

1419

c. 3052

SIX DAYS OF THE WEEK

BY HENRY VAN DYKE

SIX DAYS OF THE WEEK

LITTLE RIVERS

FISHERMAN'S LUCK

DAYS OFF

OUT-OF-DOORS IN THE HOLY LAND

THE RULING PASSION

THE BLUE FLOWER

THE UNKNOWN QUANTITY

THE VALLEY OF VISION

CAMP-FIRES AND GUIDE-POSTS

COMPANIONABLE BOOKS

POEMS, COLLECTION IN ONE VOLUME

SONGS OUT OF DOORS

GOLDEN STARS

THE RED FLOWER

THE GRAND CANYON, AND OTHER POEMS

THE WHITE BEES, AND OTHER POEMS

THE BUILDERS, AND OTHER POEMS

MUSIC, AND OTHER POEMS

THE TOILING OF FELIX, AND OTHER POEMS

THE HOUSE OF RIMMON

STUDIES IN TENNYSON

POEMS OF TENNYSON

FIGHTING FOR PEACE

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

Six Days of the Week

*A Book of Thoughts about Life and
Religion*

BY
HENRY VAN DYKE

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LIMITED LONDON

**COPYRIGHT, 1924, BY
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS**

COPYRIGHT, 1923, 1924, BY THE REPUBLIC SYNDICATE



***Made and Printed in Great Britain,
Hassell, Watson & Viney, Ltd., London and Aylesbury.***

TO
HAMILTON GIBSON
MASTER OF THE GUNNERY SCHOOL
DEAR TO ME AS A SON

A WORD TO EXPLAIN

Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work.—Exodus 20 : 9.

Any man who tries to keep this part of the Fourth Commandment in letter and in spirit will have his hands full. He will be busy from morning till evening. Often, when night comes, he will find that though he has laboured he has not done "all his work."

None the less, if he is a real man, he may like to have some kind of a friendly word at the end or the beginning of a working day, to remind him of what his work means and to suggest to him why it is worth while to keep on doing it.

But the message must be short, else it will be more of a burden than a help to a working day. That is why these papers are so brief and incomplete, —mere fragments and suggestions. On Sundays there is, or ought to be, time for longer considerations and reflections. But Sundays are not included in this calendar. These are only notes for the other days.

They were written from time to time (and in part selected from my former books), because they seemed to have some bearing on the vital relations of religion and life. They were printed by a syndicate in many daily newspapers, under the

title of "The Guide-Post." Sending them out under this new title, I can only hope that readers may find here some things to agree with, some things to question, and some things to try out.

I believe that nothing is true on Sunday that is not true on the six other days of the week.

HENRY VAN DYKE.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
NEW YEAR'S DAY	
REMEMBER AND TRUST	
THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US	
GOD'S SPIRITUAL POWER	
THE SAVIOUR OF THE FALLEN	
THE SECRET OF CONFIDENCE	
THE JOY OF RELIGION	
THE KIND OF PEOPLE GOD LIKES	
MEMORY AND HOPE	
THE SEVENTH SENSE	
WHAT MANKIND HAS DONE FOR YOU	
WHAT A CHILD COSTS	
THE SECRET OF TRUE LIBERTY	
THE HIGHER LAW	
THE GROWING CHILD	
BOUND YET FREE	
BELONGING	
THE GREAT RANSOM	
WHAT JESUS HAS DONE FOR US SINNERS	
IGNORANCE OF THE FUTURE	
THE FAITH OF ADVENTURERS	
THE FATHER OF THE FAITHFUL	
NOT KNOWING BUT BELIEVING	
CHANCES AND CHANGES	
THE UNEXPECTED TRIAL	
SOLOMON'S MISTAKE	

KNOWLEDGE AND HAPPINESS	
THE IMPULSIVE PETER	
ARE THE DEAD NEAR US ?	
RELIGION NOT AN OPIATE	
ECSTASY AND DUTY	
THE MOUNTAIN PEAKS AND THE VALLEY ROAD	
THE FRIEND OF OUR SOULS	
WHAT GOD REQUIRES	
VOX POPULI	
ABOUT LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY I	
ABOUT LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY II	
ABOUT LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY III	
PROBATION	
OF ONE BLOOD	
THE STRONGEST SERMON IN THE WORLD	
GOD SETS US AN EXAMPLE	
MYSTERY IN RELIGION	
LOANS GOOD AND BAD	
FORBEARANCE	
ABOUT WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY I	
ABOUT WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY II	
THE THINGS THAT ARE ABOVE	
COLLEGE STUDENTS	
GOD'S GOODNESS AND GLORY	
THE SECRET THINGS	
JUDGMENT IS GOD'S PROVINCE	
ANSWERING FOOLS	
THE HORIZON	
GOD'S OMNISCIENCE NOT FATE	
THE CENTRE OF THE MANY-SIDED GOSPEL	
GOD SOVEREIGN AND MAN FREE	
THE WAY TO PROVE YOUR CREED	

CONTENTS

II

PAGE

LARGE BLESSINGS OF A BRIEF CREED	.	.	.	.	.	.
LIMITED KNOWLEDGE	.	.	.	.	.	.
THE HUNGER FOR TRUTH	.	.	.	.	.	.
CHRISTIANITY TELLS	.	.	.	.	.	.
UNITY	.	.	.	.	.	.
THE FATHER OF US ALL	.	.	.	.	.	.
REJOICE	.	.	.	.	.	.
IMMORTALITY AND HAPPINESS	.	.	.	.	.	.
SUPPOSE	.	.	.	.	.	.
STRONG YOUNG MEN	.	.	.	.	.	.
MISSIONARIES	.	.	.	.	.	.
GOOD SOLDIERS	.	.	.	.	.	.
REVOLUTION, OR MORE RELIGION	.	.	.	.	.	.
FALSE RELIGION	.	.	.	.	.	.
A PURIFYING POWER	.	.	.	.	.	.
SPREADING THE LIGHT	.	.	.	.	.	.
THE APOSTLE JOHN	.	.	.	.	.	.
THE POWER OF THE CROSS	.	.	.	.	.	.
CONCERNING THE DEAD NOTHING BUT GOOD	.	.	.	.	.	.
THE BREADTH OF LOVE	.	.	.	.	.	.
POPULAR FOLLY	.	.	.	.	.	.
THE FUNCTION OF WISE MEN	.	.	.	.	.	.
PARABLES AND PICTURES	.	.	.	.	.	.
THE DRAWING POWER OF THE CROSS	.	.	.	.	.	.
CREEDS AND RELIGION	.	.	.	.	.	.
THE OPPORTUNITY OF LIFE	.	.	.	.	.	.
TWO PATHS	.	.	.	.	.	.
FRATERNITY FIRST	.	.	.	.	.	.
CHRIST IS THE DOOR	.	.	.	.	.	.
RESURRECTION NOW	.	.	.	.	.	.
LOVE THE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD	.	.	.	.	.	.
OUR FATHER	.	.	.	.	.	.

	PAGE
THE TOIL OF LIFE	.
VERIFYING THE BIBLE	.
THE FOUR GOSPELS	.
THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION	.
ANTIDOTE TO DESPONDENCY	.
SALT	.
THE INFLUENCE OF GOOD MEN	.
THE GOD OF TRUTH	.
THE EVERYMAN GOSPEL	.
A DIVINE IMPOSSIBILITY	.
THE DIVINE POWER IS SELF-LIMITED	.
LIFE MORE ABUNDANTLY	.
PERILOUS LUXURIES	.
MOVING DAY	.
CONTAGIOUS GOODNESS	.
HOW TO SPOIL A BOY	.
SAVING DAYLIGHT BY FOOLING OURSELVES	.
NERVOUS PROSTRATION CURED	.
THE GREAT PLEDGE	.
THE GOOD WAY	.
FIRE CANNOT BURN THE TRUTH	.
JUDGE YOURSELF WITH OTHERS	.
THE RIGHT WAY TO LOVE OURSELVES	.
DUST AND SPIRIT	.
CANNIBALISM AND GOSSIP	.
LEARN BY THE WORLD'S EXPERIENCE	.
SMALL DESIRES AND NO FEARS	.
THE PERIL OF IGNORANCE	.
DESPONDENCY OVERCOME	.
TOO MANY LAWS	.
SMALL THINGS	.
A CURE FOR VANITY	.

CONTENTS

13

PAGE

RICH AND POOR	
QUIET AND CONTENT	
THE GRIND OF LIFE	
A FRIEND IN YOUTH AND OLD AGE	
BIBLE READING	
TAXES	
A MEDICAL EXPERIENCE	
PESSIM AND OPTIM	
THE DISAGREEABLE TRUTH	
THE QUIETUDE OF CHRIST	
TRUE NEIGHBOUR-LOVE	
PROFIT FROM THE PAST	
THE POETRY OF HEAVENLY LOVE	
CHOOSE YOUR PORT—THEN LAY YOUR COURSE	
THE PROGRESSIVE IS A TRUE CONSERVATIVE	
DON'T BLACKGUARD THE PURITANS	
THE INSTINCT OF PRAYER	
HUMAN PROGRESS	
FALSE LOVE OF SELF	
A SHADOW OUR DEFENCE FROM SHADOWS	
THE LIGHT OF LIFE	
FAMILIAR GREETINGS	
THE FATHER OF LIES	
QUIET STRENGTH	
REGRET AND SELF-CONDEMNATION	
THE SUNRISE OF GOD	
FOOLISH NOVELTIES	
LIGHT AND VISION	
FACE THE FACTS	
INSULARITY	
FEAR NOT DEATH	
AN UNFAILING RIVER	

EVERY PERSON ALSO A NEIGHBOUR	
LOWLY VIRTUES	
THE SECRET PAVILION	
THE LOVE OF FREEDOM	
WHAT A CITIZEN OWES	
BELOVED RIVERS	
MUSIC FOR THE JOURNEY	
ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE	
HIDDEN SINS	
HONOURABLE WOMEN	
MARRY YOUNG	
BRINGING UP CHILDREN	
THE FOREST FIRE OF EVIL	
MUSIC THE CONSOLER	
A TEXT FOR HARD TIMES	
GOOD-BYE AND MIZPAH	
REST ON A ROUGH ROAD	
THE MOUNTAINS AND THE SEA	
MALICIOUS WHISPERS	
THE SUDDENNESS OF DEATH	
REMEMBRANCE AND PROGRESS	
HEAR THE OTHER SIDE	
BEYOND FEAR	
A WAYSIDE SPRING	
FRIENDSHIP FOR ALL SEASONS	
THE POETRY OF BROTHERHOOD	
HOME AND CITY	
THE SOURCE OF WAR	
THE HUMBLENESS OF THE WISE	
THE BREATH OF THE SPIRIT	
A SHEPHERD IN PALESTINE	
TONGUE-FIRE	

CONTENTS

15

PAGE

THIRSTING FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD	
THE CALL OF THE TRUMPET	
LOVE IS STRONGER THEN WRATH	
GOD'S IMPARTIALITY	
HEAVEN WITHIN	
EVOLUTION IN THE BIBLE	
TACT	
IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH	
PERILOUS CITIES	
THE ALMIGHTY	
CLEAR SPEECH THE BEST ELOQUENCE	
TABLE MANNERS	
TWO KINDS OF VANITY	
THE FOUNDATION OF PEACE	
THE MIRACLE OF HUMAN INTERCOURSE	
THE WISH FOR HAPPINESS	
THE PROMISE OF HAPPINESS	
THE TEACHER OF HAPPINESS	
THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS	
THE DUTY OF HAPPINESS	
THE BEAUTY OF HAPPINESS	
YIELD GRACEFULLY OR NOT AT ALL	
JOYFUL FAITH	
IN MIND BE MEN	
THE CURSER ASKS FOR A BLESSING	
WILL YOU OR WON'T YOU BE CHOSEN?	
THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS	
A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE	
THE NEW WITCHCRAFT	
THE GOSPEL OF ANOTHER CHANCE	
WASTEFULNESS IS MEANNESS	
THE HIGH COST OF PRIDE	

HARD LUCK FOR FATHERS	
DO YOUR WORK CHEERFULLY	
THREE ASPECTS OF ONE LIFE	
THE PRACTICAL TEST OF ORTHODOXY	
EFFICIENT FOES OF INTEMPERANCE	
THE LIBERAL VISION	
FORCE, A TEMPORARY PROTECTION	
TRUTH WINS ITS WAY	
THE AIM OF OUR LIFE WORK	
TWO KINDS OF PLEASURE SEEKING	
KEEP ON PRAYING	
WHICH WAY ARE WE MOVING ?	
GOD' TRUTHFULNESS	
EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY	
HERESY TRIALS	
HOLLOW FAME	
HOW BRAOD IS YOUR RELIGION ?	
THE DOOR TO HAPPINESS	
DON'T MAKE A PET OF YOUR ANGER	
A DUTY OF THE ENLIGHTENED	
THE INWARDNESS OF EVIL	
LABOUR SANCTIFIED	
MAJORITIES NOT INFALLIBLE	
BAD OLD WAYS	
SILLY STREAKS IN WISE MEN	
GOD'S WILL IN PRAYER	
ON THE POSITIVE SIDE	
A LASTING HABITATION	
MUSIC AS A DEFENCE	
QUO VADIS	
HUMAN MEMBERSHIP	
THE SOLIDARITY OF EVIL	

CONTENTS

17

PAGE

THE DIVINE PRESENCE	
KNOWING AND DOING	
HOW TO FADE	
TWO PATHS IN FRIENDSHIP	
CHOOSE YOUR VIEWPOINT	
A MISTAKEN GOAL	
THE IDLENESS OF IDOLS	
THE GREAT GIFTS	
DAY DREAMING ABOUT OURSELVES	
LAWFUL WEALTH	
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS	
ONLY ONE GOD	
THE SOUL MUST HAVE ITS DAY	
THE COMMANDMENT WITH PROMISE	
DEFENCES	
DOCTRINE AND FAITH	
A SOCIAL PROPHYLACTIC	
GUIDANCE BETTER THAN REGULATION	
VOTES DIFFER IN VALUE	
EVERGREENS	
THE ROYAL LAW	
ARE WE ORGULOUS ?	
WHIMS IN WORDS	
THE NEW HUMILITY	
SAFELY THROUGH THE FIRE	
A NEW GUESS ABOUT LIFE	
GOD'S IMAGE RESTORED	
NATIONAL FAULTS	
WISE RETICENCE	
MAN'S PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE	
FIVE GOOD THINGS	
THE DIGNITY OF MAN	

ABOUT THANKSGIVING DAY	
GOOD COMPANY	
SILENT THINGS THAT SPEAK	
KEEPING HUMAN LOVE ALIVE	
FAITH INDISPENSABLE	
LIFE AND IMMORTALITY	
THE SIMPLICITY THAT IS IN CHRIST	
MEN NOT CATTLE	
FOR YOUNG MEN	
THE HONOUR OF COURAGE	
THE USEFULNESS OF COURAGE	
THE COMFORT OF COURAGE	
THE PRUDENCE OF COURAGE	
EVERYDAY COURAGE	
THE DEEP SPRING OF COURAGE	
THE COURAGE OF THE TIMID	
INDIVIDUALISM AND SOCIALISM	
A THOUGHT FOR CHRISTMAS	
THE COMMERCIAL VIEW OF LIFE	
TO PLEASE GOD	
GOD DESIRES TO BE TRUSTED	
THE LITTLE PRESENT	
KEEPING CHRISTMAS	
CHRISTMAS GIVING AND CHRISTMAS LIVING	
A CHRISTMAS PRAYER FOR THE HOME	
EVERYDAY FAITH	
NOT AGAINST REASON BUT ABOVE	
STRONG BELIEVERS	
A CITY OF HOMES	
A TALE THAT IS TOLD	

DAY UNTO DAY

NEW YEAR'S DAY

The days of our years.—Psalm 90 : 10.

There it is—all our years are made up of days ;
and all our days are but little parts of years.

Time may be only “a mental form,” as the philosopher Kant said long ago (and as our ingenious Mr. Einstein has just told us, with the complacency of a commercial traveller inventing a new slogan).

But this mental form has a curious continuity.
It flows like a river.

It runs on like a road on which we are all journeying, and beside which we set up our milestones to mark the distance already traversed.

For each man it is his own birthday that tells him how many years of days he has had.

For mankind it is New Year's day, which Charles Lamb called “the nativity of our common Adam.”

Stay a moment at this milestone and think.

For each of us, how many failures, disappointments, losses !

Yet God has pulled us through, and we still have a chance to do better.

For mankind how many false starts, delays, disasters !

Yet the race goes on, indomitably hopeful.

It is a day for repentance, and patience, and courage.

And good resolutions ?

Yes, please God !

For unless we men resolve to be good, the world will never be better.

REMEMBER AND TRUST

Thou hast been my help, leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.—Psalm 27 : 9.

Every grace that God has given to us in the past, every touch of His life that has quickened us, every assistance of His Spirit that has supported us and given us a victory over evil is a proof and evidence of His power.

Let us remember and trust.

Was it long ago or was it but yesterday that we came to Him with that heavy weight of sin, asking for relief and found it ?

Come then to-day, with a yet heavier load it may be, and prove the same almighty power to deliver from sin.

Was it long ago or was it yesterday that we felt that thrill of new life, of consecration, of devotion passing through us as we gave ourselves to God ?

Come then, and renewing the gift to-day, feel again the same touch of life.

Was it long ago or was it but yesterday that we prayed for strength to perform a certain duty, to bear a certain burden, to overcome a certain temptation, and received it ?

Do we dream that the Divine force was exhausted in answering that one prayer ?

No more than the great river is exhausted by turning the wheels of one mill.

Put it to the proof again with to-day's duty to-day's burden, to-day's temptation.

Thrust yourself further and deeper into the stream of God's power, and feel it again, as you have felt it before, able to do exceeding abundantly.

Remember and trust.

"Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation."

THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly . . . according to the power that worketh in us.—Ephesians 3 : 20.

The great reason why we need to consider God's power is because we are utterly dependent on that power for the salvation of our souls.

Without it there is no peace, no hope, no certainty.

Unless God is mighty to save, we can never be saved.

How inaccessible is the standard of holiness revealed in the Christian religion!

When we hear the searching demands of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, a sense of helplessness sweeps over us and our spirit is cast down within us.

Not even the wise and needful reminder that the Christian life is gradual is sufficient to deliver us from this sense of weakness.

It is true that "heaven is not reached at a single bound," that only to-day's burdens are to be borne to-day, that growth in grace is like the blade and the ear and the full corni

It helps us to remember this. But it does not quite reach the heart of our trouble.

Look at heaven—a kingdom of unsullied love—is not that beyond our power?

Yes, it is ; and yet it is the aim set before us in the word of God ; and therefore we say that the Bible makes salvation the hardest thing in the world, something that would be impossible, if it did not at the same time make it easy and accessible for every human soul.

For that is what the Bible does—it reveals that the power that worketh in us is God's power, and that it is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

GOD'S SPIRITUAL POWER

So have I looked upon thee in the sanctuary, to see thy power and thy glory.—Psalm 63 : 2.

The vision of spiritual power, even as we see it in the imperfect manifestations of human life, is uplifting.

The rush of courage along the perilous path of duty is finer than the leap of the torrent from the crag.

Integrity resisting temptation overtops the mountains in grandeur.

Love, giving and blessing without stint, has a beauty and a potency of which the sunlight is but a faint image.

When we see these things they thrill us with joy ; they enlarge and enrich our souls.

And if that is true, how much more satisfying

and strengthening must it be to behold the spiritual power of God ?

For God also is a soul, the Great Soul ; the essence of his being is not physical but moral ; and the secret of His strength is in His holiness, righteousness, justice, goodness, mercy, and love.

To know something of the force of the great Spirit ; to see there is no temptation that can even shake the strong foundation of his equity, no evil that can finally resist the victorious sweep of His holy will, no falsehood that can withstand the penetrating flash of His truth, nothing that can limit or exhaust the great tide of His love ; to catch sight of the workings of One who is omnipotent against all foes and therefore triumphant over the last enemy, death—that is a vision of joy and power far beyond all others, and therefore it is to be desired and prayed for and sought after with the whole heart.

THE SAVIOUR OF THE FALLEN

For he said, Surely they are my people . . . so he was their Saviour.—Isaiah 63 : 8.

There are times when the memories of power experienced in the past grow faint and dim, times when it seems that all we can see behind us is a long succession of failures, and all we can feel now is a pervading sense of weakness.

At such times it is good to consider the mighty things God has wrought in and through *other* lives.

He has lifted the hands that hung down, and strengthened the feeble knees.

He has made the evil, good ; the sinful, pure the selfish, generous ; the base, noble.

He has made apostles and saints out of ; men and women that the world would have thrown away as rubbish—Peter, the impetuous and wayward ; Mary Magdalen, the defiled ; Zaccheus, the worldly ; Thomas, the despondent ; Paul, the persecutor and blasphemer.

What God could do in the first century, He can do, He is doing, to-day.

What is it that we want ?

Is it faith to conquer doubt ?

There are men and women all around us believing in the face of difficulties greater than ours.

Is it patience under trials ?

There are men and women all around us who are bearing trials as heavy as ours without a murmur.

Is it usefulness ?

Consider the works that God has wrought through the hands of men.

What can we do ?

Nothing.

What can God do with us ?

Anything—whatsoever He will.

THE SECRET OF CONFIDENCE

I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.—Philippians 4:13.

That is the secret of strength ; to know the Divine power and to use it.

The man who does not use it cannot really know it.

The Christian who says, "I know the power of God, and I am trusting in that to save me, and sustain me, and make me useful, and bring me to heaven," and yet makes no real effort to be good or to do good, is like a man sitting on the bank of a mighty river, and casting ships upon its sweeping tide, and saying: "This river is able to bear me to my journey's end."

What you need to do is to push your boat out into the current, and feel its resistless force, and move onward with it.

Then you will know the power that now you only know *about*.

Is there any reason why our lives should be feeble and stagnant and worthless?

Is there any reason why we should not overcome temptation and endure trial, and work the works of God in the world, and come at last to the height of His abode in heaven?

Only one—that we do not know Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.

Lay hold on him by faith and all things are possible.

Let us clasp the hand of Christ and climb; and as we climb He will lift us out of sin, out of selfishness, out of weakness, out of death, into holiness into love, into strength, into life, and we shall know the power of His resurrection.

THE JOY OF RELIGION

I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice.—John 16 : 22.

Joy is essential to true religion.

A gloomy religion is far from God.

A sad gospel is a contradiction in terms, like a black sun.

“Behold,” said the angel, “I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”

That message was simply the news of a great power which had appeared in the world for salvation.

God is light, God is love, God is power ; and therefore God is hope.

Little does he know of true joy who knows not this.

Falsely does he think of the great resistant force of evil, the tremendous difficulties of being good, the vast inertia of a world lying in sin, who exults in aught else than the knowledge of a Divine power able to overcome it all.

Behind Christianity there is Christ.

In Christ there is God.

For He is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person.

And the power that works in Him, the power that has raised Him from the dead and set Him at God’s right hand in heavenly places, is the power that is now saving every one that believeth, and reconciling the world to God.

When we know that, despair ceases to exist, and joy fills the heart with music.

THE KIND OF PEOPLE THAT GOD LIKES

Now these all.—Hebrews 11 : 13.

The desire for God's approval has sustained martyrs at the stake, and comforted prisoners in the dungeon, and cheered warriors in the heat of perilous conflict, and inspired labourers in every noble cause, and made thousands of obscure and nameless heroes in every hidden place of earth.

It is the pillar of light which shines before the journeying host.

It is the secret watchword of the army, given not to the leaders alone, but flashing like fire through all the ranks.

When that thought descends upon us, it kindles our hearts and makes them live.

What though we miss the applause of men ; what though friends misunderstand, and foes defame, and the great world pass us by ?

There is One that seeth in secret, and followeth the soul in its toils and struggles—the great King, whose approval is honour, whose love is happiness ; to please him is success and victory and peace.

There are a million ways of pleasing God, as many as the characters of men, as many as the hues and shades of virtue, as many as the conflicts between good and evil, as many as the calls to honest labour, as many as the opportunities of doing right and being good.

That is the broad meaning of the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, with its long roll of different achievements, with its list of men and women of every age, of every quality and condition,

slaves and freemen, leaders and followers, warriors and statesmen, saints and sinners, and silent martyrs, and nameless conquerors.

There are a million ways of pleasing God, but not one without faith.

MEMORY AND HOPE

They shall utter the memory of thy great goodness.—Psalm 145 : 7.

There is no present reality for us human beings without memory and hope.

Lose the first, and you are dead.

Lose the second, and you are buried.

In Christmas, as truly as in Easter, if we come to it in the spirit, there is a power of resurrection.

Our hopes are rooted in memories, conscious or subconscious.

Our memories flower in hopes, clear and definite or vaguely luminous.

We hope to rise from the dead because again and again the Divine Spirit within us has raised us from the death of despondency and despair.

Remember the joy that came to you when your first child was born.

Remember also the consolation that came to you when your child was taken from you and you were given faith to believe that she was not dead but alive.

Do not deny the evidence of a continuous life in memory and hope.

THE SEVENTH SENSE

As seeing him who is invisible.—Hebrews 11 : 27.

We stand in a strange and mysterious universe, with certain faculties to help us to a comprehension of it.

First, we have the five senses, and they tell us how things look, and taste, and sound, and smell, and feel.

Then we have the reasoning powers, and they enable us to discover how things are related to each other, how causes are followed by effects, how great laws control their action and reaction.

But is there not something beyond this, a depth below the deep and a height beyond the height ?

Every instinct of our nature assures us that there must be.

The lesson of modern thought is the limitation of science and philosophy.

But outside of this narrow circle lie the truths that we most desire and need to know.

In that unexplored world dwells God.

Why should we hesitate to confess that we must have another and a higher faculty of knowledge ?

The astronomer has keen eyes, but he knows their limitation, and he does no discredit to them when he uses the telescope to bring near the unseen stars.

The biologist has quick sight, but he does not disparage it when he turns to the microscope to search a drop of water for its strange, numberless forms of life.

Reason is excellent and forceful, but beyond its

boundaries there is a realm which can only be discerned by faith.

Where science ends, where philosophy pauses, faith begins.

WHAT MANKIND HAS DONE FOR YOU

Ye were bought with a price.—I Corinthians 6 : 20

We must come to understand that this race of man to which we belong, is bound together by something deeper and more vital than subjection to an outward law, that there is a vicarious element in human life, that no man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself, that all the efforts and aspirations and toils and sufferings of humanity serve us and are for our sake.

This is true in the plainest and most literal sense.

The houses that shelter us, the clothes that cover us, the food on our tables, have all been won for us by the labour of other hands.

We have paid for that labour, it is true ; but there is one thing that we have not paid for, and that is the life that has gone into the labour.

When we realise that every liberty, every privilege, every advantage that comes to us as men and women has been bought with a price—that the dark, subterranean lives of those who toil day and night in the bowels of the earth, the perils and hardships of those who sail to and fro upon the stormy seas, the benumbing weariness of those who dig and ditch and handle dirt, the endless tending of looms and plying of needles and carrying of burdens—all this is done and endured by our fellow-men, though blindly, for our benefit, and

accrues to our advantage—when we begin to understand this, a nobler spirit enters into us, the only spirit that can keep our wealth, our freedom, our culture from being a curse to us forever, and sinking us into the *ennui* of a selfish hell.

WHAT A CHILD COSTS

Ye were bought with a price.—I Corinthians 6 : 20.

The inward joy and power of our life, in every sphere, come from the discovery that its highest obligation rests at last upon the law of gratitude.

In every tie that binds us we are made free and glad to serve when we recognise that we have been “bought with a price.”

Here is the family circle.

You belong to it.

It has its obligations and responsibilities for you.

You are subject to your parents.

They have a right to control you and to demand your obedience.

So far, you are subject to a law, good and necessary, but in itself external and formal.

Presently you come to feel, if you are worth anything at all, that this family life has cost something; you catch a glimpse of the pangs of anguish, the countless and continual draughts on life and love that a mother has borne for your sake.

You think of the cares and self-denials through which a father has passed, that you might be protected and nurtured and educated.

You begin to understand that expenditures of the very best of life have been made for you.

And when that truth comes to you it lifts you

up into the true filial relation—makes you long to be more worthy of the sacrifices which have been made for you.

If they could ever be repaid, they would be a burden until you had discharged the debt.

But just because it is so great that it transcends payment, it makes you a willing debtor for ever, and binds you to a grateful and loving life.

THE SECRET OF TRUE LIBERTY

The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death.—Romans 8 : 2.

That which is obvious and self-evident is frequently false and generally superficial.

It is only by striking down into the hidden depths of our nature that we come to those paradoxes in which the essence of truth resides.

“He that findeth his life shall lose it.”

That is a contradiction in terms, but it is a reality in experience.

“He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.”

That is a falsehood to the sense, but it is a truth to the soul.

“He only is wise who knows himself to be a fool.”

To a little learning, that seems absurd, but to a profound philosophy it is the voice of wisdom.

What is liberty?

It is the recognition of voluntary allegiance to the highest law.

And what is the highest law?

It is the law of gratitude and love.

Who, then, is free ?

He who sees and feels the obligations which call him to serve the highest and the best.

The noblest, richest, fullest, purest life is that which has the deepest and strongest sense of indebtedness resting upon it always, and impelling it forward along the line of duty, which is also the line of joy.

So, then, true liberty is the highest kind of bondage.

THE HIGHER LAW

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.—Psalm 19 : 7.

The true uplifting and emancipation of our life comes through the recognition of the higher ties and relationships which bind us.

The progress and elevation of the soul is a process of discovering, not that it is independent and masterless, but that the lower laws and conditions under which it lives are subordinate to the higher laws, and that its bondage in a certain sphere becomes transformed into liberty when it is lifted up into a higher sphere, where both he that serveth and he that is served are subject unto a supreme sovereignty which is above all.

That is what I understand by the reign of law—not the domination of one rule alone upon all that is, but the reign of law over law, the higher above the lower, and the highest of all supreme ; so that those who rise to that last and topmost height, where God forever dwells and is what He commands, are sharers in His liberty and dominion.

They become the sons of God, not because

they have cast off and renounced their obligations, but because they have recognised them step by step, sphere by sphere, until at last they come with glad submission into unity and harmony with that which is sovereign and ultimate.

And that, if the Bible is true, is nothing else than Perfect Love.

THE GROWING CHILD

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit.—Luke 1 : 80.

The child, coming into existence, not by its own choice and will, but out of life behind it, becomes aware first of its physical being.

It takes its place among the creatures that breathe and eat and sleep, and adapts itself spontaneously to the laws of that existence.

A physical life has begun which will be continually dependent upon obedience to those laws.

But presently another life begins to dawn within the first life.

The child becomes conscious of powers of observation, of comparison, of thought.

It becomes an animal who thinks, and thus is subject to the higher law of reason ; and it is only by following that law that the child is really lifted upward and grows intelligent and free.

And then comes the opening of another world—the spiritual world—a disclosure so secret and vital that we cannot describe the order or manner of it.

But we know the three channels through which it comes—the affections, the conscience, and the religious feeling.

And we know the signs and marks of it.

We can tell when the child begins to feel the ties of love and duty which bind it to humankind, the laws of right and wrong which are different from and superior to all other laws, the sense of awe and dependence and responsibility which is the evidence of God unseen.

We know also that the growth of that child into liberty and nobility will depend upon the recognition of these invisible things, and the allegiance to them.

It will rise, it will become a free and beautiful soul, only as it lives in love and duty and worship

BOUND YET FREE

He that was called in the Lord being a bondservant, is the Lord's freedman.—I Corinthians 7 : 22.

How shall you make free a slave bound by law to the service of a human master ?

Suppose you bring into his mind the great truth that he belongs to God just as completely as his master does, and that, even under the hard conditions of his life, it is his duty, his privilege his glory, to serve God by honesty and fidelity and diligence.

Now indeed you have liberated his soul ; and if the liberation of his body comes, as it must come, it will find him already a free man and fit for liberty, because he has caught sight of the true meaning of fraternity and equality.

It was thus that Christianity advanced upon the world.

Entering the Roman Empire at a time when it

included perhaps a hundred and twenty million people, and sixty million of them slaves, it proclaimed no insurrection, it created no anarchy.

It taught the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man, not merely as a doctrine, but as a law of life binding all who believed in it.

It said in plain words, by the mouth of Paul and all his fellow servants of Christianity :

“ Art thou called, being a slave ? Care not for it ; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

“ For he that is called in the Lord being a slave, is the Lord’s freedman ; likewise also he that is called being free is Christ’s slave.”

And so the Gospel carries written upon its very face the great truth that the only real deliverance from a lower bondage lies in the recognition of a higher obligation.

Men are made free by discerning their noblest allegiance.

BELONGING

God, whose I am, and whom I serve.—Acts 27 : 23.

The sense of “ belonging ” is essential to our happiness.

We are never without this sense, and therefore we do not realise its importance.

But let us try for once to strip it away from us and then perhaps we may feel what it means.

You remember the story of “ The man Without a Country ” ?

Endeavour now to construct in imagination the figure of a man without a world, without a fellow-man, without a God.

Does not the mere contemplation of such condition as that throw us back forcibly, almost violently, upon the truth that the joy of our life is a dependent joy, and that we can only come into true and happy possession of ourselves when we realise that we belong to something greater than ourselves?

As living beings we are part of a universe of life.

As intelligent beings we are in connection with a great circle of conscious intelligences.

As spiritual beings we have our place in a moral world controlled and governed by the Supreme Spirit.

In each of these spheres there is a law, a duty, an obligation, a responsibility for us.

Our happiness lies in the discovery and acknowledgment of those ties which fit us and bind us to take our place, to play our part, to do our work, to live our life, where we belong.

THE GREAT RANSOM

Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.—I Timothy 2 : 6,

Man will never grow beyond the need of the ransom paid for him by Jesus Christ.

For all other ways of finding peace with God, of making sure that He loves us, of entering into the sense of forgiveness and fellowship with Him, are vain and futile compared with the Divine sacrifice.

Peace through the cross only, is true for us as it was for Paul.

Man will never grow beyond the power of that

great ransom to test and judge his soul, to reveal the thoughts of his heart, to prove whether he will be saved or lost.

For here is the solemn mystery of it all, that, though this price was paid for every man, yet every man is free to accept or to reject the gift, to acknowledge or deny the obligation.

And those who do not feel its preciousness and its binding power, those who count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were redeemed a common thing, and deny the Lord that bought them, are beyond the reach of any ransom.

God himself is to them as "a stranger and as a man astonished, a mighty man that cannot save."

WHAT JESUS HAS DONE FOR US SINNERS

While we were yet sinners Christ died for us.—Romans 5 : 8.

A great deal of our religious thought and teaching is turned to the example of Christ as the model and pattern of true manhood.

And we rejoice in this, because it is a high and noble doctrine.

But let us not forget that if it stands alone it is partial and incomplete.

The force of an example, however lofty, has its limits.

The life of Christ as an ideal falls short of the power to save us and uplift us unless it is also a ransom, a life freely given and sacrificed for us.

If he were our example only, His very elevation above us, the purity and splendour of His character, the perfection of His moral triumph compared

with our feeble and sinful lives, would discourage and cast us down.

As well ask a common man to show the genius of a Dante or a Shakespeare, to exercise the power of a Cæsar or a Charlemagne, as to live the life of Christianity with nothing but an example to guide and bind him.

But because that life is something more, because it is given and sacrificed for us, it becomes a vital and spiritual power, it lays hold of us at the very centre of our being.

While it covers our sins and shortcomings, it awakens our noblest longings and desires.

It sets us free to follow it, and to follow it to success.

IGNORANCE OF THE FUTURE

Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.—James 4 : 14.

All faith recognises that life is a pilgrimage whose course and duration cannot be foreseen.

That is true, indeed, whether we acknowledge it or not.

Even if a man should fancy that his existence was secure, and that he could direct his own career and predict his own future, experience would teach him his mistake.

But the point is that faith recognises this uncertainty of life at the outset, and in a peculiar way, which transforms it from a curse into a blessing and makes it possible for us even to be glad that we must "go out not knowing whither we go."

For what is it that faith does with these lives of ours ?

It just takes them up out of our weak, trembling, uncertain control and puts them into the hands of God.

Unless we believe that God has made us and made us for Himself, unless we believe that He has something for each one of us to do and to be, unless we believe that He knows what our life's way should be and has marked it out for us, how is it possible for us to go forward with cheerful confidence ?

But if we do believe this, then of course we shall be willing to accept our own ignorance of the future ; and, so far from hindering our advance, it will encourage and strengthen us to remember that the meaning of our life is so large that we cannot understand it.

It will not fit into our broken and imperfect knowledge, just because it does fit perfectly into the great wisdom of God.

THE FATHER OF THE FAITHFUL

They that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham
—Galatians 3 : 9.

Abraham believed.

He lived in an idolatrous country.

Every one about him, even his own father and his family, worshipped idols.

But Abraham's soul pierced through all these falsehoods and delusions to find and clasp the one living and true God who is a Spirit.

Abraham believed.

He was surrounded by the unrighteousness that a corrupt religion always sanctions and intensifies.

The pollutions and cruelties of heathen life touched him on every side, and must have left their stain upon him.

He himself was far from righteous.

There were flaws in his character, blots upon his conduct.

But one thing he did not do.

He did not carve an idol out of his own sin and call it a God.

He believed in a God who was not lower but higher than himself—a God of purity, of holiness, of truth, of mercy; and that faith, having in itself the power to uplift and purify, was counted to him for righteousness—yes, it was better than any outward conformity to a code of morality, just as religion is better than ethics because it has the promise of growth and enlargement and an endless life.

THE FAITH OF ADVENTURERS

Get thee out of thy land, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee.—Acts 7 : 3.

The power which has moved adventurers is faith.

They have believed in something unseen, something that other men have not believed in, and they have set forth to seek it.

A new continent across the ocean, a new passage from sea to sea, a new land among the forests, a goal beyond sight and beyond knowledge, apprehended and realised by a heroic faith, has drawn them over stormy seas and inhospitable deserts.

They have believed and therefore adventured.

Nor has their faith been lacking, for the most part, in a spiritual element.

There is hardly one of them—not one, I think, among the very greatest of the world's explorers—who has not believed in God, and in His overruling Providence, and in his call to them to undertake their adventures.

It is beautiful to see how this religious element has entered into the exploration of the earth, and how faith has asserted itself in the most famous and glorious journeys of men.

We see Columbus planting the standard of the cross on the lonely beach of San Salvador ; Balboa kneeling silent on the cliff from which he first caught sight of the Pacific ; Livingstone praying in his tent in the heart of Africa.

From all the best and the bravest adventurers we hear the confession that they are the servants of a Divine Being, summoned and sent by him to a work for which they would give Him the glory.

NOT KNOWING BUT BELIEVING

He went out, not knowing whither he went.—Hebrews 11 : 8.

Abraham believed.

He was bound by the ties of the world, of habit, of social order, of self-interest—by all those delicate and innumerable threads which seem to fasten a man to the ground, as the Lilliputians fastened Gulliver, and make liberty of thought, of belief, of conduct impossible.

But in the midst of his bondage Abraham heard the voice of the God who had a message, a mission,

a call for his soul—a message which meant spiritual freedom, a mission which could only be fulfilled by obedience, a call which said :

“Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto the land that I will show thee.”

Think what that involved—separation from the past, resignation of all his customs and plans of life, the entrance upon an untrodden path, the following of an unseen and absolute guidance, the consecration of his life to a journey through strange lands, among strange people, towards a strange goal—the final and supreme adventure of his soul.

But Abraham obeyed the call.

“He went out, not knowing whither he went.”
And that was faith.

CHANCES AND CHANGES

Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.—Proverbs 27 : 1.

No one can tell beforehand just how many hardships he must pass through, just how many sacrifices he must make, just how many assaults of evil he must resist, if he sets out to walk with God.

God does not show us exactly what it will cost to obey Him.

He asks us only to give what He calls for from day to day.

Here is one sacrifice right in front of us that we must make now in order to serve God—some evil habit to be given up, some lust of the flesh to be crucified and slain ; and that is our trial for to-day.

But to-morrow that trial may be changed from

a hardship into a blessing ; it may become a joy and triumph to us ; and another trial, new, unforeseen, may meet us in the way.

Now, perhaps, it is poverty that you have to endure, fighting with its temptations to envy and discontent, and general rebellion against the order of the world ; ten years hence, it may be wealth that will test you with its temptations to pride, and luxury, and general arrogance toward your fellow-men.

Now, it may be some selfish indulgence that you have to resign ; to-morrow, it may be some one whom you love, from whom you must consent to part at the call of God.

To-day, it may be your ease, your comfort, that you must sacrifice for the sake of doing good in the world ; to-morrow, it may be your activity, the work you delight in, that you must give up while sickness lays its heavy hand upon you, and bids you "stand and wait."

To-day one thing, to-morrow another thing ; and God does not tell you what it will be : He calls you to go out into your adventure not knowing whither you go.

THE UNEXPECTED TRIAL

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed.—Luke 10 : 33.

The Samaritan who rode down from Jerusalem to Jericho had nothing to do in the morning but follow that highway, and take care that his beast did not stumble or hurt itself, or get tired out so that it could not finish the journey.

He was just a "solitary horseman," and all that

he needed to do was to have a good seat in the saddle and a light hand on the bit.

But at noon, when he came to the place where that unknown victim of the "hold-up" gang lay senseless and bleeding beside the road—then, in a moment, the Samaritan's duty changed, and God called him to be a rescuer, a nurse, a helper of the wounded.

Read the lives of the heroes of faith, and you will find that they are all like this.

They set out to perform, not one task only, but anything that God may command.

They accept Christ's commission, and set sail upon an unknown ocean with sealed orders.

That takes courage.

It is a risk.

But for the spiritual, as truly as for the temporal, life the rule is, "Nothing venture, nothing win."

And is it not infinitely nobler and more inspiring to enter upon a career which runs so close to God that he can speak into it and fill it with new duties at any moment than to make a contract to do a certain thing for a certain price, as if God were a manufacturer and we were His mill hands?

It seems to me that this is the very proof and bond of friendship with God this calling of faith to an undefined obedience.

SOLOMON'S MISTAKE

Give me now wisdom and knowledge.—II Chronicles 1 : 10.

These words were spoken by Solomon, the greatest, wisest, and in some respects the meanest of the Hebrew kings.

Wisdom is more than riches or fame, because it is the foundation of both.

An understanding heart, the ability to discriminate between the good and the bad among men and causes and enterprises, is certainly a valuable possession for every man, especially for one who is called to rule over his fellows.

But there was something better for which Solomon might have asked, and which, if he had received it, would have brought down the blessing of God not only upon his reign, but upon his own soul forever.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”

This was David's prayer, the highest and the best.

Not first an understanding heart, but first a clean heart, cleansed by the Divine pardon from the stains of guilt, and freed by the Divine power from the defilement of sin.

This is the noblest choice.

Wisdom is good, but holiness is as far above wisdom as Christ is above Socrates.

If Solomon had only been wise enough to choose this, if he had only felt his greatest weakness and his deepest need, and asked for a pure and holy heart, how rich beyond expression would have been the results of his vision !

KNOWLEDGE AND HAPPINESS

In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.—Ecclesiastes 1 : 18.

Why did Solomon have all that he desired, and yet remain unhappy ?

The answer is simple and straightforward—because he never forgot or lost himself.

He tried to be happy.

That was the chief end and aim of his life, his own success, his own felicity.

In a high and grand and royal way he sought for happiness.

The delight of knowing and understanding all things, the joy of feeling that in him more wisdom was centered than in all men before, the pride of the most splendid temple and the most prosperous kingdom and the most beneficent reign—thus he sought his happiness and thus he never found it.

For it is a law of God that they who *will* be happy never shall be ; never shall clasp the phantom after which they run so eagerly, never shall feel the deep calm of a contented soul, never shall rest in perfect peace, until they cease their mad chase, forget and deny themselves, and are lost and absorbed in some noble and unselfish pursuit.

“ He that loseth his life shall find it.”

The words of the Master, who was wiser than Solomon, are true now as then.

We cannot have happiness until we forget to seek for it.

We cannot find peace until we enter the path of self-sacrificing usefulness.

We cannot be delivered from this “ vain expense

of passions that forever ebb and flow," this wretched, torturing, unsatisfied, unsatisfying self, until we come to Jesus and give our lives to him to be absorbed as his life was in loving obedience to God and loving service to our fellow-men.

THE IMPULSIVE PETER

So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his coat about him and cast himself into the sea.—John 21 : 7.

The Apostle Peter seems to have been almost more human than the others, and so more liable to error.

There is no possibility of taking him for a mythical character, a demigod, or a legendary hero. He is too much like ourselves.

Peter is so full of human nature that, whenever he is excited or agitated, it seems to overflow, and some word or deed comes out, which would be almost childish in its impulsiveness, if it were not for the virile force of the great strong heart behind it.

The consequence of this is, that he is more often in trouble, more frequently rebuked and corrected, than any other of the disciples.

And yet we love the Apostle Peter.

The very impetuosity which so often led him into a false position was a quality which, under proper discipline and restraint, fitted him to become the chief of the apostles, and the leader of the aggressive work of the church.

There was one thing of which you could be always sure with Peter—he never would profess to

love you while at heart he was indifferent or hostile to you.

He never would put his arm over your shoulder and call you "dear brother," while he was secretly endeavouring to get hold of your money, or circulating vague reports to discredit your reputation or undermine your influence.

You could rely on seeing the worst and the best of Peter at once.

He had not much tact, but his stock of candour was large.

And it seems to me that in all his errors, with one possible exception, there was a root of true and noble feeling.

ARE THE DEAD NEAR US ?

And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses ; and they were talking with Jesus.—Mark 9 : 4.

These two greatest of the Old Testament saints appeared with Jesus, and "spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem."

Surely we cannot fail to see the purpose of this marvellous event.

It was to uplift and cheer the soul of Jesus with the thought of the glory into which He should return by the sorrowful way of the cross.

They bent from heaven to follow with loving, wondering eyes His steadfast journeyings toward the cross ; and when they were permitted to speak with Him, they talked of that great, world-redeeming death from which His flesh shrank, but for which His Divine heart was ready and longing.

There is a strange suggestiveness in this conversation.

Who can tell how much the blessed dead know of our lives here upon earth !

It may be that they are following our paths even now with wise and tender eyes.

It may be that your own faithful mother, the father who prayed with you at the family altar, the friend who walked close beside you in the journey of life, is looking down upon you and watching your path to-day.

And of this be sure—if you are following in the footsteps of Christ, if you are trying to do good, these are the things which they understand, and for which they bless and love you.

You may be misunderstood, you may be misrepresented by your friends on earth ; but with everything that is good, with all noble suffering, there is perfect sympathy among your friends in heaven.

RELIGION NOT AN OPIATE

Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.—James 1 : 27.

There are two kinds of religion in the world—the religion that is heavy with self, and the religion that is strong with love.

There are some people who mix opium with their Christianity.

It soothes and charms them ; it gives them pleasant dreams and emotions ; it lifts them above the world in joyous reveries.

They would fain prolong them and dwell in them, and enjoy an unearned felicity. Their favourite hymn is :

“ My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss.”

But no one ever got to everlasting bliss by that method.

The world has small need of a religion that consists solely or chiefly of emotions and raptures.

But the religion that follows Jesus Christ, alike when He goes up into the high mountain to pray and when He comes down into the dark valley to work ; the religion that listens to Him, alike when He tells us of the peace and joy of the Father's house and when He calls us to feed his lambs ; the religion that is willing to suffer as well as to enjoy, to labour as well as to triumph ; the religion that has a soul to worship God, and a heart to love man, and a hand to help in every good cause—is pure and undefiled.

ECSTASY AND DUTY

Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles.—Luke 9 : 33.

How often we have longed to escape from the turmoil and temptation of this evil world and dwell in some calm and lofty region of religious ecstasy, holding unbroken communion with God !

This is the feeling that has often withdrawn the purest men and women from their duties in the

working world to spend their lives in sweet contemplation amid the quietude of convents and monasteries.

I suppose Bunyan's Pilgrim would gladly have stayed in the House Beautiful.

I suppose he hated to go down from the electable Mountains.

But he had to go.

The only way to the heavenly city led through the rough valley and over the weary plain.

There is no gate into heaven except at the end of the path of duty.

There is not even an honoured and peaceful grave for us until we can say with the Master :

"I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do."

THE MOUNTAIN PEAKS AND THE VALLEY ROAD

Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.—
II Timothy 2 : 3.

Remember that in this world every mountain top of privilege is girdled by the vales of lowly duty.

Remember that the transfiguration of the soul is but the preparation and encouragement for the sacrifice of the life.

Remember that we are not to tarry in the transitory radiance of Mount Hermon, but to press on to the enduring glory of Mount Zion, and that we can only arrive at the final and blessed resting-place by the way of Mount Calvary.

Remember Peter's words in the full experience of the school of Christ.

For the spirit of Jesus was in him, and taught

him what to say, when he wrote at the close of his life :

“ Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.

“ But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”

THE FRIEND OF OUR SOULS

No man careth for my soul.—Psalm 142 : 4.

Caught up in the whirl of cosmic processes, swept along in the turmoil of international affairs, a mere conscious atom in the grip of the tornado, this is what you sometimes say to yourself :

“ No man careth for my soul ! ”

And this is what I want to say to-day to you (and to myself too) :

Jesus of Nazareth careth.

He lived in an age as turbulent as ours.

Great world movements were storming around him in that first century of the Christian era.

Powers and principalities were in conflict.

No man knew what was coming.

Yet to every one who drew near to Him, the humblest, the most sinful, the most perplexed, Jesus gave a loving care as serene and perfect as if the world had been absolutely calm.

Will He not do the same, through the spirit, for every one who comes to Him now ?

This is what draws me to Christianity.

It cares first of all for our souls—not in the mass, but personally.

WHAT GOD REQUIRES

He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?—Micah 6 : 8.

Let the men who climb into the seat of theological judgment and talk at great length about what other men shall be required to believe, take a little lesson from the prophet Micah.

Compared with complicated creeds the old prophet's inspired summary of what God required from man is clear as crystal, simple as sunlight, and sweet as water from a mountain spring.

Square dealing, kind feeling, and reverent thought—these are the fundamentals of religion.

This is not the maximum, of course; for the Divine instruction and guidance may lead a man on to new visions of truth and qualities of virtue.

But this is the irreducible minimum.

Without square dealing, kind feeling, and reverent thought no man can have God's favour or peace in his own heart.

But are these things easy because they are simple?

I think not.

Often the simple things are the hardest, because they leave no room for deception.

VOX POPULI

Pilate saith unto them, What then shall I do unto Jesus who is called Cbrist?—Matthew 27 : 22.

Pilate put it to the vote of the people, and so Jesus was crucified by a referendum.

One curious thing about this was that it took place under an absolute government, the Roman Empire.

This shows that autocrats are afraid of rousing the people's wrath, and will often sacrifice principle rather than risk losing power.

Another curious thing was that in the referendum it was not really the people who spoke, but the chief priests and the elders, who had previously persuaded the multitudes to demand the release of Barabbas and the death of Jesus.

The *vox populi* was the voice of the plotters and politicians.

But the people did not know it.

They thought they were voting, but they were only recording.

Another curious thing was that Pilate imagined he could get rid of his responsibility for protecting an innocent prisoner by washing his own hands and saying to the people, See ye to it !

This shows that a governor may be a fool as well as a coward.

And the last curious thing was that the people answered, All right, we are not afraid, we'll take the blame.

This shows—what ?

Jesus explained it when He cried from the cross :

“ Father, forgive them ; for they know not what

ABOUT LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY

I

By men of understanding and knowledge the state shall be prolonged.—Proverbs 28 : 2.

The name and fame of Abraham Lincoln have risen slowly but surely in the estimation of his own country and of all the nations of mankind.

The emphasis that was at first laid upon his humble birth, his early poverty, his lack of schooling, his hardships and handicaps, gave a false impression of his real character and for a time obscured the greatness of the man.

He was not an uneducated man.

By reading he brought himself in touch with the best of literature, especially the Bible.

By close contact and observation he learned to understand the thoughts and feelings of his fellow-men.

By self-discipline he obtained a superb mastery of his own mind and could use his powers of intuition and of reasoning with marvellous effect.

That is education.

He began as a rail splitter.

He ended as a man who could split the tough barriers of political sophistry and cut the Gordian knot which bound our country to disunion and despair.

The name and title of "a common man" would have pleased him.

But remember, he was a common man with an uncommon soul.

By that inward light and by obedience to God, he steered the ship to victory.

ABOUT LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY

II

Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts.—I Kings 16 : 21.

Lincoln's main purpose in life was to preserve the federal Union of the people of these United States.

He held to this because he believed that God had a great destiny for the united Republic.

On minor questions of policy he was so willing to compromise that his own followers blamed him.

But on the vital question of disunion he would never compromise.

In that cause, he would oppose force with force.

When the civil war was ended he refused even to consider the question whether the seceding States were in the Union or out of it.

He called that question "a merely pernicious abstraction." (Last Public Address, April 11, 1865.)

His one desire and policy was the restoration of the proper practical relations between these States and the Union.

His death by the hand of an insane assassin delayed, obscured, and bungled that policy.

But in the end it has triumphed.

Lincoln's idea of a comprehensive Union is vindicated.

Politicians, and theologians, put that in your pipe and smoke it. You will find it a true pipe of peace.

ABOUT LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY

III

And the work of righteousness shall be peace.—Isaiah 32 : 17.

The day has passed. Shall not its influence and its lesson stay with us ?

Lincoln was a very plain man. He never studied the "Book of Etiquette," nor cared at all about those silly little things which are called "social blunders."

Yet he had the supreme good manners which come from a kind heart.

He made everybody, except the pretentious and arrogant, feel at home with him.

Read his letter to Mrs. Bixby, five of whose sons had died on the field of battle in defence of the Union.

It is a fine example of sympathy and courtesy.

Lincoln was an earnest reformer and progressive.

Yet he was no fanatic or puritanic censor.

Remember his humorous remark about the brand of whisky that General Grant used.

Remember that he never called slavery a sin, but only an evil and a danger.

He proposed to remove it by the free action of the States and compensation to the slave owners.

This would have cost far less than the war.

But extremists of both sides rejected his proposal.

Then Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

Lincoln says to us :

Manners come from the heart.

Progress demands patience.

God's will is peace on earth.

PROBATION

Explain unto us the parable of the tares of the field.—Matthew 13 : 36.

God uses a large impartiality in the gifts of Nature to teach us that this world is not a place of judgment, but a place of probation, in which the good and the evil are working side by side, not only in the same community but in the same character, and not to be finally separated until they have produced their fixed and final results.

We call some men pure and noble.

We call others base and wicked.

But we do not say of any living human being, "That is a lost, hopeless sinner, with nothing but evil in him."

We dare not say it, for God Himself does not say it.

We look into our own hearts and we are puzzled.

The strange mingling flow of impulses and emotions and desires, the undercurrent of half-conscious motives and the afterplay of repentance and regret—making the colour of our actions change with the changing light—all this troubles and confuses us.

We cry in all sincerity, "I cannot understand myself. There is something here that I cannot judge."

And from the shining sun and the falling rain comes the clear, patient voice of God :

"Neither do I judge thee yet. Not yet is thy trial ended. Thou mayest be sunken deep in evil, but thou still hast hope, for behold I spare thee still, I do not judge thee yet."

If this world is only a place of probation, then beyond it there must be a place of judgment.

Surely in the world to come, the just God must make compensation.

Dishonesty, and cruelty, and selfish lust will receive their punishment at the end.

Nor shall those who have waited patiently and lived purely fail of their reward.

OF ONE BLOOD

And he made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell together on the face of the earth.—Acts 17 : 26.

Surely the proof of the Fatherhood of God ought to deepen in our hearts the sense of the Brotherhood of man.

When we see Him providing with equal hands for all men, causing the grass to spring and the flowers to bloom and the stars to shine for the whole world, surely we ought to feel more profoundly and more tenderly the ties which bind together all those whom God hath made of one blood to dwell together on the face of the earth.

Our artificial life, the life which seems inseparable from the advance of civilisation and the growth of large cities, tends to deepen and exaggerate what we call "class distinctions."

It keeps men far apart from each other, creates misunderstanding and distrust.

Too often it awakens evil passions of pride and contempt among the rich, to be met by the equally evil passions of envy and hatred among the poor.

When we feel these influences stealing over us,
then it is well for us to

“ Go forth into the light of things ;
Let Nature be our teacher.”

See how God's great sun laughs at our pride,
shining with equal radiance upon the cottage and
upon the palace, and painting for the eyes of all
richer pictures than the wealth of Cræsus can buy.

See how all things that God has made tell us of
an impartial Father's love which ought to waken
in our hearts a brother's kindness for our fellow-
men.

THE STRONGEST SERMON IN THE WORLD

*He went up into the mountain ; and when he had set down, his
disciples came unto him ; and he opened his mouth and taught
them.*—Matthew 5 : 1-2.

What do you think is the most powerful and
helpful discourse ever made on earth ?

Is it not the Sermon on the Mount ?

Has any other done as much good ?

Does any other go down as deep into the springs
of life ?

See how clearly Jesus tells us that our real
enemies and dangers are not outside of us but
within us.

Victory over evil is to be won not by outward
strife, but by conquering the enemy in our own
hearts.

That will bring the needed strength and purity
and wisdom and love, in which alone we can over-
come evil.

Nothing can harm us if this Spirit abides in us.

4 THE STRONGEST SERMON IN THE WORLD

See how clearly Jesus tells us that each man's happiness depends upon the inward life.

External things do not control it.

Reproach and persecution may even be blessings to those who do not deserve them, but who suffer because they are honestly trying to be good.

Hear these words of Jesus with the outward ear only, and you are building on the sand.

Hear them with the inward ear and do them, and you are building on the Rock of Ages.

GOD SETS US AN EXAMPLE

Forgiving each other even as God also in Christ forgave you.—
Ephesians 4 : 32.

God bestows all the beauty and all the loveliness of the world upon sinners such as we are.

Even though we have disobeyed Him and rebelled against Him, His hand still feeds us.

Even though our hearts are filled with vileness, His pure-eyed stars look down on us in tenderness and compassion.

Even though we should wander far away and forget Him, and steep ourselves in wickedness, His sun would still shine, His rain would still fall for us.

Look up, thou prodigal child, lost to thyself and thy home, sunken in vice and full of inward misery, thou art not lost to thy Father.

For lo ! with every morning above thine evil and unhappy head,

“God makes Himself an awful rose of dawn.”

And even as His light follows and caresses thee wherever thou mayest roam, so His love is close

to thee, and His mercy waiting to welcome thee, if thou wilt but turn to Him.

When we see God forgiving those who have sinned against him, sparing them in His mercy and showering His bounty alike upon the evil and the good, let us take the gracious lesson of forgiveness to our hearts.

Why should we hate like the devil when we may forgive like God?

Why should we cherish malice, envy, and all uncharitableness in our breasts?

I know that some people use us spitefully and show themselves our enemies.

But why should we fill our hearts with their bitterness and inflame our wounds with their poison?

This world is too sweet and fair to darken it with the clouds of anger.

This life is too short to waste it in bearing that heaviest of all burdens, a grudge.

Forgive and forget, if you can; but *forgive*, anyway; and pray heartily and kindly for all men, for thus only shall we be the children of our Father.

MYSTERY IN RELIGION

We speak God's wisdom in a mystery.—I Corinthians 2 : 7.

A religion that professed to reveal and explain everything, and to make the moral order of the universe and the nature and plans of God as plain to our comprehension as a map of the United States—a religion that contained no mystery, would be quite as incredible as a religion that was all mystery.

We find insoluble problems and undiscoverable secrets in nature, and we expect to find them in theology.

There is something hidden even in the least and lowest form of life, why not also in the highest and greatest?

Do you remember Tennyson's poem of "The Flower"?

" Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

But that is precisely what we cannot attain.

Anything that a telescope could discover among the stars, anything that logic could define and explain and fit into an exact philosophical system, would not be God.

For it belongs to His very essence that He transcends our thought, and that His judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out.

We do not know anything about God unless we know that we cannot know Him perfectly.

LOANS GOOD AND BAD

The wicked borroweth and payeth not again.—Psalm 37 : 21.

America is the happy hunting ground of borrowers; but since we cannot lend to all who ask, we must exercise discretion in our lending.

I speak not of past debts incurred by the associate

nations with whom we were engaged in a war in defence of justice and liberty.

There we face "not a theory but a condition." The facts and aims which brought us into the alliance must be considered. Our high purpose to promote the freedom and peace of the world must be continued.

I speak now only of future loans and private donations.

Shall not the same purpose which we honestly declared then guide us now?

Shall we lend our money for the preparation of another war, for the oppression of helpless and unwilling minorities, for the propagation of international hatreds and social violence?

Not unless we wish to justify the remark of the German Attaché who called us "those idiotic Yankees."

But when we hear the voice of misery and despair, when the suffering of the little children come to us, shall we stop our ears and hold our hand?

Shall we stay to ask whether these sufferers are in Germany or Russia or Greece or Palestine or Japan?

Not if America is Christian as well as great.

Let us be generous but not asinine.

America is glad to clothe the naked and feed the starving.

But to advance money to impenitent brigands is not charity.

It is insanity.

FORBEARANCE

Forbearing one another in love.—Ephesians 4 : 2.

We ought to see in God's forbearance to judge men a lesson of forbearance to one another.

We are too quick ; not often too quick to approve, but very often too quick to condemn.

We think it confers a sort of dignity and virtue to say of other men and women that they are bad.

We are in haste to don the judicial ermine and put on the black cap and pronounce sentence.

We foster evil reports, and repeat gossip, and devour our fellows like cannibals.

Who art thou that judgest another ?

Remember Christ's words to His own disciples :

“ Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

How can we read the hidden motives, how can we know the deep repentance and regret that enter into the lives about us ?

Beware of censoriousness. This world of impartial sunlight and equal-falling rain is not the place of judgment.

And, thank God, you and I are not, either here or hereafter, the final judges.

My heart would shrink in speechless terror from deciding the destiny of a single human soul.

That belongs to God ; and to God not now, but when the shadows of time have vanished in the light of eternity.

ABOUT WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY

I

One that ruleth over men righteously, that ruleth in the fear of God, he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds.—II Samuel 23 : 3-4.

If Washington had not liberated the American Republic, Lincoln would have had no Union to save.

Comparisons of character and rank between the two men are absurd.

Their circumstances, gifts, and tasks were too different to be compared.

But in one thing they were profoundly alike—absolute devotion to their country, unselfish willingness to risk all and give all in her service.

Washington was a rich man for those days.

But he used his wealth for the public benefit, serving as commander-in-chief without pay, advancing thousands of dollars to his struggling country, and coming close to bankruptcy for her sake.

Property thus used is not "theft"; it is consecration.

Washington was a reserved man, dignified in manner and speech, except when provoked to wrath.

But he was neither cold nor solitary.

His soldiers adored him.

All kinds of brave and true men were dear to him—Franklin in his fur cap, Putnam in his old felt hat, Witherspoon in his preacher's gown, Morgan in his leather leggings, and John Adams in his lace ruffles. Washington dressed well when

he could, but what he cared for was not clothes, but the man who wore them.

Washington was a magnanimous man.

He had enviers, revilers, enemies.

When they endangered the country, he smote them hard.

When they merely slandered him, he forgave them and let them go.

His great aim was to unite all who loved America in defence of her liberty and then to bind them all together in a more perfect and lasting union.

He was the one man without whom this could not have been done.

His was the master hand that God used to make our country.

ABOUT WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY

II

And to let the oppressed go free.—Isaiah 58 : 6.

It is now the fashion among writers who would rather be original than tell the truth, to say that Washington was not a real American but a transplanted Britisher.

I doubt if he looked so at Trenton, or Princeton, or Monmouth, or Yorktown.

What is real Americanism, and where does it reside ?

Not on the tongue, nor in the costume, nor among the transient social forms, refined or rough, which mottle the surface of life.

The log cabin has no monopoly of it, nor is it a fixture of the stately mansion.

Its home is not on the frontier nor in the crowded city.

Its dwelling is in the heart.

It speaks a score of dialects, but one language.

And this is what it says :

God has given to man the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The best government is that which best protects these rights and restrains people from trampling on one another.

The best way to secure such a government is to trust the common sense of the people to choose wise and honest leaders and governors.

The right to save is equivalent to the right to earn, and the end of freedom is fair play for all.

It is the duty of the United States as a new republic, first to grow strong and firm, next to use that strength for the benefit of mankind, and all the time to set an example of justice, benevolence, and fair dealing to all nations.

Religion and morality are the firmest supports of national peace and welfare.

That is real Americanism.

That is the faith which Washington proved by his lofty and victorious life.

THE THINGS THAT ARE ABOVE

Seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God.—Colossians 3 : 1.

What does it mean to seek those things that are above ?

Where is it that Christ sitteth on the right hand of God ?

Surely not in some distant region, invisible and inaccessible to mortals.

To read the law of the risen life thus would be to rob it of its meaning and its power for the present moment.

God is not secluded in some far-off heaven.

He is dwelling and working in this very world where we live.

His "right hand" is manifest in all His works of wisdom and righteousness and goodness and love.

Christ sitteth on the right hand of his Father because He is exalted to share in all these glorious works, because He is the Mediator between the Divine and the human, because His spirit brings men into harmony with God and inspires the pure and holy thoughts, the just and noble deeds, the generous and blessed affections that lift the world.

He is not far away from us.

He is with us always, even unto the end of the world.

He sitteth close beside us, breaketh bread at our tables, walketh with us in the city streets and among the green fields and beside the sea.

The "things that are above" are the things that belong to Him and to His kingdom, the spiritual realities of a noble life, whatsoever things are pure and lovely and of good report.

These are the things that we are to seek.

We are to distinguish between the perishing and the imperishable.

We are to choose in every action between the higher and the lower end.

We are to cling to that which is fine and generous and true, and cut loose from that which is coarse and selfish and false.

We are to turn away from that which drags us downward and makes us like the beasts, and follow after that which draws us upward toward the likeness of Christ.

COLLEGE STUDENTS

Is thy counsellor perished?—Micah 4 : 9.

Men of privilege without power are waste material.

Men of enlightenment without influence are the poorest kind of rubbish.

Men of intellectual and moral and religious culture, who are not active forces for good in society, are not worth what it costs to produce and keep them.

If they pass for Christians they are guilty of obtaining respect under false pretences.

College students are men of privilege.

It costs ten times as much, in labour and care and money, to bring you out where you are to-day as it costs to educate the average man, and a hundred times as much as it costs to raise a boy without any education.

This fact brings you face to face with a question :
Are you going to be worth your salt ?

You have had mental training and plenty of instruction in various branches of learning. You ought to be full of intelligence.

You have had moral discipline, and the influences of good example have been steadily brought to bear upon you. You ought to be full of principle.

You have had religious advantages and abundant

inducements to choose the better part. You ought to be full of faith.

What are you going to do with your intelligence, your principle, your faith?

It is your duty to make active use of them for the seasoning, the cleansing, the saving of the world.

Do not be sponges.

Be the salt of the earth.

GOD'S GOODNESS AND GLORY

I beseech thee, show me thy glory.—Exodus 33 : 18.

In regard to God Himself, it seems to me that in the Scriptures His character is revealed and His essence is secret.

His moral attributes are made known to us so that we cannot mistake them.

He is just and holy, merciful and compassionate, bountiful and loving, and He discloses these qualities so fully in His self-revelation in Jesus Christ that they become clear and distinct and indubitable to us ; they belong to us and to our children for ever.

We know Him as the Father of our spirits, for Jesus Christ says :

“ He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.”

But His metaphysical attributes, the ground and mode and form of His existence, are behind the veil.

Omniscience, Omnipresence, Omnipotence—when we speak these words we do not define God, we simply name the limits of our thought about Him.

They are lines which run into infinity ; and

when we try to follow them with our logic, they lead us into a region where argument is vain and definition absurd.

Do you remember what Moses saw in the mount ?

He said unto the Lord :

"I beseech Thee show me Thy glory."

But God answered :

"I will make all My goodness pass before thee."

Here is the boundary line of knowledge—God's goodness is revealed ; but His glory is beyond the horizon.

THE SECRET THINGS

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God.—Deuteronomy 29 : 29.

Modest ignorance is a necessary element of true theology.

Bishop Butler says :

"The monarchy of the Universe is a dominion unlimited in extent and everlasting in duration : the general system of it must therefore be quite beyond our comprehension."

Richard Hooker says :

"We know not God as He is, neither can know Him.

"His glory is inexplicable, His greatness above our capacity and reach."

It is a simple fact that we cannot know all about God.

Natural theology, of course, is limited. Revealed theology widens the boundaries of our knowledge, but does not abolish them.

The Bible does not profess to make men omniscient, but simply to tell them enough to make them happy and good, if they will believe it and live up to it.

It does indeed lift man above the level of his natural ignorance ; but even as one who has gained a wider view of the world by ascending a lofty mountain still finds his sight circumscribed by a new horizon, so those who receive the revelations which are contained in Holy Scripture still discover a verge beyond which their thought cannot pass, and find themselves shut in by the secret things which belong unto God.

JUDGMENT IS GOD'S PROVINCE

The judgment of God is according to truth.—Romans 2 : 2.

God has declared that He will reward every man according to his works.

He has made known the riches of His grace, His willingness to forgive the penitent, and to help the fallen, in Jesus Christ.

And by the same lips He made known His indignation against those who will not repent, nor trust in His mercy, nor show to others that love which God has shown to them.

Nothing could be more clear and positive than the revelation of duty which God makes to each one of us.

We must forsake our sins and deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow Christ if we would be saved.

But beyond that is the region of secrets.

When we try to peer into it and explore it with our little lamps of reason, when we ask how God

will deal with the heathen, who have not had our privileges and opportunities, when we inquire what is to become of this man or that man in the eternal future, we are simply going beyond the horizon.

The very attempt to pronounce final judgment on our fellow-creatures implies what Butler has well called "the infinitely absurd supposition that we know the whole of the case."

One thing is certain, God will never do injustice to a single soul, "but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."

The rest we may leave in silence with God ; for judgment is His province and there we may not intrude.

ANSWERING FOOLS

Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.

Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.—Proverbs 26 : 4, 5.

This looks like contradictory advice.

But it is really a careful view of both sides of the same subject.

Some letters are so unreasonable, some questions so impertinent, some arguments so foolish, and some attacks so full of blind prejudice, that to answer them is to descend to their level.

Silence is the best reply.

Christ gives us an example. (Matthew 27 : 12.)

On the other hand, some forms of folly are so vain, virulent, and dangerous that they need correction.

The ignorant and conceited should not be permitted to drive automobiles, or to write textbooks, or to claim censorship in church or state.

A searching inquiry is often the best answer to this kind of foolishness.

Christ gave an example of this when He replied to the Pharisees by asking them a question which they could not answer. (Mark 11 : 27-33.)

But for us frail and fallible men, in the daily run of life, I think it wise to follow the first counsel of Solomon oftener than the second.

To go around the world trying to expose the folly of all the complacent foolish people would be a tiresome, endless, fruitless task.

It would not make them wiser, nor us happier.

Starting out in "The League to Enforce Humility," we might find ourselves high up in "The Self-Satisfied Society."

THE HORIZON

Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?—Job 11 : 7.

When a man sets out to be wise above what is written, he is in a fair way to arrive at folly; and when he endeavours to deal with infinite quantities by a finite logic, his conclusions are apt to be absurd.

It is better to know nothing about a subject than to know something about it which is not so.

It is wiser to stand in silent awe before the secret things of God than it is to adventure rashly among them and discover truths which do not exist.

The evil genius of religious thought is insatiable curiosity, and her handmaid is necessary deduction, and her kingdom is a kingdom of logical consistency and moral confusion.

The plague of Christendom has been the passion of theology to define what God has not defined, and to discover what He has kept secret.

The Bible reveals the fact of the second coming of Christ, but it declares at the same time that the day and the hour of His advent are hidden from all men.

Now here is a horizon distinctly and divinely established, and yet good people have not been able to restrain their curiosity from trying to pass over it.

In regard to the great essential truths which are clearly revealed, there has been substantial unity from the beginning.

But when men have begun to make their inferences from these truths, then divisions have appeared.

"What are these people quarrelling about?" asks the plain man.

They are quarrelling for the most part about the things that none of them can understand.

Being unwilling to let God have any secrets, they are unable to let men have any peace.

GOD'S OMNISCIENCE NOT FATE

Not willing that any should perish.—II Peter 3 : 9.

Omniscience is one of the Divine attributes.

It means simply that God's wisdom is perfect, and therefore beyond our comprehension.

But the inquisitive theological explorer takes this word as a raft and pushes out into the unknown.

Omniscience, according to his definitions, means that God foreknows everything from all eternity.

If He foreknows everything, everything must be foreordained.

If everything is foreordained, then the sin and death of every wicked man must be predetermined.

Therefore, "by the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are foreordained unto everlasting death, and these men and angels are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite that it can neither be increased nor diminished."

Thus the explorer of Omniscience reports his discovery; and when we turn from his report to the Bible, which tells us of "God, who is *not willing* that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," we feel that the explorer has gone a long way beyond his horizon and has discovered something which is probably not true.

The truth is much simpler.

God foreknows things not as they are *not*, but as they are.

If they are fixed and certain, He knows them as such.

If He has made some things dependent on the will and choice of man, then God knows that they are thus dependent and conditional.

He sends forth His Son to help men to choose right, and to say: "Come unto Me, *all* ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

THE CENTRE OF THE MANY-SIDED GOSPEL

Without me ye can do nothing.—John 15 : 5:

Nothing is foreign to the gospel. It may enter, it must enter, into every region of human thought and conduct.

But it must always be true to itself.

It may not come as a philosophy, a morality, a criticism, but always as glad tidings of the Saviour.

Some men preach as if Christ had never really lived.

That is why they fail.

Whatever subject the preacher touches, he must see it and treat it in the light that comes from the manger-cradle, the uplifted cross, and the empty sepulchre.

No man in the world to-day has such power as he who can make his fellow-men feel that Christ is a real and living person.

It is told of David Hume, the great sceptic, that he once went to listen to the preaching of John Brown of Haddington.

“That is the man for me,” said Hume; “he means what he says; he speaks as if Jesus Christ were at his elbow.”

“Without Me,” said Christ to His apostles, “ye can do nothing.”

GOD SOVEREIGN AND MAN FREE

Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.—Revelation 22 : 17.

We believe that God is the Ruler of the Universe, and that He intends that His will shall be done on earth even as it is done in heaven.

It is His will to judge the obstinate and to have mercy upon the penitent ; to vanquish the evil and to establish the good ; to destroy death, and in the fulness of time to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.

Nothing could be more certain to those who believe in God than this mighty purpose.

But nothing could be more inscrutable than the manner of its accomplishment.

We know that God is sovereign.

We know also that man is free, for the whole gospel is an appeal to his power of choice.

Both truths are sure and precious.

But they come together in a line which is the absolute boundary of our vision, even as the ocean and the sky meet, but do not mingle, at the edge of the world.

That is the horizon.

Beyond that we cannot see.

THE WAY TO PROVE OUR CREED

By works was faith made perfect.—James 2 : 22.

We must live up to what we know.

Goodness is the purpose of religion, and its best proof.

Conduct is the end of faith, and its strongest support.

God has revealed Himself in Christ in order that we may love Him and live with Him and be like him.

If we will do this we shall be sure of Him, and help other men to be sure of Him.

The best evidences of religion are holy and kind and useful and godly lives, really moulded and controlled by the Divine Christ.

A short creed well believed and honestly applied is what we need.

The world waits, and we must pray and labour, not for a more complete and logical theology, but for a more real and true and living Christianity.

The best thing that we can do to help the world to believe in a Divine Revelation is simply this :

Trust in Jesus Christ, love our fellow-men, and follow Him in the path of daily duty.

LARGE BLESSINGS OF A BRIEF CREED

I know him whom I have believed.—II Timothy 1 : 12.

Think of the large blessings of a small theology—a religion which shall really belong to us, be a part of us, enter into us, abide with us, and not with us only, but with our children, for ever.

Not many doctrines, but solid.

It need not be very wide, but it must be very deep.

It must go down to the bottom of our hearts and dwell there as a living certainty.

To be sure of God, most wise, most mighty, most holy, most loving, our Father in heaven and earth.

To be sure of Christ, divine and human, our Brother and our Master, the pattern of excellence and the Redeemer from sin, the Saviour of all who trust in Him.

To be sure of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Guide, the Purifier, given to all who ask for Him.

To be sure of immortality, an endless life in which nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Let us concentrate our faith upon these things.

If we can get hold of these profound realities; if we can gather about them all the forces of reason and conscience and experience and testimony to establish them for ever; if we can rest upon them firmly and steadfastly, feeling that they are ours because they are revealed, we shall be satisfied.

For our great need is not to know more about religion, but to be more sure of what we know.

LIMITED KNOWLEDGE

Now I know in part.—I Corinthians 13 : 12.

The trouble with most of our Confessions of Faith and Articles of Religion is that they are too long.

They contain the systems of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; but they contain also a great deal more.

And these additions, inferences, and deductions have always been the most costly to attain, the most

perilous to defend, the most difficult to believe, and the least profitable to apply.

The first lesson to be learned by one who would think wisely or speak truly of religious questions is to say, in regard to the secret things :

“ I do not know, and I shall not try to guess.”

The advice which Milton puts into the speech of the affable archangel Raphael is prudent, and as good for us as it was for Adam :

“ Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid ;
Leave them to God above, him serve and fear :
Of other creatures, as him pleases best,
Wherever placed, let him dispose : joy thou
In what he gives to thee, this paradise,
And thy fair Eve ; Heaven is for thee too high
To know what passes there. Be lowly wise ;
Think only what concerns thee and thy being ;
Contented that thus far hath been revealed,
Not of earth only, but of highest Heaven.”

THE HUNGER FOR TRUTH

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.—
John 8 : 32.

There are questions arising in human nature which demand an answer.

If it is denied we cannot help being disappointed, restless, and sad.

This is the price we have to pay for being conscious, rational creatures.

If we were mere plants or animals, we might go on living through our appointed years in complete indifference to the origin and meaning of our existence.

But within us, as human beings, there is some-

thing that cries out and rebels against such a blind life.

Man is born to ask what things mean.

John Fiske brought out this fact very clearly in his last book, *Through Nature to God*.

He shows that "in the morning twilight of existence the human soul vaguely reached forth toward something akin to itself, not in the realm of fleeting phenomena, but in the Eternal Presence beyond."

He argues by the analogy of evolution, which always presupposes a real relation between the life and the environment to which it adjusts itself, that this forthreaching and unfolding of the soul implies the everlasting reality of religion.

The argument is good.

But the point which concerns us now is simply this :

The forthreaching, questioning soul can never be satisfied if it touches only a dead wall in the darkness, if its seeking meets with the reply :

"You do not know, and you never can know, and you must not try to know."

This is agnosticism.

It is only another way of spelling unhappiness.

CHRISTIANITY TELLS

I tell you the truth.—John 8 : 45.

Christianity is a revealing religion, a teaching religion, a religion which conveys to the inquiring spirit certain great and positive solutions of the problems of life.

It is not silent, nor ambiguous, nor incomprehensible in its utterance.

It replies to our questions with a knowledge which, though limited, is definite and sufficient.

It tells us that this "order of nature, which constitutes the world's experience, is only one portion of the total universe."

That the ruler of both worlds, seen and unseen, is God, a Spirit, and the Father of our spirits.

That He is not distant from us nor indifferent to us, but that He has given His Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Saviour.

That His Spirit is ever present with us to help us in our conflicts with evil, in our efforts toward goodness.

That He is making all things work together for good to those that love Him.

"The first and the most essential condition of true happiness," writes Professor Carl Hilty, the eminent Swiss jurist, "is a firm faith in the moral order of the world.

"What is the happy life ?

"It is a life of conscious harmony with this divine order of the world, a sense, that is to say, of God's companionship.

"And wherein is the profoundest unhappiness ?

"It is in the sense of the remoteness from God, issuing into incurable restlessness of heart, and finally into incapacity to make one's life fruitful or effective."

UNITY

That Ye be perfected together in the same mind.—I Corinthians 1 : 10.

The things that I care for most in the Church to which I belong are not those which divide us from other Christians, but those which unite us to them.

The things that I love most in Christianity are those which give it power to save and satisfy, to console and cheer, to inspire and bless human hearts and lives.

The thing that I desire most for the Presbyterian Church is that it should prove its mission and extend its influence in the world by making men happy in the knowing and doing of the things which Christ teaches.

This ought to lead to union with other churches.

The Church that the twentieth century will hear most gladly and honour most sincerely will have two marks.

It will be the Church that teaches most clearly and strongly the truths that Jesus taught.

It will be the Church that finds most happiness in living the simple life and doing good in the world.

THE FATHER OF US ALL

Being then the offspring of God.—Acts 17 : 29.

In every family there may be children, perhaps not more and less beloved, but surely more and less approved.

There are some that come closer to the father's

heart, obedient, generous, affectionate ; answering every call upon their love ; rendering swift, unconscious services of help and comfort.

And there are some that cannot or will not come so near ; cold, dull, irresponsible ; set chiefly upon the following of their own wills and the pleasing of their own desires ; and sometimes wilfully wounding and bruising the hearts to which they ought to be most closely bound.

Is it possible that the Father should feel alike toward both ?

He cannot and does not.

Even though he does not speak of it, there is a difference.

And yet they are all his children.

For all of them his heart is tender and his care watchful.

And for all of them he will provide with an impartial benevolence.

It is a point of honour with him.

He will do the best he can for all.

Even so our Father in Heaven deals with His children on earth.

In the bounties of nature He shows his kindness to humanity.

In the common grace of His Holy Spirit he is for ever calling and wooing all me to turn to Him.

In Christ He offers to all who turn a full and free salvation.

REJOICE

Rejoice evermore.—I Thessalonians 5 : 16.

A revival of simplicity, a revival of sincerity, a revival of work—this will restore unto us the joy of salvation.

And with the joy of salvation will come a renewal and expansion of power.

The inconsistency of Christians is the stronghold of unbelief.

Why should not men and women who hold the Christian faith be glad all the time ?

They know that God holds the world in His care.

They know that Christ lived and died for them and rose again from the dead.

They knew that nothing in life or death can really harm them.

Why, then, go about gloomy and sour, with long faces and doleful voices ?

The lack of vital joy in the Church is the chief cause of indifference in the world.

The feeble energy, the faltering and reluctant spirit, the weariness in well doing with which too many believers impoverish and sadden their own hearts, make other men question the reality and value of religion and turn away from it in cool neglect.

IMMORTALITY AND HAPPINESS

Set your mind on the things that are above.—Colossians 3 : 2:

Take the truth of immortality.

Let a man live now in the light of the knowledge that he is to live for ever.

How it will deepen and strengthen the meaning of his existence, lift him above petty cares and ambitions, and make the things that are worth while precious to his heart !

Let him really set his affections on the spiritual side of life, let him endure afflictions patiently because he knows that they are but for a moment, let him think more of the soul than of the body, let him do good to his fellow-men in order to make them sharers of his immortal hope, let him purify his love and friendship that they may be fit for the heavenly life.

Surely the man who does these things will be happy.

It will be with him as with Lazarus, in Robert Browning's poem, "The Epistle of Karshish."

Others will look at him with wonder and say :

"Whence has the man the balm that brightens all ?
This grown man eyes the world now like a child."

This is the sure result of following out the doctrines of Christ in action, of living the truths that He teaches—a simple life, a child-like life, a happy life.

SUPPOSE

If Ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.—John 13 : 17.

Suppose that a fresh flood of brave, cheerful, joyous energy should be poured into all the forms of Christian work.

Suppose that plenty of money should come flowing in to send out every missionary that wants

to go and that plenty of the strongest and best young men should dedicate their lives to the ministry of Christ.

And then suppose that the Christian life, in its daily manifestation, should come to be marked and known by simplicity and happiness.

Suppose that instead of loading themselves down on life's journey with so many bags and parcels and boxes of superfluous luggage and bric-à-brac that they are forced to sit down by the roadside and gasp for breath, Christian families should turn to quiet ways, lowly pleasures, pure and simple joys.

Suppose that they should truly find their happiness in the knowledge that God loves them and Christ died for them and heaven is sure, and so set their hearts free to rejoice in life's common mercies, the light of the sun, the blue of the sky, the splendour of the sea, the peace of the everlasting hills, the song of birds, the sweetness of flowers, the wholesome savour of good food, the delights of action and motion, the refreshment of sleep, the charm of music, the blessings of human love and friendship.

Suppose, I say, that such a revival of the joy of living and working should silently sweep over the Church in the twentieth century.

What would happen? Great would be the peace of her children.

Greater still would be their power.

STRONG YOUNG MEN

Because Ye are strong.—I John 2 : 14.

There are many young men who are kept away from the Church by a false notion that a Christian has no use for bravery and vigour, no scope for the exercise of well-trained bodily powers and a bold, fearless spirit.

But where do we find such a notion of life save in the morbid theories of weak fanatics ?

The Christian must indeed keep his body and spirit under control, he must not be a mere animal or a reckless bravo ; but within those limits he may exercise all his daring and skill and strength.

The Church has need of brave soldiers, strong labourers, dauntless explorers.

Where would she be now had it not been for the bravery and endurance of those first apostles of the gospel ?

Is not the world better and more Christian for the bravery of Luther and Livingstone and Havelock and Grenfell ?

“ I write unto you young men because you are strong.”

That was a good reason ; for Jesus Christ has need of strong and brave disciples, to stand up well against the assaults of evil, to push through desert and jungle, over mountains and stormy seas with the message of the gospel, to endure hardness as good soldiers, to fight and not be weary, to run and not faint.

MISSIONARIES

Lo, we turn to the Gentiles.—Acts 13 : 46.

I will tell you what the British East India Company said at the beginning of the nineteenth century :

“The sending of Christian missionaries into our eastern possessions is the maddest, most expensive, most unwarranted project that was ever proposed by a lunatic enthusiast.”

I will tell you what the British Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal said at the close of the nineteenth century :

“In my judgment Christian missionaries have done more lasting good to the people of India than all other agencies combined.”

The agency which has justified its existence, done its work, and won the approval of its bitterest opponents, after that fashion, cannot possibly be foolish, feeble, extravagant or dishonest.

You cannot find any other human enterprise of modern times which has been as wisely, as prudently, as economically, as honourably conducted as this work of Christian missions.

GOOD SOLDIERS

A good soldier of Jesus Christ.—II Timothy 2 : 3.

What the world needs to-day is not a new system of ethics.

It is simply a larger number of people who will make a steady effort to live up to the system that they have already.

There is plenty of room for heroism in the plainest kind of duty.

The greatest of all wars has been going on for centuries.

It is the ceaseless, glorious conflict against the evil that is in the world.

Every warrior who will enter that age-long battle may find a place in the army, and win his spurs, and achieve honour, and obtain favour with the great Captain of the Host, if he will but do his best to make life purer and finer for every one that lives.

It is one of the burning questions of to-day whether university life and training really fit men for taking their share in this supreme conflict.

There is no abstract answer ; but every college class that graduates is a part of the concrete answer.

I believe the difference in the results depends very much less upon the educational system than it does upon the personal quality of the teachers and the men.

Richard Porson was a university man, and he seemed to live chiefly to drink port and read Greek.

Thomas Guthrie was a university man, and he proved that he meant what he said in his verse :

“ I live for those who love me,
For those who know me true,
For the heaven that bends above me,
And the good that I can do :
For the wrongs that need resistance,
For the cause that lacks assistance,
For the future in the distance,
And the good that I can do.”

REVOLUTION, OR MORE RELIGION

Preaching good tidings of peace.—Acts 10 : 36.

Some people say that a revolution is coming in our own age and our own country.

It is possible.

There are signs of it.

There has been a tremendous increase of luxury among the rich in the present generation.

There has been an increase of suffering among the poor in certain sections of our country.

It may be that we are on the eve of a great overturning.

I do not know. I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet.

But I know that there is one thing that can make a revolution needless, one thing that is infinitely better than any revolution ; and that is a real revival of religion—the religion that has already founded the hospital and the asylum and the free school, the religion that has broken the fetters of the slave and lifted womanhood out of bondage and degradation, and put the arm of its protection around the helplessness and innocence of childhood, the religion that proves its faith by its works, and links the preaching of the fatherhood of God to the practice of the brotherhood of man.

That religion is true Christianity.

FALSE RELIGION

The abominations of the heathen.—II Kings 16 : 3.

Some people say, "Foreign peoples have their own civilisations and religions, and therefore we need not trouble ourselves about them."

Yes, they have ; but that is the very reason why we must "trouble ourselves about them."

Their civilisations are full of degradation, of oppression, of cruelty, under which women groan and children perish, and men live like beasts.

Their religions are often tinged with sad and gloomy superstitions, or embodied in rituals of blood and shame.

Think of the religions of Africa which teach men to slay and devour one another ; the religions of India with their licentious rites and brutal adorations.

Think of the civilisation of China.

Let your fancy picture those nightly processions through the streets of Chinese cities, long files of young blind girls decked with garlands for the sacrifice of lust ; friendless, helpless, homeless ; marching each with her hands upon the shoulders of the one before her ; groping their way through an endless midnight to shame and suffering and death.

Tell me, is that kind of civilisation a reason why you should not "trouble yourself about the heathen" ?

A PURIFYING POWER

Whatsoever things are pure.—Philippians 4 : 8.

Where good men are in business, lying and cheating and gambling should be more difficult, truth and candour and fair dealing should be easier and more popular, just because of their presence.

Where good men are in society, grossness of thought and speech ought to stand rebuked, high ideals and courtliness and chivalrous actions and "the desire of fame and all that makes a man," ought to seem at once more desirable and more attainable to every one who comes into contact with them.

There have been men of this quality in the world.

It is recorded of Bernardino of Siena, that when he came into the room, his gentleness and purity were so evident that all that was base and silly in the talk of his companions was abashed and fell into silence.

Artists like Fra Angelico have made their pictures like prayers.

Warriors like the Chevalier Bayard and Sir Philip Sidney and Henry Havelock and Chinese Gordon have dwelt amid camps and conflicts as Knights of the Holy Ghost.

Philosophers like John Locke and George Berkeley, men of science like Newton and Herschel, poets like Wordsworth and Tennyson and Browning, have taught virtue by their lives as well as wisdom by their works.

Humanitarians like Howard and Wilberforce and

Raikes and Charles Brace have given themselves to noble causes.

Every man who will has it in his power to make his life count for something positive in the redemption of society.

SPREADING THE LIGHT

Unto all the nations.—Luke 24 : 47.

More light is what the world wants.

And do you think that it will make less light to kindle a greater fire ?

Do you suppose that one more Christian in China will make one less Christian in America ?

Do you imagine that one less effort to preach the Gospel in Africa will mean one more effort to preach the Gospel in America ?

Do you suppose that one dollar that is given for foreign missions will be taken from home missions ?

I tell you, no !

It will be taken from self-indulgence, from avarice, from worldly luxury.

Peter is not robbed when Paul is supported.

Demas, the worldling, Simon Magus, the astrologer, and Demetrius, the idol-maker, are the only ones that suffer.

Peter and Paul grow strong together, and the farther the one goes abroad, the better the other works at home.

In 1812 a man in the Senate of Massachusetts objected to the incorporation of the American Board of Foreign Missions on the ground that "the country had no religion to spare."

If that objection had prevailed I believe by this time the country would have had no religion to keep:

THE APOSTLE JOHN

Whom Jesus loved.—John 13 : 23.

Many and beautiful are the traditions of the life of the Apostle John in Ephesus.

It is said that at one time a noble and amiable youth was committed by his parents to the guardianship of John.

He was obliged to go away on a long journey and left his ward in the care of some of the brethren.

On his return he was told that the youth had fallen into evil ways, had been tempted off into the wilderness by a band of desperate robbers, and had become their leader.

John was filled with sorrow and self-reproach.

He went out into the wild country, penetrated to the stronghold of the robbers' band, seized the young man by the hand, kissed it, and, calling him by his familiar name, brought him back to Ephesus.

Out in the great church, one Sunday morning, a vast congregation is gathered.

They are waiting for some one.

A wide sea of faces is turned upward.

An expectant hush rests over the crowd.

An old man is borne in by his attendants.

His long hair and beard are white as snow.

His eyes shine with a soft and gentle light.

He lifts a tremulous hand.

His voice is faint and slow as he speaks. Hark !

" Little children, love one another ! "

The words fall like a benediction.

They are the last words of that disciple whom Jesus loved.

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.—Galatians 6 : 14.

To-day's meditation is just a quotation from a wonderful old story—*The Pilgrim's Progress* :

"Up this pathway, therefore, did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back.

"He ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending; and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulchre.

"So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and continued so to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.

"Then was Christian glad and lightsome."

Now I ask you, what need had this happy Christian of a definition of the atonement?

CONCERNING THE DEAD NOTHING
BUT GOOD

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives.—II Samuel 1 : 23.

The old Romans had this proverb: *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*. If you cannot speak well of the departed say nothing.

This came to mind as I was reading David's musical lament for Saul and Jonathan.

How beautifully it leaves unsaid the things which are better forgotten !

Jonathan, of course, was a great lover, the very model of a matchless friend.

But of Saul the record tell little that was particularly "lovely and pleasant," and a good deal that was quite the contrary.

Toward David, especially, he was often unfair, rough, and extremely unpleasant.

Yet David does not even mention this in his elegy.

He speaks only of the good, the brave, the generous qualities of the departed.

Why ?

Because Saul was dead and could not answer to defend himself.

Because his mistakes and faults belonged to the past, and it was less important to fix the blame for them than to learn how to correct and avoid them in the future.

To say the best you can of the dead is not only a natural instinct but also a Christian wish.

Biography should not be blind, but it should be based and built on the positive good qualities in its subject.

Are there no such elements ?

Then no biography !

THE BREADTH OF LOVE

Being rooted and grounded in love.—Ephesians 3 : 17.

The love of Christ is the type of all true and noble love, because it does not narrow the heart, but expands it and makes it overflow with blessed and generous feelings.

Contrast him with the Scribes and Pharisees.

Their doctrine was, "Love thyself well, and give what is left over to those who will pay for it."

Christ's doctrine is, "Love thy neighbour as thyself, and give freely because thou hast freely received."

He would have us love Him first and most, because He is our Saviour, because He has given Himself to us and for us.

But He would have us love every one else better, because we love Him best.

"That love for one, from which there doth not
spring

Wide love for all, is but a worthless thing."

That is what Lowell wrote in one of his youthful love sonnets. Can we not apply it to our religion?

"He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen."

POPULAR FOLLY

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes.—Proverbs 12 : 15.

Half the troubles of mankind come from ignorance—ignorance which is systematically organised with societies for its support and newspapers for its dissemination—ignorance which consists less in not knowing things than in wilfully ignoring the things that are already known.

There are certain physical diseases which would go out of existence in ten years if people would only remember what has been learned.

There are certain political and social plagues which are propagated only in the atmosphere of shallow self-confidence and vulgar thoughtlessness.

There is a yellow fever of literature especially adapted and prepared for the spread of shameless curiosity, incorrect information, and complacent idiocy among all classes of the population.

Persons who fall under the influence of this pest become so triumphantly ignorant that they cannot distinguish between news and knowledge.

They develop a morbid thirst for printed matter, and the more they read the less they learn.

They are fit soil for the bacteria of folly and fanaticism.

THE FUNCTION OF WISE MEN

Wisdom is the principal thing.—Proverbs 4 : 7.

The men of thought, of cultivation, of reason in the community ought to be an antidote to dangerous influences.

Having been instructed in the lessons of history and science and philosophy, they are bound to contribute their knowledge to the service of society.

As a rule, they are willing enough to do this for pay, in the professions of law and medicine and teaching and divinity.

What I plead for is the wider, nobler, unpaid service which an educated man renders to society simply by being thoughtful and by helping other men to think.

The college men of a country ought to be its most conservative men ; that is to say, the men who do most to conserve it.

They ought to be the men whom demagogues cannot inflame nor political bosses pervert.

They ought to bring wild theories to the test

of reason, and withstand rash experiments with obstinate prudence.

When it is proposed, for example, to enrich the nation by debasing its currency, they should be the men who demand time to think whether real wealth can be created by artificial legislation.

And if they succeed in winning time to think, the danger will pass—or rather it will be transformed into some other danger requiring a new application of the salt of intelligence.

For the fermenting activity of ignorance is incessant, and perpetual thoughtfulness is the price of social safety.

PARABLES AND PICTURES

With many such parables spake he the word unto them.—
Mark 4 : 33.

Christ was not fond of definitions.

He was more poet than logician.

Christ taught by parables and pictures.

He came into the world to be the Saviour of men.

What that meant in all its fulness could not be put into any doctrine, any theory, any definition.

So Christ looked around Him in the world of life, and whatever He saw that was beautiful and useful and precious He claimed and used as a picture of Himself.

“You do not know,” He said to men, “you do not know what My coming to you really means.

“You think that I have come merely to teach you something, or perhaps to *do* something for you.

"No!

"I have come to *be* something in your life.

"All that is best and most needful and most glorious is but a type and symbol of what I am.

"I am the bread of heaven.

"I am the water of life.

"I am the light of the world.

"I am the true vine.

"I am the good shepherd.

"I am the lamb of God.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life."



THE DRAWING POWER OF THE CROSS

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.—John 12 : 32.

Undoubtedly Jesus said this with reference to His death.

The answer of the people shows that they so understood Him.

To be "lifted up" was a common expression for being crucified.

As a matter of history, the cross of Christ has been the supreme attraction, the drawing power, the best-loved symbol of Christianity.

Yet till Jesus died on it, the cross was only a sign of shame and scorn.

Why this marvellous transformation?

It was because of the wonderful beauty and perfection of the life that found its crown and consummation on the cross.

It was because of the penetrating and unconquerable love for sinners revealed in this sacrifice on the cross.

It was because of the deep certainty that there is no deliverance from sin without suffering, and the deep gratitude toward the sinless Son of God who suffers with and for us on the cross.

Christianity is admirable as a system of morals, lovely as a plan of brotherhood, noble as a conception of life.

But without the cross on which Christ died for sinners, it is a beautiful lantern unlit, a poem with the central word omitted.

That word is :

The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

CREEDS AND RELIGION

Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is barren?—James 2 : 20.

Far be it from me to say that creeds are useless.

They are as essential to theology as grammars are to literature.

Nor do I dream that there can ever be a church without forms of worship. They are as needful as tactics are to an army.

But when we mistake these things for the reality of religion, when we rest in them and repose upon them as sufficient to insure our personal salvation, then we forget to seek the things that are above.

Inevitably such a religion must become a sensuous, selfish, sinking religion.

Far above it shines that blessed state of daily dependence upon God and intercourse with Him, of real fellowship with Christ and likeness to Him, of constant service and sacrifice for our fellow-

men, in which alone pure and undefiled religion is found.

That is what we are to seek just because it is above us.

We are not to be satisfied with our poor little orthodoxies or our vain little heresies.

We are not to make puppets of ourselves in our tiny rituals, and content our souls with the singing of psalms.

We are not to settle down comfortably in the conviction that we are to be saved and raised from the dead at the last day.

We are to look and long and struggle upward; we are to rise with Christ now toward the things that are above.

THE OPPORTUNITY OF LIFE

If there be any virtue, and if there be any prize, think on these things.—Philippians 4 : 8.

Men tell us that we must "know the world."

Yes, it is true, unless we are to be helpless babies all our lives, we must acquire some of this knowledge.

But never suppose that it consists chiefly of a knowledge of evil.

The world is not a pesthouse, nor is life a complication of diseases.

The true physiology is a science of health.

The deepest knowledge of human nature has for its guiding light the desire to discover that which is best in humanity.

Study vices less and virtues more.

Make your contribution to society as a believer

in pure womanhood and worthy manhood, as an encourager of faith and hope and charity, as a leader and helper in the upward path, as a friend of true friendship, and a lover of noble love.

Do not waste your life in analysing the pollutions of the social atmosphere, but bring into it the breath of a purer spirit.

“ Be a breeze from the mountain height ;
Be a fountain of pure delight ;
Be a star serene,
Shining clear and keen
Through the darkness and dread of the night ;
Be something holy and helpful and bright,—
Be the best that you can with all your might.”

TWO PATHS

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace
—Proverbs 3 : 17.

There are two paths in art and literature.

There is noble music which cleanses the heart like a tide from the sea.

There is mean music that plays upon the strings of sensual passion and vulgar mirth, strumming and tinkling a fit accompaniment to the reckless dance of ephemeral souls above the cataract of fatal folly, or beating a brutal march for the parade of pride and cruelty toward the pit of death.

There are pictures that immortalise the great moments of history, the fine aspirations of humanity, the fair scenes of nature.

There are pictures that lavish all the resources of the most consummate art to perpetuate the trivial and the vile.

There are dramas that speak of heroism and

virtue, and purify our hearts with pity, fear, and love.

There are plays that present life as a coarse and tedious farce, or glorify indecency and unfaithfulness.

There are books which store the memory with beautiful images and gentle pleasures and fine ideals.

There are books which leave a bad taste in the mind, and weaken every fibre of spiritual courage, and poison the springs of imagination at the fountainhead.

It is for us to choose in which of these two paths of art we will walk.

The choice determines our destiny.

Our intellectual nature is like the chameleon ; it takes colour from that on which it feeds.

Tell me what music you love, what dramas are your favourites, what books you read *when you are alone*, and I will tell you which way you are moving, upward or downward.

FRATERNITY FIRST

We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren.—I John 3 : 14.

Faith in Christ rewrites the old motto.

Not "Liberty, equality, fraternity."

But first, fraternity, which lifts men into equality, and so fits them for liberty.

Faith in Christ makes us acknowledge brotherhood with all who are trying to cast out devils and heal the sick, whether they follow with us or not.

Faith in Christ says, "He that is not against us is for us."

I have no confidence in that kind of Christianity which will not join hands with an honest Hebrew to relieve suffering and enlighten ignorance.

I have no confidence in that kind of Protestantism which refuses to take hold of one end of the litter in which a wounded man is lying because a Roman Catholic has hold of the other end.

I have no confidence in that kind of Presbyterianism which lives in hostility and hatred toward Christians who have other creeds and forms of worship.

I have no confidence in that kind of a church which resembles a private religious club, caring only for the comfort and respectability of its members, unreasonably sure of their own salvation and unreasonably indifferent to the salvation of the world.

CHRIST IS THE DOOR

I am the door : by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture.—John 10 : 9.

The door is the way of entrance into any building or structure. It signifies, therefore, the right of admission to all that the building stands for. The open door says "Come in."

In the home, the door means access to the inner circle of love and joy and peace.

In the fortress, the door means escape from danger, entrance into safety and security.

In the temple the door means the right of approach to the mercy seat of God, the privilege of communion with those who worship and serve Him.

Thus in all ancient religions the doorway was regarded as a sacred place. The threshold of the house was the primitive altar, and the threshold covenant was one of the earliest forms of religion.

But the door is not only the way of entrance. It is also the way of egress. It leads in and it leads out. It is the symbol of liberty as well as the symbol of peace. A door through which you can pass only in one direction is not a door : it is a trap.

The dwellers in a human home use the door not only to enter into their place of rest, but also to go out to their places of work.

The temple doors invite the worshippers to praise God in the sanctuary ; but they also remind us of the duty and privilege of going out from the holy place to serve God in the world.

Inward and outward—both ways the true door invites us. Protection and freedom ; safety and struggle ; worship and work ; life enfolded in peace, and life enlarged in power—this is the two-fold significance of the door.

And this is what Christ means when He says to us : “ I am the door : by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”

RESURRECTION NOW

If ye then be risen with Christ.—Colossians 3 : 1.

Resurrection is a great word.

It has a power to stir the mind, a charm to quicken the imagination, and an attraction to draw the heart.

What thoughtful person can repeat that sentence of the Creed which says of Christ, "the third day He rose again from the dead," and then add that triumphant utterance of death-defying faith, "I believe in the resurrection of the body," without a great thrill of hope and joy?

But these thoughts of resurrection do not exhaust its meaning.

It is more than a sublime fact in the past.

It is more than a glorious event in the future.

It is an experience in the present.

It is happening to-day.

At this very moment a new and eternal life is unfolding within human souls and transforming human bodies in fellowship with Christ.

At this very moment men and women are passing from death unto life, from darkness to light, from the perishing to the imperishable, by vital union with the spirit of Jesus.

Here, then, is the great thought which the text flashes into our souls.

There is a Resurrection Now.

There is a triumph over death for which we do not need to wait until the graves are opened.

We may have it at once.

There is a victory of life for which we do not need to look to some far-distant morning.

We may feel it to-day.

LOVE THE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

Love not the world.—I John 2 : 15.

Think how Christ lived in the world.

How closely He was in touch with all sorts and conditions of men.

How He understood the little children and rejoiced in their confidence.

How He took part in all human joys and sorrows, from the wedding feast to the funeral.

How He entered into the trials and conflicts, the perplexities and aspirations, the weariness and the hope, of human nature everywhere.

Whose thoughts did He not read ?

Whose wishes did He not fathom ?

Whose real needs did He not minister unto ?

He draws each one of us in by sympathy with us, in order that our hearts may go out in sympathy with Him.

Through the lips of that disciple whom He loved He says to us, "Love not the world"—the sensuous perishing order of existence which is separate from God—"neither the things that are in the world."

But the people that are in the world—the suffering, struggling souls, enslaved by its evil, deceived by its follies, starved by its famine ; all sorts of people that are weary and heavy laden ; all sorts of people that are climbing upward and lending a hand to others ; all sorts of people that need God's love and ours, Jesus would have us love, even as He loves us.

OUR FATHER

After this manner therefore pray ye : Our Father.—Matthew 6 : 9.

Take that one word in which Christ teaches us all to call God "our Father."

No dark prison of doubt can confine us, no forbidding walls of austere doctrine can shut us in,

while we have that door by which our souls may go out.

Who can question a father's wisdom ?

Who can fathom a father's love ?

Who can exhaust the resources of a father's tenderness and care ?

What does fatherhood mean ?

I speak out of the experience of an earthly fatherhood that has blessed my life.

It means tenderness, forbearance, watchfulness, firmness to counsel and rebuke, pity for my worst, sympathy for my best, a golden friendship, an undying love.

If earthly fatherhood means all that, how much more does heavenly fatherhood mean !

We come to Christ with our doubts, and questions, and perplexities.

He tells us that the great God, the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, is our Father.

Our questions are not all answered, but our way is open.

Doubts may still shadow our path, but they cannot stay our steps.

They are no longer a wall, but a mist, through which we press onward toward the light.

THE TOIL OF LIFE

Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.
—Psalm 104 : 23

In one aspect, all the varied toil of mankind is only the mass of separate efforts by which each individual earns daily bread and amasses wealth, little or much.

He who thinks of it merely in this aspect, drops into it as a mechanical routine, plods along in it like a horse in a treadmill, now resolutely, now wearily.

The only possible result of all his toil is what he can get out of it for himself. And that is limited by his capacity for eating, and drinking, and putting on of raiment.

The sting of actual hunger and thirst and discomfort is a stimulus up to a certain point. But once beyond that point, there is nothing to animate endeavour except certain preferences for rich and unwholesome food, and for costly and inconvenient clothing instead of simple and convenient clothing, and perhaps a strange desire to heap up money merely for the sake of possession.

But there is another way of regarding the toil of life.

It is a divine task laid upon mankind by the Creator for the conquest and cultivation of the natural world.

Human labour is a co-operation for the emancipation of mankind from the crushing pressure of physical necessities in order that the intellectual and spiritual powers of man may be unfolded.

Toil itself, performed in this spirit, is a discipline for the soul, a medicine for sloth and vice, a teacher of self-restraint, patience, and courage.

When we begin to perceive these things we see a new meaning in our work, whatever it may be.

We can put heart into it, and be proud and glad of doing it well.

We can lift it above its conditions by seeking the things that are above it.

We can make it a vocation ; a mission ; a divine enterprise.

VERIFYING THE BIBLE

The sum of the word is truth.—Psalm 119 : 160.

While the Bible contains a great many things which cannot be verified now, as, for example, all its doctrines in regard to the future state, it contains also things which can be verified.

Prophecies fulfilled—you remember the great man who was asked to name the strongest evidence of the truth of Christianity, and who answered in two words, “The Jews !” records confirmed by external and independent testimony from ancient monuments and the scrolls of forgotten histories—there are many ways in which our confidence in the veracity of the Scriptures is strengthened and supported.

But I think the best way of all is by putting its moral and religious precepts to the proof in this present life and seeing whether the results which are foretold do not begin to follow our actions here and now.

Let a man take that word of Paul, “He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting,” and try it by this test.

No law of the harvest could be more certain and unvariable.

THE FOUR GOSPELS

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.—John 21 : 25.

It seems to me a thing to inspire confidence in the Gospels that the different writers who give us their records of the Divine revelation speak so naturally, each in his own style and manner, with no effort to imitate his predecessors.

If four witnesses should appear before a judge to give an account of a certain event or a series of events, and each one should tell exactly the same story in the same words, the judge would probably conclude, not that their testimony was exceptionally valuable, but that they had agreed to tell the same story.

But if each man told what he had seen, as he had seen it, then the evidence would be credible.

And when we read the four Gospels, is not that exactly what we find ?

Four men telling the same story, each in his own way, and behind these four men we know not how many of those who had seen the Lord and companied with Him and remembered what He had said and done.

Some saw what others did not see, and some heard what others did not hear.

Their differences of narrative are proofs of their sincerity.

False witnesses would have agreed beforehand.

The discrepancies of the Scriptures are difficulties in one sense, but in another and a higher sense they are supports.

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.—
Philippians 3 : 10.

Remember that the life of Jesus Christ is a real human life, lived in the same flesh and blood, under the same conditions and limitations as ours, made human in order that it might be like ours.

Remember that the strength of it is not physical but spiritual, the same Spirit of God dwelling in Jesus whom God promises to give to all that ask Him.

Remember that its triumph over falsehood and temptation and sin and death is one triumph, and that the resurrection is but the final working of the same power which worked all through the holy life of Jesus, so that He conquered the grave with the same might with which He overcame evil.

Remember that this life is given to us, and for us, so that we may belong to it, as the branches belong to the vine, as the members belong to the body.

Remember that Christ says, "Without Me ye can do nothing, but lo ! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also. Where I am, there shall ye be also."

Remember these things, and you will understand what Paul means by knowing the power of His resurrection.

It is to know that the greatest spiritual power in the universe is ready to enter and work in us, and that he who raised up Jesus from the dead shall quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in us.

ANTIDOTE TO DESPONDENCY

Help, O Lord, for the godly man ceaseth ; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.—Psalm 12 : 1.

Every now and then, there comes a time when the crooked twist in human nature is exposed, and when the men whom we have trusted fail us.

More important than any political disclosures, or any governmental theories, is the faith in a righteous God and in the final triumph of His will.

What difference does it make when a man in whom you have trusted fails and goes wrong ?

What difference does it make when a party to which you have adhered shows that it has abandoned the principle for which you joined it ?

God has not abandoned the cause of righteousness.

And in the long run, if you join with Him, by His help you shall win the victory.

SALT

"Ye are the salt of the earth."—Matthew 5 : 13.

This figure of speech is plain and pungent.

Salt is savory, purifying, preservative.

It is one of those superfluities which the great French wit defined as "things that are very necessary."

From the very beginning of human history, men have set a high value upon it and sought for it in caves and by the seashore.

The nation that had a good supply of it was counted rich.

A bag of salt, among the barbarous tribes, was worth more than a man.

The Jews prized it especially because they lived in a warm climate where food was difficult to keep, and because their religion laid particular emphasis on cleanliness, and because salt was largely used in their sacrifices.

Christ chose an image which was familiar when He said to his disciples :

“Ye are the salt of the earth.”

This was his conception of their mission, their influence.

They were to cleanse and sweeten the world in which they lived, to keep it from decay, to give a new and more wholesome flavour to human existence.

Their character was not to be passive, but active.

The sphere of its action was to be this present life.

There is no use in saving salt for heaven.

It will not be needed there.

Its mission is to permeate, season, and purify things on earth.

THE INFLUENCE OF GOOD MEN

Salt therefore is good.—Luke 14 : 34.

Men who live an orderly life are in great danger of doing nothing else.

We wrap our virtue up in little bags of respectability and keep it in the storehouse of a safe reputation.

But if it is genuine virtue it is worthy of a better use than that.

It is fit, nay it is designed, to be used as salt, for the purifying of human life.

There are multitudes of our fellow-men whose existence is dark, confused, and bitter.

Some of them are groaning under the burden of want ; partly because of their own idleness or incapacity, no doubt, but partly also because of the rapacity, greed, and injustice of other men.

Some of them are tortured in bondage to vice ; partly by their own false choice, no doubt, but partly also for want of guidance and good counsel and human sympathy.

Every great city contains centres of moral decay which an honest man cannot think of without horror, pity, and dread.

The trouble is that many honest folk dislike these emotions so much that they shut their eyes and walk through the world with their heads in the air, breathing a little atmosphere of their own, and congratulating themselves that the world goes very well now.

But is it well that the things which eat the heart out of manhood and womanhood should go on in all our great towns ?

THE GOD OF TRUTH

His truth is a shield.—Psalm 91 : 4.

Humanity in its lower forms, unenlightened by the Divine Spirit, does not necessarily recognise the beauty and glory of truth.

Among barbarous races, lying is not only a general habit, it is frequently regarded as a virtue ; and even among civilised and cultivated races you

will find people who can see no disgrace in it except that of being found out.

Many religions have been invented and believed—or at least men have believed that they believed them—in which falsehood plays a prominent part in the characters and actions of the gods.

Remember, for instance, the masquerades of the gods in Greek and Roman mythology, and especially the fabled performances of Hermes, who may be called the tutelary divinity of liars.

The Bible, on the contrary, represents the first sin as coming out of a belief that God would not really keep His word.

“Ye shall not surely die,” said the evil spirit, and Adam believed him.

And as the first sin came out of the assumption that God might lie, so the second consisted in the fact that man did lie.

“The woman tempted me and I did eat.”

That was the first falsehood of the great harvest that was afterward to spring from the idea that God could possibly be untrue.

THE EVERYMAN GOSPEL

Preach the gospel to the whole creation.—Mark 16:15.

First, God made us all.

We are not the children of chance, the offspring of senseless matter and blind force.

The Great Spirit is the framer of our bodies and the Father of our spirits.

Lift up your hearts. Our bodies come from dust, but our souls from God.

Let us live bravely, not as mere beasts, but as men and women, children of God.

Second, there is something wrong with all of us, something which makes it easier to go down than to go up, and to indulge our passions rather than to follow our conscience.

The Bible tells us, and our hearts know, what that evil thing is.

It is sin, selfishness, which separates us from our Father in heaven and from our brother men on earth, and makes all the trouble in the world.

We must escape from it if we want peace and a better life.

Third, there is only one person who can deliver us, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

He came from heaven, and lived a sinless life as the Son of man, and died upon the cross to save the world from sin. He rose from the dead to bring immortality to light. He is one with the Father. God is like Christ. He is love, forgiveness, mercy, truth. Every one who wants to may come to this Saviour.

If you believe in Him, He will give you a new life.

If you honestly try to obey Him in being good and doing good, that will be the test and proof of your true faith. There is no other.

You don't need to swallow a volume of theological definitions. Simply come to Jesus, trust Him fully, follow Him honestly, and you shall be saved.

That is the everyman Gospel.

A DIVINE IMPOSSIBILITY

God, that cannot lie.—Titus 1 : 2.

This verse touches a point in which God differs from man.

For it is a well-known fact that men can lie, and that very frequently they do.

The great poet has described the case very suggestively in the passage where he makes Hamlet say that playing on the recorder is "as easy as lying."

Successful falsehood, like skilful playing, is an art which must be learned by practice.

But merely saying the thing that is not, is no more difficult than blowing into a flute. Any man that has breath can tell a plain lie.

Now the text declares that what is possible with man is impossible with God. He cannot lie. And you remember, at once, a number of other places in the Bible where the same doctrine is taught.

Your memory will bring up before you those massive and solid words, like pillars of granite, in which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews shows that the Christian's hope cannot be shaken because it rests on the Divine promise and oath, "two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie."

You will recognise also that the truth is one which is spread underneath the whole Bible.

It resembles a primitive stratum of rock in the earth's crust, which is lifted into sight, here and there, but which exists even where it does not appear, and is the foundation of all the other strata

piled above it, and of the deposits which floods and glaciers have left upon them, and of the dwellings and temples which men have built upon the surface.

The bed rock is the basis of all.

THE DIVINE POWER IS SELF-LIMITED

It is impossible for God to lie.—Hebrews 6 : 18.

Let us try to get it very clearly and solidly into our minds that there are some things that God cannot do.

We fall very often into a false and foolish way of reasoning about the Divine attributes, which comes from trusting a finite logic to deal with infinite quantities.

We argue that because God is infinite and absolute there must be nothing that He does not know and nothing that he cannot do.

From the mere statement of a proposition, therefore, it would follow that God knows it, and from the mere conception of an action it would follow that He can do it.

But the same logic would lead us inevitably to the conclusion that there is nothing that God is not.

If He is absolutely without bounds or limits of any kind, then He is light and darkness, He is good and evil, He is the sinner and the saint.

But the Bible reveals that God is, and that He is a real and personal being, and that He has a moral character, fixed, immutable, and supreme.

If it seems to us difficult or impossible to make that revelation square with our metaphysics, I for

one am always ready to break with metaphysics, and stand by the Bible, and trust God as he makes Himself known to my moral nature in these Scriptures and, above all, in the person and life of Jesus Christ.

And here the character is the first thing, the great thing, the dominant thing.

"He is called omnipotent," says St. Augustine, "in doing what He wills, not in suffering what He does not will. For if that happened to Him He would not be omnipotent. Wherefore He cannot do certain things because He is omnipotent."

Because the truth of God is perfect and supreme in all His ways, therefore he cannot lie.

LIFE MORE ABUNDANTLY

I came that they may have life and may have it more abundantly
—John 10 : 10.

Refuge and restfulness are not the whole of salvation.

To be truly saved, thoroughly saved, means something more than coming into security and peace.

It means also going out to a richer, fuller life, a broader, deeper usefulness, a larger joy of noble work.

Full salvation is active as well as passive.

It includes deliverance from danger and consecration to duty.

It ransoms the soul from sin in order to set it free for service.

The soul that is saved goes in to God and out to life; and everywhere, inward and outward, it finds through Christ what it needs—protection to

safeguard it, rest to refresh it, pasture to strengthen it, work to discipline and unfold it.

"I am come," says Christ, "not only that they may not die, but that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly."

PERILOUS LUXURIES

Ivory, apes, and peacocks.—I Kings 10 : 22.

Such strange and useless foreign gear the ships of Hiram, king of Tyre, brought with plenty of gold and silver to his great friend King Solomon in Jerusalem.

Man is prone to value things that are rare more highly than things that are useful. Luxury has very little relation to living.

Ivory is hardly more durable and certainly less beautiful than some kinds of wood.

Apes and peacocks are not particularly agreeable companions.

But with these adornments the palaces of Solomon were attractive to the curious, and many strange women were drawn by their splendour to enter his household.

With these to the number of a thousand, and with peacocks and apes we know not how many, Solomon lived magnificently, but less happily, I guess, than David in the sheepfold.

And in the end Solomon's wisdom declined, and his heart turned away from God, and his power was destroyed, and his kingdom was divided and ruined.

He paid too dear for his ivory, apes, and peacocks.

MOVING DAY

Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house.—Genesis 12 : 1.

Is not Moving Day marked in all our calendars ?

Is it not a symbol of the unexempt condition of our mortal pilgrimage ?

From house to house we move ; but that signifies little, if we do not overburden ourselves with rubbish.

From youth to age we move ; but that is not fatal if we do not overload ourselves with prejudices.

From opinion to opinion we move ; but that is natural if we are not forced to do it in haste.

The man who thinks when old precisely the same on all points as he thought when young, is not a conservative. He is an obstacle.

Systems, theories, idealtries, are things to be left behind on Moving Day.

They will not fit the new house.

But three things are worth carrying with us on all earthly migrations—the Ten Commandments ; the Golden Rule ; and the faithful saying “ that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

CONTAGIOUS GOODNESS

Overcome evil with good.—Romans 12 : 21.

Wrestle with a chimney sweep and you will need a bath. Throw back the mud that is thrown at you, and you will have dirty hands.

No, the best way to fight against evil is not to meet it on its own ground with its own weapons. There is a nobler method of warfare. “ Overcome

evil with good." That is the secret of the battle of life.

The way to counteract and conquer evil in the world is to give our own hearts to the dominion of good, and work the works of God while it is day.

The strongest of all obstacles to the advance of evil is a clean and generous man, doing his duty from day to day, and winning others, by his cheerful fidelity, to serve the same Master.

Diseases are not the only things that are contagious. Courage is contagious. Kindness is contagious. All the positive virtues, with red blood in their veins, are contagious.

The heaviest blow that you can strike at the kingdom of evil is just to follow the advice which the dying Sir Walter Scott gave to his son-in-law, Lockhart, "Be a good man."

And if you want to know how, there is but one perfect and supreme example—the life of Him who not only did no evil, but went about doing good.

HOW TO SPOIL A BOY

His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, "Why hast thou done so?"—I Kings 1 : 6.

That was the reason why Adonijah went wrong. His father never took him into his confidence, never reasoned with him, never asked him to think what he was doing and what the consequences might be.

Therefore, the boy did what he liked and what other people did not like.

Therefore, the young man was no better than a headstrong boy, bigger but no wiser.

Therefore, the pampered prince became a rebel and a traitor and died by violence.

Therefore, his father, King David, having spoiled him, had to suffer with him.

The process of spoiling a child may be very pleasant at the time, but in the end the results are very painful. The sins of the fathers are visited on the children ; and then—the sins of the children come back upon the fathers.

If the younger generation is wild and reckless, is not the older generation at fault ?

Discipline is as needful to a child as training to a colt or pruning to a fruit tree. But with a child the discipline must be rooted in reason.

“ Why hast thou done so ? ” is the first question. With that education begins.

How many fathers and mothers ask it patiently and lovingly nowadays ?

SAVING DAYLIGHT BY FOOLING OURSELVES

The folly of fools is deceit.—Proverbs 14 : 8.

To be foolish is an infirmity.

To fool others is a trick.

But to fool ourselves seems to be a natural propensity—you might almost say a necessity of men.

Take an illustration from that modern device which is called “ daylight saving.”

In the summer men would like to begin their work an hour earlier in order to finish it an hour sooner, and have the lovely eventide for rest or play.

Good ! A fine idea ! Perfectly simple !

But it seems that men can not do this simple thing without fooling themselves.

They must set their clocks an hour ahead.

They must tell themselves that the time is what they know it is not.

They must delude themselves into doing a wise thing.

Meanwhile, the cows and the birds and the stars and the tides and the railways run on the real time.

But men are all mixed up, and miss their engagements, because they are fooling themselves.

"Lord," says Puck, "what fools these mortals be !"

NERVOUS PROSTRATION CURED

We were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life.—II Corinthians 1 : 8.

Here was a severe case of nervous prostration.

Perhaps St. Paul also had some real illness, for we know he was a frail person.

But what made it dangerous was his despondency.

He was low in his mind ; and so his body could not get well.

What changed the situation was a change of mind.

He thought of the Divine power which is stronger than death.

He trusted himself to that power—thrust himself into that vital current as you might set a mill wheel in the rushing flow of a stream. Then the wheel turned steadily, and all the wonderful, complicated machinery of the body began to work again.

Many people, even saints, go tottering, doddering,

despairing through the world, while the river of life runs full beside them, asking only to be used.

Use it, beloved. Have as much health as your work requires, as much strength as you can safely handle.

M. Coué calls this "conscious auto-suggestion." I call it healing by contact with God.

It does not abolish death. But it keeps you living fully and gladly until the appointed hour comes, and your work is done.

Then you will be glad to go.

THE GREAT PLEDGE

Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.—
Matthew 28 : 20.

As long as God lives and our souls live, so long does this pledge stand.

It is true, we cannot always feel this presence. But we can always know that it is there, always think of it, as long as thought endures, always rest upon it forever and forever : and the reason why this promise is given is that we may hold fast to this truth.

There may be a moment in the very depth of sorrow and anguish when the presence is hidden from us. But it is not because God is absent. It is because we are stunned, unconscious.

It is like passing through a surgical operation. You stretch out your hand to your friend : "Don't leave me, don't forsake me." Then a moment of darkness, a blank—and the first thing you feel is the hand ; the first thing you see is the face of love again.

So the angel of God's face stands by us, bends

upon us, and we may know that he will be there even when all else fails.

Our friends die, our possessions take wings and fly away, our honours fade, our strength fails, but beside every mouldering ruin and every open grave, in the fading light of every sunset, in the gathering gloom of every twilight, there is one sweet mighty voice that says :

“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. In all thy afflictions I will be with thee, and the angel of My face shall save thee.”

THE GOOD WAY

Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.—Jeremiah 6 : 16.

There is the way of sensuality. Those who walk in it take appetite as their guide.

There is the way of avarice. Those who follow it make haste to get rich.

There is the way of social ambition, the way of moral indifference, the way of intellectual pride, the way of hypocrisy, the way of indecision.

Through all this tangle there runs another way—the path of faith and duty.

Those who walk in it believe that life has a meaning, the fulfillment of God's will, and a goal, the attainment of perfect harmony with Him.

They try to make the best of themselves in soul and body by training and discipline

They endeavour to put their talents to the noblest use in the service of their fellow-men, and to unfold their faculties to the highest joy and power in the life of the Spirit.

They respect their conscience, and cherish their ideal. They put forth an honest effort to be good and to do good and to make the world better.

They often stumble. They sometimes fall. But, take their life from end to end, it is a faithful attempt to walk in "the way of righteousness, which is the way of peace."

FIRE CANNOT BURN THE TRUTH

The king cut it with the penknife and cast it into the fire.—
Jeremiah 36 : 23.

You cannot get away from things by burning the written record of them.

King Jehoiakim made a mistake in that respect when Jehudi came into his presence to read from a little manuscript an extremely disagreeable prophecy of Jeremiah.

There was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, the king cut it with the penknife and cast it into the fire.

"So," thought the king, "we have done with that rubbish."

But neither was it rubbish nor had he done with it.

For God caused Jeremiah to write another little roll with the same unpleasant words in it, and there were added unto them many like words, and they were all true, and it was worse for Jehoiakim in the end than if he had preserved and heeded the first book.

Many a man burns what he wishes later he had kept.

JUDGE YOURSELF WITH OTHERS

Judge not, that ye be not judged.—Matthew 7 : 1.

How often, if we have the priceless art of being sincere with ourselves, do we recognise in the qualities which displease us in others, the very imps and unruly sprites which cause the most trouble in our own economy.

At home we are inclined to go gently with them, to make allowances, even to plead excuse for our bothersome offspring. And who shall say that this is altogether wrong or absolutely unwise? Many a vice is but a virtue over-driven. Pruning is better than extermination.

Why not apply the same principle to what we see in our neighbour's back garden, or in his front yard?

Why not remember that he probably has as much trouble with his faults and foibles as we have with our own?

And if they happen to be alike, why not use them for self-enlightenment and correction.

The things that we dislike in others may serve as mirrors to ourselves.

But let us not follow the example of that foolish person described in the Epistle of St. James, who "beholding his natural face in a glass, goeth his way and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

THE RIGHT WAY TO LOVE OURSELVES

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.—Matthew 19 : 19.

In what way are we entitled and bound to love ourselves?

That, of course, is the first question ; for upon the answer to that depends the line of love which we must follow towards our neighbour.

Evidently the right kind of self-love must not be pampering and spoiling. Only with a clear discrimination between the good and the bad in our own natures are we justified in loving ourselves.

We ought not to indulge our own whims and passions, our sloth and selfishness.

We ought to dislike and repress that which is evil and mean in us, and to cherish that which is good and generous.

The only kind of love for ourselves which is permissible must be wise and clean and careful ; it must have justice in it as well as mercy ; it must be capable of discipline as well as of encouragement ; it must strive to keep the soul above the body, and to develop both.

Precisely thus, and not otherwise, we should love our neighbours : with a steady, sane, liberating, and helpful love, which always seeks to bring out their best.

DUST AND SPIRIT

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.—Genesis 2 : 7.

This practically sums up what the Bible has to tell us about the origin of man : his body comes from the dust, his soul from God.

If we know this, we can hold fast the truth of religion while we accept the discoveries of science. There is no enmity between them.

How long it took to form man's body from the dust—hours or ages—the Scripture does not say.

If the Divine process of fashioning such a wondrous thing required many centuries and stages of development, that would make no difference with God, to whom a thousand years are as one day.

Let science trace the record in the rocks if it can. Why should it shake the soul which came from God?

A heaven-born spirit in an earthly house—that is our present life—that is what the Bible teaches. Evolution is not inconsistent with it.

Christianity tells us that the dust shall not rule the soul, but the soul shall rule the dust, and rise to immortality.

CANNIBALISM AND GOSSIP

Ye bite and devour one another.—Galatians 5 : 15.

Cannibalism is dying out among the barbarous tribes : the Fiji islanders have given it up. But it still survives among the most highly civilised peoples.

You might find yourself in some difficulty if you invited a company of friends to a feast in which the principal dish was to be a well-roasted neighbour. Everybody would refuse with horror, and you would probably be escorted to the nearest lunatic asylum.

But if you wish to serve up somebody's character at a social entertainment, or pick the bones of somebody's reputation in a quiet corner, you will find ready guests and almost incredible appetites.

How cruel are the tender mercies of the wicked !

How eager and indiscriminate is the hunger of gossip !

How quick some men are to take up an evil report, and roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongues, and devour their neighbours, yes, even their friends !

Perhaps some of my readers are doing it even now, chewing the cud in secret.

"Yes," you are saying, "this passage applies to so and so. And he certainly is a dreadful gossip. I remember he told me——"

Stop, friend, the passage was written for you and me. It is of our souls that the fable is narrated.

LEARN BY THE WORLD'S EXPERIENCE

Let them not turn again to folly.—Psalm 85 : 8.

Why suffer twice to learn the same lesson ?

Communism, agrarianism, proletarianism, anarchism, have all had their day, and it was a bad day—in Athens and Sparta and Rome and Jerusalem and Paris.

Why give them another day ?

The divine right of kings and capitalists to impose their will upon their fellow-men has been tested many times and has always failed to make good before the throne of Eternal Wisdom and Righteousness.

Why ask us to return to these old discredited theories ?

They are not really guide-posts. They are signs of "no thoroughfare."

Give us something really new, gentlemen.

Think out some better way of co-operation between the "haves" and the "have-nots."

Devise some better mode of inducing the lazy

to work, and of restraining the clever and industrious from claiming exorbitant gains.

That is what we need, as surely as two and two make four.

SMALL DESIRES AND NO FEARS

I shall not want.—Psalm 23 : 1.

It was a shepherd boy who wrote this song about the Lord, his Shepherd.

David had very little of what we should call luxury, or abundance, or even comfort, in his early life.

Plain fare, a lowly couch, the simplest pleasures : but he was satisfied.

He felt his soul restored and enriched by the green pastures and the still waters.

He knew that God would never fail to provide him with such things as he really needed.

It would be well for us, amid the complexity and anxiety of our modern life, if we could catch something of his spirit.

For the most part, our distress, our poverty, our carking care come, not from the smallness of our provisions, but from the largeness of our pampered desires.

We are afraid that we shall not always have cake, and so we forget that God has promised that His children shall not lack bread.

We begin to put our foolish trust in gold, in clever enterprises, in wise investments, in daring speculations, because the things that we want are so numerous and so costly.

A little plain living would lead to higher thinking.

It would do us good, it would do our children

good, if we should learn that the real necessities and the best joys of human life are very simple, and for these we have a right to trust God, if we do our duty.

THE PERIL OF IGNORANCE

The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way ; but the folly of fools is deceit.—Proverbs 14 : 8.

It was a great shock to America, in the late war, to discover how large a percentage of her people could neither read nor write.

What was democracy thinking of when it suffered this perilous bulk of ignorance to grow within its own body ?

Are the national institutions in which we take such a just and honourable pride safe in the hands of men and women whose minds are left in darkness and whose moral training is committed to chance or charity, while we use their bodies to work our farms, dig our ditches, build our railways, and run our factories ?

We are breeding a Helot class of our own flesh and blood.

We are ignoring the rightful claim of every citizen to be prepared for the duties which the state lays upon him.

We are heaping up at the doors of our own temple piles of tinder and quick-flaming fuel, ready for the torch of the anarchist or the insidious slow-match of the cunning usurper.

We are recruiting the sullen armies of ignorant unrest :

“ For every soul denied the right to grow
Beneath the flag, will be its secret foe.”

DESPONDENCY OVERCOME

*Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the health of my countenance and my God.*

—Psalm 42 : 11.

Thy feelings will ebb and flow, thy heart will grow warm in summer's glow and cold in winter's chill, thou wilt be brave and steadfast to-day, downcast and anxious to-morrow.

Thy streams will be full in the rainy season, and in the time of drouth they will be bare beds of stone.

Turn away from thyself. Hope in God.

He fainteth not, neither is weary. He is the unfailing fountain; with Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

When thou art dismayed, He is still full of an eternal peace.

When thou art downcast, He is still untroubled.

Is He not everywhere? Does not the sun shine as brightly on this bare mountain and on the distant walls of Babylon as on the dismantled towers of Zion? Will he not rise to-morrow as calmly and surely as he rose to-day?

Turn to God and He shall be the health of thy countenance.

Look towards the light, and thy shadow shall fall behind thee, and thou shalt march even into exile with a song upon thy lips and the brightness of an everlasting hope shining in thy face.

TOO MANY LAWS

Woe unto you lawyers, for ye load men with burdens grievous to be borne.—Luke 11 : 46.

Christ found fault with the scribes and Pharisees for making too many laws—for regulating life too much.

This is one of the dangers of a democracy—the propensity to make too many laws on too many subjects.

Doubtless some of these laws are wise and needful.

Probably most of them are well meant.

They have a good heart, as the saying goes.

It is in the head they are lacking.

And so in practice many of them produce either no effect at all, or the contrary of what was intended.

Not even the Puritan Fathers in their strictest days went as far in sumptuary legislation as some of our modern regulators would have us go.

Of old, men were rebuked by the Divine Master for asking continually :

“What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithall shall we be clothed ?”

Nowadays it seems to be no reproach to be asking continually :

“What food and drink and raiment shall we permit our neighbours to use ?”

SMALL THINGS

Who hath despised.—Zechariah 4 : 10.

It is not required of every man and woman to be, or to do, something great.

Most of us must content ourselves with humble tasks and small parts in the chorus.

Because Homer and Milton have written epics, shall we have no little lyrics ?

Because we have heard the great organ at Freiburg, shall the sound of Kathi's zither in the alpine hut please us no more ?

Even those who have greatness thrust upon them will do well to lay the burden down now and then, and be thankful that they are not altogether answerable for the conduct of the universe—certainly not all the time.

"I reckon," said a cowboy to me as we were riding through the Bad Lands of North Dakota, "there's some one bigger than me running this outfit.

"He can 'tend to it all right, while I smoke my pipe after the round-up."

A CURE FOR VANITY

And he took a little child, and set him in the midst of them.—
Mark 9 : 36.

For the mitigation and restraint of conceit, when it becomes acute (either in its gratified or its ungratified form), there is no better remedy than to frequent the company of little people to whom your occupation and your achievements (or failures) are unknown.

Elsewhere you may find heating flattery, or freezing contempt.

But here you may forget your wounds and cool your fever in that fresh and impartial air which belongs to the society of young children.

If the little ones see you sad, they will give you a glance of sorrow, they know not why, and then demand a new story.

If they see you glad, they will rejoice with you, they know not why, and then call you to their merriest play.

It is helpful to get away from yourself.

RICH AND POOR

The rich and the poor meet together.—Proverbs 22 : 2 ; Matthew 25 : 14-30.

Equality of condition is nowhere written in the Christian programme. In fact, the parable of the talents implies a continuing state of inequality.

Yet the real curse of the one-talent man is not the poverty of his portion, but the meanness and selfishness of his heart.

He is a slacker, a shirker, a striker, a lock-out man, a parasite.

His unused talent becomes a fungus.

That the rich and the poor are likely to be with us as long as men differ in ability and industry, is clearly intimated in the Good Book as well as in the dry tables of political economy.

But the Good Book adds a prediction of woe to the rich if they suffer the pride of wealth to divide them from the poor.

“Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

“Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten.

“Your gold and silver is cankered ; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire.”

QUIET AND CONTENT

Study to be quiet.—I Thessalonians 4 : 11.

It is good to remember that the finest and most beautiful things that can ever come to us cannot possibly be news to the public.

It is good to find the zest of life in that part of it which does not need, and will not bear, to be advertised.

It is good to talk with your friends, knowing that they will not report us ; and to play with the children, knowing that no one is looking at us ; and to eat our meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

It is good to recognise that the object of all true civilisation is that a man's house, rich or poor, shall be his castle, and not his dime museum.

It is good to enter into the spirit of Wordsworth's noble sonnet, and, turning back to "the good old cause," thank God for those safeguards of the private life which still preserve in many homes

"Our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws."

THE GRIND OF LIFE

Patient in tribulation.—Romans 12 : 12.

You must not suspect me of having an ulterior design of springing a new theory of the universe upon you, nor of subtly advertising a panacea for all

"The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to."

No, I am as much in the dark as you are, and with you I suffer

“The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.”

’Tis a rough, confused, turbulent age in which we have to live.

But it is the only age that is given to us. Let us make the best of it.

And above all let us not lose either our loyalty to truth or our sense of humour.

Tribulation means “grinding”; and I suppose we must go through it if we want the good flour to come out of the wheat.

A FRIEND IN YOUTH AND OLD AGE

Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.—Psalm 71 : 9.

The young need God for counsel and restraint; the old for consolation and encouragement.

It is not easy to grow old gracefully, or even cheerfully.

Much is taken when youth departs; and the increase of experience is mocked by the failure of power to make use of it.

If one is to carry on bravely through the remaining years, there must be a Divine Companion to cheer the way and lighten the burden.

This companionship will be infinitely sweeter and more helpful if it has been begun early.

An old friend is better than a new acquaintance.

That is why the Bible says :

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, *before* the evil days come.”

BIBLE READING

Searching the Scriptures daily.—Acts 17 : 11.

There are three ways in which we may read the Bible.

We may enjoy it as literature.

We may see in it a noble and impassioned interpretation of nature and life, uttered in language of beauty and sublimity, touched with the vivid colours of human personality, and embodied in forms of enduring literary art.

We may study it as a collection of historical books, written under certain conditions, and reflecting, in their contents and in their language, the circumstances in which they were produced.

This is the aspect in which criticism regards the Bible ; and its intellectual interest, as well as its religious value, is greatly enhanced by such a study.

We may come to it as the inspired guide to faith and conduct. And this is the point of view from which it appears most precious.

None of these three ways of studying the Bible is hostile to the others.

On the contrary, they are helpful to one another, because each of them gives us knowledge of a real factor in the marvellous influence of the Bible in the world.

TAXES

Doth not your master pay tribute ?—Matthew 17 : 24.

The question of taxes is one that comes home, in Daniel Webster's phrase, to our "business and bosoms."

Thoreau went to gaol rather than pay a tax which he thought unjust.

Jesus Christ cheerfully paid tribute to a government which He neither loved nor approved.

Of the two examples I prefer that of Christ.

Certainly under democracy it is unreasonable to refuse, and dishonest to evade, taxation.

If you do not like the system, you can vote against it.

That is your lawful weapon of resistance.

A MEDICAL EXPERIENCE

Arise, take up thy bed, and walk.—John 5 : 8.

When I was very sick I sent for the doctor.

He gave me good medicine.

But it seemed to have little effect.

Then I asked him what was the reason, and he said :

“ You have microbes in your mind.”

Then I looked inside myself and found two poison germs.

The first was rebellion at being sick.

The second was doubt that God could make me well if He had more work for me to do.

So I asked God to help me cast out these two microbes, and He did it.

Then I laid hold on life, and the doctor's medicine began to do me good.

Since then I have lived thirty years, working all the time.

PESSIM AND OPTIM

If God is for us, who is against us?—Romans 8 : 31.

It is useful to see the dark side. It is helpful to see the bright side.

But whichever side is most clear to you, do not let it make you an "ist."

Do not insist that the side you see is the only side.

You must admit that things are not so bad but what they might be worse.

Therefore, you cannot be a pessimist yet.

You can't claim that things are so good that there is no need of betterment. Therefore, you may not be an optimist yet.

Open your mind on both sides.

Don't ignore the evil.

Don't despair of the good.

Work patiently for the better.

Believe that God is on that side.

Take religion not as an opiate, but as a tonic.

THE DISAGREEABLE TRUTH

Trust ye not in lying words.—Jeremiah 7 : 4.

The prophet, Jeremiah, had a hard task laid upon him.

Of noble birth, endowed with prophetic and priestly gifts, living at a time when the future of the Jewish nation seemed to be very bright, this young man was called to be the bearer of evil tidings, the messenger of sure-coming doom to Judah.

Such a mission is never pleasant or popular.

Jeremiah was lonely, despised, persecuted.

He was probably the best-hated man in Jerusalem.

But he did not flinch from his duty of telling the disagreeable truth.

Every age needs prophets who are brave enough to do that—Cassandra on the wall of windy Troy, Dante flying from ill-counselled Florence, Carlyle picturing the shame and danger of self-complacent England, our own young men who are proclaiming the peril of wealth-worshipping America.

"Pessimists, ravens," cry the crowd, "away with you ! "

No ; for if these forsake us, we shall be in greater danger.

The country whose seers prophesy only smooth things is likely to have a rough time.

THE QUIETUDE OF CHRIST

Take my yoke upon you and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly of heart ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.—Matthew 11 : 29.

Rest ! Rest !

How that word rings like a sweet bell through the turmoil of our age.

We are rushing to and fro, destroying rest in our search for it.

We drive our automobiles from one place to another, at furious speed, not knowing what we shall do when we get there.

We make haste to acquire new possessions, not knowing how we shall use them when they are ours.

We are in a fever of new discoveries and theories, not knowing how to apply them when they are made.

We feed ourselves upon novel speculations until our heads swim with the vertigo of universal knowledge which changes into the paresis of universal doubt.

But in the hours of silence, Christ whispers a secret to our hearts. *Rest depends upon conduct.*

TRUE NEIGHBOUR-LOVE

Speaking the truth in love.—Ephesians 4:15.

Religion does not tell us to love or to encourage our neighbours' faults: but to love our neighbours in spite of their faults and to do what we can to better them.

True neighbour-love, then, will not be a weak, gelatinous, sentimental thing.

It will have a conscience.

It will be capable, on occasion, of friendly warning and reproof.

It will even accept, if need be for the protection of ourselves and other neighbours, the duty of restraint or punishment.

I may have a rowdy or a thief for a neighbour, but my love ought not to embrace rowdiness or thievery in him any more than in myself.

The same thing is true of malice or envy or laziness or a slanderous tongue.

PROFIT FROM THE PAST

I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.—
Psalm 77 : 5.

Henry Ford says that "history is all bunk."

That remark itself has become historical.

But Carlyle says that "history is the essence of innumerable biographies," and most wise men agree with him.

All the roads of life have been travelled by other men and nations before us.

Why not learn something from their experience ?

Peace, prosperity, victory, have been won in former times.

Why not inquire of the past how good results have been attained ?

Strife, disaster, misery, have been found on certain courses.

Why pay a new price to learn an old lesson ?

At the cross-roads is the place to read the sign-posts and ask questions.

What our age needs is to face the facts of life more frankly and to think more soberly about them.

Deliberation is no waste of time.

It is a saving of expense.

THE POETRY OF HEAVENLY LOVE

*As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.—*Psalm 42 : 1.

No lover ever poured out the longings of his heart toward his mistress more eagerly than David voiced his desire and thirst for God.

No conqueror ever sang of victory more exult-

antly than David rejoiced in the Lord, who was his light and his salvation, the strength of his life and his portion forever.

After all, the true mission of poetry is to increase joy.

It must, indeed, be sensitive to sorrow and acquainted with grief.

But it has wings given to it in order that it may bear us up into the ether of gladness.

There is no perfect joy without love. Therefore love-poetry is the best.

But the highest of all love-poetry is that which celebrates, with the Psalms,

“ that Love which is and was
My Father and my Brother and my God.”

CHOOSE YOUR PORT—THEN LAY YOUR COURSE

It was determined that we should sail for Italy.—Acts 27 : 1.

A captain should have a clear idea of what port he is to reach before he attempts to lay his course and determine his manner of sailing.

All these minor questions of ways and means must come afterwards.

They cannot be settled at the outset.

They depend on circumstances.

They change with the seasons.

There are many paths to the same end.

One may be best to-day.

Another may be best to-morrow.

The wind and the tide make a difference.

One way may be best for you, another way for me.

The build of the ship must be taken into consideration.

A flat-bottom craft does best in the shallow water, along shore.

A deep keel is for the open sea.

But before we make up our minds how to steer from day to day, we must know where we are going in the long run.

Then we can shape our course to fit our purpose.

We can learn how to meet emergencies as they arise.

We can change our direction to avoid obstacles and dangers.

If we keep the thought of our desired haven clearly before us, all the other points can be more easily and wisely settled; and however devious and difficult the voyage may be, it will be a success when we get there.

THE PROGRESSIVE IS A TRUE CONSERVATIVE

Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.—Exodus 14:15.

Do you remember when you were learning to ride the bicycle?

If you stopped you usually fell down.

It was easier to keep your balance if you moved on.

When you have deliberated, when you have seen the guiding light upon the way of security and peace, then go forward.

Prudence is worthless unless you put it into practice.

When in doubt, do nothing.

But when your doubt clears away, if you continue to do nothing you will soon be in doubt again.

Never man or nation was saved by inaction.

They way out of danger is the way into work.

Gird up your loins and push along your chosen path, steadily, bravely, strenuously, until you come to your promised land.

DON'T BLACKGUARD THE PURITANS

He shall turn the heart of the fathers unto the children and the heart of the children unto the fathers ; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.—Malachi 4 : 6.

Something too much of iron there may have been in the Puritan's temper ; something too little of sunlight may have come in through the narrow windows of his house.

But that house had foundations, and the virile virtues lived in it.

There were plenty of red corpuscles in his blood, and his heart beat in time with the eternal laws of right, even though its pulsations sometimes seemed a little slow and heavy.

It would be well for us if we could get back into the old way, which proved itself to be the good way, and maintain, as our fathers did, the sanctity of the family, the sacredness of the marriage-vow, the solemnity of the mutual duties binding parents and children together.

From the households that followed this way have come men that could rule themselves as well as their fellows, women that could be trusted as well as loved.

THE INSTINCT OF PRAYER

Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.—Psalm 107 : 6.

Prayer is something that no man can understand ; there is a mystery about it.

We cannot explain how the voice of a mortal creature should have any influence upon the immortal God ; how there should be any connection between the supplications which are wrung from our hearts by the pressure of want and danger and the fulfilment of those vast designs which have been formed from all eternity.

But however that may be, prayer is an instinct of the human heart, and the religion which did not provide for it would be no religion at all.

It is as natural to pray as it is to breathe.

If you want to know how inevitably men turn to God in all kinds of trouble, read the 107th Psalm.

Every shipwreck, every war, every famine, every pestilence, gives new illustrations to the old story.

HUMAN PROGRESS

Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou shalt make princes in all the earth.—Psalm 45 : 16.

The most perfect example of pure socialism is a swarm of bees, where personality is *nil*, every member gets the same pay—board and lodging—and the only object is to perpetuate the swarm and keep the hive full.

But without the aid of man they never produce a better bee or a more perfect hive. Is humanity to come down to that level ?

The Talmud speaks scorn of a world where "one man eats and another says grace." Is it much better than a world where everybody gorges and nobody says grace?

I can see no reason, either in morals or in religion, for the perpetuation of the human swarm, except for the development and perfecting of human souls.

What real good appears in the mere continuance of any community unless you think of the men and women and children who live there, each one the inheritor of a spark of the Divine Life, which may be cherished and enlarged into a flame of beautiful and potent light?

There is your reason for sacrifice.

There is your reason for service.

The community has a claim to live for the sake of the better men and women who are going to live in it.

FALSE LOVE OF SELF

For men shall be lovers of self.—II Timothy 3 : 2.

Some Christians are like candles that have been lit once and then put away in a cupboard to be eaten up by mice.

How much better to stay lit and keep on burning even till the candle is burned out, so long as it gives light!

There are plenty of us who love our "Self" as if we were our own grandmothers.

Whenever the little chap cries for more candy, or somebody's else's doll, we let him have it.

Dear little fellow, he is so cunning!

But the scriptural image of the Divine Love,

which is to be our pattern, is not indulgent grandmotherhood but perfect fatherhood.

Now a good father desires each of his children to grow up, to develop.

He does not wish them all alike.

But he wishes the whole family to have peace and happiness.

He wants harmony from the different instruments.

A SHADOW OUR DEFENCE FROM SHADOWS

In the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge.—Psalm 57 : 1.

God protects his children as the mother bird covers her nest.

High in air the hawks go sailing by, but they cannot reach the nest : even their shadows cannot fall on it.

Jesus said, " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings ! "

It is the same figure, consecrated by the Divine lips ; and it teaches us that there is a great sheltering love which is closer to us than any evil can ever come, hiding us securely, not only from harm, but also from fear.

Here is the peculiar beauty of the simile. It makes a shadow our defence from shadows.

The only thing that can really darken the soul is something coming between it and God ; but that is impossible so long as the soul remembers His presence and love.

The troubles and pains of life are all outside of that ; they are away beyond the protecting wings,

floating by, like little clouds, like hovering hawks ; we can wait in security until these "calamities be overpast."

Troubles far off : God very near. Calamities belong to time : peace is part of eternity.

THE LIGHT OF LIFE

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.—
Psalm 119 : 105.

One secret of the vitality and power of the Bible is that it lies so near to the throbbing heart of the world.

Its humanity is no less manifest, no less potent, than its divinity.

There is life in it, and life is always interesting.

We need to be on our guard against any method of interpreting these Scriptures which would make them shadowy and unreal.

When they are regarded chiefly as a collection of mystical charms, a mine where we may dig for doctrines, or a compilation of forms of sound words, their best influence is lost.

A desiccated Bible will have small power with anybody except the superstitions.

We ought to be grateful that it did not fall from heaven like the fabulous statue of Diana of the Ephesians ; nor was it whispered into any man's ear by a pigeon after the fashion in which Mahomet said that he received the Koran ; but God caused it to grow upon the earth, and to draw into itself all that was noblest and purest in many generations of our fellow-men.

We ought to remember that there is not a book

in it, and hardly a chapter, the threads of which are not interwoven with the actual experience of a human life.

FAMILIAR GREETINGS

And into whatever house ye shall enter, first say, Peace be to this house !—Luke 10 : 5.

Christ here commends to His disciples the use of the most familiar everyday greeting of the East—a commonplace of politeness, such as the new generation despises.

But familiarity has its charm, and I count it good that life is impregnated with it.

The regular ways, the rules of the game, the customs of courtesy, and the common phrases of colloquial speech—these are pleasant things in their season (which is daily), and without them our existence would be wayward, rude, exhausting, and far less tolerable than it is.

So with the salutations we exchange as we meet and part on the highway or the footpath of life : I find that a certain regularity in them is not so much a defect, as a necessity, a wise and friendly concession to the limits of our inventive power.

Meetings and partings are so common that their proper ritual must needs be of the commonplace.

To make it otherwise would be to weave the plain family umbrella of cloth of gold.

THE FATHER OF LIES

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.—
Genesis 3 : 4.

The attempt to deny or ignore evil has been the stock-in-trade of every false doctrine that has befogged and bewildered the world since the days of Eden.

The fairy tale that the old serpent told to Eve is a poetic symbol of the lie fundamental—the theory that sin does not mean death, because it has no real existence and makes no real difference.

“Evil is nothing,” say these teachers. “It is not real. It is an illusion, a negation. Shut your eyes and it will vanish.”

Yes, but open your eyes again and you will see it in the same place, in the same form, doing the same work.

A most persistent nothing, a most powerful nothing !

Not the shadow cast by the good, but the cloud that hides the sun and casts the shadow.

Not the “silence implying sound,” but the discord breaking the harmony.

Evil is as real as the fire that burns you, as the flood that drowns you, as the typhoid germ that you can put under a microscope and see it squirm.

QUIET STRENGTH

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might,
—Ephesians 6 : 10

Two modern expressions have been popular in our day : the Strenuous Life, and the Simple Life.

Each of these phrases has its own value. But

when they are over-emphasised and driven to extremes they lose their truth and become catch-words of folly.

The simple life which blandly ignores all care and conflict soon becomes flabby and invertebrate, sentimental, and gelatinous.

The strenuous life which does everything with set jaws and clenched fists and fierce effort, soon becomes strained and violent, a prolonged nervous spasm.

Somewhere between these two extremes must lie the golden mean : a life that has strength and simplicity, courage and calm, power and peace.

But how can we find it ?

The secret of it is in the text, for it tells of an inexhaustible reserve of strength.

REGRET AND SELF-CONDEMNATION

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.—Psalm 51 : 4.

There are two strange and powerful judgments which form themselves in our minds, from time to time, whether we will or no.

The first is the judgment of regret.

“I am sorry that such and such a thing has been done. I wish that I had acted differently. I wish that so and so had not done this.”

It is a silent confession that some things are which had better not be, and which need not have been if we and our fellow-men were only a little more wise and true and faithful.

The second is the judgment of condemnation on ourselves or on others.

We can't help feeling “down on” some things

because they are base and mean and cruel and unjust.

We despise them because we know we are responsible for them.

We can't be perfect, but at least we need not have been as bad as that.

We are to blame and we know it because the voice of God speaking in our conscience utters the judgment of condemnation.

To be deaf to this is to be a dead soul.

THE SUNRISE OF GOD

Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens ; let thy glory be above all the earth.—Psalm 57 : 11.

I think David wrote this psalm in a cavern where he was hiding from the wrath of King Saul.

In the darkness the outlaw finds his refuge in the thought of God's loving kindness and truth.

Then, at dawn, we can see him rising from his rude couch, taking his harp from its resting-place, and sweeping his hand joyously over its strings as he comes down through the shadows of the cave.

He stands in the cavern's mouth.

He looks out upon the trickling fountain, and the rich verdure which marks its course through the little oasis among the limestone cliffs.

He sees the last star fading in the sky, the faint glow creeping up the eastern horizon, the stir of life upon the face of the earth, the sun lifting himself beyond the Dead Sea and rejoicing as a strong
 1 an to run a race.

But he sees more than this.

He sees an image of something spiritual and transcendent.

For here in the last verse of the Psalm we find the last picture—the sunrise of God.

FOOLISH NOVELTIES

Now all the Athenians . . . spent their time in nothing else, but either to hear or to tell some new thing.—Acts 17 : 21.

The passion for novelty is a very old thing.

In every age men have flattered themselves as makers of a new era, and eccentricity has mistaken itself for originality.

Among the paths of conduct, that which is entirely new is apt to be false, and that which is true is likely to have some footprints on it.

When a man comes to us with a scheme of life which he has made all by himself, we may safely say to him, as the old composer said to the young musician who brought him a symphony of the future :

“It is both new and beautiful ; but that which is new is not beautiful, and that which is beautiful is not new.”

LIGHT AND VISION

I am come a light into the world that whosoever believeth in me may not abide in darkness.—John 12 : 46.

Just what light is, has long been in dispute. But what light does is evident : it enables us to see. Christ says that is His mission in the world—to help us to see God, and ourselves, and the real meaning of life. Those who believe in Him

receive this power. But the vision varies according to the strength and clearness of our eyes. Some are colour-blind, some far-sighted, some near-sighted, some cross-eyed—but to all the light brings a great gift.

We might as well expect all men to behold precisely the same world when the sun rises, as suppose that all Christians will see precisely the same spiritual truths when Christ gives them light. Some will see clearly, some cloudily ; to some the forms will be sharp, to others dim ; some will have a vivid sense of the colours of life, others will see it only black and white, or grey. But all who believe in Christ will escape from darkness and the shadow of death. They will know that God said, Light be, and light was. They will not live in night, but in day. Let us not quarrel about colours.

FACE THE FACTS

And he, when he is come, will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.—John 16 : 8.

I am glad that since we have to live in a world where evil exists, we have a religion which does not bandage our eyes.

The first thing that we need to have religion do for us is to teach us to face the facts.

No man can come into touch with the Divine personality of Jesus Christ, no man can listen to His teaching, without feeling the distinction between good and evil.

The choice between them is the great choice.

The conflict between them is the great conflict.

Evil is the one thing that God has never willed.

Good is the one thing that He wills for ever.

Evil is first and last a rebellion against Him.

He is altogether on the side of good.

Much that is, is contrary to His will.

There is a mighty strife going on, a battle with eternal issues, but not an eternal battle.

The evil that is against Him shall be cast out and shall perish.

The good that overcomes the evil shall live forever.

And those who yield their lives to God and receive His righteousness in Christ are made partakers of everlasting life.

This, I humbly believe, is the teaching of Jesus.

It is the hope of the world.

INSULARITY

And when we were escaped then we knew that the island was called Melita.—Acts 28 : 1.

There is a very pretty illustration both of the defects and of the virtues of insularity, in this story.

It seems that a certain vessel was wrecked long ago on an island called Malta.

The ship was acting as a government transport, for she carried a prisoner of state, named Paul, with his military guard.

Now their guide-post was marked "Rome." But by reason of the present rain and the cold they had urgent need of a camp-fire.

This the islanders kindled, Paul helping them.

As he was laying sticks on the flame, a little poison-snake sprang out and fastened on his hand.

Whereupon the islanders concluded that he was a murderer pursued by the divine Nemesis.

But when he shook off the deadly worm and felt no harm, they promptly changed their minds and said that he was a god.

These superstitions and extreme judgments belong to the dangerous side of insularity.

But the good side came out when the islanders took the castaways into comfortable winter quarters, entertained them hospitably for three months, and loaded them with useful gifts at their departure.

FEAR NOT DEATH

Them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.—Hebrews 2 : 15.

To be afraid of death is to live like a slave, and to die many times a year.

A friend once begged Woodrow Wilson not to risk his life by marching in a long procession through an excited city—"the country cannot afford to lose its President."

Like a flash came his answer : "The country cannot afford to have a coward for President."

It is a strange fact, and worth noting, that those who have most to do with death—like doctors and nurses and ministers—are not much perturbed by it.

They are of the same mind as Cato, in Cicero's dialogue *On Old Age* :

"Satisfy the call of duty and disregard death."

Better still is the saying of St. Paul :

"Neither death nor life shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

AN UNFAILING RIVER

There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God.
—Psalm 46 : 4.

Last summer I saw two streams emptying into the sea. One was a sluggish, niggardly rivulet, in a wide, fat, muddy bed ; and every day the tide came in and drowned out that poor little stream, and filled it with bitter brine.

The other was a vigorous, joyful, brimming mountain-river, fed from unfailing springs among the hills ; and all the time it swept the salt water back before it and kept itself pure and sweet ; and when the tide came in, it only made the fresh water rise higher and gather new strength by the delay ; and ever the living stream poured forth into the ocean its tribute of living water—the symbol of that influence which keeps the ocean of life from turning into a Dead Sea of wickedness.

When the evil of the world seems to overflow and choke you and drown out your soul, it may be because you are not giving out enough good.

If we were more generous we should be less poor.

The life which has its springs in God never runs dry.

EVERY PERSON ALSO A NEIGHBOUR

For none of us liveth to himself.—Romans 14 : 7.

If we have no real self, no thoughts, no feelings, no personality of our own, we are not persons at all.

We are mere parts of a machine.

If, on the other hand, we are ruled only by self-will, self-interest, we are sure to injure other people, and in the end to destroy our own happiness.

We become objectionable members of the community, nuisances, if not criminals.

The most difficult problem in the conduct of life is the harmonising of these two principles, so that they will work together.

Every one is born a person, a self ; and that self has the right (which is also a duty) to live and grow.

Every one is likewise born a neighbour, with ties and obligations and duties which spread out on all sides.

Which has the higher claim ?

Or are they equal ?

LOWLY VIRTUES

Mind not high things, but condescend to things that are lowly.—
Romans 12 : 16.

I am not quite so sure of anything—not even of my doubts, denials, and prejudices—as I was in my youth.

But I have had some experience of what agrees with body and soul, as Keats says in his ode to the bards of passion and mirth,

“ What doth strengthen and what maim.”

By that knowledge I try to steer my course toward peace and a certain degree of usefulness.

The minor morals of life attract me.

I like real and decent folk of all creeds and parties.

But I have *no* confidence in catchwords, either of autocracy or democracy.

Universal suffrage is no cure-all of man's infirmity.

The small but useful virtues, like fair play, and kindliness, and common courtesy, are what we need most in the business of daily life.

THE SECRET PAVILION

In the covert of thy presence shalt thou hide them from the plottings of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.—Psalm 31 : 20.

It may be that you and I will never be called to pass through sufferings and trials like those of the author of this Psalm.

It may be that our country will never forfeit its great privileges and hasten by the pathway of iniquity to a ruinous downfall.

It may be that we shall never have to protest alone against the corruptions of an apostate church.

But it can hardly be, if we are true men, that we shall not be forced at some time or other to take the unpopular side.

It can hardly be that we shall never feel the hostile pressure of the plots of man, and the stinging arrows of the strife of tongues.

Then we shall need a refuge, and we shall find it only in the loyal adherence to our convictions, in the faithful performance of our duty, which shall bring us so near to God that we can feel His presence encircling, embracing, hiding us, as in a secret pavilion.

THE LOVE OF FREEDOM

Foe ye, brethren, were called for freedom.—Galatians 5 : 13.

Nothing is more difficult to preserve than the true love of freedom in a free country.

Being habituated to it, men cease to consider by what sacrifices it was obtained, and by what precautions and safeguards it must be defended.

We need also to have a clearer conception of what real freedom is.

It is not a state of things in which every man does exactly and only what he likes.

It is rather a state of mind in which men like to do what they can, what they may, and what they ought.

To enjoy it, a man must have some knowledge of his natural powers, his civil privileges, and his moral duties.

By knowing and accepting these he becomes free to realise his best self as a member of mankind.

Liberty itself is the great lesson. And in learning it we need teachers—the wise, the just, the free of all ages.

Most of all, we need the help of religion, by which alone the foundations of the state are laid in righteousness, and democracy is saved from its own suicidal tendencies.

WHAT A CITIZEN OWES

Ye were bought with a price.—I Corinthians 6 : 20.

You are born a citizen of the Republic ; and that does not mean very much, as a bare fact, except a duty of paying taxes, and a privilege, which you

may not prize very highly, of voting with more or less regularity.

But suppose it flashes upon you some day, as I believe it does flash upon most honest young people who read the history of their country, that all the hardships and perils and conflicts of the forefathers—all the patient endurance of privations and the brave defiance of dangers, all the offerings of treasure and blood that have been made to found, liberate, defend, and preserve our country—are a price paid for you.

Do you not see how that thought must kindle the flame of patriotism upon the altar of your heart? How it must awaken that strange, inward warmth of feeling which glows at the very mention of your country's name? How it will rise, if you are a true man or woman, in the hour of need, into that devotion which cries, "It is sweet and beautiful to die for one's country"?

Surely, the very soul of patriotism is this wonderful sense that we have been bought with a price.

BELOVED RIVERS

Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the rivers of Israel?—II Kings 5 : 12.

The Jordan, except in its upper branches, is not a beautiful river.

It is violent, rude, muddy below the Lake of Gennesaret, and so liable to floods and droughts that no one can live near it, or be friendly with it.

It is a river to cross, that is all; and the crossing is often difficult and dangerous.

Very different are the streams that water Damascus and make its oasis blossom as the rose.

They do not overflow nor go dry.

They carry a thousand streams of musical refreshment through the gardens and orchards.

Naaman was quite right about them.

He loved them for their beauty, but also for their familiarity, because he had often walked beside them.

The rivers that we love most are always those that we know best—the stream that ran before our father's door, the current on which we ventured our first boat or cast our first fly, the brook on whose banks we first picked the twin-flower of young love.

MUSIC FOR THE JOURNEY

Songs in the house of my pilgrimage.—Psalm 119 : 54:

How wonderfully the old Hebrew hymn book has been used.

With the music of psalms the shepherds and ploughmen cheered their toil in ancient Palestine ; and to the same music the Gallic boatmen kept time as they rowed their barges against the swift current of the Rhone.

St. Chrysostom fleeing into exile ; Martin Luther going to meet all possible devils at Worms ; George Wishart facing the plague at Dundee ; Wicliffe on his sick-bed, surrounded by his enemies ; John Bunyan in Bedford gaol ; William Wilberforce in a crisis when his noble plans were threatened with ruin—all stayed their hearts with verses from the Psalms.

The Huguenots at Dieppe marched to victory chanting the Sixty-eighth Psalm ; and the same stately war-song sounded over the field of Dunbar.

The motto of England's proudest university is a verse from the Psalms ; and a sentence from the same book is written above the loneliest grave on earth, among the snows of the Arctic circle.

It was with the fifth verse of the Thirty-first Psalm that Jesus Christ commended His soul into the hands of God ; and with the same words, St. Stephen, St. Louis, Huss, Columbus, Luther, and Melanchthon, and many more saints of whom no man knoweth, have bid their farewell to earth and their welcome to heaven.

ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE

I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.—Psalm 23 : 6.

It is not hard to be an optimist when you are young.

But how will it be when you grow old ?

Will not the joy vanish, and the cup be empty, and the sense of being at home in the world which gladdens youth, give place to that feeling of estrangement which saddens age ?

Not if you know that you are dwelling in the house of the Lord, for then His goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life to remind you where you are.

“ For He hath not left Himself without a witness in that he did good, and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness.”

There is no reason why we should ever lose this

deep and joyful sense of domesticity in God's world.

The discoveries of science need not take it from us, but only deepen its wonder and reverence.

I remember one of the wisest of modern scientific men, the physical geographer, Arnold Guyot, whom it was my privilege to know well.

He kept the faith of a little child, and whether he was botanising in his garden, or geologising on the top of some high mountain, he rejoiced like one who was at home in the house of his Father.

HIDDEN SINS

While I kept silence my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.—Psalm 32 : 3.

A sin concealed is like a hidden fire.

It eats into the very life and consumes it with the weariness of old age.

It "weighs upon the heart."

It dries up the springs of innocent joy and peace, so that existence becomes like a thirsty, tedious fever.

There is no relief in "roaring."

All the complaints and murmurings, the outcries of disgust with life and the growlings of a sullen, discontented spirit, are in vain.

Swear that "the times are out of joint"; swear at the world for a cheat; swear at yourself for a fool—all this will bring no relief, no comfort.

The disease (and that means the want of ease) is too deep for any remedy that you can devise.

There is but one Physician who can heal it.

You must bring it to Him, frankly, freely, with

no reserve, and learn that an honest confession is good for the soul, and that God's mercy is great enough to blot out every sin except that which is hidden.

No half-repentance can possibly succeed, and no full repentance can possibly fail.

HONOURABLE WOMEN

Also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men not a few.—Acts 17 : 12.

Christianity came bringing liberty and justice to women.

Even in the Old Testament they had high honour as poets, prophets, and patriots.

The religion of Jesus is contrary to those oriental superstitions which tend to enslave woman.

Yet the Holy Scriptures give a distinct view of woman's honour and her highest sphere, which is quite different from that of many recent books and well worth considering.

The Bible declares that modesty is woman's most graceful apparel, and a quiet and home-keeping spirit her highest excellence.

She will gain nothing, and lose much, by joining the Order of Gadabouts and Busybodies.

In her children, given to her by God to be reared for His service, and for noble, useful lives in the world, she is to find her pleasure and her pride.

When she shrinks from that gift as an incumbrance, fearing that to have children will hinder her in the pursuit of amusement, or interfere with her in that toilsome round of most unsocial observances which are sometimes called social duties, she

is falling far below the dignity of her womanhood.

She is, in fact, although unconsciously, shutting herself out from that interior circle of the home, in which alone the true woman's nature puts forth its sweetest blossoms and bears its best fruits.

But when she welcomes her children as blessings, and is proud of them, as the Roman matron Cornelia was of her two boys ; when she gives to them rather than to strangers the best that she has to give, and seeks to pour her very life into theirs, then she is manifesting not her weakness but her strength, and exercising her largest possible influence upon the welfare of the nation and the race.

MARRY YOUNG

As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children of youth.—Psalm 127 : 4.

Modern life (which we call civilised) is against early marriage and large families.

But there is much to be said on the other side, and the Psalmist says it well.

He says that religion is the only sure foundation of a family ; and then he shows us the picture of a father with his loyal and stalwart children about him.

“Children of youth,” he calls them : meaning thereby to give a strong and sensible commendation to early marriage, and to teach that it is a great privilege for a man to have his children grow up and come to maturity in his own house, under his own guidance.

Thus he can have the joy of seeing them established in life before he leaves it, and their strength

will be a support and stay to him in his declining years.

They will be like arrows in his hand, whose course he can direct so that they shall hit the mark.

They will be an honour and a protection to him ; and he shall not be ashamed when he stands, with his sons by his side, among the throngs of men in the gates of the city.

BRINGING UP CHILDREN

Only take heed to thyself and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes saw, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life : but make them known unto thy children and thy children's children.—Deuteronomy 4 : 9.

Surely it would be a good thing, if, in our schools, it could be recognised that a child had far better grow up thinking that the earth is flat than to remain ignorant of God and moral law and filial duty.

And it would be a still better thing, if, in all our homes, there could be a sincere revival of household piety—piety in the old Roman sense, which means the affectionate reverence of children for parents ; piety in the new Christian sense, which means the consecration of parents and children to God.

This would rekindle the flame of devotion upon many a neglected altar, and shed a mild and gracious light through many a gloomy home, making it the brightest, cheerfulest, holiest place on earth.

THE FOREST FIRE OF EVIL

For wickedness burneth as the fire ; it devoureth the briers and thorns ; yea, it kindleth the thickets of the forest, and they roll upward in a column of smoke.—Isaiah 9 : 18.

I saw this sight once in Newfoundland when our encampment fled from a great conflagration in the woods.

The fire crept along the ground, eating its way through the moss and dry leaves secretly, breaking suddenly into flame.

It leaped and ran upon the underbrush with a crackling sound like crazy laughter.

It seized upon the tall trees, flaring swiftly into flame-pillars, roaring through the night.

It was terribly beautiful ; but behind it was desolation.

The passage of an age of licentiousness, an epidemic of evil among a people, is like that.

The hidden progress of false and wicked ways among the lowly and the little folk ; the noisy progress of popular vice and violence in the crowd ; the glaring outbreaks of wickedness among the high and lofty, visible from far—then, exhaustion and ruin !

Such forest fires the world of man has seen—in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the decline of the Roman Empire, in the years before the French Revolution, and now.

Nothing can repair the destruction but human faith, and hope, and love, and work, in harmony with the continuous creative power of God, who makes the waste land to bloom again.

MUSIC THE CONSOLER

And in the night his song shall be with me.—Psalm 42 : 8.

Wondrous power of music !

How often has it brought peace, and help, and strength to weary and downcast pilgrims !

It penetrates the bosom and unlocks the doors of secret, self-consuming anguish, so that the sorrow flowing out may leave the soul unburdened and released.

It touches the chords of memory, and brings back the happy scenes of the past.

In the rude mining camp, cut off by the snows of winter, in the narrow cabin of the ship ice-bound in Arctic seas, in the bare, dark rooms of the war-prison where the captive soldiers are trying to beguile the heavy time in company, tears steal down the rough cheeks when some one strikes up the familiar notes of "Home, Sweet Home."

Music lends a strange sweetness to the remembrance of the past, and makes the troubles of the present heavier, yet somehow easier to bear.

It borrows the comfort of hope.

It drops the threads of sorrow one by one, and catches the beams of light reflected from the future, and weaver them in among its harmonies, blending, brightening, softening the mystic web, until we are enclosed, we know not how, in a garment of consolation, and the cold, tired heart finds itself warmed, and rested, and filled with courage.

Most gracious ministry of music !

Happy are they who know how to exercise it in simplicity and love ; happy they whose life pilgrimage is cheered and lightened by such service.

A TEXT FOR HARD TIMES

My times are in thy hand.—Psalm 31 : 15.

The man who wrote this Psalm had passed through the bitter school of disappointment.

His plans had failed ; his enemies exulted over him ; his friends and neighbours had gone back on him and forsaken him.

He was having very hard times.

But he did not despair.

He bore up and carried on.

He could say confidently to God, “ My times are in Thy hand.”

Not only to-day which is so dark, and to-morrow which looks so gloomy, and the long future with all its uncertainties ; but also all the unknown between-times, the connecting links of life, are ruled and controlled by God.

This is a kind of fatalism, you may think ; but it is the right kind of fatalism.

For it does not subject us to the caprice of chance, nor to the stern compulsion of an unconscious necessity, but to the will of an all-wise and all-merciful Father.

Happy and strong and brave shall we be—able to endure all things, and to do all things—if we believe that every day, every hour, every moment of our life is in his hands.

GOOO-BYE AND MIZPAH

Mizpah : The Lord watch between thee and me when we are absent one from another.—Genesis 31 : 49.

The word "Good-bye" has a beautiful, sacred meaning, which is lost to view when we spell it "Good-by."

It is really a contraction of the phrase God be with ye, and is even lovelier than the French "Adieu"—a deep, holy word.

But I have often wondered why we have no parting phrase in English to express what we so clearly hear in other tongues—the lively hope of meeting again.

The Germans say *auf Wiedersehen*, and the Italians, *a rivederci*, and the French, *au revoir*.

All these are fitting and graceful words ; they solace the daily separations of life with the pleasant promise that we shall see each other again—a *bientot*, the French say sometimes, as if to underline the wish that the next meeting may be soon.

Mizpah is the Hebrew word. The nearest to it in English is "so long!" A little bit of slang, perhaps—but I like it.

REST ON A ROUGH ROAD

Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while.—Mark 6 : 31.

Rough is the road, and often dark ; frequented by outlaws and sturdy beggars ; encumbered with wrecks of goodly equipages, and bodies of wounded travellers ; full of cripples, and weary folk who are

ready to faint and fall, and overladen beasts and men, and little lost children.

At every turn we meet some disappointment or grief; in the long level stretches we find blinding heat and dust, and in the steep high places, cold and solitude.

And yet—truth to tell—are there not consolations along the way?

Resting places like that house in Bethany where the Master found repose and love; wide and cheering outlooks from the brow of the hill, snug shelters in the bosom of the vale, camp fires beneath the trees, wayside springs and fountains flowing among the rocks or trickling through the moss?

Here will I stop, and stoop, and drink deep refreshment. Share with me!

Music and friendship and nature—sleep and dreams and rested waking in the light of morn—these will always keep something for us, something to come back to; and if we are content with little, enough will be better than a feast.

THE MOUNTAINS AND THE SEA

Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a mighty deep.—Psalm 36 : 6.

The mountains and the sea are alike in grandeur, but in the quality of their greatness they are very different.

For the sea is ever moving, changing, flowing to and fro.

But the mountains are fixed, durable, undisturbed in majesty.

Even so to faith the central fact of the universe

is the unalterable righteousness of the Eternal, who can do no evil, tell no falsehood, commit no injustice.

He changes not ; and in this we can rest, secure that He will right every wrong and deal fairly with every creature.

But His judgments—the ways and means by which the Eternal Will is now working in conjunction or in conflict with human wills—seem to us as changeful and mysterious as the flowing tides and currents of the ocean and all the secrets that they cover.

They are unsearchable ; at times they seem cruel and hostile ; they sweep over us like billows they are like a flood of destruction.

Then, if our souls would escape shipwreck, we must look beyond the tossing, changeful, incomprehensible sea of life, to the immutable mountains of Divine righteousness—the unshaken pillars of the world.

MALICIOUS WHISPERS

A whisperer separateth chief friends.—Proverbs 16 : 28.

Be a little careful about the news which is whispered to you with the injunction, “ Don’t tell anybody.”

It may be true.

It may be only scandal.

Of course, there may be a good and honest reason for secrecy ; but you are entitled to know it before you consent to listen.

If you may tell me, why must I not tell my wife ?

Nobody has a right to force a secret on you, unless you are willing for good reason to receive and keep it.

Nobody has a right to corkscrew a secret out of you by impudent whispers.

To such a one you may answer as he deserves.

THE SUDDENNESS OF DEATH

For it is soon gone, and we fly away.—Psalm 90 : 10.

The word which is here translated “soon” means suddenly—as a dream when one awaketh.

Even when life is drawn out to its full length, even when an uncommon strength enables us to carry the burden on beyond the limit of three-score and ten, the thread is suddenly cut off, and we fly away in haste.

Death is always a surprise. Men are never quite ready for it.

The will is left unwritten. The enterprise halts uncompleted. The good deed is not accomplished.

The man who says, “I will devote my fortune henceforth to the service of God and humanity,” flies away suddenly, and his wealth is squandered by the spendthrift heir.

The man who resolves to be reconciled to his enemy and die at peace with all mankind, is cut off in a moment, and the words of repentance and forgiveness are never spoken.

It is the old story.

Moses, who lived one hundred and twenty years, died too soon, for he never entered the land of promise, and his dream was left unfinished.

REMEMBRANCE AND PROGRESS

Remember the days of old.—Deuteronomy 32 : 7.

There are two ways of showing attachment to the past.

One is by sneering at the present, finding fault with every new effort, holding back from every new enterprise, and making odious comparisons an excuse for inaction.

There have always been some people of this kind in the world.

If there were very many of them the world would probably cease to revolve.

They are the old men of the sea, the heavy weights whom the workers have to carry along with them.

But the other way of honouring the past is kind and generous and beautiful.

It pays grateful tribute to the beauty that has faded, and the glory that lives only in remembrance.

It preserves the good things of former days from oblivion, and praises the excellent of earth by keeping their memory green.

It is faithful and true, willing to learn, but not willing to forget.

Fortunate is the community in which this spirit prevails ; for there the old and the young are in harmony, though not in unison, and the bright hopes of the future are mellowed by contact with the loyal memories of the past.

HEAR THE OTHER SIDE

He that pleadeth his cause first, seemeth just. But his neighbour cometh and searcheth him out.—Proverbs 18 : 17.

The first man to catch the ear of the public has an advantage over those who follow.

That is because the public is vain, and in a hurry, and does not like to revise its hasty judgments.

A false report has long legs ; but the honest correction hobbles after it on crutches.

The law's delay is a vexatious evil. But it is not as bad as "trial by newspaper," or sentence by "Judge Lynch."

This applies not only to the action of courts, but also to the formation of opinions, prejudices, and prepossessions.

What do those people who condemned Lincoln as a coward and Roosevelt as a drunkard think of themselves to-day ?

Wait.

Keep your mind open.

Don't give your heart to the first-comer. Wait for the neighbour, who may "search him out."

BEYOND FEAR

Therefore will we not fear.—Psalm 46 : 2.

Why is it that a man who trusts in God is ever killed ?

Why does the Christian soldier fall in battle, and the Christian sailor sink in the storm ?

Why does not the providence of God always

interfere to protect his people from disaster and death ?

First of all, remember that, to the true Christian, death is no defeat, but a victory.

For the cause of truth to be overthrown would indeed be a calamity of such a nature as to prove that God is either impotent or absent.

But for you and me to fall only shows that God has done serving Himself with us on earth, and is ready to receive us to our reward in heaven.

So that in our departure the Lord of hosts is with us ; and then more truly than ever the God of Jacob becomes our refuge, into 'whose bosom we fly for everlasting peace.

Remember also that even this outward semblance of defeat, this call to lay down our arms and leave the field, will never come to us until our appointed time.

"Every man is immortal until his work is done."

So long as God has anything for us to do in the world He will take care of us and deliver us from danger.

A WAYSIDE SPRING

He shall drink of the brook in the way ; therefore will he lift up the head.—Psalm 110 : 7.

By the wayside, in a country where I often go to rest in the summer, there is a small, cool, crystal spring ; and by the spring there is a little cup, hanging on the broken branch of a tree ; and that silent cup says clearly that the water flows for

everyone who is thirsty and will stoop down to drink.

By the spring of the water of everlasting life there is also a cup which tells the same story.

But it is not for you alone.

Not far away there is sure to be a little child waiting for you to give the cup of cold water in the Master's name.

There is a place in Christ's army for every soul that belongs to Him, and a spot on the battlefield where each soldier is needed.

In a certain battle, not long ago, the officer of a battalion arrived late.

Dashing up to his chief, he asked where he should lead his troops.

"Go where you please," was the answer, "there is good fighting all along the line."

Yes, there is good fighting all along the line for Christ!

In heathen lands and in our own land; in the university and in the market-place; in society and on the frontier; in the home and in the mission school—all along the line thousands of places where loyal soldiers can do glorious service for Christ and their fellow-men.

But you must go out to do it.

FRIENDSHIP FOR ALL SEASONS

A friend loveth at all times.—Proverbs 17:17.

There is a certain kinship of spirits which does not depend on outward things.

It does not rest on common circumstances, or on similar tastes, on identical opinions.

Take, for example, the friendship of David and Jonathan—a royal prince, and a shepherd boy—yet their friendship lasted until death, and beyond.

The test of such a friendship is found not only in adversity, but also in prosperity.

The man who sticks to you when fortune favours and your affairs go well, who has no envy or jealousy, and does not fear to warn you faithfully against self-complacency and a proud mind, is no less precious in those hours of golden danger than the man who encourages and lifts you up when you are cast down.

That is the mark of a true friend : he loveth *at all times*.

THE POETRY OF BROTHERHOOD

*Oh magnify the Lord with me,
And let us exalt his name together.*

—Psalm 34 : 3.

The fault, or at least the danger, of modern lyrical poetry is that it is too solitary and separate in its tone.

It tends toward exclusiveness, over-refinement, morbid sentiment.

Many Christian hymns suffer from this defect.

But the Psalms breathe a spirit of human fellowship even when they are most intensely personal.

The poet rejoices or mourns in solitude, it may be, but not alone.

He is one of the people.

He is conscious always of the ties that bind him to his brother men.

Compare the intense selfishness of the modern hymn :

“ I can but perish if I go ;
 I am resolved to try ;
 For if I stay away, I know
 I shall forever die,”

with the generous penitence of the Fifty-first Psalm :

“ Then will I teach transgressors Thy way ;
 And sinners shall be converted unto Thee.

HOME AND CITY

God setteth the solitary in families.—Psalm 68 : 6.

The welfare of the city and the welfare of the home are inseparably connected.

What is the city, after all, but a great collection of homes ?

And how can its peace and its prosperity be secured otherwise than through the order and happiness of those who are bound together in its separate households ?

We often talk vaguely about the city as if it were a mighty entity, with a distinct life of its own.

But in truth it has no existence apart from the families which compose it. Its life is theirs.

The physical conditions, such as overcrowding, and bad buildings, and high rents, which make the formation of a home difficult, and the moral conditions, such as the prevalence of drunkenness and licentiousness, the inordinate pursuit of amusements, and the insane desire of wealth, which make

the happiness of a home impossible, are the real dangers of the city.

It is against these things that we need to be on our guard, and to work and fight with all our might.

But, after all, the great work must be done in and through the home ; and this cannot be accomplished by the law ; it can only be brought about by the Gospel.

Men and women must make their own households sweet and orderly and happy ; they must train their children in the fear of God and the love of man ; they must promote the general good by doing their duty in the natural relations in which Providence has placed them.

THE SOURCE OF WAR

Out of the heart come forth evil thoughts.—Matthew 15 : 18.

War, with its attendant horrors, seems like an outrage upon love.

And so it is, in its origin and source.

“From whence come wars and fightings among you ?

“Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members ?

“Ye lust and have not : ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain.”

Yet there is a war against war which is set in the very key of “Love thy neighbour as thyself.”

It was to frustrate a gigantic crime and to redress villainous wrong, that the Allies took up arms in the World War, and America at last joined them.

Had her heart been quicker, her feet more swift,

she might have reached the Jericho Road in time to stop the robbers before they began their cruel work.

Who can tell ?

At least, having arrived, she did her best and beat them off.

THE HUMBLENESS OF THE WISE

O Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty ; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or things too wonderful for me.—Psalm 131 : 1.

With the sense of ignorance wisdom takes her first step.

In the consciousness of limited knowledge she learns to walk.

He who thinks he knows everything really knows nothing.

For every part of the world exists only in its relation to the whole universe, and the full compass of that is manifestly beyond human ken.

It is the narrow-minded man who is most cocksure of his opinions and ready to apply them to all subjects and cases.

He will undertake to regulate the world on the basis of a single misinterpreted verse of Scripture.

But the great men of knowledge are content to say :

“ This or that is the fact, so far as we have been able to discover it.

“ It throws a little light on the further path of study.

“ Far beyond it lies the region of the wonderful, of mystery, not yet explored.”

THE BREATH OF THE SPIRIT

The wind bloweth where it will. . . . So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.—John 3 : 8.

Here is the sea on which you float, the sea of human life, with its shifting tides and currents.

Yonder is the sky that bends above you, the pure and sovereign will of God.

Out of that unsearchable heaven comes the breath of the Spirit, like "the wind that bloweth where it listeth, and thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth."

If you will spread your sail to catch that breath of life, if you will lay your course and keep your rudder true, you will be carried onward in peace and safety to your desired haven.

Nay, more; if there seems to be no breeze stirring near you, if you feel that you are lying idle and helpless in a dead calm, drifting upon the dark currents which may bear you to destruction, you have only to ask for the saving breath and it will come.

For earthly parents are not more willing to give good gifts unto their children than your Heavenly Father to give His Spirit unto them that ask Him.

Ask, then, for what you can surely have, and sail, and steer, and leave the secret things to God.

A SHEPHERD IN PALESTINE

I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep.—John 10 : 11.

This saying of Jesus and the Twenty-third Psalm go together.

In order to understand them fully we need, first

of all, to remember how different is the life of a shepherd in Syria from that of his brother in England or America ; and how much closer is the tie which binds him to his helpless charge in a wild, unsettled country, where robbers and fierce beasts abound, than it can possibly be among the peaceful hill-pastures of Vermont, or in the smooth meadows of a city park.

Here you shall see the sheep left to take care of themselves, or driven about from one feeding ground to another by a man who seems to be little more than a policeman to them.

But in Palestine I have seen many a shepherd acting as the " guide, philosopher, and friend " of his flock.

He must think where he can find, amid the drought of burning summer, the narrow strips of herbage on which they can feed, and the unfailing springs where they can drink.

He must be ready to rescue them from the fury of mountain torrents when they rise in flood.

He must guard them against the attacks of wild animals, as he leads them through the black defiles of the hills where the shadows of rocks and bushes hide the crouching forms of death.

He does not drive them ; he leads them, and calls them to follow him.

He must be prepared to evade or repel the crafty assaults of brigands who will not hesitate to kill him in order to carry away his sheep.

I have read lately of a faithful man, between Tiberias and Tabor, who " actually fought three Bedouin robbers until he was cut to pieces by their knives, and laid down his life among the sheep he was defending."

TONGUE-FIRE

The tongue is a fire.—James 3 : 6.

We are all warned against the danger of fire in the forest.

But the most devastating fires are kindled in life by a reckless, evil tongue.

There are two good rules which ought to be written upon every heart.

Never believe anything bad about anybody, unless you positively know that it is true.

Never tell even that, unless you feel that it is absolutely necessary, and that God is listening while you tell it.

If you will follow these rules you may lie down in peace, and God will take care of you if you keep your lips from evil and your heart from guile.

If every careless and half-malicious gossip could see the harm that has been wrought by his idle words, repeating unproved rumours, he would be horrified at the account which he must render for setting and spreading tongue-fire.

THIRSTING FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD

My soul thirsteth for thee . . . to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the Sanctuary.—Psalm 63 : 1, 2.

Not to many of us has it happened to be entirely deprived of the outward ordinances of religion, to dwell in a region where there was no church and no community of worship and no service of Christian praise and prayer.

But perhaps there are some of the readers of

this meditation who have known what it is to be kept by sickness, or infirmity of body, or the duty of caring for others who were helpless, for a long time from the house of God and the community of Christian worship.

If the church has ever been a reality and a blessing to you, this enforced absence has given you pain and distress.

You may have borne it patiently and without murmuring ; but still it has been a real trial, and you have felt that deep thirstiness of spirit which David describes in his Psalm.

It is a mark of true religious life.

For when a man can willingly forego even the outward services of religion and stay away from the house of God, and let the seasons of devotion and communion pass by without a regret, his faith and love must be at a low ebb, if indeed they have not altogether dried up and blown away.

A living plant seeks water : a living soul longs for the refreshment of the sanctuary.

THE CALL OF THE TRUMPET

If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for war?—I Corinthians 14 : 8.

Every man, like the knight in the old legend, is born on a field of battle.

But the warfare is not carnal, it is spiritual.

Not the east against the west, the north against the south, the "haves" against the "have-nots" ; but the evil against the good—that is the real conflict of life.

The question for each one of us is not only,

“On which side do I count?” but also, “To which side do I call?”

If we really wish the good to prevail, we must be willing to *say* so as well as to *do* so.

Make no secret of your allegiance to the good cause in which you believe, even though personally you may fail and fall.

Condemn yourself if need be, but let not your trumpet of faith give an uncertain sound.

LOVE IS STRONGER THAN WRATH

The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.—Romans 2 : 4.

In the old fable the storm and the sun contended as to which of them could make the traveller lay aside his cloak. The sun won.

Faith precedes repentance.

Hope, not despair, is the mother of godly sorrow.

The goodness of God is before the badness of man.

The Divine mercy antedates the human sin.

It is not until we see the light shining above us that we begin to loathe our dark estate and receive strength to rise out of the gloom and climb upward.

Tell men that God is inexorably just and they will tremble, and abhor themselves in dust and ashes, and lie still in sullen desperation or seek forgetfulness in the delirium of worse excess.

But tell them that He is kind and gracious, waiting to forgive them; and then, if there is anything in them that can be saved, if there is a spark of true life not yet extinguished in the deadly atmosphere of sin, they will turn to their only hope and lay hold of the great mercy of God.

It was the tender, compassionate look of Jesus that drew back the wandering Peter from his apostasy.

It is the sight of Calvary that melts the hardened heart.

GOD'S IMPARTIALITY

He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.—Matthew 5 : 45.

This is a simple statement of a familiar fact.

A little experience is enough to convince us that what we call the processes of Nature are thoroughly impartial.

The corn and pumpkins in the stingy farmer's fields ripen just as surely and just as abundantly as those which have been planted and hoed by the most generous of men.

All you have to do is to sow the seed and till the soil, and Nature will do the rest without asking what manner of man you are.

Familiar as this is, when we stop to look at it more closely does it not puzzle and confound us ?

If we regarded Nature as impersonal, and the universe as a material mechanism, we should find no difficulty in it.

But the moment we see God behind the face of Nature—the moment we believe that this vast and marvellous procession of causes and changes is directed and controlled by a Supreme, Omniscient, Holy Spirit—this apparent indifference becomes incomprehensible and impossible.

It cannot be that God is indifferent.

It cannot be that He looks down with the same

feelings upon all who move below Him, and has an equal approbation for the toil of the honest labourer and the crafty schemes of the thief.

You tell me Nature is indifferent.

I say, not if God is behind Nature. Evermore He loves the good; evermore He hates the evil.

Why, then, does He not always discriminate in all His dealings?

I think it is evident that He would teach us to believe in His fatherhood in its widest aspect of benignity.

He would manifest his abounding kindness to all the children of men.

Are we not the offspring of God?

Yes, every one of us, the lowest as well as the highest.

He is the Father of us all.

HEAVEN WITHIN

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.—Psalm 51: 7.

This is the true prayer of every soul that knows what sin is—to be healed of its hidden disease, to escape from its secret conflict and misery, to have truth and peace in the inward parts.

If we can only obtain this spiritual healing and cleansing, it seems as if we should be able to bear anything that might come to us as the necessary result of our evil deeds.

Pain, disgrace, disaster, even the literal pangs of fire, if there were such a thing in another world, we might endure.

For an outward hell could not burn one whose heart had been cleansed, whose spirit had been renewed.

Such a spirit would carry the water of life and the singing angels and the golden city and the eternal blessedness within itself, and there is not a corner of this wide universe where it could be really cast away from the presence of God.

Let us not pray chiefly that God would let us into Heaven, but first that He would send Heaven into us.

EVOLUTION IN THE BIBLE?

My frame was not hid from thee when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.—Psalm 139: 15.

Suppose we could believe the Bible was intended to teach science. Would not this verse read in favour of the evolutionary hypothesis?

This being "made in secret"—this curious fashioning of man's frame "in the lowest parts of the earth"—does not this sound like the development of the human body from lower forms, yes, even from the very dust of protoplasm?

But, mind you, I do not say we are bound to believe this.

The Bible was not given to teach science, but religion.

The method of creation is for scientific men to trace, as far as they can.

The chief duty of man, having a reasonable soul, is to glorify and enjoy God, who made him of dust and spirit.

If the evolutionary hypothesis should be proved

true, it would make this religious duty still more clear and binding.

For the vital law of the soul is upward, not downward.

TACT

The law of kindness is on her tongue.—Proverbs 31 : 26.

Some people speak of “taft” as if it were an artificial accomplishment, rather to be distrusted, and perhaps even despised, by those bold and inconsiderate persons whose words are like bombshells and who succeed in making everybody around them uncomfortable.

No doubt this is a triumph of a certain kind.

But is it more admirable than the success of one who makes comfort and pleasant feeling around her ?

I knew a lady of the White House whose tactfulness was the subject of general admiration.

She was young, and comparatively inexperienced, and men wondered where she had learned it.

She did not learn it.

The wish to set people at ease was in her heart ; and so the law of kindness was on her tongue.

IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH

Oh, satisfy us in the morning with thy loving kindness, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.—Psalm 90 : 14.

The words “in the morning,” as used here, mean at the beginning of life.

It is a great blessing to know God in childhood, so that not a single day need be passed in ignorance

of His merciful kindness, not a single trial need be borne without His help, not a single pleasure need be enjoyed as if it were the careless gift of chance or the result of our own cleverness.

It is good to belong to God in the morning, and to rejoice in His mercy until the evening.

Let us be sure that a whole life spent with God is better than half a life.

There is no satisfaction in anything without His mercy ; therefore seek it at once.

It is better late than never, but it is far better early than late.

PERILOUS CITIES

Except the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain.—Psalm 127 : 1.

The striking feature of modern history is the rapid growth of great cities.

Every city needs to be watched, for it is just as truly a focus of danger as it is a centre of civilisation.

In old times the city watchmen kept their faces turned outward, looking for a foreign enemy.

In these times they need to keep their faces turned inward, watching the signs of municipal corruption.

The city gets the best and the worst of mankind. Extremes touch. Vices knot and generate in clusters like snakes. Large opportunities make big thieves.

In the confusion of the city selfish greed finds shelter for its cruelties, and envious idleness prepares the social dynamite with which it would willingly blow up the world for the sake of looting among the ruins.

There are forces of evil beneath us strong enough to shatter our civilisation into fragments.

But, at the same time, there are other forces which prevent the calamity.

And I think the strongest of these is the grace of God and the power of religion.

Most of the men you meet in the city crowd would like to be good, if only for their children's sake.

THE ALMIGHTY

Power belongeth unto God.—Psalm 62 : 11.

The sight of power is always wonderful and therefore a thing to be desired for its own sake.

The perception of a mighty force in action, even in the physical world, confers a high pleasure on the mind.

When the force is sudden and violent, as in the case of a great tempest, our pleasure in beholding it is mixed with awe, a solemn and trembling delight.

But when it is an orderly and beneficent force that we behold, then the vision is one of pure and unmingled joy.

How glorious is the sight of a great river sweeping down from its source among the mountains to its resting-place in the sea !

The same thing is true of the might of the harnessed giant steam driving a huge engine.

It is far more true of those forces which are more silent and secret, like the heat of the sun, or the force of gravitation, seen only in the mind's eye.

But it is doubly good to know that it is all the power of God.

To understand that all the energy which throbs and pulses through the universe, comes from Him, that force is but the effluence of His will, and law but the expression of His wisdom—is good for the soul.

We want a powerful God, one who can hold the winds and the waves in the hollow of His hand.

And for our own sake, for the sake of a deeper reverence and a firmer confidence toward Him, we ought to wish to see the evidence of Divine power in the great elemental forces of nature.

CLEAR SPEECH THE BEST ELOQUENCE

I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.—
I Corinthians 14 : 19.

There was a strange phenomenon in the early church called “the gift of tongues.”

Men spoke in various languages which neither they nor their hearers could comprehend.

This was regarded with awe and admiration.

St. Paul in the 14th chapter of First Corinthians discusses this subject with acuteness and a touch of humour, yet reverently.

But he says quaintly that for his part he would rather speak five clear words than ten thousand misty ones.

That is a sensible commendation of clarity as the most valuable quality of diction.

Whether words are spoken or written, their first aim should be to express and impart ideas.

- If not, why speak or write ?

Some subjects are mysterious in themselves, and it is difficult to make them plain.

But to wrap thoughts in cloudy language in order to make them seem more wonderful is to violate the first law of style.

Yet many reputations for eloquence or fine writing are based upon this fault.

Bombinating orations, obscure books, incomprehensible reverberating sermons—they are like the Scotsman's definition of "metapheesics":

" 'Tis when the man that's talking doesna understand what he's saying, and he that's listening doesna understand it either—that's metapheesics."

TABLE MANNERS

Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than a house full of feasting and strife. Proverbs 17: 1.

This bit of advice fits in with what the doctors tell us of the value of good humour as an aid to digestion.

We should think less about what we eat, and more about our company at the table.

Good fellowship and friendly conversation make a fine dressing for the simplest salad of herbs.

I knew a lady—the mistress of Yaddo—who used to prepare topics for a dinner party as carefully as she arranged the food and drink.

We always had lively talk, but no scandal and no strife.

Even a solitary meal in the wilderness may be enjoyable if you take it beside a little friendship fire, with good memories for company.

This is one reason for restoring the old custom

of "grace before meat" which Charles Lamb commended.

If it be short enough, it tends to peace and a quiet mind.

TWO KINDS OF VANITY

Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.
—Proverbs 16 : 18.

There is a beautiful irony in this little procession—a pompous drum-major followed by a ridiculous band, a boastful beginning and an absurd ending.

There are two figures in the procession. The second clause of the proverb is not a mere repetition of the first.

Pride is open and wears a glittering uniform.

But a haughty spirit may be secret and disguise itself in mean clothes.

The haughtiest man I ever knew was an ignorant person who was always talking about his own humility and his neighbour's vanity.

To the braggart comes the visible failure, which may do him good.

But the secretly self-satisfied man gets no benefit from his many falls.

He is incurably wise in his own conceit.

He goes on boasting of his modesty and sneering at all who know more than he does.

Uriah Heep is his model.

The lower he tumbles the more he admires himself.

THE FOUNDATION OF PEACE

The work of righteousness shall be peace.—Isaiah 32 : 17.

The wise and upright of heart in all nations are now studying how to secure the peace of mankind.

The horrible memory of the last great war, and the lurid fear of the next, urge on that study as with mental whips of scorpions.

A generous American offers a prize of \$100,000 for the best plan of world peace.

But the rewards of success will be far greater than that, and they will be given to all.

There is only one basis upon which a working plan can be built.

The sense of justice which is innate in the majority of men must be reasonably satisfied.

Until that is done, we shall have resentments and fears, tumults and perturbations, wars and rumours of war.

I say "*reasonably* satisfied," because there is small hope that it can be completely, perfectly satisfied while human nature remains as badly mixed as it is now.

But when the nations *unite their good intentions*, and when the majority of men are convinced that governments are really *working towards righteousness*, then we shall have a solid foundation for peace.

But you have got to "*show them*," as they say in Missouri.

THE MIRACLE OF HUMAN INTERCOURSE

As a man speaketh unto his friend.—Exodus 33 : 11.

There are two kinds of miracles, the extraordinary and the daily.

About the extraordinary kind there is consider-

able dispute as to whether they really occur and what they really mean.

About the daily kind there is no dispute because hardly anybody notices them or thinks of their meaning.

Conversation between two human beings is a daily miracle.

How is it that these persons, separate in space and hidden from each other by their bodies, can exchange thoughts, ideas, purposes, desires?

Very simple, you say, because they have language, gesture, expressiveness of eyes and face.

Yes, but where and how did they get these wondrous things?

The very power to invent and develop language looks to me like a heavenly gift.

The deep inward thoughts and affections, so different from animal instincts, come from a source above Nature, an unseen world.

I have had talks with a friend, so sweet, so liberating, so revealing that they made me sure of God and the soul.

Is not this the meaning of miracle, a sign of the Divine Presence and a world beyond our sight?

THE WISH FOR HAPPINESS

If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.—John 13 : 17

Let me talk of happiness for the next six days—only one minute a day.

The wish for happiness is natural; all men share it.

It is the law of life itself that every being strives toward the perfection of its kind.

Every drop of sap in the tree flows toward foliage and fruit.

Every drop of blood in the bird beats toward flight and song.

In a conscious being this movement toward perfection must take a conscious form.

This conscious form is happiness, the rhythm of the inward life, the melody of a heart that has found its keynote.

To say that all men long for this is simply to confess that all men are human, and that their thoughts and feelings are an essential part of their life.

Virtue means a completed manhood. The joyful welfare of the soul belongs to the fulness of that ideal. Holiness is wholeness.

In striving to realise the true aim of our being, we find the wish for happiness implanted in the very heart of our effort.

Christ alone can teach us how to attain it.

THE PROMISE OF HAPPINESS

That your joy may be made full.—John 16 : 24.

It is a mistake to say with Goethe that Jesus came only to teach us that "religion is renunciation."

He does indeed tell us that we must renounce some things. But it is in order that we may obtain a great reward in our souls.

Christ never asks us to give up merely for the sake of giving up, but always in order to win something better.

He comes not to destroy, but to fulfil—to fill full—to replenish life with true, inward, lasting joy.

His gospel is a message of satisfaction, of attainment, of felicity.

Its voice is not a sigh, but a song.

Its final word is a benediction, a *good-saying*.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”

THE TEACHER OF HAPPINESS

Blessed are—(nine times).—Matthew 5 : 3-11.

The Sermon on the Mount is a sermon on happiness—not outward, but inward.

Unrest and “that tired feeling”; discontent and disappointment; the fever of passion and the chill of despair are the very things Christ comes to cure.

So He begins His great discourse with a series of Beatitudes.

“Blessed” is the word.

“Happy” is the meaning.

Nine times He rings the changes on that word.

It is like a silver bell sounding from his open-air temple on the hillside, calling all who long for happiness to come to him and find rest for their souls.

No persecution, nor reproach, nor outward harm of any kind can frighten that happiness away.

It is a bird from Heaven making its nest and abiding place in the heart.

THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS

That they may have my joy made full in themselves.—John 17 : 13.

Earthly happiness, the pleasure that come from without through the senses, may be pure ; but it is never perfect, and it does not last.

Happiness on earth, spiritual joy and peace, satisfies us now, and has the promise of immortality.

The secret of it is fourfold.

It does not depend on what we have, but on what we are.

It is not found by direct seeking, but by setting our faces toward the things from which it flows.

We must climb the mount if we would see the vision, we must tune the instrument if we would hear the music.

It is not solitary, but social.

We can never have it without sharing it with others.

It is the result of God's will for us, and not of our will for ourselves ; and so we can only find it by giving our lives to His control.

THE DUTY OF HAPPINESS

Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever.—The Shorter Catechism, Quest. 1.

Some professing Christians are among the most depressing and worryful people in the world—the most difficult to live with.

And some, indeed, have adopted a theory of ethics which puts a special value upon unhappiness.

The morbid spirit which mistrusts every joyful feeling, and depreciates every cheerful virtue, and looks askance upon every happy life as if there must be something wrong about it, is a departure from Christ's teaching to follow the dark-browed philosophy of the Orient.

Jesus tells us that cheerful religion is the best.

It is fine to do right against inclination.

But there is something finer, and that is to have an inclination to do right.

There is something nobler than reluctant obedience ; and that is joyful obedience.

The rank of virtue is not measured by its disagreeableness, but by its sweetness to the heart that loves it.

The real test of character is joy.

For what you rejoice in, that you love.

And what you love, that you grow like.

THE BEAUTY OF HAPPINESS

Again I will say, Rejoice.—Philippians 4 : 4.

The first thing that commended the Church of Jesus to the weary and disheartened world in the early years of her triumph, was her power to make her children happy—happy in the midst of afflictions, happy in the sense of Divine Fatherhood and human brotherhood, happy in Christ's victory over sin and death, happy in the assurance of endless life.

At midnight in the prison, Paul and Silas sang praises, and the prisoners heard them.

The lateral force of joy—that was the power of the Church.

Was not St. Paul a happier man than Herod ?

Did not St. Peter have more joy of his life than Nero?

It is said of the first disciples that they "did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."

Not till that pristine gladness returns will the Church regain her early charm for the souls of men.

Every great revival of Christian power—like those which came in the times of St. Francis of Assisi and of John Wesley—has been marked by a revival of Christian joy.

YIELD GRACEFULLY OR NOT AT ALL

Now as touching the brother Apollos I besought him much to come to you with the brethren : and it was not at all his will to come now : but he will come when he shall have opportunity.—
I Corinthians 16 : 12.

St. Paul wanted Apollos to go on a mission to Corinth. But Apollos was not at all willing to go.

So Paul yielded gracefully about the immediate mission. And Apollos promised generously that he would go at the first opportunity.

Was not this a pretty way to settle, or rather to prevent, a quarrel rising from a clash of wills?

Observe, Paul says nothing about his reasons for wishing Apollos to go, or Apollos's reasons for wishing to stay.

He does not say that he was right and the other man wrong.

He does not revive the difference or repeat the controversy.

He merely says that he gave way, and adds that Apollos will come later, as if to assure the Corinthians that Apollos is not unfriendly.

In a dispute which can be settled only by one

will yielding to another, do not make the concession grudgingly, for that will leave a grudge.

Do not repeat the discussion to your neighbours, for that may leave a feud.

Above all, if it turns out that you were right, do not say, "I told you so."

Let the other man find that out for himself.

To yield gracefully is the only way to get the good of yielding.

JOYFUL FAITH

Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous.—Psalm 32 : 11.

It is said that a friend once asked the great composer Haydn why his church music was always so full of gladness.

He answered :

"I cannot make it otherwise.

"I write according to the thoughts I feel.

"When I think upon my God, my heart is so full of joy that the notes dance and leap from my pen.

"And since God has given me a cheerful heart, it will be pardoned me that I serve Him with a cheerful spirit."

Pardoned ?

Nay, it will be praised and rewarded.

One glad Christian is worth more than a hundred gloom-casters.

He is more reasonable and more useful.

IN MIND BE MEN

In malice be ye babes, but in mind be men.—I Corinthians
14 : 20.

Childlikeness is a fine thing in a man, but childishness is both ludicrous and dangerous.

To be joyful of heart, eager, hopeful, sympathetic, like a healthy child, without guile or malice, is to belong to the kingdom of heaven.

Christ says so.

But to have a childish mind when we are grown up, is to neglect the gift of reason and the power of mental advance which God has bestowed upon us.

A manly mind is firm but not fixed.

It is ready to hear new evidence, to welcome more light.

It is eager to learn by experience, and not afraid of any truth that God has written in the Holy Scripture, or in the book of nature.

"Show me," it cries, "and I will obey, with my reason as well as with my heart."

Reasonable interpretation (says St. Paul in this chapter), preaching that can be understood, is a fine thing.

Jesus does not ask us to lay aside our reason or to shut our eyes to facts, but simply to deny ourselves and follow Him.

Even childish minds may do this.

But His best followers are those who by their growth have learned to put away childish things and in mind be men

THE CURSER ASKS FOR A BLESSING

Let them curse, but bless thou.—Psalm 109 : 28.

This is from one of the most curious chapters of the Bible.

The Psalmist begins with a series of curses, ferocious, ingenious, and comprehensive.

He curses the enemy who has spoken of him with a lying tongue.

Then he goes on to curse that enemy's father and mother, his wife, and his innocent children.

"Let his children be vagabonds and beg ; . . . neither let there be any to have pity on his fatherless children."

The force of hatred could no farther go.

It is like a blind madman, striking with his knife at every one he touches.

Then, strangely enough, this pious lunatic turns round, falls on his knees, and says :

"O Jehovah, my enemies are awful cursers, but will you please bless me ?"

No need to say, this Psalm is not Christian.

Have we ever met a man like this ?

Have we ever asked God for mercy that we would not show to others ?

WILL YOU OR WON'T YOU BE CHOSEN ?

Many are called, but few chosen.—Matthew 22 : 14.

Some men are troubled by the doctrine of election, or predestination, or foreordination, or whatever you prefer to call it.

They quote this word of Christ, and then say to themselves :

“ If I am chosen I shall be certain to come, but if I am not chosen there is no use in coming, therefore the only thing to do is to wait and see.”

This way of taking the doctrine of election makes God a liar.

When Christ says, “ Come unto Me *all* ye that labour,” He means it.

Men do not act in this silly way about anything else in life except religion.

They do not say, “ If I am to be married, I shall be married ; if I am to be well, I shall be well ; if I am to go to New York, I shall inevitably find myself there.”

If these are things that they want, they do something to attain them. They get busy about them.

Does not this apply to religion ?

God has chosen all who repent and believe and try to be good. Fulfil the conditions and you are sure of the choice.

Read the words, “ Many are called, but few chosen,” in the light of the parable from which they are taken.

There were hundreds of guests at the Marriage Feast, but *only one* was cast out.

And that was because he would not put on the wedding garment provided.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.—Psalm 96 : 6.

Keats was undoubtedly right in his suggestion that the poet must always see truth in the form of beauty.

Otherwise he may be a philosopher, or a critic or a moralist, but he is not a true poet.

But we must go on from this standpoint to the platonic doctrine that the highest form of beauty is spiritual and ethical.

It is the harmony of the soul with the eternal music of the Good.

And the highest poets are those who are most ardently enamoured of righteousness.

This fills their songs with sweetness and fire incomparable and immortal :

“The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever ;
The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous
altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than
much fine gold :

Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.”

That which is ugly is not wholly holy.

A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

*For now we see in a mirror, darkly, but then face to face : now
I know in part ; but then shall I know fully.*—I Corinthian
13 : 12.

Can a philosophy of life be outlined in two
hundred words ?

Let me try.

The world of matter and spirit is the work of
an omnipotent, wise, loving Creator.

In the natural world law reigns inflexibly ; in
the spiritual world there is freedom, in order that
there may be other spirits who choose to answer
God's love and obey his wisdom.

By a wrong choice man has fallen under the

power of evil and so become separated from God, and conscious of sin as no other creature is.

God loving man in spite of sin, reveals Himself to those who seek Him ; chooses the wise and good to make His ways known on earth ; enlightens them by His spirit ; and finally sends His own Son, the Eternal Word or Reason, to become true man in the person of Jesus Christ, and to live and suffer with and for men, thus redeeming the world.

This redemption covers all who desire it and wait for it, as well as those who know it : the desire and the knowledge are proved by the effort to do good.

The mingled conflicts, trials, sorrows, labours, and joys of mortal life are a school to prepare the souls who seek God for His gift of immortality.

This seems to me a reasonable view of life for one who knows in part.

It leaves mysteries, but it satisfies our innermost conviction that we are somewhat more than dust, and our Creator someone greater than blind chance, and our destiny, if we will have it so, something better than extinction.

THE NEW WITCHCRAFT

Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.—Exodus 22 : 18.

This was the text by which our forefathers in England and New England foolishly tried to justify the persecution and killing of supposed witches in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The latest execution of this kind in Great Britain was in 1722.

But witchcraft, the practice of sorcery, magic, and necromancy, was not thereby suppressed.

It has existed in every age known to man ; and in our own it seems to be flourishing with exuberance.

Its name is changed, but not its nature.

In every city you may see the signs of the practitioners of the ancient profession.

They call themselves clairvoyants, psychic mediums, telepaths, soul-analysts, metaphysical seers, and even psychologists—as if their craft were a real science and not a black art.

I do not include here those people who are earnestly and reverently seeking and testing evidence of existence after death. I include those who for pay profess to reveal the future, foretell destiny, discover hidden secrets, and call up departed spirits.

These are the new witches.

The old command, Thou shalt not suffer them to live, is out of date.

The new command should be, Thou shalt not help them to make a living.

I think that would put the modern Witch of Endor out of business.

THE GOSPEL OF ANOTHER CHANCE

And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven : : thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.—Luke 7 : 48, 50.

This unfortunate woman thought her life was ruined, and so did everybody else but One in the Pharisee's house where she had crept in to weep at Jesus' feet.

But Jesus said, Not so ; your great love shows your many sins are forgiven ; you have a new hope ; go in peace !

Christianity is the gospel of another chance.

Though you have tried, trusting in yourself, and failed and fallen often, all is not lost.

Try again, trusting in the Divine mercy and power, and God will bring you through.

If you can still be sorry, you are not hopeless ; and if you know your own weakness, you can obtain strength from Heaven.

Do not give up, but look up.

If men are bidden to forgive even unto seventy times seven, shall not God do more ?

Forgiveness means the opening of a closed door.

This good news lies at the very heart of the Christian religion ; and when the Church proclaims it as simply as Jesus told it to the fallen woman, then the pristine power of the Church will be regained.

WASTEFULNESS IS MEANNESS

And when they were filled he saith unto his disciples, Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost.—John 6 : 12.

Christ was not miserly.

He loved the generous impulse which gives without too closely counting the cost.

When Mary of Bethany brought her alabaster cruse of very precious ointment and poured it on His head as He sat at meat, the disciples blamed her for extravagance.

But Christ approved and blessed her because she had done a good deed with a loving purpose.

Yet evidently in the little affairs of life Christ had a saving mind—a touch of the Martha spirit.

After the multitudes were fed by his bounty He was anxious that nothing left over should be wasted.

Waste is not generosity.

It is a form of meanness—the waster is really niggardly of his thought and care.

Americans are the most wasteful people in the world.

It is easier to obtain a great gift for charity than to find people to administer it economically.

We throw into the garbage can what would feed a multitude.

We combust our forests and pollute our waters as if we thought God would not mind creating another new continent to-morrow for such a generous and wasteful race.

THE HIGH COST OF PRIDE

A man's pride shall bring him low, but he that is of a lowly spirit shall obtain honour.—Proverbs 29 : 23.

There is no fault more expensive than pride.

It forfeits favour and wins dislike.

Other men resent a neighbour's self-complacency because it interferes with their own.

Whatever just claims he may have to merit are discounted by a too evident sense of it.

If he really has no claim at all, or but a very small one, a haughty spirit exposes the nakedness of his defects.

Pride increases the power of little slights to give

us pain, and lessens the power of real approval to give us pleasure.

It is never satisfied with the applause.

Someone in the front row did not clap—someone in the gallery did not cheer—why was that?

Were they sneering secretly?

Pride enlarges our assets in imagination, but diminishes them in reality.

The man who thinks too much of himself has less thought and force to give to his work.

Let us consider the High Cost of Pride.

Is it worth the price?

HARD LUCK FOR FATHERS

He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his own sorrow; and the father of a fool hath no joy.—Proverbs 17: 21.

We know that the sins of parents are sometimes visited on the children.

How about the folly of children that is sometimes visited on the parents?

How about Eli's wicked sons, and Solomon's degenerate offspring, and King Lear's ungrateful daughters?

Such things occur in the world, and they are full of misery.

I knew a celebrated preacher years ago whose sons were either cranks or crooked.

Every one of them gave the old man trouble.

There was no health in them.

Yet as a rule, fool-sons are not begotten.

They are made—by neglect, by pampering, or, worst of all, by some hidden unfairness or hypocrisy on the parents' part.

They are not so much a bit of hard luck as they are a penalty for misconduct.

But what son, however foolish, can really like to be nothing but a penalty?

DO YOUR WORK CHEERFULLY

A cheerful heart is good medicine.—Proverbs 17:22.

Good humour is one of the prerequisites of sound judgment.

I have seen needful work done by men in excitement and an ill-temper, but never truth discovered nor creative things accomplished.

My old gardener used to swear horribly when he was rooting out poison-ivy. But when he was studying how to make flowers or vegetables grow better, he was in a friendly mood—whistling or singing.

When our resentment at the wrong things in life outweighs our joy in the right things, our minds are darkened and our power is hampered.

If you cannot entirely eliminate anger, make it as brief as possible.

“Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”

But prolong your happier thoughts, your gratitude, your admiration, your affections.

They will make you wiser, steadier, healthier, stronger.

THREE ASPECTS OF ONE LIFE

Thou wilt show me the path of life.—Psalm 16 : 11.

There are three ways in which we may look at our life, depending upon the point of view from which we regard human existence.

When we think of it as a work, the question is :
“What do we desire to accomplish ?”

When we think of it as a growth, a development, a personal unfolding, the question is :
“What do we desire to become ?”

When we think of it as an experience, a destiny, the question is :
“What do we desire to become of us ?”

Do not imagine for an instant that these questions can be really separated.

They are interwoven.

They cross each other from end to end of the web of life.

The answer to one question determines the answer to the others.

We cannot divide our work from ourselves nor isolate our future from our qualities.

A ship might as well try to sail north with her jib, and east with her foresail, and south with her mainsail, as a man to go one way in conduct, and another way in character, and another way in destiny.

What we do belongs to what we are ; and what we are is what becomes of us.

THE PRACTICAL TEST OF ORTHODOXY

By their fruits ye shall know them.—Matthew 7 : 16.

What have you done, what are you going to do, for the fruitful side of human life ?

What contribution are you going to give of your strength, your time, your influence, your money, yourself, to make a cleaner, fuller, happier, larger, nobler life possible for some of your fellow-men ?

I do not ask how you are going to do it.

You may do it in business, in the law, in medicine, in the ministry, in teaching, in literature.

But this is the question :

“What are you going to give personally to make the human life of the place where you do your work purer, stronger, brighter, better, and more worth living ?”

That will be your best part in the warfare against evil.

That will be the test of your soundness in the faith.

EFFICIENT FOES OF INTEMPERANCE

Empty, swept, and garnished.—St. Matthew 12 : 44.

There are evil spirits which take possession of idle men.

Let intemperance be the type of them all, because so many of the others are its children.

Drunkenness ruins more homes and wrecks more lives than war.

How shall we oppose it ?

I do not say that we shall not pass resolutions and make laws against it.

But I do say that we can never really conquer the evil in this way.

I hold with Phillips Brooks that "all prohibitory measures are negative. That they have their uses no one can doubt. That they have their limits is just as clear."

The stronghold of intemperance lies in the vacancy and despair of men's minds.

The way to attack it is to make the sober life beautiful and happy and full of interest.

Make the life of your community cheerful and pleasant and interesting, if you want to take away the power of the gilded saloon and the grimy boozing-ken.

Parks and playgrounds, libraries and music rooms, clean homes and cheerful churches—these are the efficient foes of intemperance.

THE LIBERAL VISION

And a voice came unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed make not thou common.—Acts 10 : 15.

This was the dream of St. Peter, hungry on the housetop in Joppa :—a great sheet let down from heaven, full of all manner of flesh, fish, and fowl, and the Divine command, "Rise, Peter ; kill and eat."

It was a sign of the falling of that wall which had divided the Jews from the Gentiles mainly on the ground of the kind of food they ate.

Peter objected because he was conservative.

But the inward voice told him that conservatism of that type was opposition to the Divine Will.

“God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.”

Peter's dream is a moving picture illustration of the word of Christ :

“Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation.”

This dream is a proclamation of liberty from those faddish rules, like vegetarianism, which judge a man by what enters into his mouth rather than by what proceedeth out of his heart.

To this day, they profess to show in Joppa the very housetop where St. Peter had his dream.

But other men have had the same dream, in other places—the liberal vision.

FORCE, A TEMPORARY PROTECTION

An avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil.—Romans 13 : 4.

The suppression of evil by force is only a temporary relief, a protection for the moment.

It does not touch the root of the matter.

You send the murderer out of the world by a regulated flash of lightning.

But you do not send murder out of the world.

To do that you must reach and change the heart of Cain.

You put the thief in prison, but when he comes out he will be ready to steal again unless you can purify his conscience and control his will.

You overthrow some bad system of misgovernment, and “turn the rascals out.”

But unless you have something better to substitute, all you have done is to make room for a new set of rascals—a new swarm of mosquitoes with fresh appetites and larger capacities.

TRUTH WINS ITS WAY

Preach the word.—II Timothy 4 : 2.

False doctrines are never argued out of the world.

They are pushed back by the incoming of the truth, as the darkness is pushed back by the dawn.

Phillips Brooks was right. It is not worth while to cross the street to break a man's idol. It is worth while to cross the ocean to tell him about God.

The skilful fencer who attacks your doubts and drives you from corner to corner of unbelief and leaves you at last in doubt whether you doubt or not, does you a certain service.

He gives you exercise, takes the conceit out of you.

But the man who lays hold of the real faith that is hidden underneath your doubt—the silent longing for God and goodness, the secret attraction that draws your heart toward Jesus Christ as the only one who has the words of everlasting life—the man who takes hold of this buried faith and quickens it and makes you dare to try to live by it—that is the man who helps you indeed.

THE AIM OF OUR LIFE WORK

What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?
—Ecclesiastes 3 : 9.

I am quite sure that a great deal of the confusion and perplexity of youth, and a great deal of the restlessness and fickleness which older people often criticise so severely and so unjustly, come from the attempt to choose an occupation in life before the greater question of the real object of our life work has been fairly faced and settled.

“What are you going *to do* when you grow up?”

This is the favourite connundrum which the kind aunts and uncles put to the boys when they come home from school.

And of late they are beginning to put it to the girls also, since it has been reluctantly admitted that a girl may rightly have something to say about what she would like to do in the world.

But how is it possible to make anything more than a blind guess at the answer, unless the boy or the girl has some idea of the end which is to be worked for.

To choose a trade, a business, a profession, without knowing what kind of a result you want to get out of your labour, is to set sail in the dark.

It is to have a course, but no haven; an employment, but no vocation.

I would ask a boy or a girl first, What are you going to work *for*? Then, What kind of work do you think will accomplish your purpose?

TWO KINDS OF PLEASURE SEEKING

In thy right hand are pleasure forevermore.—Psalm 16 : 11.

Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.—II Timothy 3 : 4.

Pleasure is a word which has a double meaning.

It may mean the satisfaction of all the normal desires of our manhood in their due proportion.

In this sense it is a high and noble end.

There is a pleasure in the intelligent exercise of all our faculties, in the friendship of nature, in the perception of truth, in the generosity of love, in the achievements of heroism, in the deeds of beneficence, in the triumphs of self-sacrifice.

But pleasure as we commonly speak of it means something very different from this.

It denotes the immediate gratification of our physical senses and appetites and inclinations.

When we make the reception of agreeable sensations the chief end and motive of our action, when we direct our will and our effort to the attainment of this end, then we enter upon a pleasure-seeking life.

We make that which should be our servant to refresh and cheer us, our master to direct and rule and drive us.

A pleasure-seeking life, in this sense, is one which has no real end or goal outside of itself.

Its aim is unreal and transitory, a passing thrill in nerves that decay, an experience that leads nowhere, and leaves nothing behind it.

Robert Burns knew the truth of what he wrote :

“ But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flower, the bloom is shed ! ”

KEEP ON PRAYING

He spake a parable unto them, to the end that they ought always to pray and not to faint.—Luke 18 : 1.

Let us not be deceived into exchanging Christianity for a cold philosophy about God and destiny.

Let no one persuade us that our religion can possibly survive without prayer.

For the essence of the Bible is that there is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God.

His servants have ever turned to Him in the day of their need, and He has wrought great deliverance for them.

Not always in the way that they have expected, for that would be to make the Divine wisdom subject to human ignorance.

But always in such a way as to give them the *substance* of His mercy, and to prove that an earnest, faithful prayer has never been offered without bringing down a blessing.

WHICH WAY ARE WE MOVING ?

Strangers and pilgrims on the earth.—Hebrews 11 : 13.

Wherever you are, and whoever you may be, there is one thing in which you and I are just alike, at this moment, and in all the moments of our existence.

We are not at rest ; we are on a journey.

Our life is not a mere fact ; it is a movement, a tendency, a steady, ceaseless progress toward an unseen goal.

We are gaining something, or losing something, every day.

Even when our position and our character seem to remain precisely the same, they are changing.

For the mere advance of time is a change.

It is not the same thing to have a bare field in January and in July. The season makes the difference.

The limitations that are childlike in the child are childish in the man.

Everything that we do is a step in one direction or another.

Even the failure to do something is in itself a deed.

It sets us forward or backward.

The action of the negative pole of a magnet is just as real as the action of the positive.

To decline is to accept—the other alternative.

Are you richer to-day than you were yesterday?

No? Then you are a little poorer.

Are you better to-day than you were yesterday?

No? Then you are a little worse.

Are you nearer to your port to-day than you were yesterday?

Yes—you must be a little nearer to some port or other; for since your ship was first launched upon the sea of life, you have never been still for a single moment; this sea is too deep, you could not find an anchorage if you would; there can be no pause until you come into port.

GOD'S TRUTHFULNESS

God, that cannot lie.—Titus 1 : 2.

What is possible with man is impossible with God.

He cannot lie.

And you remember at once a number of other places in the Bible where the same doctrine is taught.

The bedrock of the Bible is the truthfulness of God.

So we ought to remember that His warnings against sin are true.

They are not mere threats for the purpose of terrifying man.

They are sincere and honest statements of what will come, and must come, upon those who die in their sins, impenitent and unforgiven.

It is strange, and yet there surely is a reason in it, that the most solemn and awful of these declarations came from the lips of Him who was Love incarnate.

Not in wrath, not in loud and angry words, swept by passion beyond the bounds of truth, but with a Divine gentleness and with that serious calm which is the very air of sincerity, Jesus foretells the future of those who do not obtain the mercy of God and show mercy to their fellow-men.

But there is another thing more important still for us to remember, and that is that all God's promises of life and salvation through Jesus Christ are true.

“Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast him out.”

“Whosoever will, let him come.”

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY

He that bath clean hands and a pure heart.—Psalm 24 : 4.

An honest, earnest, true heart ; a hand that will not stain itself with unjust gain, or hold an unequal balance, or sign a deceitful letter, or draw an unfair contract ; a tongue that will not twist itself to a falsehood or take up an evil report ; a soul that points as true as a compass to the highest ideal of manhood or womanhood—these are the marks and qualities of God’s people everywhere.

And when these qualities are exalted and manifested, when a Christian means one whose word is his bond, who can be trusted with untold treasure without fear of his stealing, whose praise is an honour and whose friendship is a jewel of priceless value ; one who does his duty toward his fellow-men as a service to his God ; one whom you can more certainly trust to paint your house ; or make your clothes, or draw your will, or take care of the health of your family, because he is a Christian ; one whose outward integrity is the proof of inward purity—then the church will have great praise and large triumph.

HERESY TRIALS

Foolish and ignorant questionings refuse, knowing that they gender strifes.—II Timothy 2 : 23.

I hate heresy trials.

Most of them originate in envy, malice, and uncharitableness.

Some of them beget new heresies.

None of them lend any new strength to the truth or give any new impulse to the practice of religion.

So far as I know, there is no trial for heresy recorded in the New Testament.

But there were trials for dishonesty and un-Christian conduct and bad behaviour.

These are the real heresies.

Even the apostles differed in their opinions and in their ways of stating them.

St. Paul might have called St. James heretical.

But he never did—because they both loved and followed Christ.

HOLLOW FAME

Forgotten as a dead man out of mind.—Psalm 31 : 12.

What shall we say of fame as the chief end of life ?

Here, again, we must be careful to discriminate between the thing itself and other things which are often confused with it.

Fame is simply what our fellow-men think and say of us.

It may be world-wide ; it may only reach to a

single country or city ; it may be confined to a narrow circle of society.

Translated in one way, fame is glory ; translated in another way, it is merely notoriety.

It is a thing which exists, of course ; for the thoughts of other people about us are just as actual as our thoughts about ourselves, or the real character and conduct with which those thoughts are concerned.

But the three things do not always correspond.

Consider what hollow fame is worth.

It may be good or bad, flattering or painfully truthful.

People are celebrated sometimes for their vices, sometimes for their follies.

Anything out of the ordinary line will attract notice.

Notoriety may be purchased by a colossal extravagance or a monumental absurdity.

A person has been made notorious simply by showing himself "more kinds of a fool" than anyone else in the community.

To be governed in our course of life by a timorous consideration of what the world will think of us, is to be even lighter and more fickle than a weathercock.

It is to be blown about by winds so small and slight that they could not even lift a straw outside of our own imagination.

HOW BROAD IS YOUR RELIGION ?

Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father : for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.—Matthew 3 : 9.

Christ was a liberal ; and that is why the scribes and Pharisees hated Him and had Him crucified.

The false conception of the Hebrew religion was always trying to confine its joys and blessings to a strict line ; as if the favour of God were entailed, and none could boast of it save those who had Abraham to their father.

This was the keynote of that bigoted Pharisaic theology against which Jesus Christ clashed when He came to proclaim the broader Fatherhood of God.

It was this perverted idea which made the scribes and lawyers rave, when he said that there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elisha, but unto none of them was he sent, but only to the widow of pagan Sarepta ; and there were many lepers in Israel, but none of them was healed save Naaman the Syrian.

This seemed to them the rankest heresy.

But indeed it was the same truth which had been declared to Adam, and again to Abraham in whose seed all nations should be blessed, and again to Moses when God said, " All the earth is mine," and again by David and his people when they sang of the world-wide dominion of Jehovah—the same truth which was stated by Peter when he declared :

" In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."

THE DOOR TO HAPPINESS

I am the door : by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.—John 10 : 9.

Through Christ our best activities, our noblest powers of effort and achievement, go out into liberty.

Let us frankly admit that the Christian life has its restrictions, its limitations, its constraints.

It does impose a barrier between the heart and some of its desires.

It involves sacrifice, resignation, giving up.

But tell me one thing that you would have to resign if you accepted Christ, and I will tell you that without that thing you would be far purer, stronger, happier, better fitted to live than you are to-day.

If you give it up, if you leave it behind you and enter into salvation through Christ the door, you will find the same door open before you to activities that are unspeakably nobler, pleasures that are infinitely more satisfying, and rewards that are immeasurably richer.

For this is what Christ does for the man who comes in through Him.

He gives that man a new hope, a new inspiration, a new motive and power of effort, a new force of love and courage in all his faculties, and then sends him out again into the world to live and to work with all his energies.

What good thing is there that Christ will not let you do if you take Him as your Master ?

DON'T MAKE A PET OF YOUR ANGER

Be ye angry and sin not : let not the sun go down upon your wrath.—Ephesians 4 : 26.

St. Paul here makes a wise concession to the infirmity of our human tempers and gives a Christian counsel for controlling them.

“Be ye angry,” says he (quite positively, as if we could not help it), “and sin not : let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”

Even of Christ it is recorded that once he looked on the Pharisees “with anger,” because of their hardness of heart. (Mark 3 : 5.)

But afterwards He died for them, as for all sinful men ; and He prayed that they might be forgiven, because of their ignorance.

To be incapable of anger is to be less than human.

To yield to it without a cause is to run in danger of the judgment.

To be fond of it and make a pet of it is to court trouble and sorrow.

When night falls let anger die.

Anger that breaks out is troublesome.

Anger that sinks in is fatal.

A well-founded mistrust of treacherous persons we may keep. But God save us from the poison of a cherished grudge.

A DUTY OF THE ENLIGHTENED

Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.—Matthew 5 : 16.

Even in what we call respectable society, forces of darkness are at work.

Are there no unrighteous practices in business,

no false standards in social life, no licensed frauds and falsehoods in politics, no vile and vulgar tendencies in art and literature and journalism, in this self-complacent modern world of which we are a part ?

All these things are threatening signs.

The question for us men of enlightenment is :

What are we going to do to arrest and counteract these tendencies ?

It is not enough for us to take a negative position in regard to them.

If our influence is to be real, it must be positive.

It is not enough to say, "Keep out of the darkness."

On the contrary, we must enter it, as light enters a dark house to overcome and disperse the gloom.

Good men are not meant to be simply like trees planted by rivers of water, flourishing in their own pride and for their own sake.

They ought to be like the eucalyptus trees which have been set out in the marshes of the Campagna, from which a healthful, tonic influence is said to be diffused to countervail the miasma.

They ought to be like the tree of paradise, "whose leaves are for the healing of the nations."

THE INWARDNESS OF EVIL

Out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders.—Matthew 15 : 19.

We are often inclined to make the faults of our natures and dispositions the excuse for our misdeeds.

But truly, if anything could increase our un-

worthiness, it would be just this fact that our worst temptations come from within ourselves, and we are driven into wrong not by any outward tempest so much as by the force of our own impure and selfish passions.

Never plead your natural disposition as an excuse for evil deeds.

But for the deeds, the disposition would not have become confirmed.

It is as base to love lying as it is to lie.

It is as bad to have a murderous temper as it is to kill.

It is the evil nature which God condemns.

Let us make it not a cloak for sin, but a reason for penitence and a strong plea for help to overcome it.

When a man really wishes to reform and do better, he should go to the root of the matter. His prayer should be :

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”

LABOUR SANCTIFIED

Diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.—
Romans 12 : 11.

Christ came into the world to sanctify all forms of honest human toil and all tasks of vital human effort.

Christ came into the world not to separate men from life, but to bring a larger, richer life into men.

Christ came into the world to consecrate humanity to a holy priesthood, serving God in the ritual of the common life.

The activities that mar and weaken and destroy humanity, he would check and crush out.

The activities that develop true manhood and womanhood and make the world a better place to live in, He would encourage and enlarge.

He came to break down the false distinction between the sacred and the secular.

There is no clean and honest work in this world which may not be done in Christ's name, and done a little better because the workman calls Jesus his Master.

“ Every mason in the quarry, every builder on the shore,
Every woodsman in the forest, every boatman at the oar,
Hewing wood and drawing water, splitting stones and
cleaving sod,
All the dusty ranks of labour in the regiment of God,
March together toward His triumph, do the task His hands
prepare ;
Honest toil is holy service, faithful work is praise and
prayer.”

MAJORITIES NOT INFALLIBLE

They all said, Let him be crucified. . . . They cried out exceedingly, Let him be crucified.—Matthew 27 : 22, 23.

The dogma of popular infallibility goes directly in the teeth of experience, and cancels that wise and needful maxim of the Hebrew commonwealth :

“ Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.”

A thoughtful consideration of the self-begotten errors which brought about the downfall of such democracy as existed in Athens, in republican Rome, in revolutionary France, and more recently, for a few months, in unhappy Russia, dreaming of

freedom and walking straight into the ditch of Soviet slavery—such a study would yield matter for a book of profitable warnings.

It is folly to suppose that by combining ignorances you can create wisdom, or that by massing prejudices you will evolve fair play.

It is easier to move an individual than to move a mob. But it is harder to stop a mob when it gets going the wrong way.

A plebiscite is valuable only when the people are given time and encouragement to think.

Christ was crucified by a referendum.

BAD OLD WAYS

The way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the hire of wrong doing.—II Peter 2 : 15.

Among antiquities it is wise to discriminate. Some old furniture is both ugly and uncomfortable.

Evil is almost, if not quite, as ancient as good.

Folly and wisdom, among men at least, are twins, and we cannot distinguish between them by the grey hairs.

Adam's way was old enough ; and so was the way of Cain, and of Noah's vile son, and of Lot's lewd daughters, and of Balaam, and of Jezebel, and of Manasseh.

Judas Iscariot was as old as St. John.

Ananias and Sapphira were of the same age with St. Peter and St. Paul.

This is what the hard-boiled conservative fails to take into account.

It is enough for him to know that a thing is antique, to make him regard it as venerable.

He reveres all long-established ways, and considers every rule of ancient date an infallible commandment.

This petrifies the moral judgment and makes ethics a matter of chronology.

No rule, no custom is old enough to refuse an answer to the question :

Are you right, or wrong ?

SILLY STREAKS IN WISE MEN

So doth a little folly him that is in reputation.—Ecclesiastes 10 : 1.

Wisdom in the abstract is perfect, rounded and complete.

But wisdom in the concrete, as we find it embodied in those whom we call wise men, always has cracks in it.

There are faults in the gold-bearing vein.

For example, the silly streak in Solomon, most sagacious of kings, seems to have been his insatiable fondness for the fair sex.

It is not our place to judge and condemn the personal passions and prejudices of the wise. But we shall do well to recognise them as weak points.

The fortunate thing is that they seldom coincide. When we put them side by side they tend to correct and neutralise one another.

That is what is meant by the proverb : “ In a multitude of counsellors there is safety.”

It is not because the many know more, but because when they meet together they joyfully detect and expose one another's silly streaks.

One Person alone, in all history, is free from flaws. Read Sidney Lanier's poem "The Crystal." Remember what Pontius Pilate said of Jesus :
" I find no fault in Him."

GOD'S WILL IN PRAYER

Praying at all seasons.—Ephesians 6 : 18.

It is no valid objection to prayer to say that the Bible itself teaches that all things are foreordained in the wise counsel of God before they come to pass.

For this only carries us back into the region of the infinite quantities, where all our logic is at fault.

If the event is predetermined, so also may be the prayer.

It may be the connecting link in the chain.

And since we cannot tell beforehand what God will do, it would be just as foolish to say that He will send the blessing whether we ask for it or not, as it would be to say that He will send the harvest without the seed, or the rain without the cloud.

Moreover, the prayer itself is a part of the blessing.

Who shall say that it is not a great benefit to a man just to open his heart to God, to make his trouble and his care known, to give utterance to his inmost desire and need ?

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

Learn to do good.—Isaiah 1 : 17.

Denial is a barren fig-tree.

* * *

Doubt is like fog. It hides things, but it does not destroy them.

* * *

It is easier to get what we like, than to escape from what we dislike.

* * *

Good music is not difficult to obtain. But it is hard to get away from the ugly noises with which the modern city is cursed.

* * *

To open a fine vista you have only to cut a few trees. But to shut out an ugly view you must plant a grove and wait for it to grow.

* * *

You will teach your children good principles more readily than you will rid them of bad habits.

* * *

The best way to correct a foul odour in a room is not to burn a pastille, but to open the windows and let the fresh air blow in.

* * *

If you will tell your boy what to do, you will shorten the needful catalogue of *Dont's*.

• • •

The untenanted house is the one that is in danger.

* * *

But doing good, like everything else worth while, has to be learned.

A LASTING HABITATION

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.—
Psalm 90 : 1.

Man is a natural nomad, with a desire for permanence.

A tent for the wandering body, but an everlasting mansion for the believing soul—this is what we can see when we take a long, true look at life.

Wherever thou art, if thou believest in God, He is thy roof to shelter thee, He is thy hearth to warm thee, He is thy refuge and thy resting-place.

If once thou hast found this home and entered it, thou canst not be defenceless or forlorn. For He who remains the same amid all uncertainties and changes, He whose goodness antedates creation and whose faithfulness outwears the mountains, He with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning, is thy habitation and thy God.

Doubly does this thought comfort and strengthen us when we remember those who have found peace and security here in former generations.

It is not a new house that shelters us but a family home.

For our God is the God of our fathers.

MUSIC AS A DEFENCE

Thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance.—Psalm 32 : 7.

The counterpart to this psalm of repentance and joy is the gospel story of the prodigal son. And in both there is "music and dancing."

This verse carries with it a picture and an idea.

It suggests a company of friends joining hands and singing around the son that was lost and is found.

Their songs are his guard ; they surround him like a wall.

Pure music is a protection to the soul.

If anyone is merry, let him sing ; and the little devils who are always waiting to spoil every pleasure by perverting it to evil, will fly away, like bats from a cavern where a torch is kindled.

Good music is a defence against bad thoughts.

But the time for joyful music is not when the prodigal is in the far country, wasting his substance in riotous living, or feeding on husks among the swine, but when he comes to himself and goes home.

Yet in some churches the doleful music is enough to discourage any returning wanderer.

I have never sung, and will never sing, a hymn about hell.

If you believe in it, surely it's nothing to sing about.

QUO VADIS

Choose you this day whom ye will serve.—Joshua 24 : 15.]

The modern theory about the factors that control life would put heredity first, environment second, and free will last.

I would reverse the order: personal choice first, surrounding influence second, and inherited equipment third.

All three are real, and the ways are before us.

We can travel by the road that we choose.

We go fast or slow according to our temperament, which may be sluggish or active.

But the direction in which we go is a matter of our own decision.

I once knew a dull-witted son of a dissipated father, who made as handsome and brave a little ride on the journey of life as anyone could imagine.

Heredity gives us our outfit.

Environment supplies our company. But when we come to the cross-roads, the question is :

“ Boy, which way will you ride ? ”

HUMAN MEMBERSHIP

For we are members one of another.—Ephesians 4 : 25.

Life is just the process of discovering our relationships. While they increase, we grow. When they diminish, we shrink. There is no death except for those who shut themselves up and out.

* * *

In the progress of personality, first comes a

declaration of independence, then a recognition of interdependence.

* * *

It is a pity that men should be divided by their pleasures more than by their work.

* * *

We have a word in English for suffering together—sympathy. But where is the word in our language for rejoicing together?

* * *

Does this verbal lack mean that we need companionship in sorrow more than in joy? I think not. It seems to me more likely that it is an evidence of the old superstition of our race that grief is holier than gladness, and that mourning is a duty while joy is only an indulgence.

* * *

This notion is all wrong—contrary to Christianity. St. Paul tells us to “rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”

* * *

He translates human membership in terms of companionship—a sharing of everything in life’s journey.

THE SOLIDARITY OF EVIL

Against thee, thee only have I sinned.—Psalm 51 : 4.

Do we really understand that every bad deed we commit is a part of all the evil that is in the world?

There is no such thing as a single, separate sin.

If we hate, that is a contribution to the world's volcano of hatred.

If we lie, that is a contribution to the world's fog of falsehood.

Our offences against our neighbour are treason, because they lend aid and comfort to the great enemy, the Evil One.

They are betrayals of God, who is love and truth.

The warfare between good and evil is a long, long campaign—not eternal as the Zoroastrians say, because evil is self-destroying and must finally perish in defeat—but so long that the end is far beyond our vision.

Meantime, every soldier counts in every battle, and the humblest sentry post is fraught with great responsibilities.

There is no divided allegiance. The challenge is :

“ Under which King, Bezonian ? Speak or die.”

THE DIVINE PRESENCE

Do not I fill heaven and earth ? saith the Lord.—Jeremiah
23 : 24

Our daily existence sometimes seems to us a thing of small account.

It appears to be made up of endless petty tasks and a few petty pleasures and many petty trials.

It produces no great results.

We just go on attending to the details of business in a small office, or keeping house in a quiet street ; and the children are a little larger this year than they were last year ; and we have a few more grey

hairs ; and we have managed to meet our obligations fairly well.

But we wonder what we are sent into the world for.

My friend, you were sent into the world to live your life with God.

If He can come into this life of yours, you ought to think well of it.

All its daily duties, all its small delights, should seem to you refined and uplifted by the Divine participation in them.

Let us learn that the whole Christian life, whether it is lived on a large scale or a small one, is a beautiful and worthy life.

What God requires of us is not to accomplish anything wonderful, but to do justice, and love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

God has two thrones—one in the highest heaven, one in the lowliest heart.

KNOWING AND DOING

If ye know, happy are ye if ye do these things.—John 13 : 17:

Between the knowing and the doing there is a deep gulf.

Into that abyss the happiness of many a man slips, and is lost.

There is no peace, no real and lasting felicity for a human life until the gulf is closed, and the continent of conduct meets the continent of creed, edge to edge, lip to lip, firmly joined forever.

It is not a blessing to know the things that Christ teaches, and then go on living as if they were false or doubtful.

It is a trouble, a torment, a secret misery.

To know that God is our Father and yet to withhold our love and service from Him; to know that Christ died for us, and yet to deny Him and refuse to follow Him; to know that there is an immortal life, and yet to waste and lose our souls in the pursuit of sensual pleasure and such small portion of the world as we may hope to gain—surely, that is the deepest of all unhappiness.

But the right kind of knowing carries in its heart the doing of the truth.

And the right kind of doing leads to a fuller and happier knowing.

“If any man will do God’s will,” declares Christ, “he shall know of the doctrine.”

HOW TO FADE

We all do fade as a leaf.—Isaiah 64 : 6.

The comparison is old—so old that the young critics who are obsessed by their own newness call it a *cliché*, and think scorn of it.

Yet it is so natural that men will use it, or at least feel it, until the final autumn of Time brings the last leaf from the forest and the last man to his grave.

But with what a difference do the leaves fade !

Some wither brownly like the alder and the butter-nut.

Some put on golden hues like the white birch and the quaking aspen.

Some are arrayed in glad colours of scarlet and saffron like the red oak, the maple and the liquid-amber.

You can hardly call this fading, since it crowns the hills with glory and fills the vales with splendour.

Even so differently do men grow old and pass away.

Some with dry and sombre reluctance, crackling as they wither and rustling as they fall.

Some with the golden light of another world upon them.

Some with rich and mellow radiance, welcoming the Divine law which rules the earthly seasons, in the spirit of Stevenson's "Requiem":

" Glad did I live and gladly die.
And I laid me down with a will."

I have noticed that certain trees renew in their autumn foliage the same colour that marked them in the budding time of spring, but with deeper, fuller hues.

Can it be so with men?

TWO PATHS IN FRIENDSHIP

We took sweet counsel together, and walked into the house of God in company.—Psalm 55 : 14.

There are two paths in friendship: up, and down.

What are you seeking in human intercourse? It is said that a man may be known by the company he keeps. Not always. He may be better known by the purpose with which he keeps it.

The Pharisees kept company with respectable folk, and found dead men's bones. Christ kept company with publicans and sinners, and found hidden treasure.

If you are seeking in your fellow-men that which ministers to ambition or avarice or sensuality, or trying to make friends simply in order that they may help you to secure certain advantages in the world of wealth or fashion, or forming ties of intimacy whose chief attraction lies in their appeal to that which is selfish and greedy and base in your nature, then you are surely on the descending path.

But if you are looking for that which is best in the men and women with whom you come into contact ; if you are seeking also to give them that which is best in yourself ; if you are looking for a friendship which shall help you to know yourself as you are and to fulfil yourself as you ought to be, and for a love which shall be a true comradeship and a mutual inspiration to all nobility of living, then you are surely on the ascending path.

CHOOSE YOUR VIEWPOINT

As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy : and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.—I Corinthians 15 : 48.

When we look only at the sensuous side we may read nature as a grocer's account-book, but when we look at the spiritual side we begin to interpret nature as a divine poem.

There are some people in the world, and very decent people, too, to whom the returning summer cannot mean much more than it means to a comfortable cow—a time of physical pleasure, when there are no more blizzards, and it is easy to move about, and there are plenty of green things to eat.

But there are others to whom it means a blossom-

ing of thankful thoughts, a rapture of gentle affections, a promise of new and immortal life.

I once heard an Englishman, looking down upon the glittering, motionless billows of the Mer de Glace, remark that "all that ice would bring a lot of money in the hot season in Calcutta, don't you know?"

The poet Coleridge, in his "Hymn at Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni," heard those silent cataracts of frozen splendour singing the eternal praise of God. It is always open to us to choose whether we will fix our regards upon the lower or upon the higher side of nature.

We have two pairs of eyes, one of the sense and one of the soul.

The spiritual vision seeks the things that are above.

To look up is to aspire.

To aspire is to rise.

A MISTAKEN GOAL

He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man.—Proverbs 21 : 17.

The man who chooses pleasure as the object of his life has no real port of destination, but is like a boat that beats up and down and drifts to and fro, merely to feel the motion of the waves and the impulse of the wind.

When the voyage of life is done he has reached no haven, he has accomplished nothing.

St. Paul says of the pleasure seekers :

"Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things."

And in another place, lest we should forget that this is as true of women as it is of men, he says :

"She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."

That saying is profoundly true.

A pleasure-seeking life is a living death, because its object perishes even while it is attained, and at the end nothing is left of it but dust and ashes.

But the pleasure that expands our powers and makes us grow, the pleasure that is full of what Wordsworth called "*vital* feelings of delight," that is a real and worthy object of human desire and effort.

It ranks next to duty.

Indeed, it is a kind of duty, because it is a means of development.

Why are we born, if not to grow ?

THE IDLENESS OF IDOLS

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.—
Exodus 20 : 5.

He that maketh an image or likeness of anything in heaven or earth is higher than the work of his making, and the soul of the artificer is above the fruit of his labour.

If he bow down to it he is abased, and if he worship it he layeth fetters on his own spirit.

The heart of man hath not uttered the depth of his thought, nor the hand of man given shape to the fairest of his dreaming.

The living is more excellent than the lifeless, and a little child more precious than all graven images.

The idols of the mind are fashioned in darkness, and the foolish pay homage to their vain imaginations.

There is a mystery of godliness, and the hand of man can not reveal it to his vision.

Therefore let us take pleasure in the sculptures on the wall, but we adore only the King Invisible and Immortal.

Hallowed be His name in every tongue of man.

THE GREAT GIFTS

But desire earnestly the greater gifts.—I Corinthians 12 : 31.

It is only by thinking about great things that we come to love them, and only by loving them we come to long for them, and only by longing for them we are impelled to seek after them, and only by seeking after them do they become ours and enter into our vital experience.

Is not the reason why our lives often seem so narrow and poor and weak, why their interests seem so trivial, their results so feeble, just because we think so much of the things that are petty and narrow and barren and transient, and so little of the things that are great and fruitful and eternal ?

These dry and thirsty lives of ours, these dull, stale, flat, and unprofitable lives of ours—whose fault is it that they are so ?

Ours, and ours alone.

For the riches of infinite wealth and the powers of immeasurable strength are all about us waiting for us to possess and use them.

But there is only one way in which we can enter into their possession, and that is by thinking about

them, by considering them earnestly and steadily until they draw us to themselves.

The strength of your life is measured by the strength of your will.

But the strength of your will is just the strength of the wish that lies behind it.

And the strength of your wish depends upon the sincerity and earnestness and tenacity with which you fix your attention upon the things which are really great and worthy to be loved.

DAY DREAMING ABOUT OURSELVES

I will meditate in thy precepts and have respect unto thy ways.—
Psalm 119 : 15.

Our dreams of the future are too much like the modern stage, full of elaborate scenery and machinery, crowded with startling effects and brilliant costumes and magical transformations, but strangely vacant of all real characters.

The stuff of which our day dreams are made is for the most part of very cheap material.

We seldom weave into them the threads of our inmost spiritual life.

We fancy ourselves going through the various experiences of life, a fortunate marriage, a successful business career, a literary triumph, a political victory.

But we do not stay to ask what manner of men and women we shall be when we are living here or there, or doing thus or so.

Yet it is a much more important question than the thousand and one trifling interrogatories about the future with which we amuse our idle hours.

We are on a path which leads upward, by sure and steady steps, when we begin to look at our future selves with eyes of noble and clear purpose, and see our figures climbing, with patient, dauntless effort, towards the heights of true manhood and womanhood.

Visions like these are Joseph's dreams.

The very memory of them, if we cherish it, is a power of pure restraint and generous inspiration.

LAWFUL WEALTH

And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein.—Leviticus 25 : 19.

There is a great deal of foolish railing against wealth, which takes for granted now that it is an unsubstantial and illusory good, and now that it is not good at all, but only an unmixed evil, and the root of all other evils.

Many preachers and moralists talk about wealth in this way.

But they do not really think about it in this way. They know better.

And when young people discover and observe the curious inconsistency between the teacher's words and his thoughts, as illuminated by his conduct, they are likely to experience a sense of disappointment, and a serious revulsion from a doctrine which does not seem to be sincere.

Wealth is simply the visible result of human labour, or of the utilisation of natural forces and products, in such a form that it can be exchanged.

A gallon of water in a mountain lake is not wealth.

But the same gallon of water conveyed through an aqueduct and delivered in the heart of a great city represents a certain amount of wealth, because it has a value in relation to the wants of men.

A tree growing in an inaccessible forest is not wealth.

But a piece of lumber which can be delivered in a place where men are building houses is a bit of wealth.

Money is only the symbol of wealth, a token or counter by means of which it can be exchanged.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The ten commandments.—Exodus 34 : 28.

Whereunto shall we liken the Ten Commandments, and to what shall we compare the laws revealed upon Mount Sinai ?

They are fruits borne by the tree of wisdom, wherein the seed of harvest to come is hidden.

They are jewels in the crust of earth, wherein the teachings of life are made clear as crystal.

Wherefore it is said that God wrote them upon the rocks, because they belong to the foundations.

And he gave them to Israel, because they were his people chosen to enlighten all nations.

Yet he hath broken and scattered Israel, and the tables of stone laid up in the ark have vanished.

But the fruitfulness of their wisdom is not lost, neither have the jewels of their righteousness been darkened.

For in them we see clearly what is good for man to do, and what things hinder him in the upward way of living.

Wherefore Christ hath put His seal upon the Ten Commandments, because their meaning is love to God and our neighbour.

ONLY ONE GOD

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.—Exodus 20 : 3.

The men that make many gods are in confusion, because their making is after their own image.

Therefore the gods of the heathen are at war one with another ; they lie and steal and are not ashamed.

Thus do the makers of many gods build up trouble in their soul, and in the end they have no god who can save them.

But even as the whole world is one to the uttermost bounds, so all the powers that be are under the will of one God.

The lifting up of the mountains is according to His law, and the sea is stayed by His command.

He worketh secretly in the innermost parts of the earth, and the living creatures come forth at His bidding.

But unto man He saith : Thou art My child, in freedom have I begotten thee.

Therefore to obey Him is wisdom, and to worship Him is peace of mind.

When the day of perplexity cometh upon us, we take refuge in the Eternal.

And when the mystery of life is too hard for us, we abide with Christ in God.

THE SOUL MUST HAVE ITS DAY

Remember the rest day to keep it holy.—Exodus 20 : 8.

Remember also the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said :

“The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.”

In the business of living, the life within is forgotten ; and the good seed is choked by the cares of the world.

How shall the soul be fed unless there be a time for feeding ; and how shall the week be balanced without a day of rest ?

Many diseases afflict those who are ill-nourished ; and the evils of this generation are multiplied by soul starving.

Man is moulded in his habits ; and the practice of mankind sheweth that one day in seven is little enough for the needs of the spirit.

Yet is the seventh in number not sacred ; but the day that best nourisheth the life within shall be kept holy.

Rest is not found in idleness, but in good works, and quiet thoughts, and joy in the Lord.

Let us keep not the sabbath of the Pharisees, but the sabbath of Christ.

THE COMMANDMENT WITH PROMISE

Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.—Exodus 20 : 12.

He that despiseth his parents is a troubler of his own nest ; and length of days is no blessing when the house is full of rebellion.

Therefore the commandment and the promise are bound together, lest old age should be a calamity and youth a curse.

There is nothing steadfast in the nation unless the home hath foundations ; and the cornerstone of the household is honour.

In every religion reverence is a virtue, and they that cast off the aged are a barbarous people.

Put thy trust in a stealer of horses rather than in one that revileth his father, and walk with him that speaketh lies rather than with one that mocketh his mother.

Turn thy face away if thy father be in fault, and refrain thy lips if thy mother stumble, for it is not thine office to condemn them.

But do them honour in all virtue, and reward them gladly in all praise.

So shall thy children learn to bless thee, and God shall make thy heritage secure.

DEFENCES

Thou shalt not.—Exodus 20 : 13-17.

The garden of the fool hath no fences ; and the horses of the wicked are without bit or bridle.

All that harmeth thy neighbour is a hurt to thee ; and the wickedness of evil is that it hindereth loving.

Beware of covetousness ; for it is a secret way and an easy path to all other vices.

Let the love of thy fellow-men guide thee toward virtue, and the goodness of God lead thee to repentance.

He who hath not learned to give up is not worthy

to possess, for the control of passion is the secret of freedom.

A false witness against his neighbour is self-condemned, but one who hath spoken truth without fear is held in honour.

Thy virtues may not save thee, but they will give light to those that are in darkness.

Let us therefore strive to live honestly in the sight of all men, that they may glorify not us but our Father in heaven.

And wherein we have failed we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous.

DOCTRINE AND FAITH

For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.—I Corinthians 3 : 11.

Let us never imagine that we can strengthen Christianity by leaving out the great doctrines which have given it life and power.

Faith is not a mere matter of feeling.

It is the acceptance of revealed truth in regard to God and the world, Christ and the soul, duty and immortality.

What the world wants to-day is a strong, true, vital preaching of doctrine.

But we must put the emphasis of our preaching where it belongs, where Christ puts it, on the doctrines that are most important to human life and happiness.

I will not admit that it makes no difference to a man of this age whether or not he believes in the personal God and the Divine Christ.

If he really believes, it makes all the difference

between spiritual strength and spiritual weakness, between optimism and pessimism.

I will not admit that it makes no difference to a learned scholar or a simple labourer whether he accepts or ignores the doctrine of the atonement, the doctrine of personal immortality.

If he knows that Christ died for him, that there is a future beyond the grave, it makes all the difference between despair and hope, between the helpless frailty of a being that is puffed out like a candle and the joyful power of an endless life.

A SOCIAL PROPHYLACTIC

As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.—
Psalm 65 : 3.

Decay begins in discord. It is the loss of balance in an organism. One part of the system gets too much nourishment, another part too little.

Morbid processes are established. Tissues break down. In their debris all sorts of malignant growths take root. Ruin follows.

Now this is precisely the danger to which the social organism is exposed.

From this danger religion is meant to preserve us.

Certainly there can be no true Christianity which does not aim at this result.

It should be a balancing, compensating, regulating power.

It should keep the relations between man and man, between class and class, normal and healthful and mutually beneficent.

It should humble the pride of the rich, and moderate the envy of the poor.

It should soften and ameliorate the unavoidable

inequalities of life, and transform them from causes of jealous hatred into opportunities of loving and generous service.

If it fails to do this, it is salt without savour, and when a social revolution comes, as the consequence of social corruption, men will cast out the unsalted religion and tread it under foot.

GUIDANCE BETTER THAN REGULATION

Walk in the light.—I John 1 : 7.

To live up to a principle is harder than to obey a set of rules.

But just for that reason it may be better.

People are always asking for definite and precise ethical prescriptions—or trying to impose them on others.

Take so many grams of this virtue, and so many minims of that good habit, and so many drops of this moral tincture.

Avoid this vice of conduct, and that error of diet, and this crime of thought.

But St. John says to us very simply, “Walk in the light.”

You see where the shadow falls.

You can see where the star leads. Follow it with open eyes.

Let us try this way of guidance more seriously than we have yet done. The light of good will in in all our experiments !

The glow of kindness in all our efforts !

The purpose of beneficence in all our plans !

For a year, a month, even a week—do you think we can do it ?

You are my partner, neighbour, and I am yours.

But to tell the truth, between us we have small capital and less experience.

To carry out this enterprise we shall need the help of our silent partner—the Divine, Invisible One who knows all.

VOTES DIFFER IN VALUE

They that are wise among the people shall instruct many.—
Daniel 11 : 33.

Universal suffrage—one man, one vote—may be a good motto.

But it does not mean that all votes are equal in value.

In old Calvinton, when I was young, we had a professor who was a saint, a sage, and a joy to the heart. Every one in the town knew and loved him.

As he rode along the main street in his little one-horse carryall on election day, we would say :

“ There goes the old Doctor to vote the Republican ticket.”

When he had deposited his ballot, he would come out, climb into the back seat of the wagon, and smiling hold the reins, while his Irish coachman went in to exercise the proud privilege of suffrage.

As Pat emerged from the polls, he would grin, and whisper behind the back of his hand to the bystanders :

“ Begorra, oi’ve just nulligated ould Docther’s vote ! ”

But had Pat done as much as that ?

Neither he himself nor the laughing bystanders really thought so.

There was something in the example of the wise old doctor faithfully performing a simple duty of citizenship that counted far beyond the ballot he had dropped in the box.

It could not be equalled save by a man of equal wisdom and character.

EVERGREENS

And the boughs thereof were like cedars of God.—Psalm 80 : 10.

Most of the trees of Palestine, the oak, the terebinth, and the sycamore, the fig, the mulberry, and the almond-tree, are deciduous.

But one, and that the noblest of them all, is an evergreen.

The cedar of Lebanon stands loftily upon the mountain, fearing neither height of precipice nor depth of snow, stretching out broad boughs as if to welcome all beneath its layers of unfailing shade.

When you have seen one of these trees upon its royal throne, you know what the Psalmist meant when he said of the prospering vine of Israel that its boughs were like the cedars of God.

There is something divinely majestic about the great evergreens.

A forest filled with their pillared trunks has the air of a temple.

I know a grove of silver pines at the Sidney Lanier Camp in Maine, the lightest murmur of whose whispering leaves invites to worship.

Amid the brighter foliage of summer the evergreens look sombre and monotonous, but their cool aisles are a shelter from the burning heat.

And in the bare winter they offer an unchanging retreat.

Not of the cedars of Lebanon only would I chant the praise.

Knowing the lofty forests of the West, I would sing psalms of the Douglas fir-trees and the yellow pines of God.

THE ROYAL LAW

The royal law . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
—James 2 : 8.

This law as it stands, with its double duty of the right love of oneself and the equal love of one's neighbour, has been already considered in these papers.

Perhaps we may come back to it again, for it is the most important of all practical directions, as well as the most difficult to read and interpret correctly.

If I could do that, I should be wiser than I know myself to be.

But for to-day let us concern ourselves only with the question of why St. James calls this *The Royal Law*.

Is it because Christ gave it ?

But He gave also many other commandments, and He is still giving them through His Spirit.

Is it because kings always keep it ?

But some of them have not kept it at all, and few of them have always observed it.

I think it may be because it corresponds to the true ideal of what royalness means.

For only he is fit to rule men, who loves them and desires their welfare as much as he values his own high place.

I think it may be also because if this law

were kept, it would make all men royal, since where all are servants one of another, all are kings, too.

This is what St. Peter means when he writes :

“Ye are a chosen race, a *royal* priesthood, a holy nation.”

ARE WE ORGULOUS ?

When his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him.—Daniel 5 : 20.

Orgulous is marked in the dictionary as an obsolete word, but do we not need it still in our vocabulary ?

If the creature is not extinct, shall its name be forgotten ?

To be orgulous means more than to be proud

It means to cherish pride as a mark of nobility and to display it as a principle of conduct.

It means that the natural note of exultation has been prolonged in an endless symphony of self-praise, and the grateful consciousness of success has hardened into an inflexible sense of superiority.

Material wealth and prosperity tend to promote this spirit in men and in nations.

Can we not read the record of it in the history of ancient Babylon and Rome ?

Were there no signs of it in the Paris of the first Napoleon and the Berlin of the second William Hohenzollern ?

Has it never shown its tentacles in New York or Washington ?

Did it not speak American in the doggerel,
“The Yankee nation can lick all creation” ?

Talking with Rene Bazin in a cold Parisian attic during the darkest period of the Great War, I asked if he could name the cause of the dreadful conflict.

"Bien sur, c'est l'orgueil," he answered—"Sure, it is the orgulous spirit."

WHIMS IN WORDS

Great swelling words of vanity.—II Peter 2 : 18.

When they are used for the purpose which St. Peter indicates, namely, to deceive the ignorant and mislead the unwary, obscure wind-blown words are abominable.

They are also out of place when they are a mere verbal fashion taken up by writers who would fain be in the latest style.

Why do so many nowadays write "meticulous" when they mean careful, and "intriguing" when they mean simply interesting?

These are fads.

But a whim is something different.

There are occasions, it must be admitted, when a "round, mouth-filling" word is more fitting than a short, thin one.

"An eloquent oration" means something different from a "nice talk."

It is more accurate as well as more pleasing to describe a landscape as wonderful, than to say, "Ain't Nature great!"

The strongest words are not always of one syllable and Anglo-Saxon derivation.

Some of the noblest passages in the English Bible are full of words from Latin roots, like

“tribulation,” “incorruptible,” “charity,”
 “majesty,” “immortality.”

Permit me then to indulge my harmless whim for the word that seems most appropriate and conveys the fullest meaning.

Let me confess also to a liking for slang when it is imaginative enough.

Nothing could be more picturesque than the remark fondly attributed by the newspaper men to the Lady Mayoress of an American city at a recent royal reception: “Queen, you said a mouthful.”

Even if not true, that was well invented.

THE NEW HUMILITY

I say to every man . . . not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.—Romans 12 : 3.

There are fashions in virtue, as in all other things, and the new is for ever ousting the old, only to be cast out in turn when the old returns in a slightly different guise.

When Christianity praised the lowly mind as one of the noblest qualities in man, the pagan philosophies rejected it as unworthy, and the proud Roman world made mock of it in learned satires and in crude caricatures scrawled on barrack walls.

Then humility won the day, and was carried to excess in ascetic abasements and monkish macerations.

A new paganism came and exalted the superman, the machine maker, in his own esteem. Nietzsche despised Christianity as a morality for slaves.

New science teaches a new humility based upon the insignificance of man, a mere speck in the

vast universe, an infinitesimal passing figure in the eternal show of things.

Is the new humility superior to the old ?

Was not St. Paul nearer the mark when he warned us to think of ourselves soberly, and Pascal when he wrote of the grandeur and misery of man ?

Man is not a sublime achievement, but a great possibility.

SAFELY THROUGH THE FIRE

Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt ; and the aspect of the fourth is like the Son of God.—Daniel 3 : 25.

This story seems to me a picture of those lives which by some miracle pass safely and unwithered through the fierce furnace of the world.

For there the fires of avarice and greed, of anger and lust are ever burning.

There the coals of envy and malice, of scorn and prejudice smoulder in a frevent heat.

There the strong draughts of passion lift the flames like red volcanoes.

There the gentle dews of mercy fall not, and the streams of innocence and joy are consumed and lost.

Who can traverse this inferno in safety ? Who can come out from earthly life, alive ?

Yet some there are who do it—some who keep the heart of youth in the body of age—some who emerge from the world with not even the smell of fire upon their garments.

What is the secret of the miracle ?

It lies open in the story.

The three men who were cast into the fiery furnace walked with a fourth man who was the Son of God—Immortal Love.

“For love is life, and they who do not love
Are not alive. But every soul that loves
Lives in the heart of God and hears Him speak.”

A NEW GUESS ABOUT LIFE

My name is Legion, for we are many.—Mark 5 : 9:

I read in the newspapers that Mr. Edison, that most interesting and stimulating American of science, has just made a new guess at the basis of life.

“Humans,” says he, “are vivified, their functions mental and physical, are organised, controlled, and energised, by communities of entities.

“These entities are possessed of intelligence : the individuals are indivisible and indestructible, but so minute as not yet to have been isolated by the microscope—so minute they probably can pass through glass as freely as light”—etc., etc.

This is certainly a most poetic and picturesque guess—uncountable swarms of invisible “entities” building and unbuilding human life, like the insects in a coral reef.

I know nothing about the scientific evidence for such a theory, but certainly it makes a heavy call on faith.

Somehow or other it reminds me of the story of the demoniac of Gadara, who was possessed by something which said, “My name is Legion, for we are many.”

Are Mr. Edison's "entities" spiritual or corporeal or both?

Are they easier to believe in than angels and demons?

Is science less mysterious than religion?

Has any one but Christ the word of everlasting life?

GOD'S IMAGE RESTORED

The new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.—Colossians 3 : 10.

Do you remember the story of the portrait of Dante which is painted on the walls of the Bargello, at Florence?

For many years it was supposed that the picture had utterly perished.

But presently came an artist who was determined to find it again.

He went into the place where tradition said that it had been painted.

The room was used as a storehouse for lumber and straw. The walls were covered with dirty whitewash.

Patiently and carefully he removed the whitewash from the wall. Lines and colours long hidden began to appear.

And at last the grave, lofty, noble face of the great poet looked out again upon the world of light.

"That was wonderful," you say, "that was beautiful!"

Not half so wonderful as the work which Christ came to do in the heart of man—to restore the

likeness of God and bring the Divine image to the light.

He comes to us with the knowledge that God's image is there, though concealed; he touches us with the faith that the likeness can be restored.

To have upon our hearts the impress of the Divine nature, to know that there is no human being in whom that treasure is not hidden, and from whose stained and dusty soul Christ cannot bring out that reflection of God's face—that, indeed, is to feel the glory and value of humanity.

NATIONAL FAULTS

The Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, that march through the breadth of the earth to possess dwelling-places that are not theirs.—Habakkuk 1 : 6.

Men of science seem now inclined toward the theory of a common origin of mankind.

They even speak of a central starting point, somewhere in Asia, from which the tribes of animals and men were dispersed in their wanderings over the face of the earth.

There is nothing in the poetic visions of the Book of Genesis to contradict that theory.

But whatever their origin, the tribes, races, and nations of men have certainly had very different destinies and consequently different characters.

Farmers, shepherds, city builders, nomads, are all symbolised in the pictures of Genesis.

Tribes that live by war and conquest appear early. Of these the type is Chaldea, "that bitter and hasty nation."

Such nations are not happy, nor beloved, nor is their prosperity durable.

Why should not peoples, as well as persons, examine their own characters, grow wise to their own faults, and be on guard against their own besetting sins?

In this the critics whom we call pessimistic may help us greatly.

WISE RETICENCE

A time to keep silence, and a time to speak.—Ecclesiastes 3 : 7.

America has a stupid habit of criticising her public men for faults that are really virtues.

President Coolidge, called suddenly to the highest office in the land by the lamented death of President Harding, has been ridiculed for his reticence.

The cartoonist (in spite of evident natural difficulties) has depicted him as the Sphinx; and the interviewer has complained that he will not talk.

Well, suppose he is not inclined to talk much. May it not be that he wishes to think more?

Fluent speech is not the most valuable quality in the leader of a great republic.

Careful consideration, clear judgment, and resolute courage are worth a great deal more than easy oratory.

I should say to both parties :

Let us give our President time to make up his mind.

Let us discount the chatter of men whose minds were made up before they began to think.

Then let us listen with consideration to what our President has to say about our present problems.

MAN'S PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE

Thou madest him a little lower than the angels . . . and didst set him over the works of thy hands.—Hebrews 2 : 7.

The chief design of the picture of the beginnings drawn in the Book of Genesis is to show that a Personal Creator is the source and author of all things that are made.

But next to that, and almost, perhaps altogether, of equal importance, is the design to show that man is incalculably superior to all the other works of God—that the distance between him and the lower animals is not a difference in degree, but a difference in kind.

Yes, the difference is so great that we must use a new word to describe the origin of humanity, and say, This is more than God's work, it is God's child.

"Man," says Pascal, "is but a reed, the feeblest thing in nature ; but he is a reed that thinks.

"It needs not that the universe arm itself to crush him.

"An exhalation, a drop of water, suffice to destroy him.

"But were the universe to crush him, man is yet nobler than the universe, for he knows that he dies, and the universe, even in prevailing against him, knows not its power."

Now, the beauty and strength of Christ's doctrine of man lie not in the fact that He was at pains to explain and defend and justify this view of human nature, but in the fact that He assumed it with an unshaken conviction of its truth and acted upon it always and everywhere.

FIVE GOOD THINGS

Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good.—I Thessalonians 5 : 21.

It is good for all of us to know that we are not creatures of chance or fate, but children of God, capable of fellowship with Him, and heirs of immortality if we will only hold fast to our birth-right.

It is good for all of us to have firm faith and true courage ; to pray for power from above ; and to live as those who have been redeemed by Christ from the bondage of sin and selfishness and moral death.

It is good for all of us to take warning and encouragement from the mistakes and adventures of other men, and to bring the live histories of the Bible home to our own business and bosoms.

It is good for all of us to refrain from harsh and hasty judgment of our fellow-men, and to imitate what Francis of Assisi calls "the great Courtesy of God, who maketh His sun to shine and His rain to fall upon the just and upon the unjust."

It is good for all of us not to waste our time in speculating about those mysteries of theology which lie beyond the horizon, but rather to content ourselves with proving the value of a short creed, honestly believed and thoroughly applied.

THE DIGNITY OF MAN

How much then is a man better than a sheep.—Matthew 12 : 12

Christ reveals to us the dignity of man by speaking to us as beings who are capable of holding communion with God, and reflecting the Divine holiness in our hearts and lives. And here His doctrine gains clearness and force when we bring it into close connection with His conduct.

I suppose that there are few of us who would not be ready to admit at once that there are some men and women who have high spiritual capacities.

For them, we say, religion is a possible thing.

They can attain to the knowledge of God and fellowship with Him.

They are born good.

They are saints by nature. But for the great mass of the human race, this is out of the question. They must dwell in ignorance, in wickedness, in impiety.

But to all this Christ says, No !

He takes His way straight to the outcasts of the world, the publicans and the harlots and the sinners ; and to them He speaks of the mercy and the love of God and the beauty of the heavenly life.

And he does this, not to cast them into black despair ; not because it was impossible for them to be good and to find God, but because it was divinely possible—because God was waiting for them, and because something in them was waiting for God.

ABOUT THANKSGIVING DAY

Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.—Psalm 95 : 2.

Please accent the first syllable of this word—strong and hearty—*Thanksgiving*.

Thankfulness is the keynote of the oldest and most national of American festivals—the only day, I think, that is specially set apart and commended for general observance by proclamation of the President of the United States and of the Governors of the several States.

Why has this feast day, which was first celebrated by the Pilgrims in Plymouth at the close of harvest in 1621, kept its hold on the heart of the people and spread from New England westward until its bells now ring from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast?

One reason is because most people naturally enjoy a good feast; and if they are really honest they are willing to say so.

Another and deeper reason is because sincere gratitude is one of the happiest feelings in the world.

It is most happy when it rises to God for the daily mercies of life, and when we share it with our fellow creatures.

Let us remember that the Pilgrims invited their Indian friends to their first Thanksgiving.

Don't forget to put the emphasis on the first syllable.

GOOD COMPANY

I will set no base thing before mine eyes. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land that they may dwell with me.—Psalm 101 : 3, 6.

Base things there are in the world, evil and unfaithful persons.

It is impossible to get away from them except by going out of the world altogether, either by self-isolation or by suicide, both of which are unlawful escapes.

But is it not wise for a man to refuse to make base things the constant object of his attention and regard?

He will look at them when he has to—look at them fearlessly and frankly, in order that he may learn how to cure them. But he will “not set them before his eyes.”

Is it not wise for a man to choose for his closest companions “the faithful of the land,” in order that he may draw from them by contact something of their honesty and courage and fidelity to keep him in heart and fit him for his work?

He will not scorn the evil and unfaithful, knowing well how easy it would be for him to become even as they are.

But that this may not happen, he will keep company daily with some one who is better than himself.

SILENT THINGS THAT SPEAK

Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

There is no speech nor language : their voice is not heard.

Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.—Psalm 19 : 2, 3, 4.

The King James Version of our English Bible translates this verse, "There is no speech nor language *where* their voice is not heard."

But the word "where" is not in the Hebrew text.

The Psalmist is praising the wonderful works of God in the heavens that silently declare His glory and power.

How many of these inaudible prophets there are that speak through our eyes to our hearts !

Not only the mountains and the stars, but also the trees and the flowers, tell of a supernal Wisdom and Beauty abiding in the univers and shaping it as an artist shapes his work.

It is worth remembering that most of the great astronomers and botanists have been great believers in God.

I do not envy the man who can look up from the flaring lights and confused noise of the city streets, to the glittering faithful silent stars, without feeling the Divine Majesty ruling far above human turmoil.

I do not envy the man who can consider a flower of the field without feeling the Divine Goodness.

KEEPING HUMAN LOVE ALIVE

Let brotherly love continue.—Hebrews 13 : 1.

Love for our fellow-men is a thing that is easy to profess, but bitterly hard to prove.

The faults and follies of human nature are so apparent, the unlovely and contemptible qualities of many people thrust themselves so sharply upon our notice and repel us so constantly, that we are tempted to relapse into a life that is governed by its disgusts.

If we dwell in the atmosphere of a Christless world, if we read only those newspapers which chronicle the crimes and meannesses of men, or those realistic novels which deal with the secret vices and corruptions of humanity, and fill our souls with the unspoken conviction that there is no man good, no woman pure, how can we help despising and hating mankind? Who shall deliver us from this spirit of bitterness?

None but Christ.

If we will go with Him, He will teach us not to hate our fellow-men for what they are, but to love them for what they may become.

He will teach us to look not for the evil which is manifest, but for the good which is hidden.

He will teach us not to despair, but to hope, even for the outcast of mankind.

And so, perchance, as we keep company with Him, we shall learn the secret of that Divine charity which fills the heart with peace, and joy, and quiet strength.

FAITH INDISPENSABLE

Without faith it is impossible to please Him;—Hebrews 11 : 6,

How easy it is to see just why the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews inserted that sentence where it stands !

He is writing about the heroes of faith—the men and women who, from the very beginning of the world, have been bound together into one company by this great principle of all true and noble life.

Among them he counts the patriarch Enoch.

But as we look back to the brief record of Enoch's life in the Book of Genesis we find that not a word is said there about his faith.

By what right, then, is he included in the list ?

Why is he counted among the faithful ?

"I will tell you why," says the writer of the Epistle : "It is because he obtained this testimony, that he pleased God. This is proof positive that he must have had faith.

"Where you find a flower, you know there must have been a seed.

"Where you find a river, you know there must be a spring.

"Where you see a flame, you know there must be a fire.

"Where you find a man beloved and blessed of God, you know there must be faith.

"Whether it is recorded or not, whether you see it or not, it must be there, germ of his virtue, fountain-head of his goodness, living source of warmth and light ; for without faith it is impossible to please God."

We find faith in all truly great men—a confidence in something greater than themselves.

We find faith in all really lovable men—an allegiance to something finer than themselves.

We find faith even in good men who hesitate to call themselves believers—a profound loyalty to truth and a steadfast search for it.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY

Who brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.—
II Timothy 1 : 10.

Our largest and most precious interests lie in the world to come. Jesus would arouse our souls to perceive and contemplate the immense issues of life.

The perils that beset us here through sin are not brief and momentary dangers, possibilities of disgrace in the eyes of men, suffering such limited pain as our bodies can endure in the disintegrating process of disease, of dying a temporal death, which at the worst can only cause us a few hours of anguish.

A man might bear these things, and take the risk of this world's shame and sickness and death, for the sake of some darling sin.

But the truth that flashes on us like lightning from the word of Christ is that the consequence of sin is the peril of losing an immortal spirit.

“I will forewarn you,” says He, “whom ye shall fear : fear Him which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell : yea, I say unto you, fear Him.”

On the other hand, the opportunities that come

to us here, through the grace of God, are not merely opportunities of temporal peace and happiness, they are chances of securing endless and immeasurable felicity, wealth that can never be counted or lost, peace that the world can neither give nor take away.

We must understand that *now* the kingdom of God has come near unto us ; that *now* we may lay hold, not only on a present joy of holiness, but on an everlasting life with God.

THE SIMPLICITY THAT IS IN CHRIST

I fear lest your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.—II Corinthians 11 : 3.

There is no reason why religion should be made dark and difficult, by talking about it in long unfamiliar, antiquated words which cause people to wish for a dictionary.

Nor is there any excuse for seeking to win the wonder and astonishment of men by obscure sayings and curious comparisons—mountains of eloquence which labour long and violently to produce a little mouse of practical sense.

In ancient times the teachers of the people were told to read in the book of the Law of God distinctly, and give the sense, and cause the people to understand the meaning.

Religion is full of mysteries. The object of the Bible is not to increase them, but to remove them.

If a certain amount of mystery still remains, it lies in the subject, and not in the way in which it is treated.

For the most part, the teachings and rules of

Christ are so clear and direct that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein; they shed light and not darkness; they disperse the clouds and reveal the sun.

Wisdom and understanding are great possessions; yet the gates of Heaven are open to little children.

Jesus thanked God because he had revealed heavenly things unto babes.

MEN NOT CATTLE

Thou madest him a little lower than the angels.—Psalm 8 : 5:7

Christ looks upon the children of men, not as herds of "dumb driven cattle," but as living souls moving onward to eternity.

He dies for men, not to deliver them from brief sorrows, but to save them from final loss, and to bring them into bliss that knows no end.

He speaks to men in solemn words before which the dreams of earthly pleasure and power and fame and wealth are dissipated like unsubstantial vapours:

"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

There never was a time in which Christ's doctrine of the dignity and value of a man as man was more needed than it is to-day.

There is no truth more important and necessary for us to take into our hearts, and hold fast, and carry out in our lives.

For here we stand in an age when the very throng and pressure and superfluity of human life lead us to set a low estimate upon its value.

The air we breathe is heavy with materialism and commercialism.

The lowest and most debasing views of human nature are freely proclaimed and unconsciously accepted.

There is no escape, no safety for us, save in coming back to Christ, and learning from Him that man is the spiritual child of God, made in the Divine image, capable of the Divine fellowship and an immortal life.

FOR YOUNG MEN

I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong.—
I John 2 : 13.

I cherish the conviction that young men are really human beings.

They are not a distinct species.

They belong to the human race and are entitled to be humanly treated.

The best life for them is not separate and artificial, but natural, simple, active, full of vigorous exercise for mind and body.

The right education for them is not that of the cloister, in which they are divided from the world, but that of the home, the school, the university, the camp, the workshop, the athletic field, the market-place, where liberty is joined to responsibility, and where they are taught to feel that they belong to the world, and are trained to play a noble, manly part in it.

The true religion to guide them in this education, and fit them for this life, is not something novel and peculiar, specially devised for young men, but simply the plain religion of Christ, which

is good for everybody, of ever age and condition, and for all alike.

But there is one thing in which young men, if not singular, are at least pre-eminent.

They love straight speech and plain talk.

They have a fine impatience of all mere formalities and roundabout expressions.

Therefore, those who preach to young men should not use a theological dialect, but the English language, clear and strong.

THE HONOUR OF COURAGE

Be strong and of good courage.—Deuteronomy 31 : 6.

Courage is an honourable virtue.

Men have always loved and praised it. It lends a glory and a splendour to the life in which it dwells.

The world delights in heroism, even in its rudest forms and lowest manifestations. Among the animals we create a sort of aristocracy on the basis of courage, and recognise, in the fearlessness of the game beasts and birds and fishes, a claim to rank above the timorous, furtive, spiritless members of creation.

In man bravery is always fine.

A daring foe is respected, and though we must fight against him, we can still honour his courage, and almost forget the conflict in our admiration for his noble bearing. The enemy who slinks and plots and conceals—makes traps and ambushes, seeks to lead his opponent into dangers which he himself would never dare to face—is base, serpentine, and contemptible.

But he who stands up boldly against his antagonist in any conflict, physical, social, or spiritual, and deals fair blows, and uses honest arguments, and faces the issues of warfare, is a man to love even across the chasm of strife.

An outspoken infidel is far nobler than a disguised sceptic. A brave, frank, manly foe is infinitely better than a false, weak, timorous friend.

The literature of courage has always been immensely popular, and the history of the brave is written in letters of gold.

It is this that men have loved to read in the strange, confused annals of war—deeds of self-forgetful daring which leap from the smoke and clamour of battle, and shine in the sudden making of splendid names.

It is the quality which levels youth with age, gives to woman the force of manhood, equalises the peasant with the noble, and consumes all outward distinctions in the flame of glory.

THE USEFULNESS OF COURAGE

Deal courageously, and the Lord be with the good.—II Chronicles 19 : 11.

Courage is a serviceable virtue.

There is hardly any place in which it is not useful.

There is no type of character, no sphere of action, in which there is not room and need for it.

Genius is talent set on fire by courage.

Fidelity is simply daring to be true in small things as well as in great.

As many as are the conflicts and perils and hard-

ships of life, so many are the uses and the forms of courage.

It is necessary, indeed, as the protector and defender of all the other virtues.

Courage is the standing army of the soul which keeps it from conquest, pillage, and slavery.

Unless we are brave we can hardly be truthful or generous, or just, or pure, or kind, or loyal.

"Few persons," says a wise observer, "have the courage to appear as good as they really are."

You must be brave in order to fulfil your own possibilities of virtue.

Courage is essential to guard the best qualities of the soul, and to clear the way for their action and make the move with freedom and vigour.

"Courage, the highest gift, that scorns to bend
To mean devices for a sordid end ;
Courage, an independent spark from Heaven's throne,
By which the soul stands raised, triumphant, high, alone ;
The spring of all true acts is seated here,
As falsehoods draw their sordid birth from fear."

If we desire to be good, we must first of all, desire to be brave, that against all opposition, scorn, and danger we may move straight onward to do the right.

THE COMFORT OF COURAGE

He thanked God and took courage.—Acts 28 : 15.

Courage is a comfortable virtue.

It fills the soul with inward peace and strength ; in fact, this is just what it is—courage is simply strength of heart.

Subjection to fear is weakness, bondage, feverish unrest.

To be afraid is to have no soul that we can call our own ; it is to be at the beck and call of alien powers, to be chained and driven and tormented ; it is to lose the life itself in the anxious care to keep it.

Many people are so afraid to die that they have never begun to live.

But courage emancipates us and gives us to ourselves, that we may give ourselves freely and without fear to God.

How sweet and clear and steady is the life into which this virtue enters day by day, not merely in those great flashes of excitement which come in the moments of crisis, but in the presence of the hourly perils, the continual conflicts.

Not to tremble at the shadows which surround us, not to shrink from the foes who threaten us, not to hesitate and falter and stand despairing still among the perplexities and trials of our life, but to move steadily onward without fear, if only we can keep ourselves without reproach—surely, that is what the Psalmist meant by good courage and strength of heart, and it is a most comfortable, pleasant, peaceful, and happy virtue.

THE PRUDENCE OF COURAGE

Be of good courage and let us play the man.—II Samuel 10 : 12.

There is a sharp distinction between courage and recklessness.

The reckless man is ignorant ; he rushes into

danger without hesitation, simply because he does not know what danger means.

The brave man is intelligent ; he faces danger because he understands it and is prepared to meet it.

The drunkard who runs, in the delirium of intoxication, into a burning house is not brave ; he is only stupid.

But the clear-eyed hero who makes his way, with every sense alert and every nerve strung, into the hell of flames to rescue some little child, proves his courage.

The more keenly we are awake to the perils of life, the higher and grander is the possibility of being truly brave.

To drift along, as some people do, through this world of sin, as if there were nothing in it to fear ; to slide easily downward, as some people do, to the gate of death, as if there were nothing beyond it to fear ; to sport and dance, and eat and drink and sleep, as some people do, under the arch of heaven, as if there were no One above it to fear—what is this but the part of the fool who hath said in his heart, “ There is no God, there is no sin, there is no judgment ” ?

But to face the temptations and perplexities and dangers of the world without yielding to fear ; to pass, without trembling, by the dark portals of the grave in a faith that is stronger than fear ; to dare to live in the presence of the holy, mighty God in the confidence of a love that casteth out fear—that is courage.

EVERYDAY COURAGE

Be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land.—
Numbers 13 : 20.

Daring is only a rare and exceptional kind of courage.

It is for great occasions : the battle, the shipwreck, the conflagration.

It is an inspiration ; Emerson calls it “ a flash of moral genius.”

But courage in the broader sense is an everyday virtue.

It includes the possibility of daring, if it be called for ; but from hour to hour, in the long, steady run of life, courage manifests itself in quieter, humbler forms—in patience under little trials, in perseverance in distasteful labours, in endurance of suffering, in resistance of continual and familiar temptations, in hope and cheerfulness and activity and fidelity and truthfulness and kindness, and such sweet, homely virtues as may find a place in the narrowest and most uneventful life.

There is no duty so small, no trial so slight, that it does not afford room for courage.

It has a meaning and value for every phase of existence ; for the workshop and for the battlefield, for the thronged city and for the lonely desert, for the sick room and for the market-place, for the study and for the counting house, for the church and for the drawing-room.

There is courage physical, and social, and moral, and intellectual—a soldier's courage, a doctor's courage, a lawyer's courage, a preacher's courage, a nurse's courage, a merchant's courage, a man's

courage, a woman's courage—for courage is just strength of heart, and the strong heart makes itself felt everywhere, and lifts up the whole of life, and ennobles it, and makes it move directly to its chosen aim.

THE DEEP SPRING OF COURAGE

Wait on the Lord : be of good courage and he shall strengthen thine heart.—Psalm 27 : 14.

What is it that really strengthens the heart and makes it brave ?

There are many lesser things that help us, such as simple and wholesome physical life, plain food and vigorous exercise, a steady regard for great moral principles and ideals, a healthful course of reading, a sincere friendship with brave and true and single-minded men and women, a habit of self-forgetfulness and consecration to duty.

But there is something greater and better than any of these—something which, in fact, includes them all and sums them up in a word, “Wait on the Lord.”

That is the truest and deepest source of courage.

To believe that He is, and that He has made us for Himself ; to love Him, and give ourselves up to Him, because He is holy and true and wise and good and brave beyond all human thought ; to lean upon Him and trust Him and rest in Him, with confidence that He will never leave us nor forsake us ; to work for Him, and suffer for His sake, and be faithful to His service—that is the way to learn courage.

Without God what can you do ?

You are a frail, weak, tempted, mortal creature.

The burdens of life will crush you, the evils of sin will destroy you, the tempests of trouble will overwhelm you, the darkness of death will engulf you.

But if you are joined to God, you can resist and endure and fight and conquer, in His strength.

The lamp that is joined to the electric current glows with light.

The soul that is joined to the infinite source of courage in God, burns steadfast, serene, and inextinguishable through life and death.

THE COURAGE OF THE TIMID

For they all would have made us afraid. . . . But now, O God, strengthen thou my hands.—Nehemiah 6 : 9.

There is a sharp distinction between courage and insensibility.

Some natures are so constituted that they do not feel pain very keenly. To persons of this temperament, fear is comparatively a stranger.

We must not suppose that this insensibility makes them brave. It simply exempts them from the necessity of courage.

The bravest soul is that which feels the tremor and resists it, shrinks from the flame and faces it.

Never was a better soldier than the old French Marshal Montluc, who said that he had often gone into battle shaking with fear, and had recovered courage only when he had said a prayer.

The same thing is true in moral trials.

There are some people to whom reproach and ridicule and condemnation mean little.

They simply do not care ; they are pachydermatous.

But there are others to whom the unkind word is like a blow, and the sneer like a sword thrust, and the breath of contempt like the heat of flames ; and when they endure these things and face them, and will not be driven by them from the path of duty, they are truly courageous.

Do you understand what I mean ?

Timidity is no more inconsistent with courage than doubt is inconsistent with faith.

INDIVIDUALISM AND SOCIALISM

We have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office.—Romans 12 : 4.

The conflict between individualism and socialism comes from interpreting them in a mutually exclusive sense.

Whereas, truly, each implies the other.

A man alone is not a *persona* because there is no *drama* in which he has a part.

On the other hand, the *drama* of human life has no vital meaning if it is played by marionettes instead of real *personæ*.

The significance of our moral existence depends upon the *dramatis personæ*—that is to say, the individuals who act as members of society.

“ Whatever you are, be that,” is a good motto.

For the man who is too timid or too lazy to be himself is worth very little even as a “ supe.”

But he is bound also to consider whether “ being himself ” is likely to do any good to anybody else.

It is a hard problem to work out in our own lives—this reconciling of the individual with society.

But what did you expect, friend?

Is anything really interesting unless it is hard?

A THOUGHT FOR CHRISTMAS

Behold I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.—Luke 2 : 10.

Do you think the war has spoiled Christmas?

Do you believe the coming revolution, the social upheaval, the triumph of materialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat or whatever may be before us, is going to destroy Christmas and leave no room for its return?

I tell you, no!

Whatever turnings and overturnings, whatever calamity and ruin, are in store for this battered old world, you and I will never be poorer than the blessed Mary and Joseph when they walked to Bethlehem, and that same night

“The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay,—
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.”

Whatever fantasies of government or no-government the brains of men may devise, the heart of man will always ask and take a day of rest and peace, gladness and good will to sweeten the long year.

THE COMMERCIAL VIEW OF LIFE

They sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver
—Genesis 37 : 28.

Suppose we take the commercial view of life.

We shall then say that all things must be measured by their money value, and that it is neither profitable nor necessary to inquire into their real nature or their essential worth.

Men and sheep are worth what they will bring in the open market ; and this depends upon the supply and demand.

Sheep of a very rare breed have been sold for as much as five or six thousand dollars.

But men of common stock, in places where men are plenty and cheap (as for example in Central Africa), may be purchased for the price of a rusty musket or a piece of cotton cloth.

According to this principle, we must admit that the comparative value of a man and a sheep is a very uncertain matter, and that there are times when the dumb animal is much the more valuable of the two.

Of course, you perceive that this view, carried out to its logical conclusion, means slavery ; and you call my attention to the fact that slavery has been abolished by common consent of the civilised world.

Yes, thank God, that is true. We have done away with the logical conclusion.

But have we gotten rid entirely of the premise on which it rested ?

Does not the commercial view of life still exist in civilised society ?

TO PLEASE GOD

How ye ought to walk, and to please God.—I Thessalonians 4:1.

God can be pleased, then.

He is not a cold abstraction, an immovable substance, a dull, unimpassioned, silent, joyless, mighty force.

He is a person, capable of affections and emotions.

He is a heart that feels.

Delight is no stranger to him.

His love is no vague, blind impulse, flowing dumbly toward all things alike.

It is a seeking, choosing love; and when it finds the object of its search, a Divine pleasure enters into it, larger, purer than we can understand, and yet like that which comes to us when we see the fairest and the best.

He approves and blesses.

His Spirit is filled with the music of pleasure.

To waken that music, to win that approval, to please God—surely, that is the highest and holiest object for a human life.

To please men is a natural impulse.

To please good men—that is a nobler ambition.

But there is a motive deeper and more intense than even this—it is the desire to please that one among our fellow-creatures whom we have chosen it may be, as the most loyal heart and true.

But to please God, the perfect, radiant Being, the most wise, the most holy, the most beautiful, the most loving of all Spirits; to perform some task, achieve some victory, bring some offering that shall be acceptable to Him, and in which He

shall delight ; simply to live our life, whatever it may be, so that He, the good and glorious God, shall approve and bless it, and say of it, " Well done," and welcome it into His own joy—that is a divine ambition.

GOD DESIRES TO BE TRUSTED

The living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe.—I Timothy 4 : 10.

Faith is necessary because it is the only possible way of contact between God and man, the only way in which He can draw near to us, and save and bless us.

And that, if you will believe it, is the one thing that He most desires to do.

There is no compulsion laid upon Him.

He does not act as one who is performing an indifferent task.

He is so good that He longs to deliver us from sin and death, to bring us to Himself, to give us a place in His happy kingdom.

This is His glory and His delight : to rescue the perishing, to raise the fallen, to forgive the sinful, to give life to the dying.

He loves this work so much that He sent His own dear Son into the world to accomplish it.

And nothing that you can do will please Him so much as simply to let Him save you, and help you to be good.

Think for a moment : what can you do for anyone who does not trust you, who does not believe in you ?

Nothing.

That barrier of mistrust stands like a wall of ice between you and the soul that you desire to help.

Is there anything that wounds you more than to be doubted and denied, and thrust away in suspicion or indifference ?

Truly that is the deepest and most bitter pain.

Is there anything that pleases you more than to be trusted—to have even a little child look up into your face, and put out its hand to meet yours and come to you confidingly ?

By so much as God is better than you are, by so much more does He love to be trusted.

THE LITTLE PRESENT

Silver and gold have I none ; but what I have, that give I thee.
—Acts 3 : 6.

The little present, or the rare and long-wished-for gift (it matters not whether the vessel be of gold, or silver, or iron, or wood, or clay, or just a small bit of birch bark folded into a cup), may carry a message something like this :

“I am thinking of you to-day, because it is Christmas, and I wish you happiness.

“And to-morrow, because it will be the day after Christmas, I shall still wish you happiness ; and so on, clear through the year.

“I may not be able to tell you about it every day, because I may be far away ; or because both of us may be very busy ; or perhaps because I cannot even afford to pay the postage on so many letters, or find the time to write them.

“But that makes no difference.

"The thought and the wish will be here just the same.

"In my work and in the business of life, I mean to try not to be unfair to you or injure you in any way.

"In my pleasure, if we can be together, I would like to share the fun with you.

"Whatever joy or success comes to you will make me glad.

"Without pretence, and in plain words, good will to you is what I mean in the Spirit of Christmas."

KEEPING CHRISTMAS

He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord.—Romans 14 : 6.

It is a good thing to observe Christmas day. It helps one to feel the supremacy of the common life over the individual life.

But there is a better thing than the observance of Christmas day, and that is, keeping Christmas.

Are you willing to stoop down and consider the needs and the desires of little children ; to remember the weakness and loneliness of people who are growing old ; to stop asking how much your friends love you, and ask yourself whether you love them enough ; to try to understand what those who live in the same house with you really want, without waiting for them to tell you ; to make a grave for your ugly thoughts, and a garden for your kindly feelings, with the gate open—are you willing to do these things even for a day ?

Then you can keep Christmas.

Are you willing to believe that love is the

strongest thing in the world—stronger than hate, stronger than evil, stronger than death—and that the blessed life which began in Bethlehem nineteen hundred years ago is the image and brightness of Eternal Love ?

Then you can keep Christmas.

And if you keep it for a day, why not always ?

But you can never keep it alone.

CHRISTMAS GIVING AND CHRISTMAS LIVING

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.—II Corinthians 9 : 15.

The custom of making presents on a certain day in the year is much older than Christmas.

It has obtained in many ages and among many different nations.

It is a fine thing or a foolish thing, as the case may be ; an encouragement to friendliness, or a tribute to fashion ; an expression of good nature, or a bid for favour ; a cheerful old custom, or a futile old farce, according to the spirit which animates it and the form which it takes.

But when this ancient tradition of a day of gifts was transferred to the Christmas season, it was brought into vital contact with an idea which must transform it, and with an example which must lift it up to a higher plane.

The example is the life of Jesus.

The idea is unselfish interest in the happiness of others.

The great gift of Jesus to the world was Himself. He lived with and for men.

He kept back nothing.

In every particular and personal gift that He made to certain people there was something of Himself that made it precious.

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER FOR THE HOME

Father of all men, look upon our family,
Kneeling together before Thee,
And grant us a true Christmas.

With loving heart we bless Thee :
For the gift of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ,
For the peace He brings to human homes,
For the good-will He teaches to sinful men,
For the glory of Thy goodness shining in His face.

With deep desire we beseech Thee :
Help us to keep His birthday truly,
Help us to offer, in His name, our Christmas
payer.

From the sickness of sin and the darkness of doubt,
From selfish pleasures and sullen pains,
From the frost of pride and the fever of envy,
God save us every one, through the blessing of
Jesus.

In praying and praising, in giving and receiving,
In eating and drinking, in singing and making
merry,
In parents' gladness and in children's mirth,
In dear memories of those who have departed,
In good comradeship with those who are here,

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER FOR THE HOME 311

In kind wishes for those who are far away,
In patient waiting, sweet contentment, generous
cheer,
God bless us every one, with the blessing of
Jesus.

By remembering our kinship with all men,
By well-wishing, friendly speaking and kindly
doing,
By cheering the downcast and adding sunshine to
daylight,
By welcoming strangers (poor shepherds or wise
men),
By keeping the music of the angels' song in this
home,
God help us every one to share the blessing of
Jesus.

EVERYDAY FAITH

Now faith is . . . a conviction of things not seen.—Hebrews
11 : 1 (R.V.).

Faith is not a strange and far-away thing which
can only be explained to us by a revelation.

It is a principle of common life.

We exercise it every day.

It is simply the confidence in something which
is invisible ; as the Apostle says, " it is the substance
of things hoped for, the evidence of things not
seen."

Every time you receive the testimony of your
fellow-men, every time you trust in the qualities
of their character which are beyond the reach of
your vision, every time you rely upon a law of
logic in an argument, upon a law of nature in your

action, upon a law of morality in your conduct, you exercise faith.

It is the condition of reason, of activity, of human society.

“All politics and societies,” says a wise observer, “have come into existence through the trust of men in each other,” and, we may add, through their trust in unseen principles of equity, and in future results of prudence, and in One higher than themselves whom they could neither see nor name.

Take away confidence in the invisible, and the whole fabric decays, crumbles, and falls in ruin.

Thus, even from the human point of view, faith is necessary. But from the Divine point of view, it must appear infinitely more essential.

For God made man to find his way through the world by trusting something which he cannot see—just as Columbus found America.

NOT AGAINST REASON BUT ABOVE

By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear.—Hebrews 11 : 3.

By faith we understand.

It is a principle of comprehension, then, not of confusion ; something which clarifies and enlarges the vision.

It discloses not only the origin but also the purpose and the meaning of things.

It is not the contradiction but the crown and complement of reason.

The world was made for its meaning, to show

forth the wisdom, power, and goodness of God.

If we do not see that, we see nothing.

We may be able to tell how many stars are in the Milky Way ; we may be able to count the petals of every flower, and number the bones of every bird ; but unless faith leads us to a deeper understanding, a more reverent comprehension of the significance of the universe, God can no more be pleased with our knowledge than the painter is pleased with the fly which touches his picture with its feeler, and sips the varnish from the surface, and dies without dreaming of the meaning, thought, feeling, embodied in the colours.

But on the simplest soul that feels the wonder and the hidden glory of the universe, on the child to whom the stars are little windows into heaven, or the poet to whom

“ The meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

God looks down with pleasure and approval.

For in such a soul He sees the beginning of faith, which is able to pass behind the appearance to the reality, and makes its possessor wise unto everlasting life.

STRONG BELIEVERS

By faith they passed through the Red Sea.—Hebrews 11 : 29.

There are some who would persuade us that believing is appropriate only to infancy and old age ; that it is a kind of dreaming, an infirmity of the weak and visionary.

But the truth is otherwise. Carlyle says :

“ Belief is great, life-giving.

“ The history of a nation becomes fruitful, soul-elevating, great, so soon as it believes.

“ A man lives by believing something, not by debating and arguing about many things.”

Faith is power.

It makes men strong, ardent, persistent, heroic.

Nothing truly great has ever been done in any department of the world's work without faith.

Let a man fasten himself to some great idea, some large truth, some noble cause, even in the affairs of this world, and it will send him forward with energy, with steadfastness, with confidence.

That is what Emerson meant when he said, “ Hitch your wagon to a star.”

These are the potent, the commanding, the enduring, the inspiring men—in our own history, men like Washington and Lincoln, Roosevelt and Wilson.

They may fall, they may be defeated, they may perish ; but onward moves the cause, and their souls go marching with it, for they are part of it, they have believed in it.

A CITY OF HOMES

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.—Psalm 127 : 1.

There are pictures in this little Psalm.

First, we see the builder raising the walls of his house, and the watchman standing upon the city tower, keeping guard over the sleeping thousands,

and we hear the declaration that building and watching are in vain without the favour of the Lord.

“An Gottes Segen ist Alles gelegen.”

Then, we see the labourer going forth early to his work and returning late to eat the bread which he has earned in the sweat of his brow; and we are reminded that the reward of all industry comes from God, and comes for the most part while man is helpless and unconscious.

“He giveth to His beloved in sleep”—so runs the true translation of the second verse; and this tells us that the largest blessings are conferred upon us “without our restless self-activity, in a state of self-forgetfulness and quiet reliance upon the Divine goodness.”

“God bestows his gifts during the night,” says the old German proverb.

Sleep itself is a great blessing; and while we sleep the clouds are storing their supplies of moisture, the seeds are swelling in the earth, the grain is springing in the fields, the fruits are ripening on the tree, the harvest is growing golden in the mellow darkness of the autumn night.

In truth, if we are wise and diligent, Nature is on our side and all God’s world is busy preparing our bread.

A TALE THAT IS TOLD

We bring our years to an end as a sigh.—Psalm 90 : 9.

Well, then, you say life is a disappointment.

But do you not see that if you have learned this beforehand, it can never disappoint *you*?

The mistake is that we expect too much from the world.

We find fault with it, and mourn over it, and berate it, because it is not heaven.

But indeed it is a good world, if we will only take it for what it is.

It is a place of pilgrimage, and surely pilgrimage has its advantages and pleasures.

It is a place of discipline, and surely adversity hath its sweet uses.

It is the place where our years pass away like a tale that is told ; but then remember that it is God who is telling the tale ; and if we will only listen to Him in the right spirit, the progress of the story will be wonderfully interesting and its sequel wonderfully glorious.

For this is the secret of it all, that life is not broken off short, but carried on in another volume.

The one thing that we need to learn now is how to live so that the first volume shall be good and the second shall have the promise of being better.

*Made and Printed in Great Britain.
Hasell, Watson & Viney, Ltd., London and Aylesbury.*