

MAN'S MIND

God's hand fashioned man, His fingers wove the delicate tissue of his mind. The intricacy of its structure, the hidden workings of its component parts, for ever testify to the omnipotence of their Author. They have so testified all along, and will do as long as the countless ages of the eternal future shall endure.

This wondrous heirloom, the *pièce de milieu* of our outfit, was given us that we might possess the capacity of understanding the works of God. Looking at man as he was originally placed in the very heart of those works, put in charge of, and given command over them as far as they concerned this earth, we cannot fail to see the object of man's being endowed with power to reason, deduce, follow up, and comprehend. It could not be that Heaven's plenipotentiary should be an automaton. Everything was to be studied, everything to be investigated, the gift of understanding was to form the seal of his authority, and man was to reign with full comprehension of the designs formed by the great Creator, whose ambassador he was on the earth.

As time has progressed, and error has assumed grosser forms, there has been a gradual decrease in the estimate placed by man on his own mind. He has laboured under the appalling sense of the numbness which has settled on his brain. It has become difficult for him to trace the Divine Hand in its composition, and detect the lofty nature of its workings. He has,

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

indeed, failed to see it. And as the message has reached him that his mind, through sin, is corrupt and darkened, yea, and impervious to Heaven's light unless sin be first removed, he has been forced to acquiesce in the statement. All having made the same calamitous discovery, many have ceased to dream of their connection with God as exemplified in the mysterious workings of their minds.

Still, for all that, there is a latent notion of the existence of affinity between God and the human mind. Many boldly profess a knowledge of this fact, others hope it. Yet, even among those who assert their knowledge, little is revealed that would justify the allegation. The professed relationship is in deed and truth poorly sustained, and apparently little good is derived therefrom by man in his present condition.

The fact is that the human mind, while destined to be the means through which God could hold communion with man, was so constructed as to be convertible into a vehicle of error, and that by reason of man's folly in the beginning it was even so converted. The human mind was attached by Satan as one of the chattels of man's property, when yielding to wily temptation; Heaven's representative surrendered himself a captive to his foe. Satan's heavy hand has ever since been lying on the delicate structure, resulting in the formation of twists and contortions, with which man has to reckon, because they are there, but which are to him an endless source of confusion and bewilderment. Man's mind, therefore, is now scarcely human. In fact, so far has the deterioration gone, that man is able to work against his own interests, and in his foolhardiness often prefers such actions to the salutary ones suggested by the Spirit of God for his benefit.

MAN'S MIND

This working against one's own interests has assumed multitudinous forms, yet is it clearly apparent to those whose eyes have been opened. In spite, however, of the many revelations of it, there is profound sadness in the fact. To view man in this primeval state, and then compare him with the drunkard in the gutter, the prostitute in the brothel, the thief in the cell, or the murderer on the scaffold, is to try and fathom a depth of folly which is staggering in its enormity. And anguish fills our hearts at the remembrance that these our brethren have come where we find them, and suffered irreparable loss, through their failure to extricate the most delicate organ of which they were possessed, from fetters wherein they were born.

Man's mind was designed to be in harmony with the will of his Maker. When its mechanism was first set in motion, it was attuned to the Divine mind. Man's thoughts were based on God's. He received these, fed on them, assimilated them, and worked them out. By logical sequence, therefore, is that man demented, whose mind is not in harmony with his Maker's.

I have no predilection for sweeping statements on a subject so momentous as the present. But is any other deduction possible? And if that mind alone is sound, whose workings are co-operative with God's expressed will, is it not well to consider the alarming unsoundness of mind that prevails among men?

We talk of high minds, strong minds, powerful minds, enlightened minds, resourceful minds. Are these sound minds? Are they to those who possess them receptacles of Divine revelation, the leading strings that conduce to actions of which the high God approves? Are they renewed minds? Has the Spirit of God re-made, re-shaped them? Is their bent Heavenward, their activity submissive to Him who alone can lead aright?

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

It has proved to most people a hopeless commission to know themselves. In their calculations they have usually reckoned without their host, and come face to face with what they have termed eccentricities and peculiarities for which they could not account. But to him who sees the natural state of his mind, it becomes possible to know himself. Such a man begins by taking account of the principal factor, and runs little danger of going astray. The key that unlocks the chamber of his life's secrets, he finds to be the inherent corruption of his own reason. This allowed, everything receives a different colour, and permits of satisfactory explanation where mystery reigned before.

Even this, however, does little to mitigate the state of things. To be surrounded by men of unsound mind is bad enough, to know that one's own mind is unsound, unreliable, deceptive, occasioning misconception, and unable to grasp the truth, is infinitely worse. And yet so mankind exists. The great world moves on, in reality little better than a vast madhouse. *A* deceives *B*, and *B* cheats *C*, who in his turn misleads *A*, all, however, considering their own judgment unexceptionable and reliable. The result is being shown in the fact that society would come to a standstill but for the delirious excitement of the cup and the dance, of music and sport. Thus appearances are kept up, and if some cases become extreme, there is the abiding consolation that the period of man's folly is very much circumscribed.

Besides, there are the asylums where we dispose of the insane! Insane, forsooth! Who is fit to be a judge of sanity? Is it the physician who weighs and calculates, and along algebraical lines ascertains the volume of a man's brain? Is he himself sane who decides about insanity in others? Where is the

MAN'S MIND

dividing line? Is it open violence, breach of common usage, diversion from established modes of speech, that make a man insane? Alas for mankind's distressing state!

Yes, the asylums are there. And we beautify them and give them the appearance of palaces. They are always full. Their capacity is constantly being increased, and yet they are full to overflowing. Also there are countless private homes which do duty for asylums. The man of the twentieth century, the man of enlightenment, his brain crammed with knowledge, that man is virtually insane. His companion in life, laden with the cares of a modern household, which has reached the climax of unlikeness to what man's home was intended to be, borne down by multifarious duties and responsibilities, is like him, insane. His son, running amuck through the foolish trend of his school training, wasting time and energy on worthless pastimes and unholy pleasures, is insane. His daughter, her body screwed in to conform to the limits of fashion, her breathing oppressed, her circulation impeded, her tastes corrupted, her ideals crushed, her passions inflamed, is insane like her brother. The people of standing, slaving to keep up appearances, racing to ensure recognition, fever-heated with anxiety to make a living, constantly racked by the thought that something unforeseen might happen for which they have not provided, and drop them out of the ranks; striving to get their children well married lest they be burdened with them too long,—how can they be reasonably expected to be sane? Is there any phase of their existence that gives proof of sanity? And the lower classes, the herd, the despised plebs, who exist on sufferance, and are allowed action through dire necessity, whose lives are coarse, and tastes uncouth,

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

who eat and drink to-day, and die to-morrow, can they be expected to be sane ?

I have studied the subject of man's sanity, until in anguish I have cried out to God for mercy on myself and my brother. I have seen insanity revealed in the council chamber of government, presiding at the bar of judgment; insanity holding forth in the lecture room, proclaiming from pulpit and platform; insanity in the business office, at the family hearth :—disharmony with the will of God displayed everywhere, branding man's actions, high and low, with the damning superscription 'insane'.

So man has pursued his course for a long, long period, lamentably forgetful of what his God designed him to be. He has run his headlong race closing his eyes to the realities of his condition. Will he still go on ? Will man rush into eternity without waking ? Will he never come to his senses ? Will the present momentous period of his life fail to induce him to halt ? Or will he stop and reflect ? Will man be led to look about him until he is convinced that the whole structure society has reared, is founded on the acknowledgment of his madness ? that habits and customs, laws and requirements, and conventionalities have been subtly invented, by inspiration invented, to secure the devil's hold on him ? Will some be ready to confess that all humanity is caught in a net, to swim against the meshes of which intensifies bewilderment, by reason of which millions desist even from enquiring into their real state ? Will some allow that humanity is tyrannically swayed by a power that brooks no resistance ?

Is there hope for man ? That is the question : it is useless to add lines and traits to the picture of his true condition. And the reply comes to us through the ages of revealed grace : 'Be renewed in the spirit of

MAN'S MIND

your mind.' This is the answer which the Divine Spirit has studiously worded to embrace every case. It discloses no need for investigation as to the extent of the damage done to the individual mind; it invites participation in a process of renewal. 'Be ye renewed', says God. And undoubtedly the meaning of these words is, that the individual should return to the original appointment, in order that his mind should be in perfect harmony with God's. To effect this, but one way is open, the way of acceptance of God's expressed will as the only guide in life. This way has always been open, but its existence is urged the more as the situation assumes a graver aspect. Cruel doubt is reigning supreme in the mind of man, doubt intensified by the confused nature of the teachings to which he is induced to adhere, doubt which is encouraged by every evil influence to which he has laid himself open, to the intent that the soothing voice of God may be inaudible to him.

But man is to hear the invitation. It comes to him with awful solemnity as he stands upon the threshold of the closing period of time. It reverberates through the universe, and echoes through the air whenever he breathes, 'Be renewed—renewed in the spirit of your mind.' It calls upon man to cease from struggling vainly against overwhelming odds. Man would fain reform his way of thinking, yet he never will. No new piece on an old garment when minds hover in the balance. They are too delicate for patchwork. Nay, but resigning ourselves to God's own appointments, a complete renewal of the mind, and with it the acquisition of a entirely new view of life, of duty, calling, aspirations, hopes, and expectations. A new mind, a new man; a new man, a new life; a new life, a new experience of God's mercy, an unobscured

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

understanding of His ways and His will, and through it a new career, not downwards or backwards, but onwards and upwards, heavenward, daily increasing in likeness to God, in intensity of longing to do His pleasure, 'old things passed away; behold, all things made new!'

THE GAME OF CIRCUMSTANCES

THERE are people—and their number is legion—who hold the opinion that the only thing lacking in life is an understanding of life itself. They feel at ease about the details of their own earthly existence, which they have contrived to handle satisfactorily and even smartly, but the thing itself—life—remains a mystery. And yet, scarcely a mystery, for they see so much of it, and every revelation is so plain;—but life appears to them like some plantigrade monster, whose stealthy step enables it to come upon them unawares, and whose every movement is watched with dread. The plan of life seems to be a labyrinth of mixtilinear construction, the mazes of which are absolutely bewildering to those whose brain-power is not of the strongest, their courage not of the best. They have a compass by which they travel, a time-piece by which they reckon; however, now one and then the other of these seems wrong, and their indications contradictory. What man needs, and has all his days been seeking, is a pantochronometer of life, a combination of guiding influences set to perfectly harmonious action.

There is no doubt that this consideration has a depressing effect on the development of most. It is the means of constricting their vitality. It converts many a one's natural hilarity into peevishness. It robs most of us of our stability, and has a tendency to make us fickle. And few there are who, when first

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

confronted with the reality of life, have not had their confidence rudely shaken.

But then again, we see some whose life-march resembles Orion's majestic strides athwart the vault of heaven. They appear to be steadily guided onwards, unappalled by adverse contingencies. As I stood at life's portal, and watched such, I greatly marvelled at the firmness and the even nature of their gait. Methought they must have a private oriel through which celestial spirits communed with them. But I found that of them, as of others, it was true 'that one event happeneth to them all.'

To discover the secret of some men's peace of mind in the midst of so much perplexity and desperation, has been one of the main studies of my life. And the following is what I have ascertained as the result of my investigations.

Nature now is full of horrors. The light blinds, the heat oppresses, the herb poisons, the dew chills, the wave engulfs. It would seem that every power and attribute of Nature is in its revelation inimical to human life. This, of course, is the reverse of the original order. But just as much difference as is observable on that score between what is and what was, just so much misapprehension is there about the aim, nature and events of human life amongst those whose privilege it is to have a true, proper and full understanding thereof.

Puzzled by the questions that had to be answered, and awed by the responsibility attaching to the solution of each problem, some have spent precious years trying to catch up some sound from the æolian harp or pandean pipes, which might be interpreted as Divine guidance. Others have worked themselves up to the belief that they would by perseverance be placed under the action

THE GAME OF CIRCUMSTANCES

of a specific afflatus, and have prolonged an aerostatic existence, the cruel mistake of which was that the upholding agency was none other than their own nerves. There has been with some a mortification of the flesh far exceeding the bounds of common sense, while others have given way to wilful depression of spirits that has poisoned their existence.

And all that while the God of Heaven, who is responsible for man, and who holds himself so responsible, was providing a natural means for obtaining every desirable result. He, the Great One, has in His adorable appointments for the happiness of the race, taken no account of the results of man's cogitations at any period of its history. On the contrary, He has made full and perfect provision for all the exigencies of man's case, such provision linking itself to the natural outflow of the exigency itself.

To be plain:—Life consists of a string of circumstances, and it is these circumstances themselves that point the way. Should the mariner despair of finding a course either East or West, if the coast he is hugging ran in the desired direction? In exactly the same manner need none of the living despair of the circumstances of their day, so long as they are willing to follow the direction in which these point.—I have an appointment a hundred miles from home, and must take the early train. But on my way to the station I call at a friend's house, and am there ushered into a room where a moschatel has loaded the air with its scent, which almost instantly brings on a spasm of asthma. For the moment I cannot move, and so must abandon the idea of catching my train. I am annoyed, at least, if I am a fashionable individual; I hate the thought of losing a whole day after making all arrangements, and so with much ruffled feelings

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

I take the afternoon express. To my horror I learn *en route* that the morning train was derailed thirty miles this side of my destination, and that most of the carriages have rolled down an embankment. Report says that there are contusions and wounds by the score, fractured limbs, and three deaths. I wring my hands in the intensity of feeling that takes hold on me, and from my heart acknowledge the attack of asthma, yea, the unpremeditated call of the morning, yea, the presence over night of that moschatel, to be providential interference on my behalf.

But when I leave my office at 3 o'clock to keep an appointment, and on my way back my attorney stops me and prevails on me to give him five minutes to discuss an important matter that has just cropped up, which five minutes are spun out to fifteen, and I return to my chambers to find that Mr. D has called in the meantime,—a man I wanted particularly to meet,—and that now I cannot see him, as he has had to leave town, and that on that account a deal falls through which would have made my day a profitable one—then I am annoyed beyond measure.

Suppose, however, that this little string of circumstances between three and four o'clock should have been just as much appointed by Providence as that other which possibly saved my life or limbs, what have I to say? Yes, and suppose all the varied circumstances that make up my life, all, without any exception, from life-saving ones to money-losing ones, should be after God's own appointment, what then?

Why is man what he is? Why does he run up against the palings that are intended to show him the way? Why does man behave as if he were blind? Why does he construe his Maker's goodness into what he is pleased to term the 'irony and fickleness of fate'?

THE GAME OF CIRCUMSTANCES

Oh, how unhappy a being has he become with whom the God of Heaven had such great and glorious intentions!

The fact is that all circumstances are of Divine appointment, and that their 'game' is the work of the guiding Hand. And there is another fact, namely this, that the responsibility of life has all been lifted from the shoulders of those who will acknowledge their Maker's provision. We speak at times of sinking down on our knees in adoration of the acts of Providence. It would not be too much if we did this every day. For truly, the occasions on which Providence reveals its watchfulness over us, are not confined to the moments when we have an accident that might have been worse, or escape, by a hair's breadth, that which proves fatal to another. I have experienced and do most joyfully acknowledge the fact, that Providence guides us every hour of our lives. More, that the guiding Hand, which is discernible in circumstances, need only be heeded for us to enjoy immunity from the harassing agony which consumes the life of thousands of hearts. It is doubt, it is doubt that kills us—it is faith, it is trust that saves us!

I know this, and that is why I speak. How should I dare to speak, if I knew it not? Should my pen lend itself to intensify the existing darkness, the desperate confusion? I know that to be at war with circumstances is to be at war with God. I know that to submit to circumstances is to follow the Lord. I know that to question the course of the events of one's life, and daily bestir oneself to map out one's own path, is to rebel against the One who undertakes to guide all those whom His hands have made. I know that to stand still and observantly watch the indications which life itself reveals, is to draw down upon one's head the abiding blessing of the Almighty.

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

In my youthful folly, learned from companions, I was cantankerous to a degree. I remember the time when I questioned, and doubted, and criticised and made every effort to amend the trend of circumstances. But I found, thank God, that it was all rowing up-stream, a fruitless attempt to stay the sweeping tide. My eyes were opened, and when I saw my folly, I submitted and worshipped.

Life in its natural condition, and under natural influences, is a motific agency, perfectly adapted to man's estate. However, all interference with its natural flow has a congealing, a killing effect. Man is safe, so long as he accepts what his Maker has for him—his danger begins where he plies his own intellect, and applies his own inventions, to counteract what God has designed.

For, let us not forget, there is a purpose in life, a purpose beneficent and worthy, a purpose original and eternal, which is—the glorification of the Life-giver. Man is mistaken, if he thinks that his life should extol his own name. Doubtless man has thought so, and the bent of his genius is in this direction. Yet he thereby destroys God's plan, and brings death upon himself. Not the creature, but the Creator, is to be magnified! And to that end it was meet that the Creator should make every provision.

So He has done. He has assigned each his place, his area of development, his sphere of usefulness, and given him the assurance that if he will follow the way as circumstances shall point it out, his life will assuredly uphold his Maker's wondrous character. But it may be that the one humanly destined to shine as an artist may spend his days at a blacksmith's anvil, and he who was cradled as a future general glorify his God on a cobbler's stool.

THE GAME OF CIRCUMSTANCES

God has purposed that man should bear no greater burdens than are fit for his shoulders. He has willed that man should be free from worry. He has planned that sweet contentment should reign supreme on earth, and have a seat at each family hearth. Instead of this, however, man himself is leading. He has usurped the government, and plucks the bitter fruit of his audacity.

The thought suggests itself that consideration of this nature might lead to improvidence. They would indeed lead to a change of things, man no longer assuming what is not his to assume. It is his to exert himself in the service of his God, which is the service of mankind and his own service, but not to load his brain or heart with a weight of providential considerations, for which God will have him in derision. Man has caused himself serious hurt in this way. He has slaved under the supposed grim necessity of arranging for what falls beyond his ken, and many have succumbed beneath the burden.

Man was meant to be free as the fish, happy as the bird, a being not irresponsible, yet refraining from meddling with the affairs of life's government, which are safe in God's hands alone. And should not man, after he obtains a knowledge of these things, even at this late hour, return to his appointed place? It is not too late. There are more than fourteen hundred millions of lives liable to be rendered unhappy on account of an almost universal mistake. Numbers are being swept hourly away, whose dying lips avow that war with 'fate' has been the principal feature of their lives. And this war with fate would have shown itself—had they but opened their eyes—to be war with God, in whom they now expect to rest in peace. Strange mockery of realities, forsooth!

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

'The peace of God, which passeth all understanding', was to the Christians of old the great spiritual desideratum. It is that now to those who tread in their footsteps. And if the sweet peace is obtained by acknowledging the hand of God in every circumstance of our lives, great or small, palpably important or seemingly insignificant—who will continue to deny it?

TRUTH

THE term 'truth' is commonly used in contrast to falsehood, thus suggesting an intimate relation between the two. This is a fallacy. Falsehood is of a temporal nature, Satan, its author, having both a beginning and a fixed and determinate end. Truth is abiding, is from everlasting to everlasting with God. It would seem that for the present, on this earth, where truth has been superseded by falsehood, and the controversy between truth and lie ever rages, the contradistinction might aptly be applied; yet I find that such is not the case. For if the definition be allowable that falsehood is the reverse of truth, truth in its turn is by no means the reverse of falsehood.

There is no doubt that the subject of 'truth' is the hardest for mortals to discuss. Anything in Nature is more fit to do it than man. The wood-pigeon cooing in the pine copse; the sugar bird daintily pecking at the heart of a bud; the sparrow gravely twittering on the roof-ridge; the cattle complacently basking in the sunshine amongst the ripened grass; the merry fish disporting themselves in the green wave, these all know intuitively what truth is, because they live it. But man,—where is man's sense of truth? A stranger to himself, a weariness to his neighbour, an enemy to his God, how shall man talk of truth? His dress a falsehood, his diet a lie, his home a place from which a Maker is banished, how shall man define truth? Has he not for six thousand years cheated himself and belied his God? Has he not steadfastly preferred the paths of

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

dissimulation to the way of righteousness? Has not his eye grown dim, that he cannot see, and his ear dull, that he cannot hear? Is any comparison possible between his life and that of the guileless birds and fishes, whose example he once was? Has he been true to his God, faithful to his calling? Has he applied himself to search out the way of life, or in any way preferred the glorification of his Creator as his chief task? Has not numbness settled on his mind, so that even the effort of examining the aim of his existence is beyond him? And shall such an one define truth?

Nay—but Heaven's voice itself has done so. The trumpet-tongued emissary from the throne of God has proclaimed it. 'I am', He says, 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life'. Here is no patristic utterance, that might be suspected of speculative error,—the words flow from the lips of Him who had come to say what He had seen. Neither was the diction, so striking in this case, the concept of his own mind. His mission was to convey the assurance of life to man, whom death had enthralled, and to whom life was to be vouchsafed as a free gift. 'And I give unto them eternal life', He says, speaking of His sheep, 'and they shall never perish.' That life was undoubtedly His, who is the source of life, and transmission thereof the fulfilment of the errand. But there was a Way to that end. 'I am the Way', He declares. And having thus made manifest both the beginning and the end of what He had come to do, He linked the two together by 'Truth'. 'I am the Truth,' He said, later on giving out that He had come into the world 'to be a witness unto the truth.' And taking up the strain of His utterances, those that proclaimed the message after His departure, spoke about 'truth in the inward parts', 'obedience unto the

TRUTH

truth', 'being established in the truth', 'doing the truth', 'being girt about with truth', 'walking in the truth',—expressions which they had a right to use, seeing that the nature of truth had been revealed to them.

I have satisfied myself that truth is 'Concord with God.' It is by no means found through the acceptance of certain tenets, which man calls points of faith. Profession engenders no truth. It is that concord which manifests itself in submission to the will of the Most High, and obedience to the word that has come from His lips. And so it is the essence of faith, and the substance of man's devotion. To find it, is to secure the life which is in God. To believe it, is to embrace salvation. To obey it, is to redeem one's soul. To live it, is to exemplify one's Maker. It is this truth, this bond of union between God and His creature, that existed from the beginning. The angels practised it, some departing from it on that fateful day which saw the birth of evil. Man too once practised truth, but he abandoned it for a lie.

I understand that everything after God's order is truth, whereas everything outside of that order is falsehood. Hence dutiful behaviour, zealous affection, and all perfection of accomplishment in any sphere of life; every effort at obedience to the moral law under which creation is placed; the exercise of mercy, pity or sympathy; of love, faithfulness or humility, contrition, gentleness or kindly feeling; of friendship, or the self-forgetful practice of talents, gifts or accomplishments for the good of mankind and the honour of God, are deeds of truth. But insolence, negligence, inertia, disobedience, insubordination, rashness, yielding to folly or vanity; the exercise of malevolence or concupiscence; the display of malice or discord or

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

self-exaltation ; any revelation of strife or tyranny ; acts of dissension or disaffection ; war, rebellion, or any breach of the moral law under which creation was placed in the beginning, are deeds of falsehood. Shall we decide aught else? Shall we perjure ourselves because we find that most of our actions are to be found on the *index expurgatorius*? Shall we add to the mountain of our sins, because we see that in our lives that concord is not manifest by which alone truth is characterised; because we detect subterfuge in our every action, branding our best deeds as 'filthy rags'? Shall we hold on to the exuviæ of life which falsehood has spun and spun again about our existence? Shall we make God's word inoperative in our case by reason of damning obstinacy?

I am to a large extent acquainted with the usages of man. My path has brought me face to face with the practices in which he indulges. I have been an eye-witness to most of the effusions of his folly. I have myself swung the thurible in the temples of the gods. And I testify that from one end of the earth to the other these usages of the human race, by which God is dishonoured, are welded together by the sledge hammer of impious love of self into one great universal lie. Still the name of truth is preserved on earth, and its counterfeit administered as a viaticum to those who depart this life.

Not only that—it is handed round as a crux to the living, that they may imprint a traitor's kiss on the effigy, and forget their infamy. To such a state of putrescence has the world come! The name of truth is handled as a household word, and lives on every tongue, and that while those tongues constantly betray its nature, and actions belie its character! Can mankind sink any deeper?

TRUTH

I have bemoaned my lot and that of my brother, viewing him, as he me, amid the shadows of death. I have repeated to myself the inspired promises, yet their meaning faded before the influence of existing contradictions. And many and many a year have I spent in sadness because of the appalling uncertainty about the revelation of truth. Yet when my spirit was sinking under the weight, such an effulgence from Heaven was revealed to me, that my eyes could scarce endure its glory. It seemed as if the portals of the celestial city had been thrown open to my vision. And in that flood of light, as I beheld, was shown the original manuscript of God's law, preserved in the holy place of the temple above. The sight stirred within me a deep feeling of adoration. And with it there came stealing over me the conviction that mankind's departure from that law was its departure from truth. I looked about in the earth and studied man in the light of that eternal law. Some held it to have been abrogated, others had mutilated it, there were none that stood by it. The course of the ages had made its practice inconvenient. Even the wording had been altered by the forwardness of some, suiting it to the times.

It was then that I understood. Man has departed from the original arrangement. He has—oh, why use adverbs to intensify his folly?—chosen his own path, formulated his own rule, established his own government. And with these things the pall of death has settled on his fair abode!

I saw that Jesus Christ had come to live the law, nor had He quitted this world until He had fulfilled its every jot and tittle. And when He departed, He said, 'As I, so you.'

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

But man had not heeded His voice. And now, after nineteen centuries of knowledge and light, an open door, and an unbarred road, man stands farther from the truth than ever. He has discarded the provisions that were made for his redemption through obedience, and his situation is deplorable in the extreme.

I understood that a return to the principles revealed in Jehovah's law, not as interpreted by councils, colleges and synods, but as expounded by the spirit of God which leadeth into all truth, was the only hope of man at this late day. And I tried it, and found it to be even so. The conviction carried with it the injunction to bid farewell to the institutions of man, the counterfeits of God's appointments, and the great abomination of earth. My soul became satisfied that it is in this way that the Most High desires the true heart to abide the disclosures of the future. That future, which has in it the consummation of all designs, God's included, must necessarily carry in its train a test of moral fortitude. This is inevitable. When heaven and earth shall be shaken, character, as developed in man, must of necessity be tried. It is in the nature of hardships to test—then should not the final experience of life, the death throes of time with the birth pangs of eternity combined, be one of crucial investigation?

I found no other security against that day than a return to the principles of truth, contained in the ever-abiding precepts of the law. These represent the character of God. The Eternal One entrusted man from the beginning with a copy of His essence, and repeated the same in audible voice from Horeb's fire-encircled summit. They enjoin a review of man's history from its earliest beginning; an elucidation to one's own satisfaction of the reasons why at this time

TRUTH

that history is so different from what it was intended to be. They claim the necessity of a study of man's interference with God's appointments, throwing up in bold relief the progress of idolatry in a thousand forms. They force to an abandonment of the institutions of man, which are a falsehood, and by which every one who embraces them becomes a liar; and a return to the way of Truth, which stands out in its original simplicity, and present undesirableness.

But neither for myself nor for my brother did I see another chance. The fiat has gone forth, 'Be ye separate.' The followers of the Nazarene are called upon to assert their liberty. They are no longer to be the slaves of fashion, custom, agreement, or stipulation, other than enjoined by the law of their God. The narrow confines of churches cannot hold them, the limitations of creeds no longer bind them. Garments girt, and staff in hand, they take their departure from the circles where once unconsciously they worshipped idols. Man points the finger at them—yet to his own damnation.

It has to be! There is no escape from it! The cup of Gethsemane has to be drained. God's character is to be manifested in the earth, to the intent that all may be warned, and some rescued. The banner of truth must be reared on high, that ancient banner which for centuries has been dragged through mire and dust—gently, unostentatiously, by humble pilgrims who are scoffed at and denounced—before doom finally settles, and mankind, dumbfounded, shall behold the monstrosity of its departure from the truth.

CHARACTER

THE term 'character' is a wide one, and its exact meaning is scarcely defined. The word is taken to represent the sum total of a man's idiosyncrasies, which interpretation renders the number of varieties of character infinite. As a man is born, so is his character, it is said. If, however, those inherited peculiarities rank as character, these are not the subject of our study. What we understand as a man's character, is not his geniality or misanthropy, lightheartedness or melancholia, not the optimism of some or the pessimism of others, but man's insignia of royalty, those attributes that tend to form him after the Divine similitude. For on the point of character, so understood, man touches his Maker. God has a character, a character laid open and expressed, a character revealed and defined, some times called His Name, at others His Law. I used to reflect on this fact, and found that in the contemplation of the intimate relation established between God and man on this score, account had to be taken of the laws of refraction. God, dwelling in a rarer medium than man, is in man's eye diminished, I reasoned, by the converging rays of light, that reveal Him to the beholder; whereas on the other hand, the rays that from above penetrate the denser atmosphere where man breathes, tend to show up his attributes in coarser outline than they deserve.

I was grieved over this matter, until I understood the incarnation of God in the man Jesus Christ. That

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

astounding phenomenon, which man and angel have ever wonderingly studied, had the removal of this anomaly for its main object. In the person of Immanuel, God and man met. Each beheld the other in his true light. Whether Christ be on earth humbly walking in the path of the lowly, or whether He be in Heaven, sharing the bliss of the Divine presence, His substance is the same: God and man are for ever in Him combined. When here He walked in human form, it was to convey to man a correct interpretation of God: when now He pleads before the throne in the same form, it is for no other purpose than to acquaint high Heaven with man's true nature.

These matters, I find, have much—have everything—to do with character. Man in his misery, scarcely able to keep his eyes open for the weight of the poison-laden atmosphere around him, has come to the strangest conclusions. He sees one elated, and another dejected, one straightforward and another dishonest, one attractive and another repulsive, one of clean and another of vile habits, yet in his infatuation he murmurs to himself that all these are each in his own way striving to win the crown of life—and he turns away from his fellow, wondering whose 'character' will speed him on fastest to Heaven.

I have marvelled at man's stupefaction! What does he mean by 'Heaven'? What idea does he form of that place? What attractions does he find there? What prompts him to say he is going there? Does he make it God's dwelling place? Is there anything to warrant the supposition that God and he will dwell together, except his own fever-heated imagination? Is there any understanding between him and the Most High about the everlasting future?

CHARACTER

Must I assume that man is actually so dull as ever to suppose that after a life absorbed in the affairs of this world, eating, and drinking, and sleeping, and busying himself with his tools or his books, and all the while being what his moods happen to make him, a creature of animal propensities, whose right it seems to bellow, kick, butt, or caress at will, he will take his place at God's right hand and adorn the celestial palace through all eternity? I ask, who puts such notions into man's mind? Is it the latent reminiscences of Paradise that are still lingering there? Or is it the pratings of theology which never saved one human soul from perdition, nor ever will? Or, is it perchance a perpetuation of that spirit of rebellion that has rankled in the human breast ever since Satan promulgated his lie, 'Thou shalt not die!' For 'not to die' means 'to live'. Prolongation of existence suggests a locality. And if a locality be essential, why not then that wondrous country, that dream-land, of which everybody has so much to say, and the name of which is more familiar in speech and song than that of any on earth. Yes, why not?

So, I understand, man, generation after generation, deludes himself. What he is, is small matter. Some one has assured him of a place in Heaven, and that has put him at ease. Yes, some have talked of church membership, and some spoken of monetary contributions; some of voluntary privations, and some of the performance of uncongenial duties.

But no one spoke of character, as the only key that would unlock the celestial gate. No, no one, for that would have destroyed the huge fabric of man's vanity, which he calls his church. It would have given the lie to all the prevailing pretensions of organisation,

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

including popes, prelates, bishops, and priests. It would have made the Word, as revealed, the only instructor in the way of righteousness, and spiritual-minded fishermen the only shepherds of God's flock.

Still, despite what has not been said, likeness to God is after all the only plea for admission to Heaven, and likeness to God is the re-assumption by man of his insignia of royalty, which constitutes his formation of character by strenuous effort and assiduous application to a life-long task.

For, I ask, what otherwise makes man different from the animal, his fellow creature, and in many cases his devoted friend, if it be not that, while he relegates his dumb companion to the dust without a thought, he arrogates to himself life everlasting? Is not the animal his equal in the way it acquits itself of its duty? Does it not follow the object of its life with dogged perseverance, and show exemplary tenacity in its effort to fulfil its mission? And does it not spend itself willingly in being useful? Does not Nature herself exhibit all those traits, which man assumes, and on which he founds a claim to immortality? Why then, is the war horse mortal, than which a nobler and more devoted creature God's hand never fashioned? Or, is fallen man of a higher order than the beast, and if so, where does his superiority lie?

I am forced to confess that I cannot account for man's claim,—unless he has the inward conviction that he is on the road to likeness to God; that, in other words, he is working out a similitude to the Divine character, with fear and trembling. All my thinking has reverted to this one point. I have roamed over the sea of life, and been a witness not only to my own experiences, but to those of many who have sailed the main with me. And with all my might have I studied the subject of man's

CHARACTER

claim to immortality, finding 'character' the only thing worth considering.

So then, with me 'likeness to God' forms both the immortal crown of eternity, with which the overcomer shall be presented, and the filigree his own hands are destined to weave while life on earth is prolonged.

Here lies the understanding about immortality into which God enters with man. It is a mutual agreement. There is a desiring and a giving, a craving and a satisfying, a calling and an answering. There is a yielding and a receiving, a yearning and an embracing, a sighing and an accepting. There is an effort and a recompense, a hope and a realisation, an endeavour and a reward. But there is nothing arbitrary, nothing of a one-sided nature.

Is not this logic? Does it not appeal to man's judgment? Would he wish it different? Alas, he could never have it different? He could never bear Heaven without the wedding garment. Its reality would consume him quicker than hell fire. Who could endure righteousness without initiation? who the company of God, without preliminary communion? who judgment, without a knowledge of righteousness?

There is such a thing as lack of character. Man has sought out many inventions, yet among the vast number of mortals few are to be found who make a study of God with a view to obtaining likeness to Him. This likeness must be worked out by hourly practice, neglect of which, rather than depravity, marks absence of character.

How these considerations change the aspect of life! Man has come down to the very verge of the eternal world, and does not know where he stands. He is still heaping up folly as a bulwark for his own safety. His

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

corrupt reason, to which nevertheless he trusts, carries him ever deeper into misery. His wretchedness is intense, yet he seems not to heed it. With forward step he advances into the unknown. Positive recklessness seems to have maddened him. Desirous of some hold, he has grasped the web of his own vanity to stay him, and the more it gives the further he ventures.

Talk of likeness to God in the present condition of the world! Why, talk of human aggrandizement! Use smooth words, that do not offend! Extol the wonderful manifestation of man's inventive genius; flatter him into even greater expansion of his brain; soothe him with a song of emulation; ascribe to him the glory for which he is thirsting; approve his efforts to preserve good tone and fair dealing; and, at his departure, place an epitaph over him, assigning him to the land of God's rest!

'Vanity of vanities', says the Preacher. And so let all say who have breath. Yea, and let them turn from the perfidious teachings of man, and return to reason, and to God!

The earth is filled with men devoid of character. Not those they are who by acts of barbarism betray their lack of opportunities for development; but those who have from their birth enjoyed the light 'that lighteth every man that cometh into the world', and who have learned to feed on lies, forming the foundation of a system of laws and requirements prevalent among well-bred, educated folk, who are following predecessors resting under sculptured tombs, to that place of safety where the indelible writing on the slabs announces these to have gone. Still, with all this self-created security, and the assurance of bishop and priest into the bargain, these departed ones, like the present living, never

CHARACTER

fulfilled the one condition wherewith God meets all: 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father, which is in Heaven, is perfect.'

I feel safe in saying that likeness to God is aimed at less now than ever. It is undoubtedly less understood, and its need less acknowledged. Neither can any one attain to it, who perseveres in his attachment to a man-made system of devotion. God's revelation to man is an individual work. He acknowledges no go-betweens in His dealings with souls. Character can never be formed, or built up, or developed, or strengthened by copying man. Neither can any man's vicarious office in this respect ever avail another. The working out of one's character depends on one's own intelligent devotion to his Maker, which once established, that Maker Himself sees to all the rest. Man can warn and instruct, point out and admonish, but never presume to form or mould. It is the honest soul, who submits to God, spurred on by his own misery, that will be placed in the right way without the intermediary service of man.

These considerations are fraught with gravity, seeing they tend to preach a gospel different from that accepted as orthodox. But then, how little investigation is required to convince that the 'orthodox' gospel has departed from the lucid diction of the eternal Word! Man, therefore, is being deluded, deluded too in the name of the Christian religion. And on this account he ought to be warned. He, who loves man in a manner never yet fathomed, desires His child to return to Him, that he may be taught of God, and no longer of man. Human institutions, which have usurped the place God claims as His own in His dealings with man, have failed in their professed objects. Hence, a return is advocated to the original order,

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

when the Eternal One communed directly with His child on earth. The 'old path' of working out one's own salvation is being recommended. The true meaning of 'character' as containing the promise of life, is once again revealed. 'To the law and the testimony', saith Jehovah. That which 'converts the soul', that which is clean, pure, holy, abiding for ever, is proclaimed anew from the walls of Zion. The individual soul effort, resulting from obedience and submission, is revived. Characters are being formed, unseen by the public gaze, works of the Creator's own design, that will stand the scrutinising test of the great day to come. The hand is put to the plough, and the arduous task is progressing. And blessed are they that heed the voice of the universal proclamation, testifying against the teachings of men which have replaced sound doctrine.

Would that it lay in my power to sound a warning note on the subject of this chapter, that should rouse a few! Mankind's dangers are thickening like thunder-clouds; their numbers are frightful and appalling. While the nations are wasting their days in following after the vain designs of novelty-seeking human genius, the giant, Time, is taking longer and ever longer strides to get to the end of his race. And what avails it to deny the fact? What consolation is there in trying to think it is not so, or believing some fool who says it could not be? Let us allow God to speak! And his voice warns us that we should strenuously desire to attain to completion of character, that we may make our peace with Him, ere the storm burst!

FRIENDSHIP

My mind has dwelt on the general welfare of the rising generation. I have seen that to them the problem of life is made to appear indeterminate, as every one of their elders brings his own solution to bear upon it. Some go even farther, and maintain that their private interpretation is the right one, and should be accepted as guiding. This is alarmingly confusing, and the main cause of the different unwise attitudes the young assume with regard to life, when they enter upon it consciously and as responsible individuals.

Surely there is but one correct view of life, only one avenue that leads to the goal. There can be but one way of getting at a satisfactory understanding of its problems. For there is but one source of life, which is God. And, that understood, the nature of it is found to be one, its aim one; nor can the agenda regulating its transactions be reasonably expected to be very different for one from what it is for another.

Considering the life of man, it has occurred to me that with existing ideas of it, those of friendship are intertwined. It seems absurd to separate the two notions. No life ever originated in solitude—was not its inception due to the momentary confluence of a dual fount of existence, stirred by the sympathetic movement of two souls? Even that life, for which he whom we rashly and harshly call villain is responsible, springs from the same source, though unconfessed.

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

Life, as an idea, embraces that of plurality, reaching out its tendrils towards kindred emotions, by which it is glorified and strengthened. We see this and thankfully acknowledge it, counting on friendship and sympathy for the sustenance of life with every right and reason.

Now, this being so, wrong notions of life affect those of friendship, as likewise does misapprehension of the nature of friendship include confusion of ideas concerning life; with this difference always, that the results of friendship misunderstood are more palpable to superficial observation, and more patent to the casual beholder, seeing they present two visible sides to a neighbour's curious gaze. And as of friendship it is mostly the unhappy side that comes to view, the fact of its ultimate connection with life is not generally acknowledged.

Man's sense of asceticism formed no part of his primeval nature. In that, if in nothing else, lies the proof of his unnaturalness. Originally his was a warm, sympathising heart, reaching out to creation in every shape and form, making confidants of the frolicsome beasts of the field, of the chirping birds of the bush, of the smiling flowers by the wayside, enticing the very zephyrs to a reciprocity of feeling, as they sighed by his bower, his altar, his cultivated acre. Life's architecture presented niches, arches, grooves, and furrowed scrolls; nor could their structure be rendered symmetrical save by the subtlest links to other lives, kindred feelings, sympathetic agencies.

Alas for the murderous tendency man's cruelty has developed, by which contortions have taken place, leaving life's trunk bare of its branches, and inducing man to exist for self, wholly sometimes, principally always. It has led to the diminution of his soul. The foul

FRIENDSHIP

winds of sin have occasioned a shrinkage of his being, of which the withdrawal of his solicitude for his fellow man is the most lamentable feature. The cold blast of discouragement that opened his eyes to the realities of his terrestrial existence, has shrivelled up his substance, and made him small who was intended to have the breadth of mind of the Omniscient. Oh, the sad thought!

And with this friendship has suffered, nay, it has lost its character!

The unregeneracy of the heart banishes those feelings that would lead to sympathy!

I have heard the world talk of friendship, and the praise accorded its supposed virtues, until the monotonous reiteration of the topic has made me loathe it.

No, that man is no friend, and has no friend, who moves within the narrow bounds of his own being, whose feelings are confined to the needs of his own existence. And does not the abundance of such cases render friendship scarce?

Friendship, as now understood, is but one of the many soporifics which make life a dream. Now life was not meant to be a dream. God designed no intellectual or moral sleep, nor an occasional moral or intellectual awakening—but a calm, conscious, self-possessed, unceasing vigil kept by the fires of whole-souled devotion to life's duties. These duties were to form the guiding hand to man. No extraneous influences were to sway his existence and take him off his equilibrium, now here, now there. Following the divinely-appointed path, he was to learn the science of life from life itself, while one of his most potent stays was to be his neighbour's congruent fellow-feeling.

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

It is not too much to say that for the sake of gain or convenience man is taught and has learned to burn incense on his neighbour's altar, and that such an act is called 'friendship'. Nor is it going too far to assert, that one for selfish purposes flatters the other, and that such two are called 'friends'. Our 'friends' receive us into the world, and express satisfaction at our arrival; our 'friends' gather round us on the occasion of our marriage, and by their presence assist us in the first steps on an untried path; our 'friends' solemnly follow our hearse to the grave, looking concerned for the nonce about our untimely departure,—and with all this, between us and these many 'friends', never one trace of unity of feeling existed. There was no strengthening element at any time in their attachment. While they were nothing to us, we were as little to them. So men constantly deceive one another while pursuing the beaten track, lest they should be unlike their fellows, and be branded as singular.

My earliest recollections of friendship have always been most helpful. I was but an urchin when I became attached to a boy slightly older than myself, but in about the same stage of development. We went to the same school, and were in the same class. Our lessons we prepared together. Both being studious, one acted as coach to the other. We walked together, flew kites, played at marbles, went skating together, spent our winter evenings in each other's company, manufactured bird-cages, in which we traded, and divided the profits between us for pocket money. In a word, we lived together. Our two lives were joined into one, jumbled together, mixed, and divided again over the two personalities. Each shared in the other's development, in the other's pleasures and griefs. Our minds received the same mould, gradually we adopted the same ways of thinking.

FRIENDSHIP

By and by we had to part. Circumstances demanded it. We wept at the leave-taking, boyish tears in which there was a good deal of meaning, and felt lonely, both of us, for a time, as a result of the separation. We wrote to each other two or three times—and then, intuitively realising that our lives had taken different turns and we could no longer be of benefit to each other, the demonstrative part of our friendship ceased.

After thirty years, though I have not heard from my friend again, the fourth day of August never comes round but I think of him and wish him well, that being Jack's birthday.

This is my ideal of friendship. To meet a man, to help him where you can, to withdraw when you can no longer be of use to him, this is to be that man's 'friend'. The realisation of this is usually strong in the child in his nonage, but disappears with every other healthy understanding of the conditions of life, when man takes his place in the ranks of his contemporaries. Then his 'friends' become the people for whom he cares nothing, feels nothing, hopes nothing, but with whom he happens to be thrown together in the pursuit of a kindred calling, the very fact of which engenders competition and feeling of strife, inimical to mutual assistance.

True friendship is limited by opportunities for service. When they cease, it retires. It does not assert itself in vain. It is not a knotted tie that binds certain individuals to certain others—it is rather a keeping and elevating power which emanates from a soul that has learned to sacrifice self, affecting all that come within the range of its blissful influence. It is mimicked by the at-homes, garden parties, drawing-room gatherings and such like of society, the object of which is ostensibly to create centres of influence

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

by which many shall profit. Yet is their source not that pure element which assists because it is irresistibly compelled, and helps because it cannot refrain.

I have heard it alleged that 'the friendship of the world is enmity against God', and a most serious allegation it is too. It lays bare the character of what passes under the name of 'friendship'. That counterfeit of friendship is an element of destruction rather than of salvation, its influence detracting instead of strengthening. And this is that misapprehension which forms part of the mistaken ideas of life.

With some a notion has matured that their souls lend themselves to the development of friendship with a chosen few, while mankind as a whole leaves them indifferent. These form the pusillanimous crowd that lies as a dead weight on the world's heart. It virtually oppresses the breathing of mankind. These friends of a few, foes of the many, are deluded even to the verge of insanity. They have arbitrarily chosen the one or two channels through which life shall flow to them, and shut their beings against the thousand avenues along which God visits man. The result is unhappiness venting itself in foolish pride and icy moroseness, casting a gloom over their surroundings. These are a curse to themselves. Never having had a fair understanding of life, idly copying worthless examples of former days, making existence inexplicable misery to themselves, a torture to others, these unfortunates, while searing their own hearts against the redeeming influences of life, are responsible for rendering callous the few whose lot it is to keep them company by the way.

I would have man understand the responsibilities attaching to friendship. That of children is pure because spontaneous and natural; that of riper age can

FRIENDSHIP

only tend to good, when as natural and spontaneous. And I would add one other limitation :—when it ceases with the cause for service. For friendship prolonged beyond the term of such significance, fills the earth with diseased elements, in consequence of the presence whereof we all suffer. Not that the feeling should die, do I maintain, which never can and never should perish, but burns on in the true heart like a living fire ;—but this do I claim, that the outward manifestation should not overstep the bounds of its requisition.

The responsibilities of true friendship are many and onerous. Friendship moulds. And I would have it realised, that in its moulding efficacy it outstrips that which among mortals is now called 'love'. Friendship indeed forms one of the constituent parts of 'love', being that part to which the elevating power is due that is manifested by pure love. In as far as 'love' tends to raise by timely succour, its true name is 'friendship'. What 'friendship' lacks is the abiding element of 'love', not being intended for perpetuation beyond the occasions which call for its rescuing effort. Yet just on account of its spontaneous and ever-surprising efficacy, how it moulds! It does not link life to life, but acts like a buttress to a tottering wall, holding on to an imperilled life with self-forgetful tenacity, until the contemplated rescue is effected.

Let no one, therefore, in a moment of indifference, consent to become another's friend. Such a beginning would augur failure, and failure of friendship, properly so-called, brings irreparable hurt to the characters of two individuals, inflicting wounds that will fester till life's end.

I have reflected on the possibility of true friendship being banished from the economy of earth, the trend of things being in that direction. But my eye, when

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

I tried to draw the picture, was met by the frosty bleakness of a landscape to which the season of frondescence has come, and an untimely blast has nipped every budding leaf. The event would undermine the great edifice of social life; yet who, as things stand now, is not looking forward to that very thing? Can friendship abide beneath the fabric of falsehood that man has spread over him like a tent? Can she endure the blasphemous misrepresentation of her character, of which all society is guilty? Will she not ere long gather up her garments, and take flight to purer regions beyond those of earth?

Thank God! that point has not been reached yet. There are still hearts, true to their Maker, to their calling, to their surroundings. The original, innate feeling of benign sympathy is not wholly extinct. The term 'friend' is not everywhere abused. Still hand clasps hand for mutual salvation. Still the elevating, sustaining influence is extant, by which man is raised and God glorified. And though such cases have become most rare, thank God, some there are still!

It is to them that I turned my eye when I tried to frame for my own use a definition of friendship. I found an absence of selfishness there—in fact, the element of sacrifice largely predominating. I have seen man tender his fellow assistance, and after an intermission of twenty years renew the deed of generous kindness in the selfsame spirit of loyal devotion. Yea, I have seen portrayed in living figures the truth of the saying of old, that 'there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.'

And as long as that spectacle retains its place among the scenes of earth, God's image will be revealed in man. Amid increasing falseness friendship will continue to rear the standard of Heaven's righteousness,

FRIENDSHIP

and those who are seeking for the way, will find a hand to lead them to the goal of life. Friendship, to the end of time, will stand as the guiding lamp that, above the mists of the storm, her feet planted far beneath on the motionless rock, warns the forlorn mariner of the dangers that surround him, and kindly lures his barque to the haven of rest.

SOCIETY

WHAT we understand by Society, in expressions such as 'to go into Society', 'to move in Society', and so forth, is but the natural result of the multiplication of man in the earth, and as this multiplying process was from the beginning after God's order, Society may be taken to be a Divine institution.

At the same time, it has now become the bugbear of human life. This statement may be questioned by those who 'move in society', some of whom have been fascinated by its tinsel to such an extent, that for nothing on earth would they be without it. They cannot conceive of a life without the charms of society, seeing they have never understood what life is.

So much, however, is true, that since after the original order society is an indispensable factor of human existence, the elimination of that factor causes the excision of a necessary element from every dispensation. If, therefore, the necessity has arisen to any to forcibly eliminate that factor from their lives, there must be potent reasons for their so doing.

Let us thoughtfully examine the situation. There is for all an early life, which is accepted as being spent outside of Society: another life of responsible maturity, which is expected to be spent in Society. This is *a priori* a false condition of things, damning the arrangement which has called it into existence. If a community were ordained of which social life would be the natural result, then the term Society would include the life and life-interests of all, young and old,

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

rich and poor. 'Society' would only be synonymous with 'public'. This application of the term, however, though it may once have applied, now gives an erroneous impression, as Society has come strictly to mean a number of persons in a community who habitually associate together. This is an awkward and unsatisfactory definition, which we would fain supersede by a better one, if we only knew how. A study of the subject, however, always reveals the undefinableness of the term.

We are left to gather an understanding by circumspect approach from different sides. Society, we find, excludes children. There are certain terms of admission to it. These are not to be found in mental development, which comes earlier to one than to another, and fits the precocious youth for the company of his elders a decade before the dunce, but in physical maturity, in short, in puberty and the marriageable age.

In the usual order of things young people are specially prepared for their *début*, according to the specific rules of the community in which they were born. They are to a certain extent initiated into the art of independence, both in thinking and acting. Practically, they are led to feel the beginning of responsibility for themselves. They must understand that whereas thus far they have not been counted, henceforth they will be. What of cramming there is to be done on school benches, is expected to be finished before they 'come out', yet this is not considered an absolute necessity, since the distinction between fool and wise falls without the category of requirements for the ballroom and the concert hall. Special regard, however, is had to the orthodox religious training being finished before the freedom of youth is abandoned. They are, besides,

SOCIETY

taught the art of conversing, or rather of taking part in conversation on the burning questions or topics of the day, not by being given an understanding of things, which must depend on individual ability to grasp them, but by the adoption of a certain phraseology and vocabulary, which are cunningly adapted to every subject, and by which society people are more easily distinguishable than by any other feature. Lastly, the novices are given an idea of the amusements with which their to-be-equals while away the time in each other's company. The girls must learn to strum certain pieces on the pianoforte, or preferably to perform on some less common musical instrument. The boys who need not know this, though in their case it is esteemed a special accomplishment, must in so far partake of the girls' instruction, that they accurately learn to appreciate certain music, and to reject other. In this they are expected never to fail, and by keeping up the perusal of a review they will be guaranteed always to display admirable taste, seeing that those who judge of such taste themselves go by the information gleaned from the same source. The boys must, further, have an initial understanding of handling the billiard cue, and both sexes are above all things expected to acquit themselves properly of any part they take in a dance.

This *début* is to millions the beginning of life, and the prosecution of the habits and tastes to which it introduces them, life itself. In the early stages of this new phase of their existence, fathers are expected to watch their sons, as mothers their daughters, the latter coming in for a far greater amount of attention than the sons. For as to a boy's career, it is understood that *de gestibus non disputandum est*; a girl, if she is to be successful, is expected to strictly obey certain society rules,

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

which have ever remained unwritten, but are none the less rigorous, or less thoroughly understood by any female guardian, who herself 'moves' in Society, and whose praiseworthy efforts, during the whole period of initiation, on which the girl's all is supposed to depend, aim at killing in her ward all that is natural, or savours of freedom.

Our hair stands on end at the mere description of what 'coming out', which is a universal performance on earth, means to the youth in savage communities. We hear certain things of what it costs a Chinese female to be ranked as a proper representative of her race; stories have reached us of the curious habits, tending to the same object, among Turks and Indians; those prevailing among barbarians, we claim, shall never soil paper, though it were far better if we knew, for the sake of fruitful comparison;—but will the purport of that event in the life of our children, civilised youth in enlightened communities, bear scrutiny?

You, veteran society woman, you who have moved for many years in the lustre of the golden candlesticks of Mammon's temple, have you never rued the day when its doors turned on their hinges to admit you? Was it not a day on which scales fell from your eyes? When you were introduced to strange emotions that robbed you of your girlish peace; a day of initiation into an existence of artificiality which took you captive, and has ever since kept you in chains; a day when the whirl of adulation was disclosed to you, from which at first you shrank; when that realistic side of life was shown you, for which in your dreams you had vowed you would never live; when some arm was linked in yours to take you where you could have a peep into the chamber of secrets of which you would rather never have known anything?

SOCIETY

I am not a woman. I am a man corrupt like my neighbour, whose eyes have seen the sadness of society life. Yet I know of the aberration of the day of your *début*, and of many a day after. I know that your so-called graces, which 'high life' assisted in developing, secured you the place you occupy on earth. And I pity you for having obtained it, knowing what you have had to give in exchange for your prize. I have seen you bring your sacrifices, and my heart has cried out to God on your account !

And now, I know, you try to be good. At your time of life, adorned with the silvery crown which is an honour 'if found in the way of righteousness', but which is secured not only there, you are successfully hiding the hollowness of your existence by spending your days in useful occupation as committee lady for benevolent purposes. Yet you remain responsible for the waste of your days. Responsible you are for the failures which have marked your existence, doubly responsible for introducing numbers of your betters to the unpardonable levity to which you yourself have been a life-long slave. Shall their existence be rendered void like yours ? Have you resolved that it shall be so ?

I find that the worm destined to spoil the fruit, is introduced into the bud long before the fruit sets. Similar is the process of 'coming out' to a young man or maiden into the passion-heated atmosphere of society life.

For, does anything but passion reign there ? Are not the debasing elements of our nature, those that are meant to be fought, crucified, and overcome, microscopically investigated there ? Is not everything connected with that evening life, when the sun has hidden his head lest he should see, sensual, and in its inception degrading ? Is there one elevating element

IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

in society life as it now exists? Is there any link between it and the impassionate existence of the life beyond? Say, whosoever may care to speak, is there any meaning in it but supposed carnal recreation after a time of undue nervous tension? Has any one ever been lifted up to see the grandeur of man's calling by introduction to the routine performed in evening dress? Does not rather that routine ever fan the fire of passion in breasts that were meant to heave and fall with noble aspirations? Does it not feed the fever of pride and self-exaltation, and sustain perverse notions of the capabilities of him, who through folly is 'a worm and no man'? Has the abyss of idolatry been fathomed, into which society life and society views have hurled man, and from which to escape takes some of us a lifetime, while many perish there? Is it understood that 'Society' has led most of us to dethrone God in the heart, and allow man to usurp his place?

These things are naked truth. Instead of living together, guilelessly, honestly, with our children, all striving together for the goal of life, which is forsooth hard enough to gain under any circumstances, we have raised walls of separation between our families and ourselves, within which an arena has been laid out for the prosecution of vanity to which those that are born of us, and are soon to replace us, shall not be introduced until their alienation from true notions of life is sufficiently advanced to bear the sight of our society feats, and listen to the licentious tittle-tattle by which we revive our spirits for the activity of the next day.

There is one aspect of society life which is above all deeply deplorable. At the devil's court depravity is no disqualification. There is a lustre there overspreading the entire community, the substance of which is almost

SOCIETY

film-like. None can see through it. What is beneath, is private, the outside glistening and attractive.

The dissimulation and false pretence resulting from this in Society are appalling. A man fits in so long as he can hide himself. This is to such a degree apparent, that the only qualification for admission to Society would seem to be a knowledge of the art of dissembling. Hence one member never converses with his neighbour: it is the effigy of one that meets the other's reflex. It is this woeful fact that renders 'society tone' equivalent to falsehood, since it makes society people individuals on whom to rely is foolishness: the sad fact which to-day induces a man of principle to withdraw from the circle where he would fain mix with his neighbours for the sake of mutual enlightenment and mental benefit.

To some the wearing of a 'straight jacket'—one of the essential conditions of society life,—is so repugnant as to be impossible. They have tried it as David tried Saul's armour when he went to slay Goliath, and like him have laid it aside. It would kill them to lead the required chameleon existence. They refuse to be at any time other than responsible for their behaviour, and hence that behaviour must bear a uniform stamp. Their honesty brooks no distortions. To God and man they show themselves as they are, for better or for worse. They care not to present their fellow man with a disquisition on what they regard to be his error, but they protest against the artificiality of his life by preferring seclusion to company. While loyal to mankind to a degree that allows of their being compared to the intervertebral substance in the spinal column of the race, they agree to stand back where Society asserts itself. These are misunderstood, but gladly bear the opprobrium. They forego golden