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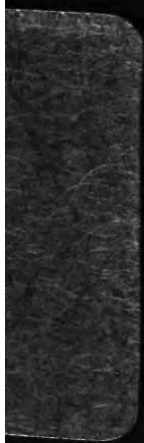
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**LIFE'S STAGES.**

G. & W. FRASER, PRINTERS, ABERDEEN.

# LIFE'S STAGES:

THEIR DUTIES AND OPPORTUNITIES.

BY

JAMES STARK,

AUTHOR OF "JOHN MURKER."



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# The Child.



“Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

“You never know where a good beginning may be happening  
Every arrival of a new soul in the world is a mystery and a shut casket of possibilities.”

“The child’s character presents far more distinctly the ground and plan of the mature man than the youth’s, since the proportions of the whole are often completely disguised by the temporary caprice of newly experienced passions and newly gained freedom.”—LEWES.

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”



## THE CHILD.

**I**T is a circumstance not without its significance that a veil, only once or twice uplifted, is thrown over the childhood and youth of Jesus; reminding us that domestic privacy is more befitting the earlier stages of human life than public notice. That reserve is in accordance with nature's teaching, and is beautiful in its season. All life is at first secret in its operations, unobtrusive in its approaches. "It cometh not with observation." It does not challenge attention till a certain degree of maturity and fitness for useful functions have been reached. The stalk which rears itself in the air, and the flower that unfolds itself in the sun, are later developments. First the invisible and underground germination, then the scarcely perceptible blade, afterwards the ear and the full corn in the ear.

But as if to show us that childhood is an integral part of that humanity of which Christ is the glorified embodiment, and also to impress

us with the beauty of a holy and ideal childhood, we obtain one or two glimpses of the child Jesus. Those side-glances are a most helpful contribution to the general impression Christ makes upon the world. They show that the Divine One incarnate was the same being at one stage that He was in another; the birth, the youth, the manhood, correspond with each other; the only effect of time's developments and changes being to make more striking the matchless consistency, the ineffable unity of His personality and character. He who in manhood was said to be "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," was at birth "that holy thing." He was also a child, unpolluted with the touch of sin. "And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him."

"Life's Stages" being the theme of this book, it is necessary that we should keep the Son of Man before us, under the manifold aspects of His history and character, as the ground and security of that regenerated humanity of which we should all desire to be examples. It is also fitting that we begin with the stage of childhood, not merely because that is humanity in its first development, but also for the reason that what is seen at the outset should be regarded, in some very important respects, as the criterion and

pattern of all that is subsequently to appear. The child is the man beginning to be. He is more than that. The child is not the mere embryo of the man. The child in more than a poetical sense is the father of the man. He is the type of the man that is to be in the spirit he should cherish and the attitude he should take before the transcendently sublime facts of life. In wondering, pondering, revering, clinging, in simplicity and sincerity of heart, he should be a child at the end as at the beginning, emptied of the ideas but never of the spirit of the child.

A human being is a many-sided unity. You cannot know perfectly what man is if you confine your attention to any particular period of his growth, as isolated from what goes before and after. All that he was and is and may become must be kept in view, if you would know the diversified capability and character which makes man. Just as you cannot know what humanity is by looking exclusively at man or woman, but must take the salient characteristics of both sexes into account: so neither can you know man or woman, as man and woman ought to be, unless, as Jesus did to the disciples, you set a little child before you. Just, too, as a man of full-orbed excellency exhibits that gentleness and tenderness which we expect to find in shining prominence

in the woman, and the woman we respect is ever allowing resolution and aspiration, without any masculine hardness, to take a deepening hold of her nature; so the child is ever present in the noble man, and still more so in the loving woman. We outgrow the notions, the intellectual limitations, the childishness of the child. We can never transcend child-likeness. "Except ye humble yourselves and become as little children ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Lovely, ingenuous, transparent, unworldly childhood, suggestive of Eden's innocency and heaven's smile—that, stripped of its crude excrescences, is what we have to grow up to and into.

A child is a beginning, an independent conscious entity. Can that be maintained? Is not rather the new-born child, within its own measure, the sum and product of the past? Can it be affirmed that a child comes into the world like a clean sheet of paper without a line or syllable upon it, or like a spring that is pure and becomes polluted only with surface sewage? To be thus addressed causes one to pause and ponder, and raises a host of staggering questions, for which though they are more easily put than answered, an answer must be attempted, in order that our views may be sifted, and that we may not confound our error, which need not be, with

God's system, which cannot fail to be for ever and ever.

Is the child as it enters this world as much adrift from the past morally as the arrival of an angel would be unconnected with the annals and genealogies of mankind? If so, a child is unlike every other part of creation. Had not the present its origin in the past? Each leaf we see in the spring is but the outcome of a long series of processes we cannot explore. Every wave that breaks upon the shore is what it is on account of the ocean from which it is an emanation.

There are some who hold that birth here is but a reappearance in another form, that each soul descends from a pre-existent state, and enters into the body which by natural process has been prepared for it. Plato and other venturous thinkers favoured that notion of pre-existence. Wordsworth seems to countenance it in his famous ode, though that may be doubted, if not denied:—

“Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting  
The soul that rises with us, our life's star  
Hath elsewhere had its setting,  
And cometh from afar.  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God who is our home.”



May not the poet in those precious lines, which reach the high-water mark of human speculation as well as poetry, be regarded as merely setting forth in his own fashion the soul's intimacy with the great Eternal Spirit from whom all conscious life is an emanation. Be that as it may, the opinion of a pre-existent state for any mortal is unsupported by the teaching of Him who came from above. Scripture, indeed, implicitly contradicts this philosophic fancy in the general strain of its narrative and doctrine.

Yet it cannot be denied that each one who comes into the world has a connection of some kind with the past. The child is undoubtedly part of the generic whole, the member of a race, a participator in the conditions and fortunes of mankind. We do not come into the world by a direct and immediate act of the Creator. Whatever opinions may be held as to the origin of the soul—and opinions differ—all must admit that as regards the physical nature at least we come upon the scene of life through the medium of our fellow-creatures. We are not isolated units. We are members one of another. We are not as if none had been before us. We are links in a chain, parts of a succession, heirs of an estate.

What is the estate? What do we have which we would not have had, if others of the race to

which we belong had not existed before us? As one part of the testament there is original sin, say some. What exactly is meant by that familiar theological phrase? That every child shares in the guilt, the moral blame, of Adam's transgression? If that be original sin, common sense as well as common justice should most vehemently protest against such a monstrous and God-dishonouring doctrine. Is it not a metaphysical contradiction to affirm that guilt as well as evil can be transmitted? Personal identity, surely, cannot be confused, without confusion all over life. Adam was Adam. I am not Adam. I have enough to answer for of my own, without taking in addition the blame-worthiness of one who lived thousands of years ago. It is more than time that the heartless heresy of original sin, as meaning guilt contracted by Adam in which every helpless babe shares, were exploded. Our reason is certainly not to be the measure of things. There are mysteries in Divine doctrine before which I am dumb, humbled, awed. But it is one thing to accept in faith what is above reason. It is another to impose what contradicts reason and the moral sense. The truly conservative and earnest theologian who is anxious that God's truth should be maintained finds that a most important part of his duty is the displacement of that in the creed which was



not put there by the hand of God, and which acts only as a stumbling block to thoughtful and candid minds.

If by original sin is meant a liability to go wrong, which every human being has inherited from the past, we have both Scripture and observation to support that doctrine. There is such a thing as solidarity. There is a sense in which it is true that we are bound up in the great progenitor who fell. We suffer by our connection with a race that is lapsed and estranged from what is good. No member of a family can offend flagrantly against the laws of God and man without bringing suffering upon all who bear his name, as well as upon himself. There is shame not only for the forger but also for his brothers and sisters. The drunkard's children have not as children the drunkard's guilt, but they cannot escape all the consequences, physical and moral, of his evil doings. So taking a wider view of the situation, the child, as part of that humanity that is stricken and morally vitiated, is a sharer in the evil, though not in the blame-worthiness, that has come down from the distant past. Every parent has the witness of his own eyes and ears to that part of the testimony of Scripture.

Perhaps you object to disabilities, inherited disorders, inborn propensities, temptations arising

from the perverted bias of fallen human nature, as an unjust imposition upon the child. But existing conditions make it impossible in the nature of things that a child of the human race could be differently situated. That which is in the stream of humanity cannot but be coloured by its fount and channel. Heredity must be accepted as an ultimate and unavoidable fact in the system of which we form a part. If you should persist in trying to take a step further, and stoutly object to any creature being put into such conditions, you raise the question of the origin of evil, and no man who has the wisdom of modesty will follow you as you knock your head against that rock.

But this has to be said for our encouragement, and in vindication of the justice and goodness of God, that if any member of the human family comes into the world feeling that his lot is a bane, he can at once find the antidote in the Lord Jesus Christ. If he is aggrieved by what his connection with the first Adam brings, he can obtain redress, and more than retrieve himself by a voluntary connection with the second Adam. The grace of God is the panacea of the moral world. It is an inexhaustible fund of recuperative power. It more than meets all the complaints, all the losses and grievances of man's natural condition. It cor-

rects every anomaly, heals every wound, suits every case, if taken in faith that brings hope. The origin of evil, therefore, is not the practical question of life, but rather the advent of Christ. Why does Nature exclude me from its paradise? is not what I have to ask. The question for me is, Why should I by unbelief exclude myself from the paradise of Christ?

*The opportunities and duties of the child.*

The great opportunity of the child can be compressed into one word—EDUCATION.

Life from beginning to end is an education, but childhood is much more favourable for that than any of the subsequent stages. We learn more in the first few years of life than we do in all the others, though fourscore should be reached. The nature is then open, plastic, retentive. Consolidation comes afterwards. We become more and more like the iron, and are in danger of being rigid in our habits of thought and action. In youth we are clay in the hands of the potter.

Education? What is that? It is what is in us, emerging as the result of well applied effort on our part. There is much God-given faculty that is latent in us like ore in the mine, and it is to us as if it did not exist till it is educed. The difference between an uneducated and an educated person is like that between a pocket-knife, the blades of which are not opened, and the same

knife with the blades unshut, open to view, and ready for use. The steel is in the closed knife but what is the use of it? We have to convert what we are into power, and education does it. Let us not pass out of the world without giving proof of what we are and have. Every Milton who is allowed to remain mute and inglorious is a loser, and entails loss upon the world. Each of us, too, is as responsible for the one, as another is for the five talents.

True education is dynamic, not putting in information merely, as you do water into a cistern but presenting the facts of science and history so as to bring out hidden resource and capability. Scholastic and technical education is not to be neglected, but there is a great deal of life's training which lies outside the classroom and outside the boards of books. Some make a fetish of printed matter, and forget that the original sources of thought are nature, experience, and the Word of God. Others again, robust men too, such as a considerable proportion of the world's greatest inventors, going straight to the facts of life, have made their mark, though as "self-made" men they have flaws and limitations which a more liberal education in early days might have prevented. We need all the educators that Providence places within our reach.

Certainly there is education for the child everywhere: in the nursery, in the playground, in the busy street, by the sea-shore, in the green fields, in the wood and garden, wherever the face of nature looks upon us. Children shut out from rural scenes, and ignorant of trees and flowers, birds and beasts, are sadly neglected in their education, however much their parents spend upon it. Children should be able to tell one tree from another, and discover the properties of the teeming variety of objects that solicit our interest. The city-bred child is not in Paradise. How mournfully the poet sings:—

“I was reared  
In the great city—pent 'mid cloisters dim,  
And saw nought lovely  
But the sky and stars.”

Happy are those children who do not dwell in an illimitable expanse of streets and chimneys—a wilderness of brick and stone. The ideal residence for the purposes of education, broad and liberal, is the place that is large enough to have the advantages of a city, and small enough to have almost all the advantages of the country.

The higher education of life demands experimental religion, not, as Matthew Arnold would put it, as an element in culture, but as an inspiring and directing force which permeates the whole.



How ill educated is he who has not learned to use his affections aright. The heart and conscience should receive our best attention, and on them should be placed the crown of culture. When God and our parents receive their due, the going out of homage and trust to objects worthy of them, brings about the highest self-improvement. To fall in love with the peerless moral beauty, the sublime self-sacrifice, the tender compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, is itself an education. But the spiritual world shut out is a world within as shut up, as empty and desolate as the disused room of a deserted house.

The *duties* of the child are summed up in one word—OBEDIENCE.

Every child should ponder this sentence: “And *He* went down and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.”

It is part of the divinely ordained condition of things that children should be obedient. “Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is *right*.” Parents, therefore, in so far as they are not unjust nor unreasonable, are to children as God. God tests us through creatures who are set over us as His delegates and representatives. In so far as magistrates and parents have Divine law to back up their wishes, their commands are as the edicts of heaven. Disrespect to parents is disrespect to

God. No one can retain the favour of heaven who has justly lost the approbation of father or mother. Obedience to parents is therefore a fair practical test of goodness in children. A child may not sin by swearing or stealing, as his training and associations lift him above such temptations. But unfilial conduct may be to him as great an iniquity before God as theft or profanity in those whose social environment is different.

Obedience, not slavish but loving, is the germ of all the virtues and graces that adorn human life. It is a bad beginning to be careless whether you give pleasure or pain to those whose fostering care has done so much for you. He is not likely to become a gentleman who gives his mother a heavy heart when he might be her joy and strength.

After the battle of Waterloo, when Prussian and British armies were in Paris, Wellington ordered a certain bridge, which some wanted to destroy, to be preserved. One British soldier was stationed on it for its protection. Only one soldier! Yes, but he represented British power, and had the British army behind him.

So the poor, frail widowed mother, in that little home, has Omnipotence behind her. All the powers and resources of the universe are on her side as she endeavours to keep her son on the path

of duty. She is not alone, though her powerful allies are not visible to the eye of sense. No throne is more firmly established than her seat of authority, no golden sceptre possesses more dignity than is assigned to her position, no royal proclamation made amidst pomp and splendour has more weight than her word, though she should have only an attic to live in, and does not know where to-morrow's bread is to be found. The son, therefore, who, taking advantage of superior physical strength, is brutal enough to disregard the will of her whom God has set over him, will yet have to reckon with a force more patent to his base and callous soul.

The time is coming when every act of unkindness or word of discourtesy shall recoil upon the heads of ungrateful and irreverent sons and daughters. Bring not down the grey hairs of parents with sorrow to the grave. Cherish parents while you have them. Hear this pleading, tearful, heart-smiting appeal from one:—

“O friends, I pray to-night  
 Keep not your kisses for my dead cold brow,  
 The way is lonely, let me feel them now.  
 Think gently of me, for I am travel-worn.  
 . . . . .  
 When dreamless rest is mine  
 I shall not need  
 The tenderness for which I long to night.”



“Oh think, if thou yet love anybody living,  
wait not till death sweep down the paltry little  
dust-clouds and idle discords of the moment, and  
all be at last so mournfully clear and beautiful  
when it is *too late.*”



# The Youth.

“I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong.”

“In this world God only and the angels may be spectators.”—  
BACON.

‘Our deeds still travel with us from afar,  
And what we have been makes us what we are.’—  
GEORGE ELIOT.

“We shape ourselves the joy or fear  
Of which the coming life is made.  
And fill our future atmosphere  
With sunshine or with shade.  
The tissue of the life to be  
We weave with colours all our own,  
And in the field of destiny  
We reap as we have sown.”—WHITTIER.



## THE YOUTH.

**E**VERY stage in the life of a human being has its distinctive quality, its characteristic power, its seasonable opportunity, and its corresponding and divinely appointed function. A man can do in middle life what was not possible in earlier years. Youth, on the other hand, has advantages all its own. That is what the Apostle John means when he names "children," "fathers," and "young men," as persons whose circumstances and aptitudes in their several stages in life make them favourable objects of address, one side or other of his message having a special adaptation to their peculiar condition and wants. Every stage in life has its own gift and its own obligation. Every variety of power in the growth of a human being brings with it a corresponding measure of susceptibility and responsibility.

The characteristic feature, the note of youth is strength. That strength is specially needed in youth, because of what youth has to do. There is

a correspondence between the hour and the man, the duty and the ability. "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be." The young man's "day" is one of strenuous endeavour, fierce conflict, glorious achievement—and he needs strength. There is that to be done in youth which cannot be done at all, or cannot be done so well, at any other period. There is only one spring-time in nature, either human or otherwise. The sculptor has only one chance of turning his block of marble to account. Southey the poet says truly: "Live as long as you may, the first twenty years are the longest half of your life."

What do we expect in a young man?

#### INDEPENDENCE.

Personality implies independence. A human being at the stage of youth is a person, a self-governed and accountable unit. He is a world, a sphere, an empire in himself. There is a sense in which it is true that man is simply the part of a whole, the member of a family, a bit of organised creation. But his position as a separate intelligence, a distinct moral force, a creature whose seat of action is within, self-originated, overshadows and dominates all social ties and outward relations, and constitutes itself the flower of his life, the manhood of the man. In so far as a creature can be like God, he is as God, for he is a *person*.

This personality does not come at birth, except in the sense that the oak comes with the acorn. There is, therefore, no independence for the infant. Infancy is the mere germ, the basis, the nature-ground of personality. There is no creature so helpless, so dependent upon the fostering care of parent as man in the first stage of existence.

But there comes a time, in some sooner than in others, when the consciousness of personality begins to dawn. The discovery is made by every one that there is a world within as well as a world without, that there are ideas as well as things, principles in life as well as rules, that there are interests which are all his own. The youth becomes alive to the existence of an intellectual and moral world, awake to righteousness and its opposite, able to think, compare, judge, and act for himself with a clear sense of responsibility. Two courses—both possible—stand before him. Right and wrong are no longer mere terms. Reason and conscience are at work on their own account. The absolute, as distinguished from the command of parent or precept of teacher, is dimly descried. God becomes more or less a reality. While respectful to seniors, and ever exhibiting that modesty which is an essential part of the beauty of youth, he yet finds gradually growing up within a sense of personality, being no longer what he was for the

practical purposes of life in the days of childhood, the mere adjunct of others, but *himself*.

The walls of a sanctuary are, like Solomon's temple, being silently reared within. In that secret place wishes are cherished, hopes take wing, purposes and ideals are formed which none see but the person and the person's God. No human foot invades the precincts of that mysterious region, the world of thought shut up in the young human heart. It is sacred to personality. It gives him the feeling of independence. He has thoughts of his own. He is alone with the eternal. He has something that nobody knows. He goes out to his brothers and sisters and parents, to his companions and employers, but he also goes into himself, into the mystic solitude of the soul. And when he has shut the door, no creature can open it. He is a person, he is independent.

The prerogative of personal independence, like every other good gift of God, has its temptations and dangers; but besides being identified with what is of most consequence to man himself, it brings with it signal advantages to the world. Fresh young life is a boon to society. Progress would be almost impossible if there were not a succession of generations upon the earth. The army of reformers is ever recruited from the ranks of youth. The old, with few exceptions, by an



inherent tendency which strengthens with years, are apt to become fixed in their views and methods, and are prone to acquiesce too readily and implicitly in things as they are. It is said that Harvey did not get a single contemporary in the profession to accept his theory of the circulation of the blood who was over forty years of age. The old have not that freshness of interest, that exuberance of energy, that elasticity of habit, that bounding hopefulness necessary for the arduous tasks and heroic feats connected with the world's improvement and onward march. They are wearied with much walking and fighting, and somewhat faint-hearted. So many of their own experiments have failed, so many of the fondest hopes of their youth have been falsified, so many of their brightest ideals have been shattered, that they begin to accommodate themselves to things as they are and have been, allowing caution, prudence, perhaps suspicion, to take the place of enterprise: and yet the world needs enterprise.

We need a new generation, uncommitted to the past, free to take a fresh view of the situation, who, picking up the drooping banner of progress as foot-sore veterans relax their hold, march on to the unsubdued tracts and untrodden heights of the future.

But, young men, mistake not rashness and forwardness for enterprise. Do not think that



caprice is independence. Do not substitute the novel for the original. While all that is old is not gold, remember that all that is new is not true. Reverence the past while you do not slavishly adhere to it. You will gain nothing by assuming that all who went before you were fools. Do not squander your strength in the Quixotic advocacy of Utopias. Let the teachings of history and the lessons of experience be a test to which you are not afraid to subject your most favourite ideas and projects.

Independence in action as well as thought is eminently befitting the young man. Is this always as prominent as it might be? Does not the rising generation depend too much upon the fruits of the past? If our fathers were too industrious, or rather too intent on accumulating money, their sons, in too many instances, have a remarkable facility in spending it. The best thing that could happen to many young men in good health and of fair capability, in middle class society, would be for them to be obliged to begin where their fathers began, with this exception, that the very best education should be given to them—a fair start and no more, leaving their fathers to give more of their surplus means for the evangelisation of the world, in co-operation with the Lord Christ its Redeemer.

The strength of the young man is shewn in SELF-CONTROL.

“Each essential element in human nature has a voice in all that concerns man’s welfare.” There is no force belonging to man that ought to be crushed. Expression, not repression, is the law of heaven, but there must be legitimacy and harmony in the expression. Even the strong and hot passions of youth are not in themselves an evil. They are an evil only when they are a law unto themselves. Is it not a shame for a man to be like the beasts that perish, governed by mere impulse or instinct? Conscience is the sovereign of man’s nature, and the blind promptings of nature are to be subject to its control. But under conscience those passions are power. It has been well said that if a man have not fire in youth he will not have much warmth in old age. Passion is, therefore, not bad in itself, if under control. Passion is like the rich deep loamy soil that can produce pestilent weeds or useful grain in abundance. Rich soil is better than thin soil. Cultivate it, purge it, sow good seed in it, and the harvester will by and by praise the strong sustaining soil.

To change the figure and use a very ancient one, the passions are like spirited steeds that may run away with you and upset the chariot. If held well in with bit and bridle, however, they

may carry you safely and quickly to your journey's end.

The animal nature in man is lower than the moral. The place of the lower is subjection to the higher. In so far as a youth shows insubordination to moral restraints, he is affirming the beastly rather than the Divine that is in him, and his own body, abused and dishonoured, may be the witness that brings most damning evidence against him. The crown is taken from his manhood by licentiousness. Let us endeavour to bring consistency between the parts in man, putting that first which is first. What a lovely sight it is to see a fully developed young man, athletic, spirited, untainted by disease, unpolluted by excess, full of warm energy, and yet in deference to moral law holding himself in, showing his strength by curbing and carefully regulating his own strong propensities. There is nothing finer on God's earth than such a youth daring to be true to all that he knows, and not afraid to go amongst men as one who can be pious and yet manly, manly and yet pious, deeming it no cant to declare Christ to be his all in all.

As strength is a characteristic of the young man, we expect in him DILIGENCE.

A friend of mine met a young man in London who had been one of his apprentices in a town in the

North of Scotland. The youth was honestly and steadily making his way in the metropolis. He had the gratitude to acknowledge his indebtedness to his former employer. "I owe a great deal," he said, "to that excellent *character* you gave me when I left home." "I gave you no character," was the reply, "you made it for yourself, and I simply certified in writing that you had done so." Ah, each of us has to make his character. It is conscientious work, faithful service, that is the only royal road to success and honour.

The late Sir John Anderson, when addressing young men some years ago in his native place—his own career being an exemplification of his precept—divided workmen into two classes: those who thought first of wages, and those who thought first of work. "Think first of money," he said, "and you will perhaps not get it: think first of duty and the reward will come."

No amount of talent, or even genius, can be taken as a substitute for patient and painstaking endeavour. What does the poet say about sons of genius?

"The heights by great men reached and kept  
Were not attained by sudden flight,  
But they, while their companions slept,  
Were toiling upward in the night."

Have we not been going in too strongly of late for entertainment, amusement often too expensive for the means of a young man? Pleasure we must have, but let it be refined, elevating, above all, honest pleasure. Is there no pleasure in simple athletic games? Is there no pleasure in the acquisition of knowledge? Is there no pleasure in the extension of our realm of thought? Music is good as a recreation, it can soothe and stir, it can awaken thought and kindle feeling. Too many in the present day, however, make it a snare, as it is not taken in its proportionate measure, but allowed to usurp the place of other things equally good. A man can admire the house he lives in without riding on the ridge of it, is a proverb that applies to the love of art, music, society, and many other things.

It is industry, not indulgence, that can bring us out and put us to advantage before the world. The sun shining on a country rich in mineral ore does not bring it out. It is so pleasant to bask and dream in the sunshine. But the ore remains ore with all the shining. So pleasure, playing upon the surface of life, does not develop and exhibit the richest that is in man. Pleasure only dallies with the surface. Resolve, self-denying resolve, goes into the earth miner-like, and digs as for hid treasure. Show as Tennyson sings:—



“That life is not as idle ore,  
But iron dug from central gloom,  
And heated hot with burning fears,  
And dipped in baths of hissing tears,  
And batter'd with the shocks of doom  
To shape and use.”

The strength of a young man is shown in  
DEFERENCE.

The glory of strength often lies in reserve, or rather self-sacrifice. It is good to have the strength of a giant, but it is not always good to use it, at least for self. They that are strong win their highest distinction when they bear the infirmities of the weak. Christianity is the strength of God, and it has taught men to do what when left to themselves they are not inclined to do—to consider and respect the weak, the young, and the aged. Chivalry, freed from its earthly, its vain and gross admixtures, is a truly Christian product. The knight who made it his life-work to redress the wrongs of the poor and down-trodden, protect the innocent, and defend woman, was only the medieval representative of a Christian young man of modern times.

It is easy for a young man to assume a respectful bearing before an engaging young woman. There is no credit to him in such gallantry. It is a pleasure. But to defer to a woman old and wrinkled, giving way to her, considering it an

honour to serve her, to defer to your sister, to your mother, to your wife, to the sex because it is the weaker sex physically—that shows the true man. To reverence the aged, remembering that you yourselves may yet be frail old men, and will be gladdened by the respectful attention of those who are strong in limb and heart; to be content to take the laborious oar and leave the helm to aged experience—that shows the truly strong man.

What can I do for the world? you say. The best thing you can do for the world is to be a man—all round. “Every temptation that is resisted, every noble aspiration that is encouraged, every sinful thought that is repressed, every bitter word that is withheld, adds its little item to the impetus of that great movement which is bearing humanity onwards towards a richer life and a higher character.”

“Can I do anything to gratify you?” said a friend to a dying voluptuary. “Yes,” said he, “give me back my youth.” That man gets back his youth in truest fashion who has the grateful recollection of a youth spent in the presence of God and service of man.

As strength is a characteristic of young men, we expect in him DECISION.

We mean by decision making up one's mind with regard to those things with which we have

to do. There are many questions with which we do not have specially to do, and which do not lie close to the immediate duties and interests of life, and we can afford to let them alone, or treat them as open questions. Whether the planets that revolve in space are inhabited, whether the interior of our earth is like a huge furnace, whether heaven is just to be this old earth of ours renovated, whether our dead have a knowledge of what is now going on in our world, whether we shall reach old age or die within a year—those and many more such questions may be allowed to remain open, as we have not the knowledge necessary on which to base a conclusion. Such a conclusion, however, and our highest good are not bound up in each other. We can fulfil all the purposes of life without decision in such matters.

But on the other hand there are questions which concern us deeply and *now*, and we cannot afford to leave them open if we can get intelligence to guide us in closing them. For example, Is strong drink hurtful or beneficial to a young man? If even the authorities were divided, which they are not, the question might still be pressed, Is it not a wasteful extravagance? Decision is coming to a conclusion on this matter, or any like it of immediate practical importance, and abiding by it.

Youth is expected to show its strength in



decision. It is not creditable to the energy of a young man to be undecided where decision is possible and eminently desirable. There is something to extenuate vacillation in the feeble old man. It is inexcusable in him whose vision is clear, in whom the spirit of enquiry is supposed to be keen, and whose whole future depends upon the acts of the present. To confess ignorance when knowledge is possible and obligatory ; to profess not to know the way when reason and wisdom and experience clearly point it out ; to shut your eyes to the facts of life ; to drift, to follow the crowd, to go on unthinkingly, is the ignoble abnegation of the rights and privileges and duties of young manhood. He who is undecided on the momentous matters of life and death without being logically compelled to remain so is to that extent a trifler, if not a coward.

It should be with youth as with the newly-loosened carrier pigeon, which from its high and strange place in the air glances and darts right and left before seeing the looked for land-mark, and then flies off in its chosen and rightful track. How many are like the ill-trained carrier pigeon which, when released, flutters about aimlessly ; and they carry no message and reach no destination. Indecision is the fruitful source of most of the evils of the world. The undecided man is at the

mercy of every temptation. He is like the fallen leaf that is caught up by the passing breeze. He is open to the inroad of any invader. He tempts the devil himself. He is no man, but the mere semblance of a man.

The necessity for decision presses most hard where our own welfare and highest interests are obviously at stake. When your house is on fire you very soon decide what to do. If you have fallen into deep water, and a friendly hand is held out to you, you do not think twice about the course you should take. If you are seriously unwell, you at once take the remedy that the highest medical science prescribes. Why so decided in such emergencies? Because the law of self-preservation so deeply implanted in the human breast makes it impossible that you as sane men can be otherwise than decided.

But what about moral and spiritual self-preservation? Is the inner man, the character, the soul, the eternal future of less consequence than the body that must die sooner or later? Surely all that can be done for the welfare and purification of the imperishable part of your being ought to be done at once. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" There are facts besetting your moral and spiritual life answering to the fire, the drowning,

the sickness to which I have referred. Have you dealt with them manfully, intelligently, and earnestly, as strong young men ought to do? Have you longed and prayed and wrestled for the truth? Have you spent as much thought on the choice of God as your God as you have done upon the choice of an occupation or profession? Have you been as anxious to stand well before the unsullied holiness of Eternal Majesty as you have been to make a good appearance at a critical examination? If not, on what ground can you claim credit for decision? You halt and dream when halting and dreaming can only be fatal. Who is the man of decision? He who cannot acknowledge authority without bowing before it. He that cannot see the lovable without loving it. He who puts his knowledge into use. Have you done that?

I ask you, What have you done with Christ? What decision have you come to with regard to Him? What think ye of Christ?

# The Maiden.

“ We live by admiration, hope, and love,  
And even as these are wisely fixed,  
In dignity of being we ascend.”—WORDSWORTH.

“ The common problem,—your’s, mine, every one’s,  
Is not to fancy what were fair in life  
Provided it would be,—but finding just  
What may be, then find how to make it fair,  
Up to our means,—a very different thing.”—BROWNING.

“ Try if you can not to pass a day without either reading  
a beautiful poem, or hearing a beautiful song, or seeing a  
beautiful picture.”—CANON KINGSLEY.

*Suggested supplement to the above:* “ Do not let a day pass  
without doing a beautiful deed of love, however humble, without  
uttering some beautiful word of kindness, or showing some  
beautiful picture of consistent character.”



## THE MAIDEN.

**I**N nothing do the Scriptures differ more from the literature of the times and countries in which they were written than in the exalted place they give to woman. You search the writings of Greece and Rome in vain for such honourable notices of the sex as are to be found in the Old and New Testaments. The wisest and noblest teachers in the most civilized countries of the ancient world were never so able to throw off the trammels of prevailing custom and inveterate prejudice as to give woman her rightful place as the fellow and companion of man. On the contrary, exaggerating her infirmities and failing to do justice to the possibilities of her nature, she was contemptuously treated as man's chattel, toy, or drudge.

She was kept in a state of inferiority; she was regarded as a minor and never free; she could not hold property in her own name; no systematic and general training was given to her; she was kept outside the higher concerns of life; servile

submission was her highest duty, and her chief glory was that no one should speak of her. Remember that was the condition of women in the most cultured and refined nations of the western world. In oriental lands she was still more degraded. She is in that condition to this day, as any one acquainted with life in the East is well aware, though improvement is beginning to dawn even there.

One of the many proofs that this is the Book of God, and is from above, is that it is ever in advance of things as they are in this disarranged world. It is a witness against what is abnormal and unjust. It ever cleaves to what is constitutionally right. It brings us back to nature and the true order and relation of things. Even in the Hebrew nation woman's position was never so low as it was in other races at the time. What beautiful pictures of maidenly dignity as well as pastoral simplicity we have in the Old Testament stories of Rebekah, Rachel, and Jethro's daughters. Woman had a high place in the Hebrew commonwealth. Miriam celebrated with triumphant song the overthrow of Israel's enemies. Deborah led her armies. Samuel's mother composed a song which received a place in the sacred records.

But it is Jesus Christ who, as far as determining the views and feelings of the modern



world is concerned, may be said to have discovered woman. The New Testament is woman's Magna Charta, her bill of rights. In the Gospels women appear as the equals and comrades of men, doing that kind of work and discharging those functions for which their natural endowments and tastes give them a special aptitude. It was under a woman's watchful self-forgetting love and unwearied devotion that the childhood and youth of Christ were reared. It was Mary His mother who observed and pondered the many wonderful incidents in the early life of that wonderful Being. If there was a Simeon to hail the advent of Jesus in the temple, there was also an Anna the prophetess. It was a woman who was his first convert and disciple in Samaria. It was a Syrophœnician woman whose faith He extolled, and held up as a model to the Jews. Perhaps the happiest moments of Christ's life were when the women of Judea brought their little children to be blessed by Him as He put His hands upon them. We read in Luke's Gospel, "And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who ministered unto Him of their substance." When hanging on the cross, we read that the women who came with Him from Galilee followed after. They were faithful to the dark and bitter end, and they were the first to visit His sepulchre. We read of the cowardice and faithlessness of man,



but the Gospel narratives make it evident that in the tragic moments and dread crisis of Christ's life, the fidelity of women, "the daughters of Jerusalem," was conspicuous, showing a tenacity as well as tenderness of affection which no trial or adversity could shake, much less destroy. What shall we say of the services which the hospitable and highly honoured house in Bethany rendered to the Divine Master as friend and guest? Martha and Mary did much for Christ and for us.

Woman held the place of importance which Christ gave her, after His ascension. Women were present in that meeting in the upper room which was a prelude to Pentecost. Women were the first converts in Europe: Lydia of Philippi, the honourable women of Thessalonica, Damaris and Priscilla, whose name is mentioned before her husband's.

Against all that is to be placed the slight which Paul in his Epistles to Timothy and to the Corinthian Church seems to put on woman, or at least the restriction which he by an exercise of apostolic authority puts upon the use of her powers—forbidding her to speak in public assemblies. But Paul must be interpreted by Paul. In Christ, he tells us, there is neither male nor female. Christ recognises no distinction in the relation of men and women to Him, and confers substantially upon both

the same privileges and the same obligations, limited of course by natural ability and aptitude. But the social life of the world could not be adapted to the Christian pattern all at once. Christian ideas and influences were at work; time was needed for the leavening process. A measure of expediency and prudence was necessary, not in the application of principle, but in the transformation of social custom. So the slave was enjoined to submit and the woman to be silent, while at the same time truths were taught which struck at the very roots of human serfdom in all its forms.

It is questionable if even Paul himself knew all the social consequences involved in his grand utterance on human equality and liberty before Christ. We cannot, therefore, accept Paul's words as meant for all time and all lands, in so far as they convey a merely conventional or arbitrary restriction upon woman. In so far as they are founded upon an intelligent appreciation of the natural province and powers of woman they cannot be gainsaid. And who can doubt that, speaking generally, woman was meant by her Maker for private rather than for public life. The very physical structure of woman, her voice as heard in a large building for example, is a clear indication of the sphere which she should occupy. It is evident she was not designed, like man, to

go out to the world and do battle with the elements in the field and on the sea. Her vocation is domestic and social. Man's muscle and nerve show that he was meant to be a wrestler, a toiler and pioneer. He has to go down into the arena of nature and business and do battle. She "abides by the stuff," and thinks of the individual and the family, not so much of the race and the world.

We must adhere to the order of nature. We cannot go against it without injury somewhere. But surely this may be laid down as a general canon that what a woman can do well and fittingly in the world she should be allowed to do without hindrance or discouragement. You may say her place is in the family. But what if she has no providential call to the responsibilities of married life. Is she not to be free to maintain herself in the world in a state of dignified independence? I know no degradation more loathsome to which woman can be subjected than to be obliged to enter the married state in circumstances which make it impossible that her judgment and heart can go with her. And in an artificial state of society in an old country like this, where there is a disproportionate number of females, we must be prepared for innovation and enterprise in the callings which women assume.

Every young woman, if her father cannot provide for her, should be trained to earn her own bread, so that she can ever hold up her head as one whose life and well-being and usefulness do not depend upon, and are not bound up in the first proposal that is made to her. All honour to the woman who, conscious of a tendency to cling and a desire for affection, yet prefers to work her way through the world alone rather than compromise her better life or sacrifice her self-respect, and there is nothing more inhuman and cruel in society than to clog her with merely artificial restrictions as she seeks to do the first duty of every human being—make an honest living.

Let us mention some of the things in life which the maiden has specially under her custody and care.

GRACE.

There is room in God's great world for grace as well as strength, for beauty as well as utility. In nature the one abounds as much as the other. There are flowers as well as fruits. There is the silvery birch—the lady of the wood—as well as the sturdy oak, the soaring and singing lark as well as the barn-door fowl.

One of the functions of woman is to be in human society what the fairer aspects of earth and sky are to the material system. The char-

acteristic of man is strength. The characteristic of woman is grace. The man ought to have grace as well as strength, and the woman a measure of strength in addition to grace. But that which is peculiarly and strikingly the woman's portion and trust is grace. We are all acquainted with familiar proofs and illustrations of that. How rude and careless men become in remote parts of our Colonies, in the "backwoods" or "bush," where they herd together without the refining influence of female society. Look at the interior of a house in which no woman dwells. In the arrangement and general appearance of things you see at once that there is the absence of the feminine presence and touch. The truth that lies at the heart of the old fables about charms and spells ought to be embodied in a woman's presence. It is her business to be winsome, "Music breathing from her face."

But winsomeness cannot come by trying—can it? How can grace become a thing of duty? It is a natural gift is it not, as much as the colour of the rose or the plumage of the bird? Yes: so far as mere complexion and features are concerned. But there can be grace even when nature has not been liberal in the bestowal of her favours. The spirit and character can come out in the face. To be possessed by certain ideas and feelings makes



the face shine as Stephen's shone, like the face of an angel. How bright and cheerful the expression may be, making a plain face a perpetual benediction. You have seen faces whose proportions were perfect, but which repelled and chilled, while others of the plainest order were as morning sunshine.

That the outward appearance and manner come in course of time to reflect the spirit and character is a favourite idea with the poets.

“Her pure and eloquent blood  
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,  
That one might almost say her body thought.”

Spenser writes:—

“So every spirit as it is more pure,  
And hath in it the more of heavenly light,  
So it the fairer body doth procure  
To habit in, and is more fairly dight  
With cheerful grace and amiable sight.  
For of the soul the body form doth take,  
For soul is form and doth the body make.”

Wordsworth says:—

“The floating clouds their state shall lend  
To her—for her the willow bend,  
Nor shall she fail to see  
Even in the motions of the storm  
Grace which shall mould the maiden form  
By silent sympathy.  
And she shall bend her ear

In many a secret place,  
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,  
And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face."

Another writes:—

"For manners are not idle, but the fruit  
Of loyal nature and of noble mind."

But let it not be forgotten that grace and vanity are two distinct things. Young women are to use beauty and attractions and fascinations not to exhort flatteries and compliments, but to improve, sweeten, and hallow man. What does the apostle mean when he says, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting of the hair or of wearing of gold or of putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price?" Does that mean that a young woman need not be particular about her dress and general appearance? No: no woman, young or old, has any call or right to make godliness an excuse for untidiness or even inelegance. But it means that the stress is to be put upon what is inward. Do not suppose that expense lavished upon dress will bring grace. For a servant to wear dress as costly as her mistress will not make her a lady. To have grace is not a question of

expense so much as one of taste and character, of manner and spirit.

#### PURITY.

It has been said that when a nation has reached the very lowest level, the signs of degeneracy are to be witnessed most of all in ministers of religion and women. When they give way there is a dark prospect. Women have ever been regarded as the guardians of goodness. Corruption amongst them is to the state what the loss of a sheet-anchor is to a ship, what the capture of the citadel is to a fortified city. The wells of our social life are poisoned when women forget their high calling. They are God's helpers and heaven's agents. Woman's more sensitive and less passionate nature makes her a fit advocate of the better man that has to fight with the lower man in every man.

For that end it is the duty of every young woman jealously and resolutely to guard the proprieties and civilities of social life which are the outposts of virtue. Politeness and fitting reserve as between man and woman form one of the safeguards of order and purity. There is a complaint of deterioration in that respect in this country of ours, especially in the rural parts. The remedy lies to a great extent in the hands of our young women. With them must the improvement begin. At all hazards, and at any cost, must they indig-



nantly resent every liberty that is taken in their presence, and every immodest word that is uttered in their hearing.

All praise to noble ladies in different parts of the land, who are doing their utmost to rouse young women to a proper sense of personal dignity. Young Women ! in your presence vice should slink abashed, and virtue should have in each of you a pledged friend and enthusiastic advocate. It is woman's business to do her utmost to keep the way open to heaven, to prevent the dust or mire of the earth from accumulating upon the fair forms of truth and purity. There are unseen angelic forms hovering around us. Women should be the visible ones.

“ This earth would be an Eden,  
Almost a paradise,  
If women were all holy,  
And women were all wise.  
Men are but women's vassals,  
If women only knew ;  
If women were all holy,  
Men would be holy too.”

#### SYMPATHY.

Sympathy ! heaven's choicest gift to man, the brightest ornament of the soul, the sovereign healer of the ailment of the race—that sympathy woman has in an eminent degree, and in the healthful and well-regulated exercise of which she finds her

highest place and usefulness. That woman has intellect is not now scornfully denied. Recent competitive examinations, where she has had an open field and fair opportunity, show that she in certain departments is not inferior to self-complacent man. Perhaps women are partly to blame for the stigma that has long rested upon their intellectual capacity, in not sooner cultivating a wider range of intelligence by reading and study.

But whilst a great deal remains to be done, and will be done, in heightening and widening her intelligence, yet she will be going against the ordinance of nature, and neglecting her own highest function, if she turn her back upon the world of the affections and enter that of masculine ambition. Woman is not like the granite crag, standing erect in the face of the fiercest storm, but like the willow that bends and quivers under the gentlest breeze. She has not the soldier-like faculty that wrestles with the problems of life—she being the minister of love rather than that of truth. Her heart is her crown and pearl, the stronghold of her nature. She cannot be unmoved in the presence of sorrow and suffering.

It is evident from her very physical frame that her Maker has called her to a ministry as a succourer, a healer, a nurse. She has for that vocation far more endurance than man. The young

man who looks down upon women because they cannot row or run as he can, forgets that a woman can watch a sick person for a whole week, day and night, with little or no sleep, which he with all his vaunted strength could not do. Woman is not man. There is a difference. It is not for the advantage of society that the one should try to be as the other. There is diversity of gift and administration. Woman has more heart than man. Christianity—humanity needs her as she is.

But if the affections are to be to a woman a strength, a security, a joy, and not a snare, she must choose Christ as the king of those affections. No creature can occupy that sovereign place. No creature is unselfish and wise enough. The best preparation you can make for loving the creature is to love the Lord Jesus Christ. He will elevate, hallow, regulate your affections. Feeling is a reservoir of force. But unless Christ keeps the key of the reservoir there is danger. A man's danger lies on the side of scepticism, his masculine logic befooling him; a woman's danger lies in credulousness, over-trustfulness, idolatry; the woman's heart that is in her making her an idolator. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

The love of the creature is never wholesome unless it is only a secondary love. Woman cannot lean with the weight of her whole soul upon any

creature. Look at that clinging plant attaching itself to trellis-work that rots with the action of the elements, or is blown down by the first tempest. See it trailing on the ground. Look at that same plant clinging to the oak which has weathered the blasts of centuries. It is safe—it is attached to the oak. Be like the latter. Faith is “reason leaning upon God.”





# The Husband.

“Measure your cloth ten times, you can only cut it once.”  
—RUSSIAN PROVERB.

“Great riches are not required for the habit of magnificence ;  
it is enough that a man should dispose of *such as he possesses*  
*greatly.*”—AQUINAS.

“It is always a feast when one breaks bread with those  
whom he loves.”

“Husbands, love your wives.”



## THE HUSBAND.

**T**HE Bible has much to say on what man owes to woman and woman to man in the sacred relationship of marriage. That was to be expected, seeing that the Bible deals with life; the closest and most binding tie that can be made on earth was bound to receive its attention. The minister who touches on such a subject is doing no more than the text book which he professes to follow requires. He surely cannot pretend to be wiser than what he finds Scripture to be, and if he ignores such a topic on the ground of its delicacy, safely and timidly contenting himself with vague generalities and doctrinal abstractions, he is avoiding a duty because of its difficulty. The utility and safety of the pulpit are assured if it keep as close to life as the Bible does, not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God. The pulpit often removes itself too much from the "business and bosoms" of men, to its own great detriment as well as that of the world. The topics from which



it should studiously hold aloof are the lighter and more superficial things of life. All that is of deepest moment to man belongs to its sphere. The whole moral basis of life is its domain. Where human duty lies the pulpit should take its stand.

All things being equal, and all conditions favourable, is the married state best for man? No: Paul says, or seems to say. What does he say? "For I would that all men were even as myself. I say, therefore, to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I." (Paul evidently was unmarried, or, as some think, a widower.) But before pronouncing the Apostle Paul to be an ascetic, an advocate of celibacy, notice what he says further on in the same chapter. "I suppose, therefore, that this is good for the *present distress*," or as you have it in marginal note, "necessity." The Apostle is grounding his advice upon expediency. The discouragement he offers to marriage is not absolute, but relative. At the time and in the circumstances, when persecution was raging and persons were liable to be torn from their homes, when society was in a state of upheaval and confusion, and the urgency for Gospel preachers who were free to go from place to place, untrammelled, undistracted by domestic ties, was clamant, marriage was not the best possible state for those who wished to occupy the high places

of the field. And while Christian monks of all ages have utterly distorted the teaching of Paul by exalting celibacy above marriage as a more holy and glorious state, yet there can be no doubt that even monasteries, in certain stages of the world's history, were helpful, at least in their early days to the progress of Christianity.

Exceptional reasons still hold their sway, pointing to a conclusion in certain cases such as Paul urged. There are instances known to most of us when a man's life lies outside of marriage for reasons which do him honour. Like Paul, whose towering nature lifted him above those supports and solaces which most natures crave and need, there are some who have consecrated their time and energies to certain public objects, which puts the conditions of home life beyond their reach. Such self-denying and heroic lives have their reward. Missionaries and other beneficent pioneers, like William Chalmers Burns of China, make a path for themselves which they must tread alone; though, speaking generally, even of missionaries, the presentation of pure Christian family life is a very important part of their testimony and teaching.

Aged and dependent parents, obligations incurred by earlier and equally strong ties, sometimes render marriage impossible. There are sacrifices placed upon the altar of duty, the flame and smoke

of which are not visible to any eye save the Divine one. There are tragedies enacted in private life, the report of which never reaches the newspapers. Feelings are stifled, innocent desires and legitimate hopes and fond visions which would, when realised, make them like most other men, are thrust aside, because such persons are at the expense of keeping a sensitive and scrupulous conscience. Also, and those are not always the natures least worthy of esteem, there are those whose wounded sentiment at an early period of life gave a recoil which lapse of years cannot overcome, the wound healing but a scar remaining.

Prudence restrains many. No one has any right to enter upon the married state until he sees his way clear to be the bread-winner of more than one. Pride, however, it must be owned, is occasionally a restraining factor, as well as prudence. In middle-class society this often operates most injuriously. Certainly, premature marriages are mischievous. It is generally admitted by those who have a right to give a judgment, that a man is better to be nearer thirty than twenty years of age before taking this step. But the man who has as his only reason for not being married, his desire to begin domestic life in a style such as the parents on both sides are living in, is the victim of a pride and worldliness and vain ambition most

contemptible to behold. The woman who is not willing to begin married life in a humbler way than her father is able to afford to keep her after years of toil and progress, is not worthy to be the wife of a young man of any self-respect. What folly that those who are beginning life should expect to be as those who have earned a little of the comfort and splendour of life by years of steady industry. Youth with its abounding energy, freshness, and buoyancy, should not be so dependent upon such things, and should not be such a devoted worshipper of mammon and fashion. It is critical to begin at the top of a ladder, for every step must be a step downwards.

Marriage that is prevented or unduly delayed by pride does almost as much harm to society in one way that marriage precipitated by rash thoughtlessness and imprudence does in another. Improvidence that foolishly hastens, and worldly ambition or tyrannous fashion which stands in the way of a divine ordinance, are both bad.

Is marriage a failure? is a subject that has recently been discussed in the public prints. You might as well ask, Is human nature a failure? Marriage, of course, participates in the limitations, frailties, and defects which adhere to human nature. Marriage does not transform weak erring creatures into paragons of excellency. Patience, forbear-

ance, generosity, Christian principle and love, are virtues as much needed in the house as in the world. And if men will rush into the married state, driven by mere blind impulse or passing fancy, without true confidence or deep affection, without also considering the question of compatibility of disposition and taste, how can there be anything but jarring discord? The thought must come some time. If not before marriage, it will come after, when it is too late, making the yoke nothing better than an irksome and repulsive load. He that enters into the closest and most solemn of earthly unions without duly considering what he is about, has but himself to blame if marriage in his case *is* a failure. It cannot be a success unless ordinary discretion is brought into use. How true and worthy of quotation in this connection are the following words: "Because love is so holy, as well as so strong a passion, do not love or think you love too soon. Not every passing fancy or stirring of the blood, not every mood of admiration or impulse of devotedness is to be revered. It takes a wise man to love wisely. One needs a disciplined, an experienced soul to trust one's affection."

Let us protect this institution of heaven from abuse and ridicule. He that does anything to lower or disparage marriage, by substituting some



of those feather-brained schemes of which we hear now and again, or advocating that divorce should be made easy, is a traitor to the order and purity of society. Family life is the nucleus of all that is best in this world. How Scripture honours this institution. It makes it plain that marriage is not a mere human device or expedient, an artificial arrangement. The Bible tells us that this relationship comes to us with the weight of a divine appointment, and the sacredness of a divine sanction. Christianity, too, has adopted and hallowed the relationship. Our Lord, as you know, performed His first miracle at a marriage feast. The mystical spiritual union subsisting between Him and the believer is compared to that which exists between husband and wife. The constitution of man and the teaching of the Bible are never far apart. They understand and fit unto each other. They bear marks of being the product of the same mind. There are certain great native ineffaceable instincts belonging to the very basis and structure of human nature that may be overborne or kept in abeyance by other feelings or considerations of exceptional strength, but just as the law of self-preservation and other primitive parts of man's being are sure, as a general rule, to take care of themselves and hold their own against all comers, so this ancient ordinance that began to take effect in Eden is still

a power, and is likely to continue to be that till the end of the world. It runs its course with heaven's smile upon it.

A craving for companionship is as natural as a desire for light and food. It is not good for man to be alone. There are parts of man's own nature that are passed over and locked up, like so many disused apartments of a house, as long as he is held aloof from others of his kind. For some of the higher purposes of life man would be about as useless by himself as a pillar without the rest of the cathedral of which it is meant to be a support, as an arch in the middle of a stream without the other parts of the bridge connecting with the land on either side. In certain important respects man is only the part of a whole, the limb of a body. He finds his complement in another. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." It is as Longfellow says:—

"Even as rivulets twain, from distant and separate sources,  
Seeing each other afar, as they leap from the rocks, and  
pursuing  
Each one its devious path, but drawing nearer and nearer,  
Rush together at last to their trysting place in the forest.  
So those lives that had run thus far in separate channels,  
Coming in sight of each other, then swerving and flowing  
asunder,  
Parted by barriers strong, but drawing nearer and nearer,  
Rushed together at last, and one was lost in the other."



There are three things expected from a husband—Headship, Support, Companionship, all having their ground in love.

#### HEADSHIP.

A wit once remarked that the rite which makes two people one does not settle *which one*. It is well for the concord of family life when the question is never formally settled. Authority should be *felt*, not seen or heard, as between husband and wife. Both, if the union is a well-assorted one, should act upon and mould each other, so that there is a growing mutual assimilation.

If it should happen that preponderating force of brain and character lies with the wife, and she is a wise woman, she will not make the fact too apparent. Certainly, things human as well as otherwise find their natural level, and the husband is embraced within the scope of that general law. But the teaching of Scripture makes it plain that the natural order of things requires that the husband should assume the responsibilities of headship. It is a loss to the wife as well as the husband when this order is reversed, and she cannot look up to her husband. Woman's function is influence, man's prerogative is authority; but in certain respects influence is greater than authority, and it certainly becomes a woman better than the

other. There is a lowering of self-respect all round, and a disturbance of what is meet and fitting when it is otherwise. Man takes the initiative to bring about wedlock. The woman's choice lies in giving or withholding consent. So should it be all through. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is Head of the Church."

#### SUPPORT.

The husband is literally the *house-band*. He keeps it together and keeps it up by his strength and industry. He goes out into the world and brings in the bread that is needed. Paul uses strong language in enforcing this duty: "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and he is worse than an infidel."

One of the most helpful uses of marriage is shown in this, that it provides a most excellent stimulus to continued application of muscle and brain. Man needs something to steady and settle him, to call out his energies. Left to himself, without the ties and obligations of social and domestic life, he is apt to be at once lazy and restless. An excellent antidote to a roving disposition is the responsibility and weight of family life. The boiler that is to be a source of motive power to the steamship has to be bolted down. So before a man can be of much use in this world it is necessary that

he should be tied down to a certain routine of duty. There are men who from the mere love of work will, in any circumstances, without any pressure, spend time and strength to the day of their death in useful activity. But those men are examples of what ought to be, not of what generally is.

Most of us need that the necessity should be laid upon us from without. The clamant occasion has to rouse us. The latent power has to be evoked. The man has to be shaken and stirred. Appeals have to be made to conscience and heart. The man has to be drawn out. He that is married, if he is truly a man, has given a pledge to society of continuous and patient labour. He has put himself into a position which is the best possible for the world getting out of him what is in him.

#### COMPANIONSHIP.

Marriage ought to be the highest kind of companionship known upon earth. In order to that husband and wife must of course have something in common. Hence the importance of intelligent choice to begin with. A mistake here is fatal. To be tied for life to a person with whom you have few ideas in common, especially on that highest of all subjects—your relation to God—is purgatory upon earth, and not always with those salutary moral effects that the Roman Catholic expects from purgatory in the future. The great

secret of a happy married life is to have made such a choice that you can have a sustained interest in each other, each finding a helpmeet in the other in the higher concerns of life. Do not—those of you who are young—do not disregard the counsel, or it may be, the warning of father and mother or long-tried friend in such a connection. If the advice given is founded solely upon social and worldly considerations, it may be deemed superfluous. It is a pity that parents should lose influence over son or daughter by attaching too much importance to differences—real or supposed—in station, though these are so far worthy of consideration. But let the decisive question be: Is the person of good character, respectable intelligence, refined taste, pure aspiration, well trained, and practically useful—a fit companion for life?

Do husbands always realise that it is their duty to be the companions of their wives? Is it considerate or kind to spend all the day in business and then devote the whole evening to your club or other society, or in the summer, to the bowling green? Even public work is not an excuse for neglect of wife and children. A man's duty begins at home. The family stands before all other institutions upon the earth. There may be a kind of refined and exalted selfishness even on the part of philanthropic workers.

As for want of time to devote to home duties owing to pressure of business—it is a question whether any man has a right to make a sacrifice of home-life for the sake of business. What though trade were to suffer a little and home to gain, would not a right balance be struck in the light of the supreme ends and interests of life? Merchants, shopkeepers, and others ought to combine in entreating and urging the public to make their purchases at an earlier hour than men who serve them may be the servants but not the slaves of their customers. I put in a plea for more home life. Make home bright, attractive. Remember that from the necessity of her position a wife is thrown upon the society of her husband. The society of wives would perhaps be more improving if it were more largely cultivated. The heart has its claims and rights. It is not enough to provide food and clothing for the body. There are higher and finer requirements.

Love is the fulfilling of the marriage as of every other law. The husband whose life is rooted in God is likely to be dutiful and kind. Piety helps the natural disposition, whatever it is. If the man be affectionate, religion has a heightening and hallowing effect. If he be deficient in that respect, true piety is invaluable. A man will be all the better a husband who has one that stands higher



in his heart than even a wife—and that is his Lord.  
 “In order to love a woman well, truth and honour  
 must be loved still better.”

Here the true woman speaks to one who would  
 be a husband:—

“Before I trust my fate to thee,  
 Or place my hand in thine,  
 Before I let thy future give  
 Colour and form to mine,  
 Before I peril all for thee, question thy soul to-night for me.

“I break all slighter bonds, nor feel  
 A shadow of regret;  
 Is there one link within the past  
 That holds thy spirit yet?  
 Or is thy faith as clear and free as that which I can pledge to thee?

“Does there within thy dimmest dreams  
 A possible future shine,  
 Wherein thy life would henceforth breathe  
 Untouched, unshared by mine?  
 If so, at any pain or cost, oh tell me before all is lost.

“Look deeper still, if thou canst feel  
 Within thy inmost soul,  
 That thou hast kept a portain back,  
 While I have staked the whole,  
 Let no false pity spare the blow, but in true mercy tell me so.

“Is there within thy heart a need  
 That mine cannot fulfil?  
 One chord that any other hand  
 Could better wake or still?  
 Speak now, lest at some future day my whole life wither and  
 decay.”

**The Wife.**



“ Benignant looks  
That for a face not beautiful do more  
Than beauty for the fairest face can do.”

“ Be not like those  
Who, trimmed in forms and visages of duty,  
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves.”

“ There’s a rose looking in at the window  
In every condition of life,  
In days of content and enjoyment,  
In hours with bitterness rife ;  
Where e’er there’s the smile of a true wife,  
As bright as a beam from above,  
’Tis the rose looking in at the window,  
And filling the dwelling with love.”



## THE WIFE.

**T**HE first duty of a woman, if she is desirous of securing her independence and maintaining her self-respect, is to establish personal and confidential relations with her spiritual Lord, Jesus Christ. Only in this way can she effectually guard what she should prize as the very crown and jewel of her nature, viz., the right to regard her existence as of consequence in itself, apart from the intervention of any fellow-creature. She is so made that there is a tendency in her to lean upon some one stronger than herself, to rise, ivy-like, by clinging. This can be no demerit to her, for it is an integral part of her divinely-framed constitution. But it opens up to her the possibility of making herself of less account than is consistent with the dignity of her nature and vocation, should she and Christ remain strangers to each other. In such circumstances there is danger on the one hand of marriage meaning to her idolatry, or on the other hand the want of it amounting to a fatal

deprivation, which places the ends and interests of life in this world beyond her reach. Either alternative is unbecoming in a creature made in the image of God.

Man's temptation lies not on that side of his nature. Owing to his sturdy self-reliance, and the sufficiently comfortable sense he has of his own importance, he is more likely to err on the side of pride than of over-trustfulness and excessive devotion. There is a sense, therefore, in which it is true that a woman is made to feel more readily than man the immediate advantage of faith in a personal Christ. It gives her heart a stay for life in all circumstances that never fails; one which hallows and sweetens every possible condition and rectifies every other relation. Coming up to Christ, who as her Sovereign has the right to dispose of her life as He sees fit, she is at once relieved of an irksome load of responsibility, as she surrenders herself implicitly to His guardianship and control. Becoming a member of the great spiritual commonwealth, she is of consequence on that ground; she is a unit and an equal among the higher forces of heaven; she has a future and a purpose wherever her lot may be cast; and her deepest and most sacred joy in life is beyond being made or unmade by any fellow-creature of either sex.

**A woman compromises her individuality, parts**

with her birthright as a free-born child of heaven, makes herself the mere creature of a creature, and besides putting herself in the perilous position of staking her all upon conditions which she cannot always control, when she feels that her life and happiness are absolutely and necessarily bound up in marriage, so that to miss it is to lose, and to hit it is to gain, where loss and gain are of the weightiest moment. It is no disrespect to holy wedlock, upon which our Maker's sanction and smile rest, to affirm that that is too great a sacrifice to lay upon its altar.

Such inordinate and abject dependence upon marriage is in every respect disadvantageous. In the first place, it does not always open the path which leads to the destination so eagerly coveted. In matrimonial as in other matters men, when they do not lose their heads, choose the person who is best fitted for the position that is vacant, not those who passionately desire it and ply cunning arts to get it. Should ardour and manœuvre win the day, instead of fitness, very likely that will be one added to the number of ill-assorted and unhappy marriages. That person is most eligible for the higher sphere who is doing her utmost by self-discipline and culture to bring herself into harmony with her present situation, and is unmistakably proving herself to be useful and necessary

in existing relations. Men do not always know what is good for them, it is true, and occasionally in moments that are not lucid, pick up dross when they might have had treasure: but certainly if a woman is to be the wife of a man whose wisdom gives proof that he is worthy of her, and the union is to be the blessing to both that it was designed to be, that consummation will not be hindered but helped by her, if, standing upon the native dignity of her womanhood and her personal identification with Christ as the sovereign disposer of her future, she refuses to regard marriage in any other light than as a part, an honourable part, but in no circumstances the whole of life.

Moreover, this worship of Christ, this outgoing of "the hunger of the heart" to Him who is fairer than the children of men, and who is the perfect embodiment of love as well as excellency, makes disappointment less likely with the man of your choice. Most persons, especially those of intense and deep nature, idealise the object of their affections, investing the loved one with qualities which are of such exaggerated merit and splendour as to exist only in the illumined imagination of her who loves. That woman is ill-prepared for the process of disenchantment, which comes sooner or later, if she has not previously fortified herself by drinking of the water, of which if one drinks



she shall never thirst again. If her nature is highly strung, the disparity which deepening acquaintance obtrudes between the actual and the ideal jars, and unreasonably expecting in her husband what she could only find in Him who is "chiefest among ten thousand," she, waking up from her dream, and having the facts of life substituted for the dissolving views of romance, is apt to do injustice to the creature of flesh and blood, encompassed with infirmities, to whom she is yoked. The discovery that the only god she has to live for is a Dagon who cannot keep the lofty shrine in which a fond heart has placed him, or a Nebuchadnezzar's image in which there is a large proportion of clay mixed up with the silver and gold, brings a weariness and perhaps bitterness which is as canker to the soul. Those yearnings and passionate strivings after the unattainable in the human are as harmful to her who loves as to him who is loved.

Thus experimental religion, besides its own intrinsic worth, has the advantage of tending to make a wife sensible and satisfied. She is as content to take as she is to be "a creature not too great or good for human nature's daily food." She does not vainly sigh for "better bread than can be baked from wheat." Realising that "Frail creatures are we all: to be the best is but the fewest faults to have," she cheerfully adapts herself to the only

conditions on which marriage is possible in this world, and having access to secret springs of strength by the communications she has opened with heaven, she is enabled to be a dutiful, helpful, happy wife.

As such she will be to her husband **THE EFFICIENT KEEPER OF HIS HOUSE.**

It is the right, the duty, and the privilege of a wife to take upon her the burden of household management. The wife is as responsible for the business of home as the husband is for his business in the world. Unless incurable incompetence or hopeless failure in health be the plea, it is inexcusable in a husband to eject his wife from her rightful province as one who has the custody of the keys and resources of his domestic establishment. If she is worthy of being his wife, she is not unworthy of having responsibility in her own domain, and to withhold it is to cast an indignity upon her in the eyes of the world, which to every woman of spirit must be a humiliation that stings and embitters.

It is the pride of every wife worthy of her position to have an orderly and clean house, a table on which is spread, it may not be a dainty and costly, but a well cooked and neatly served repast. The rich and the poor meet together here. A wholesome and palatable meal does not depend



so much upon money as we are apt to suppose. It is very much a question of skill and taste as applied to common articles of nutrition. Much food is wasted, much injury is inflicted upon the health, and much is done to mar the comfort of home by the want of sufficient intelligence and painstaking in the use of the provision the bountiful Giver of all things has made for us. In these days when cooking lessons are given in our public schools and at evening classes, we may look for reform in a department which has a closer connection with some of the ills in society we deplore than perhaps most of us are willing to admit. Even the lady who does not require to put her own hands to the work will be all the better a wife, if her knowledge exceeds that of a subordinate. Whether home be a mansion or a cottage, the best that trained skill and thoughtful management can do to make it a palace of delights ought to be done.

We have the highest possible sanction in Scripture for a wise economy in the use of the things entrusted to our care. Christ was no friend to extravagance and waste. What attention He, the Lord of glory, bestowed upon little things. When Peter went into the empty sepulchre he found the napkin that had been about our risen Lord's head, "rolled up in a place by itself." He who had command of the resources of the universe did not

disdain to use the "five barley loaves and the two fishes" in miraculously feeding the multitude, and He gave command to "gather up the fragments." Parsimoniousness! No, there can be no parsimoniousness where there is generosity of heart. Parsimony is thrift for its own sake, and is the child of avarice. Frugality is the child of simplicity and temperance, and the friend of charity. There is no meanness in taking care of little things, that you may not only be solvent but bountiful. "Waste not, want not," is a proverb that has wide application all over and all through life.

It is whispered that some of those commercial embarrassments and failures of which there are too many in the present day are due partly, if not in great measure, to extravagance and vanity at home. Social rivalry, silly ambition, living in a larger house, and having costlier and more numerous entertainments than the husband's income is equal to, is the beginning of a course that ends in debt and disgrace. Sometimes the wife is kept in shameful ignorance of her husband's financial position, and in such circumstances she cannot be greatly blamed. But when she wittingly goes beyond her proper allowance to gratify her foolish desire for show, her conduct cannot be too severely reprobated. The burden of the home lies upon the wife. Her husband's mind is occupied with

his business in the world. She is the household guard and should put on the brake in time. If a sister of mine were bringing her husband into difficulties through want of thought and conscience on her part, I would have no hesitation in saying to her, "Better that you should put yourself into a premature grave through excessive toil than that you should bring reproach upon the name of the man whose helpmeet you profess to be." The spirit of the Greek matron, addressing husband or son going to the battlefield, should animate every wife—"Return *with* your shield or *on* it."

In order that expenditure may be kept under income, every good wife will set an example to her husband in not exacting more than a moderate sum for dress. A gentleman of very high military rank said the other day that women of all sections of the community were at fault in spending far more than was proportionate in paying homage to fashion and the lust of the eye and fancy. Is the charge well founded? I do not presume to answer the question.

A good wife should be to her husband THE PROMOTER OF HIS PLEASURE.

There are some things more difficult to keep than to get, and affection is one of them. Too many in wedlock are held together mainly by the legal and social tie, that of sentiment being

allowed to drop. This may partly account for the circumstance that most novelists bring their hero and heroine to the altar and leave them there, the story from that point being too tame and featureless to be pursued any further. The poetry and witchery pass away, and prosaic routine, fittingly figured by the yoke, takes the place of the fascinations of love, which ought to be renewed every day until death do them part, being as spontaneous and fresh as this morning's dew and sunlight, though not perhaps so demonstrative as in earlier days. True love does not change with time, except in this, that there may be the steady and warm glow long after the blaze and sparks of youth have passed away.

There are men who from the density of their natures are proof against the enchantments and innocent guiles of wedded love, and notwithstanding the most gracious attentions, are so hard and self-contained as to prefer the company they find in the tavern to that of their own home; but speaking generally a wife has far more power over her husband than she takes credit for, if she would only exert it before it is too late.

It is action of that kind which gives you a moral hold of your husband. Many a wife has lost the heart of her husband by not being at as much pains to please after marriage as before. Let not

the practical concerns and everyday cares of the household put out the sentiment that brought you together. Be at pains to cultivate, maintain, and guard your affection for your husbands. That is the fount of your power to please. Lose that and you lose what makes marriage helpful and beautiful. What hollowness and mockery if mutual surrender be wanting in marriage. Be not you of the number "who, trimmed in forms and visages of duty, keep yet their hearts attending on themselves." Rather let your love be that which Tennyson describes:—

"Love took up the harp of life and smote on *all* the chords  
with might,  
Smote the chord of self that, trembling, passed in music out  
of sight."

Many of us are so much afraid of our feelings that we often do injustice to one another in not giving due expression to them. We are so cautious and reserved, and so unwilling to err on the side of excessive demonstrativeness, that we do not give others, to an adequate degree, the benefit of the affection we cherish for them. It lies there in the heart like so much locked-up capital that never sees the light of day. Let it come out. What power is exerted to please the husband who comes home jaded with the day's toil when he finds his wife at the threshold looking her very best, and



ready to greet him with a smile. Good words and looks and endearing acts cost little, and are worth much in fostering that sentiment which is the very soul of marriage.

In short the wife, having it as part of her business in life to please, should endeavour to acquire that subtle yet, like sunshine, powerful thing we call tact.

“What is tact? 'tis worth revealing,  
Tis delicacy's finest feeling,  
It is to scan another's breast,  
To know the thought ere half expressed ;  
If word or tone should waken pain,  
To drop the subject or the strain ;  
To mark each change, each shade to know,  
From care's cold brow to pleasure's glow ;  
To read in the averted eye  
Refusal now or sympathy ;  
To catch the sigh, the timid tone,  
And make the speaker's thought your own ;  
To come around with winning art  
And gently steal away the heart.”

A wife should be to her husband **THE MINISTER OF HIS HIGHER LIFE.**

The wife is called the better half, and she proves herself to be worthy of the honourable designation when she holds her husband up to the better side of life. Women more than men are the guardians of the holy of holies of life. When exalted and refined sentiments and women



part company, the world is indeed in a bad way. Woman was given to man to be his helpmeet. But is the help only to be granted to him in his material concerns? Is she to be a mere house-keeper? Man has a spirit, a character, an inner life; more of the man dwells in them, or ought to dwell in them, than in the lower parts. Is he then to get no help where help is of most consequence?

The wife is the good angel of her husband. It is the business of the true wife to endeavour that he to whom she is united shall get and keep the use of the higher self. "The bell cannot reveal to itself the sound of its metal, the friendly hammer must do that. My friend must put me in possession of myself." The true wife is she who unlocks for a man his nature, and leads him up to its higher places and inner apartments. She may not have much logic and philosophy, but having what is better, pure impulses and holy aspirations, the light that comes from her will be light that leads to the gates of paradise.

There is nothing that accelerates the higher development of man like sympathy, which evokes and quickens. In order that the fount of truth and wisdom may play, there must be channel and vessel. Richer musical strains would be sung if there were finer ears and hearts to hear. How depressing and repressing it is to be tied to one with

a limited range of ideas, and having no more moral capital in life than a miscellaneous assortment of stunted aims and paltry motives. We want our women to be women and not men, but to be womanly is not to be frivolous and worldly. A woman can be a woman and yet nourish her soul with those larger views of life and duty that are unknown to the busybody and the gossip. She will then be able to strengthen her husband where perhaps he is weak. No one has such opportunity of making something of a man as his wife. She knows him as no other person does. She is more of a presence to him. It is in her power more than in that of any other person to drag him down or lift him up. God means you to be to your husband what He Himself desires to be. Be a fellow-worker with God for the purification and elevation of him to whom your fortunes are linked. No creature comes between you and him. No angel in heaven has such a call to do him good as you have. Let your orbit of thought and desire not be a narrow one, and that will in no way disqualify you for homely duties. Live daily in that great spiritual world in which Christ is enthroned as your Lord, and living in spirit with Him you will be better able to live for your husband. "Go with mean people and you think life mean." Go with Christ, and how exalted and glorious is life.

**The Father.**

“In Æsop’s fable, when the fisherman caught a little tunny, the fish said, ‘Put me back in the stream, and I will get into the by-water, and you will catch me when I am a big fish. ‘Ah,’ said the fisherman, ‘if I let you go now, I may never see you again.’”

“Love goes oft astray,  
Losing while it seeks the way ;  
Power doth sometimes ill,  
Wielding more of force than skill ;  
Therefore with sound mind  
Love and power must be combined,  
Love will then go right,  
Power be usefulness and might.”

“Be noble, and the nobleness that lies  
In others sleeping, but never dead,  
Will rise in majesty to meet thine own ;  
Then wilt thou see it gleam in many eyes,  
Then will pure light around thy path be shed,  
And thou wilt nevermore be sad and lone.”



## THE FATHER.

**T**HERE is no position open to any creature of God so full of responsibility and honour as that of a father. There is nothing in earth or heaven, so far as we know, to be put in comparison with fatherhood amongst men, except it be the relation which the great infinite Spirit sustains to those who are made in His image. Angels know what it is to be children, but not fathers. The beasts that perish are acquainted only with the physical and merely instinctive side of paternity, the moral aspects and issues of the connection being, of course, unknown to them. So far as our knowledge goes then, God and men stand alone in having persons who claim to be regarded as their offspring, dependent upon their support and protection, and with an eternity before them which will be so far determined and coloured by the training that is received and the example that is set.

What can be said at the very outset more fitted to illustrate the dignity of fatherhood, the grandeur

of its opportunity, the sacredness of its joys, and the high and solemn obligations which it imposes, than such words as these : " Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." A man who is a father is the only analogue that infinite wisdom could discover with which to set forth the fulness and tenderness of God's own compassion for those to whom he has revealed Himself. So far as natural relationship and government are concerned, a man never comes so near to his God as when he is a father. It is only by moral qualities and characteristics, indeed, that a man can really participate in what is most distinctive of God. Still amongst the natural ordinances of the vast system of things, an earthly father is in a limited degree, and up to the measure of his capabilities as a creature, what the Universal Parent is to all made in His likeness. There are many aspects of the divine character which man can imitate, and so far reproduce. There is only one aspect of the Divine *position*, and that is fatherhood.

Carrying out still further the analogy between God and man as regards paternity, there is a sense in which it can be said of fathers, without any profanity, and so as to deepen the solemn responsibility of their position, that they, too, can bring others upon the scene of life in their own likeness. The science of the present day is shedding a lurid



light upon the question of heredity. Investigation has yet much to disclose, but enough has been learned to convince us that a birth is not the entrance of an absolutely new thing into the world, but the beginning of a life that has its determining roots and principal suckers in the past.

Heredity is not, indeed, so simple as many suppose. It is very complex, and in many respects inscrutable in its action. Allowance must be made for the play of diverse, subtle, and as yet occult forces. The son may be very different from the father. One generation is not the mere repetition or reproduction of another. Close observation of a family or race for a long succession of years leads to the conclusion that traits of character may sink out of view for generations and then unexpectedly reappear. Features, dispositions, capabilities, all the forces and facts which go to make life are often a combination of the recent and remote that is exceeding strange and puzzling, a child sometimes being the sum and product of what it baffles us to trace, however far we travel into the past. Nature has secrets which she keeps.

But after all that has been said, this has to be admitted, that a father is one who, by his own choice and act, incurs the responsibility of being the instrument of bringing living creatures into the world, who inwardly as well as outwardly resemble

himself. What manner of men then ought fathers to be! Who that has conscience and a heart can, in the light of what has been said, enter upon marriage lightly? There are men of a sensitive mould, of a fine delicacy of moral sense, who in view of known constitutional weakness or disease refrain from committing themselves to that course which involves the propagation of what may be only an augmentation of the world's suffering, and as enlightenment spreads, the number of such scrupulous ones will doubtless be increased, and their honourable self-restraint correspondingly applauded.

But a father's responsibility does not end with the birth of his child. He is in some measure in the new-born babe. More than that, his life, as a moral presence, goes every day into the young, expanding, assimilating human organism that owns him as father. The character of every father is a force, and silently but penetratingly is it operating upon the child, and so far shaping the man that is to be. So it is literally true within limits that we can bring creatures, whose destinies are linked with the ages of eternity, into our own image. What a powerful motive to earnest endeavour after a pure and exemplary life. It is a duty that is laid upon every one to be obedient unto the vision of life that is given to him. But when a man realises that for good or for evil other lives are more

or less bound up with his, either blessed or cursed by the connection, should not the fatherhood within him rouse and inspire the manhood? Who that has a spark of nobility in his nature, or is touched with any tenderness or yearning affection, looking on the trustful face of his child can do other than say from the bottom of his heart, "With the help of God, I must be a good man?"

What then is the supreme, the indispensable, the all-pervasive requisite of the father? It is the perfect and purified exercise of that which was enkindled in his heart the moment his first-born looked up into his face, pleading in its helplessness for fostering love. Is that all the father needs? Yes, that is all, but how much is it! All that is needed to make day is the sun. All that is needed for summer is warmth. All that is needed to make the father is true love. But what is love?

IT IS NOT COLD MEASURED BENEVOLENCE.

The loving father does not say, "I am going to do my duty to my child." In true love the heart is ever in advance of the conscience. In love there is immeasurable depth, spontaneous outflow, exuberance, the abandonment of calculation. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." There is an inexpressible infinitude beneath those words. So is it in his measure

with an earthly father's love. He gives it forth without stint, as nature gives forth her fragrant breath on a summer morning. It is an atmosphere that encompasses the young life, not so much air admitted into an exhausted receiver. It is the gushing fountain, not the counted-out drops of a drug. Our love for our children should be like the glorious, generous, unstinted sunshine, not like the gas of our homes, which comes through a registering meter. The true father says, "There is nothing within the range of my power that I would not do for my child." It was the father's heart that spoke in David when he exclaimed in his agony, "O Absalom, my son, my son, would God I had died for thee!"

BUT NEITHER IS THIS LOVE FOOLISH FONDNESS.

There is a love that costs very little. It is the mere pleasurable play of instinctive feeling, easy-going good nature, the kind prompting of nature, with as little of the moral element in it as the feeling that constrains each of us to protect his own life. Just, too, as there may be circumstances in which to make the preservation of our own life of paramount importance would betray the baseness of a mean and cowardly spirit, so there may be an indulgent fondness in the parent that has nothing but unmitigated selfishness as its root. The father will not put himself to the

trouble of maintaining the law of right in his household, nor will he inflict upon himself the pain of administering the needed rebuke and chastisement. He spares his children, but really under the guise of kindness of heart he is sparing himself. He will not allow a high and enlightened sense of duty to cross his own nature. Every true father in correcting a child suffers more than the child that is corrected. But some are not disposed to endure that suffering at the bidding of conscience, and then they plume themselves upon their tenderness of feeling. Tenderness of feeling! Obtuseness rather. What credit does a man deserve who allows a lower feeling of his nature to gain the mastery over a higher?

True love ever consorts not with the baser feelings but with what is deepest and purest in the heart. It never parts company with intelligence and conscience. It addresses itself, not to the fancies and wishes, but to the real needs and enduring interests of the child. Wise affection will unceremoniously snatch the sharp-bladed knife from the hand of the child, or dash tempting but poisonous fruit that is being lifted to the mouth, though tears of bitter disappointment should come to the eyes. Inexperience is not always the best judge of love's truest manifestation, else no child would ever be weaned from its mother's breast.



The wider experience and fuller knowledge of the parent should guard the child, sometimes against his most fervent longings.

For example, I have occasionally heard this excuse given by the elder members of a church after they had called a minister in whom they personally did not have confidence, and who very soon proved himself to be inefficient, "We did it to please the young people." Now, let us understand one another. A man who does not love children passionately, who is not at pains to keep himself in sympathy with their feelings and to look at things with their eyes, is almost incapacitated for the ministry of Him who said, "Feed my lambs." But then trained intelligence and mature experience that can detect the emptiness and superficiality which lie behind the flashy style ought to have spoken out, and not allowed a church to be almost wrecked, and public interests ruthlessly sacrificed merely to "please the young people." Young as well as old have been befooled and division and bitterness, which may take a generation to eradicate, have brought dishonour upon God's cause, all which might have been avoided if years and discretion had sat at the helm, and held the helm, and while considering the young did not surrender reason and the lessons of experience in deference to juvenile importunity.



This is an illustrative example of the attitude which should not be taken by parents in relation to their children. The divine order of things cannot be overturned without injury to all concerned. The precept stands, not "Parents obey your children," but "Children obey your parents." It is in accordance with the fitness of things that rule should be in the possession of the disciplined and ampler life. Do not then purchase peace by dropping the reins. It is ignoble, it is disastrous both to parent and child. It is easy to get goodwill by giving way at all points. The difficulty and the duty lie in trying to retain the good feeling of our children without surrender.

Neither on the other hand can this love take the form of UNREASONABLE AND RIGOROUS RESTRAINT.

There are young persons who find it difficult to believe that their parents and elderly friends were ever children. They think of their fathers and mothers as having been always old, just as they themselves will ever be young. Old people sometimes give occasion for this notion in the childish mind by speaking as if they, like Minerva, who is said to have sprung fully armed from Jupiter's head, were utterly ignorant of the earlier stages of life.

They try to regulate the feeling and conduct of their children solely by the experiences and

views which they now have instead of those which they had when children; this is a fault that fathers are not always free from, but which the unmarried more readily fall into. They insist upon the existence of old heads upon young shoulders. They make no allowance for the mercurial days of youth. They, from the slower action of their blood, can sit still and be at ease, and they require that young creatures, whose pulse beats twice as fast, should be as sedate as they are. It is not in nature that it should be so. It is crass stupidity to expect it. Let us have more imagination; let us endeavour to think on the things of our children, and by putting ourselves in thought in their situation, give lawful scope for exuberant energy and buoyant spirit, for play and din and romp at seasonable place and time. We do not want sickly children who sit in the corner repeating pious platitudes. We should like our children to be children, natural, lively, unconstrained, not old men and women before the time; ever exhibiting the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom, but without affectation or precocious and sage-like maturity.

One of the advantages of having children is that we are assisted by them in keeping feeling fresh and vivid. Some of the young life passes into the old frames. Thus there is reciprocity

between parent and child. The father gives ballast and steadiness, and gets in return vivacity, and is delivered from that weakness which so often besets the old of living too much in the past. The father, by his children, has a stake in the living present such as nothing else can give. In return for that let him, while not withholding from them the benefit of his larger experience and sifted knowledge, also show a considerate regard for the feelings and legitimate wishes of those who belong to a different stage of life from himself, guiding, purifying those wishes, but not ruthlessly suppressing them.

BUT THIS LOVE OF THE FATHER IS NOT A NARROW AND EXCLUSIVE REGARD WHICH MAKES A WORLD OF THE FAMILY.

There are fathers who make too liberal a use of deputies in the training of their children. They confine themselves to business, to the financial department of life, and leave teachers to take more than their proper share in equipping their sons and daughters for the responsibilities of manhood and womanhood. As if to make amends for neglect on the moral side, they overdo what is needful on the material side of the life of their children. Might not such rich fathers do more for the future welfare of their children if they did less in hoarding up money on their behalf. While we are to begin

with the support of the household, we are not to end there. There is a needy world beyond the family circle that has claims upon our liberality. Let us abandon that narrowness that can see little or nothing upon which to spend the money we have accumulated than our own offspring. During the last fifty years, thousands of young men have come to grief because they came too easily to money, which their parents ought to have distributed more wisely and conscientiously. A number of merchants and manufacturers met under one roof some time ago in one of our large cities. In course of conversation they began to speak confidentially about the provision they had made for their children. After a while one of them exclaimed: "Are we not fools to toil and gather and keep as we are doing, as if our sons were idiots, and could do nothing for themselves?"

Paternal affection is made beautiful and kept wholesome when it is transfigured by the larger love of God and His kingdom. The best father is he who is not the slave of his children but the servant of God. When he can say: "My son is much to me, but God is more," he will then be more to his son than if his heart were concentrated upon that son. In robbing God we rob all with whom we have to do. The father is less than he ought to be to his children unless he feels and acts

like one who has been put in trust by God. The king, the magistrate, and the father have their position immensely strengthened when they endeavour to represent God. Fail in duty to the Supreme One, and you injure yourself.

Fathers! God says in effect to you: "You are acting for Me. Be as you know I would be were I where you are. You cannot take the burden of the universe on you, but you can take your share of it."







**The Mother.**

It is said that on a certain coast where fogs are frequent and dense, and where there are no lighthouses, it is the custom for the women to go down to the beach, and when a storm arises, to sing out with their clear voices upon the sea, and their sons and brothers and husbands, while hearing their voices, are guided by the melody in safety to the shore.

You may not be able to put heroism and goodness into poetry, but you can put them into young life.

“When you educate a boy you perhaps educate a man ; when you educate a girl you are laying the foundation for the education of a family.”

“It is only with renunciation that life, properly speaking, can be said to begin.”



## THE MOTHER.

**E**VERY man who has reached middle life, and even long before that, has a considerable amount of his capital fund of inward pleasure drawn from memory. He is not dependent on the present with its vivid and somewhat garish delights, nor yet upon the future with its gaily coloured visions, fancy's creations, and hope's fond pictures. The past by its recollections, which are bound up with our very identity, sends wave after wave upon the shore of the present. What wealth of pleasure can be drawn from the paradise-like days of childhood, when trust and hope made the world in which we dwelt, and the pleasing illusions of inexperience sometimes came nearer to the higher realities of life than the cares and fears of mature years. Who can recall without a thrill of joy rambles with companions long ago by the sea-shore or in the darkening wood, when life's mystery and witchery cast their spell upon us, and existence seemed an endless summer day? When we went

to church on a June morning, all nature smiling upon us, every flower saluting us with its fragrance, every tree with its song, the lark high overhead mingling its enraptured music with the solemn tones of the distant bell that was summoning us to worship—who can remember all this without thanking God for the pleasures of memory?

He that was reared in a happy Christian home has by remembrance a bank to draw from that can never break, and which will never fail to honour his calls, however numerous. There are holy joys in such a circle which are the nearest approach to heaven's blessedness that this earth can afford. Of all the figures belonging to that little domestic commonwealth of early days, perhaps the most familiar and endearing is that of the mother. To a very considerable extent the mother *is* home. The brothers and sisters, however affectionate, have pursuits and interests of their own which so far separate them from us, even the father has his business out of doors to which he devotes the greater part of his time; but the mother's interest and business in life is to care for us, no gratification, no personal consideration, not even life itself standing between her and our welfare.

Mothers, it is impossible for you to over-estimate the weighty responsibility and the grandeur of your opportunity. The future of the world is in

great measure in your hands. The hand that rocks the cradle is for the higher purposes of life mightier than that which wields the sceptre. "What France needs for her regeneration," said Napoleon, "is *mothers*," The want of France is the want of the world. The most sacred and precious interests of the race are entrusted to you mothers. You get men at first hand. You shape the character and determine the future. The first twenty years of a man's life remain freshest in the mind, and are the principal source of the pleasures of memory. You will notice that the greater and richer a man's nature is, the more he makes of his mother's influence. Almost every biography of a great and good man traces a considerable proportion of what he is and has to his mother, whose sayings and example remain long in the heart. The minister has the young for a few hours once a week, the mother lives with her children.

What is necessary to produce good and wise mothers?

THAT THE DUTIES AND CARES OF MOTHERHOOD BE ACCEPTED AS A MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE DIVINELY APPOINTED PLAN AND OPPORTUNITY OF YOUR LIFE.

Before a mother can be what she ought to be, she must accept her position with all its responsibilities and toils as a divine appointment, and one

in the fulfilment of which the highest interests and ends of her own life are being subserved. Your mind will lie close to the needs of your calling as a mother with all the more alacrity and cordiality if you realize that your own personal good is bound up in the constant manifestation of a spirit of consecration and service to your children.

Cares that come in the providence of God, and arise from the allotted tasks of life, are a helpful and needed discipline. If judiciously and carefully used, they school and perfect habit and character. They are at once a stimulus and a corrective. Mothers, burdened and weary, with that wonderful facility which manifests itself in us all of projecting the ideal good into conditions of life which we do not possess, are tempted sometimes to suppose that those who are free from their responsibilities must be happier. It is a delusion. She alone is happy who stands by the post of duty as God has made it for her. When we are loosened from the ties and engagements of life, and have no cares laid upon us, then all sorts of cares come rushing in to fill up the void. We become the victims of gratuitous and fanciful cares. Rest assured, the more ease the more unrest there is in life. There is no satisfaction so deep and lasting as that which comes from doing good to others. You never participate so largely in the blessedness of God as when



you contentedly and valiantly occupy the high places in the sphere of duty as they are opened up to you. In doing your best for children you are doing the best possible for yourselves. Home is a school for you as well as for your children.

A great step is taken, a great advance is made, when a woman awakes to the solemn significance of life, and the possibilities of human nature, as she is true to its highest inspirations. When one begins to feel that life is not a mere saunter, nor yet a scramble, but something to be done with courage and dignity, half the battle is over.

But no woman who is placed in the position of a mother can be held guiltless before God if she delegates the duties which nature imposes upon herself to others, and that not on the ground of ill-health, but merely for the sake of securing her freedom for the enjoyment of the gaieties of society. Providence has arrested and bound her, and if she recklessly throws off the bonds it is at a great, in some cases a terrible cost to all concerned. We learn from the biography of Lord Shaftesbury that if all the persons about him when he was a child had been as heartless as his mother, in all probability there would have been no Lord Shaftesbury such as we know. There should be nothing but scorn for the mother, whatever her rank, if she chooses to follow the foolish customs of society and

resigns the rearing of her children altogether to hired persons, instead of obeying those holy laws and instincts which her Maker has implanted in her bosom.

AMIDST THE CARES AND TOILS OF FAMILY LIFE  
SEEK THE CALMNESS AND SERENITY WHICH COME  
FROM A CLOSE WALK WITH GOD.

There are many besides mothers who have no difficulty in maintaining an equable frame of mind in all circumstances. They are easy-minded. They are strong on the passive side of their nature, and can sit still and be happy when affairs are in confusion and work is in arrears. Are they to be envied? Nay! verily. Many changes must take place before spiritlessness and stolidity can be raised to the rank of virtues. Better far the anxious Martha than the easy slattern. The mother who has a mind above her position, and is sublimely intent upon the higher things of life and duty, while she neglects her own household, is a reproach to the name she bears.

At the same time let it be remembered there is no virtue in bustle. There is loss in it. When friction is reduced to a minimum there is all the more energy freed for work. Fret and fuss only worry and hinder, they are not work. There are, however, some busy housewives who seem never to be happy unless they are making din and raising

dust. Their daily duty is not done as Solomon's temple was reared, without the sound of hammer. They go about like the boisterous wind rather than the silent sunlight. They make a demonstration of their duty. They exhaust themselves and weary, perhaps irritate, others by the superfluous energy they put into the smallest details. There is a want of proportion, true perspective, in their life, and magnifying trifles they bring conscience as an imperious exactor into regions where really it has no jurisdiction. Punctuality, cleanliness, order, become ends in themselves, gods that are worshipped instead of ministers that serve. I have seen earnest, well-meaning mothers who, by this narrowness of vision and flurry of manner, succeeded less in promoting the happiness of a household than persons with slenderer abilities but more quietness of temper and delicacy of touch. There is something in the familiar saying, "The more haste the less speed." All the great forces in nature are quiet in their working. It has been said that some people "scrubbed" their children with good advice, and admonished them as a man would a barometer with a crowbar! There are mothers who seem to be driven by a hard task-master, and you hear their loud breathing and hurried footsteps as they rouse themselves and others to action.

Is it not a pity when family affairs are so managed as to leave the impression upon young minds that life is a crushing burden and perpetual struggle? Do not misrepresent life in the eyes of your children. Do not make it a treadmill, a prison-house or a bear-garden. Try to be unencumbered. Be earnest and yet calm.

How is this to be done? Method can do much. The prayer that induces serene self-restraint can do more. Be much with God and you will not be so embarrassed. When things go wrong and temper is tried, lift up a little prayer to heaven there and then. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

ENDEAVOUR BY INWARD CULTURE TO BE WHAT YOU WOULD LIKE YOUR CHILDREN TO BECOME.

I read an American story lately which began thus: "Egbert Haldane had an enemy who loved him very dearly, and he sincerely returned her affection, as he was in duty bound, since she was his mother." A pregnant and suggestive sentence! What! is it possible that maternal affection can be in effect all that the malice of an enemy could design? Yes, it is, alas! too true and too abundantly proved that the tenderest feelings of a mother's heart, the richest treasures of her nature, can be so lavished upon her offspring as to bring about their ruin. Wisdom must be wedded to the instinctive

feeling of the mother, else it will work mischief. Mere affection can spoil as well as foster children. True love will check and restrain, will, when the occasion arises, cross the child for his own good.

But when we undertake the office of correction we need a double measure of wisdom and grace. Listen to what Plutarch says on this point, as useful to mothers as to others: "In expressing blame we should wait for a fitting occasion, and not accustom ourselves to put every criticism into words at the moment of feeling. Let us husband it rather for some fitting occasion, and not blunt the edge of rebuke by wasting it on trifles. Let us beware how we ever sever what is painful in intercourse from what is encouraging. Never quit a friend with words of discipline. Let your last discourse with him be always kindly. Never give to censure the painful distinctness of succeeding silence."

But the great panacea for mothers in the training of their children is to be what they would like their little children to become. Ah! how true the trite words are: "Example is better than precept." But true as they are, they do not express all the truth. When the example goes against the precept, there is then a danger of the precept, which is good in itself, being contemned, and the impression comes to the young mind that all goodness is hollowness and pretence. Be real.



Children have quick perceptions, and soon learn to draw inferences. Mothers have a great advantage to start with. The young child has unlimited faith in its mother. As has been beautifully said by Martineau: "When she calls her children to her knee to speak to them of God, she herself is the greatest object in their affections." As the expanding mind clears its way, oh! do not let the discovery be made that the mother is not what she inculcates. It is useless to endeavour to make a child control his temper if you give way to your own, to tell him to be truthful while you are not strictly so. As a rule—there are exceptions—it is not what we enjoin, but what we are, that is followed; we drag our children down or lift them up to our own level. The stream that goes from the fountain does not reach a higher point than that from which it proceeded. We touch and affect others in a way more subtle and secret than flowers do in the garden. Unconscious influence is often more than direct effort as a means of good. A good person creates an atmosphere like fragrance in your room. Emanations are falling from you when you think not of it. Be careful of the culture of your own souls. By prayer and self-discipline seek sweetness and holiness of nature. Live daily in God's presence, and you will reflect some of heaven's splendour upon those about you.



LET THE MOTHER REMEMBER THERE ARE TWO PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TRAINING OF THE CHILDREN, AND STEADILY AVOID DIVIDED COUNSEL AND CONTROL.

Alas! mothers are sometimes so placed as wives that they have to step out of their natural position, and assume duties that do not properly or exclusively belong to them. Owing to the heartless neglect or incurable incapacity of those to whom they are yoked in the joint responsibility of parents, they have, for the sake of the children to take the entire management. Necessity knows no law, and mothers, in such circumstances, must do the best they can, for, whatever happens, they cannot afford to see their children ruined.

Nothing, however, but dire and heart-breaking necessity can excuse a mother for separating herself in any degree from the father in the training of the children. A house divided against itself cannot stand, and father and mother should be one in administration. Divided counsels are a weakness and a scandal in family life. Nothing can be more damaging to all concerned than the common threat to tell the father. The father is present in the mother, and ought not to be regarded as the family's officer of justice, held in reserve. Stand immovably together as father and mother. If the mother conceals misdeeds to please the children,

they again, improving on the example, may hide important matters from the mother to please themselves.

FIND A PLEASURE IN EACH STAGE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CHILDREN.

In the earlier stages of married life, when the mind is occupied with the care of rearing children, mothers often look longingly forward to the time when sons and daughters shall be full-grown, their education finished, and parental work done. When that period has been reached, how often, again, we find mothers turning back with pensive yearning to the stirring days when the house was full of young children. What parents in middle life do not feel as if the golden age of the family were in the past, when need was greatest, and body and spirit were most under tension? Yet we are bound to acknowledge that there is no more than sentiment in that regret. "Let mothers lament as they will over the change from childhood to maturity, which of them would not grow weary of nursing for ever a child in which no life of growth kept unfolding in infinite change?" Everything is beautiful in its season. Take each stage as it comes, and find a spring of happiness in its bosom.

Amongst my readers may be mothers, some of whose children have entered upon a stage of life

which belongs not to this world. The poet expresses their feeling when he says :—

“My children, my children, they clustered all round me  
Like a rampart which sorrow could never break through,  
Each change in their beautiful lives only bound me  
In a spell of delight which no care could undo.  
But the lily-bed lies beaten down by the rain,  
My tallest, my fairest, oh ! let me complain,  
For all life is unroofed, and tempests beat through.”

But there is another side to parental bereavement, which has not escaped the notice of the poet :—

“The years go fast, my children soon  
Within the world of men  
Will find their work, and venture forth,  
Not to return again ;  
But there is one who cannot go,  
I shall not be alone.”

Mothers, behold the dignity of your vocation. You have the next generation under your care at the formative period of life. You have an opportunity such as angels might envy. Bring your children to Him who said : “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Teach them to pray. Those prayers learned on a mother’s knee, how they cling to the memory and heart. Fellow-believer, does not the spirit look back fondly upon the time when thou

“Didst prattle prayers that were  
Half childish playfulness,  
Half God within the heart?”

Mothers, pray every day for your children.  
“Women have produced no master-piece in any walk. They have produced neither an ‘Iliad’ nor a ‘Paradise Lost.’ They have invented neither algebra nor the telescope. But they produce something grander than all these things: it is on their knees that is formed what is most excellent in the world, an honest man and an honest woman.”



**Middle Wife.**

“ There is no man suddenly either exceedingly good or exceedingly evil, but grows, either as he holds himself up in virtue, or lets himself slide in viciousness.”—SIR PHILIP SYDNEY.

“ 'Tis not growing like a tree  
In bulk doth make man better be,  
Or standing like an oak three hundred years  
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere.”—  
BEN JONSON.

“ Dipping buckets into empty wells,  
And growing old in drawing nothing out.”

“ Beautiful young enthusiasm ! keep it to the end, and be more and more correct in fixing on the right object of it. It's a terrible thing to be wrong in that—the source of all miseries and confusions whatever.”—CARLYLE.

“ The fancy of the lower mind—  
That waxing life must needs leave all its best behind.”





## MIDDLE LIFE.

**I**S it not a remarkable circumstance that poets and philosophers generally strike a pensive note when they make middle life their theme. One without a moment's reflection is prepared to admit that old age has aspects suggestive of sadness, but it is not so evident that man in his prime should be liable to give a sober tinge to his thought. But listen to the conversation of two men above forty years of age, who meet for the first time since they were playmates in the same village, and you will not fail to notice that while the lighter tones are heard as they recount the adventures of early days, yet the strain of their conversation is quiet and sober, as they say:—

“We both have run o'er half the space  
Listed for mortals' earthly race;  
We both have crossed life's fervid line,  
And other stars before us shine.”

One cause for the pensiveness of middle age is the discovery of mortality as a fact in the

life, and an actual element in the personal experience. "The grey hairs here and there," and other unmistakable signs, make one *feel* what he formerly only believed, that every one in this world is under sentence of death, with no chance of a reprieve. How much there is in our creed that is inoperative, practically dead, till we come up to it, and attain to the contact of experience. It is indeed foolish to measure things by our sensations, concluding that what we do not see and feel in our own person has no relation to us, instead of using reason and imagination to reinforce and make vivid the universal testimony that it is appointed unto men once to die. But then we are all fools, more or less,—befooled by our own fancies.

The life that stretches before most young persons is to them as if it were an eternity. For the purpose of impression, death is not always within their horizon of contemplated experiences. The fact that their progenitors in Eden did not obtain renewed access to the tree of life is not realised, and they can scarcely persuade themselves that as citizens of the earth they are not immortals. Their vigour, freshness, and elasticity of physical frame, their buoyancy of spirit and bounding hopefulness, put death amongst those shadowy beliefs which, of course, must be accepted, but which do

not belong to the category of experimental truths and working convictions. What parent is there who does not know that death may enter his fold any day and rob him of one of his lambs? But when the little one is in high fever, and the physician looks with a grave and concerned expression, the knowledge *comes home*. So middle life makes us feel what we formerly knew. Its deeper lines, dimmer vision, and stiffer joints, turn mortality, which was one of those objects of which we knew, into one that we know. Farther on in life there is less of this pensiveness to the healthily constituted mind. If we are Christians we recover from the shock. The first grey hair causes more painful surprise than the hoary head, just as the sere and yellow leaf makes one think more of departed summer than December's stormy blasts and bare fields. The beneficent tendency in nature of gradual adaptation to environment, enables each one of us to accommodate himself to life's developments as they come. Victor Hugo said that the saddest part of life was between forty and fifty, as it was the old age of youth. After fifty began the youth of old age. Certainly, as the Christian believer nears the borderland where the light is to break and the shadows flee away, some of the brightness of the land which lies at the end of his pilgrimage ought to be reflected in his face.

Another cause of pensiveness in middle life is not only the death that is before us but the death that is behind us. Every one who has been forty or fifty years in the world has lost much, and that enforced detachment from objects we loved and valued is death in its worst form. To a man of affectionate and generous disposition, the rupture of the ties of life, the premature removal now and again of companions with whom he began life, and the almost total disappearance of a generation in advance that he venerated, and upon some of whom he leaned for counsel and encouragement since he was a child, make him feel that the bitterness of death has already come and gone. Those who have natures that are sensitive and responsive, that vibrate to all that is about them, to whom associations and memories are more than outside things, cannot but be affected by the changes of which they have been the witnesses and sharers. Burroughs, the American writer, says: "Of certain game birds it is thought that at times they have the power of withholding their scent, no hint or particle of themselves goes out upon the air. I think there are persons whose spiritual pores are always sealed up, and I presume they have the best of it. Their hearts do not radiate into the void; they do not yearn and sympathise without return; *they do not leave*

*themselves by the wayside as the sheep leaves her wool upon the brambles and thorns."*

Another cause of pensiveness when middle age is in thoughtful mood is the narrowed range of possibility and hope which comes with it, as compared with the Utopian visions and expectations of youth. How true to human experience is that which Melancthon says of himself. When he began to preach the gospel, he thought he had nothing to do but announce himself and his object, and the world of unbelief would fall before him like the walls of Jericho under the blast of the rams' horns. But he, to use his own language, soon found that "old Adam" was too much for young Melancthon. A man has to be some time in this world before he can measure himself and his capabilities aright. There is a certain amount of illusiveness in life's early prospect. All is seen through the transfiguring haze of young and ardent enthusiasm. The youth who is high-spirited and imaginative, looks at things through the medium which he himself supplies; he walks upon enchanted ground, where difficulties disappear as by the wave of a magic wand; he is eager to rush into the arena that by one fell blow he may destroy all the enemies of righteousness and progress. The millennium is always nearer to one at twenty than at forty.



“We trusted then, aspired, believed,  
That earth could be re-made to-morrow.”

Now, middle life is a period of disenchantment. We get our experience, which does not exactly agree with our expectation. We awake from dreams to sober facts, to the prosaic realities of life.

Middle age, then, has to be on its guard against  
CYNICAL SCEPTICISM AND INDIFFERENCE.

One of the besetting sins of men who have had experience to correct the extravagant fancies and high-pitched expectations of youth, is cynical indifference. When the discovery is made that things are not to be as their fond imagination represented they would be, a re-action sometimes sets in, and they are embittered, callous. Their zeal, which had not a little of the character of a volcanic eruption, rather than the heat of a steady fire, is exhausted, and now they are so many extinct volcanoes, hard and cold. Maturity in such a case brings misanthropy. The world before now has seen men who were wildly revolutionary in their youth becoming fossilized traditionalists when the meridian of life was reached.

How is that to be avoided? By calling to remembrance the fact that God's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts, and by reposing in Him the trust we have been forced by the inexorable logic of facts, to withdraw from



ourselves. We have to gauge aright our place and function in the system of things. We have an inordinate estimate of our own importance. We expect that the work of millenniums is to be compressed within the brief space of our life. We forget that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day, and that we of the present day are but an insignificant part of a countless procession of co-workers.

Middle life should not make us sceptical, but sober. We awake then from our feverish dreams to God's facts. Instead of supposing that we can carry the Kingdom with a bound, we learn to put more reliance on persevering prayerful effort. Faith may be as strong though not so impatient. Zeal may be as effective, though it do not blaze and shoot forth sparks as it once did. The electric is not the only kind of force in existence. God does His best work on the earth with the quiet sunshine rather than the pealing thunderstorm. Noon has not the picturesque interest of morning or evening, but it is then when nature's activities are busiest. Midsummer has not the richness of song of earlier days, nor the tender grace of autumn, but it is then when the corn ripens and the principal work of the year is done.

You middle-aged men who have spied the land

do not bring back an evil report. Do not discourage the young by affirming that what is before them is no land of promise, but a place of difficulty and disappointment, to be dreaded and shunned. Be like Caleb, who saw the children of Anak and the fenced cities as well as the craven-hearted spies who accompanied him, but who also saw God and heard His word. Have less faith in yourselves and more in God. Hold to the belief that the realities in store for mankind transcend by far the fair fictions which the human mind coins for itself.

“Faith blighted once is past retrieving,  
Experience is a dumb dead thing,  
The victory's in believing.”

MIDDLE LIFE HAS TO BE ON ITS GUARD AGAINST  
AN UNDUE DEPRECIATION OF THE GENERATION  
BEHIND IT.

Young men are seized with an irresistible desire to make themselves of account in the world, to give effect to the manhood that is in them. This is in accordance with the divine order of things. The earth does not belong to any one generation of men. Progress is maintained by each link in succession doing its best to bring forward the next.

Those who by reason of years, and the labours

and honours connected with them, have established themselves, should feel that it is part of their duty and privilege to give a hospitable and generous welcome to new arrivals. As the young faces look timidly and yet longingly upon the stage, where you have won a position for yourself, and where they would like to use their prerogative and prove their power as men, bid them come forward. Do not frown them away. They may be opinionative, self-assertive, pugnacious. So probably were you when you were of their age. The controversy between the elder and younger generations is perennial. Young life thinks of the future rather than the past. It is not willing to take the yoke of by-gone centuries. It is inclined to ignore the labours of former generations, and build from the foundation. It is yours to come in as a mediator, and show how far the future may have its due, without the past being discounted; how legitimate independence and progress can be reconciled with reverence for antiquity. All the generations—the young, middle-aged, and old—need one another. Each is helpful to the other. They make a beautiful unity that must not be broken or marred. To lose the society of the young is to middle age a most serious deprivation. Schiller is not more poetical than truthful in describing the loss:—

“ Yet I feel what I have lost in him,  
The bloom is vanished from my life,  
For O! he stood beside me like my youth,  
Transformed to me the real to a dream,  
Clothing the palpable and the familiar  
With golden exhalations of the dawn.  
Whatever fortunes wait my future toils,  
The beautiful is vanished and returns not.”

MIDDLE AGE HAS TO BE ON ITS GUARD AGAINST  
UNDUE SELF-DEPRECIATION.

A not uncommon temptation besetting middle age is to under-rate the possibilities which lie before it. We give up too soon. So far as aspiration and eagerness for work are concerned, many die before their time. They go out to meet the shades of evening when they should wait till they come. They think of retirement before Providence grants release. They sever themselves from public life and duty, when there should be no such severance, in a world that stands so much in need of experienced guides and trained workers, but such as the sick-bed or the grave enforces.

We identify vigour and efficiency with youth, forgetting that there are various kinds of vigour, and that the qualities which are of greatest service to the world are precisely those which are at their best when the body begins to show signs of tear and wear. Sagacity, breadth of view, calmness and

clearness of judgment, sympathy with men, the mastery of general principles, and even ordinary power of understanding are more conspicuous in the man of fifty than in that same man at twenty. He cannot acquire knowledge so readily, nor take in fresh impressions, nor use his memory with the same advantage, but for insight, cogency of reasoning, and all that comes under the term wisdom, he may be a growing man after middle life is past.

"Now flower and perfect fruit  
Together dress the tree,  
High midsummer has come, midsummer mute  
Of song, but *rich to scent and sight.*"

Experience gives a man a more distinct impression and a firmer grasp of truth. At first you give what you get from others. You take truth on trust. You are an echo rather than a voice. The young man has not had time to learn, at first hand, to absorb and convert into vital force that which is to his mind and character what the blood is to his body—the wisdom of life. When the youth writes or speaks it is more or less by a purely intellectual process, what is written or said being chiefly due to memory or that kind of mental appropriation, in which the whole man cannot be said to be present. But the middle-aged



man who has been living up to his opportunity has experimental assimilation to give weight and authority to his utterance. He is not a mere medium of transmission. He is an original fount. He can testify of things which he has seen and heard. He has not only the full mind, the rich store, but he has the power which springs from the fact that he has personally intermeddled with that of which he speaks.

That accounts for the circumstance that some of the best intellectual work in the world has been done by middle-aged men. Sir Walter Scott's novels were written after he was forty years of age. That period would appear to be the coming of age of great novelists. Thackeray wrote "Vanity Fair" when he was over forty. Michael Angelo did some of his best work when he was approaching sixty.

Besides, character in middle life has had time to prove and show itself, and that imparts added momentum to the personality. A man when young is an untried force, an experiment, and time is needed before confidence can grow and be established. Consequently, what he says has not the weight that it will have after those who hear have had the opportunity of testing the witness as well as the testimony.

Middle-aged men! the world and God Himself expect you to take the most responsible part of



the best work that is to be done. Many are learning, others from old age are retiring from the world's service; you have to bear the heat and burden of the day. You have gathered your materials, you have acquired skill in the use of your tools,—work while it is day. Rouse yourselves from dreams of ease. Work has to be done, and who is better fitted than you to do it?

MIDDLE LIFE HAS SPECIALLY TO BE ON ITS GUARD AGAINST EARTHLY-MINDEDNESS.

Many men who began life well show signs of moral and spiritual decline when middle life is reached. The crust of custom begins to encase their spirits. Not content with dutiful attention to the things of the earth that is balanced by some kind of moral or religious work outside the business that brings bread, they become wholly absorbed in the selfish getting of gain. Breaking away from the influences of a Christian home and the promise of early days, they leave the golden age of life behind them, and enter upon the iron age of toil for its own sake, or for the money it brings. What object in life is more hard, callous, unlovely, than a middle-aged man who cares for nothing but what contributes to the increase of his hoard? Such worldliness is treason to a man's own soul; it is the extinction of the light which heaven has put within him; it is moral insanity.

If the temperament be of a different order, the degeneracy in middle life takes the form of self-indulgence. How many who in early days were full of moral ardour, temperate, scrupulous,—relax very considerably as they and the world become more intimate. Instead of their course being upwards they slip down to low levels and become of the earth earthy.

Middle-aged men need warning and admonition quite as much as young men. Forty marks a crisis in life as much as twenty. If we do not habitually walk with God and maintain our conversation with heaven we are almost sure to become “terrestrialised.” When we allow life to slip from God and conscience, it comes under the iron grasp of habit, and habit which cannot justify itself before reason and Scripture. History is full of examples of persons such as Mahomet and Solomon, who lost in middle life the purity and simplicity of early days.

“’Tis the most difficult of tasks to keep  
Heights which the soul is competent to gain.”

You who are young choose now some kind of work for which you can have no motive power except what the love of God and man inspires. Keep up your acquaintance with God, and be loyal to His cause upon the earth. Faithful continuance in that course will carry you safely through the

perils of middle life, when you reach it. Neglect prayer, Christian work, and the privilege of giving, and in all probability you will come under the hard thraldom of worldliness, which is the besetting vice of middle age. To every one between the middle and the end let it be said:—

“Finish thy work,  
The time is short,  
The sun is in the west,  
The night is coming down,  
Till then  
Think not of rest.”





**Old Age.**

“To the animal nature the pleasure of existence decreases with age; but to the soul the joy of existence deepens and intensifies.”—JOHN PULSFORD.

“When cold winds range my winter nights,  
Be thou my summer door;  
Keep for me all my young delights,  
Till I am old no more.”—GEORGE MACDONALD.

“I hear it singing, singing sweetly,  
Sweetly in an undertone,  
Singing as if God had taught it—  
It is better farther on.

“Night and day it sings the same song,  
Sings it while I sit alone,  
Sings so that the heart may hear it—  
It is better farther on.

“Sits upon the grave and sings it,  
Sings it while the heart would groan,  
Sings it when the shadows darken—  
It is better farther on.

“Farther on? But how much farther?  
Count the milestones one by one?  
No! no counting,—only trusting—  
It is better farther on.”





## OLD AGE.

**I**F you would see old age to the best advantage read the Old and New Testaments. There you find the last stage of human life hallowed and ennobled. The frailty of the body, worn with use, battered with the storms of time and shocks of fortune, is not concealed; and even occasionally, as "desire faileth," a certain weariness of spirit may be detected; but in the main the old man comes before you in Scripture with a faith that is unsubdued, a hope that is unextinguished, a resolution that is undaunted, as he treads with tottering step the narrow space between him and the grave. What a rare picture gallery of old men and women, as original as it is reassuring to those coming after them, these sacred pages present to our view.

Let the eye rest upon a few of the more illustrious examples of that saintly old age which, through communion with the Living God, has "light at eventide." Abraham, that calm and

majestic figure which towers above all others in the dawn of the world's history,—“he gave up the ghost in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.” Jacob, the chastened and purified Jacob, who after many trials emerged from the crafty and selfish Jacob, of former days,—“when he was a-dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.” Joseph, whose distinction it was to be an able man of the world and yet a true man of God, said in his old age: “Behold I die, and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land into the land which He swore unto the fathers.” What strikes one in reading about those patriarchs is the quiet, business-like air with which they accepted the facts that lay at the farther end of life's journey. “They died as men o'erpowered by sleep lie down.” They certainly afford a most satisfactory proof and vivid illustration of the text, “He that believeth shall not make haste.” God was so real and so near to them that they always felt they were in His hands whatever should betide them, and therefore all must be well,—must be as it ought to be. Their tranquillity arose from the fact that they looked not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at those that are unseen and eternal.

Turning to the New Testament, do we not see

old age transfigured and brought to the very gate of heaven, and therefore to the perfection of serene satisfaction, as old Simeon hails with ecstatic rapture the new-born Christ, and feels now that desire is consummated, that his life had fulfilled its purpose, and he can afford to die? "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Paul, "the aged," physically exhausted with incessant toil and unexampled hardship, has yet the victor's exultant shout and the ardent hopefulness of an heir-apparent, as he views the situation at the last stage: "I am now ready to be offered up, and the time for my departure is at end. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing."

What secret springs had those men access to that they could maintain such perennial freshness of feeling amidst winter's frost and chilly breath? Where did they get "their joys which were lodged beyond the reach of fate?" Where you and I can get them—in heaven's communications with men! "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the

youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint." "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing."

It is not nature which does that. It is the result of a supernatural gift. Apart from divine grace, most men who live to an extreme age are not so; but are like the leaves of one of our beech hedges that cling to the branches all through the long weary winter. They are withered and brown, and as they shake and shiver in the stormy blasts, they seem to mourn their hard fate that they should have survived the leaves of other shrubs now buried in the soil.

THE OLD AGE OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS A TIME FOR CONGRATULATION.

A man who had been in Paris during the whole of the period of the great revolution, and had been the witness of most of those swift and tragic transformations which were of daily occurrence, was asked if he had done anything. He replied that *he had lived*. He thought that to have

survived all the perils with which a residence in Paris was then beset was in itself an achievement.

In like manner, an old man in virtue of his very age is, in some measure at least, a victor. When you think of the delicacy of the human structure, the extraordinary fineness of some of the chords of this harp of a thousand strings, the marvel is that the instrument should keep in tune so long, and that no tender part should snap under constant use long before the threescore years and ten have been reached. It has been said that an acquaintance with physiology unqualified by experience and habit would make even the young afraid to leap or run, so delicate is the mechanism of some of the vital parts. Does it not sometimes surprise you that the heart should go on beating, beating, by day and night, never stopping to take rest till the seventieth or eightieth milestone in life's journey calls a halt? When you remember, too, that the body is like a beleaguered fortress with countless forces, many of them unseen as well as subtle, besieging the life that is in you with hostile intent, you cannot but admit that there is some little distinction in having by prudence and resolution kept the enemy outside the gates till the divinely allotted measure of days has been fulfilled.

I always feel disposed to rise and uncover in



the presence of an old man. We should have the same feeling for him that we have for the veteran soldier who has borne himself bravely on many battlefields, or the hardy mariner who has weathered a thousand storms, or the successful explorer who has gone over all the ground and completed the task entrusted to him. It is a great deal to have lived an upright, useful life, for seventy years. It is distinction to have so done, though nothing brilliant has been achieved; and therefore I say an old man has earned our respect, unless he himself by his misconduct has made respect impossible.

Any one who knows men cannot be unmindful of the fact which the psalmist alludes to when he says: "The wicked have no bands in their death, but their strength is firm." There are some who, while they fear not God nor regard man, know how to take care of themselves physically, and are selfishly prudent in their very vices. There are natures hard, self-enclosed, and niggardly, and as very little "virtue goes out" of them for the sake of others, their lease of life is not curtailed by a single day. Others, again, of tender and sympathetic feeling, expend themselves freely, the consumption being so rapid that the light is in danger of going out too soon. There is exaggeration and injustice, along, however, with a few grains of truth, in the



well-known lines: "The good die first, and those whose hearts are dry as summer dust burn to the socket."

But the truth of that observation is immensely overshadowed by the counter declaration: "Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he hath known My name, . . . with long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation." In the Old Testament length of days is regarded as a mark of the divine favour. While the teaching of this book fosters the heroic, self-sacrificing spirit which induces a man to set a light value upon temporal possessions, and to count not his life dear unto him in view of the more clamant consideration of allegiance to truth and duty, yet in its sweet reasonableness, the Word of God always endeavours, when it can do so consistently with its higher ends, to bind piety with longevity. This text for example strikes a note that is familiar to readers of Scripture: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

Most of the things that go to shorten life are not of God. How few die prematurely because of their sublime devotion to the will of God. Would it not be making a generous admission to say that unreserved consecration and unshaken fidelity to

the cause of God had killed only their thousands; while it would be no exaggeration to affirm that war, dissipation, pestilence, and preventable diseases of various kinds had killed their tens of thousands? As science advances, as men become more temperate, as the comforts of life are multiplied and distributed, as God's will is increasingly done, a much larger number of men and women will reach the normal age of at least threescore years and ten.

OLD AGE IS A TIME FOR THANKFULNESS.

Life is a blessing. It must be so, for life as we know it in ourselves is the masterpiece of Him who is of infinite resource and love. Men often under-estimate life as they do a picture, because they do not see it in the right light, which is the light of His countenance. Are any of you what too many of this weary and satiated generation are, pessimists, "life's tired out guests?" Change your point of view. Take the cross of Christ and the promises of God therewith connected as your standpoint, and the preciousness of life will rise immeasurably in your eyes. He that knows Emmanuel will never put the question: "Is life worth living?"

It is good to be alive. "It is good to be born, to be a happy, healthy babe, with heaven lying all round in our fancy; good to be a boy, light of heart, crowded with wistful questions, and dowered

with quenchless hopes; good to be a girl, loving, tender, true, and helpful; good to be a man, with a manhood that is wise, and strong, and holy, and good; good to reach a well-ordered and serene old age, wearing the old man's befitting crown of glory."

Who has such cause for thankfulness as an old man? What a wide space he has on which to build his gratitude. What a retrospect he has of beneficence received. No one else has had the same opportunity of testing the faithfulness and forbearance of God, putting to the proof the divinity that dwells in Him in whom he has lived and moved and had his being.

It is the privilege, too, of an old man who has walked with God to be thankful for all the diverse elements that have entered into his lot, the bitter not less than the sweet, the shadows as well as the sunbeams, the losses quite as much as the gains. If all those had been seen beforehand, as Shakespeare says:—

"The happiest youth, viewing his progress through,  
What perils past, what crosses to ensue,  
Would shut the book, and set him down and die."

But whatever he might have felt in anticipation, or even as he was passing through the varied vicissitudes of life, now that he looks back upon them, and perceives how grace and wisdom hold and control them all, the old man can say from

the bottom of his heart: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

An old person is as thankful for the "mercy" as the "goodness," for the medicine as well as the food of his soul; for no one has such a humble estimate of his own worth before a holy God as the man who has been many years in this world. One of the best evidences that one has profited by years is a deepening humility. Years need not have a withering, but they certainly ought, and generally do, have a mellowing effect upon the spirit. No one knows himself so well as an old man, and no one has such an overpowering sense of the long-suffering of God. When he thinks of his errors, shortcomings, and sins against the light, his failures in duty, his neglected opportunities, his worldliness and selfishness, how thankful he is that the God with whom he has to do is merciful as well as just, and as he reviews the past he exclaims, with a full heart and tearful eye: "It is of the Lord's mercies I am not consumed;" "By the grace of God I am what I am."

The gratitude of the aged in Christ does not spring merely from the recollection of the past, but also from the experience of the present. The saint is thankful for what is before as well as for what is behind. He does not think that "all the

life of life has flown." Old age is not something he has been dragged to, as a prisoner to his dungeon, or a captive to a land of exile. It is something he has won. He now has "the last of life, for which the first was made." His is the joy of harvest. His feeling is not described when it is said that he is reconciled to age. He accepts it as the monarch his crown, the victor his palm, the bride the hand of her betrothed. He is thankful that he is now so far on his journey. "I am advancing," said a Christian lady, above eighty years of age, to me once, "it is long since my vision was beclouded, my hearing is very much impaired, my feeble limbs can scarcely support me; I am advancing, I shall soon be home." Oh! what has not Christianity done to redeem old age from brooding melancholy and weariness which maketh the heart sick?

OLD AGE IS A TIME FOR THE INTENSE SPIRITUALITY WHICH THE CLEAR VISION OF OVER-MASTERING FAITH BRINGS.

One of the saddest sights in this world is an old person who is destitute of Christian faith, and at the same time without material comfort. When the blood is thin and cold, energy is ebbing and all bodily action is sluggish, there is a much greater dependence than was in former years upon external supplies and artificial aids. The youth,



full of health and animal spirit, has the conditions of physical happiness very much within himself, and if he has bread and his skin is covered, he is independent of creature comforts. But the additional clothing, the staff, and the spectacles, all speak of the diminished power of the frame in the course of years, and the need there is of provision for old age.

But however large the account may be at the bankers, it cannot by itself go very far in covering the needs of age to any one who lives other than a merely animal existence. No one knows better than an old person that "man shall not live by bread alone." You may feel the desolation of life though you are in a gilded chamber, and you can pine upon a velvet couch. Provided one is in possession of the necessaries and common comforts of life, the difference between the rich and the poor is even narrower in old age than in any previous stage in life. Money cannot buy back the freshness and energy of youth. No skill can be hired, however high the fee offered, to repair the failing senses and bar the entrance of death. How touching the words of Barzillai the Gileadite: "I am this day fourscore years old; and . . . can thy servant taste what I eat or drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? Wherefore then should thy servant be



yet a burden unto my lord the king?" One of the most touching incidents I have read for a long time is recounted by Oliver Wendell Holmes, now bordering upon eighty years of age. In an article descriptive of a tour he made in our country not long ago, he says: "As we drove over the barren plain at Stonehenge, one of the party suddenly exclaimed 'Look! look! see the lark rising.' I looked up with the rest. There was the bright blue sky, but not a speck upon it which my eyes could distinguish. Again one called out 'Hark! hear him singing!' I listened, but not a sound reached my ear. Was it strange that I felt a momentary pang? 'Those that look out at the windows are darkened, and all the daughters of music are brought low.' I had a very sweet emotion of self-pity which took the sting out of my painful discovery that the orchestra of my pleasing life-entertainment was unstringing its instruments, and its lights were being extinguished—that the show was almost over." He adds: "All this I kept to myself of course, except so far as I whispered it to the Unseen Presence which we all feel is in sympathy with us, and which, as it seemed to my fancy, was looking into my eyes, and through them into my soul, with the tender tearful smile of a mother who for the first time gently presses back the longing lips of her as yet unweaned infant."

It is undoubtedly part of the order of things, and we must lay our account with it, that, keeping only the physical nature in view, the pleasure of existence does decrease with age. Old age is then an enemy to happiness! Yes, unquestionably it is, if you draw your happiness solely from the senses. Old age is bankruptcy to the voluptuary, and not much better to the respectable worldling. An old heart cannot be other than miserable, as it is a heart linking its fortunes with those of time, and therefore laying itself open to age, decay, and misery; a heart seeking peace outside of God—in the *things* of God, and not in God Himself. How then are we to fortify ourselves against this enemy? By the possession of the young heart, which faith gives: by reinforcements from the spiritual world. The only way in which you can counterbalance loss and decay on the material side of life is to draw more largely upon that faith which is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” If you “live in the spirit;” if you “walk by faith;” if you are “increased with the increase of God;” “though the outward man is perishing, the inward man will be renewed day by day.” The joy of existence deepens and intensifies as life goes on, if in and through Christ you have acquired an inheritance that is “incorruptible” and that “fadeth not away.” If you aspire to be as God

is, to participate in His blessedness by sharing in His love of righteousness and compassion for men, you will find that God, instead of putting you in your old age in a "strait" place, has given you a "large room," as "the limits of the mortal life begin to melt into a wider horizon." You will then be able to feel as an old bed-ridden fisherman once said in my hearing, when he was asked "How are you?"—"Just lying at anchor here waiting for orders to sail."

"It is the evening hour,  
And thankfully,  
Father, Thy weary child  
Has come to Thee.  
I lean my aching head  
Upon Thy breast,  
And there, and only there,  
I am at rest.  
Thou knowest all my life,  
Each petty sin;  
Nothing is hid from Thee,  
Without, within.  
All that I have or am  
Is wholly Thine,  
So is my soul at peace,  
For Thou art mine.  
To-morrow's dawn may find  
Me here or there;  
It matters little, since Thy love  
Is everywhere."

In order to have an old age that is all we should like it to be, take the following suggestions:—

1. Accept old age as heaven's best gift for you as a citizen of the earth. Consent to be old. Do not make the vain attempt to disguise age.

2. Seek pleasures that are inward and lasting.

3. Cultivate the society of the young.

4. Do not retire too soon from the business of this world. If you do not require to work for a living, remain at the post of duty as long as you can, that you may make money for God. "He is already dead who lives only to keep himself alive."

5. Have interests that take you out of yourself and bring you near to the fellowship of God and sympathy of men.

6. Do not take the faults of youth into your old age, for old age brings its own defects.

7. Turn towards heaven. Do not *walk backwards*.

8. Think of "the oak of centuries' growth still putting on its green leaf, contributing to the hopefulness and the promise of spring and the beauty of summer,—a contribution all the more valuable that it gives a sober tinge to prevailing brightness and gaiety."

The End which is the  
Beginning.

**“He that hath found some fledged bird’s nest may know  
At first sight if the bird be flown :  
But what fair dell or grove he sings in now  
That is to him unknown.”—HENRY VAUGHAN.**

**“Brethren, arise,  
There is no home for us,  
Till earth be purified  
We may not here abide,  
We were not born for earth :  
The city of our birth,  
The better paradise,  
Is far beyond the skies ;  
Upwards then let us soar,  
Cleaving to dust no more.”**

**“Let us never hope to make anything more than heaven by  
our religion, nor ever be content to take anything less.”—**

**MATTHEW HENRY.**





## THE END WHICH IS THE BEGINNING.

**I**T is related of a traveller that, on visiting the catacombs of Rome, he by some mischance being separated from his guide, was lost among the intricate passages and lonesome scenes of that ancient underground cemetery. As he was groping his way, with considerable fluttering of feeling, caused by the associations of the place, and the thought of possible entombment while he was yet alive, he dimly descried what his terrified imagination took to be a skeleton advancing towards him. The horror of the situation was too much for him; he fainted. But the lapse of consciousness being but for a moment, he awoke in the light of the searchers who had come for his rescue.

Is not that incident a suggestive picture of what death is in prospect, and also in actual experience, to the man who is prepared for it? It is but a mediator between the lower and loftier life. Death is an end in which there is the inevitable pang of dissolution and separation from visible and familiar

environment, which, however, is much more dreadful in the distance than at hand, and is also but the momentary prelude to a glorious beginning in another state of existence. *It is fainting and awakening in the light of the searchers who come for our rescue.*

Why should there be this instinctive recoil from death, which even faith does not always completely overcome? If mortality be a purely natural necessity, "a payment of the debt of nature," as was generally affirmed by heathen writers of ancient times, and is taught by non-Christian thinkers of our own day, it is one to which man at least has a difficulty in reconciling himself. Does not the Scriptural conception of death, as having something to do with human sin and divine displeasure, go deeper down, and account more reasonably for that aversion to death as it comes to us, which unquestionably does exist in the human breast? It is the moral element in death which imparts to it its tragic solemnity. Had there been no "fall," there would have been doubtless some kind of dissolution, but not death as we know it. "The *sting* of death is sin."

But if a man has gained the "victory" over sin, "through our Lord Jesus Christ," two things happen in his experience; he at the expiry of his earthly lease is willing if not eager to go, and at the same time he has a confident expectation that

in going his life is simply passing into an unknown but higher sphere.

In the first place, he can give a good reason when old age has been reached for going out of this world. Both he and it are to each other as spent forces. They have nothing more to get from one another. Human life here as a whole is a stage which is outgrown, just as were the minor and successive stages of which it was composed. A man cannot ever be a child—life must go on. So he cannot ever be a denizen of the earth—life must go on.

Why not go on in this present scene? Because eternal life is not mere monotonous everlastingness. It is progressive change, augmented interest, higher development, under fitting circumstances. The cradle, and the nursery with its toys, serve their purpose as incidents, not as permanent interests in life; and just as man becomes a stranger to them, so he last becomes a "stranger upon the earth."

What a tender pathos there is in the strangeness that comes from exhausted use! What paradox there is in life,—familiar, yet strange! Yet is it not so? I take up the books of famous authors which I read and mastered at college. I turn over the leaves languidly. I cannot now read them with the same avidity. I wonder why the spell does not work, why the charm is gone. I ask myself the question: Are they changed? No, do you not

see the old marks and pencillings of favourite passages? Am I changed then? Yes, the explanation lies there! Those works in their thought and essence have gone into me. Their genius and spirit are part of the structure and capital of my intellectual life. The printed page has lost its power because it has served its purpose. Those paper leaves in worn and soiled bindings are to me what the moulted feathers are to the bird, which it leaves behind as it soars.

The world drops us and we drop it when we are done with each other. If a man has been living to profit, he becomes more independent of the world as he advances in years. It is less to him because it has been so much to him. Its scenes, its treasures, its pursuits, are not the same that they once were, as they have to a great extent yielded up their contents to him and are wrapt up in himself. The world becomes more or less husk, the kernel is parted from it and transmuted into the vital force of his own being. We have a certain regard for an outworn garment, as it was so closely associated with us, yet we put it aside. The student passes by certain books in his library with a feeling which may be described as fondly indifferent. He seldom reads them—they are in him. He has a kind of sentimental reluctance to dispose of them, however, and probably they will

stand upon the shelves till he is taken from them, rather than they from him. In like manner the earth, and all its contents, fulfils its ministry in and for a man in the course of years, and while his own reason as well as the teaching of Scripture tell him that it is fitting he should go, yet there is a vague yearning for the old earth, and a pensive pleasure in its scenes, which brings a tear to the eye even as the heart smiles and is exultant at the prospect of heaven's promotion, of which death is the signal.

But why be so confident of a life beyond the grave? Because the soul is not done with itself though the outworn body is about to break down. While the man who is truly and profoundly alive admits the wisdom of departure from this world after a season, he feels that there is that in him which could go on if only, as he believes is really the case, another world and another body were provided for him. The old man who is a Christian is exhausted in relation to this world, but not in relation to life. The sheath is worn, but the sword has not lost temper and edge. As Bushnell says: "Observing how long the soul-force goes on to expand after the body-force has reached its maximum, and when disease and age have begun to shatter the frail house it inhabits, how long it braves these bodily decrepitudes, driving on, still on like a *strong engine in a poorly-*



*timbered vessel*, through seas not too heavy for it, but only for the crazy hulk it impels,—observing this, and making due account of it, we should be the more impressed with a sense of some inherent everlasting power of growth and progress in its endless life.”

But some say this sense of unending and expanding life is no more than a disguised belief in the perpetual freshness and energy, not of men, but of man. It is a knowledge of the continuity and progress of the race, to which our personal life has been a contribution, like a rill that empties itself into the river, and is present and yet lost in the larger current. Our work, memory, and influence remain, and as we pass away we are to comfort ourselves with the thought that death is a contrivance by which the world is delivered from the encumbering presence of those whose force is spent, to obtain the services of another generation, young and strong.

“ On storms my strong-limbed race,  
Pause for me is nigh ;  
Long on earth will man have place,  
Not much longer I ;  
Thousand summers kiss the lea,  
Only one the sheaf ;  
Thousand springs may deck the tree,  
Only one the leaf,  
One, but one, and that one brief.”



Does that impersonal and shadowy kind of immortality appease the hunger of your heart for life? Are you content, and is it sublime in you to be content to pass away like a snowflake on the stream? No, magnanimous self-sacrifice is not self-extinction, but self-devotion to noble ends. That is a spurious unselfishness which depreciates personality. It is like the cure of disease by the infliction of death. It is not Judas the suicide, but Paul the brave wrestler, who longs to live that he may love and serve, who is the type of manly heroism. This doctrine of immortality only in the race is the spawn of fantastic and diseased sentiment; it is a fiction coined in the mint of despair; it is a speculative subterfuge known only to philosophers, and is at once repudiated as a counterfeit immortality by the honest robust common sense of men who put less dependence upon the overstrained "conceits of the closet" than upon the unsophisticated instincts of the race. "What is the triumph—the outcome of the nineteenth century culture? All that we can do upon this scheme is to live our little span, wisely if we will, happily if we may, and then drop down with all our being and belonging, with all the power which we have trained, and all the treasure which we have gathered, into the all-devouring night." Is not the "wisdom" of this world folly?

A plea then is put for personal immortality. On what ground is it advanced?

Let us proceed cautiously to clear our ground and be content at first with this negative position:

IT WOULD REQUIRE TO BE PROVED THAT BODY AND SOUL, MATTER AND MIND, ARE IDENTICAL BEFORE IT COULD BE AFFIRMED THAT THE END OF MAN'S LIFE HERE IS NOT ITS BEGINNING ELSEWHERE.

It is an undeniable fact that mind has not been resolved into matter. The materialist, the man who maintains that everything that is in man and the universe can be accounted for by a reference to the properties of what is called matter, is obliged to call our faith into exercise in order to the acceptance of his propositions. He cannot prove that thought is an attribute of matter, that the one springs out of the other, that consciousness needs nothing more than a physical organism to account for it. He can, indeed, furnish us with evidence of the fact that a certain condition of the particles of the brain is at present necessary to thought, and that there cannot be thought without coinciding action on the part of the material organism. A man who is stunned cannot think till he recover from the physical disarrangement caused by the blow. But that does not prove more than that mind and body dwell together, and have entered into partnership—have made a

kind of communistic arrangement. When the materialist goes farther and asserts identity, he brings in an assumption—calls for faith. The gulf between matter which has not the qualities of mind, and thought which has not extension and visibility is admittedly—the highest scientific authorities themselves being witnesses—as wide and impassable in this nineteenth century as it was in the days of Socrates and Plato. Professor Tyndal allows that there is a chasm between brain action and consciousness: “Here is a rock upon which materialism must split when it pretends to be a complete philosophy of the human mind.” It requires more faith to believe that matter is mind than that mind is not matter.

But we can go farther, and carrying war into the enemy’s camp, can affirm:

THAT THERE IS THAT IN MAN WHICH IS NOT IN THE MATERIAL SYSTEM GENERALLY, VIZ., THE ABSENCE OF NECESSITY OR, PUTTING IT POSITIVELY, THE PRESENCE OF MORAL FREEDOM.

Nature speaks to us in the imperative mood. She herself has no freedom. All her operations are pre-ordained and unavoidable sequences. She cannot do other than she does. She has no mind or will of her own, but is slavishly obedient to the behests of—well, we shall not say of an Unseen Presence, for that might be disputed, but—an

established order. No one thinks of imputing blame to nature when it sucks us into its whirlpools, lashes us with its tempests, buries us under its avalanches, scorches us with its lava, fevers us with its malaria, or poisons us with its deadly herbs. We sometimes, indeed, speak of "relentless" nature, but when we do so it is with a clear knowledge of the fact that we are using a figure of speech.

But there is no poetical license in affirming that Nero the Roman Emperor was an atrociously cruel monster, whose desert it is to be execrated by every reader of history. What is the difference between Nero's treatment of the Christians and nature's treatment of us as she sweeps us before a terrific tornado? The only answer is that Nero had that which the physical system has not, freedom, responsibility, a moral nature. The words conscience, reason, will, proclaim the difference. He *could* have done other than he did. Philosophers, by their metaphysical subtleties, may try to confuse the issue, but however ingenious their fine-spun speculations, they only make themselves laughing-stocks among their fellows when they have the hardihood to push their fatalistic or necessitarian theories into practical life. Our police, our prisons, our penal settlements, are the most effective reply to those reasonings which tend to undermine human responsibility. Society would

be in a state of chaos to-morrow if the assumption were to be generally accepted that the wrong-doer could not be a right-doer. What is remorse but the acknowledgment, extorted from the wrong-doer's own nature, that he might and ought to have done other than he did. That "ought," not the "must" of the physical universe, is the distinguishing glory of man, and the irrefragable proof that he has a nature other than that which he sees in the perishable world around him. It is the shame of man that he should break the appointed order of things. It is his glory that he *can* do it; for it proves that while there is much in him that he shares with nature, and is subject to its conditions, he being obliged to die like the flower and all material existences around him, yet there is something else in him which does not partake in the characteristics of what the senses unfold to the view. There is the consciousness of personality. "The law of physical science can never, therefore, become a moral and spiritual law for mankind." There is something in men which does not belong to things as we know them in this world. It is for that something which is not the same as that which dies, that we claim immunity from death's fell stroke. Still farther:

MAN HAS A SENSE OF IMMORTALITY OR A FUTURE LIFE JUST AS HE HAS A SENSE OF THE PRESENT WORLD.



The soul may be said to have its "senses" as well as the body. There are certain instinctive beliefs, fundamental conceptions, permanent convictions of the race, which do for the unseen world what the senses do for the material world. Every one who has but an elementary acquaintance with philosophy is aware of the fact that the veracity of consciousness cannot be scientifically demonstrated. We believe that our bodily organs and the interpreter within do not deceive us, but correctly present facts to us as they are in the outlying world. We trust our senses in dealing with things sensuous. Should we not in like manner trust the primitive conviction, the universal persuasion and ingrained desire in the human breast with reference to immortality? It is questionable if reasoning can do much to strengthen this inborn sentiment or belief. Greg, the author of the "Creed of Christendom," said he was always more sure of immortality when he did not argue about it.

Belief, a sentiment or conviction which seems to be a part of man himself, and which cannot give a better account of itself than that it is,—that, and not mathematical certainty, is the basis of human life and action. We believe in the reality of the external world; but, as Berkley's reasoning shows, we cannot logically prove it. We believe in the permanency of the laws of nature, the



stability of the constitution and course of things, but it is not so certain to us that the sun will rise to-morrow as that two and two make four. I saw a man this spring actually throwing away his seed upon the ploughed ground. True, he expected his own back again with usury. What was his security? Faith in the continuity and benevolence of the system into which he threw his seed. When I have to die, I hope to be able to give as much practical effect to my instinctive belief in disposing of my personality as the farmer did in disposing of his seed. My faith will be a venture, but not more than was his. He has his own observation and the experience of mankind on which to ground his assurance. I have the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and its undeniable effects upon the history of the world, along with the evidence of my own spiritual consciousness on which to build my hope.

It must be candidly owned that the sense in the human heart of an unending life is a light that is somewhat eclipsed at the present time. There are various causes for the persistent doubt which haunts and depresses the present generation. In every age the young, the healthy, and the prosperous cannot be said, speaking generally, to have a very vivid and influential sense of a future state. The glories of the celestial world are not seen to perfection till the sun sinks in the west,

and much of the brightness of the earth passes away. "First that which is natural, afterwards that which is spiritual." There are rare and choice spirits whose intimacy with the eternal world, begun in childhood, is maintained through all the stages of life till by death faith is lost in vision. Many men, however, have to go "through their day of pleasure, the school of adversity, through the inexorable developments of long years," before the unseen world becomes to them the reality of life, and this transitory scene the unsubstantial shadow. What lies in the foreground of life is considered to be quite enough to occupy the mind and satisfy the heart, and the thought of another world comes up like a pale phantom at a feast.

In addition to this natural but foolish and culpable disinclination to pay due heed to another world until our interest in the present one is somewhat exhausted or impaired, a belief in that for which the senses supply us with no evidence, is clogged by the dead-weight of an extraordinary development and over-pressure of interest in the material world that has taken place in the present century. Men are dazzled by the wonders natural science has disclosed, and the prodigious feats it has performed. More has been done during the last fifty years by scientific researches and achievements to press the material side of life upon our

view, and so to give a colour to our thought and feeling, than any previous thousand years of the world's history could unfold.

Soul and body being bound up together in man, sense and faith have both to be exercised; but it is exceedingly difficult for him to preserve the balance at any time, more especially when earth is pouring and thrusting its treasures upon him, and making him the object of its spoils and enchantments in a way unheard of in the past. Faith is, therefore, put to a disadvantage in the present day, amidst the excitements and pleasures that abound. A belief in the existence of the unseen has a struggle to maintain such as it never had before against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Unless a man is at special pains, by seasons of prayer and reflection, to do justice to both sides of his nature, holding the intrusive and garish world of sense in its place, and encouraging the more ethereal part of himself to come forth and speak out, the finer and spiritual instincts within him will be over-borne. The tendency of scientific men, according to the testimony of one of themselves, is to "concentrate all their minds in their eyes and hands," and they are setting a fashion which we must resist, if we would not sell our birthright for a mess of pottage. Here is the testimony of a Christian scientist: "I find that if for a few

weeks I remit my scientific studies and habits, I am conscious of a certain loss of power, loss of delicacy of scientific perception and appreciation of facts; and if this is so in my scientific life, can I wonder that suspension of care and prayer and watchfulness should have a similar effect on my spiritual life?"

Man is weak, and it is easy for him to go wrong, to be partial in his thinking, disproportionate, one-sided in his views. "Think long about a thing and you will end by thinking of nothing but that." Darwin himself admitted that absorbing research in the physical sphere, unbalanced and unregulated by other studies, had disqualified him for some of the literary and sentimental pleasures he once enjoyed. He was to them as a "withered leaf." The man whose daily duty it is to analyse the body, handle tissue, and bring all that engages his attention under the microscope, is tempted to say there is no spiritual world, all the more so if he makes himself the mere tool and drudge of his profession. While, therefore, we are respectful to scientists on account of the undoubted facts which they furnish, we must not be too much impressed by their general reasoning, when there is room for the bias and colour which predominating and ill-regulated feeling imparts.

But a deeper philosophy is beginning to prevail amongst the leaders in natural science. The vastness, the awful grandeur, the infinite exactitude, the profound significance, taken along with the impenetrable background of mystery in creation, are humbling the most daring explorers, and begetting in them the conviction which Newton, their master so well expressed, when he said he was but a little child who had gathered a few pebbles on the sea-shore, the illimitable ocean beyond being to him untraversed and unknown. There are some approaching the subject on the scientific side who are beginning to think that the sensuous may be but the veil of the spiritual world, and believe, as Blanco White expresses it in his inimitable sonnet, that death may be a revealer like night:

“Mysterious night! when our first parent knew  
Thee from divine report, and heard thy name,  
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,  
This glorious canopy of light and blue.  
Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,  
Bathed in the rays of the great setting sun,  
Hesperus with the host of heaven came,  
And, lo! creation widened in man's view.  
Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed  
Within thy beams, O sun? or who could find,  
Whilst fly and leaf and insect stood revealed,  
That to such countless orbs thou madest us blind?  
Why do we then shun death with anxious strife?  
If light could thus deceive, wherefore not life?”



THERE MUST BE IMMORTALITY FOR MAN, ELSE HIS CONDITION IN THIS WORLD GIVES NO EVIDENCE OF THAT SUPREME WISDOM AND GOODNESS WITH WHICH THE SYSTEM OF THINGS IS GENERALLY CREDITED.

We cannot think of the other creatures in this world being greatly different from what they are. They seem to fit their environment, and fulfil their destiny. So far as we know, they have no uncrowned expectations or unrealised hopes. The earth seems to be to them and to do for them what they need.

It is not so with man. Incompleteness is the word which describes man in his present state. What he is simply gives us the hint and suggestion of what he might be. We get much with man, but we expect more. He craves, and evidently was made for happiness, but he is not perfectly happy. His nature was laid on the plan that he was to be virtuous, but he is not so. He has to die, and yet his nature rebels against death. As a mere creature of time, man is a signal failure. There is a mistake somewhere. John Stuart Mill was not far from the truth, when looking at human life upon the earth from *his stand-point*, he concluded that the Framer of things was either not omnipotent or not absolutely good.

As a creature whose duration was not to extend over threescore years and ten, man, in the nature



given to him, is immensely overweighted. There is much in him that is superfluous. He has more motive power than the occasions of time can call out. There is not room in the theatre of this world for all the parts of the human drama. What mean those yearnings after the eternal and unseen which, do what he may, he cannot eradicate from his nature? What mean those aspirations and better moral moods which open up to him glimpses of a higher life? Although you never saw a bird except in a cage, you would still be able to conclude that it was intended by its Maker to roam in a larger amplitude of space than the bars afforded, from the circumstance that it had wings, and sometimes used them in dashing itself against what stood between it and the "larger room." Man's yearnings and aspirations that will not be satisfied with the present are to him what wings are to the caged bird. Taking man as we know him to be into connection with the assumption of his non-immortality, he is like an oak planted in a garden flower-pot; he resembles a creature who has the wings of an eagle joined to the body of a sparrow or barn-door fowl, or a spirited steed yoked to a child's toy cart. There is a want of proportion between the grandeur of his nature and the paltriness of his destiny, if he is only a creature of threescore years and ten.

No creature except man, so far as we know, leaves this world with a wealth of capability undisclosed and unexhausted. Latent power means further development, does it not? Beasts and trees spend themselves as a rule before they die. How many human beings leave this world with untold wealth in their natures, which they have had no opportunity of putting upon the counter of time.

Man's better nature is "cribbed, cabined, and confined" here. If there is no future sphere where expansion and rectification will take place, where wrongs shall be redressed, high-handed and unabashed wickedness punished, down-trodden virtue upheld and rewarded, then things in their original structure and design are sadly out of joint.

But is it not incredible that our idea of what ought to be in man should transcend what actually is, when exactly the reverse of that holds good over all the rest of creation? Is there not splendour in the realities of nature which cast our imaginings into the shade? Here is my idea of what ought to be in man,—there are the facts of life. They do not correspond. Is there to be no correspondence in the future to restore the balance between the ideal and the actual in this present life? Things in God's universe are usually far ahead of our preconceived notions. But it would appear, if man is

not immortal, that the system of things in some important respects sinks far below the level of what we can picture and desire for ourselves. Can this be believed? Is the visionary magnificence of the human mind to have no counterpart in the actual framework of things? Is the poetry of life a mere spark from the anvil of my own thought, and is this spark to eclipse all the luminaries of heaven? Is there nothing

“Beyond the verge of that blue sky,  
Where God’s sublimest secrets lie,”

to equal those glimmerings of grandeur and blessedness in my own bosom? Is it to be assumed that we finite creatures can conceive something better for ourselves than what the Infinite One has actually provided for His children? Are our expectations to beggar the resources of the universe? No, it is flatly inconceivable that the finite can outshine the infinite. Therefore, I conclude that the God who made me and dowered me with that wealth of desire and hope, has placed somewhere in my future a real attainable good that answers to what is in my own mind. I cannot believe that the best part of life, its poetry, its glory, its heaven, is a delusion, a light to lure me on to despair, else

“The pillared firmament is but rottenness,  
And earth’s base built on stubble.”

On the other hand is it not an argument of

very considerable weight in favour of the Christian revelation that, putting aside for the moment the question of its historic reality and objective validity, it, simply as a conception, suits the deepest and noblest parts and extremest needs of man. If it is a vision, an ideal only, it is remarkable in this that it has more to recommend it than most facts and truths. It fits and agrees and hangs together with what is best for man. There is no conceivable good that the Gospel of Christ does not hail and welcome as something to be embraced within its scope and added to its estate. The Gospel is all that could be desired, if only it could be proved to be grounded in reality. Is that general admission not a gain? "Deep calleth unto deep," our nature and the revelation that professes to be from above meet and are one. The best that is in us and the best that is in that old Book stand or fall together. Its rejection is our confusion. Prove it to be unworthy of acceptance, and the question of the psalmist may well be pressed: "Wherefore hast Thou made all men in vain?"

EVERY ONE FOR HIMSELF THROUGH CHRIST CAN HAVE THE BEGINNING OF WHAT HE KNOWS IS AN UNENDING LIFE BEFORE THE EARTHLY END COMES.

It is not necessary that we should accept the theory of conditional immortality to maintain that life in Christ does immeasurably deepen our sense

of immortality. A great deal can unquestionably be said in favour of the opinion that the man who neglects his opportunity and persistently refuses to live in the higher regions of his being, may, on the principle that capacity is extirpated by prolonged disuse, gradually "destroy himself." But let us in the meantime confine our attention to the positive aspect of the doctrine of "Life in Christ," which is certainly more practical.

The teaching of Scripture is that if a man knows God as He is revealed in Christ, gets an experience of His love, enters into His communion, participates in His character, and lives for the fulfilment of His purposes, he has within himself that life which never dies. That is what Christ said to Martha: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Christ says little about mere duration, continued existence, immortality, as He has nothing to do with empty negations. It is life that is His favourite idea. Immortality is not with Him the conclusion of the logician or the guess of the sage, but the attribute of that life which is the peculiar possession of God, and which He shares with those who are children as well as creatures. It is life that is timeless, everlasting, lifted above the conditions and accidents of earthly existence, but the stress is laid upon its quality or character, not its duration.



Now it is possible for us, through Jesus Christ, to enter into such personal relations with God, and to have our natures so enriched and expanded by communications from Him as to have a sense of immortality that is simply unconquerable. Our growing oneness with God makes us feel that God and we must go on together. We cannot think of a separation. Our interest in life is now inexhaustible as God Himself, His truth and love is the treasure of the soul. We have a basis of life that is indestructible. We can no more conceive of our death than of God's. As Thomas More puts it:

“But souls that of His own good life partake  
He loves as His own self; dear as His eye  
They are to Him; He'll never them forsake,  
When they shall die, then God Himself shall die.”

He and we live for each other. Would He take ephemera into His confidence? Would He shake heaven and earth to bring salvation to creatures who are put out of existence soon after it began to work within them? The intimacy begun between us and God must have a future in which to ripen. The Incarnation and the Cross demand something more proportionate to their momentousness than what the few imperfect years of this life afford. Grace is our title-deed as immortals.

It is thus possible for us, by having a vivid



sense of God, to have a strong sense of eternal life. We make sure of life's *breadth* by making sure of its *depth* and *height*. Living and walking with God, the road must stretch beyond the grave. We have thus within ourselves the power of augmenting immeasurably the vital force of our being, as faith is strengthened and spirituality is deepened. He who lives a mere animal life has comparatively little difficulty in believing that his end shall be like that of an animal. A man may easily part with his birthright if he becomes one of earth's grovellers. If he lose that fine sense of the divine, his intellect will soon furnish him with some plausible pretext for the rejection of the doctrine of immortality, and he will stand naked and not ashamed; but let "the inner life of the spirit awake and the intellect's verdict will be intolerable, and the length and breadth of his nature will not be said nay." What wealth and range of responsiveness there is in the human breast! Place a human being into a relationship that comes within the scope of his natural affinities, and there is something in the heart that will come welling up to answer it. The heart is ready for all sorts of providential occasions and opportunities. Filial affection is there ready for use. Parents rouse and exercise it. Love is there which the lovable calls out. Veneration is there; age and other forms of

the venerable bring it into play. A yearning for the undying is there, and the Eternal God in Christ liberates, exalts, sustains, that implanted instinct.

To one who has a clear vision and vivid sense of God as a Father who communes with His children, death is of no account; "he shall never die." Death is a mere act or point of transition. It is only a shifting of the scene, not a displacement of the substance of life. It is not a renunciation of life, to be resumed at some future period.

"There is no death. What seems so is transition.

This life of mortal breath

Is but a suburb of the life Elysian,

Whose portal we call death."

Death to the Christian is thus a moral act. He consents to die. The animal or the worldling expires. The man of faith surrenders his soul to his God,—“Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.” Oh! the grandeur of Christian faith. The man who has it can glorify God in decay and dissolution, and he is the only creature in the world who can do so. To step into what nature deems a void, a yawning abyss, horrible darkness; and yet by faith to fill it with the gracious and beneficent ministries of heaven is the very highest proof which the human mind is capable of giving of the sublimity of that faith with which Christ inspires mankind.

It does not come within the scope of the present volume to consider the various questions connected with a future state of existence. Suffice it to say that Scripture plainly teaches that as we end so we begin. In old maps of the world you see large vacant spaces with "unexplored" upon them. Had any one the hardihood to attempt to construct a map of the unseen world, he would have to write the word "unrevealed," as well as "unexplored," over still larger spaces. It is no part of the design, and is indeed inconsistent with the genius of divine revelation as we have it, to afford full and definite information regarding the contents of a period which lies beyond our present economy and need. "Brisk curiosity" and speculative meddling receive no countenance from the Bible, which is intensely practical and immediately helpful in its aim. We must be content to accept a theology which is not a philosophy of the universe, nor yet a system of doctrine which exhaustively covers the whole area of eternity. Just as the calendar for this year has nothing to do with next year except to lead up to it, so Scripture studiously avoids questions that are more curious than practical, and declines to encumber itself with responsibilities as a divine oracle which do not belong to the present as affected by man's thought and action. How very little, for example,

is said in Scripture in describing heaven as a place or scene. It is the moral and spiritual aspects of the future state, not external details, that are presented to us in the Book of Revelation and other parts of the sacred volume. The canvas is given to the reader, and he can paint thereon scenes of magnificence and beauty such as the gorgeous imagery of Scripture suggests to his mind.

But of this Scripture leaves us in no doubt, that we begin as we end, that there is a continuity in the life of man as a moral being which death does not break. We are what we have made ourselves by desire, prayer, and habit. No reconstruction of our external environment can alter the moral basis of life, which is what it is in virtue of the power that we have as responsible beings of shaping our destiny. There is no magic in death. It is Christ and not death that makes us "new creatures." Every one holds the key of his future in his own hands, according as he gives effect to self or Christ as the law of his life.

When death overtakes us, each of us is like a traveller passing through the Mount Cenis tunnel. On the one side is the cold North, on the other the sunny South,—but the rail goes on without a break. The aspect of things is changed, personal identity and moral character are untouched. There is no error in the present day that is doing more

to deaden the higher nature of man and put out the light of heaven than the incipient belief that somehow all will yet come right, whatever we be or do in this present life. Christians who propagate doctrine that has a leaning in that direction might be better employed, as they by their reckless speculations and vain dreams are diverting attention from those immediately practical objects which Christ and the Apostles deemed quite enough to occupy our attention and engage our energies during the few years of this present life. The profoundest thinkers and the men most to be valued as theologians take the position of Law, the English mystic, when he says: "‘Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right’ is stronger support to my mind and a better guard against anxiety than the deepest discoveries that the most speculative, inquisitive minds have helped me to."

Things will come right if we, with the help of God, *put* them right. Ships do not drift into the haven. Why be so anxious to prove that drifting in the higher sphere of life may not be accompanied by the penalties which it brings with it elsewhere? Why be so anxious to convince ourselves that there may be a heaven in store for us though we do not walk on the road that leads to it? *Walking on the way is itself heaven begun on earth.* "He that believeth on Me *hath* everlasting life."



To know and possess the Lord Jesus Christ as the ground and goal of our being is the supreme felicity of life. But He that has imparted this blessedness of experience and has begotten within us a new and profound interest in life, is the unfaltering witness for immortality. Our higher life for the present and our life for the future thus go together, and are bound up in Him who came into this world that we might have life and have it more abundantly.





