

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

This process is almost as common in professing Christendom as what is called 'confirmation'. It would seem as if man's mind were singularly adapted to finding satisfaction in running in a groove. And yet, how far must any such thing have been from his Creator's design! What! Could man, made in the image of God, a child of high Heaven, the outcome of the decree of Divine counsel, the masterpiece of the Omnipotent, have been intended for senseless mimicry? Was he not rather meant to scale the heights of limitless development, until at length his aspiring soul should merge into equality with that Being in adoring whom he has spent his life-time?

Investigation has led me to see how painfully much latter-day education has to do with failure in religion. I now except the ways and requirements of Society, believing that for complying with these men may be held individually responsible. Not so, however, for their education, into which they are led without any predilection, and of which others decide the form. School education, as now understood, has ceased to be, if ever it was, a drawing out and strengthening of natural endowments which alone should establish man's individuality. It has taken the form of coercive moulding, which destroys instead of building up. It prescribes what shall be accepted, and lays down maxims and principles like arithmetical rules. It is this that causes schools to turn out infidels by the thousand. Man is upheld as the object of worship. Foolish adulation of mortals is encouraged, nor is anything loftier presented by those who have themselves learned nothing better. Minds which were intended for unlimited individual expansion are thereby stunted, remain narrow, and become diseased—thereby also religion deteriorates into worthless mimicry, as today we find it on every hand.

RELIGION

My soul cherishes the profoundest pity for those thousands of noble beings who fail to reach their destiny. They were intended to constitute objects of singular beauty in the economy of earth—yet now they wearily drag out an existence of insignificance, and by and by disappear without leaving the faintest trace on the sands of time. They were sacrificed to modern school methods. The pressure upon them being overwhelming, they accepted the mould in which their fellow men wanted them to appear on the stage. They abandoned naturalness, and became living lies. Their relation to God they never understood. He Himself was presented as a mystery, and the tie ignored by which they were bound to Him.

I am impressed with the consciousness that man's danger on account of the institutions by which he has elected to be governed, is increasing in gravity from year to year. The moral side of man's existence has grown appreciably darker during the past century. He who was designed for lofty aspirations, has dwindled down into the apathetic materialist of today, in whom the image of God is unrecognisable. Sad indeed, as grave as sad, and as ominous as grave, is the fact that the time has come when the Lord of Heaven is anxiously enquiring: 'When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith in the earth?'

DIVINE INFLUENCES

IF I am a true type of humanity, i. e. if I may assume that the impressions I receive come to me through the same channels as to other mortals—of which fact I would fain count myself assured—man is a paramagnetic being.

When I was young, nothing used to cause me greater wonder than the vivid description of the incessant strife which Paul of Tarsus pictures in his Epistle to the Romans as raging within himself.

I have, however, long ceased to wonder at his words. Man's is a dual nature, and his experiences, his responsibilities, and his aim are twofold. The peace of his life, the joy of his days, lie in the true reconciliation of the claims of either nature.

As man was originally made, there existed the most perfect harmony between the two sides of his being. In the state he foolishly preferred to the original, there is endless war between man the animal, and man the heir-elect of heaven. In other words, man is the battle ground where God and his adversary strive for the mastery.

While this fact is generally acknowledged, there exists much error regarding the true part man himself plays in that exacting controversy; there is confusion of ideas concerning the point where man's own will is exercised.

A large section of those who profess to be religious say that man has no voice in the results of this strife. These make him a passive beholder, whose soul-energy is not even sufficiently awakened to choose sides.

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

They make him suffer the agonies of life-long suspense, and in the end yield to the inevitable, which has been determined without any co-operation on his part.

My soul loathes the very idea. From my heart I pity the thousands who have been trapped into such a belief; trapped, too, by the unintelligent acceptance of a creed invented by man. Such a doctrine clashes with the spirit of the Gospel. It is the creation of a brain that has misunderstood Heaven's benign provision for the sinner's welfare.

Another section deny the existence of the controversy, and believe—as they term it—in free choice. They aver that man's prerogative is to arbitrarily choose between life and death, heaven and hell. More, they arrogate the right to see for themselves which form of service is preferable—that of Jehovah or that of Baal—and of retracing steps already taken if proof convinces them of a wrong selection. These make man an unfallen being, glorying in primeval innocence. Their pride has blinded them to their own destruction. They have no knowledge of God, or of their own estate. They are hopelessly ensnared in their own vanity, and follow in the ways of headstrong arrogance.

But others have obtained grace to see things as they are. These acknowledge the raging controversy, and smart under the consequences of its fury. They perceive how their hearts are torn like the fair meadow where horsemen make their charge. They feel the blows given and received. All the while they are aware that the raging battle concerns their eternal weal or woe.

Yet of one other thing they are conscious—their own participation in hastening the end. In fact, they are confident that the consummation depends on their

DIVINE INFLUENCES

own loyalty to either of the contending parties. The view they take is not that they stand, as it were, on neutral territory, merely to be claimed by the conquering side, but that they stand on the enemy's ground, belong to him body and soul, do so belong by their own and their ancestors' choice, and that passiveness in this great matter is, therefore, out of the question. They have proved their allegiance to one of the contending parties. He who leads the attack on their professed sovereign, is the One who calls Himself the Saviour of Men. The war which is waged to settle the right of ownership of their souls, is a combat in which Satan acts on the defensive.

It is the understanding of these facts that makes inactivity on man's part absurd. Christ who leads the hosts of heaven to battle on His behalf, claims anticipative transference of allegiance. It is the yearning for deliverance, brought about by faith in His mediatorial sufficiency, that causes the angelic armies to be marshalled to battle. It is the responsive yearning in the heart of the soul's lover for the redemption of the one appointed to die, that prompts them to engage in mortal combat the prince of darkness and all his host.

But what could ever justify the existence of such issues, unless it be the fact that man is called upon to decide and declare for Christ? Nothing else is conceivable, nothing else is suggested by revelation. Those who have partaken of the deliverance brought about by the Saviour, are reminded that they are 'bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which (now) are God's.' The Lord is not slow to recognise the responsibility man has assumed by being the cause of the prevailing controversy. Ever since the time of man's fall has it waged, then in anticipation of the work of redemption, as now in memory thereof.

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

Previous to the scenes of Calvary, as much as afterwards, the conflict raged over the selfsame issue. And ever has man's decision,—His willing decision for Christ and eternal life,—sustained the combat unto its successful termination.

A fair view of man's condition reveals the following facts :

1. As long as he is satisfied in the enemy's camp, no conflict exists on his behalf.
2. As soon as his soul, attracted by the view of Christ's life, which is open to all, appeals for deliverance from existing conditions, thereby virtually renouncing its allegiance to Satan, the controversy is opened in his interest.
3. As soon as a successful issue is reached, and that soul has escaped the snare of the fowler, and rejoices in the liberty of the children of God, the scene changes, and Satan from that time acts on the offensive for the recovery of his subject.

And so the campaign drags on, until the end of earthly life intervenes. So also is its final decision left an open question, till the termination of this life finds man in one camp or the other.

This, I find, is the only intelligent solution of the many questions about conversion, assurance, and the efficiency of deliverance from sin. Conversion is a continuous act, proceeding from step to step, and only finding its completion in full surrender and all-embracing obedience. Assurance links itself to the facts of life. It is not intended to rise and fall with the tides, yet may do so, if these tides represent the introduction and rejection of sin. Spiritual ups and downs are not of Divine appointment, yet are unavoidable in the absence of steadfastness. The efficacy of deliverance, again, is complete and subject to no flaws which might create disappointment.

DIVINE INFLUENCES

But man's holding on to it in faith is a very different matter, in which variableness is experienced to a large extent, for which, however, he alone is responsible.

It is foolish to let vain babblings have any influence on one's life. True they cannot touch convictions, but the number of people who have formed no convictions because they are mentally not capable of so doing, is great. The truth about God's own appointments, apart from beliefs and sayings, ought to be laid bare, that at length it may be understood. And among the many things that rightly claim the attention of those that seek for truth, the matter of this life-long conflict stands prominent.

I have studied the influences that make for decision in man's lot. He is magnetically attracted both ways. His soul lies open alike to the allurements of vanity and the wooings of Divine Love. The opposing forces which interest themselves in him, find adaptability for his becoming either the most abject or the most glorious object in creation. The possibilities of his nature are immense, and the fecundity of his heart is marvellous. He may be the antitype of Satan, or he may grow into likeness to God Himself. And whichever of these conditions is brought about, must be the result of influence.

There is no doubt about the existence, or the magnitude, or the diversified character of wrong influences. These are acknowledged by all. They are even said to be known, and their intricate nature detected—though few people perceive the delicate web which the agencies of Satan have spun about their own souls as well as the souls of others.

There is, however, doubt and uncertainty about Divine influences, their existence, extent, and strength, and

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

the understanding most people have of them is expressed by a shrug of the shoulders, or a sigh. This unsatisfactory state of things is nevertheless compatible with the axiom, commonly adopted, yet false and dishonouring to God, that man has an inadequate knowledge of his Maker, the reason for which lies in insufficient revelation. If God is a myth, small wonder that His influence is not realised.

As I have pondered over this point so long as the name of God has suggested to me the existence of an intelligent Being; yea, and as all that long while, now extending over more than half a life-time, my soul has diligently sought for the manifestation of the influence of Heaven on my own individual life, I have come to the following conclusion, the truth of which is to me beyond question, that, whereas sin in the beginning created a veil hiding God from man's gaze, that veil has grown appreciably thinner as the ages have rolled by; and that whereas man, out of ever-increasing misery, and with ever-diminishing mental power, has cried for mercy—now that the confines of time have been reached, the said veil has so far lost its opaque property as to have become unmistakably translucent.

I gladly declare that my heart rejoices in this fact. It is open to all salvation-seeking souls to ascertain its reality. Far from being mysterious or out of reach, the influence of Heaven over man has never been so manifest or so strong as at the present day. I have earnestly laid myself open to its unrestricted occupation of my heart. I notice it in my life, daily and hourly. It commands my actions and desires alike. It lures me heavenward despite every carnal inclination. In verity, and to the honour of God, do I testify that it keeps me company by day and night. I own to the

DIVINE INFLUENCES

fact that my corrupt inclinations often repel it,— nevertheless it makes itself felt again. It acts as an ever-suggestive prompting to my spirit. I ascribe to it alone all the good I ever accomplish. I think by it, and act under it. It guides me perceptibly, and directs my going. To it I owe an eternal debt of deep gratitude. If eternity should reveal that I have been in any way instrumental in the uplifting of some soul, to it alone is all the honour due. It even tends to lift life's grave responsibility off my shoulders. I am conscious of the presence of other shoulders about me, stronger than mine, that bear the burden.

It is through the vivid impression of the reality of Divine influences that I have understood the saying 'Ye are not your own'. I know this, and willingly acknowledge it. The fortress of self has been razed to the ground since God has assumed the burden of my soul's salvation. While I am conscious of being in the enemy's country, I leave my case with God without any apprehension. However much I am alive to my own unworthiness when I do it, I have learned to look upon God's promises as including myself, and the peace of mind therefrom ensuing is beyond description great.

The acknowledgement of direct Divine influence over me, specially appointed for my ultimate salvation, has solved for me the riddles with which life was before beset. I have by its agency learned to understand both God and man, in so far as man is represented by myself. And this also have I learned, that such acknowledgement is above all things recommendable to those who seek for the felicity of a peaceful mind.

It is the denial of the existence of this influence that creates doubt. And again, it is because the nature of doubt is such and none other, that doubt is abhorrent

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

to God, even so that He will not hear the prayer of him who cherishes it.

As to myself, the element of doubt has vanished with the glad assumption that the counsels of the hours of activity, and the suggestions of the silent night season, which regulate my existence, and appoint to me the paths I tread, are from above, from that God whom I worship, for whom I live, and to whom I hope to be joined for ever, before the constellations have many more times completed their circuit.

EDUCATION

IN the beginning of things, whither all true investigation repairs for correct views, we discover the God-appointed nature of human education. The term which in modern tongue represents the idea, is well chosen, though now, like so many other terms, misapplied, as witness expressions such as 'state education', 'secular education', 'scientific education', and so forth. Man, originally, was a being endowed with all capabilities for becoming perfect by development, and education was to be the vehicle in which he was to be conveyed to that delightful condition. He was to be 'led out' and 'led upwards', and the drawing influence was to emanate from the conditions of his life. He was made acquainted with his Maker, and worshipped Him intuitively; with his relation to Nature, and was constantly stimulated thereby; with the object of his life, and he detected nothing but encouragement in it; with the possibility of an eternal existence in likeness to his God, whereupon alone were founded all his aspirations; with the law under which he was placed, the elements of which he proved to be as adorable as beneficent.

During the years of my intelligent existence I have tarried much in the garden of Eden. By night as well as by day I have been there. I love above everything to visit the scene where manhood first blossomed, and impressed its Maker, when daily at eventide He walked in the garden, in the same way as the dew-bepearled flowerbud impresses me on that particular morning when its every leaflet is preparing to lay itself bare to

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

the sunbeam's touch. In this unfolding process, which all the heavenly intelligences were anxiously watching, all man's education was contained.

I have found this investigation of the substance and nature of education in Eden itself most salutary. It has furnished me with views of life which have stood the test of correctness. At the same time it has caused me to differ from those opinions, the universality of which gives them an orthodox appearance.

I have contracted the habit of viewing all things concerning human life in the light of man's original state. It is only in Paradise that I find that harmony between man and his surroundings which enables me to arrive at anything like fair judgment as to what he ought to be. Outside of Eden his condition seems paradoxical. Not that I am unwilling to allow for the fact that he is no longer in Eden, or that that happy home was only his for the merest fraction of his time on earth,—but whenever my mind seeks for a solution of any of life's riddles, it is to Paradise that I go for a starting point from which to reason. This is especially true with regard to education.

The subject of education is one which engrosses the mind of every responsible being capable of independent thought. The question of how the helpless babe is to develop into the glory of creation, the only created being destined for perpetuation of life, is sufficiently ponderous to arrest the attention of all. Most of those, however, who attempt to answer it for themselves or their fellows, fall into the error of constructing a system with the elements they now find available, calling such system 'education', the result of which has been that the variety of educational systems is as great and striking as that of native huts, for which every country furnishes different material to the aborigines.

EDUCATION

The grave responsibility connected with the devising of means by which human beings shall be led to their final destiny, and the appalling possibility of leading them to death instead of life, calls for the deepest and most faithful research of the elements which constitute the true science of life. I have ascertained that without a correct view of man's original state, our search for these constituent elements is in vain. Human life has been overlaid with a gloss so misleading that no one who has not dug into the depths of its component conditions can understand it.

'Education' has taken the form of 'training'. In other words, its nature has been changed into a preparation for filling a place in human society. Evidently, however, this is not its design. It is from this misconception that terms like 'state education', 'secular education', and such like have resulted. Man, despairing of success with regard to an eternal future, has set about providing as best he can for this present life. This is commendable, and the results of his efforts form an indispensable part of the dowry with which the young are to be provided. But of 'education' there is none in it. The term is applied falsely, just as falsely as when it is maintained—as I have heard it maintained—that a cow may be educated to eat all kinds of human food.

The fact that 'education' implies a leading out of and up to, which can only signify a leading out of self and up to the Creator, makes the term impossible of confusion with school training. It is absurd to talk of finishing one's education. Education is a life work, which is of necessity broken off at death, to be resumed in the existence beyond, and continued as long as He who is above all things will in any way be superior to His creature. An 'educated' man, therefore, is simply

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

a person sufficiently broken in and trained to follow successfully one of the beaten paths of man's existence here below, and should rather be described by a term which is less of a sad misnomer than the one we supply now.

Man's faulty terminology leads him lamentably astray. Education has without doubt the element of sacredness in it, which element, however, is now looked for in school training, making a man of erudition an object of veneration: witness the tombs of poets and statesmen, whose learning and sagacity, irrespective of their lives having led them out of self and up to God, are held up to the living for all time as having secured them immortality. This state of things is but the fruit of man's carnality, blindness, and woeful infatuation.

In the matter of education, the 'leading' plays an unimportant part, so far as man has a hand in it. Life itself educates, and the conditions of life, over which man has scanty control, do the leading. Yet has man a duty to fulfil with regard to the education of his brother—a duty, sacred and delicate—that, namely, of seeing that the budding life in which he is interested has appropriate surroundings. It is here that his greatest responsibility lies. Every inmate of a house is partly responsible for the sanitary condition of it—so is every dweller on earth co-responsible for the cleanliness of the spot he occupies, and the purity of the air-column that rests on it. It is his duty to see that his successors do not breathe vitiated air, nor have their soul-garments soiled by anything it is in his power to remove out of their way. This consideration gives to life its most pleasing and sympathetic aspect.

EDUCATION

Man originally came to earth with complete adaptability to the highest education. In this he is crippled now. But let no one lose sight of the fact that then the work was designed to be finished on earth, where time and eternity should meet and be interwoven, whereas now the process is barely begun here below, and continued on his receiving immortality at the hands of his Redeemer in glory. This makes an appreciable difference which should act as a healthful stimulus.

Man takes considerable pains to find expressions for the true meaning of 'education'. I have seen it stated that 'education' takes in the heart, the head, and the hand. Others have said that education comprises moral, mental and manual training. The attempt has evidently here been to make use of alliteration as an aid to memory. The fact is that we are anxious to figure out the details of the all-comprising term. And yet there is little good in all this. It may be expressed far more simply. 'Education' means the development of the entire man. Every faculty, every taste, each inclination, every wish, each aspiration, every talent which his Maker has implanted, and the budding of which will therefore lead him nearer to Him, must be developed. For this man was made, and without it he fails to reach his destiny.

The prevailing misapplication of the term 'education' finds its source in the equally prevalent misconception of the relation between God and man. Indeed the depth to which man has sunk is sadly evident in his notions of the meaning of 'education.' His eye is turned earthward, where most men look for the bounds of their existence and expectations. God has been made a being whose existence is in every way extramundane, and whose connection with man only begins

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

where mortals separate themselves from earthly surroundings, and soar away in prayer and praise, in abstract meditation or devout acts of penance. This state of things is most deplorable, and brings to view the active interference of God's enemy, where His own rule has been rudely ignored. It is through this that man has become estranged from his Maker. Crude, grotesque, foolish, rash notions have been formed, all equally fictitious. On these the living feed, instead of on the Word of Revelation. They have filled their mouths with ashes. Their brain has become bewildered. Instead of the smith wielding the sledge-hammer for God, and the carpenter plying the saw for Him ; instead of the labourer mixing the mortar with a feeling of fidelity to his Maker in fulfilling the duties of his life, and the gardener scattering his seed, and watering his acre for the honour of the Creator, man has conceived the idea that God and his daily life are unconnected. Hence 'education' is a term not understood.

Yet 'education' exists as at the beginning. It exists in all the grandeur and wideness of its meaning, as verily as it did in Eden. At the opening of the twentieth century it still appears to man in all its beauty, and walks the earth clothed in garments brilliant and beautiful as the tail of the comet, which men behold with admiration and awe. And what is more, right understanding of the term is still extant, for it is the happy lot of some to have received an insight into its meaning. Their souls are filled with the grand notion of possible likeness to God. They live for it; they strive after it. The idea sustains their courage, it fans their hope. It brightens their lives and makes their every soul's effort sublime. These breathe an atmosphere differing from the common, their aspirations having lifted them above the scenes of earth. Their eye shines

EDUCATION

with the lustre of elevated expectancy. They lead the life of the stranger on earth. However much involved in the affairs of the world, it is apparent that they dwell as it were in tents. Their sojourn here below betrays all the characteristics of a pilgrimage.

These are they who have remained true to Nature. They have refused or abandoned the allurements of artificial life. To weary man their company is delightfully refreshing, yet is he unable to follow them in the voluntary sacrifices they bring. They have allowed God's hand full control over them. He, as revealed in Nature, guides them. They have held His wisdom in too high esteem ever to gainsay His injunctions. Instead, they have listened, obeyed, followed. Their souls are aglow with adoration of the conditions of life which their Maker has graciously appointed. They see the hidden in the visible, and their hearts rejoice in happy glimpses of the 'beyond', which to them is but a natural perpetuation of the present. These are the men and women who act and do, and rest and sleep, who breathe, and speak, and work for God—whose every step is intended to do Him honour, because they feel tied to Him. Their talents develop, their tastes form, their desires awaken, their aims become fixed, their aspirations are born—all under the prevailing sense of their oneness with Him whose hand has made them. They allow life to call forth more intense life, feeling more profound feeling. The activity of their existence increases with their advancing years, that of the mind being greatest. Their declining years tend to increase the lucidity of their ideas. They remain fresh and green despite decrepitude.

These are the ones in whom the divine origin of life and its indestructible nature are seen. They abide

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

under the sweet influences of Heaven which formed the canopy of their cradles. They abstain from the death-inviting usages which poison social life. Their bodies they regard as temples of the Holy Spirit. They are subject to like passions with other men, yet by their 'education' are gradually lifted into spheres where these cease to rage. Their lives are a sweet incense to God. They bear up the world of men in prayer before the King of Earth. On their account the wicked prolong their days. The fragrance of their purity counterbalances the fumes which rise from the altars of abandonment.

Such is the condition of men and things here below. Undoubtedly there exist two classes—the educated and the uneducated, but how different are they from what goes by that name! Eternity alone will show where the line of division was drawn. And great will be the astonishment of the millions, whose 'education' will prove to have had no significance for anything beyond their few short days on earth.

I would emphasise the thought that schools furnish no 'education'. A few tend to encourage it—most would almost appear to counteract it. Schools train for different avocations according to the rules of the present dispensation—matters to which education has nothing akin. 'Education,' on the contrary, is the daily continuation of that natural development of dormant life which begins in the cradle and at a loving mother's ever-pacifying bosom. Its principles are sweet resignation, rest, reliance, hope, and an all-pervading peace. Such 'education' is the ladder that leads up to Heaven,—man's destination and the future of all whose contrite spirit enables them to lead a life of submission to Him whose will and counsel are wise and benevolent, and bent on the salvation of the fallen sons of earth.

SCHOOLS OR NO SCHOOLS

A SENSE of horror fills me when I think of those places, where children are huddled together by hundreds to be trained for the race of life. The feeling of aversion is so strong that I have failed to conquer it. And many and many a time I have mused on the question whether these 'schools' were a benefit to society or otherwise.

I have seen hundreds of parents whose state of mind during their children's schooldays approached trepidation. They were mentally kept on the rack for a long period of their existence on account of one necessity of life to which they had to submit, that of sending their children to school. More tears have apparently fallen, more prayers been offered, more sighs heaved on this account than over any other human arrangement. Still schools exist, and flourish. Still they enjoy universal support. Still no mean proportion of the public revenue goes towards maintaining them.

I have concluded that schools are a necessary evil. And while my heart rebels against such a term as unworthy of any of the conditions of human life, the fact that these conditions are so sadly different from what they were meant to be, enforces resignation.

There must be schools. No doubt, had man continued in the ways of God, either these congregations of children would never have been, or they would have been harmless. They are not harmless now. On the contrary, they are most harmful. They are the

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

places where seeds are sown in the hearts of the young, the development of which cannot be counteracted by the best of home influences.

It has been my bitter experience to see much of the 'behind the scenes' of school life. Moreover, that contamination of which I am conscious as having had a crippling effect upon me morally, is directly traceable to the schools I attended. A simple narration of what I have seen would make people's hair stand on end. My tale indeed would scarcely be credited. I will, therefore, content myself with the one comprehensive statement that I have seen all the vices of human society practised in schools. My eyes have beheld children daily initiating one another into practices, and with that impunity, which after maturity not only ensure disgrace and abandonment, but call for the use of the rack and the gibbet. I have seen boys and girls leave school absolutely equipped for a life of debauchery, of shame, and of crime.

Such are some of the reminiscences of my school days.

And now in their turn my children go to school, and may be exposed to similar experiences. I can scarcely hope that they would go through them unscathed, reflecting on the irreparable harm done to myself; but my soul most fervently prays that God may have mercy on them during this trying period of their lives.

I know the arrangement of the homes of men, and how impossible it is to give children the necessary training there. Life is exacting. It is no longer a sitting under one's vine and fig-tree. There is a race to be run which calls for strenuous preparation. And so I admit, and by my own example show, that schools are indispensable, even if some are the very

SCHOOLS OR NO SCHOOLS

antechambers of hell. As development, which tends to education, is primarily found in solitude and the privacy of home life, so must the training for the duties of earth be obtained where children congregate round masters and mistresses.

And now looking away from the moral standard of these institutions, and considering the mighty influence they have on society, and how they regulate life by forming the habits of each rising generation, they ought to be places to which we could give our blessing. For as far as the work they do is concerned, they are to society as it now exists, a greater boon than any other conceivable thing. They battle with ignorance and counteract poverty. They are designed to uplift, notwithstanding that their influence often has a lowering tendency. They aim at assigning to each child his place in the community, and accomplish this successfully. They propel the national car. Their failure would mean universal confusion, revolution and ruin. They form one of the sustaining elements of social life.

I am prepared to acknowledge all the good done by schools. Only too gladly will I do so, though with a bleeding heart. The recollection of my own school days, which will torture me all my life, has not blinded me to the necessity for, nor the benevolent nature of, these institutions. No, however much I may wish that my children may be spared the scenes I witnessed, I acknowledge that schools must exist, and will stand by them with my influence and moral support. There is a delightful ingenuousness in child meeting child. Both stand on the same platform. Both have their visors open when they approach each other. There is a meeting alike of eyes and of hearts. They compare their talents, their capabilities, their tastes,

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

and all with the same frankness and unfeigned ease. The one gladly imparts the information which for the moment makes him the other's superior. There is an absence of reserve, and grudge seems non-existent. Then when they set to work at their appointed tasks, emulation springs up, yet it only stimulates. The winner's youthful benignity towards his inferiors smoothes away all feelings of envy.

So children are a help to one another. There are no better teachers for the young than their equals. Children learn where their efforts escape their teachers' notice. It is not while on the school benches that they make the greatest progress: it is when they compare notes at play. Their marvellous inquisitiveness, the result of intense interest, causes them to have no rest until they are satisfied that their playmates know just what they are in the act of acquiring. Every intelligent child is a ruminant as regards his knowledge. What he snatches up from elaborate explanations for which he cares nothing, he grinds over till it is all his own. At the same time he translates the whole of the information into his own vernacular, only using the teacher's terms in the teacher's presence.

The assistance children render one another is beyond the average conception. And the child whose lot it is to grow up by itself, away from the precincts of school life, feels that there is a blank on some page of the history of his early development. It is only where child meets child in undisturbed companionship, that results may be looked for which vouch for that grand expansion of mind in the future, by which the race profits. The man who would benefit his fellow-man must have been a boy who learned to understand his equals.

There reigns in schools a natural incentive to work for which the child looks in vain elsewhere. The

SCHOOLS OR NO SCHOOLS

atmospheric conditions of the human flower garden are unique, and—more than the soil which may be equally good outside of it—produce hardy plants. Nor is the teacher's presence accountable for these happy results. It may be his influence, but not his presence. Most teachers act the bear in the 'Kindergarten'. They are too heavy, too clumsy, too awkward, too slow for the young minds they seek to train. While ever watchful, their presence should recede from the foreground wherever possible. Yet should their influence pervade school life. Their devotion, faith, and love, should help to sweeten the atmosphere. The firmness of their characters, the force of their convictions, with the grace of their companionship, should make them at all times a court of appeal for the litigants who are always clashing, yet thereby constantly gaining in mental fortitude.

The school alone is the place where everything becomes possible to the child. His faith in himself, and in the talents which constitute his outfit, can only attain commensurate proportions while he is wrangling in the midst of his competitors. A score of phases of development appear to him feasible because of what he sees others achieve. At school a tied tongue may become loose, a slow brain quick, a stiff body lithe, an awkward mien graceful, an angular trait—an eyesore to others—may wear off.

The school is the place where, on account of numbers, repetition is the great lever of progress. And the child needs nothing so much. What he repeats three times in a private class of two, he has opportunity to say thirty times in a class of twenty. It will take quite that before the dunce takes it in. And it will take quite that too, before the bright boy assimilates it. Thus it is that the arithmetician, the mathematician,

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

the scientist, the orator, the writer, receive their grounding. The foundation of their fame is laid in the school. The groundwork there is done so solidly, that they can build on it indefinitely, and not fail. Such a result private instruction alone could never bring about, seeing that in that case the chief element is the teacher's knowledge, while in the school it is the child's personal effort.

Much better than the teacher does the child understand how to learn. He learns to talk by talking, to reason by reasoning, to sing by singing, to calculate by calculation, to draw by drawing. All philosophical rules are to him mere ornamentation, not to be despised, yet never the chief thing. Unseen the process of constant application goes on and bears fruit. The work of grinding, so disparaged by those who learn no longer, is the secret delight of the child in the different stages of rapid acquisition of book knowledge.

Marvellous strides have been made during the 19th century by what is erroneously called 'public education'. The people's school has come to the fore, and wielded a mighty influence over the nations. What will the 20th century do with this institution? It ought to improve it, but how? Not primarily by minor changes in its curriculum—that seems well nigh perfect, and is moreover constantly and closely watched. But of one element, so evident and so dangerous besides, cognisance ought to be taken. The public school stands as a beacon of light. As such it ought to lead, whereas now it follows. It follows, because it feels the constraining influence of society-life upon it. Forsaking its high aim, it curries favour with existing conditions. It caters to present opinions. Herein it is wrong, and does wrong. The school ought to have its quiet sanctum where its path is mapped out, independent of how the

SCHOOLS OR NO SCHOOLS

world of men may be surging outside. It should be an institution governed by higher ideals than business instincts can ever awaken in a man.

On the school depends the success of the generation. Would that divine wisdom might reign in its management instead of growing militarism. A spectre is looming on the public horizon, which fills with awe the few who see it. They apprehend its steady advance in military drill, cadet corps, and rifle associations, in saluting the flag, and wearing uniform on school quadrangles. The apparition augurs doom to human society. And yet it is not suspected, nay, it is even looked upon with favour. So bewildered has man become, that he cannot distinguish friend from foe.

The twentieth century, unless God himself intervene, has a career in store for the people's schools which, though fraught with honour, and fragrant with praise, must lead to the downfall of the nations.

WAR

THE original destiny of the earth, and of man upon it, is clear. Before man appeared on the scene, "the Lord God planted a garden in Eden," and beautified it to such a degree of excellence that it formed a fit dwelling place for that creature in the image of God, whose comprehensiveness of mind needed all that Nature had to show for its contentment and development. That spot, Eden, was vastly different from the earth beyond it—different only, however, on account of labour and pains bestowed upon it.

According to God's appointment, Eden was to be extended. Designed as a home for the first couple, their progeny was intended to dwell among surroundings precisely similar to the original. As the race increased, Eden was to grow. It was to grow, too, by the exertions of man, the keeper of Paradise. By degrees the boundaries were to be extended by new plantations, until—the period of extension being determined by that of the increase of the race—all the earth should have been converted into an Eden home. The dwellers on our globe were all to have been born and reared among sylvan beauty, and to have spent their lives in its culture and husbandry.

Thus far revelation allows us to reason. We refrain from venturing upon questions which would from their nature give rise to idle speculation. Among these would be: 'What would have happened if man, sustaining life endlessly by the fruit of the tree of life, had, after a period, filled the planet? Sin intervened,

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

and put a different phase on man's history from the beginning. Death came into the world, and rendered all provision against overcrowding needless.

God's image on earth was intended for the tilling of the soil under the most felicitous circumstances. When these circumstances changed through his own wilfulness, the given work still remained of the same nature. Yet ever since that time the earth has witnessed a controversy between God's appointment and man's choice. Man's mind, insidiously corrupted by the introduction of sin, henceforward prevented his viewing things in the right light. His taste was perverted, and that not on account of indirect extraneous interference, but by reason of inherent obliquity of reasoning. It was this that made him scorn the original arrangement, and develop a desire for congregating; whereas dispersion, as opposed to huddling together, formed a distinct feature of his Maker's design.

The outcome was early visible. Men forsook agriculture, and followed other pursuits. The results were provision for food by illegitimate means, the creation of society with society's wants, the rise of cities, distinction of classes financially and otherwise, the introduction of artificial government as opposed to natural, a clash of interests, competition, discord, strife, and war.

God destroyed those early generations for their execrable wickedness, the development of which was as great as it was spontaneous. By the flood He broke man's strength, and limited the measure of his days. The race, indeed, multiplied again, yet never recovered itself. But what it brought over with it from the antediluvian world was a tendency to congregate and aversion to distribution, whereas nothing had been intended but that each family should subsist on its own

WAR

plot of earth, and the husbandry of the soil be its chief occupation. This, even with sin rampant on earth, would have greatly ameliorated man's lot, and infused into his life the elements of contentment and peace.

However, that was not to be. The virtues fostered by agriculture were discarded. Man had other ideals, ideals of his own creation, which he pursued with all the ardour of his maddened brain. He had persistently sought a change of diet, claiming in the provision he made for his mouth a vent for his cruelty and blood-thirstiness. On that head God has ceased striving with him. Now, though millions had perished in the attempt, the other great reform was to be effected, embodying the cherished change of occupation and consequent mode of living, and—though the Almighty once more intervened, and by a miracle beyond all calculation frustrated the completion of the tower of Babel—on this score also man was permitted to henceforth follow the designs of his own heart.

There is one figure of antiquity to which insufficient attention is paid by the present generation—the man Nimrod, the city-builder. Stung by invidious pride, this man surrendered himself to the spirit of darkness, and became the instrument in Satan's hand for revolutionising the very elements of human existence. The institutions of Nimrod prevail today in their entirety, and though they pass under different names, are sufficiently unaltered in character to be discernible by those whose ambition it is to obtain an understanding of prevailing conditions. So much is certain, that a scrutiny of Nimrod's institutions is indispensable to all whose common sense has impressed them with any doubt as to the legality of the existing conditions of human life.

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

Nimrod introduced a change of worship—religion, let us say—making it a complete counterfeit of what the God of Heaven had designed, and of what man's unsullied devotion to his Maker dictated. His worship, with its attendant customs and rites, is adhered to even to this day, and forms the never-ceasing cause of failure on man's part to harmonize the promptings of his heart with the hollow forms of conventionalism.

Nimrod likewise introduced a change of government. Patriarchal rule was inimical to growing communities. It was out of place in established cities. Besides, being founded on reason and benevolence, it had as such long since become antiquated. His fertile brain furnished the form which was to supersede it. He became the first king, as history tells. This necessitated the possession of territory, which again necessitated conquest. Nimrod, therefore, initiated warfare,—so the record has it—revealing the unwonted spectacle of men being trained for the pursuit of professional carnage. Nimrod gave to the world, though doubtless in crude form, the science of war.

There is a strangely immoral ring in the term 'war'. It implies the fruit of perverse emulation, an entangling or embroiling, unholy strife, the condition of hostility manifesting itself in open violence. It is the crowning point of the culture of sin. Calmly considered, it appears as a demon from lowest hell, wrapped in garments stained with human gore.

Yet war has for forty long centuries been one of the chief occupations of man. It has been graced with an unparalleled bestowal of talent and study. It has engaged the flower of mankind for countless generations. Besides, it has been enshrouded with the veil of honour, and its pursuit has been lauded to the skies.

WAR

This is in truth a strange anomaly. Has man contrived to convert his shame into his glory? Doubtless he has. And yet we feel that these things ought to be most carefully considered before they are pronounced upon.

I have wished with that intensity that sometimes reveals itself in my desires, that I could, by ocular observation, be convinced of the condition of heart of a field-marshal placing his army in battle array. On his countenance lies depicted the terrible weight of the responsibility he bears. In solemn consultation with his staff the plans have been drawn up. At a certain moment, the thousands of human beings at his command are detailed to their various positions. The instruments of destruction, acknowledged implements of Satan's own invention, accompany the troops. There are rifles and cannon, swords and spears, of the most modern description, the most approved pattern. There are explosives, one kind superior to the other in the certainty of its death-dealing effect.

The opposing army is making similar preparations. It, too, has its commander-in-chief, in whose mind the arrangements have all been completed. He, like the one on this side, is a man of learning, of moral excellence, disciplined to the full in the school of life. In both those hearts the same feelings of justice, righteousness, tenderness and pity prevail. There is no trace of hatred either in this bosom or in that. Both are sent on a mission and both are fulfilling it. They each command, say, fifty thousand human souls, who by-and-by will be hurled against one another in mortal combat.

Anon on yonder side the cannon belch forth. This side replies. The battle has begun. All day it rages. It is renewed with the rising sun. Its end is a rout on

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

yonder side, a helter-skelter flight, a hot pursuit with lance and sword, a hacking down of what bullets have spared, a surrender of the few left at last.

What is the position? Five thousand men have dropped never to rise again. Twelve thousand are wounded, many being maimed for life. The field is strewn with the remains of noble beasts of burden. Indescribably confused heaps of wreckage lie all around. Beyond, thousands of hearts of loved ones despair, other thousands are thrown into mourning. It is the work of two days, nay, of one!

Shouts of joy rend the air in distant lands! Echoes of elation, that set the muses singing, that inspire pen and brush, that call forth hymns of praise, and exquisitely worded entries in the world's annals, reverberate over the earth! New vocabularies suddenly find their way to busy lips. Joyous excitement takes hold of staid hearts.

And the two men, the leaders? The one, the recipient of universal condolence, the other the object of adulation, are entered in the more extensive annals than those of earth . . . as murderers, responsible for each life cut short or ruined.

Are they? they and their officers, these and their men, every one of those hosts that came up, weapon in hand to assist in lighting the bonfire of hell which burned on that field of carnage? Are they?

I should so much like to know a commanding officer's feelings!

I know my own. I know that God warns against handling the sword. I know for myself—nor is there ever a doubt in my heart—that war is impious. I know that hitherto every nation that has waged war, has paid for it with its heart's blood. I know that to fill the earth with devastation and bloodshed is greater

WAR

sacrilege than man, by reason of perverted feelings, is able to realise. I know that I would myself yield up my life rather than kill my fellow man. I find no fitting name for the execrableness of war! My heart rises against the very thought of it!

What can have come over man, nay, over Christians so-called, that they can handle the subject of war as they do, with a laugh, with a nod of consent, with an expression of satisfaction, with a show of elation? Those that bear the name of the representative of Heaven's Majesty, how can they speak and act as they do? Christian nations—and amongst them the most persistent preparations for man's destruction on an ever-increasing scale! How indeed can it be?

But there is glory in war! There is the avengement of wrong in it, the punishment of crime!

Has man lost his senses? Where is the glory of gore, the beauty of livid hills of human flesh? Where is the grandeur of opening up the bowels of the earth by a descending shell, and entombing disjointed heads and legs and arms, with scattered brains and hearts? Where is the glory of enlisting thousands of human beings in the service of the arch destroyer, and killing in them every sense of morality and humanity, causing them to fly at each other's throats like beasts of prey, and perish together? What miscreant is he who would seek for honour or glory, beauty or virtue, excellence or grandeur on a battle field?

Man is indeed strangely blinded. The evidences thereof are increasing yearly, they are most apparent in his ideas about war. Hark at the shouts rending the very air! Behold the populace dancing in the streets of the great cities. See how they reel and stagger, long rows, arm in arm, their faces besotted with drink, their mouths extended with wild excitement, vociferating

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

national songs which make the hearts even of the more sober-minded beat with like elation ! And bunting is hung out, and fireworks are displayed, horse races are run, regattas are held, and the rich give banquets and the cup passes round, and Te Deums fill the vaults of sacred buildings,—and all because of the successful slaughter of a number of the enemy by dint of stratagem, of superior numbers, of weapons of later design—now usurping the place of courage—for which slaughter full retribution will be demanded as time goes on. For yet, ‘whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.’ ‘A man for a man’ is still the unalterable condition.

But war is inevitable!—I believe so, in the present situation. I believe war has been inevitable ever since Cain displayed the brutality of a murderer. I believe, that, at the present day, the world cannot exist without the terrible and noisome collision of nations who are all inebriated by the play of foulsome passion. I believe, too, however, that certain among those nations should study their personal relation to these things. I believe that Christians ought to be exceedingly careful how they follow the One whose blessed name they bear ! I am persuaded that with the increase of armaments and of standing armies, and the daily invention of newer and yet more destructive implements of death, those who would live a life in which preparation for eternity finds a place, ought to consider most studiously what their position is in this present world. I maintain that the appointed light-bearers should do their duty, and help others to view things in the right light. They should call wickedness by its right name, and beware lest they be found to consent to terming carnage an act of patriotic piety.

Jehovah—it is urged—has Himself employed the agency of war for the accomplishment of His ends. He

WAR

punished Sodom and Gomorrah by overturning them, so did He punish the Amorites by cold-steel-destruction; He, in both cases having seen that they had filled the cup of their iniquity to the brim. If ever, I conclude, similar circumstances should arise, and a like command go forth, war would be as justifiable as in Israel's early history. However, such war is one of extermination, nothing less, and by no means one for the acquisition of territory, the righting of supposed grievances, the punishment of insult, the upholding of national supremacy, or the like. Moreover, such war is waged in the name of God, who Himself leads the army to battle, with whom armaments are no consideration, and weapons do not avail—who discomfits by thunder, strikes by hail, and causes the stars in their courses to fight, instead of the murderous implements of Satan's device. Again, the result of such war would be honour ascribed to God, and majesty to the Most High, on account of the punishment of sin, and revenge of the sacredness of His holy name. No man's hand would by such warfare be stained, nor his responsibility rendered one whit more grave.

The strides that are being taken towards a universal outbreak of hostilities are no less than huge. I need make no attempt at describing them—they are more than apparent; the accounts of them fill the pages of the periodicals which bring the tidings to every man's door. At the same time, the cry of 'Peace, peace!' is greatly on the increase. This is another conundrum of the present time.

Who can doubt that the world as a whole is arming for possible contingencies, whereby nothing is meant but a universal *mêlée* in which all the nations will be embroiled? Are not the armies being vastly increased? Are not the navies? Are not the civilian forces growing by leaps and bounds? Are not colleges and public

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

schools supplying a soldier's equipment with a soldier's drill? Is not the air full of State Military Education? Are not the nations, indeed, changing from commercial communities into military powers, laying their all on the altar of the god of war? And is not the original destiny of man being strangely forgotten with it all? Man with his debauchery, woman with her levity, children with their corruption, all have launched out on the sea of national strife, abandoning themselves to the stimulating sense of vainglory, which nerves one to sustain the other until all go under.

I make no attempt at a description of the present fateful situation. No words of mine could ever bring about the work which is designed to be done in the privacy of man's own heart, where God's voice makes itself heard. Besides, nothing is further from my mind than the desire to raise an alarmist cry. In all calmness I would invite my fellow man soberly to consider with me whither we are drifting, we and our children. To discard false representations, to adhere to the truth, to search for light, to abide by the unfailing Word of God, these are the duties which I would exhort all to assume, so as thereby to save themselves from the delusion which reigns around.

MILITARY TRAINING

WITH a growing degree of solicitude I have considered the case of the young man of today. I have studied him in the home, in the school, on the playground, in the street, in the railway carriage, on the public promenade, in the café, in the theatre, in the church. Wherever I have been, I have had him before me. For my life has been bound up with his, and the course of circumstances has made me his associate.

I would have a word with you, parents, you who have boys among your children. I would consider their case with you. Are they not beloved, are they not very precious? Are they not the hope of the future for you? Are you not building lofty expectations on them? Have you not nursed them, cared for them, taught them, watched over them as you would over a great treasure? Have you not felt that their future days would reward you for many an anxious hour? Have you not been prompted by the belief that nothing was too good for your boy? Say, is not your boy's case before you all day, each wakeful hour of the night? Have you not pleaded and prayed for him on your knees with all the earnestness you could command? Have you not attempted to intercede with God for him in your fear that he might have forfeited Divine favour through the multitude of his youthful follies?

I would be urgent with you, parents. Have you considered to what extent the lot of mankind within a very small number of years must depend upon our boys? How soon we shall be forced to retire, and

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

they to step forward? Have you carefully weighed the fact that the affairs of all the world will be, must of necessity be, in their hands? Or are you among those that leave things to time, and suffer no concern as to what it may bring? No, you are not. I would not speak thus to you if you were. I can see by your countenances that you are anxious, solicitous, eager to make adequate provision.

In how far, and in what way, have you provided for the hope of your house? Let me not be misunderstood. I would not by a single word advocate such carefulness as I see in some houses, merely for the preservation of the family name. Would it were family virtue, or even family tradition! But what's in a name? No, I do not care whether your name is preserved or lost—but for this do I care, that the young man who will soon be leaving your home, be able to take his stand amongst the pillars of society. And I ask, with a view to this, have you made adequate provision?

You sent your boy to school, and have done your duty by him so far. Did you select the school? Did you satisfy yourselves that it was a school? or was it one of those places where irresponsible men drum worthless things into foolish heads? Was your boy trained there with a view to the solemnity of his future? Was his mind guided there? Did he receive preliminary impressions of the burden of responsibility he was soon to assume? Did you notice, as he came home week after week, quarter after quarter, that there was a change in him tending towards the realisation of your fond hopes? Did you observe increasing calmness, gradual elevation of thought, magnanimous aspirations? Was there spiritual growth detectable in the object of your parental affection? You sought for those things—did you find them? Were the masters building on the

MILITARY TRAINING

foundation you had laid? You were trying, always trying to co-operate with them—were they co-operating with you for your boy's ultimate good?

My spirit has grown sick at times as I have thought about our boys. I know the places where we are sending them for what we are pleased to call their education. I am aware that they are taught the intricacies of science and the beauties of language to some extent—but as to the development of character, the awakening of the sense of grave responsibilities, and the proper fitting out for the onerous duties of life, where are they? Who can show me the place where the nation's greatest treasure and each family's delight is nurtured in a becoming way, and with a view to the nation's general welfare? The place where the good and the wise, the strong and reliable men are formed which the world needs; the burden bearers, the state buttresses of the future, the men whom God can appoint to hold the history of declining humanity in hands that have sufficient strength for the work, and will see it through?

One thing I see being done—one phase of life being cultivated. I observe that in one respect provision for the future is being made. In my wanderings I notice an ever-increasing number of young men displaying cap and bandolier, and carrying a carbine. And I find that our boys' vocabulary is being enriched by such terms as 'undress' and 'full dress', 'rifle pit', 'quick march', 'volley', 'lieutenant', 'target practice', 'camp out', which in years gone by formed the nomenclature of the military only.

This fact affords food for thought. There is but one step between the school cadet corps and the Volunteer regiment—it is, in fact, but a consideration of age. And where lies the dividing line between the Volunteer and the Regular as far as active service is concerned?

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

Hence, is not all the rising male generation being trained for the battlefield? I cannot see it otherwise. Besides, it is not otherwise. It is but too true—all our bright boys, the happiness of our homes, are being drilled for bomb targets.

I am making a strong statement, but does not truth constrain me? And do not those who are responsible for these facts know what they are about? Have not the authorities, as we call them, the men who watch over our national interests, long since descried the approach of danger, which will demand every male in the land to cope with it? It is surely coming—and some men know it. Not that the crowd is apprised of it—why should they be? They need not know, they have but to follow. And they are following. Urged on by the approving smile of feminine admiration the uniform is donned, the rifle shouldered, and general satisfaction secured. The army can no longer stand without the Volunteer, the Volunteer ranks cannot be repleted without the cadet corps—but the arrangements are perfect, one step overlaps the other, and the unwary school boy will be a soldier before he knows it.

Now do not these things require the most serious consideration of some? What are our boys born for? Why were they given us? Are the men of the immediate future to be military men? The officers of state military men? The officers of the church military men? The tillers of the soil military men? The physicians military men? The educationists and scientists military men? The heads of the families, which are even now prospective, and the fathers of the next decade, military men?

What are we coming to? Is this to be the great feature of life in the 20th century? Are the sword and the gun to be the chief ornaments of society?

MILITARY TRAINING

Are the nations as a whole to be forced into that unnatural state of excitement that marks military life, and is destructive of any higher ideals than slaying and destroying? My soul shudders at the thought! And yet these things are before us. The tendency of our individual lightheartedness, the trivial tone of our speech, the frivolous stamp of our conduct, the inveterate love of amusement, the steady abandonment to vanity, these have landed us where we stand in this period of increasing enlightenment, the 20th century.

What? Are we to have general militarism? You who are so assiduously training your young men for this, have you considered what you are doing? Have you observed how you place your boy in a false position as regards human society? Have you seen that as to himself, you make him occupy a position which in God's eternal appointment has no place; and that as regards his relation to his fellow men, you make him everybody's enemy? What other thoughts can your boy have when you buckle on his bayonet and put the rifle on his shoulder? For what other purpose than that of destruction should he carry arms? What other pride do you try to instil into him than the pride of a murderer? Spare me your foolish talk of the defence of his country! That country has always been defended without its statesmen, lawyers, physicians, theologians, students, and artists carrying arms. Your words are hollow phrases! If there must be slaughter, let those slaughter and be slaughtered whose heads have been set a-whirling by pride or emptiness—are there not always a sufficient number of such? What has your boy to do with that game of hell? Was he meant for it? Did you nurse him for it? Did you entreat the Almighty a dozen times to spare his precious life for that?

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

And I ask, where are the Christians of the future? Where are the followers of the Nazarene in the rising generation? Is the Lord to become a woman's God? Surely those young men who are training for eventual carnage are not Jesus' disciples? Away with the notion of field chaplains and camp preaching! Let the devil have a perfect game. It is absurd to attempt to combine his service and God's. Those that are where the devil rejoices to see them, should have full scope for showing the allegiance they have preferred. Alas for the terrible delusion! We knew it was to come, and now it is here! It has one form for the old, and another for the young, one for the rich and another for the poor, one for the veteran sinner and another for the unstained youth. And for him, the noble-browed, bright-eyed, clear-brained hope of our homes, the nursling of love, of attachment, of devotion; him on whom our eyes have rested with delight, while our lips whispered a prayer for his welfare, for him, unless the Almighty save him by a miracle of grace, and appoint us to lead him with wisdom and patience away from the scenes of slaughter and shame in which man seeks his glory,—for him, our jewel, for him, our darling, the delusion will lie in the cap and shoulder straps, in the belt and the sword, by the allurements of which God will lose the servant of His election, we the son of our prayers, and he—may his Maker have pity on him!—he, his own soul!

LANGUAGE

AS THE emotions of man are manifold, so are his modes of expression varied. And his body is in its members amply supplied with instruments for such expression. His forehead has its frown, his brow its arching motion, his nose its disdainful pucker, his lip its curl, his eye its ever-varying glance, his hands and feet their many telling gestures. Expression by means of signs, is, therefore, possible, but, though universal, it must naturally be incomplete. In such modes of expression, moreover, there is small power.

But power lies in the human word. I love to think of the first words that fell from the first man's lips. How sweet they must have sounded. What impression they must have made. How must the undefiled surroundings have strained the ear to catch up the melodious sounds. These accents—clearer than the silvery brook, more soothing than its evening babble, more charming than its native dell,—how they must have fascinated the dumb listeners in the grass, in the trees, in the stream. I have had an intense longing at times for the privilege of hearing some sound representative of those first words. They tell me it was human language from the beginning—I know that. They give it the name of Aryan—the term has no suggestion for me. They assure me that the Sanskrit, still extant, is akin to that first vehicle of man's thought—the intimation means nothing to me. I am only too well aware that no voice on earth can now reproduce anything similar to Adam's first hymn of

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

praise to his Maker, welling from a heart as pure as God's, flowing from a tongue as immaculate as an angel's.

Yes, I have wished I could have some idea of the sounds of Adam's first communication to his God. I have always thought that then I should know what human language was intended to be like.

No doubt language is now very much deteriorated, and very little like the original. Still there is power in the human word even to-day. I am aware that the expressiveness of languages varies, but I know also that in every country, in every clime, with every nation, it is possible to utter intelligible sounds that will move the hearts of the people, and send those hearts swaying hither and thither with the sentiments expressed. No further proof is needed that even to-day there is power in human speech, both civilised and barbarian.

This power was intended for the exercise of a world-wide dominion. The beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the finny tribe in the briny deep, were all in turn to have the sovereign's word addressed to them, and to stand ready to obey. Alas, that man through an act of presumption should have lost the royal word of command! When his thirst for forbidden knowledge was slaked, he knew it no longer, nor did it ever recur to his memory.

But still—man, the wreck of his former self, degraded and debased, has power left in the utterance of his lips. The circle of its manifestation indeed is circumscribed. Creation no longer gives heed to the accents flowing from his tongue. Only a small portion of his own kind, whose lot is cast in the same geographical boundaries as his, fall within the sphere of the influence of his speech. That, however, suffices him. That circle itself appears wide to man, so diminished in every way.

LANGUAGE

Within those boundaries he can provoke a laugh, or cause tears to flow; he can soothe hearts and comfort them, or rouse spirits, and fire them to deeds of bravery and daring; he can deal out advice and instil courage; he can brighten hopes and stimulate effort, excite indignation or call forth sympathy; he can demand admiration or induce contempt, awaken love or inspire hatred,—and all this by the mysterious but unquestioned power of the breath of his mouth.

Man's word is the sceptre of his sovereignty, it is the sign of his superiority, the abiding proof of his excellence. It is the sure means of entreaty, of persuasion, of conquest. There is a ring in it that appears to be undying. A word in season will follow a man wherever he goes, and be an ever-present witness to the end of his days. Whole lives may be regulated by one single sentence pronounced by the lips of one held in reverence, and after-generations be made to feel its effect.

These facts are fraught with meaning. Man, whose life is not ruled by instinct, depends on the word of his fellow for guidance. And as he is guided, so he will go. In this way do those whose words have weight, load themselves with responsibility.

Every one has stood at a crossing where several roads meet. And while knowing in a general way by the compass of life which direction to follow, we have stopped to consider which road to take. We remember well the many times we have been to trusted persons for advice. We explained the situation to them and said what we thought. And then, with an earnest desire to assist us, conscious of the gravity of their decision, they spoke, hesitatingly at first, scarcely to the point, we thought, but gaining courage as they went on, until the sentence came—who shall say that it was not

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

inspired?—which decided us. It was not always palatable, but a voice within us said, 'This is the way.' And as they still went on, multiplying words, we remember how sometimes we waved our hand, begging them to desist, for the die was cast, and the answer had been received.

Oh, it is that one sentence that decides, which defines a whole period, maybe a lifetime of activity in certain lines. And the world is benefitted or harmed, and the age suited or otherwise; hearts are relieved or burdened, and human life saved or wrecked, all as a result of that word in season, the responsibility of which lies on someone's shoulders.

At times when I have thought of these things, a sense of pain has come over me on account of the manifest decay of human speech. If, I have reasoned, the human word is the only God-appointed vehicle of power, why is it not better preserved, not more tenderly husbanded? Why is it exposed to all winds and weathers, and given a prey to the ravages of sensuality and passion? And I have been led to carefully consider my own individual case. Suppose I were to exercise power over some one's mind by my words! Suppose a number of my contemporaries should be intended to be guided by me—what is my position with regard to language?

I began to notice the ways in which men express themselves.

Some talk glibly on every conceivable subject, their very form of speech betraying the shallowness of their thoughts. Such were no fit example for me.

Others have an airy mien, a superficial way, bordering on indifference, when they speak. Their tongues lay bare the condition of their minds. They are hollow vessels. I was not to follow them.

LANGUAGE

Others again spice their expressions with interjections, ejaculations, profane utterances and oaths. I learned that these are despicable beings whose words should never be allowed any weight or significance. They breathe an atmosphere of inebriation, and their speech should go unheeded. I shrank from even listening to such.

And others I found who had given themselves up to the use of superlatives. Their sayings sound impressive and weighty. Yet I found on examination that they are not so. These persons live in a self-created world of exaggeration, and are unreliable in their every utterance. They are false, and their example was to be no guide to me.

And then I found a few—would there were more of them!—whose words bear the stamp of mature and careful thought. Their utterances are few, measured, laconic. They are not the charming talkers, the fascinating speech-makers. Brilliancy is less an adornment to them than depth. Their utterances flow steadily from the pure fountain of lofty thought. These few see things as they are, and represent them as truth reveals them. 'The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies.' 'Apples of gold in imagery of silver is a word spoken at its fit time'. My life has abundantly proved that this is even so.

Personally I owe much to the guiding word of man. In the course of a very varied life, in which I have mixed with all sorts and conditions of men, it has been my happy lot to meet a few who had the power to guide me in the name of God. They acted as His representatives, and I acknowledged them as such. I proved the profound wisdom of their words. By their utterances I allowed myself to be guided, and

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

have reaped a rich harvest of reward. And how have I prized their welcome words!

The nineteenth century has witnessed an appreciable deterioration in human speech. There has developed a spirit of slovenliness, and looseness of expression. In some countries this has already led to serious consequences. The majesty of speech has been wantonly abandoned, and a feeling of 'anything will do,' taken hold of the people. Schools have contributed their quota to the prevailing negligence. The art of speaking has not been cultivated as it should be,—in some communities not at all. Intelligent reading—as reading without pronunciation is erroneously called—has largely taken the place of exercises in enunciation. The step is telling on the life of nations to-day. Literature has greatly suffered. What is left of the grandeur of human utterances is to-day employed for the embellishment of novelettes. Serious writers are not listened to. The decay of language as the expression of thought, has gone hand in hand with general apostasy. The 'old paths' are discarded—new ways have been opened up for literary diversion, ways of frivolity and painful remissness in established virtue. A good speaker, an eloquent man, is now a phenomenon. Such a man is trotted round the globe and made a spectacle of. The oratory of church and court, yea, and the doubly attractive, because private, oratory of the family hearth, is almost extinct. The result is loss of elevating influences, a sad and grievous levelling of platforms among those who are intended for healthy emulation. The word of man used to bear sway—where is it now? The mighty sword has lost its keenness of edge, and its power lies low.

LANGUAGE

Oh, the pity of it! God's messages to the earth, which are as real to-day as ever they were, suffer for want of power in their proclamation. Faith is by hearing, and hearing by the word,—but where is the word? Where is it sounded? Who is touched by it? Is it not left on the written page for every one to do with it as he pleases, and nod over it as he likes, when he bends his drowsy head to read?

For this man is wholly responsible. And surely, man can ill bear that burden. He can never answer for the decay of the power of human speech, which was his from the beginning. It is iniquitous neglect alone that has caused it. And all the 'so-and-so's,' and 'how-do-you-call-it's,' and 'I mean's,' and 'don't-you-see's,' and the many more meaningless expressions that swell the list of testimonies to man's guilty inactivity of brain, which list is lengthening with the passing years—these are the things that have by their assiduous propagation done the mischief.