,” no “Adversary,” but One who has been prolific in providing ways of drawing out the best that is in man. As you and I look back over the past history of mankind, it may seem a very slow process that has led from the primitive human stock to the finest type of to-day; but, slow or not, and we creatures of a few years may not be the best

judges of that, the result is undeniable. Here are the fine minds, well-cultured: here are the fine characters, richly developed, and something of the process that has educated them, drawn forth their best, is applied to every one of us.

Consider that process in your own case: I can but suggest a hint or two of it. The Great Angler has surrounded you with earth and sky and all forms, colours, sounds, tastes and odours in nature, seeking your latent powers by means of them. He has put you in the midst of countless productions of genius and good taste. You have stores from the experience of the men of the past; splendid stories and examples of manhood at its best come with a challenge to you day by day. These, and your duties, joys, sorrows, hopes, fears, and problems, are the mechanism by means of which your inner secret is being sought and brought out into the light of actual life. Don't say there is nothing in you worth all this trouble. When you read or hear of some fine action done by quite an ordinary person, a common workman it may be, or just a servant girl of the usual type, and such persons show us every now and then that "all men are possible heroes," as Mrs. Browning says; when the daily paper tells you of that side, for once, to set off the seamy side, do you not feel a thrill of admiration and exultation? That is because the deep-down Man in you is being "fished" for. It is worth while being "caught" in that way; it is not for death, but for life.

Someone may ask how he shall know if he is

securely "caught," not merely touched a little on his better side and then let go. Well, always allowing that extreme modesty becomes a man who knows his weakness and fallibility, I should say there is one pretty safe test. The Man in us is fairly reached only when we seek it in others and help them to do their best.

In one of the later Gospel stories we read of this Simon Peter, the Galilee fisherman, that when he and his fellows had seen their Master crucified and were now back in their own district, mournful over the loss of his presence, the impulse came that is always a good one to come in the hour of trouble. Get to work; don't think you honour the memory of your dead by idleness. "I go fishing," said Simon. Then said the others, "We go with thee." The incident may serve to point back to that bygone invitation of the Master—"Come, let us fish for men." Such an invitation comes really to us all. No man's best is reached till he realises that he is here not merely for his own "soul's salvation," but to help lives around him. For remember, there are splendid resources hidden away in those lives. They may look unpromising at first, but some of the best men and women looked so once. Get that lad to kindle his imagination, but not with wildly sensational and extravagant things, or worse, but with the nobler deeds and more splendid ideals of history and biography. Win that pretty girl who is so fond of dress to see that, while prettiness is really a nice thing in the world and not to be despised

so long as it doesn't go with conceit, the truth is, as Emerson puts it, that "a beautiful form is better than a beautiful face, and a beautiful behaviour is better than a beautiful form." So help all to be what they know they ought to be.

## THE SILENT HARP

"How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"  
—Ps. cxxxvii. 4.

OF all the tender touches of poetry in the Bible writings, few or none are so pathetic as the picture given in this psalm of the captives that wept by the waters of Babylon. Some of us, perhaps, hardly realise their position, but if we did, we should fully sympathise with their grief. We in good old England have been so long free from invasion that it is hard to imagine what being conquered means. We cannot imagine ourselves and our children lying at the mercy of a foreign army. As for being deported to a distant country, some sturdy ones among us may think they would make a bold bid to get a living even there. Yet a few minutes' quiet thought will bring home to us all the terror and utter misery of such a condition.

It is not without profit that these Hebrews have been in many generations an object lesson for devout and serious minds, for the men who not only live but think how and why they live. The traditional story of Israel begins with obedience to an impulse in the heart of their ancestor, Abraham, to go out and seek a better country.

From that going-forth, not knowing whither, even as a young life goes forth, the race went on, through perils, defeats, victories. Enslaved in youth, delivered and established as a free nation by the mercies of God; again brought low and carried into captivity; and only at last glorified through suffering, taught by bitter experience till they could teach all mankind the one wisdom of life, that man exists to do the will of God, to seek righteousness and leave the issues with him: such was Israel's story. Something like that has been the story of many a man.

So here we find the sweet singers of Israel bewailing in a minor key the wretchedness of a life whose proper music is hushed, the harp hanging useless upon the willows that grow by the waters of Babylon—a silent harp, that once gave forth the "Lord's song," and that might sound yet again, if hope and courage were but reborn. There are, I say, men like that to-day. And looking upon their mournful ways, noticing the silence of their finer faculties, and the discords of their disordered lives, one sees into what strange lands a man may be taken captive, lands where the "Lord's song" is as impossible as the songs of Zion to the sorrowing victims of Babylon.

Someone has said that the life of man is like the fabled coffin of Mahomet, suspended between heaven and earth. One while it inclines to the heavenly, another to the earthly. How sure a test of our moods it is that, when a man inclines to evil, the good songs, the songs of pure joy, of hope, of trust and high aspiration, fade away,

and even become unnatural! Let but an uncharitable mood possess you, and in that "strange land" no song of the soul's true Zion can arise. Let an unforgiving temper prevail, a disposition to "have it out" to the uttermost farthing, then the sweeter voices of the heart die away. As when thunder broods dark above the forest, the bird-music dies, so dies the sunny music of the soul when we shut out love, for then we shut out God, who is Love. Find me a man who thinks harshly of his fellow-men, one that judges quickly and severely, and suspects much, a man that counts the heart to be "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," shall we hear the "Lord's song" from him? Will he lead little children in happy ways, help young men and women to grow wise and gracious, cheer the faint-hearted and get the world's work along, or make the widow's heart to sing for joy? Indeed, my brother, it cannot be. Divineness, like the sunlight, always finds out its own proper medium. If the opal structure is not there, the iridescence shall not shine. If the rose-petals fail, where can rosiness show itself? If mercifulness be not in the heart, the heart cannot utter notes of mercy. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness."

Whatever be the province of the land of captivity into which a man may have been carried away, let him hasten to win his liberty; if the full release may not be yet, at least let him be ever ready to sing softly to himself some Lord's song of hope and patient faith. I observe these

poor Hebrews, whose harp was left so pitifully silent, came to worse things; they fell to cursing, as the psalm shows, instead of soothing and cheering their spirits with some music of Zion. It had been better not so. Better for a man who cannot pretend to much in the way of a religious life to be true in the one or two things that seem quite clear to him, to sing the chant of duty, and one or two bars of thankfulness that things are, at least, no worse. By and by, if he keep the harp in tune, the mournful cadences and halting measures will give place to a fuller minstrelsy. No longer sounding low in his heart as a transient voice, the song of his life will at last become eternally sure, heavenly sweet, till he too joins the glorious harpers who praise God with their whole being for ever.

"HARDEN NOT YOUR HEART"

"To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart."  
—Ps. xciv. 7, 8.

IN religion we want the man of fibre, staunch to principle, loyal to so much of the truth as he has in sight. We want a thinker, whether he be a writer or speaker, to show the "courage of his convictions." We feel, no doubt, with Emerson, that it is a decided loss in conversation when there is no standing up straight for ideas on one side and the other, but all is let down into a "mush of concession." Prof. Huxley, speaking of the Metaphysical Society (which was founded by Tennyson and his friends for a

meeting-place where thinkers of all schools could come together, Christians and non-Christians, Churchmen, Romanists, agnostics, theologians, scientists, whatever they might be), said it ultimately "died of too much love." We can probably all guess what he meant. Sturdy and unflinching debater as he was, merciless to what he conceived to be false, valiant for what he held to be true, Huxley had scant respect for the softness that yields at the first contact with difficulty, and preferred useful combat to profitless courtesies. If I read the Scriptures aright, the Eternal One Himself prefers a "manly man." "Stand up on thy feet" was the greeting to the prophet Ezekiel. "Gird up thy loins like a man" was the challenge to Job.

So, then, we do want vertebrate natures about us, not those of a flaccid or jelly-fish kind. Little good comes to us through men who have no respect for their own thinking. No good at all can come to a man himself who is a traitor to his share of the truth. And yet, here comes the warning, let us beware of intellectual "hardness," the disposition to assume that we know everything already, and that wisdom will die with us. Simple, honest, definite conviction is one thing, and a very good thing; but stubborn pride refusing to budge, whatever the evidence, is quite another thing, and by no means so good. Men forget that, after all, it is a big world; and that, just possibly, others may have caught from it meanings obscured as yet from ourselves.

You and I may have travelled far, but none of

us has seen quite everything yet. We have read many books, seen many pictures, heard much music, met many people in the flesh or in history, but still there is more. Nature certainly has many a mood, and art grows various as it tries to reproduce them. The old problems of our existence challenge philosophers still, while new aspects of reality come up before successive generations. In a world so big and various, with so long a history and so wide an outlook, surely the wisest temper is that which is always open to fresh inspirations, always ready to be taught. Some things we do know, and by them we will live, but not as men who suppose themselves to have now reached the end of the journey. The more resolute of will we are, the more need is ours to be "born again as a little child," to accept the world as wonderfully new every day, to grow more delicately sensitive, more quickly responsive to the Voice that calls on us.

It is not in matters of theory only, let us be sure, that this warning is useful. Questions of practical conduct arise in which it is essential to preserve the mind from blind prejudice or unjust partiality. Much of the mischief that comes about in human intercourse, whether in private or public circles, springs from the habit of taking one side in ignorance or misconception of the other; or of rashly judging another man's words or actions and refusing to consider the case in all its bearings. If a man wishes to be guided in his duty he mustn't strain too hard upon the bit. He must be resolute to do what he con-

cludes is right, but not hasty in concluding. This is not mere prudence, but a religious duty, for him who knows that the inner world is, no less than the outer world, a realm where God's will, not ours, should be done.

Sometimes, again, one will "harden his heart with sorrow," as we read the afflicted Job said he would do. It is a pity when the waters that should soften the heart tend apparently to petrify it. Older people may remember an incident in our national life which certainly had the appearance to some of a falling into this kind of fault. Well do I remember the gloom of widespread mourning that fell upon all classes in the land at a time when I was a boy capable of comprehending very little of such things. Queen Victoria's illustrious consort, Prince Albert, was carried away by death in the prime of his years; his passing was a grief to all good citizens, and to the Queen herself it was a lasting sorrow. So lasting, indeed, was that sorrow, that after a long period of respectful sympathy some popular murmurs began to arise that the Sovereign had other duties, after all, besides those of private affection. At that stage of things there was a story current to the effect that one of those friends of the Queen who had the privilege of common speech with her—I think it was Dean Stanley—met her, in her usual dress of deepest mourning, with the words, "Madam, have you not forgiven the Almighty yet?" Now, of course, every right-minded person would shrink from even the appearance of wounding afresh the wounded

spirit; but is there not here something worthy of pondering by us, if at any time we hug our griefs and shut ourselves up to them, as if they were the only things in the world that matter? Of a more ancient English monarch the tradition goes that after losing his beloved son by shipwreck he was so grief-stricken that "he never smiled again." That poor king makes a pathetic picture; but one cannot help thinking he would have been helped himself more if he had "smiled again." Was there no poor man's child near by who would have been made happy by a playful word from him? Had he no thought to cheer those around him who shared the burdens of the State? Surely, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, will whisper more clearly to the soul that tries to comfort another in its sadness, than to one who makes even of sorrow a sort of selfishness.

## LIKE TO LIKE

"And being let go, they came to their own company."  
—Act iv. 23.

THERE are two aspects of our "own company." (1) There are those whose interests are the same as ours, with whom we share a common life, whose ways we know, whose efforts we partake, and who exchange mutual services with us. The ties that bind us into such companies are real and useful; indeed they are absolutely necessary for daily life. But (2) there is the "company" whose temperament is ours and who think and feel much as we do on the more

outstanding questions of moral, social, or religious importance. They are the kind of people to whom, "being let go," free to choose our associates, we instinctively prefer to turn for "company." Their natures, rather than their circumstances, are specially congenial to ours.

As to the former kind of fellowship I need say little here; only that little is, I trust, well worth considering. Seeing that by necessity we are often bound up in our daily life with others into groups which none of us voluntarily chose, we do well, surely, at least to save such "companies" from discord, so far as we may. A stranger in a strange land, for instance, will feel keenly enough the absence of his familiar friends. Their looks and voices have been left far behind, and here he is, surrounded by people of whom he knows little or nothing, and who are equally ignorant of him. The boy who is at school for the first time, or the lad just starting work, cannot help feeling his lonely position. He may be excused if his young heart sinks somewhat as he misses the encouragement and indulgence of his parents and home friends, and timidly meets the keen criticism of the new circle. The solitary traveller on board a liner has the same kind of experience in another form. All of those around him, however, are in very much the same case; and what are they to do? Obviously, since they must inevitably be "companions" (the word literally implies sharing bread together), they must, as we say, just make the best of things. The special kindness that exists between long-tried friends

is for a time denied them; but all cheery good-fellowship is not taken away, even when men are complete strangers to one another. Seeing that hours and days, and it may be, in case of employment, a much longer time will have to be spent together with the rest, it is only common-sense to take some pains to spend that time as pleasantly and profitably as possible. People who have to work together must cheerily try to put up with uncongenial companions, if such companions are about them. After all, we have to get on somehow, and we may as well get on reasonably and smoothly if we can. Perhaps something better will grow out of the most unpromising of beginnings.

But as to the second type of "company," the more spiritual type, there is more to be said. Few themes, I think, can be more attractive to a brotherly sort of man than the wonderful, and sometimes very subtle, attractions of "like to like." It is marvellous, though occasionally almost comic, to see how soon these attractions set up. Beginning with beginnings, everyone can see how in cases such as those before mentioned one of the accidental company very soon draws closer to some other. The shrinking schoolboy, whose heart was so heavy the first night he spent at the new school, soon finds out a chum. The soldier in barracks, the sailor in the fore-castle, the passenger pacing the deck—give each but a few days with the rest, and he will find out congenial spirits. As we say, "Birds of a feather flock together." It has a good meaning as well as a bad.



This proverb, like many another bit of homely wisdom, enshrines a very suggestive truth. I said something about the second kind of "company" as that which we choose for ourselves. But, when you come to look closely into the matter, do you not see that there is more than mere choice here? When comradeships spring up between those who have hitherto been strangers there is certainly a great deal of unconscious attraction at work, usually much more than deliberately conscious selection. We are "sorted out," in spite of ourselves; and this process, if you look closely into it, goes very far and very deep.

Surely we are all aware of the capacity we have for enjoying really "good company." When, in the midst of our rather dull and monotonous life, a kind of door opens, and we are suddenly brought face to face with some splendid action, or some glorious idea, we find that we are not altogether out of key with it, however humdrum our life has been. On the contrary, we feel that between us and the hero, or between us and the brilliant speaker, there is a vital bond, none the less real for being so often unrealised. A crucial instance occurred in East London life some time ago. Some enthusiastic people, who had themselves long enjoyed the thrilling interest of the great Greek tragedies, conceived a notion that such wonderful things were not meant to be for exclusive enjoyment of a chosen few, but that the common people ought at least to have a chance of sharing the feast. So it was decided that one

or other of the classic masterpieces should be produced for East End audiences. Some wise critics foretold failure. But their fears were groundless. The poor people who assembled in their hundreds to see the play might naturally miss many of the allusions and be perplexed about some of the customs represented, but as to the living interest of the drama there was no room for doubt, as was proved by their silent awe, their tears and their smiles. The hopes and sorrows and triumphs of the human heart are a common property of all men, and these at least were understood, and these were the principal things.

So it is true that, if a man will but go down deep enough into his own nature, he will find himself akin to all the greatest and best of human kind. The lowest sinner may have fellowship with the highest saint. The great Something that makes us will not allow our poor foolish limits to shut us out from one another altogether. It would mar the completion of the picture, which, at last, as the work of the Perfect God, must not fall short of perfection in any part, in any life.

#### THE ETHICAL TEACHING OF JESUS

"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"—Luke vi. 46.

JESUS saw and teaches us the supreme value of the Human Being. There is for him no figure of speech too high to be used in regard

to it. Sometimes he reveals his conception by words of encouragement. If a man has forgotten what he should be and gone off into some wilderness of degradation, and then bethinks himself and turns to the right again, Jesus says boldly: "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God" over him; yes, more than over ninety and nine "just" persons that "need no repentance." Sometimes he shows his mind by the most solemn warnings: "See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for in heaven their angels behold the face of my Father." And if anyone says the "little ones" referred to were his "disciples," remember that they only became such by his going for them into life's common ways and haunts. They were then and always worth his while to give his life's best for them. No word can be more awful than that in which he seeks to unveil for men what they are really doing for themselves, when they injure "any the least of his brethren," when they trample on them and degrade them: "It were better for that man that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast in the midst of the sea."

These sayings need not be multiplied. The whole tenor of the teaching and career of Jesus testifies to his sense of the absolutely immeasurable worth of each soul that lives, the lowest, the simplest, the most wretched and degraded, as well as the "just" who "need no repentance." This conviction of the supreme value of the Individual is one of the two foundation stones

upon which is reared the grand all-inclusive arch of his ethical system.

The other is his conviction as to the *Community*.

His gospel, whatever some of his followers have since made of it, was far from being a programme of etherealised egotism. He spoke often of "the Kingdom," we hear, and kingdoms are not made of unrelated lives. Once, indeed, he said "the Kingdom of heaven is within you"; a thing first of spirit and then of outwardness. But we may be sure that Florence Nightingale's saying would have been emphatically proved by Jesus: "The Kingdom of heaven is within; but we must make it without." Yes; here as everywhere, the Logos of God, the "reason" divine, must "take flesh" and be manifested in outward form.

The Community at present is far from realising the ideal of any "Kingdom of heaven;" but even now it is, as it always has been, of quite incalculable significance to the respective men and women, the Human Beings, who compose it. A man's full worth is shown by his affections, faculties, services, character; and all these exist just in so far as he is really a "member" of the Community. In a sense, the Community makes the Individual; and all his best, or his worst, is elicited by the lives around him. If it is to be the best that is drawn out, the Community must be framed on the best lines. It must rise toward the higher standards of mutual honour and mutual service. It must embody, as it alone

can, the higher human possibilities. How far we are from that, we must sorrowfully confess; but we, even we, can see hints and prophecies of what will be realised by and by, when civic life is as fully ordered and as nobly animated as at least some citizens' lives have been. The family is a higher organism, of greater potentiality than any single member of it; the regiment can attain to excellence impossible to the solitary soldier; the nation can evoke effort, enthusiasm, passion, and affection, such as no less rich a complexity could reveal.

What will be the grandeur of our race when all societies and communities of men realise their full spiritual significance towards their component members and towards other nations! What a splendid consummation when all the kingdoms of this earth are become "the Kingdom of our God and of his Christ!"

Here is the glorious aim, unrealised as yet, toward which, through whatever tears and pains and frustrated hopes, the men who have learnt to value things as Jesus did, are pressing and must ever press.

## NEMESIS

"He that soweth righteousness hath a sure reward."  
—Prov. xi, 18.

THE world's greatest writers, from Æschylus, the Greek, to our own Shakespeare and George Eliot, have emphasised and illustrated marvellously this law of the all-round, just, and inevitable

Retribution. Slow but very sure is Nemesis. Justice, "beloved of gods and men," says the ancient, "has feet of wool but hands of iron." Man's "pleasant vices" unfailingly turn to whips and scourge them; and though in our own individual case we may repine that it is so, a deep instinct in us answers exactly to the great world's principle, and so passionately do we "love" this Justice, this even-handed minister divine, that we cry out in our natural short-sightedness against any infringement of it that seems to occur in the world around.

Cause, consequence; this end of the lever raised, that inevitably lowered; seed, crop; "to every man according to his work"; so, with various examples, we always read, when we can read, in a bigger book than the Bible, that book of experience out of which all the world's Bibles are but imperfectly copied. Really, if you come to think of it quietly, does it not seem a curious, a tragically comic thing, that any man or nation should conceive the possibility of getting outside this Law? I wonder if anywhere there have been people silly enough to imagine their bodies an exception to the law of gravitation! Well, I suppose the excuse for not being just as certain in regard to the action of laws moral and spiritual, is that they are not so obvious, to beginners, as the law of falling bodies. But our minds are ours to think with, and if men had been content with the "obvious," they would have missed much of what is held most valuable by us all. It certainly takes little practice in any art or science that has

to do with what we call "Nature" to be taught how inflexible the rules of the game are. You may excuse and plead how you will, but if you put your finger in the fire your pleading will not save you from a burn. You may have deceived your neighbour for awhile, but "Nature" cannot be cheated. Sooner or later the exact result emerges from the combination of all the antecedent steps. If your chemicals are impure, the experiment is so far a failure. If your fittings are not secure, the gas gets through; if the wires are not rightly insulated, the electric current leaks. So goes the story in every direction. The fraudulent dealer may write "pure" on the label, but the test-tube takes no heed of that. The bungling workman may disguise his imperfect work from you; but great Nature will assuredly expose the trick, and it may be a costly one for all parties. The careful scholar in Nature's school knows that, in the long run, the knave pays dearest.

That being so, how strange it is that men do such foolish things! Sooner or later the blood of the sensualist must blab his secret to all the world; however did he come to forget that "must"? The skin of the drug-taker is quite plain reading for the initiated; why did she expect "no one would know"? The liar, the hypocrite, having a few times deceived his honest neighbours, is stamped henceforth; and, by and by, even those whom he has never cheated observe danger signals in the very look of the man.

We ought not to be surprised at these tell-tale symptoms. What would surprise the careful

student of this world would be their absence; and what does surprise the lover of mankind, who knows something of the finer capacities of our minds, is the deplorable self-deception that prevails in some lives. People should realise that everything, dead or living, besides being related to everything else, has its structure. It may be easily seen in some cases, hidden away in others, but structure is there in each one. Take a piece of glass. So far as the eye of man discerns there is no particular arrangement of its particles; in fact the ordinary observer does not so much as think about them at all. Light passes easily through the glass, and if there is no flaw, he can read (let us say) the page on which it may be laid. But if the glass is subjected to pressure, this way or that, there will be a corresponding alteration in its inner but still invisible structure; you detect it by seeing the rays of light distorted from the path they formerly took. The "structure of a man's mind" may seem fanciful to speak about, and yet to what are the differences in people due, if not to differences (as we say) in "their make-up"?

If, then, we look quite straight at the doings of the rogue, who has been (as we say) "successful," what exactly is his success? It is just that of being a rogue; just that! The odds and ends of materials that his roguery may collect around him, bits of metal, paper, silk, fur, curious stones, things to look at, to listen to, to swallow, all this may loom large in his imagination, or in that of potential rogues who envy him; but there, in the centre of this cluster of so-called "goods," is an

indubitable "bad," namely, the man himself. The silent-footed Nemesis has never once lost track of him through all his dodgings. Every twist he gave to his shabby mind, so shabby as not to see the difference between having desirable things and being a desirable thing oneself, has warped his structure inevitably, so that the light of life gets woefully distorted for him. The sweet and simple delights of innocency are so foreign to him that he scoffs at the mention of them. The wholesome pleasures of a healthy mind are insipid to him; his palate is spoiled. From great and noble passions he has become an alien; and to the common troubles which beset us all, and which innocence faces with quiet trust, he has added for himself the fear of detection. "The guilty fear in every bush an officer." And perhaps, after all, there is Something to be faced, sterner than the sternest agent of human law.

Do not suppose, my friends, as some of the ancients appear to have done, that Nemesis only followed up the evil-doer and exacted the full score against him. The divine law of Retribution is just as certain on the track of the well-doer, and will just as surely give him the harvest of his honest and true dealings. Be of good courage; the rogues of the earth cannot succeed against the Righteous Judge of all worlds. "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"; such work will infallibly prosper in the end, and can never be "in vain for the Lord."

## FOR A SEASON AND FOR EVER

"Perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever."—Philemon 15.

IN the course of his years the aged Paul had discovered some of life's deepest secrets; they are rediscoverable by the thoughtful in every generation. If he had lost something, he had "gotten understanding"; and one very useful bit of "understanding" is the wisdom to look all things squarely in the face, the unpleasant as well as the pleasant, and reckon them up quite candidly. He approached Philemon, who was suffering from a vexatious disappointment in the loss of a servant, just in the wise spirit of a sound and practical adviser. You have had a hard knock, let us suppose, a severe financial blow, and you feel as if it was all up with your business. But the shrewd voice of some steady-minded friend comes to you: "Is the case quite as bad as you think? Let us see the books. Compare all the accounts carefully; be sure you set down everything accurately on both sides, and then strike a correct balance. True, there has been a loss, is there no gain? Or is no gain yet possible?"

"Come now," says Paul, "granted the evil; it can't be denied. But is there no possibility of good coming out of it all? You lost a 'slave'; perhaps you may gain a 'brother,' even a 'brother beloved.' He was parted 'for a season'; perhaps that you should have him 'for ever.'" Here is a new light on the whole transaction; it is a light that changes the aspect of all life's

comings and goings, the light of the abiding blessings.

Everyone of us is related both to the temporal and the eternal, to the things that pass away and the things that endure. By no effort, however great, by no wisdom, however subtle, can we cut ourselves free from the "seasonal" aspect of life. Just as surely we cannot really be divided from the eternal side of things by our folly, blindness or inertness. These only render fearful to us that which should be glorious and sublime.

"For a season" we eat and drink, we wear and use; and we must do so, whoever we are, and wherever we are. Necessity is laid upon us from time to time to secure fresh supplies of food, new clothing, new tools and appliances for our convenience or our work. We get these things, or they are provided by others for us; and as soon as we have them they begin to escape our grasp! We may, of course, prudently preserve them awhile; or, on the contrary, we may recklessly hasten their decay; but, sooner or later, decay they all must. If we will not eat it, the food in time becomes corrupt. If we hoard up our clothes instead of wearing them out, we must fight the moths for them; and the rust bites into the steel that use does not keep bright at the expense of rubbing away.

"For a season" also we see and hear, and enjoy or suffer the sensations of the bodily organs. The flower is fading, even while we admire its perfected beauty; and, as we are listening with delight, the ripple of the bird's song runs away. There is

nothing stereotyped in Nature; she is not a statue, but a living thing; and to live is to change both in Nature and in man. He who is healthy and vigorous drinks in the varied bliss of living "for a season;" and in like manner his stricken brother, worn with suffering, though he may suffer long, comes to an end of his pain at last. Thus for a season are all the things that happen to us. It is we who "for ever" *become*.

And we are parted from the things which we often desire to keep; perhaps that they may be ours for ever, ours not in a way that involves the repetition of loss; not in the poor "slave" form, subservient to sense alone, but in the glorious "brother" form, helpful to the spirit, the abiding part of us.

The days go, forms beloved pass away, but nothing has been lost. The touch of the Master Hand has but entered so much the more intimately into the very life-substance of the immortal instrument which He is preparing for the music of a higher world. What the eye does not see any longer, the mind knows more clearly now. "It is expedient for you that I go away," says Christ to his friends, and . . . "If I go away, I come again." The beloved form has vanished; the beloved reality cannot go, being a thing eternal with God Himself, and the enlightened heart sings at last with the poet, "Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine!"

## WE ARE GOD'S HUSBANDRY

"We are God's fellow-workers; ye are God's husbandry (tilled field), God's building."—1 Cor. iii. 9.

THERE are two main ideas here. The first is obviously that life, whatever else you may say about it, is a process; the second, that it is a divine process. However you may imagine the divine Being to exist, however you interpret the divine purpose, life is not a haphazard thing. There is too much arrangement and dove-tailing, as we say, and working together.

Let us, then, note these metaphors, because they are very significant—the tilled field, the building. Tennyson in his *In Memoriam* employs other metaphors. He speaks of the hands that have come "out of darkness," which reach through nature "moulding men." There is a "moulding" going on, according to the poet. He also speaks of life as not being idle ore,

"But iron dug from central gloom  
And heated hot with burning fears,  
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,  
And battered with the shocks of doom  
To shape and use."

In these cases the moulding of the man is conceived as part of a process, as the sculptor might mould his plaster before he sets to work to make the marble statue; and, in the treatment of the ore, there is continuous heating and hammering of the iron or steel to "shape and use." Thus we have the same general conception of process

going on, not the striking out of something definite and perfect at once: so that with this one wise touch you rebuke the impatience of man, the foolish expectancy of man, that there shall be no flaws, as they are called, in the work. If I go to see any process, like the moulding of a model or the smelting of ore, at any stage I can very easily discover something or other upon which criticism may fasten. "This might be otherwise!" Yes, and it is going to be otherwise, but at present it cannot be otherwise, because there is a process going on, and you must first have "this" before you can have "that." Life is not a finished and complete achievement. It is *going on*, and I venture to think, with all respect to the memory and imagination and genius of the poet, that the apostle chose better symbols, when he spoke about the tilled field and the building. Of the two the tilled field is the better, for a building might be looked upon as a sort of dead thing, though when we really know the inwardness of things we shall see that no building was ever reared but was the embodiment of thought. It also represents method and process; but the tilled field is a process from seed-time to harvest, and then begins the process again. In the tilled field we are in the region of life.

This ought to give pause to those who still subscribe, if there are any, to the idea that at one stage there is a finishing of revelation, that in one instance somewhere, if you could find it, there is the absolute and completed plan made clear, the absolute and completed planning of God. No,

there has been, there is, and we may be sure there will be growth; and growth means change, shedding off some things and putting forth others. Growth also demands amongst other things liberty; and that is where we Unitarians always hold up our protest against the dogmatic tendencies of those who would hinder the discovery of truth, or the proclamation of the discovery when the truth has been discovered. Give the soul liberty to grow, the individual soul and the soul of the race. Let it have opportunity, room, and ample scope to develop in the best way that is revealed to it, and then you may hope for great things.

It is part of the growth of the world; the shedding off before the new leaf can appear. Very often you may learn the old familiar lesson from the boughs of trees. When the bough stolidly keeps its leaf it shows that the tree is dead; but when the leaves are being shed and there are the buds of the new season, it is living. So we believe that we are true to truth in this matter, if we proclaim the largest liberty for the mind, and desire to have the amplest room to grow.

Now, what is the second of these two great ideas? As I said, it is the idea that the process which is incomplete, which has many noble and wonderful things in it, but which is yet to be completed, is a divine process. When we use the word "God," we know well that we are suggesting what we can never define. We are attempting to express what can never find full expression; we are hinting rather than expressing. There is

a sense of that Something implied in the verse which I quoted to the children in my little talk to them this morning: "He that planteth the ear, shall He not hear?" The plan, does it work itself out? The process, is it self-executing? I may draw up a plan for my garden, but unless I work in it, the plan by itself is ineffectual. The architect may draw up his plan for a building; but unless the workpeople set to work, living agents performing their respective parts, there will be no building there. And so there would be no building here, no process revealed in the history of mankind, were there not at the back of all Something adequate to such a plan, to such a process. It is that that we mean, when we say "God" and speak of the "divine." And the Unitarian's word respecting this is that, here of all places, we do well to be very modest, while we are confident, and to be very reticent, not to be in too great a hurry to lay down definitions; for we have seen that in the growth of men's thoughts there have been many changes with regard to the conception of the divine Being. But one thing must be true; there never was any good thought about God that was anything like good enough for the reality; all our dreams of excellence fall far short of the excellence of the divine. And as, in regard to power and the extent of the universe, the modern conception has far surpassed anything conceived in old times, so in those higher reaches of existence which we call truth and goodness, love and benevolence, the Eternal surpasses all that our



feeble minds have ever been able so much as to dream of.

For if science has revealed anything in these days, it has revealed that no single part of the universe is left outside the divine law, that no single bit of the universe is negligible. Now that applies to human lives, surely; otherwise the most valuable things would be neglected, while the mere instruments of life would be carefully guarded. We are sure that it will not be so. Our gospel is that the eternal and illimitable Divine energy is on our side, if only we are on the side of the illimitable, the Divine energy, the Divine goodness, God Himself. "When shall I know that I am blessed with this Divine energy and goodness?" It is when I do my duty, it is when I go forth to help my fellow-citizens, to guide a child on the first steps of the larger growth, when I protest against things evil in the world, when I fight against wrong and when I defend the weak. When I live to good purpose, then most surely I know God's good purpose.

That is the Unitarian's gospel. It is not a gospel which pretends to exhaust the mysteries of being, but it is a word of cheer in the midst of trouble. It is not a gospel which draws a line, and calls on men to stand exactly in intellectual things where we do; but it is a word, I say, of cheer, inciting every man to go on in the path which God reveals to him as best for him. It is a word of cheer, making us feel that we cannot lose ourselves, even when we go astray wilfully; that the Eternal Benevolence and Wisdom are too great

for our little folly, and that we shall be brought back again, even though it may be with pains and tears. That applies also to the human race; and in so far as this crime-laden generation is overwhelmed with calamity, it is because the generation has gone wrong, it is because the generation has not yet learned that the process ought to have reached a higher stage; it is because the generation at large has not listened to wiser men in the past, but has gone on in the same old blind way, men setting themselves up one against another, instead of saying, "Come, let us work together with one another, for One is our Maker, and we are all His people; One is our Father, and we are all His children, and brethren one with another."

## GUESTS OF THE HEART

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."—Rev. iii. 20.

GREAT guests come into our lives, sometimes apparently without stopping to knock. While I am talking, you are thinking, and I cannot tell what sudden thoughts, quite different from mine, may spring into your mind. The story of many great men show a kind of sudden "inspiration," as we call it, now and again. Men of science, philosophy, art, literature, all sorts, including ordinary people like ourselves, occasionally have these unexpected visitations. Charles Darwin had one. He was in the far south of America, he tells us, and had been pondering long on the

problem of man's original condition and his relation to all other living things. Suddenly, as he watched the very primitive human beings that inhabit that land, the thought flashed across his mind that the first of human creatures were really like that; and so his thoughts were led on into the theories that are now so closely associated with his name. A great Irish mathematician, Hamilton, had a similar experience. He had been for a long time pondering difficult problems and sought in vain for a formula which should unlock them. Day after day, he says, his family would ask him as he came to the breakfast table, if he had discovered what he wanted, and he had to admit his failure. One day, as he came to a bridge in Dublin,—there ought to be a memorial tablet erected on it—there came into his mind, quite unexpectedly, the long-sought solution, the invention of quaternions which made him for ever famous in the learned world. Lord Tennyson, too, had once been for a walk high on the downs in the Isle of Wight near his home, with the winds blowing aloft and the waves rolling far below. When he came home, his son tells us, he wrote down at once those well-known verses entitled "Crossing the Bar." They begin thus:—

"Sunset and evening star,  
 And one clear call for me!  
 And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
 When I put out to sea,  
 But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
 Too full for sound and foam,  
 When that which drew from out the boundless deep,  
 Turns again home."

"This is the best thing you ever wrote," said the son to him. He replied, "They came in a moment!"

Yes: suddenly, unexpectedly, marvellously, such bodiless guests may come to us; if not bringing triumphs of genius, they may bring us the new idea we wanted to solve our own particular problem of daily life, without "stopping to knock," but not without preparation, conscious or unconscious, on our part. Fine inspirations don't come to fools, or to lazy minds; it is not the way of Wisdom to give itself away, generous as it is to all who make ready for it. Let us, therefore, be willing to do our part, and not to let slip the chance of being visited by the best of all Visitors. "Be ye also ready," said Jesus; he was ready, as a familiar instance in his experience shows.

Familiar the instance is, but I rather think it is not as carefully observed as it deserves to be. I refer to his story of "Blessing little Children." Of course, everyone sees it as a pretty incident, and even those who have little use for Christian tradition as a rule are ready to admit that here is something really gracious, and singularly unlike anything that even the followers of this Prophet talked about and did, if we are to judge by some early Christian writings. But let us notice the particulars: they may possibly have a special bearing on present-day affairs. Well, in the first place, when "they brought young children to him" on that memorable occasion, it was not the Nazareth mothers, who would be well known to him, nor even Galilean mothers, who might claim

to be of his own country. Certainly they were entire strangers to him; they belonged to quite a different part of the land; and it seems, as I read the gospels, that very possibly they actually belonged to Samaria! In that case, his ready love for the little ones takes on a peculiar significance; but in any case, please observe, the little ones were unknown to him; they were not a picked batch, but just the ordinary run of juvenile humanity, so far as we can see. And yet, what a splendid vision flashed into the good Master's mind, as he welcomed them—a vision that has gone on glowing in the minds of all his true disciples ever since, blessing multitudes of little lives in every land, and lifting up the whole conception of our common human nature. As his eyes greeted theirs and his open arms invited one after another and he blessed them, not in some strange official manner, but in the sweet, simple way that every lover of childhood knows, making them fearlessly happy and delightfully their best innocent selves, he saw what I fear is hidden from a good many of us. "Of such," he bore witness, "is the Kingdom of Heaven." Their angels do there "behold the face of my Father."

Talk of blessing! Who was most "blessed" that day but that Blessed One, who thus saw through the ordinary dull films of things into the heart of the mystery and wonder of things! So the "sudden inspiration" came to him, as it might have come to us, any of us, walking the villages of Surrey, if only the door of our heart had been ready for such a Guest. Alas, so far are some of

us from being conscious of such a knocking at the door of our heart that the cause of the little ones is too often treated with indifference. If they happen to be clean and quiet, and in general terms "good," people are actually able to "put up with them," and even at times to take a turn in minding or teaching them. But the dirty little waifs of the streets, that is a very different matter. I have heard of late of some very patriotic Christians who were sternly insistent that the starving children of their late enemies should by no means be blessed by *their* charity. It seems a long way from the standard of him whom they profess to honour. But let him be their judge; let us rather ask ourselves whether we are quick enough to hear and respond to Love's knocking at the door of our own heart.

VERSE

BEYOND

Not loss to pay the toll of years  
 With passing tears ;  
 Not loss to learn the script of Pain—  
 Not loss, but gain.

Not here to compass all we would  
 Of life and good ;  
 Not here a perfect Peace to share—  
 Not here, but There.

Not less the Beauty that shall be  
 Than this we see ;  
 Not less of Love the hidden store—  
 Not less, but more.

Not now, except in part, to know  
 The way we go ;  
 Not now to clasp our Own again—  
 Not now, but Then.

VIATICUM

LENTEN VERSE

Go with me, Lord, to-day,  
 Wherever lies my way,  
 In light or shadow let me feel thee near ;  
 Guide thou, from morn till eve,  
 So shall I never leave  
 The one right path, in boldness or in fear.

VERSE

If pleasant work be mine  
 Beneath the smile divine,  
 Be mine also the thought of gratitude ;  
 And, when the task is hard,  
 May duty be my guard,  
 And keep me steadfast to the true and good.

In fruitful words and ways  
 My heart would utter praise ;  
 If power be lacking, patience yet may shine ;  
 But should the day succeed  
 In happy song or deed,  
 Lord of all days, the glory shall be thine.

THE SECRET

PASSION-TIDE

ALL ye that love the Lord,  
 Come, hear, while I record  
 What for my soul the Lord of life hath done ;  
 Your joy will he renew  
 Who is the only True,  
 The ever-living, ever-loving One.

Long, long I sought him not,  
 His goodness I forgot,  
 My heart was hardened and my hope was dead ;  
 I knew not what I would ;  
 And still the Lord is good—  
 I asked him for a stone ; he gave me bread.

The proud world's fleeting gift  
 A moment may uplift;  
 His broke my heart, yet bade its fears begone;  
 It was Another's woe  
 That laid my spirit low—  
 I saw the Cross of Love, and Christ thereon.

Oh, sweet and wondrous change—  
 How real, and how strange  
 The power of pity, when at last we see!  
 My soul the secret learned  
 When to the Lord I turned,  
 And lo, he laid a Cross of Love on me.

THINE

*(Je suis à Toi.)*

L E N T E N V E R S E

L O R D, I am thine, though a traveller belated,  
 Seeking a home in the mercy divine;  
 Only that mercy so long would have waited—  
 Hear me, still I am thine.

Dark grows the world, and the destinies call me,  
 Lonely, how lonely, the path that is mine;  
 Let not the shadows descending appal me,  
 Guide me, Lord, I am thine.

One after one, my companions have left me,  
 Whither I know not—there cometh no sign;  
 Day gave me friends, and the dark has bereft me,  
 Help me, still I am thine.

Is there no rest from the burden of sorrow?  
 Is there no sun that for ever doth shine?  
 Lord of the day, thou art Lord of the morrow—  
 Keep me, Lord, I am thine.

L O V E T E A C H E S, L O V E L E A R N S

L E N T E N V E R S E

P R A Y ' R S that I long to pray,  
 Secrets I yearn to say,  
 Pent in my heart are they,  
 Waiting release;  
 Help, Lord, a love so weak,  
 Grant me the words I seek,  
 Or, in my silence, speak  
 Thy word of Peace.

Ah, could I tell thee now  
 All, as I silent bow,  
 Could I but breathe the vow  
 Struggling in me!  
 Yet, Lord, thou knowest well  
 What makes my heart to swell—  
 All, all I cannot tell  
 Is known to thee.

'Tis for thy Love I yearn,  
 'Tis to thy Love I turn;  
 My love doth faintly burn—  
 Its flame increase;

S U P R E M E H O U R S

So shall I learn to pray,  
Love casting fear away ;  
So shall I hear thee say  
Thy word of Peace.

W A L K I N G W I T H G O D

How rich is he who, as he goes,  
Life's wayside treasure wisely knows ;  
Delights are his, not vainly given,  
That make of earth an earlier heaven.

How brave to hope, how strong to bear,  
The man who cheers the road with prayer ;  
Who patiently abides the end,  
In sweet communion with his Friend.

How peaceful he, when night is come,  
Who finds himself with God—at home,  
The journey o'er, and in his breast  
Assurance of eternal rest.

O best Companion of the way,  
Mine in the morning of my day,  
Still let me feel thee at my side  
And give me light at eventide.

P L O U G H I N G A G A I N

D E E P the ploughshare cleaves, and deeper,  
Labours done new labours bring ;  
Secret Sower, Open Reaper,  
Is it harvest now—or spring ?

V E R S E

Is it losing, is it winning,  
Falling back, or marching on,  
End of all, or great Beginning,  
Now the age we knew is gone ?

Comes an answer : “ Nought is single,  
Spring and harvest interplay ;  
Dawn and sunset lights commingle,  
Night falls east, and west the Day.

“ Lo, the book of God's creation  
Never yet was bound and sealed ;  
All the past is preparation,  
Still the Sower treads the field.”

Ploughshare, in my heart strike deeper,  
Through the stony surface go,  
That the Sower and the Reaper  
Still may reap, and still may sow.

S I N G H I M

A H Y M N F O R C H I L D R E N

W H O would sing of God aright ?  
Let them sing of boundless Might ;  
Sing the starry hosts that go,  
Night by night, in shining row ;  
His the Law that leads them on—  
Sing him, sing him, everyone !

W H O would utter forth his Name ?  
Him the Lord of All proclaim ;

S U P R E M E H O U R S

Sing the hosts of sea and land,  
 Born beneath his quickening hand ;  
 His the Life that leads them on—  
 Sing him, sing him, everyone !

Who would raise the sweetest song ?  
 Sing him kind as he is strong ;  
 Sing the Saviours he doth send  
 Sinful mortals to befriend ;  
 His the Love that leads us on—  
 Sing him, sing him, everyone.

A L E N T E N P R A Y E R

*Ps. xliii. 3.*

O LEAD me, Lord, and bring me,  
 Before my day is o'er,  
 Where duty shall be nature  
 And faith shall fail no more.

Bid my faint heart remember  
 Its troubles past and gone,  
 That I may see how surely  
 Thy Love hath led me on.

Wake once again the singing  
 Thou gavest in the night,  
 Where, lonely in the darkness,  
 I trusted for the light.

Again with hope's assurance  
 My faltering will restore,  
 And lead—until thou bring me  
 Where faith shall fail no more.

V E R S E

V E S P E R S

THE curtain falls, tired eyelids close—  
 Come, fold me, fold me, shadowy Night !  
 Thou wilt not, canst not, quench the light  
 Of love that in my bosom glows ;

For still, within the secret cell  
 Where broods the Spirit o'er the deep,  
 Amid the miracles of sleep  
 Another Love shall guard it well.

And in that sweetest sleep of all,  
 My love, which is my life, shall be  
 Safe with the Love that lent it me  
 To use, before the curtain fall.

S L U M B E R S O N G

N E A R is night, but love is nearer,  
 Tired am I, but love is strong ;  
 Dear is light, but peace is dearer—  
 Peaceful be my evensong.

Lord, thou know'st the day's endeavour,  
 Lilies toil not—needs must I ;  
 But the task is not for ever,  
 Here awhile I lay it by.

As a little child returning  
 Seeks, and finds, its mother's breast,  
 Now my soul, for comfort yearning,  
 Comes to thee again, to rest.

Lowly, penitent, forgiven,  
 Happy in eternal grace,  
 Thus to sink to sleep is heaven,  
 In my Father's dwelling-place.

THOU LEADEST ME

THOU ledest me, my Shepherd,  
 I shall not want with thee,  
 By still and shining waters  
 Thou ledest me ;  
 I rest, when I am weary,  
 In pastures green and fair,  
 And all my bliss is crowned with this—  
 My Lord is with me there.

Thou ledest me, my Shepherd,  
 Though rough the road may be,  
 Yea, in the vale of shadows  
 Thou ledest me ;  
 E'en there I fear no evil,  
 Thy comfort still is near,  
 And while my Guide is at my side  
 What shadow shall I fear ?

Thou ledest me, my Shepherd,  
 With heart from trouble free,  
 To feasts of purest pleasure  
 Thou ledest me ;  
 My cup of joy runs over,  
 My days, with goodness stored,  
 Glad tidings tell, that I shall dwell  
 For ever with the Lord.

SURPRISES

BLEST it is with God to meet  
 When we seek his face,  
 But how strange, how passing sweet,  
 Comes the unsought grace !  
 As a friend to win a friend,  
 Every art he tries ;  
 Ere we ask, his gifts descend,  
 Love's divine surprise.

Is our path a path of gloom  
 Shadowed o'er with care—  
 Suddenly, some hidden bloom  
 Tells us God is there ;  
 Faith at last is changed to sight,  
 Life no more is dim,  
 Beauty's unforeseen delight  
 Woos the soul to him.

Even in the city crowd  
 Shines eternity,  
 Sinai-flashes pierce the cloud—  
 Lo, how near is he !  
 Heroes in a moment bold,  
 Right's resistless will,  
 Truth in self-denial told,  
 Show him with us still.

Blest it is to know thee near,  
 Friend of friends, most high ;  
 Blest to see thee, and to hear,  
 When thou passest by ;



S U P R E M E H O U R S

But the best is still to feel  
 With our very heart,  
 Nothing fully can reveal,  
 Lord, how near thou art.

S A I N T S P I R I T ' S

*(In Stow's Survey of London, 1603, after the story of Essex House, which stood where Essex-street, Strand, is now, we read: "Then west was a Chapple dedicated to the Holy Ghost, called saint Spirit, uppon what occasion founded I have not read. Next is Milford lane, downe to the Thames. . . .")*

CHURCH of the Spirit, long ago  
 The fathers to thy shelter came,  
 And all their purest joys below  
 Were clustered round thy sacred name.

The mother brought her babe to thee  
 To seal it for the life divine,  
 Content, whatever else might be,  
 To know her child a child of thine.

The busy paused to seek thy peace,  
 Youth pressed to join the bridal throng,  
 The burdened sinner sought release,  
 The old man sang his Simeon song.

Days come and go—the walls decay  
 That love doth rear so white and fair;  
 Where art thou now, and where are they  
 That sang the hymn and said the prayer?

V E R S E

The shrine is gone, and they are dumb;  
 Howe'er we listen, nevermore  
 Shall echo of their music come  
 Through pillared aisle and open door.  
 And yet across the waste of years,  
 The changing world, the deeps of death,  
 The spirit born within us hears  
 The word the Holy Spirit saith.  
 We too, by sweet compulsion led,  
 A shelter seek amid the strife,  
 And worship with the ages dead  
 The Giver and the Lord of Life.

A W I N T E R L O V E - S O N G

A CHILD, O Lord of Beauty,  
 Childlike I learned to see;  
 Seeing, I loved the lovely,  
 And gave my heart to thee.  
 My heart I gave to thee,  
 And sang for love alone;  
 O keep the heart I gave thee  
 For ever, Lord, thine own!

The frost of years shall silence  
 The fountain heard of yore,  
 The snow shall hide the snowdrop,  
 The child shall sing no more.  
 The child shall sing no more,  
 Yet warm the heart shall be,  
 As in the days of childhood,  
 When first I gave it thee.

*New Year's Eve, 1925.*

A COMRADE SONG

(Composed for Sunday School Anniversary, 1927, Upper Chapel, Sheffield.)

HERE'S a day, and a cause, and a comrade,  
 And a call for a comrade more,  
 In a work and way as dear to-day  
 As e'er in the days of yore ;  
 And here we sing, with the joy of Spring,  
 The Song of a Comrade Corps !

Our life is a day at the dawning,  
 The year's at the Spring in youth,  
 When hearts are light, and beauty bright  
 Shines out on a world uncouth,  
 As the comrade band joins hand in hand,  
 For the cause of God and Truth.

How stanch were the old-time leaders !  
 Is the old road hard for me ?  
 Still the trumpet call—"Come one, come all !"  
 Sounds clear over land and sea ;  
 O heart of mine, 'tis a call divine,—  
 March on, with the brave and free !

There's a wreath that is rich as roses,  
 There's a crown that the comrades wear—  
 'Tis the glory won by duty done  
 And a life that is strong and fair ;  
 And, when they sing, with the joy of Spring  
 Come the roses everywhere !

THE GOD OF HOPE

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, and in the power of the Holy Spirit."—Rom. xv. 13.

God of Hope, our hope renewing,  
 Holiest Might and Joy in one,  
 Pardon thou our faint pursuing,  
 Help us till our course is run.  
 Power is thine, beyond conceiving,  
 Far beyond man's deepest needs ;  
 Grant us—weak, but still believing—  
 Hope, to press where Jesus leads.

From the cloud that hovers o'er us,  
 From the burden of the years,  
 To the gospel joy restore us,  
 Cleansed from all these faithless fears.  
 Safe with thee, whate'er betide us,  
 Where shall doubt or shrinking be ?  
 With the God of Hope beside us,  
 March we on—to victory !

THE AMULET

WHEN my little day is ended  
 Be it truly said of me—  
 Here was one who, much befriended,  
 Tried himself a friend to be.  
 Oft perplexed, and sometimes fearful,  
 In the crossing tides of life,  
 Powers benign have kept me cheerful  
 'Mid the surging and the strife.

S U P R E M E H O U R S

Manly comrades sailed beside me,  
Weathered, wary, valiant still,  
And the courage they supplied me  
Might a poorer spirit fill.

Nor were these my helpers only,—  
Strangest, surest fact to me  
Was the Comrade of the lonely,  
Whatsoe'er his name may be.

Much forgiven, much forgiving—  
That has been my wisest lore,  
Nor could any mortal living  
Need that precious wisdom more.

Should to-morrow's sailors heed me,  
Here's my amulet to keep ;  
Wear it, brothers who succeed me,  
As ye launch into the deep.

## THE STORY OF W. G. TARRANT. II.

*(In our last issue we printed the early part of the life-story of William George Tarrant, the well-known hymn-writer, as taken by his son from an early autobiography that has just come to light. In it we told of his birth and early bereavements, of his schooling at an orphanage, and of his hardships as an apprentice silversmith.)*

WHEN my father was sixteen, he began to attend classes in Natural Science, and was enthralled, becoming "good in Physics and fair in Chemistry, Physiology, and Geology." Here was a great new world opened to him, and with it, a great new perplexity. These things he was now learning about the creation of the world, these things so fascinating and so new, were they not different from the Bible story as he had learnt it of old, and as he heard it Sunday by Sunday from the pulpit?

He was already feeling uncomfortable at the Mount Zion Chapel for other reasons. He had confided some of his aspirations to the minister, and perhaps he felt that they sounded presumptuous in an ex-charity boy, so he left that Chapel and began to attend the Church of the Saviour. This was a church dominated by the personality of the great preacher George Dawson, fully Unitarian in outlook and theology, but not in name. Here he found religion, devout and deep, but unafraid of any new discoveries. Here was faith, secure on the solid rock of natural fact, however old tradition might shake in the winds of modern thought. Here was the anchor of his life.



By now he had become inured to the factory, and the years of his servitude rolled on. His reading spread over a wider field. He read English essayists and philosophers. He taught himself enough French to read Molière. He read Thackeray's novels. Since any new knowledge was enthralling, he studied Mathematics, Euclid, and Logic. Music, too, had its place, for it was his new bass voice that first earned him any money outside the factory, as he was for a time a paid choirman at a well-known church. Wide as the field was, it was always in literature that his main interest lay, and he began to write, hoping that his pen would free him from the enslavement of a manual trade. But his style, self-formed from the great ones of the past, did not commend itself to publishers, and he was deeply disappointed by his lack of success.

By the time his seven long years were up, he was leading a very busy life. As a craftsman in the factory where he had served his time, he was earning a wage that shows that he was a first-class craftsman, too. He was fully immersed in

institutional life, attending science classes and debating societies, and becoming a known member of the Church of the Saviour. But, when he was 25, trade was bad, and he fell into short-time working or even, perhaps, into stark unemployment. He found new work at his trade in Sheffield, and left Birmingham with hopes running very high.

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These hopes proved false. His new work was not such as he had been used to. He was alone in lodgings, away both from his beloved Aunt Sarah and from his bustling activities: his literary hopes were in ruins. He sought refuge where he had always found it, in religion, attending the Upper Chapel, Sheffield, and placing himself at the service of the minister, Rev. Eli Fay. He was feeling his way to his true vocation, now, and hoped to become a lay preacher. Eli Fay was impressed by his breadth of self-taught knowledge, his power, and his devotion; but he saw how much greater the harvest would be if these gifts were ripened in a college atmosphere. He told him of the Unitarian Home Missionary College, Manchester, and advised him to apply for admission there. This must have been the breaking of a great new light; with his insatiable thirst for knowledge, the possibility of a college training must have been a thrilling prospect for the future, though the present was dark indeed. The new job came to nothing, and he tramped the streets of Sheffield trying vainly to find work, and then returned to Birmingham to stay again with Aunt Sarah.

He found work as a traveller in cheap jewellery, while he studied, for the first time in his life, for a definite examination. With his background, and with his amazing power of learning, the task may not have been difficult: at any rate he was successful in passing the entrance examination, and his autobiography closes as he prepares to enter College, in September, 1879.

The rest of the story is well known: two years in Manchester at the Home Missionary College and Owen's College, the Tate Scholarship, two years in London at Manchester New College and University College, Graduation as a B.A. of London University, and then his life-work. The mere catalogue of his activities in that work would more than fill the space I have—and are they not recorded elsewhere? But the wonder of his story remains, that one man could have done so much, both as a lad struggling upward and as a servant of God and of his fellowmen. What made all this possible?

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He had a tough physical frame and a first-class brain, of course, but these were the tools; the use he made of them lay deeper. It lay partly, I think, in his immense interest in all things, an interest that took him as a lad through so wide a field and which made him as a man the all-found man he was. Partly it lay in his ability to see through to the heart of every problem, to grasp its essentials clearly and at once. Perhaps it lay even more in the devotion with which he gave himself to every task that came his way, whether pleasant or irksome, until this devotion became so much a part of him that no one ever noticed it. But surely there was something deeper that gave him his resilience, his smile, and his serenity?

What do we remember him as, today? He was the singer, whose hymns are always so clear, so tuneful, so full of hope and of true service (a little girl showed one to my grandson as her favourite hymn, far away on the beaches of Fiji). He was the preacher, whose words were always so direct, so unmistakable, so inspiring, and so true. He was the teacher, so patient and so expert a guide that difficulties faded when he showed the way. He was the committee-man, clear-headed and business-like, seeing through to the solution of each problem so quickly. Above all, he was the friend, whose smile was so happy, whose help was so immediate, whose sympathy was so ready, and whose counsels were so wise.

What can I say of him, who am his son? Only this, that to me he was one who, loving, always understood. No academic training, however erudite, no life's story, however strange, could have given him that complete understanding of his fellow-men, at all their ages. Perhaps something great was sown in his early days of sorrow that flowered so fully in

the light. Or—was it just the man himself, the real man, behind all his struggles and achievements? One thing is sure: as he travelled his long road, as he rose resilient in the days of darkness and almost of despair, as he laboured un-hurried at his abounding work, as he smiled serene right to the very end, he carried with him life's greatest talisman—a supreme sense of the Love of God, who was always very near.

Officer. George Lane's three daughters were merry girls, fond of a joke, fond also of music, poetry, and dancing, but well-educated, with good taste, and deeply religious. In stature they were short and at first robust, but with a fatal tendency towards consumption.

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So the Colour-Sergeant married Mary Lane, and their only child, my father, was born on July 2, 1853, at Pembroke, in South Wales, where the regiment was in barracks. There the young parents lived the routine life of a military married quarters during the first nine months of my father's life, but then came an abrupt change—the first of many that were to buffet him. The Crimean War broke out early in 1854, and the 1st Royal Scots were ordered overseas. Two days before they sailed, the Colour-Sergeant took his wife and baby, together with her sister and her three young children, and her mother, all to stay in the working-class home of his sister Sarah, who was married to a Birmingham silversmith.

It must have been a crowded household, with four tiny children, their two young mothers, and their grandmother, as well as Aunt Sarah and her husband, and there were many mouths to feed. The young mothers took what work they could get, as "hands" in the factory where Gillott's newly-invented steel pen-nibs were made. At home, the four little ones were looked after by their grandmother (of whom they were in much awe) and by Aunt Sarah, whom they loved. Perhaps reading together was an easy way to keep them occupied, but they were encouraged to read: in one of them that early encouragement bore tremendous fruit. Their library was small, one or two books of Scottish and English poetry, an old "reading-book," a few "improving stories," a religious tract or two, the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, a book on Bible-study, and a cookery book!

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Happy days of early childhood were darkened, very soon. Before 1854 was out, Colour-Sergeant Tarrant died of illness in the Crimea, and the other sister's soldier husband died as well. Birmingham in the 1850's was no health resort for consumptives, and after two or three years my father's youngest little cousin fell ill and died. His memoir records the sight of the "weak form lying on the check-covered sofa"—a sight burnt into his memory when he was less than six years old. When he was six, his mother died, and her sister followed her within the year. As they fell ill, the women's factory earnings ceased, and with their death their widow's pensions ceased as well. Depression had hit the silversmiths' trade, and they were very poor.

But by now the nation's conscience had been aroused as never before. When the British Army sailed for the Crimea, for the first time in history a newspaper correspondent sailed with them; and what a correspondent! William Howard Russell of *The Times* was a man who defied official opposition, and who wrote the truth of what he saw. His revelations of the appalling conditions in the Crimea shook the nation to its core, ousting a Government and sending Florence Nightingale hurrying overseas. Nothing could bring back the thousands buried in the mud of Balaclava, but at least their children could be fed. A National Patriotic Fund was started, and the springs of private charity were opened, too. My father—himself a weakly child—was taken from the home of disease and death, and sent for some months into the country, in the Lickey Hills. There he ran in the woods and fields, and so marvelled at tree and flower and bird and bee that ever afterwards they held a special place within his heart.

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Then came school, at an Orphanage to which he was sent by the Patriotic Fund. His early zest for reading had taken him above the usual level for his age of seven, and gave him a lead that he kept up right through the school, for he became top boy of the top class before he was twelve years old. Out of lesson-times he went on reading, too, taking out all the books he could get from the school library, and reading those issued to other boys as well. He took full part in the

merry life at school, and yet he must have been one of children who are curiously aloof. The religious sense of mother, and his early experience of suffering and of death had both marked him deeply. While he was very full of when with his school-fellows, he was given to brooding meditation when alone. He writes that he "did not much," but confesses to flaming passion if anyone jested at things that he held sacred.

When he was thirteen and a half, the Patriotic Commissioners withdrew his grant, perhaps because they felt a boy who had been top boy of the school for two years not stay there any longer, but he was allowed to remain his fourteenth birthday, when he left to face the world went back to the only home he knew, that of his good Sarah: the question was, what was he to become? There was no tradition of black-coated status in the family; natural thing was for a lad to learn a trade, and so my father found himself bound for seven years to a master to learn art and mystery of a silversmith.

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It was an appalling change for him. Hitherto he lived in a home that was poor but carefully cultured, and in a school completely shut off from the world, where he had been a star pupil. Now he had become the lowest of the low—a very green apprentice in a rough-house factory, who suffered much in body from the bullying of a brutal master and perhaps even more in spirit from the drinking and swearing all round him. Thrown back upon himself, he sought refuge in three things. First, in reading: the Free Library was his command, and he read deeply and assiduously, mostly, at first from the great English poets. Second, in the theatre: he took to the Birmingham Theatre as often as he could scrape a few pence for the gallery, becoming quite a connoisseur of different presentations of "Hamlet," but especially enjoyed comedies. (The very first of his own literary work to bear its mark appears to have been two comedies, which were produced with some success.) But it was in religion that he found his greatest refuge. He had previously become familiar with Anglican Service when at school, and he now went to Mount Zion Baptist Chapel, where the Gospel was preached as he had learnt it at his mother's knee.

(To be concluded)