

INTRODUCTION

FOR the last 1800 years the clock of time has been steadily ticking, while among the sons of earth there have been those who were anxiously watching for the hour when it should stop. 'The end of time' is, therefore, by no means a new expression, the thought no novel one. I believe in the Word of God, not after the exposition of man, but as it is revealed and speaks to me personally.

I do not believe in a science called theology, which is of human fabrication. Its tenets, so far as they correspond with the revealed Word, are superfluous; where they do not so correspond, they are, to me, worthless.

In terms of the Word of God, there is an end of time, a decisive and unquestionable termination of the present dispensation.

In terms of the same Word, that terminal period coincides with the return of the Son of God to earth to complete the Divine plan conceived previous to man's creation.

Once again in terms of the Word of God, Christ gave a direct and binding promise to His disciples before He left them to suffer and die: 'I will not leave you orphans, I will come again'—the repetition of which promise has re-echoed through the ages in the stirring words: 'Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.' 'Surely, I come quickly: Amen.'

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

Still having my eyes fixed on the revealed Word, I find that certain signs are enumerated by which the approach of 'the great Day of the Lord' may be recognised. By common acceptance, these signs have been fulfilled in the events of the last 150 years. Again, scriptural chronology, which before was a mystery, but has now for a considerable time been understood, places the beginning of the 'time of the end' a full century before where we now stand.

Lastly, the exhortation which Christ himself gave us, to studiously discern the signs of the times, includes a searching examination of the prevailing political situation, which has to-day assumed a form in which no student of history dare deny the existence of all the necessary elements for a universal war, which—once again alluding to the same revealed Word,—will be the unmistakable herald of the closing day of the present history of earth.

The message, 'The great day of the Lord is near; it is near, and hasteth greatly', has therefore by this time lost every element of threat, and speaks of a fact both palpable and within reach.

I am acquainted with all the current theories of a millennium. I was myself once taught that Christ would reign on the earth previous to the end of all things, and establish a kingdom of universal peace. However, I have since wondered how such a theorem could ever have been propounded, or how men could be found with courage to propagate it, seeing it is to all intents and purposes a myth to which the Scriptures, intelligently read, lend no support.

Now, leaving every man to his own thoughts on every other topic, and without raising religious controversy of any kind, I would suggest that to all thinking men the necessity presents itself of viewing the century, on whose

INTRODUCTION

threshold we as yet wonderingly stand, with a certain sense of apprehension. The fact is, that whereas 'the day and the hour' are unknown to all, the end is due at any time, and may announce its advent with lightning speed, seeing that apparently 'all things are now ready.' I speak thus unhesitatingly on this point, seeing that it is now a matter of fact, and no longer one of opinion. What has 'what I think, or you think' to do with it? No human voice entered into the counsel which decided on creation—no human voice will be heard in the final plea for a new creation. We, dwellers of earth, have in all truth, as far as these matters are concerned, to take things as they come. Mercy, though, takes upon herself to warn us.

The dying hours are still gliding by as smoothly as they have ever done; the hand on the dial steadily and unwaveringly ticks off the day and the month. Nor will there ever be a moment's hitch in the hidden mechanism: second, and minute, and hour will still succeed each other as before; the sun will continue to rise and set, the moon to run the circle of her phases. Winter and spring, summer and autumn will still succeed each other in their natural, time-compelling procession. And all things will seem to be as they were.

However, this apparent sameness now fails to inspire the old confidence. Not indeed amongst those who set their faces against revelation, and think they are wiser than God. But with those who have learned to submit to what the Divine will teaches, there is an abiding sense that they are by now travelling over the sites where ere long the closing scenes of earth's history will be enacted.

To such, every new day must be a time for reflection. They behold the swiftly spinning activity of life about them with a sense of 'danger ahead'. They realise that

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

solemn preparation henceforth has a great deal to do with the manner of their daily walk.

It is to such that I have addressed myself in the further pages of this volume.

With them I would pause a while, and look carefully round to ascertain where and what we are.

There are divers false positions which man has taken up. There are certain deplorable conditions to which he has become subject. There is a web of delusion spun about him, which the majority of mankind have not yet detected, much less swept away. The existence of this state of things constitutes man's danger.

It has been my aim to know myself, that I might know man. I have apprehended the perils of life, and studied how I might escape them. Truthfully can I say that I have felt for and wept over man's situation, and shuddered at his impending fate. I have followed the record of the surging generations from the beginning with keen solicitude, the present one interesting me most of all. It does so interest me, indeed, that at times I yearn to grip my fellow-creature's hand, and ask if he is aware of the imminent peril which hangs over his head and mine.

I have looked to the writers of the age. From what I know of myself, I am convinced that some of these entertain the same positive ideas that I do. But how few reveal what man should above all things know—the dangers of his existence! Some have hinted at the drollery and absurdity of our artificial life—but will inference only open man's eyes? Should there not be a certain sound of the trumpet? Should there not be a direct attempt made at saving persuasion? Should there not be a truthful exposition followed by an earnest 'I beseech you, beware'?

Some, who have touched upon this theme, have spoken derogatorily of a situation they see no chance of mending.

INTRODUCTION

This is worse than silence. Besides, it is unworthy behaviour. It would never serve the purposes of benevolence. It can only discourage and embitter, wound and kill.

As from my favourite haunt, where I am wont to meditate—the place I love and revere, because at times angels linger there; where the noise of the cascade and the babble of the brook, the booming of the ocean and the rustle of the foliage in turn reach my listening ear; where my mind is enlightened to understand the ways of God and my own darksome paths; where love for my Redeemer and sympathy with my neighbour fill my soul; where I am vouchsafed answers to my prayers, and indications as to what path to pursue—as from that spot I look down the vista bordered by mountains of Divine promises, into the sunlit valley where man runs his race, the view is too fascinating for me to find anything at which to chide. Human activity, human struggle, human suffering, are sacred to me. I see no reason for an attempt at disparagement or reproach.

But plenty of occasion do I see for pity—and I declare that I pity mankind from the depths of my soul. I cannot lead—but I understand that He who could, preferred to do so by giving His precious life as a redemptive sacrifice.

And I at last would speak, constrained by sympathy. Moreover—having proved to my own conscience those things whereof I speak, I claim the right to discuss them. My philosophy is the fruit of experience and the result of facts, by no means the dream of a morbid brain. Far from advocating asceticism, I would have it known that I have loaded myself with all the responsibility a man can be expected to bear. The hand which presents this volume to his generation, is that of a man whose sufferings in life place him on an equality with most men, and qualify him as a brother and well-wisher to all.

MAN AND MEN

IN my more than forty years' experience of the living, I have become convinced that there are three classes of men—

(1) those who are units in themselves, who live their own lives, who are spiritually unconnected with others.

(2) those who are strong, i. e. wise and benign, and who in their wisdom and benignity become centres of light and influence among their fellows.

(3) those who are weak, a huge class, who stand in need of help, and are divinely appointed to be assisted and directed by the strong.

I have noticed how all are by circumstances drafted into one of these three classes: also how perfectly they seem to fit and feel at home there.

Of the first class I would say little. It contains those who spend their days in arrogance or indifference, unmindful of the high behest that made man his brother's keeper. I have neither sympathy with, nor love for them. They are the blight of earth. Self is the object of their worship, and gratification of self their aim. They are nonentities as far as the life of the great world of men is concerned; and when they die 'without being desired', mankind rejoices to see them make room for their betters.

The second class is the salt of the earth. In numbers this class is smaller than the first, but the magnitude of its significance is incalculable. The world keeps afloat

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

on its account. It is the 'city on an hill that cannot be hid', the 'light of the world', the connecting link between Heaven and our globe. Its members have various virtues attributed to them. They are in turn called wise, great, saintly, good, powerful, influential, thorough. Round them, like satellites, cluster groups of human beings, their equals in design, their inferiors in reality. These worship them, copy them, follow them, extol them, and thus form the large third class, whom the Lord of Heaven designed to be his 'little ones', unto whom God-like benevolence in every conceivable form is to be shown in His name. These latter form the *raison d'être* for the existence of the parasite, without which creation would be incomplete.

Class 2 also contains the men of ideas, the men of thought; class 3 the seething crowd who thrive and feast on those ideas, and live them out. Beauty and grace, character, idealism and counsel are to be found with class 2; submissiveness, obedience, attachment, love and fidelity with class 3. Either is incomplete without the other, and between them exists mutual and harmonious dependence. The two form the positive and negative poles of human energy, wholly indispensable one to the other. A feeling akin to gratitude that fills the heart of the agriculturist when he sees his crops increase and ripen, and stimulates him to renewed activity when the harvest is gathered, is what sustains class 2 in ever continuing to give out and produce for the sustenance of universal life.

I am impressed that the system of the school education and home training in the last century has done much to destroy the God-appointed equilibrium of these classes. Habits of life, in various forms, peculiarities of diet, an undue reliance on medical science, a general surrender of individual thought (which surrender is born of a

MAN AND MEN

tendency to inertness), stimulated by our systematised social classification, have helped to disproportionately swell the numbers in class 3 and thin the ranks of producers in class 2.

I believe in my heart, and know,—and the strong conviction has become an integral part of my thinking—that man has left the position he was intended to occupy. He has, therefore, betrayed himself. It does not require any high swing of thought to arrive at the conclusion that we are a degenerate race. At the same time the thought is a most sad one, and one against which the millions of earth struggle as hard as I have done. However, when the birds sing it out, and the cattle low it; when the breeze sighs it forth, and the brook babbles it; when the trees rustle it, and the flowers breathe it—that we are corrupt,—what shall we say?

The sense of this inherent corruption, while overwhelming to class 3, stimulates class 2 to desperate activity of mind. With them, the race is to be run, no matter how badly they fare in the attempt. ‘L u c t o r e t e m e r g o,’ they cry. Many go under, only to float again. They have implicit faith in the promise that ‘The Lord upholdeth all that fall.’ Their mental struggle is tremendous at times, yet they account themselves intended for it. Over the quicksands of earth’s experiences they stumble on, the multitude beholding the gallant wrestling with the opposing foe, and through it taking courage.

I have seen the magnificent struggle in which many have engaged, and, while pursuing my own crab-like march over the most treacherous ground, have intently watched them, that from their example I might derive wisdom.

There was a period, a long one, when my thoughts were not with men. To all practical purposes I lived alone.

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

I came in touch with the throng—aye, for the sake of food!—taking my garments together as one may see maidens do when they cross a streamlet on slippery stepping-stones. While their skirts are not long enough to reach the water, or the gathering prevents any danger from unforeseen splashing, gather them they do, intuitively, closely, so as even to impede their steps—stupidly, one would say—and so did I.

It is mistaken prudence, as I have learned. 'I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.' The heart of a true man beats for the world of men. I have, with all my endeavouring, endeavoured to occupy a place in class 2. More, I have understood the call, which comes to every human soul, to go and fill a place there.

The woe of mankind is upon humanity, and those know it who have eyes to see, and ears to hear. The last century has seen it settle. Neither could its advent be averted, man having almost universally estranged himself from the source of light. Civilisation has engendered madness. Man, largely, is an artificial puppet instead of a grand and reverent entity. We have learned to crawl in the dust, instead of breathing the ozone of our native sphere.

It is alarming to gauge the individual wickedness of man, one's self included. Our sins are ever before us. We are cognizant of our deplorable state. And yet—there are millions to be succoured and propped up. But herein lies our remedy, that we betake ourselves to places where we can lavishly render help. Only that man fulfils his calling who has learned to stand in the breach, and is engaged in rescuing others. The influence emanating from such a man is in keeping with the largeness of his sacrifice. Placing everything on the altar, his proffered

MAN AND MEN

life comes back to him rejuvenescent, and moreover springs up round about him in souls which it animates. His very words act as vulneraries, his looks soothe the troubled breast. The dew of Hermon seems to lie on his brow, and literally does the fragrance of goodness check despairing souls on their way to destruction.

I have had my eye on such men many a time. In fact their career has been the study of my life. I have seen them develop at an astoundingly timid age into centres of blissful activity. Men called them angels, but they were not such. They developed into good men and tried, and did signal service in the cause of humanity. Some of them live retired lives, others venture more into prominence, yet with them all wisdom seems to dwell, and benevolence and benignity are the adorning graces of their existence.

Yes, and also magnanimity. A pusillanimous soul I never found amongst them, which has made me conclude that only the largehearted ever find a place in class 2. Broadness of view is characteristic of such men, to which alone the fact is attributable that their lips breathe a blessing on whoever comes in contact with them.

I have envied the lot of class 2 with holy envy. I know from experience that the angels of Heaven dwell amongst them. Yea, I have been forced to conclude that the camp of such men is constantly safeguarded by sentries detached from the angelic host. And so, I have thought, it is made possible for the life of God to be revealed to the seething masses upon earth. The Holy One, whose object is man's highest good, has His mediums of revelation, His instruments of communication. And I have blessed this life, when I saw this, and the Divine appointments, which are wise and gracious and all-embracing.

BY DICTATION

I WOULD not be understood to aspire to the name of a psychologist. The term is such a wide one. But I have tried to make a close study of the phenomena of man's mind. And in this study I have found—in addition to what I have heard others express—that some men live by principle, and some by dictation. To this subject I have for years—through constraint—given thought, and would claim careful consideration of the result of my investigations.

A great many men, most in fact, are copyists ; nor could they, by reason of small intellect, or lack of moral courage, be otherwise. They follow, sometimes blindly and sometimes with open eyes, but always easily and willingly, some one whom they account worthy. Such men refuse to accept the axiom that as God has endowed them with reason, each one has and should develop a mind of his own, and that any one who falls short in this matter turns traitor to himself.

However, of that great crowd of human puppets I would not here speak. The inducements to become copyists are many and strong, though never honourable or productive of peace of mind, which, as a result of action, constitutes the great criterion of right. I would review the ranks of those who have learned to exert themselves, so that they may reach the goal set before all ; and among such I find some living by principle, and others by dictation. By 'principle', I may say, I understand a fundamental truth which by adoption develops into a 'rule of life' ; and by 'one's principles', those elements of truth which link on

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

naturally to the chain of one's individual thoughts, and so constitute one's personal maxims. Concerning these maxims it should be observed that education and the rules of society militate against the grandest and holiest of them. By high authority, mankind, i. e. the civilised portion, has for ages past been forced into and kept in ruts, some of which are so ancient to-day, that when reason or Divine revelation recommends 'the OLD paths,' men have the audacity to point to these as the paths meant. I understand that principles are neither inherited, nor accepted by way of a dowry, but that man individually chooses his own, that is, if he is a man.

To tell the tale of 'principles', and how they fare on earth, no mortal dare undertake. I honestly do not believe that any man would have sufficient effrontery to employ his pen in such a cause. The hidden secrets of social sin would sooner be blurted out by an impious press than would any individual presume to publish the adventures of principles on this earth. Their history is so lamentable as to be inexpressible in human language.

Yet some men do live by principle, and they do it consciously and in sincerity. They understand that violation of principle means death, but they have courage to face that fact. Some by adherence to principle shorten their lives, and are content, looking for the reward of the faithful. Such men are engaged in a life-long campaign. The world endures them only in so far as their rules of life correspond with custom, and on whatever point they differ therefrom, there is strife, disagreement, and generally reproach. Life by principle, therefore, is a life of sacrifice, and no one should make the venture who is not fully satisfied that the maxims of his choice are worth the resultant abnegations.

BY DICTATION

Unprincipled men are much *en évidence*, but I would not be understood to include copyists under that head. That would be wronging the common herd. For in order to have principles, it is first of all necessary to have brain enough for independent thought, and secondly to be sufficiently in earnest to assume the responsibilities of a reasoning existence. Unprincipled persons, therefore, are those who have the qualifications necessary for the culture of principles, but whose levity or concupiscence destroys in them the desire to wear the shackles of morality. These are the wicked of earth.

Another class of men, as I said, live by dictation, which is more commonly called 'impression'—but I have reason to select the more uncommon term. Some do it unconsciously; others, while subject to the reality of it, fight against the revelation granted them, and reason away the possibility. A few, a very few, understand and profit by the benign disposition which above all things suits human adaptabilities. Divine dictation was meant for man. He was originally placed so near the spirit world, and to that higher class of beings his own make-up was so perfectly congruent, that his ears would have caught up the faintest whisper from the mouth of God. Beautiful in the extreme, and as pathetic as beautiful, is the one-line description of the original state, 'And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.' There is a world of happy suggestion in this simple statement; there is an infinity of grief in it too, when we read it, and look about us to find the reality.

Still, even as late in the day as the twentieth century, man is a dictatable entity. More, he is actually being dictated to even now. Divine revelation has increased in

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

intensity as sin has gained the upperhand on earth, yet has the form of that revelation never been changed. Resort is still had to the first form it ever took. In other words, the still small voice is yet there; it is there for individual guidance, for personal instruction, for private tuition. That blissful, that natural, that unimpeded communion with God which was once the order of the day, is still realised and enjoyed by those who—shall I say—place themselves open to it?

The God of Heaven does hold communion with the dwellers on earth. Let me explain here that I am not referring to communion through the medium of the spirits of the departed. For reasons on which I may later elaborate, that and everything connected therewith, is to me devoid of logical cause. The communion to which I refer is sweet, direct, hallowed intercourse between God on high and His child below. It is what may be called a direct result of the fatherhood of God, which is now as real as in the beginning of things. It is, that God's child may even now appeal for help, and obtain it as a result of his call; that he may even now ask for guidance, and have it sent him; that even now he may apply for deliverance, for a sign by which to know the Divine will; for strength, for health, for wisdom,—and have his prayers answered.

Some men live near to God to-day. They are as really walking with God as did Abraham of old. They know His will, discern what is pleasing to Him, observe the path in which they should go, and endeavour to keep up truly filial connection with Him whom they worship. Into this they may be initiated both by example and instruction, but can never by such means alone continue there. Ask one and all, and you will receive the same reply: 'God's will is being revealed to us: we walk here and sit down yonder; we work now and rest then; we resolve this

BY DICTATION

time and hesitate another ; we are positive of one thing and waver about another,—all by dictation, through clear, unmistakable impression.'

The result is a calm that borders on unruffled peace ; a state of mind that fills one with a realising sense of Heaven's unlimited bliss, from which are born exalted hopes, great thoughts and lofty actions, besides which—and this is above all things desirable—the entire responsibility of the life of the individual is transferred to his God. This does not make him an automaton. It places him amongst the Divine agencies, ranked 'a little lower than the angels', yet employed in similar service to theirs. It makes man take the place for which every fibre of his body and every atom of his mind is adapted.

Latter-day education and social requirements have rendered such a life well-nigh impossible. Men have been forced to walk in ruts,—and there are no ruts in Divine appointments. On the contrary, these aim at ever-increasing activity, at unceasing development. The growth of man's mind has been stunted by the cruel limitations of social life. Men have failed in the upward career for which they were destined, on account of the shackles placed on them by an unhallowed community. School education has made copyists of the race, and the number of those who have broken loose from its bonds is small and ever diminishing. Few can now pray, i. e. commune with God. Many have learned to ape a leader, and in outward performance manage to come up to his standard,—but where are those whose connection with Heaven is a conscious one ; who can touch the human race with one hand, while with the other they grasp the hand of God ?

It is the gradual removal of these from the ranks of the world, the leading out of one Lot after another from the great Sodom of earth, that is fast hastening on the

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

'great day of the Lord'. When their transfer shall be complete, doom will be instantly ushered in. It is but reasonable to suppose this. It could never be otherwise. Mankind as a whole expects the winding up of things, yet the causes which lead up to the result are not acknowledged. Education as it is now understood, constitutes one of the chief among these. For not only is the training of our children partly entrusted to men and women themselves godless and devoid of all sense of the meaning of this life, but it has passed into the hands of the State, and by being thus generalised, has become degraded and to a great extent valueless. In this, as in other things, the masses rule, and the masses possess neither sanctified wisdom nor insight into what is hidden from the vulgar gaze, nor are they instrumentalities acknowledged by the agencies of God's government. The desire to copy, by which the responsibility to be borne by the object of dictation is avoided, has created a State conscience, State morals, a State religion, State censorship and State preferences—but what are all these in the light of the Day of God, when we must appear before Him naked, and singly, and unconnected with the arrogant system of human predilection by which individualism is destroyed for the sake of seeming equality, and unhallowed comfort? Investigation of things unseen has convinced me that Divine dictation is the source of age-enduring principles. They are infused into the mind, and established in the heart of him whose object of worship is the great Being whose sovereign will stands responsible for the existence of life. With that man dictation is but another name for individuality.

OF NECESSITY BORN

THERE are many men who, from a feeling of pride, object to the idea of things deriving existence from necessity. The term does not appeal to them, it rather provokes them. The idea contained in the expression 'of necessity' is repulsive, as many think. Things must have a reason, and in that reason the elective element should be prominent. With the many grades and shades of sanity and insanity of the human mind, it is hard to find terms that suit all, or even a reasonable number. Yet it is well to remember that among the things born of necessity, man himself ranks. Every progenitor of human beings, be he male or female (but more especially male), who is accustomed to honest thinking, will admit this. I will not lift the veil of privacy, nor do I need to do so : the reason for my suggestion is obvious ; I may go one step further and conclude that as the beings whom I father were born of necessity—of impulse for the time being uncontrollable—I, their father, in common with all fathers, belong to the same class. From which it is an easy deduction that the entire human race exists 'of necessity.' There is no hardship for me in owning this. What element of pride could ever find satisfaction in believing it otherwise ? Besides, I find this necessity to be in accordance with God's appointment. My investigations lead me to conclude that in it, and in it alone, lie the tracks of His adorable supremacy. Man has attempted to reason this away. Wicked man has insolently denied his Maker the place He has reserved to Himself in the constitution of things. But the impress

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

of His hand is for ever unmistakable. Proud man may think it lost, or rejoice over its untraceableness—but who can ever get over the fact that Necessity is the great mother of things, and that the impulse that impregnates Necessity is from above?

It is a daily wonder to me how man can keep kicking against the pricks. He almost seems to take a delight in it, a delight which might be styled demoniacal, if it were not so inexpressibly stupid. Here am I I exist of necessity. From necessity I eat, drink, sleep, think, talk, work. Some of the actions in which I engage might be called elective, and yet I am constrained to confess that on close examination everything I do has the element of necessity in it. Paul exclaims, 'Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel!' And again, 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' Examples around me, the loftiest and the best, coupled with my own experience, compel me to admit the existence of a constraining element, called Necessity, which makes its influence felt in every phase and action of my life;—and if that be true in me and in others, why not quietly and calmly, honestly and frankly, own it?

Where is the harm?—Man is a responsible being, but the weight of his responsibility is considerably lightened, and his condition under it to a great extent ameliorated by the assumption of the law of Necessity, to contend against which is futile and senseless.

I would not, however, have it understood that I am speaking of what man calls Fate, or what is expressed by the kindred theological term 'Predestination'. The one expression is to me meaningless, the other misinterpreted. I pity from my heart the Moslem fanatic who is driven to abandon the helm of his boat, because Fate will visit him as it visits all, and who with full surrender of reason, prefers that Allah's will be done! Just as much do I pity

OF NECESSITY BORN

those who with me profess to be followers of Christ, and hence bear His precious name, who are led to despair of eternal life because some consideration has blinded them into the belief that they are not predestinated. To my mind all God's appointments are in full accordance with reason. And this is logic to me, that, while I have the full exercise of mind and will, He remains 'God over all', and by way of interference all His own, and supremely wise and adorable, guides me through the mazes of life. Does it matter to me, if this interference bears the name of Necessity, the character of which tends to humble me?

I have seen men fight against the fact of their own existence. I have heard them deny the reasonableness of it. They were so inflated with foolish pride as to desire to tear away the ties by which they were bound to Heaven and earth. A razor, a pistol, an open well, the boundless sea, a precipitous rock were possible means of transition into supposed nothingness . . . a flight from self, from the curse of being alive, the unendurable duty of being an agent in a God-appointed world, into a limitless and unknown beyond. Most of the living have with me given this matter a thought. It has been and is being forced upon us by the events of the day. But for my part, I conclude that such individuals were presumptuous and overbearing in the extreme. They fought against the truth of their existence to the bitter end, the character of which is yet to be revealed. I have pitied such men on account of the delusion to which they had fallen a prey. And equally do I pity those who to-day are assailed by the same dark thoughts, the same horrible desire. The pulling of a trigger, a great leap, a hasty gash—these are easy matters, mostly with instantaneous results—but their immorality is beyond description great, and the rebellion against God and His appointments appalling.

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

Knowing myself to be a being constrained by necessity, I see an opportunity for my mind to rest. I need not beat the air, need not combat life. I am placed in a vessel all my own, placed on the stream, and sail I must. It is the manner in which I do the sailing that occupies my attention, sharpens my wits, and begets in me a feeling of satisfaction if all goes well. It is I who arrange the sails; my judgment causes me to tack at one time and run before the wind at another; there are nooks of delight where I may at will drop anchor and rest—why then should I not be satisfied? Must I, the sailor, of necessity be the maker of the water, of the wind, or of any other necessary element, or required condition? Why cannot I acknowledge a God above me, whose supreme power has arranged for my comfort? Can I not thank Him for the craft He has given me, for the beauties of the day that surround me—the marvellous sunlight overhead, the dancing billow-crests around, the shores of promise in the distance? Is not the necessity to sail, seeing the sailor is there, a blessing, a delight? And as to the sailor being there through no personal election, are not the attractions of the voyage sufficient to make him rejoice, and break forth into lifelong thanksgiving and praise?

I am aware, possibly as much so as man can be, that few people are happy. I have had about me those who were surrounded by all the conditions of happiness, and yet were being consumed, as if a fire were burning in their breasts. I am convinced that such is the case with millions. And by analysing these cases, I invariably find that a hopeless struggle against what I have called 'Necessity', but what is in reality the 'Will of God', is being maintained. They have their own ideas as to how things should be—and who has not?—but because those ideas do not on all points harmonise with what God has appointed for them: because the craft leaks

OF NECESSITY BORN

slightly and they have to bale, or because the sun is rather hot, or the wind not just from the quarter from which they would wish it, or the shore-view less interesting than might be, or perchance the element that carries them not quite so clear as they have hitherto known it, or some little thing chances to run counter to their notions—they deny all and sundry of God's gracious provisions, and hang their heads in sullenness, forgetting to watch, forgetting the danger, losing sight of the beacons, morosely grumbling at the water, the wind, the flapping sails, the unsteady rudder, and anon fall back, neglect their bearings, graze the rocks, and run aground; and all this rather, much rather, than remember their vocation, their grand object in life, the beautiful shore whither they are bound, and the angelic companions which are at their beck and call so long as they do the appointed work, which is to sail on, on, on!

Shall I call the all-prevailing unhappiness among men foolishness? I would if I dared. But a choking feeling takes hold on me as I pronounce the word. It is so general as to be almost universal, and to ridicule it would be an act of arrogance. But *unreasonable* I will call it. Man's unhappiness is for the greater part *most unreasonable*. The devil rejoices over it, but every other created being is a sufferer by it. It mars the condition of the universe. Every one of the countless multitude adding his quota of so-called sorrow to the mountain which by-gone ages have accumulated, the height has grown so colossal, that at this final stage of earth's history, sunset each day down in the valley comes earlier than was intended, and the lengthening of the night paints the sad cheeks sadder still.

Oh, why, why does not man frankly and gladly own the law of Necessity, and enjoy life as God shapes it for him?

ILLUSION AND DISILLUSIONMENT

THERE is no doubt that man's arch enemy has been most methodical in his deception, and that he has acted on well-defined plans. Nor can it be said that he does not have it all his own way on earth.

Some people do not care to discuss the point of Satan's interference in human affairs. They even go so far as to object to the mention of his name. But what purpose is served by the objection? It is but too manifest that he is there; that at every turn in the road he makes his presence felt; that ultimate triumph over him, to which all aspire, means a lifelong, every-day struggle. It is foolish to reckon without one's host. It is worse to engage in warfare and take no account of the strength of the enemy.

For us all there has been a time when the halo that hung about life was removed. Oh, the sad remembrance! We had been gambolling in the green fields of earth, lightly skipping about the flower-bordered walks of Paradise, our cheeks all aglow with youthful joy, easily forgetting an occasional pain, a momentary sorrow, a passing disappointment—until, all of a sudden, a sensation came over us as of scales falling from our eyes, and our wandering gaze rested on unfamiliar scenes, the same in outline as those to which we had been accustomed, yet woefully different in detail; scenes that filled us with a painful apprehension—and we were told that this was henceforth to be our abode, our

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

sphere of action, and the arena of our race for life. What if it looked so uninviting, so gloomy, so weird? We saw the millions there, all moving briskly about, following their various avocations, and we were urged to join the throng. Our voices were hushed, and with a strange feeling of intense unhappiness we tacitly took up what was presented as the burden of life.

However, the period of inurement was not long. A few months at the most it lasted. We soon imbibed the spirit that animated the multitude among whom we moved. We were early imbued with a feeling of the necessity of the case. We noticed how much in earnest others were, and imitation of their zeal became attractive. A limitless scene of action opened up before us, the very extent of which had a bewildering effect. Besides, we soon discovered the key to the new form of happiness into which we were being initiated. We found the joss-stick of man's contentment, and learned to burn it before the god of earth. Yea, we learned to kneel where everybody else bent the knee, to bring the incense they all brought, to identify ourselves with the company that had generously, eagerly, taken us up. And so the change was effected that transformed airy-souled idealists into staid members of human society.

Alas for the day! How little we thought of it, and how much it meant. It was a day of compromise. Great at first had seemed the difference between what we had been, and what we were asked to become. A sharp controversy had ensued, but that same day it ended. The silken net of lifelong captivity had been artfully thrown over us; golden were the chains that were placed on our feet; beguiled into slavery from which we were never more to be set free, the illusion was so complete that we even dared call ourselves happy. A

ILLUSION AND DISILLUSIONMENT

peace, born of a sense of carnal security, stole over us. We were led to a place on life's platform by the hand of one whose wrinkled brow bespoke for him esteem and respect, and we placidly accepted our commission. That day we bade farewell to Nature and her injunctions, and became artificial, like the company into which we had been drafted.—

It has been my happy experience to see the spell break under which I was bound. Circumstances such as come to all threw me temporarily out of the arena of strife. I was tempted to seize the opportunity and reflect; and as I reflected, the whirl in which I had lived lost some of its bewildering intensity. Discrimination returned to me. The old feeling, that which I had when I was called a stupid child, came back. My pallid cheeks felt their wonted glow steal over them again. My heart became strangely warm. I felt the fixed stare of my eyes relax. There was a mellow tone in my voice. The feeling supplanted my very sinews. I felt much less of a man, much more like the boy of yore. And behold, there came gliding slowly before me a picture of that same Paradise-like land in which I had spent the days of my youth. A sensation of love, of friendship, of strong attachment; an appreciation of beauty; a hope, so sweet, of forgiveness and acceptance; a sense of reliance and salvation; a feeling of joy on account of dependence—these filled my soul. My gaze became less eager. No longer did things look so bare, their outlines so clearly defined. There was a sheen of glory resting on the scene. A twinkling light played on every outline, smoothing it into indefiniteness. That strange yearning after the unseen, that intuitive longing after a revelation from Heaven, that I had known in days long forgotten, came back with undiminished intensity.

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

Then I reasoned: this is my destiny, this is life—not that other. And I asked myself if I should ever return to the hum-drum of the world of men, and make common cause with them, and strive for mastery and succeed, and be censured here and lauded there, and urged on and enticed away from platform to platform, and sphere to sphere, and create for myself a career of usefulness, and fill a place of note among the living; and then lay me down and sleep in an honoured spot, my very tombstone testifying to the virtue of my life. And I thought of the friends and acquaintances I had made, and considered their strenuous efforts to overcome difficulties and solve the problems of their respective vocations, and observed how they strained every nerve and grew wiry in the ever-new attempt to make a name. I noticed the harness in which they ran, and how it was designed for a never-ceasing forward motion, every attempt at stoppage causing pain. I reflected on the sameness of its design. It made them all alike. There was a striking similitude in the way they bent forward in the march, in the manner of their speech, in the set gaze of their eyes, in the tenour of their expressions, in the cut of their garments, and the shape of their footgear. They moved along like an army to battle.

Then I noticed that their march was not one of choice. They were driven. They had divested themselves of personality, and were wearing some one's livery. And as the masses passed by me in vision, the evidence of this fact became very marked. I asked myself if I would not join them again, and share in their common ideals. But my soul recoiled at the thought.

I found that the task-master who drove them was called 'routine', and that his name was chosen with a view to hiding his identity. He has a pleasing appearance,

ILLUSION AND DISILLUSIONMENT

and the name suggests a plausible aim. The master-mind, bent on successful government of the dominion of earth, chose 'form' as the surest means to his end. Man, unhappy in the consciousness of his sin, gladly accepted anything that might tend to the amelioration of his lot. And 'form' does this effectually, because it blinds. A 'form' for social intercourse, a 'form' for the conduct of the home, a 'form' for the education of the young, a 'form' for worship, a 'form' for daily labour—that creates decorum, and decorum engenders contentment. And so man has become blinded, and unconscious of his real state.

It is the initiation into this 'form' that constitutes the eye-opener which comes to all in turn. Instead of realising that the Creator designed the child-life to run on undisturbed, till a 100-year old child is borne to the tomb for temporary rest, that child at the tender age of eighteen at the most is placed in a treadmill, which we call 'routine', there to wear out body and soul, until his cheek grows pallid, his temples grooved; until body and brain give way, and he is laid away in the silence of the grave, himself the chief mourner over a wasted life.

Yet 'routine' there must be. How would the world exist without it? Where were the discipline necessary to society, if every man and woman were an individual element to be reckoned with? Yes, forsooth, what would things come to on earth, if God's plans were followed out instead of the devil's? For they are diametrically opposed to each other. God wills that man shall stand and think and act individually, as a self-responsible entity, conscious of the charge given him by his Maker; the devil, however, for the sake of his plans, plans of ruin and destruction, suggests a huddling together like sheep in a fold, for the

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

suppression of feeling, the renunciation of responsibility, the smothering of individuality, the death of aspirations. Form, and routine, and the false impressions born of them, the illusionary view of man's existence, these are the instruments of his choice to lead astray those who were designed for places of equality with God.

The thought suggests itself to me that the world is irredeemably lost in this respect, and that raising objections now against the prevailing customs of earth is like 'a voice in the wilderness'. But I cannot give in to this thought. I know too well that it is God's intention that some shall be saved even at this late hour, saved from further drinking the poison of the system in vogue. For some, I know for a fact, do it under misapprehension, unaware of the deadly effect it is having upon them, and the danger in which it places their souls. How should they know better, seeing they have never been informed? Some even do it for the sake of daily bread. To such I would say: I know as well as you what a mighty lever is daily bread, yet have I proved in my humble life that for it no one need miss his God-appointed place. Man does much to keep the wolf from his door, and who can blame him for it? But to conform to such ways of the world as he knows to be wrong, to be a slave to form and routine, and drag himself on in the beaten path, simply because the crowd is there, is to make a grievous mistake, which must end in eternal misery. No, not for the sake of bread! Every honest soul receives his share from Him who deals out to the creatures of His hand according to their needs. Of this fact my experience has unmistakably established the truth.

ILLUSION AND DISILLUSIONMENT

Some who have become slaves to the ways of earth, who have hardened their consciences by the practise of wrong, are even now relenting. They stand convicted of having been led astray. Their blindness has yielded to the piercing rays of God's truth. It is to them I would speak. It is to them them that I would stretch out my hand. They are my brethren, who have travelled the same road with me, not from choice, nor from pleasure, but on account of education, falsely so called, and the over-powering force of habit.

I have shared their experience, have been tried like them, have felt the power of the influence which ever urges them onward—and my inmost soul is filled with pity for them and their fellows.

Why not turn back? Why not stop being parts of the huge machinery which all the winds of earth help to drive—and become men? Why not develop lofty thought, and individual activity? Why not return to the appointed paths? Why not experience, together with those reared in our homes, what man's Creator can make of man? Why not prove the soundness of God's system of education, the goal of which is life beyond the clouds? Why not separate ourselves from the seething throng for the sake of contentment born of true development, and have heart and home filled with that spirit that is intended to animate true men and true women?

Yes, why not be disillusionised?

RELIGION

I REMEMBER how the sense of religion was first awakened within me. My mother was frequently ailing, but once she seemed sick unto death. I was but young at the time. I saw the family doctor come in the course of the morning, and at noon—and towards evening he came with two others. They held a consultation and shortly afterwards the two left, and our own doctor saw my father; when he too had gone, my father called us together, and told us in a hushed voice that they had no hope of my mother's recovery. I remember asking what that meant. Father said they expected that mother would not live till morning. There were two children younger than I, and the youngest crept on to father's knee and nestled close against him; when she noticed that he wept, she cried too, and then we all cried, seven of us, and one dared hardly look at the other.

It was then that I took courage to say, 'Father, can't Jesus heal mother?' The thought seemed to appeal to him powerfully, for in a few moments he put my little sister down on the floor, rose, and said, 'Children, Jesus can heal mother. Let us all ask Him, and behave as if He were in this room.' And he knelt and we all went down on our knees, and he spoke to the Lord so simply as I had seldom heard my father speak. He spoke as if he were a child conversing with his father. He laid the case before God, and reminded Him of His great power to speak and it would be done; and then he drew such a touching picture of a motherless family of seven, that any man would have listened, had he heard him.

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

After that we all went to bed except father. The next morning when we came down, whispering to one another, he met us, and told us how he had watched by the bedside till two o'clock that morning, when, he said, it had seemed to him as if an angel had bent over mother and kissed her—for she had dropped into a sound sleep and did not wake for three hours; and how she had then whispered to him that she felt better and was not going to be taken away from us.

Upon this we all went quietly to mother's room, and father spoke to her softly, and she put out her thin, wan hand, and as we knelt at the bedside one by one, she laid it on our heads, and repeated our names. Then she bade us sing a hymn of praise to God for her recovery, and we did so there and then.

Mother did not die. She recovered rapidly and lived another twenty years.

Now this incident in my life had its abiding results. I had seen the power of Him whom I had learned to call God. The mention of His name had thus far awakened undefined, mysterious, almost uncanny notions in me—now I had seen the reality of it all. And countless times since—in similar and different circumstances—I have looked up to that Being, albeit half dazed with sorrow and anguish, and have always felt drawn so close to Him, that it would seem as if He and I were actually connected by inseverable ties. Thus the worship of God became bound up with my very life.

It has never been difficult for me to sympathise with those to whom religion is a hopeless mystery. It is that, unless the individual realises that God hears prayer. This fact is to me the one binding element in man's connection with Heaven. All the talk we hear from the pulpit and elsewhere, of the necessity for

RELIGION

rendering the homage of a life to Him who reigns above, is to the souls of men like so much wind that blows over us and leaves no trace. Man has no logical ground for religion unless he has a hold on God—and this he cannot have until he obtains unmistakable proof that God hears him when he calls.

The number of people who are made unhappy by religion is astounding. They are religious because it is good, or commendable, or fashionable to be so, or because the conduct of the religious appeals to their good sense. Yet do all these considerations lead to hopeless failure. There is no firm foothold possible unless there be a personal connection with the Unseen.

This surely is nothing surprising. Religion is the acme of intelligence, and this consideration merely places it on a line with other necessities of intellectual life. Yet we have the sad fact before us every day that whereas when anyone engages, say, in the study of astronomy, and fails to comprehend it, he calmly concludes either that his instruction is not of the right kind, or that the subject is beyond him—religion is professed by tens of thousands, whom, despite their zealous pursuit, it seems to place outside their wonted sphere, and by transplanting them into uncongenial soil, causes them to suffer and pine away; yet they still hold on to it as a sailor does to his sinking ship. Evidently such people are misinformed, or else religion is beyond them.

Religion is treated as forming part and parcel of the science of life, and, what is singular, it is considered to be an elementary branch of it. Children of tender age, weak-minded people, the uneducated, the decrepit, all handle it in common with men and women of sound body and mature mind. Very striking in this connection is the fact that the inception of religion, and the form

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

in which it is usually introduced to children, is logical and true, but that it almost invariably deteriorates, or at least the presentation of it does, into something which creates discomfort and destroys peace, as soon as people get old enough and intelligent enough to reap the fruits of their practice.

Religion is to me an element of life, not a hypothesis based on theories. I understand and acknowledge that life came from God, and that the desire to render homage to the Creator is but an inherent part of the gift with which he has endowed man. Religion, therefore, does not consist in the acceptance of dogmas, but in doing what we individually conceive to be the will of God. I admit that in our day such a thing is impossible without the aid and guidance of that Word which reveals to us the One with whom we have to do, and explains the purport of His will; at the same time the consideration is suggestive, that the said written word formed no part of the original plan God had with man. Likewise should the thought—that the Word as Divinely inspired is very different from what man's exegesis makes of it—be allowed its true weight.

There is nothing of which I am more firmly convinced than that all religion which occasions discomfort is a sham. I do not say this disparagingly. I have had opportunities many and varied of observing the mental struggles of individuals who wanted to be religious, and to whom the very idea proved repulsive. For their sufferings I entertain due regard, and yet believe that they are caused by incomplete or incorrect information.

Though religion forms an integral part of life, its birth in the human heart is dependent on information. This is a fact that should never be overlooked.

RELIGION

However much its ultimate growth depends on one's own willing efforts and mental candour, the seed must be sown. No one is religious by inheritance. Though it may seem ever so hard, it must be acknowledged that the human heart is not naturally attached to the heavenly cord. The place may be there for the link to be established easily and expeditiously, but some hand must bring about the connection. Human effort may have little to do with this, yet is sense-impression indispensable, and that impression must come through an outside agency.

Religion, i.e. the state of being linked to the Infinite, after one has once learned the way, appeals to one and does not appeal to another. Also it appeals to different individualities in different degrees of intensity. Some climb easily the ladder that leads to the skies, others have difficulty in getting up from one rung to the next. Deplorably great is the number who are religious by virtue of their imitative faculty, and those are above all the ones who do not succeed. For religion, being one of the essentials of life, is an impossibility if practised on the strength of someone else's success. As the number of these imitators is marvellously great, religion is brought into disrepute, and mystified by those who have no knowledge of its real nature.

All religion is founded on a proper understanding of man's fallen condition, and the efficacy of Divinely proffered redemption. I have come to this solution after honestly and earnestly looking at the matter from all sides. I could wish that all men might see alike in this, knowing full well that it would bring to all peace of mind, and the clearest insight obtainable into man's destiny. The lines on which private devotion ought to be established should be clearly defined:—'I have

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

experienced and I acknowledge the fact that the human race has fallen away from the Creator's design; I admit the lucidity of the plan of redemption as laid down in Holy Writ; I accept the provision made for me; I perceive that as through disobedience man fell, so by obedience he will be restored; I have resolved to follow the perfect example of obedience set me by Jesus Christ; hence I obey His injunctions, am willing to do His bidding, and gladly leave all the rest to His gracious provision'.—To me this constitutes a perfect scheme for perfect happiness on God's lines.

I have seen the efforts that are wasted in trying to attain to virtue and goodness outside of these lines. The undertaking is a gigantic one, and seems most courageous, but is nothing but folly. Man was never intended to make or formulate his own religion. Devotion to a higher Being must always be as regulated by that Being himself. And so for man to conclude that the God of Heaven could accept of what a mortal in his own wisdom decides to give Him, is preposterous. Here is another and most important reason for the want of success many have with their religion. It brings peace to none. It holds out no promises. It moulds their lives in such a way that they become strangers to themselves. All their thinking is influenced by their misfortune. Their usefulness is impaired. Their vitality is sapped. And for all this they have to thank the grotesque misconception, that God is anxious to receive from man whatever he can spare Him.

I have come to a clear understanding of the fallacy of such reasoning. My God is to me just what he calls Himself—He is my Creator, the Source of all wisdom, all goodness, all strength. He is my Guide, Helper, Saviour, Protector, Father. I would never dare to

RELIGION

worship Him on my lines, but have gone, and still go, to Him humbly to enquire what He requires of me. And as I am persuaded that the guide to true worship is laid down in His word, I consult the Book He has given me with a mind open to impressions, and an ear willing to listen. I have no need that man should teach me, finding, as I do, that the Divine Author Himself largely undertakes that task.

It is by the revealed Word in conjunction with those private revelations of which I am made the happy recipient by unmistakable impressions, that I desire to stand or fall. To accept the word of man is, I find, dangerous. The instruction I receive regulates my actions; by my actions I shall be judged and rewarded; how dare I then be guided by what man gives out as expositions?

A like danger do I see in system. Man, without right or reason, has systematised religion. It is one of the many sins of presumption of which he stands guilty. But of all, this one may prove to be the worst. It is beyond all description hideous, and has for many centuries played directly into the hands of God's wily opponent. Religion can no more be systematised than life itself, and the attempt to do it is unpardonable. Yet it has been most successfully carried out, even to the extent that system is now largely accepted for spirit. God is worshipped according to the ritual of a church—which ritual, rightly considered, is nothing short of idolatry. For the God of Heaven cannot be worshipped through formularies which perhaps no single soul could breathe out as the outcome of its original inception. Here it is that love is changed into obligation, and insidious apostasy overtakes the unwary soul, whose inner life will soon be frozen into one of the fashionable shapes in which man stolidly travels to his doom.