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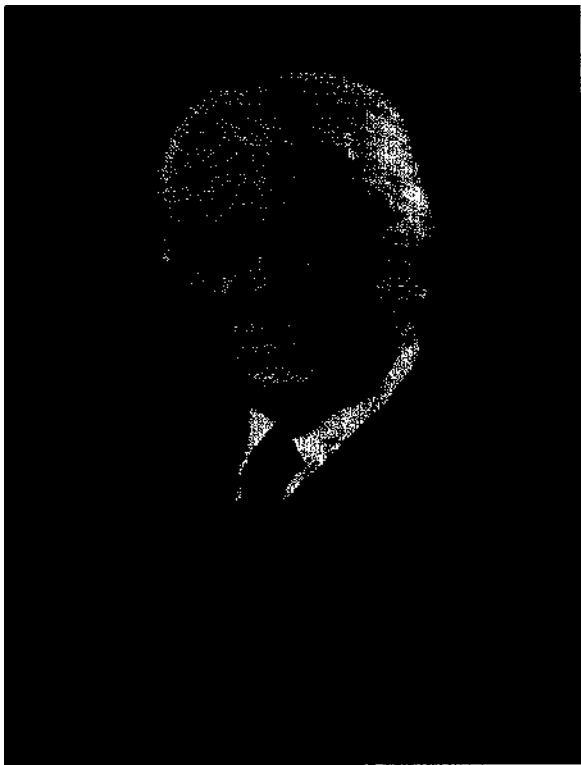
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The Confession of
an Octogenarian



THE AUTHOR IN 1940

The Confession of an Octogenarian

by

L. P. JACKS

" By my God have I leaped over a wall"

PSALM xviii, 29

L O N D O N

George Allen & Unwin Ltd

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To the Memory of my Mother

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I

GENERAL CONFESSION

"The best part of life is that of which we can give no account"

I HIS BOOK is written about a mysterious being who, throughout, will appear as "I." The reader will find that shortest of words and profoundest of mysteries scattered over most of the pages.

Who or what is "I"? The mystics seem to know but they cannot tell. Descartes said "I think, therefore I am, ' believing he had laid down a clear proposition: but he left " I " unexplained. A wit, who must have been a mystic also—the two are sometimes combined—finding in one of his books the saying of Goethe "the Highest cannot be spoken" added this gloss on the margin: "neither can the I-est." Perhaps the Highest and the I-est are one and the same. Indian philosophy seems to think so.

Whoever can explain " I " will have solved the riddle of the universe. He will certainly not solve it so long as he leaves "I" unexplained, be he philosopher, mathematician or physicist. The last enemy of the philosopher is himself. When he has explained everything else let him explain himself—if he can. "Behold I show you a mystery" he might say. Quite so, *but who is the showmati?* Had Descartes said "It thinks therefore It is" would his clear proposition have been less clear? If " I " were deleted from every sentence of this book where the word occurs—there are thousands of them—and "It" substituted, would the story be less truly told? Is not the " I " who writes this book an "It" to every person who reads it, and every reader an "It" to the writer? Why, then, not make the sub-

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stitution? The answer is that we are all creatures of habit. And who or what are "we?" Answer, ye wise!

This Confession, then, is a deliberate exercise in egoism, written throughout under the feeling that the "ego" appearing in thousands of its statements is an unfathomable mystery. Every reader is a living embodiment of that mystery, with the difference that he reads what is written instead of creating it. Thus the reader is as pure an egoist as the writer. Why then should the writer apologize for his egoism? His reply to the accuser is *tu quoque*. Egoism is the only "wear."

For this reason, a self-confession, if truly written, would be a chapter in the history of Everyman and a sentence, or perhaps only a word, in the history of the universe, which is the Autobiography of God, the Confession of the Ancient of Days. *If truly written*. In no other kind of writing is perfect truthfulness so difficult of attainment as in writing about "I." This is why the book is named a Confession and not an Autobiography. "Confession" indicates the writer's intention not to spare himself in his effort to tell the truth. Truth perfect and complete he does not profess to attain. In the life of Everyman there are certain truths which *cannot* be told and ought not to be told if they could be. By leaving those truths in their hiding place the writer brings his confession a little nearer to the confession that every man would make if he were to tell the truth about himself. Our lives are autobiographies whether we write them or not, those that we write in visible ink being the expurgated editions or bowdlerized versions of what is already written invisibly but indelibly. Countless millions of these autobiographies exist in the unexpurgated form, and there is an element common to all of them. This, if it could be extracted, would furnish a chapter in the Autobiography of the Universe and would contain information not to be found in any History of the World so far written. But it would help to give meaning to what is otherwise a meaningless tale.

With the reader thus made aware that his own egoism is reciprocal to the writer's, and that in reading this book their

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respective egos arc mysteriously interacting, the third person may now be dropped and a start made in the free use of the first.

In the course of this book I shall confess many things without caring very much what people think of them. Twenty years ago I should have been more circumspect and secretive. I should have been less willing than I now am to disclose certain unhappy or even sordid circumstances in which a part of my early life was passed. I should have felt, snobbishly no doubt, that the disclosure might injure me in the eyes of some rather splendid people with whom later events had brought me into contact. But now it doesn't matter. I am too old to be wanted any longer as a week-end guest in the country houses of splendid people. As to the sordid people of my sordid days, they all seem to be dead. As the old man remarked to the Vicar's wife (in *Punchy* I think), "Many people have died of late who didn't use to die when I was younger." I shall soon be one of them myself. To all the condemnation that my confessions, or my manner of making them, may bring upon me, and to the harsh world in general (a distant bomb has just shaken the table on which I write) my answer is "*moriturus te salutat!*"

In me there dwells no knowledge of myself except the knowledge of my ignorance. Notions about myself I may have; but notions are not knowledge. I could not demonstrate the truth of any one of them either to myself or anybody else. In my youth I was much given to the philosophy which teaches that self-realization is the end of life. Well, I have taken pains about an endless number of things but I cannot remember that I ever took pains with the deliberate intention of realizing my self. And now, if anybody were to ask me, in my octogenarian plenitude of years, "How far have you succeeded in realizing that self of yours," my answer would be "God only knows." *In tuas manus, Dotnine, meant animam cotnmisi.* Were I challenged to prove I am not a villain, I could not do it. Nay more: if anybody called me a saint—and to my unspeakable horror,

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somebody once did—I could not prove him wrong, and could only tell him that he was an ass. Why, even as to what I look like in other eyes, I have no exact knowledge, but only the foggiest notions, and can only hope it is not disagreeable. "Judge not that ye be not judged"—especially when tempted to judge yourself. No doubt the psychologists will be down upon me for saying that. Let them be down. Psychology professes a lot of knowledge about a thing called "mind." But about its own mind, the mind that produces the psychology, it seems to know nothing.

Again, were I to be asked "are you, in your old age, a happy man?" the best prompt answer I could give would be to tell the questioner that he had asked a foolish question. To say that I am happy and to say that I am not would be equally untrue or even meaningless. Perfectly happy I certainly am not—who could be in 1941? Who ever was? But then I have no desire to be. Perfect happiness, says Victor Hugo, is a terrible thing. The two words "perfect" and "happiness" run easily off the tongue and make an attractive pair, but they also make nonsense. The soul of man, which in my philosophy includes the body, and is just as visible, thrives best *on* a mixed diet in which pain, and not a mere pinch of it either, is a necessary ingredient. So too is pleasure, but I am inclined to think that the amount of pain which the soul can assimilate with benefit to itself is greater than the amount of pleasure. What proportions of each give the best results nobody has yet determined and, for obvious reasons, nobody ever will. But it seems safe to say that unless a lot of pain goes into the cooking pot of experience what comes out will be indigestible, and quickly poisonous if no pain goes in at all. I have had much pain in my life, and a varied assortment of it, but not enough, I think, to form a perfectly balanced diet and give the best results in vitality and courage; not enough to develop the full flavour of the fine pleasures in the mixture, nor to kill all the poison in the coarse. I perceive also that pain is a thing of endless qualities, each with a different value as an ingredient

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of life, so that a little of one may be more than enough and much of another less than enough.

When somebody asked Bismarck on his eightieth birthday what had been the happiest period of his life he replied "The first eighty years," and then added "I do not remember a single hour of unalloyed happiness in the whole course of my life." The two sayings interpret each other. In both of them I find it easy to concur. I cannot recall a single hour, not even in childhood, when I was entirely free from "anxiety for the morrow," from discomfort, sometimes acute, sometimes faint, but always present, caused by uncertainty about *what would happen next*. This may be a defect of memory on my part: but so it is. I seem never to have been entirely free from *la peur de vie* in one form or another. But, again, who is? Tension is the natural state of man—tension between the past out of which he is for ever coming and the future into which he is for ever going. The other name of this tension is anxiety for the morrow, at its highest in youth, when there is a long morrow to be anxious about, but greatly diminished in old age when the morrow is short. I speak here of the anxiety which centres on oneself, one's own interests, fortunes and happiness. Of this, which was very active in my youth, I have now almost nothing, which is a great relief, due to no virtue in me, but to the obvious fact that the morrow, my morrow, is too short to be worth bothering about. But the tension has not diminished. With the diminution of anxiety about my own morrow, there has come increased anxiety about the morrow of the world. Are not the saints in the same predicament? Would they be saints if they were not? Perhaps the pressure of this greater anxiety has something to do in reducing personal anxiety in them, as in me, to insignificance. Anyhow, the fear that things may go wrong seems to be a condition of their going right.

Among writings on the true nature of happiness, philosophic or other, I have found nothing more illuminating at the essential point than the story called *The Shirt* (*La Chemise*) by Anatole France. A certain king, the story runs, being afflicted

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with a malady that threatened his life, was informed by an eminent scientist that he would be cured immediately by wearing the shirt of a perfectly happy man. Search for such a man was immediately set on foot and orders given to the Treasury to buy his shirt at any price. For a long time the search drew blank, the king meanwhile growing worse and worse. Many candidates, with their shirts ready for sale, came forward, but all their claims to be perfectly happy broke down under cross-examination by the experts appointed for the purpose. The mere fact that they wanted to turn their shirts into money was proof sufficient that their happiness was not yet perfect. At last, when the king was on his death bed, the searchers found an old man, living alone under a roof of boughs in the midst of a forest, whose claim to be perfectly happy the experts could not upset. A delegation from the Treasury was sent in all haste to buy his shirt. "We understand you are perfectly happy" said the delegation; the old man replied that nothing could be truer. "Then permit us to buy your shirt" said the delegation: "name your own price." "Alas, messieurs," replied the perfectly happy man, "*I never had a shirt.*" So the poor man, who seems to have been a kind-hearted old fellow and had been perfectly happy a moment before, became perfectly miserable on realizing that he had no shirt to heal the king's malady.

On the whole I think we should be well advised to get rid of all this botheration about happiness both in our philosophical exercises and in our daily life. Why batter on a door that opens on nothing at all? "Knock and it shall be opened unto you." Doubtless it shall, whether the door you knock at be God's or the devil's. Leave the devil's knockers unexercised, say I. This is one of them. I will not say that happiness is not worth bothering about, but I am convinced that bothering about it does no good. For myself I would flee to the ends of the earth to get out of the way of anybody who set himself to make me happy, knowing well that he could not do it and would only torture me in making the attempt. I have little hope of persuading others to adopt these conclusions. My

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young friends, I know, will have none of them. There was a time when I would have none of them myself.

If my confession has interest for anybody it will be for those who like to hear the testimony of the common man, "the middle of humanity" as Shakespeare calls him, *Vhomtne moyen sensuel* in French. Not that any man is really common, though many are unclean. Look closely into the common man and you will find him as strongly individualized, as truly unique as the members of any other class, the representatives of any other type. But the predicate "common" is negatively useful as indicating that the subject of it is not one of the privileged minority who possess hereditary culture, wealth or standing. My claim to be "self made" is as good as that of most men to whom the term has been applied. But that is not saying very much, since the term, of course, is not strictly true of any of us; were I to claim it for myself I should be guilty of gross ingratitude to my fellow men and deserve to be called an atheist into the bargain. Yes, certainly the latter. For my eighty odd years have left me firmly convinced that a divinity has shaped my ends from the very first, and is shaping them even now as I listen to German bombs exploding in the distance, and see around me the most appalling exhibition of man's inhumanity to man that the heavens have ever looked down on.

I know very well that the Great Soul of the World has other things to look after besides the shaping of my ends. But this only makes me the more grateful that my ends have not been overlooked in the general press of cosmic engagements. In that Presence I dare not call myself self-made, though it might flatter my vanity if other men were to call me so. They would have this amount of truth on their side, that the lessons I have learnt most effectively are lessons which no man taught me, and which I seemed (though only seemed) to be teaching myself. I have often been in flat rebellion against my teachers, especially when I suspected they were trying to do me good, or to make me happy.

I recall one of them who tried to make a better Christian of

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me by persuading me to adopt the rule of non-resistance to evil. I was moved to tell him that if ever he, or anyone, detected me in doing evil, or in being evil (as he easily might), and failed to resist me to the very uttermost of his power, using violence if necessary, then he was no friend of mine but an enemy of God and man whom I would denounce as such on the first opportunity. One of my schoolmasters, when about to administer a caning, would use a similar argument. "Remember," he would say, "that I give you the cane because it is *my duty*"—as unquestionably it was. On one occasion the good man, after doing his painful duty with a thoroughness required by the circumstances, was violently sick in presence of the howling culprit, who was—well, no matter who he was.

The changes in British habit and ethos which have taken place since mid-Victorian times have been analyzed and described by many writers, of whom none has done it as well as E. F. Benson in *As We Were* (1930) and *As We Are* (1932). So well indeed has he done it that there is no need to do it again, and little prospect that it could be done better, to say nothing of the fact that we are now in the midst of changes which may dwarf the significance of those whose record ended in 1932, and have already converted the "as we are" of that date into "as we were" from the present point of view. Born seven years before Mr. Benson I have lived through all the changes he describes and have survived into this period of greater change which he was not permitted to see.

I remember the crinolines and poke bonnets of the early sixties; my mother wore both and looked charming. I have watched a game of cricket played by gentlemen in top-hats: such is the force of early impressions that even now a gentleman without a top-hat seems to me somewhat of a contradiction in terms. In those days I was not a very competent observer of world events, but I remember one that caused a shock in our nursery. I was sitting in a high chair eating my morning porridge under supervision when my father (or was

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it my uncle Ebcnczer?) burst into the nursery with a newspaper in his hand calling out "My God, they've shot the President!" For that, Mr. Benson was born too late. Did he, I wonder, in company with other boys of his age, march about the streets in 1878 singing

"We don't want to fight,
But by Jingo if we do,
We've got the men, we've got the ships,
We'll find the money too?"

No, as the son of an Archbishop, he can hardly have done that, though his age made it possible. Well, I, who am the son of a shopkeeper, did, though I was old enough to know better. I found myself singing it again to the old tunc, but with a rather cracked voice, in the summer of 1939, to be rebuked by my pacifist friends, to whom I could only reply that the doggerel, wretched though it be, is a true expression of the English war-mind, which doesn't want to fight, but by jingo if it docs. . . ! I still bear the jingo impress of '78, and am glad it has not faded out; for only last night I heard from the lips of a Pole the story of what the Nazis have done in Poland and prayed that strength might be given to my country to execute God's errand on the wicked, and that I might live a little longer to see it done.

Have I been a mere spectator of this moving picture, as of a scene that has passed before me? By no means. It has all passed *through* me, as through everyone who has lived as long, leaving its mark upon each of us and contributing much to make us the kind of old men and women we now are. The young people may have changed in this way or in that, for better or worse. Had they changed differently we old people would also be different in like manner: we are what we are, pessimists or optimists, kill-joys or make-joys, largely in consequence of influence exercised upon us by the young. If they dislike us, to some extent they have to thank themselves for the sour looks we give them and, reciprocally, we too may thank ourselves if we find the youngsters too uppish.

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I have no intention of describing these changes either as I have witnessed them in the past or as I feel them going on, more rapidly than ever, around me and within me at the present moment. But having lived through it all, and still surviving, it occurs to me, like other men in the dwindling band of my contemporaries, that I must be a kind of living compendium both of "what we were" and of "what we are." In me, as in my fellow survivors, there still live on the age when Lincoln was shot and crinolines worn, the sixties, seventies, eighties, nineties of the last century, the Edwardian epoch, the Great War, its continuation into the present war and the Polish horrors—all these live on in us and move forward blended together, into a future known to God only. So far as I make my confession truly, as I shall try to do, the changes through which I have lived, and am still living, will tell their own tale. Though the voice be feeble the testimony will be direct.

Were I to attempt an analysis of the motives that have led to the writing and publication of this book it would not be convincing, not even to myself, and would probably be the most untruthful part of my confession. The fact that I am making a confession and making it, not in the secrecy of a cloistered confessional, but in public, proves me an egoist beyond all gainsaying. How could I deny the charge that I am calling attention to myself, asking the reader, as any showman might do, to come and look at *me*—at the price named on the cover of my book? But so, in a manner, does everyone who publishes a book of any kind with his own name as the author on the title page. "Come and hear what I have to say" is the obvious implication. The reading public, though it may grumble at the price demanded for the show and refuse to pay it, dislikes anonymous books and demands to know with whom it is dealing. I remember how restless and suspicious we all were while *Ecce Homo* remained anonymous, what wagging of beards and twisting of moustaches went on (both were worn in those days, mine being a moustache) over the question of its authorship, and how relieved we were on discovering that we were

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not being practised upon by some theological fifth-columnist, who might be either a Unitarian or a Jesuit, but invited by a *bona fide* Professor of History to think his thoughts after him. And what of those authors who would escape the charge of egoism by pretending to be somebody else—Charlotte Bronte to be Currer Bell, Marian Evans to be George Eliot? Is there no egoism in that? I suspect a good deal of it, focussed on the thrilling moment foreseen by the pretender, and certain to come, when the pretence will be unmasked. The psychology of publication is a mingled web, but a thread of egoism can be traced through the whole of it.

With egoism admitted as the dominating motive—for am I not making a confession?—I see another in the tendency of old age to live in the past. This tendency is natural enough when so little of the future remains to bother about. But how could one live in the past unless it were actually here and present to live in? I am prone to think it is. Odd how the past of one's life seems to grow more real, more actual, more present as the time draws near for receiving one's discharge! What drowning men are said to experience in the last moments before death, the resurgence of their total past into a moving picture of inconceivable rapidity, this, in fainter forms and broken sequence, is a familiar experience with old people—at least with one of them. Fragments of the past, and not always the best fragments either, will occasionally start into life, and be lived through again, with oneself as a living actor, so vividly remembered that they are not *remembered* at all, but literally lived over again. These experiences which, possibly, are intimations of immortality, have a strange attraction and they are fostered in writing such a book as this. That, certainly, is *one* of my motives in writing it. I enjoy these resurrections.

But I have not given a full account of my motives. I have only said enough to suggest that a full account cannot be given. Nor need it be.

2

CONCERNING AN OBSCURE FAMILY

"Pour etre heureux vivons caches"

IN MY present family circle there are two beautiful women, now grandmothers, whose features taken one by one have no mutual resemblance. Yet these two women are constantly being mistaken, even by those who know them well, the one for the other; their grandchildren will sometimes address the wrong one as "grannie." The reason is that they carry about with them the same atmosphere, emit an equal radiance and make their presence felt in the same way. They seem also to have come out of the same past, as indeed they have, for they are sisters, and to be moving forward into the same future, as they probably are not. The parts are all different, but the wholes so nearly identical that even I, who have known them for years, must sometimes look twice to make sure which is which.

Another phenomenon of the same order was my father's resemblance to W. E. Gladstone. This too vanished completely on examination point by point, and yet, in the moment before examination began, would often strike the passer-by and cause him to nudge his companion. I think my father was rather proud of this; we, his children, certainly were. It gave us a sense of superiority to other families in the shopkeeper class. There was Uncle John, for instance, an uncle by marriage, who kept a more prosperous shop, a draper's. He lived in showier style, and was known to hint on occasion that we were his social inferiors, looking down upon us with the disdain that tuppence-halfpenny is apt to feel for tuppence. But he bore no resemblance to Gladstone, as we did. Many stories were

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current, some no doubt invented, of my father being mistaken for Gladstone, but, not unnaturally, I never heard of Gladstone being mistaken for him, which would have pleased us still more and enabled us to put the purse-proud uncle once for all *in* his proper place. Each of them, Gladstone and my father, was a good Liberal of a type now extinct, "persevering in good causes, obstinate in bad." I can think of nothing else to explain the resemblance. It vanished on analysis but returned on synthesis, as many things of greater importance have been known to do; for example; the existence of God.

I mention this for a reason which the following paragraph will disclose.

I am one of many for whom the story of the Bronte family has a strange fascination. The other day as I was reading E. F. Benson's *Charlotte Bronte*, the best book about her and her family, it suddenly flashed upon me that the atmosphere of the Bronte household was the atmosphere of my early home. In both the inmates were spirits in prison, struggling to be free. The two households were *of* the same size, the members of the younger generation numbering four in each, of whom one was a troublesome brother, ours not drunken and dissipated like Branwell, but a sore difficulty, hated by one of my sisters and loved by the other, as Branwell was hated by Charlotte and loved by Emily. The family budget and the general *res domi* were of about the same figure, at least during my father's lifetime (they became much worse after his death) needing constant care to make both ends meet. The perennial old servant, never more than one, the elderly aunt immuring herself at stated hours in an upper chamber, the grim religion always at our elbow but inwardly resented, the cult of respectability, the pervading sense that we were not like other people but somewhat superior, at least to our immediate neighbours, the mingling of "refined interests," as Charlotte would call them, with a preponderance of sordid cares and domestic anxieties—all this, vivid in my memory, and amounting to no more than the resemblance in height and atmosphere

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between the two women of my parable, or between Gladstone and my father, makes me at home in the Bronte household. But there the resemblance ends. Of the suppressed but insurgent genius of which there was so much in the Bronte family (in Emily most of all) there was no trace in ours, except perhaps a faint one in my shopkeeper father. But all of us, both parents and children, had brains of a sort, and therewith intellectual ambitions which untoward circumstances were continually thwarting. I, the youngest of the four children, was much concerned in the "ambitions." I cannot but smile, more in pity than in scorn, when I remember what they were.

I doubt if any of us was naturally religious; certainly none was *anima naturaliter Christiana*. A grim religion, of the narrow evangelical type, which we ultimately threw off, was always there with a finger uplifted in menace, and we had been drilled to a certain religiousness in conformity with it, regularly attending some church or chapel where it was purveyed. In times of emergency we betook ourselves to prayer, using it, as so many do, like the emergency cord in trains, but without fear of the attendant fine for misuse. I remember a time, early in my teens, when I secretly made a desperate effort to get myself converted, according to pattern, which came to nothing and which I knew had come to nothing, as I am now glad to say. There was a constant element of menace in the atmosphere, vivid menace of misfortune in this world and a fainter of damnation in the next. The most insistent was the menace of disease, which hung especially over my father, the breadwinner. For many years he suffered an obscure internal malady—obscure in those days—which punctuated his normal gaiety with intervals of excruciating agony, and the recurrence of which was a standing terror in the family: it finally killed him at the early age of forty-seven. With that was associated the menace of poverty which became acute after his death. It was a life of perpetual battle with contradictions, obstructions and limitations, constantly changing their form but never disappearing, in which the main preoccupation was that of keeping

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our heads above water. Had a genius appeared in our family some analogue to *Wuthering Heights* might have come out of it all. Thanks mainly to my mother, who kept up the spirit of the fight, it had a brighter side. Of how many families in the middle class, to say nothing of the class beneath it, might not a similar story be told, resulting in an epic, if genius had the telling of it!

The reader will gather from the above that I make no claim to a distinguished ancestry. My forbears on the paternal side were mainly of the seafaring class. Somebody once asked my father, who had the look and bearing of a born aristocrat, which he certainly was not, "what was his family crest?" "To the best of my knowledge," he replied, "it's a red herring." My great grandfather, Robert Jacks, was master sailmaker on the frigate *Nonsuch* which took part in Rodney's action against De Grasse in 1782. On the voyage home after the battle he amused himself by making an immense scroll of tapestry on sail cloth, on which he depicted the animals that went into the Ark, using silk drawn out of captured French flags as his thread: it now reposes, or did, in the Naval Museum at Greenwich. This is the nearest I can get to an artist among my ancestors. My other great grandfather (on the paternal side) was one Captain Bell, who commanded a privateer named the *Elizabeth* during the French wars. About him there is a tradition that while *de jure* a privateer, with authentic Letters of Marque in his cabin, he was *de facto* something of a pirate. On returning after many adventures from his questionable occupation on the high seas he became a Plymouth Brother, which was also the persuasion of my great Aunt Vcrcoe, the widow of a sailor, whom she said she had no wish to meet in the next world, regarding him as irrevocably damned for his fornications, adulteries and bigamies in foreign seaports; she was the aunt who lived with us and summoned us to prayer in times of emergency. Of Captain Bell it is further related, and established by an oil portrait, which presumably still exists, though

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I know not where, that he had a purple countenance like Old Welter's and grew enormously fat, insomuch that going one day in a sedan chair to some feast or function in honour of nautical heroes, he burst through the floor and came down on his ample sternworks in the roadway, no doubt to the great relief of the panting chairmen. *Requiescat in pace.*

The name Jacks is said to be a corruption of the French Jacques and there is a vague tradition, to which an American genealogist has given some colour, of a Huguenot ancestry connected in its later stages with the Orkney Islands. This gives a higher flavour of respectability and I hope it is true, but have never been able to verify it, inquiries in the Orkney Islands yielding no results. My father may have had it in mind when he claimed the red herring for his family crest, our Orcadian ancestors, if there were any, being presumably fishermen.

The nautical tradition, with its mingled flavours of tar, red herrings, piracy and Plymouth Brother conversions, was broken by my grandfather, the Rev. James Jacks, and broken it has since remained, though a trace of it may still persist in my lifelong love of the sea and a glorious immunity from seasickness, which neither Boreas nor Euroclydon nor any of that boisterous crew has ever yet disturbed.

By what steps the Reverend James, son of the artistic sail-maker, graduated in the claim to reverence, or acquired the title to it, I have not been able to ascertain. Towards the end of the Regency of the First Gentleman in Europe, James, then about twenty years of age, and naturally not yet *reverendus*, married my grandmother, daughter of the piratically-minded Captain Bell, she running away from boarding school, so I have heard, for that purpose—not a good beginning, one would think, for an apostle of Calvinism, which is what James afterwards became. They were married by the famous Robert Hawker in Charles Church, Plymouth, a city where the seafaring families of bride and bridegroom seem at the time to have made their headquarters. There is good evidence that the youth was a protege of Hawker's, that he had been converted

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under his ministrations and launched by him on the antinomian way of thinking; James being at the time a lawyer's clerk, held in scorn by the warlike Captain Bell, not yet converted, as an unthinkable match for his handsome daughter. I judge him to have been a young man of parts, with a streak of romance in his composition and enough courage to brave the wrath of the purple-faced Captain.

The early marriage was rapidly productive of a family of six children, annual arrivals in the universe and mostly named in the scriptural mode, of whom Hephzcbah (Hebrew: "my delight is in her") was the eldest daughter, my father Jabez ("child of sorrow") coming last but one, and the list closing with Ebenczcr ("stone of help") saying, appropriately enough, "hitherto hath the Lord helped us." (i Sam. 7, 12.)

This last arrival, my Uncle Ebenezer, was a characteristic product of the Jacks family. As an introduction for the rest of us I will here interpose a few particulars concerning him.

For many years he kept a well-known chemist's shop at the junction of Gower Street with the Euston Road and was a familiar figure in that busy corner of the universe, renowned for the high topics of his discourse and the grandiloquent language in which he entertained his cronies, professors from University College and such-like. Often have I watched him slapping the ingredients of a prescription into a bottle while engaged in the full tide of high-flown discourse, and trembled for the life of the patient: but doubtless the "Lord helped him" in that as in other things, for the shop had a high reputation both with prescribers and prescribed for. Sometimes my uncle was himself the prescriber. You had only to sketch your symptoms over the counter and in a brace of shakes, almost literally that, and without needing the intervention of that expensive middle-man the doctor, in a brace of shakes, I say, the appropriate bottle would be in your hands and your case diagnosed for you in sonorous medical terminology; nature having ordained, as we all know, a sonorous name and a remedial bottle for every malady. My uncle, taught by fifty

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years of dispensing, was familiar with the correspondence at every point. There were certain bottles of his own composing which would do the trick when other bottles, the formula for which cost you two guineas, had resulted only in wasted money; one in particular, sold with his name on it for eighteen pence, which I would back against all the creations of Harley Street, and of any street in that guinea-devouring vicinity. Not to spell that Bottle with a capital would be a sacrilege. There was magic in it. It was known among his nephews as "Ebenezer's Masterpiece."

Like all the progeny of Adam he was an enigma, but more interesting than most of us. In him was to be seen a combination of elements which seemed to have come together more by fortuitous concourse than providential design; high-brow interests visibly announced in a lofty forehead and benignant aspect; confused economy, in precipitate movements and a figure loosely knit; moral elevation, in large-scale practice and general outlook; slip-shod ways, in the laying-out and punctuation of his daily walk. By his high-brow interests and moral elevation he would edify those who walked with bini, but irritate their tempers by untimely starts and unpunctual arrivals; one whom you would find in slippers when he should have been in boots, and *vice versa*. Strange mixture, he, of method and muddle, of hits and misses, of the solid and the windy, of pharmacy and fine language. Some elements of this mixture, though not the best, I am conscious of inheriting from his side of the family, but qualified in me by the fact that I am the son of a mother, not of that side, and the enemy of slip-shod performance in small things as in great. Of her I shall presently have more to say.

Such was that "Stone of Help," my uncle Ebenczer. There are few men for whose higher qualities I have better reason to be grateful. His kindness to me at a time when I sorely needed it was wonderful. Alas, that I did not repay it better! Memories of deficient gratitude to him, and to others, are among the bitterest regrets of my old age. Take warning,

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ye who are young! And again I say, take warning!

There were two other sons, Robert and Quarm Jacks, the latter named in honour of a Devonshire farmer who adopted him, but with sublime indifference to cacophony. They vanished into eternity before my time; how, when and where God knows. I have no record beyond the fact that these were the names of them.

To return to my grandfather, the Reverend James. The next trace I have of him is at Dodbrook, near Kingsbridge in South Devon, where he appears to have kept a school, or at least taught in one, a lawyer's clerk no longer and now seemingly on his way to some spiritual vocation. A pamphlet I have before me, dated from that place, bears a long title which may be thus summarized: "The doctrine of the Holy Trinity defended against the attacks of Mr. Seabrook, By James Jacks, Schoolmaster, Dodbrook, 1820." Who Mr. Seabrook was I do not know, but suspect him to have been a sectarian marauder in Plymouth, where his heresy had a fortress or rallying-place¹; nor do I know anything of his Attack except what may be gathered from the Defence. This reveals a fluent pen and considerable controversial skill on the part of my youthful grandfather, who emerges at the end of the controversy on his feet and triumphant, while Mr. Seabrook is flat on his back and dead as any nail. The pamphlet shows further that the ancestral stream of tendency had now taken a turn from seafaring to theology, with a slant towards the central citadel of the Established Church rather than to any of the dissenting suburbs. However that may have been, I find my grandfather at the next stage—with what interval between, and how filled, again I know not—the Minister of a Dissenting Chapel in Nottingham, which went the Independent way, "Zion Chapel" the name of it, and there proclaiming antiuomian doctrine with an eloquence of which the echoes were still to be heard in Nottingham when I was a boy. I have talked with old

¹Probably the leader in one of the Bible sects, then numerous in the West of England. "Seabrookites" is the name one of them went by.

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people who mentioned his name with awe, told me of the immense crowd "a mile long" that followed him to the burying and would repeat the hymn composed by my grandmother for the occasion. All I can remember of the hymn is the general tenor, and that each verse began with the words "Weep not O Zion," the reason for not weeping being such as we might expect in an age now past, when the triumph over death and translation to a better state were the dominant notes of Protestant Christianity—all very tunefully rendered, so that the hymn made a good recitation and caused the hearers to weep, though bidden to the contrary.

This grandmother, the runaway bride of the Plymouth marriage, is a vivid image in my memory as a stately old lady with a mind of great dignity, totally blind in her closing years. I can still hear her deep contralto voice reciting "Weep not O Zion" to the assembled grandchildren *on* her birthday. He for whom Zion was not to weep, her partner in the Plymouth getaway, had then been in his grave for half a century. He had died suddenly in 1829 at a friend's house when little more than thirty years old, after an exceptionally hard day's work in preaching the gospel according to John Calvin, as revised and improved upon by Dr. Robert Hawker.

There was once in our possession, and still exists somewhere, a feebly painted portrait which depicts my grandfather as a long-faced, clean-shaven young man of attractive but not beautiful appearance, the hair reddish, the brow lofty, the eyes blue, the nose big, hooked and jutting out like a promontory, the mouth wide, loose and mobile, a mouth designed, one might say, for the easy emission of eloquence and the rapid reception of victuals. A man impossible to imagine as doing violence to his neighbour, but easily as pouring out a torrent of vocables calling sinners to repentance. An old lady in Nottingham who had sat at his feet in her youth, hearing many years after his death that his grandson was treading in the questionable steps of the demolished Mr. Seabrook, cried out in wrath "He is unworthy of his grandfather."



THE AUTHOR'S MOTHER IN 1860

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If a man may have an adventure after lying in his grave for half a century, my grandfather was such a man. The manner of it, somewhat macabre, was as follows:

Early in the eighteen-eighties Zion Chapel, having fallen on evil days, was sold to the highest bidder for conversion to secular purposes, which it still serves, unless a German bomb has destroyed it since I was last in Nottingham. This necessitated the removal of my grandfather's body, which had been interred below the pulpit in front of the Communion Table and lain there for fifty years. An order having been obtained from the Home Office, my uncle Ebcnezer, the only surviving son, an infant of nine months when his father died, attended the disinterment as representative of the family, the operation taking place at night. On the grave being opened the coffin was found un decayed, for the grave had been well scaled up, and within was a leaden shell, also hermetically scaled. This my uncle ordered to be cut open; the lead was folded back and there for the first time with eyes that could focus their object he saw his father's face. All the features were intact, the great nose, perfectly preserved, still jutting out like a promontory and a mass of reddish hair, much grown, surrounding the lofty brow. For a few moments only the vision lasted; for the features, on the admission of air, immediately began to disintegrate. Strange introduction of a son to his father and a grim adventure for both of them!

I now turn to my mother, who was of a different metal, and her metal was Damascus steel. She it was who led us in the battle with misfortune and poverty, the one who would never give in, her spirit "shining like a pillar of fire in the darkest places of the battlefield." Her figure was diminutive, but above was a head that needed a statelier pedestal. It was crowned, as I remember her from early days, with a great mass of coal black hair parted over her broad forehead. All the features were finely chiselled, the colour high, and the whole face radiant with fire, animation and intelligence

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—'tis a pity that no portrait was painted of her as she then was, and that only a few faded photographs remain. In her youth she had many lovers, one of whom she remembered with sighs to her death in old age. Her marriage to my father took place in 1853 in a dissenting chapel of strict principles, in St. James's Street, Nottingham—chapel since vanished and principles greatly declined in the world at large—minister the Rev. John Wild, whose son, also John Wild, was my first schoolmaster in the rudiments, an excellent teacher and sufficiently judicious in his use of the cane.

My mother, whose maiden name was Stecre, derived her fine features from my grandmother who came of the good stock of the Ludlows and had been a notable beauty in her time. Grandfather Stcere, a dapper little man to judge by his portrait, carried on some sort of agricultural business, that of a miller I think, at Scraftoft near Leicester. Both he and my grandmother died in the late fifties before I was born; a flat tombstone bearing their names, William and Mary Stecre, was recently found by a lone octogenarian poking about with his stick and playing Old Mortality in Sneinton¹ Churchyard, among scores of other flat stones lying cheek by jowl and long forgotten.

When grandfather Steere transferred his business to Nottingham, or perhaps retired from it altogether, the family, in which there were four children, came to live in Sneinton, now a dismal region and never I imagine a very cheerful one. It would seem that widow Jacks was also living in the neighbourhood with such of her offspring as were not in orphan schools. Established at Sneinton, the Stcercs seem to have made connexion with the flock at Zion Chapel, now under a new shepherd. There, during the long Sunday service, the wandering eyes of the little Steeres, Mary, Anne (my mother), Joseph and William, all black haired, looking out over the top of the pew, which they could only do standing up, would be arrested at another pew, where the orphaned progeny of the late

¹ A suburb of Nottingham.

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shepherd, Hephzebah, Jabez, Jemima and Ebenczer, all red haired, would also be taking a look round; and the eyes of the black haired would meet the eyes of the red. In some such way, I imagine, began the series of events, encounters, interpellations and concatenations which the Reverend John Wild crowned with his blessing in the other Chapel I have spoken of, a marriage of some consequence to me, being followed, seven years later, by my own arrival in the universe, the last of four children—the change from Zion to St. James's Street having been effected, so I have heard, because the Zionites were now weeping over a new shepherd, not because he was dead but because he was offensively alive. By this time, it will be observed, the odour of tar has disappeared from my family history and the odour of Chapel taken its place—a change not without influence on my own career, as I shall presently show. Captain Bell, however, was still somewhere in the offing, working havoc among the chairs. But he, as I have said, had already been converted from piracy to chapel-going.

Like most people, I inherit a good many of my uncles' qualities, not excluding Ebcnezer's. My mother's two brothers, Joseph and William, must therefore not be omitted from my confession. Uncle Joseph was a kind of hero in the family; no greater compliment could be paid to any member of my generation than to be told he resembled him. He was the only one of the family who became rich, making his fortune at an uncommonly early age and by means not to his discredit. William had a very different history. Alas, if I inherit from either it is from Uncle William rather than Uncle Joseph.

An oil portrait of Joseph—well painted this one—exhibits him as a dandy dressed in the fashion of the forties; a swallow tail coat, a resplendent waistcoat and a gorgeous silk stock with an opal pin in the midst of it, the whole make-up in the Regency tradition, which was then dying but not dead. A gallant young gentleman, you would say, with a soul of fire looking out from the eyes of him, and a reminiscence of Byron

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in the general impression; one likely to be much sought after by those of the female denomination, and not without reciprocity—a surmise in keeping with tradition as I have received it. The face is simply the male version of my mother's. He was devoted to her and she to him.

By steps not known to me, but no doubt in virtue of exceptional ability, he became the partner at an early age in a Nottingham firm of lace-makers and a pioneer in the development of that industry. The export of Nottingham lace to America had begun, and seeing great opportunities in that direction he established a business house in New York under the name of Linder and Steere and proceeded to make his fortune. Once a year, and sometimes twice, he would travel to America on this business in one of the slow steamers of those days. His last voyage was in 1856 and his ship the *Pacific*, a paddle steamer of the old Collins line, parent of the *White Star*. My father went to Liverpool to see him off and gave him a box of his favourite cigars to console him on the voyage. From that day to this neither he, nor the ship he sailed in, nor the company that was in her, has ever been heard of, nor will be till the sea gives up her dead.¹

The shock killed my grandmother Steere. She would start from her bed in the night-time at every approaching footfall in the street, believing it was Joseph's, listening for the sound, so I have been told, even when she was asleep, until she went completely deaf on the listening side; she was convinced he would return in the night when nobody but she was expecting him. To my mother also it was a shattering blow, the first of a long series of sorrows, but dwarfing all its successors and continuing alive to the time of her death, forty-three years later.

¹ Some particulars confirming my memory have been kindly furnished me from the records by the Secretary of the Liverpool Underwriters' Association. The *Pacific* was American owned, built of oak, square rigged on two of her masts, paddle propelled and of 2,860 tonnage. Her cargo, largely consisting of Nottingham lace, was insured for two million dollars. She carried 45 passengers, among them, "some Nottingham lace merchants." She was supposed to have struck an iceberg.

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He left a considerable fortune and had made a will before sailing in which it was divided between the various members of his family. Many of the assets were in America and there was a long delay in realizing them and getting the proceeds transferred to this country; I have heard that they were much attenuated in the process. My mother's share turned out to be about £6,000. All this happened before I was born, but I have heard so much from my mother about Uncle Joseph, have had him so constantly held before me as the family hero, been bidden so often to imitate his qualities and withal am so familiar with his portrait, that I seem to know him well and, if recognition is possible in the next life, I shall recognize him immediately and introduce myself as his posthumous nephew. He counts for something in my life.

Of Uncle William, as I have said, a very different story has to be told. Him I remember well; he survived into my boyhood, a gifted, charming, handsome man, adored by us young people; a fine shot, a complete angler and sportsman in general; a cunning maker of traps and gins, very deft in the use of his hands; black haired and fiery-tempered like all the Steercks. There was no "chapel" about William, unless a tavern be considered one. If Joseph was the hero, William was the favourite, the imitation of Joseph, which was constantly enjoined upon us, receiving many a check from our natural tendency to imitate William. To this day the element I inherit from William, which is of this world, and the chapel element not of this world, which I inherit from the other side, are at war within me, and more confusion arises when the Ebenezer element intervenes in the strife. But "hitherto the Lord hath helped us."

Somewhere in the fifties William was shipped off to Australia where he became a gold digger, Bendigo way, I think; had many adventures in the digging, some of them with a bowie-knife; made money; lost it and came home impoverished, in time to receive the benefits of Joseph's legacy. Thereafter he went into partnership with my father as an ironmonger and

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bought a country house at Bramcote, where he played strange pranks. The pranks not agreeing with ironmongery, the partnership was presently dissolved and William began to fall on evil days. He took to photography, at which he was extremely skilful according to the standard of that time, as indeed he was skilful in everything, not least in creation of wild pleasure for his adoring nephews. He ended his days as landlord of a public house. I vividly recall his death in 1870. We were then living in the country, and coming out of the old church one Sunday evening a messenger, who had ridden from Nottingham, handed my mother a scrap of paper on which were the words "William is dead." I can see the words now, written in a scrawling hand, and I can see my mother turn white and stagger as she read them. Strange how such things are imprinted on an old man's memory!

3

EARLY LIFE IN NOTTINGHAM

"Exploring the haunted corridors of life"

THE FIGURE that stands out clearest in my memories of childhood is that of my father, my mother, a much stronger figure, superseding it from a later period. "Your father," she once said to me. "was a weak man." In some respects that is true, but it was the judgment of one whose staying power, though lodged in a frail body, was astonishing. Judged by another standard my father was anything but weak. He was a shopkeeper out of his element and always restless in consequence, many-purposed, each purpose short-lived and occasionally quixotic. His natural vocation was that of an orator, religious or political, or the two in combination, if the two can be combined; a man born to blow a trumpet in Zion and not for the selling of hardware. He had the outward appearance of such a trumpeter—for was he not said to resemble Gladstone?—and could make you an admirable extempore speech, never without a touch of humour, on any subject that interested him. Religious according to his lights, which were those of evangelical piety, he certainly was, yet not so as to suppress a strain of pagan jollity. I have in my possession a long religious meditation written by him in a time of physical suffering, when his general worldly outlook was "black as the pit from pole to pole," which reveals an agony of soul, and a mastery of it through the faith that was in him, so sublime and terrible that I can only compare it with the story of Gethsemane, of which indeed it is an echo. He had a hiding place, perhaps in the deep rock cellar beneath his shop, to which he

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would secretly retire for prayer. "Withdrew into solitude for communion with my Maker and found great consolation" is one of the entries in his pocket book. No: he was not essentially a weak man, though he had many weaknesses. Was the scrupulousness of that prayer-holic one of them? I think not. "When thou prayest enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father which is in secret." Strength is needed to shut that door and my father had it. Not a weak man, then.

After the early death of grandfather James, which occurred when my father was four years old, he was sent for education to the London Orphan Asylum, to which he travelled alone on the top of a coach, with pneumonia as the immediate consequence, remaining in that excellent school till the time of his apprenticeship to an ironmonger in Nottingham, and receiving a thorough education in the rudiments, and something more. Among other things, they taught him to speak correct English and to write a most beautiful script both in large letters and small—acquisitions not to be despised, though apparently held despicable in these days. His penmanship was indeed wonderful. I have seen him perform miracles on his thumb nail or on the smooth surface of an old sixpence, holding the pen by the end furthest from the nib; or he would cover you a sheet with intricate arabesques and you would find no flaw in the symmetry. A more finely modelled pair of hands than his you have never seen—at least not on a shop-keeper. They had magnetic qualities and were never cold. He was one of those who can *think* with their hands. Would that we all could, and with our whole bodies as well—like the lady in Donne's poem who

"so distinctly wrought,
That you might almost say, her body thought."

My father's shop was in an old narrow street having a picturesque name, all that was picturesque about it, "Bridle-smith Gate," a reminder of times long gone by. Near one end

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of the street was Nottingham market place; at the other a festering mass of slums known as Narrow Marsh, a dolorous and wicked region forbidden to us, where the Nottingham "Lambs," roughs of a most dangerous type, "devil's regiments of the line," were congregated with thieves, pickpockets, sixpenny prostitutes, verminous children and swarming bed-bugs; beyond that were the stations, the Midland and Great Northern: a street therefore of much traffic to and from the stations and well suited for the sale of hardware. On Saturday nights, when the drink was going, Narrow Marsh would spill over into Bridlesmith Gate and many a bloody fight have I seen from the upper windows when the public houses closed, and those sons of Belial, the "Lambs," wandered forth full of wickedness and gin. This was in the time of waning fortunes when our country house had to be given up and we lived over the shop.

Among the familiar figures of that vicinity whose images remain imprinted on memory is that of a blind old sailor, said (by himself) to be a hundred years old, who had fought under Nelson at Trafalgar. He sat begging at the end of the street towards Narrow Marsh, near the house of the famous Dr. Ransom, his long white hair falling over his shoulders and a Braille Bible on his knees, from which he would read aloud with a droning sing-song in the hope that his piety would be rewarded by coppers. One day some of us boys, ingenious young devils that we were, provided ourselves with fine sand and, waiting for the moment when the centenarian stopped reading, and withdrew his fingers from the book, we approached silently and sprinkled the sand over the page so as to obliterate the letters; then we waited for results. Presently the old warrior returned to his reading and this is what was heard: "And the Lord said unto Moses—*who the hell has been putting sand on my Bible?*"—on which a local wag made comment that the words were evidently aimed at Bishop Colenso, whose destructive criticism of the Pentateuch was then fluttering the theological dovecot. The name of the hero

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was Parkin. He had a story to tell about the boarding of a French ship, which he would repeat, always in the same words, to any passer-by who would give him the price of a pint. He told how he climbed into the ship by swinging himself up over the bowsprit, and was immediately confronted by a big sailor in a red cap who fired a pistol at him, but missed; whereupon "I draws my cutlass, which I was a-carryin' between my teeth, and cuts him down—like this" (cut reproduced with stabs to follow) "at which the officer in command of the boarding party called out 'Well done, Parkin. Give 'em some more like that'." By such deeds has Britain won her command of the seas, and to such ends have the Parkins who won it frequently come, notwithstanding what the Lord said unto Moses and Lloyd George unto the returning heroes of 1919. Where is that French sailor now ? Where is Parkin? Have they met and made it up in Valhalla? Answer, ye who proclaim the immortality of the soul!

Veterans of the Napoleonic wars were often to be met with in my boyhood and being a veteran myself, though not of the wars, and having a fellow feeling for all such, I will tell the story of another whom I knew.

Among our Nottingham heroes there was an old man, doing odd jobs about the place, who had fought and been severely wounded at Quatre Bras. Across his forehead, just above the eyes, was a long horizontal scar extending from side to side, at which I would gaze in wonder and admiration. It was the work of a French cuirassier charging the British square, where my hero had knelt in the front line ready to get busy with his bayonet. The horseman making a great swoop at him, the point of his sword reached just far enough to cut the man's forehead in the manner indicated by the scar, and blind him, so he would tell us, with the blood that flowed down into his eyes. "All the same, I gets my bayonet into the horse's belly, you bet I did, and down he comes a-wallop on the top of me." He lived to a great age and was taken by a friend of mine, some time in the eighties, to see Lady Butler's famous picture

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"Quatre Bras," then being exhibited in the town. Asked what he thought of it, he replied: "Well, it didn't look like that to me. You see, the lady that painted that picture was looking on at the square from the outside where she could see the faces of our men. I was inside where we couldn't see our own faces but only the Frenchmen that were coming at us. No, sir, it didn't look like that to me." An excellent piece of art criticism, which throws light incidentally on a good many things beside the picture "Quatre Bras."

For example: I have read many accounts and studies, by gifted writers, of the mid-Victorian epoch, of what people were like and how they lived in the sixties, the seventies, the eighties, and have greatly enjoyed the literary feasts they offer, while yet, as a surviving veteran of those times, who remembers them vividly, I find myself exclaiming at the end of it all, "it didn't look like that to me." "The monotony of a decorous age" is a phrase I have seen applied to that epoch. But nobody who had spent a day in the company of my Uncle William, or taken a walk down Narrow Marsh on a Saturday night, would have pitched on monotony and decorum for describing the essentials.

Or consider what the anthropologists tell us about primitive man, his psychology, religion, vision of the world about him, etc.—again, I cannot restrain a doubt as to whether it looked just like that to primitive man. It is certain at all events that he didn't regard himself as "primitive" but as the last thing out, and with good reason too. Or take the Early Christians, about whom I was extensively lectured when I was a student of theology and have since read many learned books. That was an illuminating moment when it suddenly dawned upon me, as a light from heaven, that those early Christians thought of themselves not as "early" but as thoroughly up-to-date Christians exactly on time and even in advance of it, an illumination (at least I count it such) which has had something to do in forming my present views about the origin of: the Christian religion, and about other things too. "No, sir," I

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hear these early Christians saying when they read what Dryasdust has written about them, "No, sir; it didn't look like that to us. And do, please, try to remember that when we wrote our Gospels, Epistles and Books of Revelation, we were not thinking of *you*, nor of your generation." What a limited, *ex post facto*, thing history is—I mean, of course, history as written in books! Wisdom after the event is the best it has to offer us. And how easy it is to be wise after the event. This is not a digression, but a necessary part of the confession I am trying to make.

I return to my father.



THE AUTHOR'S FATHER IN 1867

[to face page 33]

4

MY FATHER AND HIS OFFSPRING

"A power girt round with weakness"

A WO IMAGES of my father survive in my memory; one, with his top hat on, the other with it off. He usually wore it on in the shop, as well as when he walked abroad. So arrayed you would have taken him for what he was, a well-to-do shopkeeper of chapel-going habits, one of the class who formed the sturdy backbone of mid-Victorian Liberalism, worshipped Lord John Russell, hated that upstart Disraeli and conducted family prayers. But when he took his top hat off, and exposed his head-piece to full view, you would see a very different man, wonder what he was doing in the shopkeeper's galley and think what a *fine* appearance he would make in the House of Lords. Whether you saw him with top hat on or top hat off, whether you talked to him behind his counter, at the neighbouring tavern (he liked an occasional glass of whisky) or in his own drawing-room, you would always find him an ardent politician who had read last night's debate in Parliament from beginning to end (they were worth reading in those days) and could make you, if you put him on his legs, as good a speech as any of them; especially if you started him on the Income Tax, that infamous imposition which had just been raised from fourpence to fivepence in the pound: "peace and retrenchment" for ever, and leave those continental scoundrels, Bismarck and Louis Napoleon, to hang themselves in their own halters.

Discoursing on these topics, but not on these alone, you might often find him in one or other of the places I have just

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mentioned but notably at *The Queen Elizabeth*, an ancient, select and highly respectable tavern in a street near the shop, frequented by a group of cronies, Nottingham burghers of weight and consideration; of whom the other members I recall were Smart who kept the furniture shop, Etherington the gunsmith (or was it Hetherington, for we were careless about the "h" in our Nottingham dialect) and a very remarkable man, Sam Collinson, stockbroker, worshipper of Tennyson, himself a local poet of some merit, a great friend, who had only one point against him in my father's estimation—that, though he went to chapel regularly, it was the Unitarian Chapel he went to, an aberration in Sam which was to have some influence later on in the course of my own fortunes. There, I say, in the cosy room of *The Queen Elizabeth*, you might often have found my father, a glass of whisky before him, discoursing with men of weight on the fivepenny income tax, the villainies of Disraeli, Bismarck and Louis Napoleon, Napier's march into Abyssinia, the "progress of the species," Darwin's bombshell, Tennyson's latest poem or other prominent topics of the day. I often found him so myself when sent to fetch him, an important customer having come to the shop and found him absent. Which, of course, was not good for the shop.

It was through my father that I got my first introduction to politics or, more correctly, my first impression of what politics are, an impression, needless to say, which has never been wholly obliterated, I being then seven years old. The occasion was the Nottingham by-election in 1866¹ when the extension of the franchise to the seven-pound householder, regarded by Carlyle as "shooting Niagara" (since more thoroughly "shot") into raging whirlpools of democracy, was the main topic of controversy and broken heads; the place, Nottingham market

¹ I will not take an oath to this. It may have been the General Election of 1867 which led to Disraeli's "dishing of the Whigs." But as I probe in the waters of Lethe there comes up a murmur of "Amberley" and of another name, "Bernal Osborne," which would fix the date at '66. The story of the '66 election is told by Lady Amberley in *The Amberley Papers*, edited by Bertrand Russell, in a manner partly corroborative of my memory and partly not.

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uproar and a cloud of missiles, stones, eggs, potatoes, turnips, no longer miscellaneous directed but all flying towards the balcony, the bareheaded gentlemen and the Mayor. "You see that young man on the Mayor's left," says my father, "that is Viscount Amberlcy, son to Lord John Russell, God bless him." So I take a look at Viscount Amberlcy, and see that he is standing up well to the flying turnips, making a speech, not a word of which is audible in the howling of the storm. Then I begin to cry, and my father wisely takes me away. As he pushes through the crowd partisans of Uncle John's colour (blue) shake their fists and boo at him, his activities in the yellow interest being well known. He gets home with his top hat still on his head, "unknocked-off," as I might then have described it, but dented in the front, and here am I, delivered into the arms of my anxious and upbraiding mother, a weeping urchin fresh from his first contact with political life. Later contacts have given me better cause for weeping.

It was either at this election or at another in the sixties that my father's meddling with politics got him into trouble. In some invective of his against Sir Robert Clifton, overheard perhaps in the cosy room of *The Queen Elizabeth*, he had incautiously described, in the florid language he was fond of, the fate which Sir Robert in common with Disraeli and the whole Tory party deserved, in his judgment, at the hands of their fellow countrymen—whether public execution, enforced emigration, or general submergence in duck ponds, I do not know, but assuredly something pictorially striking since my father had the suggesting of it. Rumour took up the tale, gave it wings, reduced it from the metaphorical to the literal and, behold, next day there appeared a placard, or chalk writing on the wall, informing the public that my father was offering a reward of £500 to anyone who would burn down Clifton Hall! Now the fat was in the fire! Before nightfall the "Lambs," streaming out of Narrow Marsh, were at work on the windows of the shop and order passed by the head shepherd, a slaughterman he, that, sure as there was beer in England, my father

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was to be done in and his country house burned down—yes, *his* and not Sir Robert's.

I sound my memory in vain for the sequel, and those who could have enlightened me are all passed to dim regions where my enquiries cannot reach them. I have shadowy recollections of a brief reign of terror in our country house, of sentinels posted to give warning of approaching "Lambs," of my father keeping close, of disguise adopted, arms provided, devious routes taken when he stole into Nottingham to record his vote, as he did, for a burgher's vote counted for something in those days, not yet being one in twenty-five millions, and when you gave it openly and not in secret as now. But recorded his vote was: Viscount Amberlcy, standing for the righteous cause, got elected and my father returned to the country without visible damage. The storm—of teacup proportions, indeed, when remembered in the storm raging as I write, but of like origin to a world-war—the storm, I say, presently subsided and the shuttered shop reopened. But I have a notion that decline of its fortunes began from that date. My father's dislike of business increased; subordinates, one of whom swindled him grievously, were left in charge; the *Queen Elizabeth* interludes grew longer; there were more cronies and fewer customers. His malady also increased on him; there were paroxysms of pain in the day-time and occasional nights of agony which I shudder in remembering; doctors, puzzled by the intermittency of the symptoms, came and went; their bills mounted up; there were lawyers also on the scene and their bills were yet larger. His resilience was remarkable. The paroxysm over, the crisis passed, he would quickly pull himself together and become a gay companion and an optimist. "The phoenix has risen from her ashes" he would say. There was a strain of Micawber in his composition.

Among his gifts was a faculty for extempore rhyming which, had fate been kinder to him, might have come to something notable in the way of ballad making. On fine days, when we lived in the country, we used to walk with him through the

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fields into Nottingham—it was four miles—he to his shop, we to school, and all the way he would beguile us with ballads, on the village postman who always passed us at the same point, on the donkey that brayed when he sighted us, on the windmill that creaked us a greeting from the hill top, and I know not what else. Alas that they are all lost, for some of them were worth preserving, notably that on the postman, "The Ballad of Samuel Clay," with its fifty odd verses, a new one added every time the old man passed us.

He would make fun of his misfortunes, mocking at them, and put the fun into rhyme. Nature had endowed him with the power to laugh at himself and to make quick transitions from the tragic to the comic; I reckon it a kindly gift. When bankruptcy hung over him he composed the following for his epitaph:

" My name was Jacks,
I sold tin tacks;
My rent day sure,
No more! No more!"

What he could thus make fun of was no fun to the rest of us. The shadow of misfortune grew large in that common little world of ours: it crept nearer and presently became the shadow of death. As a child I was acutely aware of it and it has left a mark on me. It accounts in some measure for my present conviction that human life is fundamentally tragic, but splendid for that reason, and never to be understood unless its nature as death-ended is kept in view, which I suppose is what Plato meant when he defined philosophy as a meditation on death¹.

Of the house in Nottingham where I was born I have no recollections. It stands as it was then, with surroundings little changed at the top of "Elm Avenue," the last house on the left as you approach the Reservoir. In front are ancient elms between which, at the age of two, I triumphantly reproduced the feat, the trick of which must have taken our ape-like

¹"Those who take the true path in philosophy study nothing but dying and being dead"—*Vhccdo*,

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progenitors ages to learn, of walking upright from tree to tree on my two little legs, instead of crawling on all fours; so at least I have been told by a witness of the triumph whom I can no longer summon to countersign the testimony. Soon after that portentous occurrence, the shop now prospering and my mother's legacy being vulnerable for the purpose, my father built a substantial house, but as ugly as the bad taste of the period could make it, in Hampden Street, where it also stands outwardly unchanged and converted, when I last saw it, into a private hotel.

Here memory begins to operate. I remember having scarlet fever in that house and the awful vision of expanding and contracting globes of light that tormented my poor little brain, visions often since renewed. I can see the family doctor (Charles Bell Taylor, afterwards a famous oculist, a man with the face of Mephistopheles) standing with his back to the fire, and hands under his coat tails, predicting my speedy demise; and, very distinctly, I see my mother on her knees by the bedside praying for my recovery. It was in that house that I, *aetate* 4 or 5, but having a turn for experiment even at that early age, was caught in the act of rubbing the cat's nose in the mustard pot, the person who caught me being no other than my great aunt Vercoe, widow of the fornicating sailor presumed in Hell, who, after castigation administered to that part of my anatomy designed by nature for the purpose, foretold that, grace failing, I was doomed to share the fate of the fornicator, and compelling me after punishment to go down *on* my knees and join her in prayer for prevenient grace against a repetition of the offence, or the commission of its like in the future. My religious education had begun.

In 1865 my father, restless as to domicile as to everything else, rented a fair-sized country house with a large garden, known not very appropriately as Gcdling Cottage, taking it over from the then acting rector who had found the rectory proper too much for him. Gedling, which is now a suburb of Nottingham with the works of the jerry builder much in

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evidence and collieries on the outskirts, was in our time a real village in a real country setting, with a population of two hundred real country folk, a parish clerk, a parish constable, a doctor on horseback, a mighty smith with sinewy arms, an irrepressible poacher (who gave me a lesson or two), a weather-beaten keeper of his lordship's game, a jolly miller, a drunken carrier (Lucknow veteran, he), a village idiot, a village black-guard, a flash reprobate from London with Don Juan proclivities, an aged postman, a letter-opening postmistress, and, finally, a wise woman, versed in herbal remedies, incantations, phases of the moon, the delivery of newcomers into the universe and the laying out of corpses at the time of exit.

All these humble realities we had, and others more exalted, hewn from the same rock and rooted in the same soil—a real lord (the Earl of Chesterfield) and a real squire (Burnside) to take the rents and shoot the partridges, their hatchments set on high in the Church; and a doubly real parson, the Reverend and Honourable Orlando W. W. Forester, to look after the souls of us all; the whole place pervaded by the odour of antiquity, of hayfields, of farm yards and the subtler scents of aristocracy, with sounds to match, the singing of birds, the lowing of cattle, the sigh of the wind in the tree tops, the peal of churchgoing bells on quiet Sundays and the voice of the honest watchdog baying deep-mouthed welcome as we drew near home. On high ground in the midst there rose up a lofty and most beautiful church spire, unique in construction, a landmark visible for many miles round in that flatfish country. For six years we lived almost under its shadow.

But I must curb my octogenarian garrulity and be content with recording but a few of the memories that crowd upon me from those years. Since the Church has been just mentioned, let that be the starting point.

Our Reverend and Honourable Rector, who afterwards became Lord Forester, was a stately and benignant aristocrat, an excellent clergyman and preacher, somewhat aloof, of course, from tradespeople like ourselves, and an object of reverent awe

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to the Gedling villagers, whose religious evolution in the Sixties was still at the stage where "God bless the squire and his relations, and teach us all to keep our stations" was an utterance of genuine piety. Lords and Ladies were always flitting about the place and to be seen on Sundays occupying the seats of the mighty in Church—at least you could see their noble heads and bonnets when they stood up, appearing above the high top of the first class compartment reserved for them. We all had the feeling, at any rate I had, that God must needs listen to the prayers when so fine a gentleman as our Rector was reading them, a marked difference for the better when compared with the devotions of the Chapel we had attended in Nottingham, where the minister, whatever else he may have been, was not a fine gentleman. In fact I got a notion—a snobbish one *no* doubt but not without influence in my religious education—that God himself *liked* Church more than Chapel, the reason being that I liked it more myself, though I have sometimes been asking of late whether God's liking for either of them is altogether unqualified. However, since this book is a confession, let it be recorded that at the age of ten or thereabouts I had come to like Church more than Chapel. I liked it more because of the fine gentleman who did the praying and preaching and the fine ladies in the first class compartment; because the walk to it lay across fields and by hedges, where you might find a linnet's nest, instead *of* down dismal streets, where the only birds were dingy sparrows picking in the horse dung. Moreover it had a beautiful steeple and a clock on the side of it, which you could hear going tick-tock during the service, while our Chapel had neither steeple nor clock.

I liked it also because of the punch in the parish clerk's voice when, reading the responses, he summoned us to make Moab our wash pot and cast out our shoe over Edom, and for the mightier punch in the voice of the blacksmith, who led us in the hymns, making the whole, I thought, a *manlier* religion than that of our Chapel, which might be all very well for

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great-Aunt Vcrcoe, but no religion for a boy with a catapult in his pocket and a few swear-words in his vocabulary. Naturally I was then too young to understand the sayings of Emerson "whoso would be a man, let him be a nonconformist," or to perceive that, even then, I was a nonconformist myself. The catapult and the swear-words were proof of it. Both were strictly forbidden.

The pew assigned to our family was square, high backed, with narrow seats all round and large enough for a hunter's loose box. The three-decker pulpit was our next door neighbour, a partition intervening, so that we could only see the preacher's profile, ourselves unseen except by the tail of his eye: if you sat on the side opposite the door you could not see him at all, *nor he you*, a tactical point duly noted by my brother and me.

Of the many sermons I heard in that church I can remember nothing. But that is not to say that the service had no effect on me. It had a considerable effect. I had been taught that my duty to God and my neighbour, the latter especially, required me to *sit still* and endure with patience till the trial was over. That lesson has lasted. Rightly or wrongly, enduring with patience has remained all through my long life inseparably associated with duty to God and my neighbour. And I have always found plenty of things to sit still under, sermons and prayers among them, though I cannot claim to have endured them all with the patience I displayed in Gedling Church. For in that church there was an *owl* to watch and think about, while in the churches and chapels I have since attended there has been no owl—unless the officiating minister might sometimes be considered one.

This owl had its nest in some cranny of the roof, which gave access to the interior as well as to the outside. Like the owl of Minerva in Hegelian philosophy, it was wont to take flight when the evening shadows began to fall. Evening service in summer or afternoon service in winter was the time, therefore, when the bird might be expected to manifest.

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On such an afternoon or evening my brother, my two sisters and I are seated in our horse box pew, patiently enduring; my brother at the tactical point opposite the door, his eyes devoutly turned towards the roof, as of one in quest of the invisible, the sermon proceeding meanwhile. My sisters are gazing in the same upward direction; so am I; four better behaved children you never saw in church; all sitting still to admiration and all with eyes turned heavenwards. We are watching for the owl, which often comes out during the sermon, having concluded, no doubt, that it will do him no harm.

Presently there is a wafting of mighty wings high up in the roof, as of an angel descending *on* the congregation; which perceiving, the four children sit stiller than before, their upward glance grown more intense, until the owl, having completed his circumnavigations, returns to his nest, with faith confirmed that the sermon will do him no harm. Then might you have seen my brother, at his tactical point behind the pillar, draw a catapult from his pocket and make pretence to shoot at the owl, closing one eye for better marksmanship and taking aim as if for a high shot. A tense moment in our pew! But the sermon proceeds without interruption until the welcome sound of "Now to God the Father" relieves the tension and the trial of our patience ends.

The wise Owl of Minerva, whose wisdom awakes when the evening shadows begin to fall, has often been used to symbolize the truth that we do not understand our experience till it has become past history. At the present time, when we are experiencing a secular earthquake, the symbol is a warning that attempts to explain the upheaval, to trace the causes and predict the issues, of which I have made some and heard many, are likely to be premature. "Wait" says the Owl, "wait till the havoc is complete; wait till the whole event is before you; wait till the day's work is done; wait for the last word of the sentence before proclaiming what the sentence means. Mark it well, ye hasty ones! The last word may be the keyword,

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as when the maiden answered "I love you *not*", and the lover, who has jumped to conclusions before the negative spoilt the positive, fell down dead under the shock of the contradiction."

Such in all times and places is the warning of Minerva's messenger. But the Flight of the Owl, as I see it whenever I borrow the pregnant image, is not, for me, in the Temple of Minerva. Always I see it wheeling and undulating silently among the ancient roof-beams of Gedling Church, with a Christian sermon going on below. Seventy years have passed over me since then. A reminder that the day is far spent! I must hasten on with my story, lest the evening shadows deepen into night before the tale is told and the last word spoken.

My brother Leonard, six years older than I, was not one whom a severe moralist would have selected as a model for good conduct among boys, either in church or elsewhere; my great-aunt Vercoc in particular condemning him both for this world and the next as one of "Satan's own." This verdict was based on his general capacity for mischief and on certain experiments of his in the use of gunpowder, performed, not without forethought, in proximity to my aunt's person, and suggestive of a sulphurous destiny for the author of them. Later on his capacity for mischief turned to something better than the invention of stinking fireworks. Alas, he died when he was only twenty-eight, and a light that might have shone far went out.

Our relations with the parish clerk were warlike—thanks to my brother. It was the clerk's habit, on concluding his part of the exercises, to settle himself for a comfortable nap, having first lodged his big prayer book, a leather bound folio dating from George the First, on the top of the aforesaid partition. This disposition of objects being observed one day by my brother, he tipped the volume over, so that it fell on the sleeping clerk below and made a terrible commotion in the church. Whence it came to pass that misdemeanours at Gedling,

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whether occurring within the church or elsewhere, if untraceable to any other source, were always attributed by the clerk to some member of our family, and the suspicion communicated by him to the Rector, whose awful and rebuking eye was the terror of our lives and a foretaste of the Day of Judgment. We hated that clerk. All of which was tunefully commemorated in a ballad as we walked to school in the early mornings, our jolly father marching in the midst of us and conducting the performance.

The waggoner with his horses, the poacher with his gins, the gamekeeper with his gun, and Nature, the great mother of us all, these were my tutors-in-chief during the six years at Gcdling. Isaak Walton's *Compleat Angler* was one of the first three books I read (and still read with delight), the others being *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Pilgrims' Progress*. From the village idiot I learned the use of the sling-and-stone. Keeping your eye steadily fixed on the mark, make seven whirls round your head, all in the plane of the object you are aiming at; at the seventh, throw your body forward like a fencer making a lunge, and let go. Such were the maxims of my instructor. He was not a cretin, gibbering and saliva-dropping, but a roaring, boisterous giant, a reversion to primitive man, with a gorilla-like head which would have fitted well on the shoulders of him who left the Piltdown skull to the anthropologists. He would wander about the fields slinging stones at pigeons and crows, and whenever he hit the mark would let out a yell that curdled the blood of the parish and sent the rabbits scuttling to their holes. What a pity there was no anthropologist in Gcdling to study his religion and write us a book about it all! Think of what Dr. Marcet or Sir James Frazar would have got out of him! In after years I used him as the model for a character in one of my books. But this was a much less important affair than the study of his religion would have been.

I knew also where every kind of bird in the locality built its nest and had a collection of birds' eggs which would have got me into trouble twenty times over in these enlightened days

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of bird preserving legislation, if the police had been sharp enough, as they seldom are, to detect me in the act of robbery. I could find the pole-star and its neighbours in the nightly heavens, which a young friend of mine, recently home for the holidays from Eton, could not find. I knew where the sun rose and set at solstice and equinox, and had fixed a high pole, marking on the ground the points where its shadow ended at various seasons—my calendar, and all my own idea! Solstice and equinox were words unknown to me. But what did that matter?

"Those earthly godfathers of heaven's lights,
Who give a name to every fixed star
Have no more profit of their shining nights
Than those who walk and wot not what they are".¹

Such a one was I. A bright little boy, my masters, I do assure you!

And a sportsman too. Under instruction from the incomparable Isaak and an occasional lesson from Uncle William (God rest his soul!) I became a wily angler; the banks of the smooth-flowing Trent, two miles distant from us, were the scene of my operations. There I became acquainted with a strange fellow, a "mouchcr" we called him, who made a living by taking wasp nests and selling the grubs for bait to fishermen on the banks. From him I learnt a trick or two of that trade, together with some additions to the stock of bad language already acquired from my other tutors. Samples of this I would innocently deliver on embarrassing occasions, such as a ladies' tea party in my mother's drawing-room, until severe castigation taught me to know better. If the curious would like to know more precisely what the offensive language was (this being an age when nothing is unmentionable), the following will throw light on the matter. A friend taking a walk with Tennyson remarked that something or other was "awfully fine." "Don't say 'awfully'," replied the poet, "say 'bloody'".² Surely an improvement.

¹*Love's Labour's Lost.*

²The story is told in E. F. Benson's *As we Are.*

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At the end of this period I was no longer the frail little chap who had watched the riot in Nottingham market place from his father's shoulder and wept to be taken home to his mother, as witness the following.—The distance between our home in Gedling to the schools we children attended in Nottingham was, as I have already said, just four miles for each of us. For two years I walked that distance both ways three school days out of four all the year round, and was none the worse for it, but all the better. Our allowance for railway fares was exiguous, and the station being two miles off we decided, on free vote taken, to walk to Nottingham whenever we could and to spend the fare money at a tuck shop on the road. This feat of endurance was performed by my sisters, both of whom died octogenarians, less often than by me, but they would always walk when my father was of the party, as he would be if no paroxysms were threatened and he had had a good night; on no account would the girls miss their chance of contributing new lines to those family products, "The Ballad of Samuel Clay" and "The Ballad of the Owl." But often I made the journey alone, looking well about me and quickening my pace as I passed under Colwick Wood, where a man had recently been robbed and murdered.—Take notice of all this, ye pampered children of to-day; ye of the well-to-do, sent to school and fetched home again in a closed car, though the distance be no more than half a mile: ye of the working class also, who must needs have a bus, paid for out of the rates, sent round to pick you up. Ah yes, no doubt you have great advantages over the urchin of the 'sixties who day after day padded his eight miles to school and back. My dears, I congratulate you *on* your advantages! But not all of you will live to be octogenarians. And which of you, in car or in bus, is adding a line to the *'Ballad of Samuel Clay" or to any other ballad? I bid you think on these things!

We had three alternative routes for our walk. The pleasantest was that which led us by Murderer's Wood; the least pleasant through the village, if village be the right name, of

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Carlton, a dolorous place haunted by misery and the shades of death, the undertaker and the publican alone enjoying the benefits of mid-Victorian prosperity, recently declared by Mr. Gladstone to be advancing by leaps and bounds. This route, though the shortest, we seldom took, for the Carlton part of it was ugly beyond imagination, and constantly ravaged by epidemics, scarlet fever, typhus and small-pox. The inhabitants were mainly "stockingers," makers of stockings on hand looms, survivors of domestic industry that flourished before the Industrial Revolution, then dying under the competition of Nottingham machinery, and now dead. No chance of finding a bird's nest in Carlton; the birds sang not in that dismal region; pleasant sight or sound there was none; but rows of wretched habitations and the ceaseless clack, clack of the stocking frames inside. Poking your head into *one* of these dens, as we often did, though forbidden, you would be overpowered by a horrible stench and would see the stockinger at his frame, hunch-backed and anaemic, coughing and clacking his way on the road to dusty death. This was my introduction to human misery, of which I have since seen so many kinds, and so much.

Many of these stockingers were Mormons, a sect whose solution of the universal riddle had somehow got wind in those regions. We had a servant, a middle-aged woman, quite illiterate, to whom the solution had appealed. She would often discourse with great fervour to us children of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Latter Day Saints, Zion and Salt Lake City, hoping perhaps to turn our young minds towards the Mormon solution, and representing Salt Lake City as an earthly paradise, New Jerusalem, or Land of Beulah to which she herself, when sufficient passage money had been saved, would presently make her pilgrimage. There was also in that neighbourhood a Mormon conventicle to which I once found my way, whether under Harriet's conduct or as an independent investigator, I cannot now say. All I can remember of what went on is the frantic howlings and bellowings of the initiates at certain

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points in the exercises, which effectively frightened me away from the Mormon paradise.

Here I am prompted to anticipate.—My knowledge of Mormonism remained at the stage where Harriet's instructions and the Carlton ho wrings had left it until many years later, when I found myself in Salt Lake City, a guest of the Mormons. On one of their buildings near the place *of* my entertainment I saw these words engraved in great letters across the pediment: "*The Glory of God is Intelligence.*" Strange motto, thought I, for a lunatic sect, but very fitting for a sect not lunatic. And not lunatic is what I found my hosts most emphatically to be. I came to the conclusion that in the matter of enlightenment, toleration, social progressiveness, zeal for the education of the young and non-lunacy in general, the present Mormons" of Salt Lake City have as good a claim to call themselves Latter Day Saints as any existing denomination, and a better claim than some. No doubt it will be said that I was shown only the best; to which I answer there was a great lot of the best to be shown, and all of it very good, both in the Mormon institutions and the Mormon men and women who had the working of them. Moreover, if you were shown the *worst* of any religion, not excepting your own, would you not conclude that it was all humbug? Whereas, if you were shown the best of them all, would you not conclude they were all *one*? Which is precisely what I concluded when, after many wanderings in regions celestial and terrestrial, I found myself in Salt Lake City, the Land of Beulah, which, sixty years before, our illiterate servant had set out to seek, but died on the way, and heard the trumpets sound for her from another shore. She was a faithful creature and worthy of the Kingdom prepared for all such.

But I am going too fast and too far. Let us leave Salt Lake City and return to Nottingham.

5

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"God plays the organ while the devil blows the bellows"—*Goethe*

WHAT WITH his malady, his growing dislike of shop-keeping, *Queen Elizabeth* interludes, "Samuel Clay" ballading, speechmaking on behalf of righteous causes, and rather quixotic outlook *on* the universe in general, my father went bankrupt and we were sold up by auction to the uttermost farthing his creditors could lay their hands on. From the stock-in-trade to my mother's beautiful furs, in which the little witch looked so charming, all our goods, properties and treasures went to the creditors' account, my father's resemblance to Gladstone availing no whit to soften their hearts or abate their insistence on the pound of flesh. Let the sordid details of that affair be buried in oblivion for ever! It was a phenomenon of dimensions so minute that only the Lord's Remembrancer took notice of it, invisible in the cosmic panorama and hardly discoverable by the historian's microscope, but yet a part of history, one among thousands like it, with a nature akin to the fall of empires and the overthrow of civilizations. Our empire, bounded in a nutshell, had fallen as completely as Babylon or Tyre and great was the fall thereof to *us*.

We found a villa in a semi-genteel row of houses and made a modest home there out of the salvage of the wreck. My brother Leonard, in the hope that journalism would be a field for his literary ambitions, was apprenticed as a reporter to the *Nottingham Journal*, owned by Job and William Bradshaw. My two sisters, their education half complete, were taken from school; the elder, a brilliant and beautiful girl, with many good

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lines to her credit in the *Ballad of Samuel Clay," was presently much run after by dissolute men, and married unfortunately, with sad results both to brilliance and beauty.

As for myself, I had already left the small "academy" kept by John Wild in St. James's Street and been transferred to University School in Waverley Street, of which the Rev. George Herbert, an evangelical clergyman, was headmaster. Here, then, is the place to say a word about my early education, so far as it fell into the domain of the pedagogue.

Far from being well grounded in Greek at the age of five, like John Stuart Mill, I was unable to read plain English until I was nine or possibly ten years old. For reasons connected with the frailty of my childhood, I was taught neither reading nor writing till then, my education being left, very wisely, I now think, to such tutors as I have already mentioned: wisely, I say, notwithstanding the regrettable swear-words that found their way into the curriculum. The results of the postponement were not so disastrous, in the intellectual department, as you might think. In three years after learning to read I was the head boy among fifty in University School, carrying off enough prizes to load a wheelbarrow (I have them still), all handed to me by Bishop Mackenzie of Southwell, with handshakings, compliments and admonitions to devote my talents to the service of God. Yes, at thirteen I was as precocious and conceited a little prig as ever deserved a thrashing, or whatever the proper equivalent may be in the milder discipline of these days. Note this, ye pedagogues. Not by way of boasting do I set it down, for I have never disguised the fact that our family had brains. I set it down for your information.

The first books I read, or learnt to read, were the *Book of Joshua*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Compleat Angler* and the *Pilgrim's Progress*, not a bad foundation, each ministering to an innate love of adventure derived from both my parents, from Captain Bell, from the sailmaker and, more remotely, from Father Adam, whose adventure with an apple, Eve prompting, has brought such disasters on us all. From these I soon got on to

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Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, and actually tried to imitate the majestic style of it, and the long sentences ending with a genitive, in private compositions of my own. I also read Scott from end to end and imitated him in like manner. Worst of all—and this I can hardly mention without a blush—I read *Paradise Lost* and at once proceeded to produce a superior epic of my own, with such results as you may imagine. In fact I never read anything with pleasure in those days but I must immediately set to work on an imitation of it, a habit which caused me considerable trouble later on, as I will tell in its place. I now recognize, as a point of psychological interest, that my imitations of the "moucher's" vocabulary, and its disastrous reproduction in my mother's drawing room, were all of a piece with imitations and reproductions subsequently practised in pulpits and other eminent places.

Meantime, or for a considerable part of the time, my school bills were unpaid, my father being one of the unemployed. When people talk nowadays about the miseries of unemployment I am fain to cap the story with one of my own, but pitched in a different key.

The unemployment, seventy years ago, of a bankrupt tradesman, once well-to-do, with a touch of genius in him and with four talented and ambitious children to provide for, one of them a rival of Milton, will bear comparison, in point of misery, with that of the unemployed working man of our time, with a generous dole to fall back on and no rival to Milton among his offspring. How we managed to keep the pot boiling during that period, and to turn up regularly at St. Mary's Church, which we now attended, in smart Sunday clothes, each with a coin to put into the collection plate, and my father still bearing his resemblance to Gladstone, but now somewhat dimmed—how all this was managed I know not, but managed it was; our heads, to all seeming, were still above water, and none held higher than my father's. I suspect that my gallant, high-spirited little mother was at the bottom of all that.

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It was during this period of unemployment that the Micawber strain in my father's composition came uppermost. Sick man though he was, his faith that something good would turn up never deserted him. The event justified his faith. After the misery had lasted long enough to brand itself on my memory, and lend a touch of dark colour to my vision of the universe which has never completely faded out, something moderately good did turn up. He was appointed "travelling agent" (which means I suppose commercial traveller) at a good salary to a large firm of Sheffield manufacturers of hardware. His faculty for business, when he chose to exercise it, was excellent, and might have made his fortune had not excellent faculties of another kind interfered with its operations. Proof given of business faculty, supported by testimonials from the Liberal M.P.s whose righteous cause he had supported with his oratory, secured him the appointment, the proprietors of the firm being also of the Liberal persuasion. The salary, I believe, was £700 a year. So the sun began to shine, unpaid bills were liquidated, unemployment was at an end, and my father started "on the road"—the railroad naturally.

Two years of it killed him. Stricken by internal disease and a sick man intermittently, he was unable to face the conditions of constant travel and change of abode. For a time all went well, but after about a year of it the old symptoms returned with new violence and anxiety again settled down on our home. On one occasion, being in Leeds, a violent seizure took him as he was passing the Town Hall. He fell down unconscious on the pavement, was picked up by the police, lost sight of for many days and finally brought home half dead. But he was soon "on the road" again: how he stuck it is known only to God. His last and fatal seizure was in Plymouth. This time he was brought home with incredible difficulty, for he was raging in fever, by a fellow traveller who loved him—may he be rewarded for it in the resurrection of the just! He died shortly afterwards, in the spring of 1874. Never can I forget the agony that overwhelmed me, a boy of

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fourteen, when I first saw my father lying dead, and realized, all in one terrible moment, that he, my constant companion, who had been so animated, responsive and gay, would neither move nor speak nor laugh with us any more, and though I might call my loudest there would be no answer. That too has left its mark. The wound aches to this day.

In the school holidays I accompanied my father on some of his business journeys, always with instructions from my anxious mother to telegraph if anything went wrong with him, visiting most of the industrial towns in the North and becoming familiar with the atmosphere of commercial rooms in the hotels. I became familiar also with the types of commercial traveller as he then roamed about the land. These, in my classification, were mainly two. The one consisted of tippling, poker-playing, whoremongering sons of Belial whose conversation was not edifying to the ears of adolescence, but overheard and noted nevertheless. The other and, I think, less numerous variety was elderly, grave and godfearing, some being men of substance, partners in important firms, who did their own travelling and formed a kind of fraternity calling itself "brothers of the road." My father was one of them. They held aloof from the sons of Belial, avoiding the hotels they frequented. I remember one of these "brothers," a delightful old gentleman, who offered to adopt me, promising all sorts of "advantages," travel abroad, University education and I know not what else. My father informed him that I was not for sale. I am glad the deal never came off. Heaven knows what bad end I might have come to had all the advantages promised by the old gentleman been given me for nothing. It was a Brother of the Road who tended my delirious father in that appalling journey from Plymouth to Nottingham in 1874 and brought him home, alive but dying. I have forgotten his name, but his memorial is with God.

The maintenance of the home after my father's death devolved on my mother. She did needlework of the kind demanded in those days, being an expert in that department; stitch, stitch, stitch till the late hours of the night, the old story

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of a woman left to fight the harsh world with a needle and thread. Unspeakably sad to me is the memory of that fiery soul, that powerful intellect subdued to such an element, and both lodged in so frail a body; the fine face turning haggard, the black hair grey thinning, and the delicate hands wearing to the bone. Unspeakably sad but beautiful also, and indelibly stamped on my memory, is the image of her small figure, daintily clad in black silk, going out silent and alone every Sunday to lay a handful of flowers on my father's grave. Unspeakably sad; but a shining example that has saved me more than once from cowardly surrender, and shines before me still, so that the weight of years grows light when I think of it.

My two sisters, half educated as they were, went out as governesses, with dissolute men in pursuit of them. My brother was fortunately able to bring some help. He inherited his father's wonderful hands and skill in penmanship, which with him took the form of writing shorthand with unheard-of rapidity, a gift which became known while he was still an apprentice and brought his services into much request by London and other newspapers for the accurate reporting and transcription of important political speeches. He became rather a figure in the reporting world, and his fellow reporters would be constantly in our house. I am glad not to have grown up in ignorance of the reporter's life and its conditions. I judge it to be a hard life. It killed my brother when his literary powers were at the point of bursting into flower, as commercial travelling had killed my father a few years before. Great are the vicarious sufferings allotted to the sons of men!

My brother Leonard was one of the strangest characters I have ever encountered, an enigma I am unable wholly to solve. He was something of the fine gentleman, elegant in appearance, elegant in speech. True to the tradition of the Steeres, he was always faultlessly dressed, as my mother was, though there was so little for her to dress. Outside the home everybody fell under his charm; women adored him. But something had gone wrong, and I think the error was my father's. He had

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pitched his hopes for Leonard too high. He was to be the genius of the family. So he, who needed no forcing, was forced and disciplined too rigidly, tutors for this, tutors for that. Much of what he was taught he would not learn; much of what he learnt he was not taught. The boy was stubborn, rebellious and resentful of the discipline enforced on him, with the natural result that his resentment turned against his father who enforced it. It became reciprocal; on the one side, the resentment of a son to an exacting father; on the other the resentment of a father to a wayward son. There were explosions, interchanges of bitter speech and scenes, best forgotten, when fiery tempers were aflame on both sides.

The evil was not confined to the relations of the two. Regarding the rest of us as on his father's side, which we not always were, he turned against us, held aloof, kept himself to himself and lived his own life. His affections and charming manners were bestowed on others; his antipathies and angry moods were for us. He was no snob, and yet so elegant a creation seemed out of place in a home such as ours then was. Yet he was loyal to it. But for the help that he furnished it would not have survived the day of misfortune.

In one sense these unhappy conditions turned out to my own benefit, for my father, recognizing when it was too late the mistake he had made with the eldest of his children, avoided it with the youngest. Moreover it taught me a warning lesson, to which my mind has constantly recurred in later life, especially when I had to consider the place of discipline in education. But it was a tragic affair, which I would rather had never been than that I should now be claiming a benefit derived from it. *Of* how many evil things may not the same be said! Do we not often feel ashamed in confessing they have done us good—that we stand only because we have been made wise by another's fall? When the children of the millennium remember the cost in human suffering at which their perfect happiness has been achieved will not a cloud pass over the sun and an end come to the perfection?—But to proceed.

6

WE TAKE A PAYING GUEST

"We do not understand our experience till it has become past history"

AT THE time of my father's death I was the prize-boy of University School, and a person of great importance in my own estimation. But school bills were in arrear, and there was no prospect of paying either them or their successors, my father's estate, when debts had been deducted, being less than nothing. Notice to leave at the end of the term was accordingly sent in and steps taken to start me in life as an office boy. Whereupon that true Christian and noble-hearted man, the Rev. George Herbert, promptly informed my mother that the bills were cancelled and no more would be sent in however long I remained at the school.

Then came a catastrophe, the memory of which is bitter even to this day. A week or two after my father's death I had to sit for the School Certificate, or whatever was the equivalent in those days, at which I was expected to win great glory for the school. Shattered as I was on losing my father, how deeply shattered you would hardly believe, I went to pieces in the examination room and failed *in totol*¹ But what a lot of good that did me, conceited prig that I was! A blessing on the examiners who ploughed me! A blessing also on George Herbert, to whom it was a bitter blow, as any schoolmaster will understand, but without difference made in his kindness to me. To him I owe it that I did not start in life as an office boy, but had around me, for some years to come, the influence of a good man—much needed by me.

Presently there came some relief to our *res domi*, then *angusta*

¹ To do myself justice I may say that next year I rehabilitated myself in a very satisfactory manner.

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to the limit of stoic endurance, that being a period when there was nothing to be got out of the public purse in the way of pensions, state scholarships and all the rest. My mother took in a paying guest. And who should the paying guest be but my father's crony, Sam Collinson, stockbroker and verse writer, Unitarian by denomination, a regular attendant at the Unitarian Chapel in the High Pavement where he sat at the feet of that notable breaker of idols, and prophet of the One God, the Rev. Richard Armstrong. Do you wonder at my mother, with her calvinistic antecedents, admitting so dangerous an clement into her household? Well, my mother, as I have said, had a lively intellect, known many disillusiones, suffered more than her share of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune and learnt by bitter experience that all her pullings of the emergency cord would not stop the train, whether in church or in chapel. She had travelled far, and by a thorny road, from the days when, as a wicked little sprite, she sat among the black-haired Steeres in Zion Chapel and caught the eye of the red-haired boy in the pastor's pew; had become, in fact, very much of a stand-no-nonsense person in religion and in everything else. And so it came to pass that on her way up the High Pavement to St. Mary's Church she would sometimes stop short at the Unitarian Chapel and turn in to hear what the Rev. Richard Armstrong had to say about the corruptions of Christianity or the rational basis of Theism. She felt no alarm therefore when our paying guest, a bearded man of sixty, began to take an interest in the now chastened prig, whose adolescence was prompting him to ask questions, and raised no objection when he placed Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* in the boy's hands, and bade him read it diligently—which he did. She had read it herself and thought it a very fine book. How different the course of my life would have been had our advertisement for a paying guest been answered by some other than Sam Collinson!

My religious education at this period was a confused and confusing affair. At school was my kind headmaster, George

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Herbert, hoping for my conversion, instructing me in evangelical divinity to correspond, and I receiving the Divinity Prize from Bishop Mackenzie, with significant admonition to devote my talents to the service of God. At home was our paying guest, Sam Collinson, lending me *Literature* and *Dogma* and quoting the Rev. Richard Armstrong on various topics. Then there was a High Church curate at St. Mary's who got hold of me and had me to tea with him every week with designs on my confirmation, and I think baptism as well, with much talk about "the Church.," previously thought of by me as only a manlier institution than Chapel, but exhibited by him in quite a different light, which showed that outside of it there was *nulla salus*, all of it utterly at variance with the George Herbert, Richard Armstrong and Sam Collinson views of the universe. To make confusion more confused I, being now sixteen, fell desperately in love with a heavenly vision seen in church, having two long plaits of golden hair down the back of it, and a hat with a scarlet feather on the top. This, though I knew it not at the time, was a dominant influence. Had I seen that vision, or any other like it, in the Unitarian Chapel instead of St. Mary's Church I should have joined Sam Collinson's denomination without more ado. As it was I continued to attend St. Mary's Church with a regularity that never failed, and the High Church curate's hopes for me mounted high.

So much for my religious education at the critical period of adolescence. As to the secular part of it—the distinction between which and the religious was sharp in the seventies, though it has long vanished from my way of thinking, insomuch that the heavenly vision just spoken of now seems to me no more secular than religious—as to the secular part I was being prepared by George Herbert to sit for a scholarship at Cambridge, his notion being that I was destined for the Church, but in the Low rather than the High department to which the curate was steering me. Looking back on the confusion I now see clearly that the elements most active in it came from our paying guest, Sam Collinson, and from the heavenly vision in St. Mary's Church.

7

I FIND A JOB

"No man has the right to say 'be damned' to the means by which he earns his living"

I H A D to be fed and clothed as well as educated and the knowledge that I was a burden on my mother weighed upon me continually. Secretly I began looking out for a job, at which I could earn my keep, and presented myself for appraisal at the offices of various firms in the Nottingham lace trade, where I would be told either to go to the devil or to call again next day, when Mr. So-and-So would be in. Calling on one next day when Mr. So-and-So, a German Jew, was in, I was informed that he liked the cut of me and would start me on a road which, if I copied his example, would end in my becoming a rich man. Suspecting a trap and fearing I might fall into a den of thieves, for I had been reading about Fagin in *Oliver Twist*, a hero with whom I felt a certain kinship, I declined the offer and was left to follow other examples than that of the German Jew.

Shortly afterwards I heard that an usher was wanted in a North country private school and having already tried my hand as a sort of pupil teacher under George Herbert and been told by that good man that I was cut out for teaching, I applied for the job, got it, said goodbye to University School, and to the heavenly vision in St. Mary's Church, but only to be haunted by another in the North country as soon as I got there, and by others after that. I was under seventeen at the time, but looked older, having trodden a hard road since my father's death.

I had acquired two accomplishments at University School which I must not omit to mention, since each has had

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something to do with making me what I am. The school had a tradition for the proficiency of its pupils in elocution. George Herbert, himself a fine elocutionist with a magnificent voice, took great pains with me in that department, teaching me to speak my mother tongue distinctly, an accomplishment not possessed, I have lately observed, by many young gentlemen whose education at Eton and Christ Church has cost their fathers thousands of pounds, but whose vocal language bears more resemblance to the hissing of serpents or the hobble-gobble of turkey cocks than to the intelligible articulation of Englishmen. The second accomplishment I owe to a bibulous drill sergeant, named Maloncy, an Irish veteran of the Crimean war. He drilled us on military lines and was exceptionally thorough in teaching the bayonet exercise. This he affirmed to be the foundation of British greatness and its safeguard for all time, explaining how it had saved the Battle of Inkerman and illustrating the thesis by showing us how he himself, after parrying the bayonet of a Russian soldier, had finished him off with that upper thrust he had taken such pains to teach us. In addition to these accomplishments I was fairly well grounded in the classics and the mathematics, which were taught in alternating lessons, according to the advice of Dr. Johnson who, when asked with which of the two a boy should begin his education, replied, "Sir, while you are debating on which of the two your boy shall begin, another boy will have learnt them both." I was that other boy. I might well have won a scholarship at Cambridge had not all that been brought to an end by my sudden resolve to be no longer a burden for food and clothing on my frail but indomitable mother, who would have killed herself with hard work rather than let me go short of either. George Herbert was bitterly disappointed; but I think I did right.

For five years after that I wandered from school to school, all privately owned, finding each of them, except the last, which was at Upper Norwood, quite intolerable, and realizing to the full whatever truth there may be in the ancient adage

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"whom God hates he makes a schoolmaster." Certain am I that God, though he might love me (and there is evidence that he did), hated such schools as those I worked in, of which there were many at that time and may still be some. In one of them, near London, I was so miserable that I came very near embarking on desperate courses. The idea of enlisting had been put into my head by a fellow master who, when he was in his cups, had confided to me that he was a deserter from Her Majesty's 52nd Regiment of Foot. But let a veil fall over the rest of that episode and its sordid concomitants.

At the end of it all I could have testified that Dickens's attack on private schools, caricature though it be, is not unfounded. Of the amenities at Dothcboys Hall I had a taste; of Mr. Creakle's regime, a mouthful; and a convincing meal of Dr. Blimber's Academy for the Sons of Gentlemen. Among headmasters I encountered none so outrageous as Mr. Squeers or Mr. Creakle, but their treatment of education as a field for commercial enterprise reappeared in several under whom I served. Dr. Blimber I seem to remember in the flesh; ditto many of the ladies with whom Dickens adorns his picture of the private schools. The unfortunate Mr. Mell and Mr. Feeder, B.A., that "human barrel organ," were reproduced in two of my fellow assistants. Toots I knew well; Steerforth I also met and was able, unlike Mr. Mell, to settle my account with him in a very satisfactory manner. Of boarding-school evils, untouched by Dickens and too vile for caricature, I saw enough to enlighten me. It may be that my zeal as a would-be reformer of education, which flared up at a later period, as I shall tell in its place, owed some of its warmth to my varied experience in private schools.

The school that I hated most, and God cannot have loved, was a very select affair, a preparatory school, where the boys were rich mothers' darlings, and too young to have graduated in vice. The outstanding feature here was the "religious teaching," with which the darlings were dosed so unmercifully, morning, noon and night, that I am inclined to fear that

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many of them have since turned out badly—though this, according to the pessimists, is what we all do. The very punishments were tainted with the odious thing. Fancy punishing a boy by making him write out the Beatitudes ten times! And all for what? Because while playing his games he had innocently let out a foul word picked up, *no* doubt, from his father's stable boy—the very word, in fact, with which I had once electrified the mid-Victorian ladies in my mother's drawing room. Do you tell me that to give the boy a thrashing for such an offence, which is what I got, is a brutal thing? I agree. But tell me next what punishment you propose to substitute. If your substitute be writing out the Beatitudes ten times, then, say I, your own portion shall be the whip! Yes, I would "lay leather on the backs of you" with all the strength remaining in this old arm! Mark it well, ye hypocrites! Your talk makes me sick. Think you that I have lived all these years among the sons of men without discovering, by experience in my own person, that more cruelty can be practised, and more injury inflicted on soul and body by your "non-violent" methods than by all the racks and thumbscrews in the torture chambers of the Inquisition?—But again I am wandering from the point. Oram I?

One effect of five years as an assistant master was to introduce a strain of the pedagogue into my composition, which subsequent experience has not entirely suppressed and can hardly fail to be revealing itself in the course of this confession. When analysed into its elements my schoolmaster life was a miserable experience and I am prone to say "be damned" to it all. But I have often found that experience which inclines me to pessimism when studied under a microscope has the opposite effect when viewed through a telescope. After all, the value of most things in life depends on the other things with which they are mixed—like the salt in our victuals or the "bitters" we put into sherry. But I must curb these lapses into sententiousness.

8

"MOTHER OF ORPHANS"

"An educated man is one who can do things in which he has never passed an examination"

AMONG THE saving influences of that dangerous period, for which I owe unbounded gratitude to God, and but for which I might easily have gone to the bad, and nearly did, I place first the heavenly visions, "Highland Mary" and the rest of them. Next in order comes London University—London University which, by opening its gates to "external students," has provided a way of escape for thousands of imprisoned souls, mine one of them: let all such bear testimony and thank God for London University.

I have already told how I thwarted the good George Herbert's efforts to steer me to a Cambridge scholarship and how, earlier, my father refused the offer of that benevolent Brother of the Road to smother me in "advantages," Oxford University and all. But there still remained London University, mother of impecunious talent, mother of them that have no "advantages," opening her arms wide and saying "Come ye that are unprivileged and unendowed, ye that have thin purses but good brains, come, and I will give you degrees. But let there be no mistake as to the terms. Not for nothing shall my degrees be given you. We will have examinations; they shall be stiff and cover a wide variety of subjects. My standards are high, my procedure rigorous and my examiners implacable as Destiny. Get knowledge how, when and where you will; prove to my examiners that you have got it; so, and not otherwise, shall any degree of mine, yes, even a pass B.A. be your portion. Self-taught or taught by others makes no differ-

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ence to mc; I care not who taught you, nor what the teaching cost your father, nor where you got it, in an ancient college with all the apparatus of learning about you, or all alone in a bed-sitting room at 125. a week and only a stinking gas jet to work by. My business is not with what you have been *taught*, but with what you have *learnt*, and to that alone shall my examiners direct their inquiries. Work hard then: scorn delights and live laborious days; and may God and Samuel Smiles¹ be your helpers!"

So spake that Mother of Orphans, the University of London, and to me, hungry orphan that I was, her speech was music sweeter than Apollo's lute; aye, sweet as the voice of Highland Mary, or whoever else may have then been carrying on her beneficent work. I responded, and with the help of God and Samuel Smiles worked as I have never worked before or since. In whatever school I might be teaching the leisure was scanty and the work hard. And hard too, in her way, was the Mother of Orphans, so that I must needs burn the midnight oil, or rise at unearthly hours, or spend my holidays in a bed-sitting room at twelve bob a week near the West India Docks, with sailors from the Baltic ports for my fellow lodgers and a stinking gas jet to work by at night. Matriculation, a brain-twisting affair in those days, and the examination that followed, were passed by mc with all sorts of honours, under these conditions.

Somewhere on that toilsome journey I had a breakdown, due no doubt to an overdose of Samuel Smiles. It took the form of sudden visitation by appalling terrors about nothing. Words cannot describe it. But I can say this: those ingenious interpreters of the wrath of God who painted hell, in the splendid west window of Fairford Church, as a place where grinning devils fry the damned on gridirons and toasting forks, would have painted it differently had they ever known what it is to be overwhelmed with the horrors that may come upon

¹*Self Help*, by Samuel Smiles, was a book of inspiring examples much read by industrious young men in my generation. Who reads it now?

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a young man for no worse offence than overtaxing his brain. But God mended me, and in due course, after some help from University College, I emerged into the glory of a B.A. with "honours," which later on I was to turn into the greater glory of an M.A., and that, mark you, not by payment of a fee, but as a reward for answers given to the stiffest questions hard-boiled examiners could devise. "Les grandes pensecs viennent du coeur" is not true of the examiners appointed by London University, or was not in the days when I was their victim.

Smile not, ye anointed sons of Oxford and Cambridge, ye who walk the groves of your Academy with stretched-out necks, mincing as ye go. Self-taught as I was—and how else can anything be effectively *learnt* in this world?—I could write a Cheek prose as well as some of you. It was only when I came later into contact with your lordships and you smiled at the want of polish, shuddered at the false quantities or the misplacement of an enclitic, that I lost interest and forgot the trick of it all. And hearken to this, O my masters: were you to read out those elegant Greek proses of yours in the hearing of Demosthenes or Plato, they might not smile or shudder, as you did at me, but they would certainly *laugh*, and laugh louder, I verily believe, at the "polish" of your performance than at the want of it in mine.¹

Judged by the standards I now apply to such matters, my academical education—if that can be called academical in which there was no academy—was shockingly defective and at points even vicious². Certainly it was not the education which produces either fine gentlemen or fine scholars. Of social life as it goes on in the Colleges of the older Universities and of training in the team work of athletics there was, of course, nothing at all—nothing, that is, for us orphans. Few of us, I imagine, can have become good mixers. The tendency rather was to make us hard, unsympathetic, self-absorbed and self-

¹In *As ne sire* E. F. Benson, himself a classical scholar, suggests that they would sound to the Greeks much as "Babu English" sounds to us.

²It should be understood that I am speaking here of the External Students as they were when I was one of them sixty odd years ago.

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assertive; for were we not intellectually self-made? Those who went into the nonconformist ministry, as a good many did, were of the kind that preaches dry sermons, like answers to an examination paper in theology, and quarrels with the congregation into the bargain.¹ To art we were entirely indifferent—no time for bothering with foolishness of that kind, it was not a "subject." Sitting for an examination at Burlington House with the Royal Academy open next door I never thought of going in to look at the pictures—though the shilling to be paid for admission may have had something to do with that. Some, especially among those taking scientific degrees, would have a turn for atheism and develop into hard-bitten intellectuals, contentious and argumentative, formidable writers in the *Freethinker* or the Rationalist Press, or perhaps would become prophets of some ethical creed, with a reminiscence of religion about it, the creed intellectually self-made, like the prophets. The majority I think became teachers in secondary schools, where they would be diligent drudges for the rest of their working lives, or becoming headmasters would be good organizers, but hard drivers of youth and apt to be tactless and overbearing on the human side.

There was one of these fellow orphans, an assistant with me in a London school, whose image rises up in memory as the most disagreeable man with whom I have ever come into contact. He was an intellectual monster with an enormous brain, his skull capacity reminding you of a two-gallon bucket. Degrees were his meat and drink and his appetite for them insatiable. Self-taught, like myself, but about ten years older, he had three to his credit when he joined our staff and was working up, as a private student, for the D.Sc., that inquisitorial masterpiece, to obtain which, it was said, you must have eaten not the fruit alone but the entire tree of scientific knowledge, and be able on demand to regurgitate any portion of it fancied by the examiners at Burlington House. He lived, moved and had his being in a desert of examinations, his out-

¹ I know of a few exceptions, enough to prove the rule.

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looks all sandy, the atmosphere about him that of the Sahara in a dust storm, and his general appearance not unlike the camel's. His voice had a snarling tone and the chief subject of his discourse, apart from examinations, was atheism, of which he was an accomplished exponent. Once, being in difficulties about the Differential Calculus, which was child's play to the monster, I asked him to help me out. He snarled a refusal. He had no time, he said; the D.Sc. examination was only a fortnight ahead. Of course he got his D.Sc. I wonder what became of him, for I have never heard of him since.

Strange that this man, with whom my contact was brief, should stand out so clearly in memory. Until this chapter was begun I had completely forgotten him, when, suddenly, as I wrote, his ugly head bobbed up from the waters of Lethe and the sound of his voice discoursing atheism came snarling down the years. Explain it, ye psychologists! Is it that he has been preserved in the Fourth Dimension and will go on, to all eternity, gobbling up degrees at London University, discoursing atheism and refusing to help me out with the Differential Calculus? Or is it, more simply, because he, of all the human beings I have hated, of whom I confess to a good many, is the one I hated most? But why, then, had I forgotten him in the interval? And why did I hate him so bitterly? He was not a scoundrel, like that other fellow master who had deserted from the 52nd Foot. He was only a specimen on the large scale of a type of which I was myself in a fair way to become a specimen on a small scale. Yes, that must be the reason for my hate.

Schoolmasters of this type, of whom you could find many specimens among the orphan graduates of London University of my time, have not been an unmixed blessing to the cause of education. Having won their degrees by brains, and by rapid penmanship in the examination room, they overvalued both, and becoming educators themselves continued to overvalue them in the schools, treating the brain of the pupil as the only part of his anatomy the schoolmaster has to do with, and having little use for the hand, except as a writing instru-

"MOTHER OF ORPHANS"

ment. For them the branches of the Tree of Knowledge were not branches growing on the tree and sharing a common life, but branches *sawn off*, tied up in a bundle of faggots called "the curriculum" and therefore dying or dead; they became "subjects"; "objects" only so far as they led on to getting a job. I remember another of my fellow orphans, who afterwards became headmaster of a grammar school and a well-known lecturer of the University Extension, with whom I travelled in the same carriage from Nottingham to sit for an examination at Burlington House. He was reading an Oration of Demosthenes, "rubbing it up" at the last moment before facing the examiners. As he finished each page he would tear it from the book and fling it out of the window, saying as he did so "Goodbye, Demosthenes: I shall see *you* no more."

This kind of thing was not, of course, confined to orphans of London University like my fellow traveller and myself. But it was characteristic of us. I have said we were self-taught; but it might be more correct to say we were self-crammed. All the same, to be self-crammed at one's own expense is no worse than to be crammed by somebody else at one's father's. Probably better. On the whole we have no reason to fear comparison, badly educated as we unquestionably were, and great as is the harm we have done to the education of others.

9

INTERLUDE IN GERMANY

"The most cruel wars are those between nations that were once allies"

TOWARDS THE end of the phase I have been describing I went off for some months to Germany as a help to recovery after my breakdown, having saved up a little money, for I was not badly paid, for that purpose. I chose the old University town of Gottingen, then made illustrious by the philosopher Lotze, and by other famous professors "full of New Testament criticism and lager beer." But it was not to drink or New Testament criticism that I went there, and in fact drank nothing from that stream; but I did drink of the lager beer which goes with it in those parts, and found it very good. I went to learn German, of which I had already crammed a fair book knowledge. My companion was T. L. Gihmour, a reporter emancipated from *The Nottingham Journal*, friend of my brother Leonard and for many years *thejodus Achates* of James Barric¹; readers of Mr. Mackail's biography will remember him. We lodged with a Frau Richart near the Geismar Thor, sallying thence on many adventures, the first I had had for several years.

There were two "pensions" in Gottingen more or less educational in outlook, for the male and female denominations respectively. We soon made contact with both. The inmates of the first were boys of eighteen or twenty from the English public schools, destined for the Army or the Diplomatic Service, one of them I remember being presumptive heir to a peerage, an athlete, who announced that if he failed to pass

¹ Barrie joined the staff of *The Nottingham Journal* in January, 1883, and wrote the weekly articles on topics of the day. This had previously been done by my brother who died in November, 1882.

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for diplomacy, as seemed likely, then, "damn it all," he would go in for the Church where a family living awaited him. Whether this attractive young gentleman went into the Church I am unable to say, but if he did, he may well have ripened into that good looking clergyman of the contemporary advertisement who is so assiduous in recommending the "Three Nuns" tobacco to his young friends. These boys were a lively lot, expert in various departments of daring and devilry, all "learning German," at least so their parents believed. They seemed however to be entirely indifferent to the German language, if not contemptuous of it, apparently deeming it a disgrace to be able to speak a word of a tongue so flagrantly un-British. But by no means indifferent to the inmates of the female establishment, which abounded in heavenly visions, enough to go the round of us all, myself included. This was my first contact with the Public School type, with the aristocracy—in the person of the young aristocrat just mentioned—and with the sisters of diest types, who were also "learning German" within eye-shot and sceret-notc-shot of the house where the young gentlemen had their headquarters. They would appear in all their charms at the English Service on Sunday mornings, which the male establishment also attended in full force, though there was nothing in the walk and conversation of either party on week days that could be easily connected with the Thirty-Nine Articles. For myself, not being a public school boy and being still in the Samuel Smiles tradition, I was not at all ashamed to be caught speaking German and learnt it moderately well. My instructor was a schoolmaster named Eulert whom I remember for his uncontrollable laughter at my mistakes, and for teaching me the ritual of a beer drinking club to which he introduced me. He taught me among other things, not too edifying, how to play a game called "Der Graf von Luxembourg," a kind of dart game played to music, in which he who lost, as beginners always did, had to pay for lager beer all round.

Among the remembered incidents of that time there is one

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which I found useful as an illustration later on when I became a professor of philosophy.

We arranged a cricket match to be played on some open ground near the military barracks. There was a considerable number of spectators to witness the novel performance. Among them was a German professor, an anthropologist, who held a theory that popular games have their origin in the ritual practice of primitive religions and hoped, no doubt, to get some light on the matter from our proceedings. When the game was over he requested an explanation of its principles, which he said had greatly puzzled him, as indeed they well might; and I, as the only member of that German-learning team who had learnt any, had to answer his questions. Now, if you want a test for your powers of explanation, try them on explaining the rules of cricket in a language you have imperfectly mastered to a logically-minded foreigner who has just seen a cricket match for the first time. Never have I endured a more gruelling examination than the one I got from that German professor on the ground behind the military barracks. There was something fixed in his mind which prevented my explanation from being intelligible to him, "*leh verstehe nicht*" being the constant response to my efforts. At last I discovered where the snag lay. His difficulty was concerned with what he called "the economy of run-power," which seemed to his rigorous mind entirely vicious and absurd. Why, when the ball was hit to the boundary, were the batsmen, who didn't run at all, credited with four runs, while the fielder, who had run a life and death race with the ball, half across the field, and been *halb-gchorsten* at the end of it, credited with not one? Why, again, when one or two runs were to be had, did the batsmen run between the wickets as though *der Teufel* were after them, whereas when four were to be had, they remained immovable and chatted with the umpire, while the fielder, who got nothing for his pains, ran as though *der Teufel* were after him "*Es ist ja unbegreiflich!*" In short there was no conceivable *Weltanschauung*, not even a British one,

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into which such rank nonsense (*lauter Unsinn*) could be fitted.— This incident, as I have said, often came back to mind when, as a teacher of philosophy, I was urging my pupils not to trust appearances too far, and to distinguish between the spectacular and the important. And in connexion with other things too. No wonder we are at war with Germany.

On the whole I came back from Germany wiser than I went, though that is not claiming very much for myscH in the way *of* wisdom. I was then twenty-one.

10

TURNING-POINT IN MY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

"The deepest joy of life is to emerge victorious from a moral conflict"

As EVERY schoolmaster knows to his sorrow, much teaching goes on from which no learning results, the difference often being due to the stupidity or inattention of the pupil—a cause of the alleged "failure" in our educational system which should not be overlooked in discussions of that topic. Even when the subject taught is nothing more controversial than the multiplication table, the pupil may fail to learn it, and often does. But if he learn it, or any part of it, he will learn what he is taught and not something else. That 7 times 9 make 63 will be accepted without criticism and, when once learnt, there is no reason to fear that subsequent experience will incline him to regard it as not true, though of course it may be forgotten. The same holds of the exact sciences in general. Here the difference between what the pupil *learns*, if he learn anything, and what he is *taught* is at the minimum.

The difference is apt to be much greater where the humanities are concerned, especially if religion is regarded as one of them. Here too the pupil may fail to learn what he is taught, through stupidity or inattention; but even if he learn everything you teach him there is no certainty that he will not unlearn it later on, regard it as untrue and possibly react to the opposite. The more intelligent he is the greater the likelihood that he will criticize what he is being taught, either then or afterwards. You cannot be sure of his reactions.

In my own case, which must be a common one, I had no sooner become an adult than I began to unlearn what I had

MY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CONTINUES

been assiduously taught as a boy and to learn, not indeed its opposite, but something very different. My religious teachers hoped, no doubt, that my mind would remain fixed all through life in what they had taken such pains to teach me, just as it has remained fixed in what I was taught about 7 times 9. The actual effect, however, was to provoke reactions away from their lessons and towards something else.

All that has been said about the importance of Adult Education needs doubly underlining when Religious Education is in question. Religious Education is obviously lifelong. Continuity is therefore essential. No greater mistake can be made than to give young people religious teaching which the subsequent experience of life is unlikely to sustain.

Everything in my experience, whether catapulting birds in the Gcdling fields," swotting" for examinations in abed-sitting room, pursuing heavenly visions, explaining cricket to a German professor or studying German philosophy, has had something to do with my religious education, my religion at the present moment being nothing else than the outcome of varied experience in the sum total of more than eighty years. But I am now going to speak of my religious education in the current sense or. the term—the sense in which it is understood by those who are now advocating in *The Times* newspaper and elsewhere that the education of the young after the war (why "after"?) whatever else it may be, *must* be religious.

At the period to which I have now come, two converging streams of tendency were flowing strong, one in Nottingham, the other in London. I will deal with them in that order.

This was the time when there was something in the atmosphere of my home in Nottingham which still causes me to feel, when I read about the Brontes¹, that I am familiar with the conditions in Haworth Parsonage. Whether or *no* David Hume was right in contending that our ideas arc compounded out of a raw material of sensations, it is certain that ideas, however they may arise, give birth to feelings of their own

¹See page 13.

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entirely different from anything of which they can have been compounded and, contrariwise, may "feel" alike when the components are different. Thus, as I have said before, the idea retained by memory of my home as it was at this time, considered as to the separate features of it, differs at many points from my idea of the Bronte home when similarly analysed. And yet the "feel" of the two is the same.

The two situations had something in common, though it may be hard to define. I think it lies in the fact that the inmates of both these homes were spirits in prison. That is certainly true of my mother who, more than all the rest of us together, made the atmosphere of the home what it was. To her it could not be said "thou hast been one, in suffering all that suffered nothing . . . that fortune's buffets and rewards hast ta'en with equal thanks." Her part in our little drama was Hamlet's, not Horatio's. She suffered all and she suffered much: not one, she, to take the buffets and rewards with equal thanks. She had a powerful intellect, one of the keenest I have encountered in woman, but incessantly preoccupied with the problem of making both ends meet, which she accepted as a duty, solving it triumphantly. She was in continual rebellion against the elements, some of them sordid, in which her life was immersed, constantly dwelling on the might-have-beens, on a lover lost in youth, on the fate of her brother Joseph, ever hoping, but hoping in vain, that escape would come at last. Her hopes were largely centred on her eldest son, my brother Leonard, in some respects the most promising of her children, the counterpart to Branwell Bronte, without his vices. But he was suddenly stricken with mortal disease and died (1882) in the first blossoming of his promise.¹ Later on there came some relief to my mother's circumstances, but it came too late. She died frustrated. But that is not the last word. For she had done what she had determined to do. She had kept the home together when, but for her, we should have been homeless. Not frustrated then, but victorious in a deeper sense. Are we not here on tragic ground?

¹ He had just published "The Great Mouses of Nottinghamshire," descriptive and historical. He was a welcome guest in great houses.

MY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CONTINUES

We shared the frustration, but with the difference made by youth, and by the high spirits of which we had abundance. These helped to carry it off lightly, but intensified our moments of rebellion. We might be compared to wild creatures confined in a cage, tamed to all appearance, but continually looking about for means of escape and sometimes beating fiercely on the bars. Of the *anima naturaliter christiana* there was nothing in any of us, except a trace in my younger sister, the Anne Brontë of the group. The old Adam was strong, our passions were lively and our tempers hot, but all repressed by circumstances, or restrained by the instinct of "respectability" common to the middle class, at least in those days. I think it was fortunate that we were poor. Had advantages been showered upon us they might have proved drawbacks, or worse; as it was, we turned some of our drawbacks into advantages. Looking back down the long perspective of the years, my vision of it all is coloured, no doubt, by the intervening media. But the outlines are fairly clear. I see many things that are painful in retrospect, and much to regret, especially my own selfishness. But many of those sorrows have since been transmuted into joys and some of those evils into good. I see "virtues that would be proud if our faults whipped them not, and crimes that would despair if not cherished by our virtues." On the whole I thank God that it was as it was.

I am trying to tell something of my religious education and what I have just told is the background of the story. It accounts for the fact that my acceptance or rejection of what has been offered me in the way of religious or theological teaching has been largely determined by an underlying sense of the tragedy of life. Doctrines and philosophies might be taught me and were taught; some based on authority, some *on* reason but, if they failed to fit in with that background, they *felt* wrong and I could never *learn* them, could never assimilate or believe them. You might convince me that charity is the greatest of virtues—that felt right—but you could never convince me that the universe is a charitable institution; I seemed

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to know instinctively that it was not. I must needs *taste* that the Lord is good as well as *see* it, and taste before I saw.¹ It is true of philosophies as of single ideas, that however complete the dismissal of feeling in the construction of them, and however sternly based on "reason," each has a distinctie/ of its own, and evokes feeling in those to whom it is offered, the "lie in the soul" being, so I judge, not so much a defiance of the reasoning on which they are based, as a defiance of the feeling they evoke, of the taste they yield, as right or wrong. For me it would be "a lie in the soul" to profess belief in any religion or philosophy which failed to harmonize with my underlying sense of the tragedy of life, bred in me by the conditions of my youth. In such reactions the whole man is involved, and not his reason² alone.

Thus if you told me that the creation is "good" in virtue of some "divine far-off event" to which it is slowly moving forward, my first thought would be "how tragically slow the movement is, how tragically long the journey, how tragically enormous and long drawn out the sufferings of humanity on the march," and I would immediately suspect you were offering me a gingerbread consolation. What gingerbread it seems at this moment as I listen to the sound of German bombs bursting in the distance! A man of sorrows I have never been; but I am acquainted with grief, the acquaintance having begun quite early in life. I know also what it is to be a spirit in prison. And though the griefs and imprisonments of my early life in Nottingham are but an infinitesimal drop in a vast ocean of such endured by the whole creation, I deem them a fair specimen, so that, were you to analyze the drop, you would find the constituents the same as if you were to analyze the entire ocean.

When later on I became a minister of religion I never had a very large congregation. People used to say my sermons were hard—meaning "harsh." It was probably true, and perhaps a

¹ "O, taste and see that the Lord is good." Psalm 34, 8.

² "A lunatic," says G. K. Chesterton, "is not a man who has lost his reason: he is a man who has lost everything except his reason."

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reason why I ought not to have been a minister at all. But, being what I was I should have been wholly false to myself had I preached a Christianity with the gingerbread flavour.

My holidays during the school-teaching period, when not given up to "swotting" for examinations in a sailors' lodging house up the Mile End Road, which was exceptional, were spent at my home in Nottingham. And here I came into contact with that excellent man, our paying guest, the stockbroker poet, Sam Collinson, Unitarian.¹

My knowledge of Unitarians at this period may be summed up as follows. I had heard one of my chapel-going relatives remark that Unitarians were worse than atheists, and would all go to hell as a matter of course. From another source I picked up the information, whence I cannot remember, that they made remarkably good mayors and town councillors, and had wondered how that could be, since they were all to be damned. Lastly, and this was the chief item, my brother having been sent one day to report a speech by Dr. James Martineau, the famous Unitarian, came home in a state of enthusiasm rare in a reporter, declaring that the said Martineau was the most finished orator and had the most beautiful voice he had ever heard; to confirm which he took out his reporter's note-book and read out to my mother, I being present, a selection from the incomparable speech. Now, ever since the days when I imitated Gibbon and spouted orations in George Herbert's elocution class, I had had a weakness (common to our family) for oratory, and had got it into my head that speech-making was the noblest occupation of man; and the passage read out by my brother appealing to me as finer than anything I had so far imitated, I resolved that if ever the chance came my way I would go to hear this James Martineau, notwithstanding the doom awaiting him in the next world.

Such, at this date, was the sum total of my knowledge about Unitarians—(i) doomed to perdition, (2) good mayors, (3)

¹"Autumn Leaves" was the title of Sam's masterpiece (a volume of poems). I have read worse poetry by better known poets.

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fine orators, at least one of them. For the rest the Unitarians and their notions had occupied my thoughts in no manner or degree. The assistant masters with whom I had associated in the common rooms of the schools where I had served had always been either extremely vicious or extremely pious; I hated both, the pious especially; but neither the vicious nor the pious had been Unitarians. The University of London which had mothered me in my orphanhood had many Unitarians among its founders and promoters; James Martineau himself had once been candidate for a professorship at University College, and doubtless there were many of them among my fellow orphans in the examination rooms at Burlington House; but I knew it not and it would have meant nothing to me if I had.

Such was my weakness for oratory, that even while yet in my teens I had become an habitual sermon-taster. Let word be brought me that a good preacher was going anywhere in my neighbourhood and then, without thought given to what his theology might be, you would find me next Sunday in his congregation. I went to hear Canon Liddon at St. Paul's, Bishop McGee in Westminster Abbey, Charles Spurgcon in his Tabernacle, putting Spurgcon¹ at the very top of the tree—nor have I heard his equal since. Had you asked me, at the age of twenty, to state my religious views, I doubt if an intelligible answer would have been forthcoming; but if I had given a true answer it would have run somewhat thus: "My religion is the one which produces the most eloquent sermons and the most agreeable services." For I had my taste in services too, and could appreciate an eloquent prayer as well as an eloquent sermon, not perceiving, as I learnt to do later, that eloquent prayers are apt to be addressed, not to God, but to the congregation. All which is enough to show that, at all events, I was not a young atheist, though I might be a young fool.

Such are the stages to which my religious education had

¹James Martineau was occasionally found among his hearers. Somebody once asked him "Why do you go to hear Spurgcon when you don't believe a word he says?" "Ah," replied Martineau, "but *he* does."

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arrived when I came into close contact with that good man, Sam Collinson. But let it not be supposed that he at once set to work undermining my belief in the Doctrine of the Trinity. In the first place Sam was far too much of a gentleman to do any such thing; in the second I had no considered belief in the Trinity for Sam to undermine, but only a delight in the fine phraseology of the Niccnc and Athanasian Creeds and in rolling off the phrases with the rest of the congregation in St. Mary's Church, where the chanting was led by a first-rate choir. Moreover the Doctrine of the Trinity was not among the "subjects" on which I was to be examined by London University, which at that time were the "subjects" of most importance for me; it seemed just as good as any other doctrine, and better than those which were less eloquently expressed. No, Sam (who was "Mr. Collinson" in those days) said nothing whatever about it, nor about anything connected with it. It is true that when a young atheist, say a reporter friend of my brother's, turned up at our house and let out some ungodly remark at table, Sam would immediately come out strong on the side of the angels and put the blasphemer to silence. But his usual conversation was about other things, about Nature, art, literature, poetry (especially Tennyson) and architecture, all new "subjects" to me and opening out entrancing prospects in various directions. Never once by word or gesture did he try to wean me from believing what I heard in St. Mary's Church, but he did explain its architecture, to which I had never given a thought before, so that now, going there on a Sunday, I would be studying the arches and the windows, when I ought to have been listening to the sermon. I delighted in his conversation.

On Sunday mornings, our roads lying the same way, his to the High Pavement Chapel and mine to St. Mary's Church, we would walk into town together and coming to his Chapel, which was just short of my Church, it would occur to me that I might as well turn in there with Sam, and listen to the oratory he was sitting under. Going in, I would often find my brave

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little mother, who had started earlier than we, already seated in the pew and reading in the Unitarian hymn book, compiled by James Martineau, which she was very fond of, and much preferred, she would often say, to Hymns Ancient and Modern. I found the oratory very good in the High Pavement Chapel, though a trifle ponderous, better than the oratory in St. Mary's, which was tolerably good. And so did my mother. The "subjects" also were novel and, on the whole, more interesting: for example "the Influence of Greek Thought on early Christianity." Hitherto I had conceived of Greek thought as something that had to be translated into British thought by poor devils in the examination room and in which you either "passed" or got "ploughed." But this High Pavement orator, the Rev. Richard Armstrong (B.A., London) gave me a notion that Greek thought might help to make me less of an ass than I was, and might indeed have the same effect on all men. And so it came to pass that the High Pavement Chapel became in course of time a By-Path Meadow into which my mother and I got into the habit of straying instead of continuing on the straight road to St. Mary's Church.

I have said that Sam Collinson, being a gentleman, made no attempt to interfere with my religious beliefs—if "beliefs" and "religious" are what I may call them. But when he saw that I came of my own free will to hear and profit by the Rev. Richard's oratory, he did lend me Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma*. And with what result? No book since *The Cornpleat Angler*—no, not even the excellent cram-book I had used for examinations, likely questions on one side and answers on the other—had gripped me so completely. First of all there was the English, the style. What did it matter to me that people called Matthew Arnold "an elegant Jeremiah," as Sam Collinson had told me they did? What would not I have given to be half as elegant myself, even though it turned me into a Jeremiah? But that was not the chief. Here was something to think on. All that about "a Power-not-ourselves that makes for righteousness," for ever pressing in on all sides like the atmos-

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pherc, so that those who felt it, as the Hebrews did, must sing about it in Psalms and proclaim it in Prophecies and clothe it in myth and crystallize it into dogma and build it into churches of stone, aye, and into chapels too. Influence of Greek thought on Christianity? Why, without that pressure, there would have been no Christianity to be influenced; yes, and no Greek thought to influence it, for does not the book make it plain that "Hellenism" also had felt the impulse of the Power-not-ourselves? "Strange," I thought, "that the preachers in St. Mary's Church have nothing to say about all this. But I seem to have heard something like it from the Rev. Richard Armstrong. I wonder if *he* knows that the High Pavement Chapel, as well as St. Mary's Church, owes its existence to the Power-not-ourselves that makes for righteousness?"

This last line of thought I remember very distinctly. It got mixed up in a queer way with my interest in architecture, recently awakened by Sam Collinson. Whether in church or in chapel, I became attentive to the forms of building around me, and a thought would occur which might be formulated thus: "The builders of this place, whether they knew it or not, were egged on to build it by the Power-not-ourselves." This thought, repeating itself in whatever church or chapel I attended gave me the feeling that, fundamentally, religion was the same in all of them. That feeling, so oddly engendered, I still retain.

My mind, which has never been a very rigid one, being then in a plastic condition, this notion of Arnold's sank deep into the substance of it, where it has remained ever since, uneffaced by the subsequent experience of life. Being young I took it much to heart and reflected somewhat as follows: since the pressure of this Power, like that of the atmosphere, is upon everything and everybody, it must needs be pressing upon *me*. I ought therefore to feel it, to experience it, as Arnold says that everybody can and the Hebrews did. So I began looking out for signs of its action upon myself.

Now it so happened that about the time when *Literature and*

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Dogma got a grip on me, I found myself in one of those hot corners into which a youth with susceptibilities is apt to stumble. A bad girl—no heavenly vision, that one—was in rank pursuit of me and I, fool that I was, *on* the point of capture. The pull in that direction was tremendously strong, for the vision, though not heavenly, was attractive enough in the terrestrial way. But I was acutely conscious of a counter-pull. It was as though an inner sentinel, with musket at the ready, was warning me to keep off that ground and threatening to shoot if I advanced another step. This, mark you, at the very time when, in the grip of *Literature and Dogma*, I was looking out for indications that the Power was at work on *me*. Was there ever a luckier coincidence? "Ah," thought I, "there it is—the Power you get to know by *experience*, the Power nobody can get away from even though he fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, the Power that pressed on psalmists till they sang and on prophets till they prophesied, the Power that built St. Mary's Church and the High Pavement Chapel! I had better give in to the Power." Give in I did, and the bad girl disappeared from my life.—God mend us all!

Thank you, Mr. Collinson, up there among the Cloud of Witnesses, or perhaps standing invisible at my elbow, thank you, sir, for lending *Literature and Dogma* to that foolish boy at that critical moment. My old heart warms at the memory of you. To you I owe my first religious experience.

Of my other reactions to *Literature and Dogma* I cannot well distinguish at this distance between what happened then and what happened later. Not then, perhaps, but soon afterwards, it dawned upon me that Arnold's way of treating the Book of Authority as great literature and letting your mind "play freely" round its contents, if it should ever become the fashion, would cause a considerable upset in the Protestant religion, and even create some difficulties for that logical part of Protestantism represented at the High Pavement Chapel. At all events I had become Arnold's man and went on to read everything of

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lis that I could get hold of. A turning point had come in my religious education.

Such was the first of the two streams of tendency which were flowing at this time, the one in Nottingham. I turn to the second, which flowed in London.

II

SERMON-TASTING

"In the present age we attach too much importance to getting things said, too litde to getting them done"

A HAVE SAID that in these days sermons were my hobby, not without a dim notion that in due course I might be producing sermons of my own. Well, one day there came a friend of mine, himself an experienced sermon-taster, who informed me that there was a preacher going strong in the Bloomsbury district whose sermons would be well worth my tasting. He has tasted them himself, he said, with the result that for the time being all sermons save that preacher's seemed to him savourless. His name was Stopford Brooke, one that I had not heard of before. "What denomination?" I asked; for like Faraday when experimenting with chemicals I liked to know "what to expect" when experimenting with sermons. "I don't exactly know," said my friend. "Until recently he was in the Church of England, Queen's Chaplain, but he has resigned his Orders, Thirty-nine Articles and all that, and some people say he has become a Unitarian, though he doesn't say himself what he has become, but leaves you to find out. However he carries on in his sermons much as he used to, but drops the Creeds and cuts the wash-pot business out of the Psalms." "That's all right," I replied, "his being a Unitarian, if that be what he is, won't put me off. I've already heard several Unitarian sermons by the Rev. Richard Armstrong, and mighty good ones too." "Have you ever heard James Martineau?" he asked. "No," I answered, "but I've heard *of* him and mean to hear *him* if I get a chance." "You'd better," said my friend,

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"he's first-rate. Anyhow, meet me next Sunday at Bedford Chapel. Take the bus to Tottenham Court Road and get out at the end of Gowcr Street."

Bedford Chapel, a spacious but dingy place with galleries round three sides, was crowded when we arrived, and only after much waiting and beckoning of vergers were seats found for us, high up in the gallery where we had a good view both of preacher and congregation. Presently the preacher appeared, coming out from a side door at the rear of his surpliced choir. From that moment I was his man. Never had I seen so splendid a creature—an archangel, an Apollo with a head on him that any god on Olympus might have envied and eyes that flashed fire to every corner of the building. This, thought I, is not going to be dull, nor dry, nor stupid, nor hollow, nor feeble, like so many sermons I have tasted. It wasn't. There was meat on that bone; nay, a banquet for the hungry. The sermon was about Abraham and Lot, how, when they had to choose between the good land and the bad, Abraham, like a great and generous soul, gave Lot the first choice, and when Lot chose the best for himself, as your greedy ones always do, Abraham with a magnificent gesture (magnificently reproduced in the pulpit) bade him take it and go to the devil (the preacher didn't say that, but he meant it by his gesture) while he, Abraham, went forth by faith into the barren mountains, not knowing whither he went, Lot taking the low road, he the high, a pioneer of humanity through all the ages! Talk of tasting a sermon! I swallowed it in great draughts and was intoxicated—nay, not intoxicated, for that would mean there was poison in the draught, but exalted above myself. Unitarian? Who cares what the preacher is when he preaches a sermon like that? Not I, either then or afterwards. The hungry sheep would flock to that shepherd, no matter what he calls himself, nor what other people call him.

But there is another thing I must not omit.

As my friend and I walked away, our silence broken only by ejaculations, he presently said to me:

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"Did you notice that row of handsome girls in Liberty dresses sitting in the second pew from the front?"

"Of course I did. Who are they?"

"They are Stopford Brooke's six daughters."

"Oh!" said I.

That was sixty years ago. My wife is now sitting before me, recording these words with a typewriter as I dictate them. She was Number Four in the row of Six. For more than half a century she and I have travelled the same road, and are still travelling, the end of the journey not far off. Eight years after that vision of the Six under the gas lights of Bedford Chapel, we were married: thirty-five years afterwards I was writing the Life of Stopford Brooke, then lately dead, with a pile of his manuscripts before me, "Abraham and Lot" among them. Had a prophet foretold these things that Sunday evening in 1881, my amazement would hardly have been greater than it is at this moment in 1941, when memory has carried me back to the beginning of the long retrospect. Thus do acorns grow into oaks, and only God understandeth the way thereof.—Consider this, ye that predict the future; consider it, and keep silence!

The sermon on Abraham and Lot exalted me, I say, above myself, orphan of London University as I then was. Come what may, I would be like Abraham, going forth in faith on my adventures but not knowing whither I went, which God knows I have since done, with many a fall on the high mountains and many a lapse to the low country where Lot came to grief, but still going on, with Number Four beside me and the greatest adventure of all not far off, pilgrims between two eternities, as we all are.

Thus it was that my dim notion that one day I might be producing sermons, for other people to taste, began to shape itself into a more or less definite purpose to become a sermon-maker myself. As to what the sermons would be all about, my notions were of the foggiest. They would be sermons, that was the main thing, and just as eloquent as I could make them.

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Probably the first would be about Abraham and Lot, for I was still given to imitating my betters, though I could now do it less abominably than in the days when I imitated *Paradise' Lost*. Then too there was the Power-not-ourselves which had saved me from the bad girl: I could make a topping sermon out of that, wrapping it up so that the congregation would not suspect that I was talking either about a bad girl or about myself. And what about "denomination?" I still liked Church better than Chapel which I always associated with my great-aunt Vercoc, a born chapel-goer, who had been so unpleasant when I rubbed the cat's nose in the mustard. But I had read *Literature and Dogma*, and who could stand up to the Thirty-nine Articles after that? And as to the dissenting denominations, what -if *Literature and Dogma* were to sink them all, the Unitarians included, as it certainly would do (so I thought) if the dissenting mind, "playing freely" round the Book of Authority as the elegant Matthew recommended, began dissenting from *that*? Yes, it would be safer to avoid the denominations one and all. But how to become a sermon-maker without entering one or other? There was the difficulty. And yet here was Stopford Brooke preaching finer sermons than I had ever heard or tasted, preaching them to crowded congregations, but not telling anybody what denomination he belonged to—*looking*, it is true, like a clergyman of the Church of England, but not *preaching* like one, at least like none I had ever heard. The thing therefore was not inherently impossible. Anyhow it seems to have been written in the book of Fate, somewhere about this period, that I would never be a denominationalist. And I never have been.

In this dilemma I went off to Nottingham and laid the whole case before that wise gentleman, my friend Sam Collinson. "Have you ever heard of Manchester New College?" said he. No; didn't know there was such a place. Was it in Manchester? No, it had once been in Manchester but was now in London—called "New" for that reason. And James Martineau was the Principal of it. "James Martineau!" I cried. "Why, I'd go to

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the ends of the earth to hear *him!*" "It would be worth it," said Sam. "James Martincau is one of the greatest minds in England, if not the very greatest. Tennyson knows him." But it must be a Unitarian College, I objected. No, said, Sam, it was not that. The Unitarians had a lot to do with it, but it was undenominational on principle. The students were not required to subscribe to any particular dogma. "Something like *Literature and Dogma*" I put in. "Yes, something. But you go and ask Richard Armstrong about it. He was a student there himself."

So off I went to Richard Armstrong with an introduction from Sam in my pocket. I think the introduction must have described me as a rather promising young man, for I noticed that Richard, who had never heard of me before, after well looking me up and down, seemed to grow interested.

"The first thing you should realize, young man," said he, "is that though you may think you have a gospel to preach at the present moment you may find yourself with a very different gospel at the end of the College course, or possibly with none at all."

"I suppose they let their minds play freely in that College," said I, quoting *Literature and Dogma*.

"Yes. That's what they are supposed to do. The College is undenominational.

"Suppose, then, I decided, when I was there, to go into the Church, which I like better than Chapel, would they turn me out?"

"Not if I could prevent it," said Richard.

"And suppose I find myself with no gospel to preach?"

"The next step will rest with you."

What he then went on to say appears in my diary in a form almost identical in substance with a letter he wrote to Stopford Brooke after the public announcement that he had left the Church of England. This being the better version I will reproduce it as it appears in *The Life of Stopford Brooke* (p. 328).

Nottingham, September 29th, 1880.

I desire to express my gratification that you have not elected to join any ecclesiastical body, but retain an unlimited freedom of personal utterance.

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May I point out to you that this is precisely the position of the ministers of those old Presbyterian congregations which have now become independent in Church government and generally Unitarian in doctrine? As one of these, I have never been asked to subscribe or assent to any formula, I am subject to no doctrinal trust deed, I enter into none but purely personal and voluntary relations with any other Churches or individuals, and it is fully recognized by my people that my teaching is to be that which in the development of my own mind may commend itself to me, and that I am to conform to *no* other standard than that of my own conscience. You have been erroneously described as "joining the Unitarian body." This you could not do if you wished, for there is ecclesiastically no "Unitarian body" in this country, and there is no mode of "joining" even that group of Churches in which a Unitarian theology prevails, since their communion together is one of sympathy only, and is in no way formulated.

Now this was exactly what I was looking for. *Literature and Dogma* might sink all the other dissenting denominations, but not the Unitarian body, for the simple reason, as Armstrong said, that there was no Unitarian *body* to sink. It might sink *me* and leave me with no gospel to preach. But that would be my own affair.

As a relevant matter of fact, I may here interpose that *Literature and Dogma* helped to keep me afloat or, better, to give me a firm anchorage. The Power-not-ourselves was for many years the sheet-anchor at winch my frail bark rode well against storms and currents. Nor did that book, or any other, sink the Rev. Richard Armstrong. Within less than eight years after the conversation reported above he and I were the respective ministers of two important Churches, mine called a Chapel, in Liverpool; he a tried veteran, I a neophyte fresh from College, and far too inexperienced for the position I held; both of us unsunk and with our heads well above water. Of that more anon.

Thanks to Armstrong's assurances that I should not be entering the prison-house of a denomination and that my mind would be encouraged to "play freely" round the subjects of study, the upshot of it all was that I entered at Manchester New College, the way being made easy by the munificence of the

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College itself, due perhaps to Armstrong passing on to the College (where he was held in high consideration) Sam Collinson's affidavit that I was a promising young man. Dangerously easy I now think. If I could have my way, which I never have had in that matter and do not hope to get now, I would err on the side of making entry into the ministry difficult rather than easy.

I was delighted with the prospect before me. An important element of my happiness was the sense of liberation from what was now behind me, the drudgery of an assistant master's life and constant association with my fellow assistants, of whom the only one I liked was the deserter from the 52nd Foot, a scoundrel but kind-hearted. Now I should get into different company, the company of minds all playing freely round the most important of "subjects," professors and students alike, with James Martincau to lead the play, and Bedford Chapel five minutes' walk distant from the headquarters of the College in University Hall, Gordon Square. And then the "programme of studies" as set forth in the College prospectus, an appropriate professor to each, and James Martincau heading the list with the Philosophy of Religion, divided into I know not how many different heads and sub-sections. Was there ever such a programme! What brains they must all have! Why, London University with its stiff examinations will be child's play to all this! But *sursum corda!* With a mind playing freely, I can tackle it. And with such a galaxy of professors, each with portentous degrees after his name, to help me out! And with the whole day, yes, the whole term to do it in! No more swotting away till the small hours after a hard day's work in teaching stupid boys! No more fear of those horrible terrors and a breakdown! No more of that endless worrying things out for myself and getting wrong at the end of it all! These professors would put me right in a jiffy, would show me the trick of those Greek accents I could never get hold of, and though mathematics was not in the "Programme of Studies" one or other would be sure to have "done" them in getting those portentous degrees, and be able to give me a tip about the Differential Calculus,

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which I had found so difficult and was anxious to get on with. And James Martincau instead of Samuel Smiles for guide, philosopher and friend! Think of that! What oratory awaited me! How he would teach me philosophy, which I hadn't yet "done." How he would enlighten me about the Power-not-ourselves, which I had not "done" either, and only got to know of through reading *Literature and Dogma* and the accident of a bad girl starting it into operation. Such was the entrancing vision that danced before me. How entrancing only those can understand who have lived the life of an orphan graduate, whether of London University or any other, and earned his living as I had earned mine during my orphanhood.

But a blow awaited me on the very threshold, and the memory of it is bitter to this hour, so bitter that I would say nothing about it but for the fact that I am making a confession and not writing an apologia.

Great was the sorrow of George Herbert, my old school-master, my beloved benefactor, when I told him what I was going to do. He listened with a grave countenance and I could see that all his hopes for me, which were many, were being dashed to the ground. I told him that I might go into the Church after all and that the College would not prevent me: he said "The Church will have something to say to that. It won't want you when you come out of that place. You will never go into the Church." I told him about James Martincau. He said "A great man, no doubt. The more the pity!" I told him that the College was undenominational. He said "Impossible. They can't keep the balance." I told him that the College required no adhesion to any form of belief either from teachers or students. He said "What a mistake!" In reply to his question "How will you find the money?" I told him how munificent the College had been to me. He raised his eyebrows. His last words were: "All this looks very well on paper. But you will find a difference in the reality."

That interview affected me greatly and it affects me still. But the die was cast and I went on.

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My mother showed none of George Herbert's grief and was almost non-committal. "We shall see how it works out," she said. "The prospect of you becoming a parson doesn't appeal to me very strongly. As a class, I don't like parsons. You are not naturally pious, no one with the blood of the Stcercs in his veins ever was, and I hope you will never fancy you are, nor pretend to be." My mother had travelled far from the days of Zion Chapel.

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"No young man of twenty can give a good reason for rejecting the religion of his fathers"

THE RECORD of the years I spent as a theological student does me little credit. I cannot lay the whole blame on myself, though I lay a good deal of it there, and I am unwilling to lay any of it on the College Staff, whose kindness to me was great and from one of them quite extraordinary. I was disillusioned; perhaps my own fault that I was so. The dreams I have described on a former page were foolish: none the less I was disappointed with the reality. In fact I was out of my element, as my mother foresaw, as I would have been in any theological college, for the atmosphere in all of them is much the same. Whatever the principles of a theological college may be, it has an atmosphere not favourable to the "free play" of the mind round the subjects of study. My destiny, not very different in this respect from the destiny of other men, was to acquire religion (if any were acquired) through the experience of life, of which a critical instalment had already come to me in connexion with the bad girl. I do not forget that theological study is itself a form of experience, and a very interesting one. But in my case it operated rather by teaching me what religion is not, than by teaching me what religion is. And I confess that now, in my old age, listening to sermons, of which I was once so ardent a connoisseur, often has the same effect on me. That, say to myself, is what religion is *not*. The consequence is that now listen to very few and preach none¹, though I once preached many.—But here I am anticipating.

¹ Yet the thought occurs to me that I am preaching one now. Force of habit, of which we are all the creatures, more or less.

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Was I not a misfit? I often asked myself the question, and saw it in my mother's eyes when I went home for the vacations. But it was all for the best. To be in my element might not have been good for me at that time of my life, my "element" being then of a kind that I was better out of than in. I now see that the contradiction was salutary.

My performance in the studies of the College ranged from mediocre to bad, and reprimands for my deficiency were frequent. The method of teaching mainly consisted of delivering lectures at dictation speed, to be taken down in note books and afterwards reproduced in the examination room¹. I found it heavy going. Attendance being obligatory I would often sit through the dreary hour without taking a note, present in body, absent in mind, with the result that my reproduction of the lectures at the yearly examination was contemptible. Others more teachable, or better prepared for such teaching, were able to profit by it and rose to eminence in learning comparable to that of their teachers, perhaps highest in James Drummond, whose fine scholarship and quiet manners concealed a spiritual energy that flamed up at times in prophetic fire. Alas for the poverty of my response! Taught much I learned little. The scholar was more at fault than the school.

To Martineau's lectures I was more attentive. I enjoyed his splendid rhetoric, the echo of a sonorous soul. He was a great philosopher but not a good teacher of philosophy, at least not for such as I. He had an imposing system of his own, almost identical with Kant's on the ethical side, which he presented with a measure of hortatory eloquence, not encouraging us to think round it or beyond it. In particular he disliked our having anything to do with the Hegelian sorceries then prevalent at Oxford. Pantheism lay that way, with its empty Absolute and iridescent mist of vague ideals—no substitute these for the Personal God of the Christian religion. This may have been the best for some of us, but not for restless minds inclined to play freely round what they were being taught. He would

¹ I am speaking of the College as it was sixty years ago.

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often plunge us into difficult ratiocination for the understanding of which we had no adequate preparation. But even when I could not understand him, I felt uplifted by his presence, the vision of his magnificent head, the glow of his countenance and the sound of his beautiful voice. As he delivered his lectures, which he read at a normal speed, he would beat time to the rhythm of his language, or of his thought, with a great ivory paper knife. His philosophy, as he expounded it in his lectures, was an orchestration of many instruments, imaginative as well as intellectual, with an occasional drum-tap of humour: the paper knife was the conductor's baton. He spoke the language of the gods, all very splendid, but hardly good teaching.

It has been remarked that the great men of Unitarianism, Martineau, Thom, Drummond, Beard, Hargrove, and others I have known and revere, seemed made for a world larger than the Unitarian. I have heard them compared to lofty figures set upon pedestals inadequate to their height. If that be a true impression, as I think it is, Martineau is the outstanding instance. I account him among those for whom any parish less than the world would be too circumscribed. But who has believed his report? His "Way out of the Unitarian Controversy," a way clearly open, remains untrodden. The effort he made with Sir George Cox in 1887, and the Bill he drafted for "a Federal Union of all the religious bodies under the name of the Church of England," came to nothing. All Unitarians honour his memory and acclaim him a Master in Zion and a great leader; but when he offered to lead them in a critical moment of their history, they would not follow. Jane Welsh Carlyle, sitting next to him at a dinner party in Liverpool, where she often met him, once said: "Mr. Martineau, why don't you come out of all that?" He shook his head mournfully and said something about "loyalty to old friends." So long as the Voice of Duty bade him remain where he was, he was in his right place.

Come one, come all; this rock shall fly
From its firm base, as soon as I.

That was his view of the matter and it was enough.

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He too, as I soon perceived, was a prophet of the Power that makes for righteousness. But the language was different and more remote from the common levels of my own experience. To be in his presence was, for the neophyte, to be in contact with a nature higher than his own, evoking the desire to follow, but often compelling the cry "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man;" a double effect, which he had upon me as a young man and his remembered image still retains.

In some respects, I am inclined to think, my reactions were not so salutary. That in him which had the splendour of the eagle's flight, when passed through the medium of lesser personalities, came out at the other end as something dreary, pedestrian and uninspiring. He might be compared with a noble wine which suffers no dilution with water and becomes, on the least dilution, insipid and unrefreshing. This was a danger to those of us who, like myself, had a turn for imitation. Fortunately, in my own case, I was imitating Stopford Brooke at the time when I was imitating Martineau, and the two imitations, both absurd, tended to cancel each other out. They might copy the sound, but not the sense.

We had in the College a Debating Society, at which Martineau always summed up. The meetings were largely attended by the outside public for that reason, lie being over eighty and seldom to be otherwise heard in public. His speeches lasted about a quarter of an hour. It is a thousand pities they have not been preserved. They were the most perfect specimens of impromptu oratory I have ever heard. His gorgeous rhetoric left aside, save for a rolling phrase or a fine image here and there, he would pour out a stream of the purest and simplest English, which came from him as easily as the song comes from a bird—and all in that wonderful voice of his. However confused or trivial the other speakers had been, he would find something important in what they had tried to say, weave it all into an orderly sequence of thought and end at the right moment with a definite conclusion which, whether the hearer agreed with it or not, left him, as Shakespeare's finest dramas

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do, with a feeling that the debate was really ended—"the rest was silence."

As to the undenominational character of the College, which as set forth on paper had attracted me so strongly, the reality seemed to confirm George Herbert's comment: "impossible. They cannot hold the balance." The balance, as I found it in those days, was overwhelmingly weighted on the Unitarian side, nor could I observe any counter-balance in the other scale. The members of the staff were all Unitarians and so was the governing body. Though we were theoretically free to move in other directions there was little disposition to take them. We were on a definite road in a definite company, free indeed, to turn aside, but without motive to do so, and faced by the prospect of being lost in the wilderness if we did. Not that this disconcerted me; it merely caused some surprise. Ever since *Literature and Dogma* and the experiences connected therewith I had been virtually a Unitarian (as I still am)¹ but without knowing it. The experience of being among Unitarians who did know what they were, and attached much importance to it, was entirely novel to me, but I soon fell into their ways and found it easy to go forward on their road, the more so because the other roads became closed to me.

University Hall, where we lived, was a general hostel for students of many kinds, and occupied only in part by Manchester New College. The Warden was Henry Morley, Professor of English Literature in University College, a man greatly beloved by me, under whose wise and genial administration the Hall was filled to capacity with an extremely interesting group of student types—Indian Civil, medical, engineering, scientific, Slade School and I know not what else. There were some journalists also, and a few foreigners both European and Oriental. My chief friends were "Indian civils" and "medicals"; of the former several have since risen

¹ Addressing a Conference of Unitarians at Leeds in 1888, Martineau made the following statement: "If anyone, being a Unitarian, shrinks on fitting occasion from calling himself so, he is a sneak and a coward. If, being of our catholic communion, he calls his chapel or his congregation Unitarian, he is a traitor to his spiritual ancestry, and a deserter to the camp of its persecutors."

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to high position in India and figured in her history; among the latter I well remember the present Lord Dawson. Another friend was F. G. Bylcs, afterwards a notable figure in Yorkshire journalism. The social life of an undergraduate in an Oxford or Cambridge College, a priceless thing, formed no part of my education; but I had compensation for the loss in the contact I enjoyed for four years, and a vital contact it was, with students of many different types and of gifts so varied. There were some black sheep among them too. But I have learnt much from black sheep as well as from white, "knowledge of good, bought dear by knowing ill." What knowledge has a value comparable to that? And what is bought at so high a price?

The question may well be asked—indeed I am asking it myself at this moment—"the College having refrained from expelling you as a rebel, why, since you were out of your element, did you not expel yourself, get out of it and go elsewhere?" The answer is not easily given but, as well as I can piece it together, would run as follows.

1. Save the wilderness there was no "elsewhere" to which I could go. And the wilderness is not attractive to a young man without private means and no pretensions to be a hero.

2. Though out of my element among theological students I was more nearly in my element among the other students I have mentioned.

3. While neglecting the studies prescribed by the College, or at least some of them (which I admit was wrong), I was busy, with a mind playing freely, in other studies prescribed by myself. In particular I was studying philosophy under Professor George Croom Robertson of University College whose own philosophy attracted me far less than Martincau's, but who was a better teacher of that "subject," indeed the best I have known, making it more of an "object" than a "subject" and stimulating the minds of his pupils to think freely round what he was teaching them. With the reluctant consent of my own College, which gave me some exemptions for the purpose, I was

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studying for the London M.A. in philosophy, with Croom Robertson to help me in getting it. Under Croom Robertson you were not merely *taught* philosophy (Martineau's way) you *learnt* it, which is quite a different thing, and the difference between good education and bad in every "subject" under the sun. To have lost Croom Robertson's teaching would have been for me an unspeakable calamity, and I should have lost it had I expelled myself.

4. Strange as it may seem after what I have said about my College misdemeanours, there had grown up a close friendship between a member of the College Staff and myself. This was J. Estlin Carpenter, son of the famous physiologist, a scholar of varied attainments, an eminent Orientalist, versed in the Sanskrit and Pali Scriptures and the comparison thereof with the Christian, a man of intellectual stature not very far below Martineau's and like him, and many other Unitarians, a devotee of the Categorical Imperative; one of whom you might say, "Here is Wordsworth's Ode to Duty incarnate in the person of a very gracious and learned gentleman." He took an interest in me from the first and this, though he knew me for a rebel and was himself of an *ethos* far superior to mine, ripened into a friendship ended only, so far as this life is concerned, with his death forty years later. But for him, I might have screwed up my courage and gone forth into the wilderness, with what disasters to follow who knows? Indeed it was he who dissuaded me.

In Carpenter, as I have indicated above, the cardinal Christian virtues were developed and active. His foible, if I may so account it, was of the kind that springs from a nature radically noble and generous. From his incapacity to think evil of any man there grew a tendency to convert geese into swans and to help them as swans deserve. He helped some for whom it might have been better had they never come within the range of his swan-creating imagination. As for myself he would never believe I was not a swan. In reality I was a bird of a very different feather, though not perhaps exactly a goose. But what benefits have I not received from his mistake!

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So much had this beneficent man to do with the subsequent course of my life that, having mentioned his name, I will here linger over it a little longer. I am not the only one to bless his memory. His devotion to the students of that College, poor pilgrims some of us, was wonderful: a guide to the bewildered, a mentor to the foolish, a friend to the needy, a lifter-up of chop-fallen souls. Not deficient in this world's goods, he kept open house for us all; introduced us to fine music, poetry and architecture; took us round the country to visit cathedrals and gave up his vacations to entertaining us in the Lakes.

He knew the way of access to every view point and mountain top in those hilly regions, and seemed to have a map of their contours imprinted on his mind. Being clipper-built and a terrible walker, he would take us long expeditions on foot, with "summits" on the way and a crowning "summit" at the end, his tireless legs, reinforced by the sense of duty, making nothing of it, while the rest of us were all laid out at the end of the day, thirsting for beer, the only good thing not provided in the Carpenter hospitality which, needless to say, was teetotal. Martineau, then over eighty, was once of the party, putting the rest to shame by arriving first at the mountain top, the Categorical Imperative, I imagine, having something to do with that also. Not being made that way myself, these constant intrusions of the sense of duty irritated me not a little; or I would react with indignation, like the sailor at Trafalgar who, when he saw Nelson's signal, called out to his mates: "What! Does the old man think we *ain't* going to do our dooty?" Thus minded I would linger behind and sit by the side of a tarn smoking my pipe in peace, with thought "playing freely" as I watched the ripples breaking on the strand, while the others panted on to the peak, the venerable Martineau leading, or failing him, the sinewy Carpenter. And yet the general principle was not new to me. This glorification of toil, this preference for the sweaty Hills of Effort to the fertile valleys of pipe-smoking contemplation, what was it but the doctrine of Samuel Smiles applied to mountaineering in West-

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morland? What was it but the story of Abraham and Lot, which was to be the subject of my first sermon, here visibly re-enacted by a reading-party in the Lakes, with Martineau (or it might be Carpenter) for Abraham and me for Lot? But I was ever a little slow to practise what I preached.

Another occasional partner in these strenuous operations was Philip Wickstced, of whom I also saw a good deal in London. Of him it was currently said that he could hold his own with more specialists, each on his own ground, than any man in England. The range of his knowledge, and thorough knowledge too, was astonishing. If you drew a diameter across the immense circle of it, you would find at the furthest end Aristotle complete, in the middle the Scholastic Philosophy and the Divine Comedy (this known forwards and backwards) and, at the end nearest you, Political Economy on a Mathematical Basis, while between those three points was every kind of knowledge you choose to imagine. He was a cheerful philosopher, quite inobservant of what food he was eating, whether caviar or cold potato; in appearance somewhat of a ruffian, but with a faculty of discourse in him befitting a banquet of the gods; as learned and jolly a vagabond as ever you took a long tramp withal, not unreasonably persecuted by the Categorical Imperative, but valiant against the wicked and a bold defender of the weak.

This great scholar and sturdy barbarian I would sometimes encounter wandering about and astonishing the natives in Norway, where I spent the Long Vacations when not spending them with the Carpenters at the Lakes. I had bought a country boat, from up Lofoten way, a gondola-like creation with a fore-and-aft sail, that rode the waves like an eider duck and was easily rowed when there was no wind. In this I would sail up and down the fjords, often alone, getting quarters in peasants' houses (always hospitable) and more than once in dire peril of my life from violent squalls suddenly sweeping down from the mountains. Wickstced was playing much the same game and our orbits would sometimes cross in Norway.

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He had a faculty for getting lost among the mountains; his condition when I once met him being that of recovering from a bout of famine and exposure, while the local tailor was engaged in mending his nether garments, and he, with intellectual ardour undiminished, and clothed in a mackintosh, would be discussing *Peer Gynt*, which he was translating, with the Norwegian ladies in the inn. He was among the first to introduce Ibsen into England. A great man and a most excellent!



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13

A PLAIN TALK, FROM MYSELF AS AN OLD MAN TO MYSELF AS A YOUNG ONE

"Young mail, I've heard that ye're vcrra clever. And I've no doubt ye are, seeing that ye're fresh from the university. But allow me to tell ye—ye're going straight to the bottomless pit"—*Carlyle to Sir William Harcourt*

SO, AFTER many aberrations and indocilities, my course as a theological student came to an end, and a solemn ceremony was held at which we were sent forth, as ministers of religion, into a world hungry for the bread of life, Martineau taking part¹ and giving us each an affectionate farewell. We called it "a valediction" and "a welcome into the ministry." The text of what he said has faded from my memory but I remember that it contained a subtle, humorous but kindly reference to my faults (he was a deft hand at that kind of thing) and that I was conscious that those about me were smiling.

While not remembering in detail what was said either by him or the others who took part, I do recall that I went away from that solemn occasion feeling very uncomfortable. Throughout the whole proceeding the assumption had been made that we young men had received a call from on high to the ministry of religion; that, hearing it, we had responded, like the prophet of old, "Here am I, Lord, send me;" that we were self-dedicated spirits; that we had made our vows and were now going out into the world to fulfil them. This also had been the keynote of the hymns, of the Scripture reading, and of the prayers. Whether these assumptions were true of

¹ He had resigned the Principalship of the College and been succeeded by the Rev. James Drummond.

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the other students is not for me to say. But certainly they were not true of me. No doubt they described what I ought to have been and what my professors had the right to assume that I was, but as applied to me they were a misfit and I knew it. I had been publicly credited with motives for entering the ministry more exalted than I could truthfully claim. I had been placed in a false position.

I will now imagine myself, an old man of over eighty, addressing myself as a young man of twenty-six about to enter the ministry of religion. Possessed of the knowledge I now have, and partly had then, I should have spoken as follows:

"Young man: if your father had left you a thousand a year, you would not be where you are. It was fortunate that you were left to scramble through the world as best you could. Thanks to that, you find yourself to-day a minister of religion. To say you have *chosen* this vocation would not be true. You found it open to you and took the opening. The motives which led you to take it were of a mixed nature. One of them was your eagerness to escape from conditions you greatly disliked. But there were others: among them your newly awakened interest in a Power-not-yourself that makes for righteousness. Your present position is due, not to your own choice, but to the action of this Power, acting through the circumstances of your life. You may detect its action even in the unpleasantness of the conditions from which you were so eager to escape. The righteousness it makes for, however, is a much broader thing than you have yet realized. But you will realize it later on.

"The position of a minister will protect you from certain dangerous tendencies in your nature. At the same time it will offer temptations to others. I warn you in particular to be on your guard against your tendency to regard religion as an affair of pulpit oratory, and your ambition to become a pulpit orator yourself. It is a foolish ambition and one moreover in which you will not succeed. Already it has led you into absurdities. I refer to the absurd imitations of James Martineau and Stopford Brooke that are to be found in some of your trial sermons.

A PLAIN TALK

But take comfort from the thought that God often uses the foolish things of this world for his own ends.

"Your philosophic studies have furnished you with a *hearsay* knowledge of God considerable in amount and some of it fairly authentic. This you may find useful in your ministry; but on one condition only. The condition is that your hearsay knowledge, your 'philosophy' as you call it, has its roots in a knowledge which is not hearsay but first hand. How much of that do you actually possess?

"You possess a little, enough to act as leaven for the whole of your 'philosophy.' It consists in what you have found out, by experience, of the Power-not-yourself that makes for righteousness. Had you learnt of that Power by merely reading *Literature and Dogma* it would have been hearsay knowledge like all the rest. But the circumstances of your life were so arranged that you happened to find it out for yourself. That discovery will prove of more value than all the rest of your 'equipment' put together. Under the impact of further experience it will exfoliate into forms of which at present you have no prevision. Without it, your 'philosophy or religion' will be dead and futile, and your eloquence will be empty wind."

Thus I can imagine myself as an old man addressing myself as a young one on the day of my entering on the ministry of religion. Had these things been said to me then, I could not have failed to recognize that they were true. But none said them and I was left to find it all out, painfully, by myself. But that too may have been for the best.

14

REVELATIONS IN AMERICA

"They sprang out upon me like ambuscades"

SHORTLY BEFORE leaving College I had been awarded a travelling scholarship by the Hibbert Trustees. The scholarship giving me a choice of foreign universities, I elected to go to Harvard, having heard of two philosophers there, William James and Josiah Royce, whose views of the universe I was eager to become acquainted with. And so it came to pass that in the autumn of 1886 I found myself for the first time, but by no means the last, on American soil, having crossed the ocean in a crowded and ill-found ship, narrowly escaping the fate of my uncle Joseph in a terrible gale, when for three days the ship was in continual danger. Of my fellow passengers the one I remember most distinctly was a dour Scotch minister, a "Wee Free" who, discovering that I was a Unitarian, denounced me to the ship's company as Jonah. The only point I had in common with this brother-of-the-cloth was that neither of us fell seasick or broke our bones in the hurly-burly, as many of the other passengers did; a condition not on the whole to my advantage, since it enabled the wretch to persecute me when, under a kindlier dispensation, he might have been laid out seasick in his bunk and so minding his own business. However, it helped me to realize what I had brought upon myself by joining the Unitarians, instead of going into the Church, and prepared me for milder forms of the same experience later on. I also learnt how difficult it is, when somebody accuses you of being a Jonah, to prove that you are *not*. It may

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be compared to proving that you are not a Jesuit in disguise, which I am told, by those who have tried it, is quite impossible. At all events it was a valuable lesson.

Shaking myself free of this formidable monitor, who continually dogged my steps, I made my way to Harvard, where a room was assigned me in Divinity Hall, the very room they told me that had been occupied by Emerson.

That was appropriate, for I was then in a mood to feel the force of Emerson's saying "whoso would be a man, let him be a nonconformist." The unreality of that "Welcome into the Ministry" (so far as it concerned myself) had given me a shock, and not much would have been needed, in the way of influence from outside, to turn me into a nonconformist against nonconformity itself, not excepting the Unitarian version of it. My precarious condition is revealed by the letters I wrote to Carpenter¹ after my arrival at Harvard. It was like the condition of the man described in the Second Book of Esdras, approaching *a city that is builded and set upon a broad field, and is full of all good things. But the entrance thereof is narrow and is set in a dangerous place to fall, like as if there were afire on the right hand and on the left a deep water; and one only path between the twain, even between the fire and the water, so small that there could not but one man go there at once.* But the Divinity that shapes our ends was looking after me.

I was soon sitting at the feet of Josiah Royce, a young man with a great head like a Norwegian troll's, at once ugly and beautiful, and a flow of philosophical discourse coming out of it like the river Mississippi. He being about my own age, there presently sprang up a friendship between us which lasted with great profit to me till his death in 1916.

I had already been introduced to Spinoza by Croom Robertson, an excellent interpreter of what Spinoza actually said, but it was Royce who helped me to read him *between the lines* and to find the meaning of that sublime philosophy not in what it

¹ He preserved them all, and they came into my possession after his death. To read them now is to dig my dead self out of its grave.

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says but in what it is trying to say, but cannot be completely said, by Spinoza or by any other.

This was not all the water I drew from that well. Previously I had learnt or been taught that knowledge is an affair between two, a knower and a known, a subject and an object, but always with a dim feeling on my part that a *third party* was somehow involved. This Royce confirmed. He explained to me that the structure of knowledge is triadic; that a Third Party called by him "the Interpreter," bridges the gulf between knower and known and so establishes a traffic between the two which would otherwise be impossible. Indeed I had already learnt as much when studying Malebranche for my M.A. degree—Malebranche, according to whom "we see all things in God." But this, at the time, had interested me mainly as a piece of information which I might have to disgorge in the examination room. Now, having *no* examination to bother about, and with a master mind as my frequent companion in daily walks, oyster suppers, trips to New York and suchlike, it began to interest me quite differently. I reflected upon it, and presently came to the conclusion that our Interpreter was not a person extraneous to myself but definitely lodged within my own mind, a sort of mind within the mind, a self within the self, which the psychologists had somehow overlooked, though without it there could be no psychology and no psychologists.

One day, as Royce and I were eating oysters in a restaurant, I asked him if we might change the name of his Interpreter and call him the Living God. "I guess you may," said Royce, "provided you don't think of him as a magnified version of the Reverend So-and-So"—the Reverend So-and-So being an eminent Boston preacher, whose eloquence had attracted me, for I still had a weakness that way. "But," he said, "you will do better to call it the Holy Ghost." Anyhow, I got the feeling, while at Harvard (if feeling be the proper name for it), that wherever I was, whatever I might be doing, and whatever the state of the New England weather, which froze my ink solid in winter and almost boiled it in summer—that through all

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these vicissitudes of experience, I was in the House of the Interpreter. That feeling has remained with me ever since—call it mysticism or metaphysics as you will. No matter what form experience may take, it now seems to me fairly obvious that a dialogue is going on in two languages which an Interpreter, lodged in the depths of my own being, is translating into a third language, a *lingua franca* of truth and falsehood, good and evil, intelligible to me and to all men.

The idea of "the Beloved Community," which grew out of the foregoing, was another property of Royce that strongly attracted me. It was his version of the City of God, of the Communion of Saints, but so widely conceived that all the loyal and devoted are *ipso facto* its members and lovers. Now the ideals that have ever appealed to me most strongly—and is it not so with the rest of us?—are those which I can see walking the earth as *persons*. Here the part was played by the image of my long-suffering mother at home, who wrote me such gallant letters every week, and who, though now of no particular creed and "disliking parsons as a class," was clearly a shining member of the Beloved Community as Royce conceived it, *one* of countless millions who, from the first, have carried the burden of humanity, fallen asleep in their generations and left their memorial with God. And here too before me, was Royce himself, with his troll's head and impish ways, practising what he preached, if ever man did; no mere mouth-piece of philosophy, he, but a lover serving a mistress; one of that temper which, if spread abroad, would make the whole human race a united family. Among thinkers I have met none more honest, among companions none more amusing, among friends none more loyal. He had the heart of a child and kept it to the end. In after years when visiting me in England he would gather my children for a frolic and when the play was over would recite, in his queer Californian drawl, his favourite scenes from *Alice in Wonderland* or the *Hunting of the Snark*, and wind up by telling them that what he had recited was all about "**the Beloved Community**" **and that** they would understand

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it when they were older. Which some of them now do.

"The Hope of the Great Community" was the phrase he used oftenest when speaking or writing on this theme. Thirty years after our friendship began, a book of his, the last to be published during his life, gave the "hope" a novel and highly suggestive turn, which had considerable influence on my own activities. It was published early in the first German war and bore the title *War and Insurance*. Though the matter belongs to a later date, this seems the right place to speak of it.

It was an article in his creed, as it has long been in mine, (derived no doubt from him) that ideals, to become effective in this world, need to be coupled with business-like methods. He had a great respect for "the business man" as the appointed instrument, under heaven, for converting ideals into working propositions, into going concerns *on* the earth, and was forward, in his philosophic way, to make friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness. That the Hope of the Great Community might evaporate into eloquence, or become a mere theme for academic discussion and exchanges of logic-shot, was a danger to be feared. We would often discuss the means of preventing this, of how and where the germ of the Great Community could best be planted in the common soil of human industry, of how the heavenly ideal was to be linked with the business-like method essential to its terrestrial realization. But without finding any satisfactory solution at the time.

Later on, when exactly I do not know, he found a clue in the principle of mutual insurance. He seems to have come into contact with some insurance experts in the American business world, and cross questioning them as his manner was, on their methods and principles, drew the conclusion that mutual insurance is, simply, a businesslike way of converting the particular burdens of each into the common burden of all. Give that principle a world-wide extension and the ideal of the Great Community would begin to march. A link would be forged between earth and heaven, the foundation of the Great Community laid, war gradually die a natural death and the "woe

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of combat" cease to darken the earth. The idea was simple and profound, a combination characteristic of Royce. It anticipated what afterwards became known as "collective security." But it had a deeper foundation than the Covenant of the League of Nations, prosaically businesslike, but capable of supporting an exalted structure.

To trace the steps by which he arrived at this conclusion would here be out of place. They are deeply interesting and may be found in his books: *War and Insurance*, *The Hope of the Great Community*, *The Problem of Christianity*¹. They have a close connexion with what has already been said about the function of "the Interpreter" in human experience, whose counterpart in the world of business is the go-between, the broker, the middleman. The following quotation from *War and Insurance* will serve as a sample of the whole.

Begin to make visible the community of mankind, not merely, as at present, in the form of alliances which are ambiguous and at times irritating, and of arbitration treaties which are likely to be broken at some passionate moment when they are most needed, but in the form of a sufficiently large board of financially expert trustees, whose membership is international, whose services are duly compensated from the funds of the trust, and whose conduct is guided by plainly stated rules which have the substantially unanimous consent of all nations concerned in the plan.

It will be seen from this that he conceived the Great Community as having a *fiduciary* rather than a political nature.

The general principle underlying all this appeared to me of great value and when Royce died in 1916, leaving it avowedly tentative and undeveloped, I made an attempt to bring it into public notice and appealed for its further exploration. It was the theme of my own contribution to the orgy of "Reconstruction" that went on during the first German war and ended, as we now know to our cost, in the Treaty of Versailles. Like so many others who were busy at the time with schemes for mending the world "after the war," and incidentally getting in each other's way, I had my pains for nothing. The little

¹ New York: the Macmillan Company.

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interest the suggestion had aroused soon evaporated, the war being followed, as the present war conceivably may be, not by "the building of a new and better world" but by a general landslide into a worse. The disillusion consequent on that general failure befell me many years after I had learnt to share with Royce in the Hope of the Great Community. But it belongs to the part he has played in my life.—I return to my experience at Harvard in 1886.

While Royce was liberating me from the notion that philosophy is a game of arguments and helping me to study it as a means to deepening my experience of life within and the world without, another revelation, of great moment as a factor in my destiny, was coming to me through the medium of a man widely different from Royce in temperament and cast of mind. This was Charles Eliot Norton, officially known as Professor of Belles Lettres, the successor of Longfellow and a member by birth of that close aristocracy of culture, close as any in the world, for which New England is renowned.

Though a Master of Arts, I was clearly master of no art, not even an apprentice. I had finished my college education in England, and was about to embark on the ministry of religion in complete ignorance of what art contributes to human experience. And so might have remained to this day but for my contact with Norton. The only sign I had given of not being congenitally blind on that side was my flair for eloquence and my crude imitations of the eloquent. Absurd as this was, and great as were the absurdities to which it led me, it might, under a kindlier dispensation, have been guided away from the absurdities and developed into some modest form of creative power. But none of my educators paid any attention to this hopeful sign. However I had not been long in contact with Norton's influence before something that was asleep in me began to awaken.

It began by his introducing me to the *Divina Commedia* of Dante, of which he had just published a translation, the best, I think, that has ever been attempted in prose. I had already a

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fair knowledge of Italian, self-acquired, like most of my linguistic acquisitions. I was able therefore to follow his exposition of the *Commedia*, which he conducted amid a coterie of half-a-dozen students in a room of the Sevier Hall. One day he said to me "Young man, why did you come to America, of all places on earth, to study Dante?" I was a little puzzled how to answer but managed to say something like this. "I did not come to America to study Dante, but discovered him here by accident." "Then what *did* you come for?" "Well, sir," I replied, speaking somewhat at random, "to tell the honest truth, I believe I came here to study America." "That will take you a long time," said he, "but come to my house to-morrow and let us talk it over. I should like to show you my Giorgione and other tilings."

Going to his house on Shady Hill, the first time of many, I found myself in the company of a very charming gentleman whose quiet manners and illuminating conversation at once took possession of me. He showed me his Giorgione, lamenting that the world was no longer capable of creating great art, and went on to talk of many such things in a strain that was new to me and intensely interesting. I soon perceived that his mind had a sceptical turn. When I spoke to him of philosophy, he shook his head rather sadly and remarked that most of what he had encountered in that line was "not sincere," but seemed to make some exception in favour of Plato, who, he said, was a great artist. He talked to me also of Ruskin, who was his friend, and of Carlyle whom he had known, advising me to read all that Carlyle had written, which I at once began to do and afterwards did, and still continue doing when bored by the minor prophets of these days. After this he went on to speak of the *Life* of Carlyle then recently published by Froude, on which he commented with some severity, and taking down a volume of it showed me a page scored with his corrections of verbal errors in Froude's quotations from one of Carlyle's letters, the original of which was then in his (Norton's) possession. There was talk also about Dante and arrangements made

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that the coterie (misnamed a "class") should transfer the readings from Sevier Hall to Norton's study.

That evening was a critical one for me, though I can hardly have been aware of it at the time. The impression I carried away was that great artists were, before all else, *sincere*; that Dante was the sincerest of them all; that Norton himself was sincere; that some of the eloquent people I had so much admired were doubtfully sincere, and my imitations of them quite obviously insincere. The impression went deep. For a student of philosophy this meditation *on* sincerity was disturbing, but salutary.

From those readings of Dante, conducted in Norton's study, and under his guidance, I carried away a dim notion which, in after years, and under the impact of a varied experience, ripened into a conviction, namely this: that Dante's vision of Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, linked together as an indivisible unity, is the truest vision of the Universe yet compassed by the human mind; that the Universe, while unquestionably Copernican when viewed from without, is, as unquestionably, Ptolemaic when experienced from within; materially the one, spiritually the other. It began to dawn upon me that while there is no infinitesimal small enough to represent my insignificance, or yours, in the material universe, there is no magnitude large enough to measure our importance in the spiritual; that while in the one we are floating specks lost in a dead immensity, in the other we are enthroned as gods at the living centre and lords of the world¹.

I learnt from Dante this further lesson, constantly enforced by Norton: that the highest truths are best expressed by the utmost economy of language. In the Divine Comedy there is no eloquence, but everywhere there is dynamic beauty achieved by the simplest of means, whereby the thought, and the feeling generated by the thought, are conveyed without distortion or

¹A11' alta fantasia qui manco possa;
Ma già volgeva il raio disiro e il velle
Sì come ruota ch'egualmente e mossa,
L'Amor che muove il sole e l'altre stelle.

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adulteration from the speaker to his audience. That truth may be spoken two persons are needed, one to speak, the other to hear. In Dante the speaker's part is so fulfilled that the hearer has the least difficulty in fulfilling his. This was what Norton meant when he dwelt on sincerity as the essential quality of good art, and on Dante as an exemplar of it.

Another Harvard professor who let light into my darkness was George Palmer who lived to a great age and died, much honoured, not long ago. Officially he was a Professor of Ethics, but being a man of letters as well as a philosopher, he encouraged the study of Greek Literature along with Greek "Thought." Among his efforts in this direction were certain "Readings" from Homer, which I attended. Hitherto Homer had been, for me, little more than a name for one of the difficulties to be negotiated in the curriculum or obstacle-race appointed by the University for those in quest of degrees, and which, when the degree was obtained, you could treat not only as "done" but "done with." Perhaps I am exaggerating, but certainly not very much, when I say that up to the age of twenty or thereabouts I had looked upon Greek authors as enemies, or at least in league with examiners to make things difficult. The books in which their works had been brought before me were all *school-books*, edited by schoolmasters or college dons. The Greek writers were the authors of these school-books, which they had written for the express purpose of getting them translated into English by such as I, and so providing my examiners with the munitions of war. This strange notion of Greek Literature, which I imagine is not uncommon in schools and colleges, was, in my case, completely exploded as I followed Palmer in his "Readings from Homer." Even now, at this distance of time, I remember the revealing moment so distinctly that I can live through it again. We had come to that part of the *Odyssey* when Ulysses, returned to Ithaca after his many wanderings, is recognized by his old dog—what a masterstroke was that!—and the poet, gradually deepening the tension and darkening the atmosphere, draws the action on to

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a tremendous climax in the slaying of the suitors, the launching of the thunderbolt. Here was art, here was sincerity, here was dramatic power! I felt it in my bones, nay, I saw it all in a flash. Something buried in me and imprisoned came to life. Was not that a revelation? Was not the Holy Ghost at work?

Of William James, with whom I came much into contact later on, and whose philosophical writings were to influence me greatly, I saw but little during my year at Harvard. He was then at the beginning of the brilliant work *his* psychology which was to make him famous the world over. To tell the truth, I have never been greatly attracted to psychology and am content to leave it behind me as a difficulty surmounted in my obstacle-race to a degree. Just as the human body, having nothing in its outward appearance to show the strange things going on inside it, must become a corpse or be put under an anæsthetic if you would bring its interior secrets to the light of day, so with the human mind. When it comes under observation the life has gone out of it. A thought is a thought only so long as you are thinking it; your analysis of it, therefore, is a post mortem operation performed on something which is not a thought at all, but the corpse of a thought, from which the thinking has departed. The information you thus get about the mind is partial at best, useful when so recognized, but extremely dangerous when taken as complete. Ostensibly the science of the soul, the psyche, psychology suffers from the disability common to all the special sciences, that of having no soul of its own, and for that reason is an inadequate guide in dealing with human nature, of which "soul" is the essential attribute.—These are my present opinions. I cannot say that I held them clear-cut at the time when I neglected to attend the brilliant lectures on psychology that William James was giving in 1887. But it so happened that my "soul," asleep hitherto, was beginning to awake under the ministrations I have described, and gleams of a larger wisdom were breaking in. Preoccupied with these experiences I was in no humour to take up the study of psychology, notwithstanding the opportunity.

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The result of all this was that I began to think of religion not as founded on Reason, Faith, Emotion, Imagination or any other of the separate faculties to which its origin had been assigned, but as the spontaneous response of the *whole* man to the *whole* of his experience, a conception which grew clearer as time went on and has remained with me ever since. In the excitement of making what, for me, was a new discovery, I wrote a long letter to Dr. Martineau in which, to judge by his reply, I must have asked him whether that way of thinking would have his approval. His reply, which is characteristic, was as follows:

35 Gordon Square,
London, W.C.,
February 24th, 1887.

Dear Mr. Jacks,

I was delighted to receive your interesting letter of the 1st inst. and be put by it so pleasantly *en rapport* both with yourself in your studies, and with so many of the eminent Professors of Harvard whose influence you are privileged to feel. I am entirely in accord with your resolve to find an ultimate sustaining base for the religious affections and moral aims to which the practical life of every true man, and above all every one assuming the position of a spiritual guide to his fellows, must be surrendered. Nothing can be more ruinous to others or more miserable in itself, than the helpless fluctuation which I observe in many a mind, now sunk in the depressions, then lifted into the frothy enthusiasms, of some passing wave of feeling, like a floating oar at the mercy of the clement it ought to use for progression. The justifying base, however, must be sought over the whole area of the mind, or, I would rather say, in the undivided essence of its life, and not, after artificial analysis of its powers, in the testimony of one "faculty" corroborating by repetition the assumption of another. It would be but a bad economy in the structure of our nature, were the same truth given twice or thrice over by separate faculties, so that, when missed by the blindness in one, it could be picked up by another. Yet this is too often what men expect, e.g. that the belief in Moral Obligation and in Theism, shall be so secured to us by the logic of the *Scientific Understanding* that, if *this* made up our whole mind, we should still have them. When this expectation is disappointed, the truths are rejected, instead of the false test by which they have been tried. It takes the whole mind to supply every truth which lies beyond the cognizance of external perception and its elaborations. From this con-

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viction, I have an aversion to the very language of mental analysis—the modern self-conscious talk of "emotions," "aesthetic apprehensions," "high ideals," etc.; and look upon it as the gelatinous stage of a process of dissolution in intellectual and moral vigour and solidity.

I am greatly interested in what you tell me about Professor Royce, and shall certainly procure his book. From your account I gather that he belongs to the modern Kantian school, under Hegelian modifications; a school which has great merits, in many of its dealings with the *dual* phenomena (from the play of the subject-object relation): but which to me becomes unintelligible in the attempt to reach a *monistic* point beyond in "a consciousness uniting subject and object in a single judgment." As "judgment" has no meaning except in the parting of subject and object, this is to me a self-contradictory combination of words. The supposed necessity for pushing back to a *monism* in philosophy appears to me an arbitrary assumption; defended always by the reply, "Why, it is just what we mean by Philosophy; there is no philosophy without it." Then, if there should actually be two ultimate entities, "Philosophy" whose business it is to find the ultimates, will be bound to miss them and replace them by a *one* which is no entity at all.

I have been a good deal taken off from my proper work of late by engagement (in Sir George Cox's absence at Cannes) with the Church Reform movement. I have had to draft a Bill for Disestablishment without Disendowment, and for the Federal Union of religious denominations under name of the "Church of England." An Association is formed for carrying the scheme out. I expect little from it at present. When the Liberationist movement becomes immediately threatening, we shall probably obtain more favourable attention. If the Contemporary Review reaches your reading rooms you may see a paper from me on the subject in the March number. Having started the movement, I must now leave it in charge of younger men, and revert to the preparation, now far advanced, of my next book for the Press.

All goes well at M.N.C. and at the Hall. This year must determine whether the present relation between the two shall be continued beyond the term of Professor Morley's Headship, which will hardly continue more than a year or two further.

Should you fall in with Mr. E. E. Hale or Mr. Samb Longfellow, give my kindest remembrances to them.

Believe me, always,

Yours most cordially,

JAMES MARTINEAU.

The shaping divinity knew what it was about when, in 1886, it shaped my ends in the direction of Harvard. But I

REVELATIONS IN AMERICA

cannot claim that I discovered America at that time, as I told Norton I had come to do. Since then I have made many visits to that large country, travelled its length and breadth and had contact with the inhabitants of almost every State in the Union. But I have not yet discovered America. Who has?

AN EXPANDING HORIZON

A man may be drunk with love without being nearer to finding his mate—*Thoreau*

T O LIVE for a year in so large a country as America, though only in a New England corner of it, was bound to have an expansive effect on the mind of a young man. Somehow the wind seemed to blow from wider spaces. But this was not all. For the first time I found myself occasionally hobnobbing with the rich. I got an entry, not wide but sufficient, into Boston "society," one of the most exclusive in the world, "where the Lowells speak only to Cabots, and the Cabots speak only to God." The opener of this guarded door was a very gracious lady of Philadelphia Quaker antecedents, and full of the charm, simplicity, dignity and goodness derived from that excellent stock. She was Miss Joanna Rotch and lived at Milton, a residential district seven or eight miles from Boston. I was free to make her house my home at any time, and often did so. She introduced me to many of her friends and, one thing leading on to another, I came into contact with a few of "the best families" in Boston. Thinking of them as I found them in those days, and perhaps biased by the abounding kindness they showed me, I am tempted to say that America has succeeded as well as most countries in producing a genuine aristocracy and to proclaim, without pretending I am uttering a scientific fact, that the best Americans are the best people in the world. Such at least was the impression made on me as a

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young man in 1887, nor has the impression been modified by a much wider (but still inadequate) knowledge of America gained in later years. There was a time when I would have added that just as humanity has nothing better to show than a good American so, *per contra*, it has nothing worse to show than a bad one. To the first of the two statements, both of the impressionist order, I still adhere; but now, with Hitler and his gang before me, I regard the second proposition as untenable, and withdraw it without qualification.

One of these rich Bostonians invited me to spend a part of my vacation in his palace at Newport, Rhode Island, a place then on the way to the splendour and magnificence it has since attained. Remembering my entertainment *in* the bed-sitting room up the Mile End Road at twelve shillings a week, I was overwhelmed by the suffocating superfluities of that palace and seemed to be moving in a dream. Whatever harm this experience may have done me in other ways, it certainly widened my horizon. In that palace there was a heavenly vision which redeemed it from vulgarity and brought me within measurable distance of a mesalliance. Heavenly visions encountered in a palace have much the same effect on a young man as those encountered anywhere else and this one, doubtless, did me some good, if only by making me a little wiser in a department where wisdom is mostly to seek.

Boston at that time seemed to swarm with these visions, as no doubt it still does. I must have fallen in love, and not always successively, with at least a dozen. Looking back on it from my present view-point I am disposed to think it was all of a piece with the revelations which came to me through the very different mediation of Royce, Norton and Palmer, the whole forming an inseparable unity. Was it not so with Dante and his Beatrice? And why should it not have been so with me?

There is one incident connected with all this that may be worth recording, if only as an illustration of how the experience of a man in his old age may be linked to that of his youth by an object so common as a tree.

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Not long ago I found myself again in the scene of these romantic adventures, revisiting my old playground in the country round Boston. Wandering from one remembered scene to another I would constantly be meeting a ghost, visibly presented to the mind's eye. It was the ghost of myself as I was in those days—and what kind of ghost is so interesting as that? As I thus wandered, indulging in sentiment, my host who was watching me came out of his house, an old house, which I had good cause to remember. "There is a tree not far off," he said, "a remarkably fine specimen which, as you are a lover of trees, I should like to show you." Presently I found myself before a magnificent New England maple, a god among trees, towering to a great height, with an immense spread of branches and girth round the trunk of I know not how many feet. "That," I said, "is a tree to worship." "Beware how you worship it," said my host, "it was you who planted it. See, there is a tablet at the base to commemorate the planting." For a moment I was incomprehending and bewildered. Then, suddenly, there flashed into memory a long forgotten scene with the ghost of myself in the centre of it.—I was back in 1887, on the eve of my departure from America with no present intention of returning. There had been some kind of party to bid me farewell. The others had all departed when one, who had remained behind, needless to say a heavenly vision, produced a small maple tree growing in a pot, which she had kept hidden under a bush while the revels were proceeding. "I want you to plant this," she said, "then you will come back to see how it's getting on." Yes, it was my ghost who had planted that tree, and she who made me plant it has long departed to the heaven whence she came. Meanwhile the tree had grown better than the planter. And I had come back to "see how it was getting on."—A notable expansion of my horizon coming late in life. But an expansion in time, not in space; in depth, not in area. These time expansions, to which age is more susceptible than youth, are, I think, the most significant. Perhaps death is one of them.

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Brisk Youth appeared, the Morn of youth,
With freaks of graceful folly—
Life's temperate Noon, her sober Eve,
Her Night not melancholy;
Past, present, future, all appeared
In harmony united,
Like guests that meet, and some from far,
By cordial love invited.¹

My Pilgrim's Progress has now reached a stage for which Sentimental Journey might be a better name, and the reader excited to pity or envy of my situation, according to the temperament which nature has endowed him withal. As I would spare him the trouble of entertaining either emotion, I will make the next chapter as short as I reasonably can, notwithstanding that a longer version might prove the most interesting chapter in the book, at least to impertinent curiosity. In this I shall be following the excellent advice of Edward Gibbon in his *Autobiography*: "It is a rule of prudence, as well as of politeness, to reserve such confidence for the ear of a private friend, without exposing our situation to the envy or pity of strangers; for envy is productive of hatred and pity borders too nearly on contempt."

¹ *Yarrow Revisited*.

AN EFFECTUAL CALL

"A certain person, after hearing an exposition of the theory that all religions originate in sex, exclaimed 'Ha! At last I understand why we take off our hats to the ladies.' "

IN SPITE *of* the miscellaneous character of my doings in New England I did not forget, nor wish to forget, that I was appointed to be a minister of religion. It is true that I neglected the studies of the Harvard Divinity School, to which I was formally attached, and for much the same reason that I had neglected their counterparts in London. The authorities at Harvard were indulgent, either regarding me as a queer fish to be left to its own ways, or kindly putting the telescope to the blind eye when my deficiencies were in question. But I kept in contact with the Unitarians and from time to time would preach in their pulpits. What my discourses were about I have forgotten but I suspect they were watery versions of Martineau's or some other religious philosophy. There seems however, to have been a certain "go" in them, which may have been partly due to the elocution lessons I had received from George Herbert, and this "go" proving acceptable to the sermon-tasters in those regions, produced an invitation to settle as pastor in one of the New England Unitarian churches. This I declined, mainly for reasons connected with my mother, from whom I was unwilling to be permanently separated, and partly because the revelations spoken of above had shown me, among other things, what a watery creature I was. I began to see that this hearsay, second-hand stuff about God and Christ, in which I was so prolific, was not religion, but at best only a reminiscence or ghost of religion, that it would soon

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exhaust itself and give out—in short, that though it might *go* it wouldn't *do*, and that calling it Unitarian wouldn't make it do. I have before me now letters written in that strain to Carpenter in England which show plainly enough that I was on the point of abandoning the ministry before I was too deeply committed to it; and his replies, also before me, show as clearly that he, good man, was very anxious about me. In one of these letters to Carpenter, which turned on the Unitarian conception of Christ, I said that in my opinion—I was at an age when I stated my opinions rather freely—those who called Christ God and those who called him Man were both wrong, but that the first were less wrong than the second and that I for my part would have nothing to do with the question whether He was one or the other. This piece of impertinence troubled Carpenter greatly. Impertinence is the proper name for it. I have since learnt to apply the word to all dogmatic solutions of great mysteries.

I was in this touch-and-go condition when events occurred which put an end to my vacillations. On opening my letters one morning I could hardly believe my senses on finding in one of them an invitation to become assistant to Stopford Brooke at Bedford Chapel. Had I received an invitation to become demigod to Apollo my surprise would hardly have been greater. But what an opportunity—to be brought into close contact with one whom I looked upon as inspired, to be under his influence, to receive his admonitions—imagine what that meant to a young enthusiast! Was I wrong in taking it as a "call"? I did so take it, and now, when I know more of the divine operations than I knew then, a "call" is precisely what I believe it to have been. At all events my decision to accept the offer was immediate; the die was cast and the crisis ended.

Somebody behind the scenes had evidently been active in my interest. My suspicion, verified later on, fell upon Carpenter. "Mr. Brooke is looking out for an assistant. Can you make a recommendation?" "Yes: there is a young friend of mine now in America, who, etc., etc." So; I imagine, the

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affair began. But Carpenter's benevolent testimonials were not the only medium through which the powers which have moulded my destiny were then at work. Let the following bear witness.

In a previous chapter I have told how, when first visiting Bedford Chapel on a sermon-tasting expedition, my attention had fallen on the occupants of the second pew from the front, and of my interest in learning that they were the six daughters of Stopford Brooke. I had not forgotten that vision, which had somewhat dazzled me at the time. What part it played in confirming my decision to close with the offer to become their father's assistant I cannot now distinctly recall; but my knowledge of human nature, as exemplified in myself, compels me to believe it was a contributing factor. A charm was added to the prospect before me.

Now Providence had so arranged the matter that about this time two of the Six were travelling in America under the guardianship of their uncle, Major-General Edward Brooke. The party coming to Boston at the critical moment very kindly invited me to spend an evening in their company; an invitation promptly accepted by me.

I have since learnt that the General and his nieces were under instructions to seek me out in Boston, ascertain, so far as personal inspection could, whether the character Carpenter had given me had any basis in reality, and cable a report to headquarters. That the report was not unfavourable may be inferred from the fact that it was followed by no disturbance of the negotiations for my appointment. It is conceivable, however, that one of the General's nieces had a hand in drawing up the text of the cablegram.

This was followed by a moonlight picnic in romantic surroundings, in the course of which it was arranged by the younger members of the party that, subject to the General's approval, we would all return to England in the same steamer, the Cunard *Pavonia*, sailing next week. The General, taking a liberal view of his duties as guardian, raised no objection.

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The rest can be briefly told. When the *Pavonia* disembarked her passengers at Liverpool my engagement to Number Four of the Six had reached the stage when parental ratification was all that was needed to make it complete. Such was the posture of affairs when Stopford Brooke first set eyes on his future son-in-law and new assistant, appointed on the strength of Carpenter's generous testimonials and a confirmatory cablegram, of mixed authorship, from Boston. The engagement was formally announced five months later.

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This gave me a jostle—*Bunyan : Grace Abounding*

THE PROFESSIONAL equipment required in the Protestant churches before allowing the minister to begin practice on the souls of his fellowmen is less sharply defined than that required by the College of Physicians before a young man can get his licence to practise on their bodies. Among the Unitarians the latitude is great. By not compelling the neophyte to make a profession of faith they leave his theological equipment largely a matter to be determined by himself. This may be condemned on the ground that it takes no precaution against the entry of quacks into the profession. On the other hand it may be defended as giving a greater scope for individuality. Such at all events was the principle of my own professional education. There had been much influence, but no coercion. I had passed many examinations, but had no certificate on the wall to assure the spiritual patient that I was not a quack.

At this distance of time it is difficult to state rightly what my professional equipment was. That it was exiguous in all the parts capable of exact measurement may be said with confidence—nothing at all comparable to the Thirty-nine Articles either in range or precision.

Of theology there was a little, but that little good. All of it lay within the framework of the belief in a Power-not-ourselves which makes for righteousness, and for all excellent things. This verifiable belief was a *depositum fidei* remaining intact, and somewhat enlarged, from the days when *Literature and Dogma* had been my guiding light.

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Of philosophy there was a considerable amount but miscellaneous and ill co-ordinated, with Spinoza (read between the lines as one who meant more than he said) as the predominating element for the time being.

Of Christology nothing, the Higher Criticism, in which I was moderately versed, having destroyed it and left me sceptical as to the historical character of the Gospels. (The time was not yet come when I began to build up a kind of Christology out of that very scepticism.)

Of religion, understood as an interest that could be isolated from other interests, detached or detachable, I also had nothing. But of religion as an element interfused with all experience, inseparable from it and modifying its quality, I had a good deal, though I needed more. For example, if I saw a primrose "in the crannied wall" I would see it and enjoy it more completely than if there had been no religion in me, and yet what I saw and enjoyed would still be the primrose and not its ghostly equivalent in a suprasensible world. Or again, if I made an ass of myself, I would be more ashamed afterwards than if I had been totally irreligious; but making myself an ass would still be what I was ashamed of, and not "sin," "folly" or any other abstraction. I saw God as all men see the light, not as shining in vacuo, but as a universal illumination reflected by every object on which it shone.

Such was the slender capital on which I drew for the sermons I had to preach when taking the place of Stopford Brooke in the pulpit of Bedford Chapel. Judging by the smallness of the congregations which tolerated them, they probably consisted, as before, of philosophy-and-water or, worse still, of Higher Criticism-and-water, but watery anyhow. In my experience as Brooke's understudy there was certainly nothing to generate self-conceit. The place was always crowded when he was expected to preach and the congregation would watch for his appearance, like the god Apollo, at the rear of the choir as it crossed over from the vestry door. But if he failed to appear, and "only the curate" brought up the rear, there was a visible

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spasm of disappointment, the people would troop out in dozens and some minutes elapse before the faithful remnant had settled down. This was not encouraging for a young preacher. Nor was the comment passed by my mother after hearing me preach in Bedford Chapel. She pronounced the sermon "forced." Her standard in the matter of sermons was high. But the take-down to conceit was good for me.

Towards the end of that year, 1887, I was again on the verge of breakdown, and a whisper passed round that my days were numbered. I had been appointed a University Extension lecturer in Political Economy, a subject for which I had some qualifications of an academic kind. Stopford Brooke falling ill at that time I had to tax my capital for two sermons on Sundays, and twice during the week had to keep a large audience interested in Political Economy. For a beginner in two trades this would have been too much, even if he had not been in love, as I was, and his love affair approaching a climax.

One Sunday evening when I was in the middle of my discourse in Bedford Chapel, and getting on fairly well, a strange feeling winch I can only describe as *loneliness* began to creep over me, and gradually deepened. The people in the Chapel became inanimate like the Ancient Mariner's shipmates; the high pulpit from which I was speaking was a pillar holding me up in a great emptiness; my voice a meaningless sound, breaking out into an ocean of silence and death. Running round the galleries there was a row of gaslights, and I seemed to be hanging on to them, as the last stay I had left in a world that was about to vanish completely, leaving me absolutely alone. Fear took hold of me, for I recognized my old enemy and knew what was coming. Suddenly it fell like a thunderbolt—that unspeakable horror which had visited me once before when similarly overwrought. My lower limbs began to give way; I clutched the edge of the pulpit with both hands and came to a dead stop. How I managed to wind up the service and get home to my lodgings God knows.

Nothing was said to me afterwards to show that anyone

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present was aware of what had happened. Probably the sermon was of the kind that may stop itself anywhere without making much difference to the hearers, and the congregation would go away merely remarking that the curate looked ill or had been more futile than usual. Nor have I ever revealed it till I came to write this page. I reveal it as a warning to those whom it may concern.

Had Coleridge, I wonder, ever been down into that hell? I can read *The Ancient Mariner* as the record of an experience not unlike my own in the pulpit of Bedford Chapel. There is one verse that strikes the keynote of it:

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

I was broken and thought myself done for; but God again mended me, leaving a scar that remains to this day. It needed some screwing up of my courage when next I had to appear in Bedford Chapel. "The thunder was gone but the hinder part of the tempest remained;" and many years elapsed before its niutterings died completely away. To the end of my preaching life I could never enter a pulpit without the feeling that I was facing a crisis. Often, in later years, as the verger closed the door behind me, the fear of that hell would touch me from afar off, and I would utter the prayer which is the summary of all prayers "*In tuas manus, Domine, meant anirnam commisi*" I have been mercifully preserved.

My lodgings were in Gordon Square, ten minutes' walk from Bedford Chapel. As I walked down Gowcr Street on the Sundays that followed, fearing what lay before me, I would strengthen myself with whatever reinforcements I could think of, most of them stoical. Some were lines from my beloved Dante, who had also descended into hell and found there a point of departure for his journey to heaven. There was one from Vergil which served me well, and still serves, "*T/Y ne cede malis, sed contra audentior ito*" I also remembered Carlyle

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who, when he met the foul fiend in *Rue S. Thomas de l'Enfer* (his Gower Street) took him by the nose and wrung it! Yes, it was a fight with Apollyon fought out on the pavement of Gower Street which, for aught I know, has been the scene of many such. "Thou shalt go no further," cried Apollyon, "here will I spill thy soul." The combat was mortal and the issue a near thing.

Born and bred in the shopkeeper class and with an outlook on life conformable to that breeding, I now found myself in another atmosphere, associating with well bred people whose walk and conversation were on a different level. My mother, quick to perceive the significance of the change, and knowing me better than I knew myself, warned me that I was in danger of becoming a snob. But I was aware of the danger myself and tried to avoid it, with what success is not for me to say. The truth is that I was so proud of my shopkeeping father and heroic mother that I could have walked as an equal among princes. I had no difficulty in accommodating myself to the change. Nothing happened to me, either then or afterwards to affect the character of this confession as a middle-class story, nearer akin, in the essential matter recorded, to "the short and simple annals of the poor," than to the chronicles of the great, the eminent and the famous. That, at least, is what I would wish my confession to be.

In Stopford Brooke's household, of which I was now virtually a member, and among his friends, I came into passing contact with many who were then eminent in art and literature, Burne Jones, George Howard (afterwards Earl of Carlisle), Lord Bryce, Henry James, Oscar Wilde, Bernard Shaw, the beautiful Ranee of Sarawak and Mrs. Richard Green, widow of the historian, the two latter related to the Brooke family. In Brooke's luxurious flower-banked study, at the top of his lofty house in Manchester Square, brilliant conversation would go on deep into the night; to this I would listen enthralled, sometimes putting in a feeble word of my own. I can only trust that my proneness to imitation, which had served me so ill in other connexions, served me better in this.

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I was also a frequenter of debating societies, of which the best was that founded by Brooke in connexion with Bedford Chapel. Here Socialism, mostly of the Fabian kind, to which Brooke himself had leanings, was much in evidence, and I, being on the other side, would sometimes venture to measure swords with the prominent Fabians of the day, and get severely punished for my pains by Bernard Shaw or Sidney Webb. A great controversy was then going on round the ideas put forward by Herbert Spencer in "*Man versus the State*," published in 1884. I was on Spencer's side, which means that I was on the side of Man against the State. And am so still. Even then I saw dimly, as now I see clearly, that Man, while made for life in *Society*, was not made for life in such political states as now exist, and that he must either find some other form of association or lose his humanity under their pressure. The Fabians of course would have none of it. All my political thinking, of which I have done much in recent years, has its roots in "*Man versus the State*" as we debated it in the eighties. That book, which is still worth reading, sounded the alarm which, unheeded at the time, is now being fulfilled in the bloody suicide of sovereign states.

Another writer whose spell was on me at this time was Carlyle, who, as I have said, had helped me in the fight with Apollyon. But not in that alone. Thanks to something I had learnt from him I now began asking myself "How much in those sermons of yours represents what you really believe, and how much what you only want other people to believe?" I am bound to confess that I was somewhat disconcerted by the answer. This, combining with the repercussions of my Apollyon fight, seems to have produced some improvement in the matter and manner of my preaching. I infer as much from the fact that about the end of my year as assistant to Stopford Brooke there came to Bedford Chapel certain sermon-tasters from Liverpool, for the purpose of tasting mine. These experts, returning to Liverpool, and reporting favourably on what they had tasted, I presently received an invitation to succeed a

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famous preacher, Dr. Charles Beard, lately deceased, in the Renshaw Street Chapel of that city. As I afterwards learnt, my friend Carpenter, with whom I kept in close touch, and whose influence in such matters was great, true to his habit of converting geese into swans, had sent to the Liverpool people a better testimonial than I deserved. I had grave doubts of my ability to follow in the steps of so great a man as Charles Beard, but I was anxious to get married, and the salary at Liverpool being a good one, these misgivings were thrust aside and the invitation accepted. I was to go for six months "on probation."

So the year came to an end. My relations with Stopford Brooke as his prospective son-in-law had naturally been more interesting than if I had been his assistant only. With another the double relationship might have been difficult; with him all difficulties were liquidated, at least for me, in the dynamic radiance of his personality. To what I have elsewhere written of him¹ I have only to add that now, a quarter of a century after his death, he is still for me, as for all who were near to him, an undeparted presence. My headlong engagement to his daughter, which a sterner parent might have forbidden, appealed to his generous soul as romantically pleasing, and was counted by him a point in my favour. Nor did my impecunious condition greatly trouble him, he being occasionally impecunious himself through his lordly expenditures on works of art. In all of which I was fortunate. At the time of which I have been writing, his daughter, from whom after fifty-two years of companionship I am still unparted, was little more than half the present age of the youngest of her six children.

"Tra bella e buona non so qual fosse phi."

So she was then; has been since; and will be for ever.

¹*The Life and Letters of Stopford Brooke*. 1917.

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SERMON-MAKING IN LIVERPOOL

What this parish needs is a minister who knows God otherwise than by hearsay—*Carlyle*

THE HISTORY of the congregation at Renshaw Street, dating from the Act of Uniformity, is involved on the one hand with the civic history of Liverpool and on the other with that of English Nonconformity in general. To be rightly understood it must be read in connexion with this double background. The whole story, throwing light on many matters of great interest to the historical student, has been admirably told in its proper setting by Anne Holt in *Walking Together*¹. There it may be seen how, as one minister succeeded another, the congregation, originally Presbyterian and orthodox but having an "open" Trust, gradually moved, as many Presbyterian foundations did, in the direction of Unitarianism, and how this in turn gradually shifted the basis of authority from the Bible to Reason, Conscience and the Inner Light.

Points of connexion with the history of the great seaport are many. It is interesting to note how this congregation, which became a nursery of philanthropists in the nineteenth century, was largely supported in the eighteenth by wealth derived from the African Slave Trade, then regarded as sanctioned by the Bible and fully consistent with a godly life². For what could be more godly than to deliver poor negroes from heathen darkness and the certainty of damnation, by

¹ George Allen and Unwin. 1938.

² John Newton, Cowper's friend and partner in the *Olney Hymns*, was captain of a slaver, the *African*, in 1752. He afterwards aided Wilberforce in the abolition of the trade. "During the time I was engaged in the slave trade," he wrote, "I never had the least scruple as to its lawfulness." See *Walking Together*, p. 155.

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carrying them to a land where they would receive the "blessings of Christianity?"

Renshaw Street Chapel, built in 1811, was the third meeting-house erected to accommodate the growing congregation which, like most Unitarian congregations at that period, had then attained considerable dimensions. Richard Wright, a Norfolk farm-hand turned Unitarian missionary, visiting the Chapel in 1812, and finding only 250 people at an afternoon service deemed the congregation "small" even for a wet day. In my time, eighty years later, 250 would have been considered "large" even for a fine one.

Architecturally the Chapel may be described as the spirit of Puritanism turned into stone, a fortress built foursquare against the assaults of Satan, an Ironside among chapels, with no beauty that men should desire it, save that of fitness for its purpose. This was defined by the Open Trust Deed as the worship of God, whose Divine Nature, as indicated by the architecture, was clearly that of *eine feste Burg*. Behind this uncompromising edifice was a spacious graveyard, where Unitarians slept in their generations, under ponderous flat stones well blackened by honest Liverpool soot. Beyond the graveyard and contemporary with the Chapel, was the British School, where the religious education of the young was conducted on sound, no-nonsense principles. Though structurally obsolete, and condemned as such by the Powers-that-be, "that school," said the leading members, "will not be closed till we Unitarians choose to close it. We are a law-abiding congregation. But there are those among us who have influence in the shaping of the law. Yes, you may close our graveyard by your Intra-mural Interments Act, but, even so, we shall get a clause inserted in Committee exempting our family graves from the application of the Act." Which they did.

Such was Renshaw Street Chapel, a hiding place of great qualities, but rather forbidding, one might say, for the first pastorate of a romantically-minded, half pagan young man who, though there was Puritan blood in his veins, had come

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to the conclusion that the Power-not-ourselves, while making for Righteousness, makes also for Joy, Beauty and Excellence in all things.

In taking the place of Charles Beard this unripe young man was succeeding a mature man, a preacher of force, fire and scholarship, a commanding orator on public platforms, who had played an important part in the life of Liverpool and was an acknowledged leader among the Unitarians. This remarkable man, whose *Lectures on the Reformation* are a classic¹, makes it very clear in the said Lectures that the Reformation was the beginning of a movement whose destiny was to go further than it had yet gone, and would not be completed till it reached a point where no Authority was recognized save that of the Living God.

Now the young man was well acquainted with these views of his mature predecessor. His Unitarianism, such as it was, was little concerned with the Doctrine of the Trinity, but much concerned with completing the work of the Reformation, and he was rash enough to think that he, with his slender equipment, might contribute something to that end. Having no Unitarian background in his own family and upbringing, and being somewhat of a foreign importation in Unitarian regions, he had yet to find out whether Unitarians in general were as much concerned as he was in completing the work of the Reformation. At all events this concern of his was the keynote of what he attempted, as the successor of Charles Beard in the pulpit of Renshaw Street Chapel, with such scanty success as might be expected from one so immature. Unless I am much mistaken it is the keynote of what he has been attempting ever since.

In spite of this agreement with his predecessor our young minister knew very well and soon verified *amhulando* that to follow in the steps of so great a man would, for him, be no easy task. Nor was Charles Beard the only predecessor he had to reckon with. There was another even more difficult to

¹An edition has recently been reissued with an introduction by Professor Ernest Barker.

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follow. His name was John Hamilton Thom. Him Beard had succeeded in 1867. He was still living in old age and a practising member of the congregation when the young man took over.

In my judgment, which may or may not be shared by others, John Hamilton Thom is the greatest preacher the Unitarians have produced. Rating Martineau and Charming very high, I rate Thom still higher. His *Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ* are, for me, supreme among sermon literature; supreme in the essential quality of conveying what the preacher himself believed, as distinct from what he wished other people to believe; supreme also in the matter of insight into human nature; and in other qualities as well. He knew God "otherwise than by hearsay." Belonging to the older school of Unitarianism, he was a theologian of no mean order, propounding a Christology in which the office of Christ as the Divine Revealer stood so high that only an expert in such matters could detect the points at which the preacher had lapsed from orthodoxy. Had he been living to-day the B.B.C. might have allowed him to broadcast an occasional sermon without the least risk that his Unitarianism would profane the microphone. Yet, when the occasion demanded it, he was capable of giving an effective twist to the tail of the orthodox lion.

This venerable and saintly man was a regular attendant at Rcnshaw Street Chapel during the whole time of my ministry. Many of the congregation, in which elderly people predominated, had sat at his feet; they spoke with reverence of Charles Beard, but with greater reverence of Hamilton Thom. He had created their standards of what a minister should be, do and say. "It reminded me a little of Mr. Thom" was their highest praise for a sermon; "Mr. Thom would never have said *that*" their sternest rebuke for an unacceptable statement. Nor was this high standard applied only to the minister's exercises in the pulpit. His walk and conversation on weekdays was judged by the same rule. When, for instance, following my father's example, I began taking part in politics and made a rather foolish speech, at an election, in support of the righteous cause,

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I was at once reminded that "Mr. Thom never compromised his congregation in that way."

Once it was Mr. Thom himself, normally most tolerant of my performances, who administered the rebuke in person. Those were the days when bicycles were popular with young sportsmen and shop assistants, but not yet adopted as a means of polite locomotion. Greatly daring, and feeling myself something of a desperado, I purchased a bicycle, one of the earliest fitted with pneumatic tyres, and learnt to ride it round Abercromby Square in the early hours of the morning when nobody was about. One day I was riding in Sefton Park, dressed for the part, when I met Mr. Thom, a stately figure, clothed in immaculate broadcloth under a broad brimmed silk hat, and needing only an apron and gaiters to make him the perfect Bishop; and I alighted to pay him my respects. He heard me in astonished silence, gazed at the bicycle, then at me, then from one to the other and finally withered me with a look that said as plainly as words could have said it "Young man, you are inattentive to the dignity and importance of your character as minister of Renshaw Street Chapel." No, Mr. Thom would never have done *that*. And I did many other things Mr. Thom would never have done. Yet he was not incapable of a sly joke. "I noticed," he said to me on one occasion, "that three times in your sermon yesterday you used the expression 'men and women/ May it not be taken for granted that 'man' embraces 'woman'?"

The "dignity and importance" which the bicycle had offended attached not only to the office of the minister but to the congregation. Walking down Renshaw Street about noon on a Sunday morning in the eighties you would have passed a long line of carriage-and-pairs, with Mr. Thorn's smart brougham somewhere in the row, awaiting the exit from the Chapel of Rathbones, Holts, Jevons, Gaskells, Brunners, Tates, Jones, Thornelys, Mellys, Hollands and Gairs, their stately locomotion to and from Chapel on a Sunday morning being then one of the sights of Liverpool. Had you been in the Chapel on

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Hospital Sunday (founded in Liverpool by Charles Beard) you would have put your half-crown into the plate on the top of several £100 notes; and, had you been in the secret, you would have known that a certain member of the congregation having learnt that the Presbyterian Church in Sefton Park (Minister John Watson, D.D.) had beaten our morning collection by £50, would send his coachman down to the evening service with another £100 for the collection plate; so that, when the *Daily Post* reporter came round to the vestry for the figures, the minister, who was in the secret, would be able to tell him that the Renshaw Street total for the day had passed £700, and that Sefton Park was definitely beaten. And further. Had you lived in Liverpool at this time you would have heard how these Unitarian merchant princes were pouring out their wealth in thousands and tens of thousands for works of public beneficence, and might even have heard the story of how one of them, who was fond of his jest, being asked by the vicar of the parish in which he lived to subscribe to some parochial undertaking, told him in reply that if he, the vicar, would add up the sum total of all the Church of England had subscribed to Unitarian undertakings during the last hundred years, he, the Unitarian, would forthwith give him a cheque for ten times the amount.

To live among so many rich people was a new experience and the atmosphere could hardly fail to be somewhat exotic to the nature of one born and bred as I was. To live among them as their spiritual guide seems to me, as I now look back upon it, little less than an absurdity for a young man whose endowment for the part was as exiguous as mine. Perhaps it was a part which nobody, however endowed with spiritual gifts, could have fulfilled with complete satisfaction to his conscience. There were, however, many in the congregation who were not rich and a few who were distinctly poor. This, if it reduced the difficulty in one direction, increased it in another. To preach acceptably to the rich without offending the poor, or to the poor without offending the rich, is not an

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easy task even for an old hand in the art of reconciling opposites. To the best of my knowledge I gave no serious offence to either, though this may only mean that I evaded the difficulty. All parties were tolerant of their young minister.

William Rathbone, the philanthropist, and the sixth in succession to bear his name, was a notable figure in the congregation. His ancestry was Quaker and he had the Quaker mentality. My wife and I were often his guests at Grccnbank, when he would talk to me very freely. His great wealth was, I think, a burden on his conscience. Once I heard him say that his philanthropic donations had such favourable repercussions on his credit in the financial world that the money donated brought him a safe 5 per cent.: could anybody tell him how this might be prevented? None of us could. *On* another occasion he said to me "The text on which you ought to be constantly preaching in Renshaw Street Chapel is 'Howl, ye rich'." I never tried the experiment. I saw no reason why people who paid me a good salary should howl unless I howled with them, and reflected that Mr. Thom, who had married William Rathbone's sister and kept a brougham, and was sure to be present, might consider himself included in the anathema. Naturally I could not bring myself to the point of asking Mr. Thom to howl.

Another notable member of the congregation was Robert Durning Holt, the first Lord Mayor of Liverpool. He, with his brilliant wife and numerous children, occupied the last pew^T in the body of the Chapel, immediately behind Mr. Thom. The smallest in the row of children was a little boy, Lawrence Holt, whose nose just appeared above the edge of the pew. Many years afterwards, when Renshaw Street Chapel had been demolished and a public hall erected on the site, Lawrence Holt, then himself Lord Mayor of Liverpool, my son-in-law and father of four of my grandchildren, was standing, chain of office round his neck and me by his side, on a platform built near the spot where I had once stood in a pulpit. I was inspired to tell the audience about the interesting changes which the

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whirligig of time had brought about in my relation with Lawrence Holt.

There were considerable stirrings of wrath among the orthodox when his father, Robert Holt, appointed me Lord Mayor's Chaplain for his term of office, an appointment requiring in those days considerable courage to make and a little effrontery to hold, at least by one such as I. On one occasion when W. E. Gladstone, then Hearing the end of his career, was being entertained at a banquet in the Town Hall, it was my duty to "say grace." I sat exactly opposite the great man, with only the width of the table between us, and conscious from time to time that he was fixing me with that terrible old eye of his. After my delivery of "grace," which was an original composition of my own, he turned to Robert Holt, who was sitting next him, and said in a deep voice which I heard distinctly: "*Who is that young man?*" I did not hear the Lord Mayor's whispered answer, but it was followed by a loud snort from the Grand Old Man and another terrible look at me, which seemed to say, "You are not the proper thing, young man, and that grace of yours was not the proper thing either." I was able to follow most of his subsequent conversation with the Lord Mayor. It began with a discourse on the soup he was eating, soup being a commodity for which Liverpool Town Hall was famous, as well as for others in the gastronomic department. Gladstone knew all about that soup. Having sufficiently discussed the particular instance before him he went on to soups in general, displaying a knowledge of their properties which suggested that he had studied all the soups in the universe, and had never studied anything else. Fortunately he paid no more attention to me. This was my only encounter with the man my father's reputed resemblance to whom had made me such a proud little boy as I trotted by his side down the Nottingham streets.

My interest in philosophy, Dante and other things of good report brought me into contact with the professors in Liverpool University College, notably with Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Edward

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Gonner and Sir Walter Raleigh—to give them their subsequent titles. With Lodge a friendship was begun which ended, so far as it could end here below, a few months ago, when I saw him, aged 87, for the last time, and he said to me in his cheerful way: "I shall soon be going *upstairs*," as he soon did. I remember his first experiment with wireless telegraphy which other men, climbing on his shoulders, have since brought to perfection. It was at his house in Grove Park that I met F. W. Myers and heard from him, and from Lodge, that which induced me to lend thereafter a respectful ear to the skilled investigators of psychic phenomena.

Lodge and I were members of the Liverpool "Philalethian Society." There were choice spirits in that Society; among them, John Watson, my competitor on Hospital Sunday at the Sefton Park Presbyterian Church, the author, under the name "Ian Maclaren," of the *Bonnie Brier Bush*, a masterpiece of story-telling; C. W. Stubbs, then Rector of Wavertree, afterwards Dean of Ely and Bishop of Truro, and Sir Edward Russell, editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post*, a generous encourager of young men, me among them, and the best dressed gentleman in Liverpool. There we discussed the problems of the universe; always under the rule that the Society had no "shocking point," a rule welcome to me as a Unitarian. There I was not regarded as "tainted," and could ventilate my notions for "completing the work of the Reformation" with the assurance that nobody would be shocked, though some might be tempted to smile.

This "completing the work of the Reformation" I was beginning to find an uphill task. Even my congregation, after twenty years under Charles Beard, from whom I had got the notion, were not keen about it, and would sometimes tell me that these "completings" of mine were leaving them "with nothing to lay hold of," or that "Mr. Thom never went as far as *that*" There was, I thought, too much counting of the congregation which had come to hear about the "completing," and too little enthusiasm for the "completing" itself. Some-

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times, when chosen to preach at some annual Conference of Unitarians, I would produce one of my best "completing" efforts for the occasion, with the result that I found myself set down for a rather conceited young man who had been promoted beyond his merits, obviously aspiring to be a leader and therefore in need of a snubbing, while the meeting, which followed the sermon, would be devoted to "matters of business" or to the exaltation of Unitarianism as the best of all possible religions, neither of which, to my feeling, -was the right way to get the Reformation completed. All this may have been salutary. But it was not encouraging. There were others, however, who gave me to understand that I was getting to firmer ground, that my step was more assured, and that I might expect to improve as time went on. This coincided with my own feeling. My mother also was becoming less critical and seemed inclined to make me an exception in her dislike of parsons. The congregation neither increased nor diminished. We had one or two tiffs, but there was an entire absence of the quarrels between the shepherd and the flock that so often turn nonconformist chapels into happy hunting grounds for Satan and are not unknown even in parish churches. We "walked together," according to the ancient covenant¹, in amity, kindness and goodwill.

I never worked harder than during the six years at Renshaw Street, except perhaps in the days when Samuel Smiles was my prophet. There were many duties besides preaching, some of which, to one of my pagan temperament, went against the grain. I read voraciously in a wide field of philosophy and literature, giving lectures, amateurish enough, to societies which had got to hear of my volubilities. In particular I kept up the study of the *Divine Comedy*, finding in the poetry of it a truer expression of what religion meant to me than in any philosophy. A series of evening sermons on the *Divine Comedy*

¹"Then standing together, they joined hands, and solemnly covenanted with each other, in the presence of Almighty God, to walk together in all God's ways and ordinances." From Jacob's *Church Covenant*, 1616. (The motto of Anne Holt's *Walking Together*.)

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which I gave in the chapel drew the largest congregations I ever had in Liverpool.

What I had found, and still find, religiously significant in the Divine Comedy was, briefly, as follows.

Religion, or faith, is there rightly placed in its *cosmic* soil and setting, its roots not confined to Judea or Greece, nor to any other locality or epoch, but drawing their life from the entire universe. True, the universe, as Dante knew it, is Ptolemaic, revolving round the earth as its centre; more strictly, round Dante himself; a mere doll's house of a universe compared with the material immensity revealed by science. Yes; but that is precisely what the *spiritual* universe eternally is. Moreover, this Ptolemaic universe, in which each of us is at the exact centre, is the *real* universe, while that other, the universe of space, is an air-drawn creation of the human mind, an amazing creation, but yet having its centre in the astronomer who reveals it and, in that sense, egocentric.

This spiritual, egocentric universe is conceived by Dante as consisting of three inseparable and interacting elements named respectively Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, these forming a unity and operating as a unity in human life. A fundamental truth, of which, even then, I had some experience, and have since had much.

Here, thought I, is a Vision of Eternal Truth, which may help in "completing the work of the Reformation." I still think so.

The production of two sermons a week for the kind of congregation I had at Renshaw Street was too great a tax on my capital: I have no doubt that my mother's verdict of "forced" would have applied to some of them. It could hardly have been otherwise. Looking back on it all as an "impartial spectator," which I was far from being at the time, I am inclined to say that no young man should be placed in such a position. In some ways, certainly, it did me harm. But I have often found that episodes in my life, which seemed to be doing me harm at the time they occurred, have done me good in the

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larger context of my life as a whole, the devil blowing the bellows but God playing the organ.

I was wondering how long I could stand up to it all, my wife was growing anxious about me and candid friends were again predicting my early demise, when one Sunday there appeared in the Chapel certain mysterious strangers, evidently persons of weight and consideration. They were sermon-tasters from Birmingham, where the Church of the Messiah had recently lost its minister, Dr. Crosskey, a notable figure in those parts and successor, *longo intervallo*, of the famous Joseph Priestley, Unitarian philosopher and discoverer of oxygen, whose house, library and scientific apparatus were burnt by a Church-and-State mob in 1791. The apparition of these suspicious intruders was shortly followed by the arrival at my house of a deputation, headed by Mr. Charles Gabriel Beale, known to everybody who knows anything to the purpose about Birmingham. They told me that their Church was rich in young life and the young people devoted to it in a tradition passed on from generation to generation. This attracted me: it would fill a want I had felt greatly at Renshaw Street, where most of the heads were grey. "But," said I to the deputation, "there is a grave difficulty. I understand that Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who has recently split the Liberal Party on Home Rule and quarrelled with Mr. Gladstone, is a member and one of the chief supporters of your Church, and was once the Superintendent of your Sunday School. Now, though Mr. Gladstone has recently treated me rather contemptuously at a banquet in the Town Hall (this I thought rather than said) I am very distinctly a Gladstone man and a Home Ruler. That may get me into trouble if I come among you. In fact it has done so already here in Liverpool, where there is no Mr. Joseph Chamberlain to compass my annihilation." "I don't think that matters," said Mr. Thomas Russell, a member of the deputation, "we are not all of the same mind with Mr. Chamberlain." "Besides," added Mr. Herbert New (Treasurer of the Church), "though Mr. Chamberlain subscribes very liberally to the Church funds, he very

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rarely attends." "There is a virtue named discretion," said Mr. Beale. "I am not sure of possessing it," said I. So we parted with the understanding that both sides were to think it over. Which both sides having done I accepted the invitation.

This happened forty-seven years ago. As I look back down the long perspective of years to the event I have just described my attention is arrested by another event about midway between then and now. Exactly twenty years after I had discussed with the deputation the possibility that Mr. Chamberlain would not approve of a Home Ruler as minister of the Church he supported, and might annihilate him with his disapproval, I was summoned from Oxford, where my work then lay, to conduct his funeral in that same Church. It is another instance to suggest a reflection often forced upon me in looking back to times when what is now a memory was a present experience. How little indication do present events give us of the future events to which they lead on! And if that is worth reflecting on when only the life of a single individual is in question, how much more when great events are shaking the whole world, as they are at the moment I write these words. Who of us has the faintest conception of what the issues of it all will be? "When they say unto you lo here, lo there, go not after them. As the lightning that lighteneth the one part of heaven and shineth to the other, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man." In my own life it certainly has been so.

There were elderly men in the Renshaw Street congregation with whom my relations were almost filial. The parting was painful and not without a tinge of self-reproach on my part. Leaving my wife in the Lakes, with two infants who were afterwards to serve through the Great War, I went off by myself for a long holiday in Norway. There, amid the racing waters and majestic solitudes of the Lofoten Islands, or alone in my boat on the Western fjords, I thought much of what had happened to me and wondered what would happen next,

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living for a time in that universe of which the centre is myself, the spiritual centre for all of us. It may be that my faith in the Guiding Hand, which has grown progressively with the passage of the years, received some reinforcement; for once, during a violent squall on the Hardanger fjord, I came very near to losing my life, and was saved as it were by a miracle.

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BIRMINGHAM : DISCOVERY OF THE COMMON MAN

Of all points of faith the being of God is, to my own apprehension, encompassed with most difficulty, and yet borne in upon our minds with most power—*J. H. Newman: Apologia*

MY DISCOVERY of the Common Man, the most important I have made, or that anyone can make, seems to have begun during the time of my settlement in Birmingham. This, at all events, was the period when the discovery began to be effective as a guiding influence on my walk in the world, way of thinking and conversation with my fellows. The whole course of my life up to that period had indicated a predisposition to make the discovery; I had been on the way to it all the time. My birth in an obscure family of the middle class, the associates of my childhood, the penurious circumstances and commonplace tragedies of my home life, my lonely struggles as an orphan student, my introduction to artificial theologies and rebellious reactions, my miscellaneous fellowships and frequent fallings in love—all this, and the contrasts to all this, with which I had been brought into contact, were favourable to the discovery of the Common Man and to the habit of approaching my problems from the Human End. Circumstances outwardly unfavourable and sequences apparently haphazard now seem to me, as I view them in retrospect, to have had a purpose. They led me to the discovery of the Common Man, as circumstances more favourable and sequences more carefully ordered might not have done.

To discover the Common Man is, of course, to discover that which all men have in common; the discovery, therefore, of

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myself in my neighbour and of my neighbour in myself, the only condition on which the two can be loved equally. It follows that each of us must make the discovery, if he make it at all, for himself. No man, having made it for himself, can pass it on, ready made, to another. The most he can do is to persuade others to adopt a way of life which leads on to the discovery. To become acquainted with the Common Man by listening to what others have to say about him is impossible. Such hearsay knowledge of him, like hearsay knowledge of God, is no knowledge at all, but opinion only and worthless as an incentive to action. Knowledge of God and knowledge of the Common Man are closely akin. Some think them identical.

The Common Man is not an inferior person on whom the wise look down as ignorant and the polite as vulgar. He is a superior person to whom the wise look up, and from whom the polite derive whatever of their polish is not factitious but a glow from within. He, of all men, is the one who lives by Reason, but Reason in the sublime sense given to the word by Kant, and not in the sense of those who confuse it with ratiocination, argumentativeness and the exchanges of logic-shot. The Common *Mangoes straight to his mark*, in contrast to those who approach the mark circuitously and lose themselves on the way. These live by the Understanding, which compares with Reason as the blind man's stick, testing the ground for his next step, compares with the pole-star guiding the mariner in the circumnavigation of the globe. The conversation of the Common Man is "yea, yea," "nay, nay." You discern what he believes by what he *does*, not by what he *says*, at least not by that alone. Reading his belief from his actions, it is clear that what he believes in is the everlasting difference between good and evil, true and false. "Yes," said Emerson, after hearing a pessimist prove that this is the worst of all possible worlds, "yes, all you have said may be true, but *what is that in you which knows it?*" Answer: the Common Man. He knows the everlasting difference between good and evil, true and false.

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My work in Birmingham began in the autumn of 1894. I had passed from a maritime port, situate like ancient Tyre "at the entering in of the seas," with its constant appeal to the imagination, to a manufacturing city, where more was to be seen of the nation's inner life and less of its outgoings. Both being smoky places, "Smokeover" occurred to me as a name that would cover the two. When, a quarter of a century later, I came to write *The Legends of Smokeover*, this word had become the name of a composite photograph, to which a dozen industrial cities had contributed. But though Liverpool and Birmingham had the smoky attribute in common they were widely different in other respects. The social currents in Birmingham were less diffused than in Liverpool, and the social differences less marked. Though the industries were far more various they were closely concentrated and interlocked. The Common Man was more in evidence in the public life of the city, and the magnate less. Moreover there was in Birmingham one outstanding figure whose personality had stamped itself on the life of the community. Joseph Chamberlain was not a magnate of the type to be found in Liverpool. He was nearer to the Common Man. In this, I think, lay the secret of his leadership in that city.

It was an advantage to me as a Unitarian, that Chamberlain, though rarely attending the Church of the Messiah, only twice I think during my nine years' ministry, was known as a supporter of the cause for which it stood. There was a further advantage in the fact that Birmingham had never ceased to be ashamed of itself for what it did to Joseph Priestley, the father of Birmingham Unitarianism. If the citizens cannot be said to have whitewashed the tomb of that prophet, they have made a better atonement by erecting a beautiful statue of him near the Town Hall.

Which again prompts an anticipation. Towards the end of the South African war Mr. Lloyd George, who was then unpopular as a pro-Boer, and especially so in Chamberlain's stronghold, came down to air his views in the city, and was

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violently mobbed in the Town Hall, from which he is said to have escaped in the disguise of a policeman. I witnessed the riot as it swayed round Priestley's statue, and was forthwith inspired, either from below or above, with a fine notion for a sermon. In this sermon I denounced the riot as a disgrace to Birmingham and rashly predicted that just as its citizens had put up a statue, on one side of the Town Hall, to Priestley after burning his house in 1791, so some future generation would put up, on *the* other side, a statue to Mr. Lloyd George, whom their fathers had mobbed in 1901. The London *Daily News* reported the sermon at length, and I soon found myself in hot water. When last I visited Birmingham, some forty years after the date of this sermon, the statue of my Unitarian predecessor was still standing on one side of the Town Hall, but I saw no sign of my offensive prophecy being fulfilled on the other.

This, so far as my memory and record bear witness, was the only occasion on which I got into trouble for "interfering in politics" during the nine years of my ministry (1894-1903). My relations with Birmingham, its people, and especially with the representative group of its people worshipping in the Church of the Messiah, were intimate and happy. I became interested in the history, the social life and the manifold industries of the city, and was commissioned to write the article on Birmingham in the tenth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* then appearing. This involved considerable research and was a valuable education. I breathed deep in the atmosphere of industrialism, the influence of which was still in my blood when I wrote *The Legends of Smoke* over twenty years later, and has never wholly left me.

In Birmingham I learned to know the Common Man better than I had known him in Liverpool and began to realize that the most precious part of my equipment as a minister of religion, Unitarian or otherwise, lay in what he and I had "in common." Thus was laid the foundation of my belief, now grown to firm conviction, that the Common Man is the appointed saviour of the world, the long expected Messiah to

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whom the Church I served had been dedicated. Not, however, with that meaning. The name, "Church of the Messiah," originated from a controversy in the eighteen-sixties between James Martin and Samuel Bache, the minister at the time, the latter maintaining that Jesus claimed to be and was the Jewish Messiah, the former maintaining that he neither was the Messiah nor claimed to be. Mr. Bache considered that he had won, and when the Church was built in 1861 named it "the Church of the Messiah."

The congregation which worshipped there was, as I have said, representative of Birmingham. The Chamberlains (there were several families), the Kenricks, the Nettlefolds, the Rylands, the Beales, the Russells, the News, the Crosskeys, the Worsleys, the Gladstones, the Mathews, the Smiths, the Fields, were all near kindred of the Common Man, high-powered and strongly individualized. The Church had a Mission to the Poor, housed in the back premises, and supported another in the slums; the members of the former furnishing the bulk of my evening congregation and an important factor in the government of the Church. Some good specimens of the Common Man were to be found among them also; their missionary, named Tranter, the best of them.

The "grave difficulty" I had anticipated turned out to be no difficulty at all. Though the Home Rule controversy was then raging, congregation and minister "walked together" in good fellowship, as we had done in Liverpool, but at a brisker pace, better suited to the temperament of the minister. We had many arguments by the way, but no quarrels.

Joseph Chamberlain, then in the full tide of his political activities, though not attending the Church, did not ignore me. From time to time he would invite me to "Highbury," and showed me much kindness. Naturally I came to know his sons, Austin and Neville, who in later years continued the kindness of their father. On one of these occasions Chamberlain, knowing that I was a Home Ruler, asked me to state my case, which I doing as best I could, and he answering incisively

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point by point, we sat up in his study till three in the morning, smoking the best of cigars. Needless to say I got the worst of the argument, as I have often done without losing faith in what I was arguing for. It was conducted on his part without the least contempt for my views and with the sole desire to put me right. Unfortunately the record of that conversation is lost. I remember, however, that he said many things about the great Liberals of his time which threw a new light for me on his character and on theirs; I remember also Ins strong insistence that the Conservatives had done far more than the Liberals for the working man and for the poor. On another occasion he showed me round his famous orchid houses. Pausing before an orchid of great beauty he pointed out the astonishing arrangement Nature had made for the fertilization of its flowers. "And the scientific people tell me," said he in conclusion, "that it has all come about by chance.—*Rubbish!*" Which is precisely what it will always be to the Common Man.

I vividly recall a small dinner party at the modest home of E. A. Sonnenschein, Professor of Greek in Birmingham University, at which the male guests were Chamberlain, Edward Caird (Master of Balliol) and myself—a queer assortment of personalities. Caird, after his manner, was mostly silent, but Chamberlain was in his best talking vein. As we smoked after dinner he told many stories of which the following, noted down at the time, is one.

Some time in the early seventies he had paid a visit, in company with W. H. Mallock¹ to Carlyle in Cheyne Row. In the interview with the sage Mallock managed to get the whip hand in the conversation, as Carlyle himself was wont to do, but strongly resented when others made him the victim. The sage accordingly relapsed into a gloomy silence and sat puffing his long clay pipe while Mallock poured out a monologue. Presently Carlyle rose from his seat. "And now, gentlemen, I'll bid ye both good-day" said he. Somewhat

¹ The author of *The New Republic*.

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disconcerted the visitors departed and went downstairs. When they were in the hall below, about to leave the house, they heard Carlyle calling over the banisters on the top storey: "Mr. Mallock, Mr. Mallock, d'ye hear me?" "Yes, sir." "Weel, I've not enjoyed your veesit, and I'll thank ye no to come again."—I can still see Chamberlain warming his hands over the fire in Sonnenschein's study as he told this story.

Another Birmingham notable with whom I had some contact was Jesse Collings, M.P., prophet of "three acres and a cow," a wise, solid, benignant man, more at home with the ploughshare and the pruning hook than with the sword and the spear, and no match for Chamberlain's biting tongue. His wife, a charming lady, belonged to my congregation. I would often dine at Ins house. At one of these dinner parties Chamberlain was present and, being that night in a bad humour, mercilessly snubbed us all, Jesse Collings getting the worst of it, though my own share was sufficient.

In Birmingham also I learnt something to the purpose about the Quakers, whose right name, the Society of Friends, is the best name that has ever been given to a religious movement, a true pointer to the Universal Church, "the Beloved Community" that will arise on the earth when the Common Man fulfils his destiny. It is a strange fact of my experience, which the nature of this Confession requires me to state, but which I do not pretend to interpret, that while never feeling entirely in my element with other denominations I have always felt at home when circumstances have brought me into contact with the Society of Friends, on the one hand, and the Society of Jesus on the other. Can it be that the two extremes meet in the heavens and that one day they will meet on the earth? Neither the Friends nor the Jesuits have ever sought to influence me in their directions—one reason why they have influenced me so much. Many of the former fell within the circle of my acquaintance when I was in Birmingham—Cadburys, Al-brights, Sturges, Barrows, Wilson-Kings. The city had no truer "friends" than they and they were friends to me also, but

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in ways that they knew not of. *Sit nica anima cum illis.*

What I chiefly owe to Birmingham, then, is a fuller discovery of the Common Man and help in drawing a little nearer to him. Yes, it was to him, so I thought, and not to a Jewish phantom, that the Church of the Messiah was really dedicated. Did Jesus claim to be the Messiah? Unquestionably he did, I answered. Why else did he call himself the *Son of Man*, which is what all men are? Why else predict that, on a day when none was looking for it, this Common Man would appear on the clouds of heaven, with all the holy angels, and make himself master of the whole earth? A new conception of Christianity as the religion of the Common Man, in which "the work of the Reformation" would be completed, began to dawn upon me. One day, thought I, all Churches, and all Chapels too, will be Churches of the Messiah—Churches of the Common Man. It was bad exegesis, so the critics told me, and would have been displeasing to Samuel Bache, but it was an inspiring thought. It still inspires me.

THE COMMON MAN FURTHER DISCOVERED IN RURAL SURROUNDINGS

"Hamlet is a universal man because he is the duplicate of no other man"

MANY YEARS after I had left Birmingham a writer of character sketches chose me as one of his subjects. The writer was Harold Begbie, "The Gentleman with a Duster," and his book was *Painted Windows*, in one of which he thought fit to insert my figure. He was kind enough to give me credit in what he wrote for some good qualities I do not possess, but there was one point at which he hit the mark and revealed me to myself. This man, he said, "moves like a peasant."

Why did Begbie place me in that category? The explanation lies, I think, in an incident which occurred during the interview I had with him before his sketch was written. By way of getting "copy," he had been pressing me about my religious views, a kind of interrogation in which I have never shone to advantage nor been able to respond to my own satisfaction; and I, getting rather bored or irritated, suddenly broke off the conversation and proposed that we should go out and look at some fine pigs I was fattening for the market. This proposal, he seems to have concluded, was one which only a peasant would have made in the circumstances. I believe he was right. Nor am I ashamed to confess it. Christianity is a country-born, not a town-born, religion. Other birthplace than the countryside, other founder than a peasant, it could not have had.

The peasant strain in me, which had been free in childhood, but afterwards repressed by the circumstances of my home, by the grinding years of academical orphanhood, by theologi-

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cal study, by the work that had fallen to my lot as a Unitarian minister, was liberated and came to life in the manner I will now relate.

One day in 1897, wandering about Gloucestershire on a bicycle, which had become everybody's vehicle since the time when Mr. Thom had frowned upon it as compromising my dignity, I came upon an empty farm house on Bredon Hill, an outlier of the Cotswolds, and learning that it was to be rented for £20 a year, promptly took it. The house was on the south side of Bredon ("the hill of springs") which sloped upwards for about a thousand feet and had on its summit a vast camp of the ancient Britons, a view over several counties, with Avon winding like a snake in the valley below, the towers of two cathedrals and the hills of Wales visible in the far distance. All around lay orchards, a "sea of blossom" in spring time. Nestling hamlets, church spires, ancient country houses dotted the landscape; in all the vast expanse not a factory chimney, not a bungalow was to be seen. A land on which the jerry builder had not laid his curse; owned by good landlords as yet unruined by taxation and tilled by prosperous farmers who despised Agricultural Colleges, grew rich on their contempt, and hated "eddication" and Lloyd George, as responsible between them for the decay of old England. A piece of unspoiled country such as my soul longed after. There for twenty years I breathed again the atmosphere of my childhood and was entirely in my element, a peasant among peasants.

My landlord, who lived in a neighbouring manor house, was one of the prosperous farmers aforesaid. His name was Cormell, which sounded in the local pronunciation rather like "Cromwell" and may have been a corruption of it. There was no reason to suppose him descended from my hero and fellow peasant, the great Protector, though from the cut of him he might have been. My conversations with this man, as I sat with him in his kitchen with hams and flitches dangling above, and mugs of cider before us, were among the most

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illuminating I have had with any human being. Of intellect as we reckon it in Universities, he had not much; of "education," reckoned likewise, nothing; but his stock of intuitions was amazing. From intercourse with this man I came to the conclusion that unless the soil and its cultivators arc of one soul and substance, so that each understands and loves the other, ill fares the land they cultivate, and ill fare the men who cultivate it—a point to be borne in mind by those who would accomplish the revival of British agriculture. Being "a peasant at heart" it was not difficult for me to understand the elemental truths which emerged from the farmer's Cromwellian conversation. I wish they were better understood at the Ministry of Food, which controls the supply of our victuals, with so much understanding of "control" but not so much of what they are controlling. But I am now too old to offer myself as adviser to that Department.

Another friend of mine was a highly skilful shepherd employed by my landlord. As Ins master was a farmer in the sense that he was a living farm, so this man was a shepherd in the sense that he was a human sheep, or, shall we say? half sheep half man—a fertile combination. His voice distinctly reproduced the sheep's "baa" and when he spoke to me I felt that a sheep was taking part in the conversation. But let no one suppose that tins made it uninteresting. On the contrary I found it almost as illuminating as that of his master, whose voice, as I have said, was as much the voice of a farm as of a farmer. There was unquestionably a sheep-element in that shepherd's mentality. How much wiser we should all be, our philosophers especially, for an occasional conversation with a sheep and how lucky was I to meet a man, like this shepherd, who could translate the sheep's language into Gloucestershire dialect. When I began to write books, which I did largely under the influence of these surroundings, I combined him into a composite image with another "shepherd" of my acquaintance, and put it into a book called *Mad Shepherds* under the name "Snarley Bob."

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These, and such like, were my companions during the twenty years when this place was my holiday home. They served to enrich my conception of the Common Man and to strengthen my belief in him as the Messiah, the appointed saviour of society and the completer of the Reformation. One effect of this, I believe, was to improve the quality of my Birmingham preaching, which needed improving. The improvement consisted in a nearer approach to reality and less concern with distant "views" of it, my own or other men's.

It was good also for my six children, who ran wild over the country, with the police occasionally after them for minor offences against the law, learnt to fend for themselves, as their elders did; learnt also that the food they ate and the milk they drank were not mere shop articles whose history began when they were bought over the counter or deposited at the kitchen door. They caught fish in the stream and cooked them: they rode horses and broke their bones: they watched the pressing of the cider and the brewing of the mead, both domestic products, and found by experiment that if they sampled either of these beverages too freely it would make them drunk. Their subsequent walk and conversation gives me no reason to believe that these lessons were thrown away.

Meanwhile I digged, planted, kept bees, bred live stock, and spread their dung over the grateful earth, the vegetable congregations responding to my ministries as no human congregation had ever done, perhaps recognizing that a peasant was the minister. The crops flourished, the animals brought forth, the flowers laughed in their beds, and all night long in her season the nightingale sang her "amorous descant" round my dwelling place. I now perceived more clearly than ever that the Power-not-ourselves makes for other tilings besides "righteousness," though perhaps included within it on a right definition of that term. It makes, I thought, for courage, often challenging to combat those whom it loves, adopting them as sons if they fight well, but pursuing them with hailstones and coals of fire if they run away, its love all

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turned to hate. All of which may be found written in the Book of the Wars of the Lord.

And so it went on till the time came for Harold Begbie to interview me on my "religious views," for me to break off the conversation by inviting him to take a look at my fat pigs, and to find myself consequentially placed in a stained glass window, with a good guess at my character written below.

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FAREWELL TO BIRMINGHAM

Let your religion be less of a theory and more of a love affair—
G. K. Chesterton

AMONG THE memories of my life in Birmingham none gives me greater pleasure to recall in old age than the many weddings (with christenings to follow in due course) that took place among the young people of the congregation. These were numerous and frequent. On more than one occasion I managed to play a part in the preliminary romance, but without letting the lovers know that I was playing it. When people tell me that marriage is a failure, and prove it by statistics, I always get the worst of the argument, but the memory of the happy marriages I have been concerned in, my own especially, keeps me convinced to the contrary, and I can only reply that proving marriage a failure does not prove that either celibacy or free love is a success. Incidentally these marriages, at least some of them, helped me to understand the quality of the Unitarian fibre which, not being a born Unitarian myself, I had to learn from those who were. It came about in this way.

Sometimes it would happen that the daughter of a Unitarian, a member of my flock, would get engaged to a member of the Anglican Church. This, on more than one occasion, led on to an interesting passage of arms between the two families concerned. When the time for the marriage drew near the Unitarian father of the bride would receive from the Anglican father of the bridegroom a proposal couched in some such terms as these: "As my family and myself, as well as many of our friends, are strict members of the Anglican Church, and as

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my brother, the Bishop of So-and-So, hopes to be present at the ceremony, I suggest that it will be agreeable to all parties if the marriage were arranged to take place at the Parish Church, which is conveniently near your house, and the Rev. Canon Jones asked to officiate." To which the Unitarian father of the bride, challenged at a point where the Categorical Imperative allowed of no parley or hesitation, would give prompt answer to the following effect:

"My daughter will be married to your son by the Unitarian minister in the Unitarian Chapel where I have worshipped God all my life, where I was married myself, as my father was before me. *There* my daughter's marriage to your son will take place, *or not at all.*"

The issue of the combat, in the typical case, was surrender to the immovable Unitarian father; but not without protest, which would be emphasized by the absence of the Bishop or other notable from the ceremony, by a falling off in the wedding presents from that side, by the scanty attendance of the offended family, by their studied inattention during the service and their freezing manners in the vestry while the registers were being signed. After which there would come a gradual dissipation of the frost under the warming influence of the Unitarian champagne, always of the very best, at the merrymaking which followed the religious exercises.

One of my last acts before leaving Birmingham was to do my part at a wedding which involved nothing of this unpleasantness. Bride and bridegroom were stout defenders of the faith, with names famous in the history of Unitarianism. A happy ending for me and beginning for them.

In the spring of 1902 a movement was set on foot which resulted in the foundation of *The Hibbert Journal*, owned by the Hibbert Trustees. To *The Hibbert Journal* and its fortunes, with which I have now been connected for nearly forty years, I shall devote a separate chapter. The Hibbert Trustees appointed me their Editor, the only condition I made being

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that the Journal should have no party or denominational commitment, that no recognized school of thought should be excluded from its province, and that generally I should be given a free hand. The idea of completing the work of the Reformation, which I owed to Charles Beard, now held me more firmly than ever before, but in a form greatly enriched and extended beyond my first apprehension of it. Experience of denominationalism had convinced me that no denomination, whatever its principles might be, could accomplish it single-handed. It would require a vast mobilization of spiritual and intellectual forces to which all the denominations would have to contribute. The Religions of the East would also play their part. Nor would it be the work of professional theologians alone. It would be the affair of the schools as well as of the churches and chapels, and the layman would co-operate with the priest. Such was the conception I had in mind when stipulating with the Hibbert Trustees for a free hand. I thought of *The Hibbert Journal* as a point where these manifold forces might come to a focus, interact, and generate spiritual energy by their interaction. Completing the Reformation had, in fact, reduced itself in my mind to the simple question of generating spiritual energy, which is another name for awakening the soul: that done, the rest would follow.—The stipulation was accepted by the Hibbert Trustees, and on that basis they appointed me editor while I was still minister of the Church of the Messiah.

I soon found that I had undertaken a formidable task. The response to the new project from the religious world was on a scale that none of us had expected. Articles began to pour in from writers, both clerical and lay, who had long been needing just such a free medium of expression as *The Hibbert Journal* afforded. Except in a small way I was without experience in editing, and such advice as I could get from other editors, to whom I applied for it, was not much to the purpose: they were all working on different lines from mine. One of them compressed it into three words, "be a *brute*," which

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perhaps was more to the purpose than I thought it at the time.

The volume of the work rapidly increased, it made incessant and exacting calls on my energies, and I saw that it would be impossible to carry it on for long in conjunction with my other work as the minister of an important church. Fate, however, was kind to me. In the early months of 1903 I was offered the post of Lecturer in Philosophy at Manchester College,¹ then newly established in Oxford. Though not over confident in my technical equipment I took the risk, accepted the offer and removed with my family to a seventeenth century house belonging to the College, 28 Holywell Street, Oxford, where I lived for the next ten years. The post would give me more leisure, especially in vacations that covered half the year, be easily combined with my philosophical work and, indeed, helped by it.

There was another consideration that weighed with me. I had left Liverpool largely because I was out of breath, preaching breath, and needed to get a second wind. It was not so in Birmingham. By continued practice the production of sermons had become easy, and I was ready to produce as many as circumstances might demand. Give me a likely subject or text and I could knock you off a passable sermon in a couple of hours. This facility, when I reflected on it, rather frightened me. I saw a danger that just as religion had been for me in my youth largely an affair of tasting sermons, so now in middle age it might become an affair of producing and preaching them, and that, I well knew, would be no religion at all. Just as religion may be *studied* till it is studied away (like the philosopher who became so absorbed in proving the existence of God that he forgot to say his prayers) so there is such a thing as over-preaching it. This I saw might happen to me, if I went on producing two sermons a week all the year round and producing them with such dangerous facility. At Manchester College I might have to preach half a dozen in the course of

¹After removal of the College to Oxford the word "new" was dropped from its name.

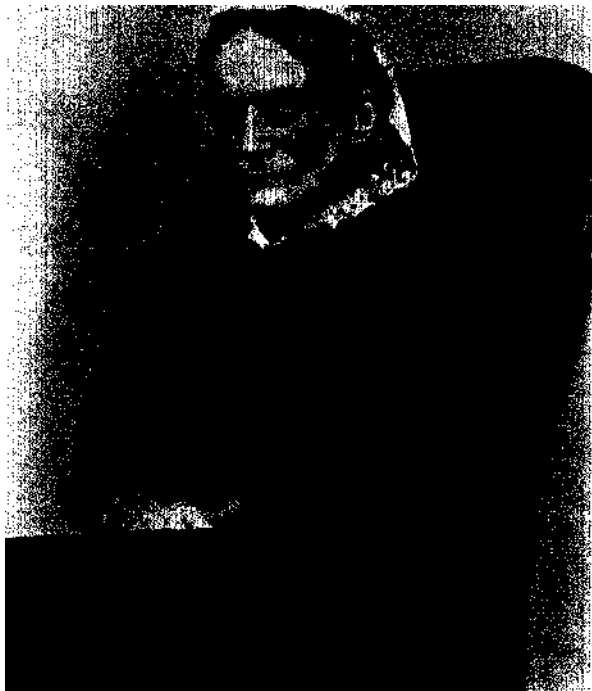
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the year. That, I thought, would be far better for me. I even began to look forward to a time which now, thank God, has come, when I might possess my religion, and share it with friends, without having to preach about it in public.

I was forty-three, a little beyond the middle point of my present life-span. My active ministry, which had lasted sixteen years, was at an end.

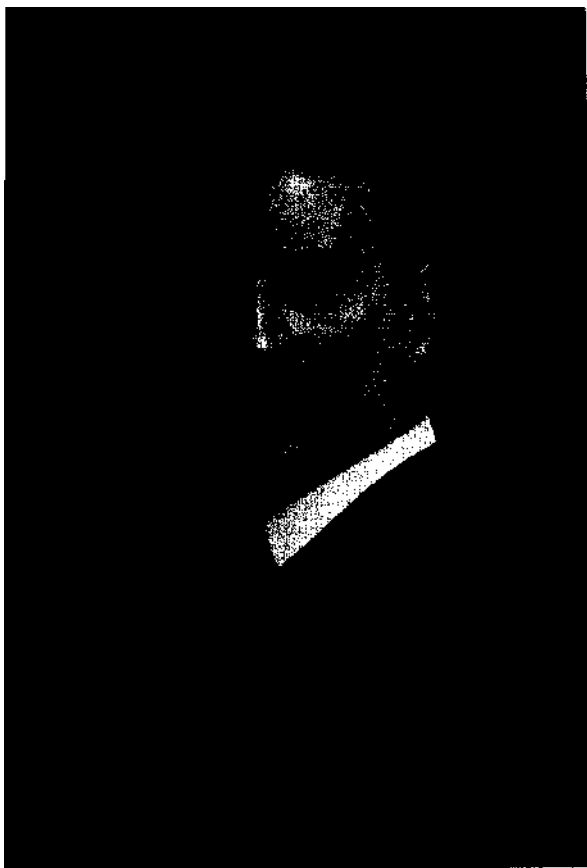
Tolstoi was right when he pointed out how easy it is to confuse the desire to serve God with the desire to draw a congregation. In my own case desire to sway the crowd, desire to be a "success" as a preacher, which had led me in youth to imitate the eloquent, had never been entirely overcome. The proof is that when I failed to sway the crowd, and found myself at most but a modest success as a drawer of congregations, I was disappointed. It may be that the Higher Powers had used the foolish ambition for their own ends; I believe they often do. It was the clement that my mother, who understood me so well, feared might get the upper hand in me. In 1903 she was no longer here to warn me of the danger. She passed away in 1899, worn out by many conflicts. By that time her warnings had been taken to heart, and to this day they are not forgotten.

One day, not long ago, I was walking abroad with my dog, a powerful Alsatian, when a tiny weasel, a mere wisp of life, suddenly ran out in front of us. It stopped and reared up in a posture of battle, as though to bar the way to the approaching monsters. The dog dashed forward to the attack. But the brave little creature stood its ground, faced the foe and put on such a fiery aspect that the great dog was terrified, turned tail and ran away.—It was a vision of my mother's battle with the world, the battle she had fought for *me*, of one origin and purpose through the realms of animated nature from lowest to highest, the fight of the mother for the children, that Life may not perish from the earth. Is there any combat so sublime? I deem it a manifestation of the Living God.



H. J. Whitlock, Birmingham
THE AUTHOR'S MOTHER IN 1895

[to face page 168]



THE AUTHOR IN 1910

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MANCHESTER COLLEGE

"Strange things will happen to your waggon if you hitch it to a star"

MANCHESTER COLLEGE, to which I was now appointed Lecturer or, as I was sometimes called, Professor, had been moved in 1889 from London to Oxford, in spite of Martineau's opposition, and housed in spacious buildings three years later. Though located in Oxford it was an independent institution unconnected with the University. To join its Staff, therefore, was not to become an "Oxford man" except in the sense that one resided in Oxford or its neighbourhood. We were immigrants who had not been invited by the University. The presence, in the midst of the other Colleges, of an institution so tainted with heresy was resented by the orthodox who, nevertheless, were powerless to prevent it: an attitude which the following anecdote may illustrate.

A certain ecclesiastic, so the story runs, walking one day in company of a friend down the Mansfield Road paused in front of the newly erected College. "The erection of that building in Oxford," said the ecclesiastic, "is an impertinence. Even the architecture is obtrusively Unitarian: solid but cold." "Yes," answered his friend, "built to last, not to please. You can imagine it lasting to the Day of Judgment." "Ah," said the ecclesiastic, "I can imagine it lasting to the Day of Judgment. *But not afterwards*"

The origin of the College can be traced to one of the numerous "Nonconformist Academies" founded up and down the country in the half century that followed the passing of the Act of Uniformity, for the education of dissenters, clerical

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and lay, whom the Act excluded from the Universities. The home of its original was a small stone cottage at Rathmell on the Yorkshire moors, where an ejected minister of 1660 conducted the studies. In its early history it was neither more nor less heretical than any other nonconformist academy, but having a non-dogmatic foundation, its tendency from the first had been to attract, both as teachers and students, those who were becoming dissatisfied with the official creeds and were often moving in the direction of Unitarianism. The same was true of the long succession of its benefactors. Thus it had come to pass that when I joined the Staff, and for the twenty-eight years of my service on it, the personnel and atmosphere of the College were predominantly and at times entirely Unitarian, though its principles were unsectarian and non-dogmatic. In 1903 the members of the teaching Staff were all known as Unitarians, and so were the members of the large governing body. No exclusion was practised towards members of orthodox denominations and if, as occasionally happened, a student declared his intention to take Orders in the Church of England, or to become a Methodist or Presbyterian minister, his status would be unaffected and any scholarship he held continued to him as before.

A typical case was that of W. E. Addis, an eminent scholar, who was a member of the Staff when I joined and for some years afterwards. Addis had been a priest in the Roman Church, afterwards a Unitarian minister, and was known as a Unitarian when he was appointed Professor. Later on, while still holding his Professorship of Hebrew and the Old Testament, he joined the Anglican communion; whereupon a movement was got up by a group of ardent Unitarians to oust him from his professorship. Counsel's opinion declared in favour of Addis and, on a vote being taken among the supporters of the College, the attempt to get rid of him was overwhelmingly defeated. This was a test case for the College principle of non-exclusion.

It must be said, however, that there were few opportunities

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of giving a welcome to members of the orthodox bodies. Whether as teachers or students, the orthodox were little disposed to join an institution staffed by Unitarians, governed by Unitarians, endowed by Unitarians. Naturally it would cause them to be suspected of making terms with the Unitarian heresy. It was all very well to tell them that they were "free" to adopt whatever creed and serve whatever church they might choose, and no doubt the College was sincere in telling them so; but in view of the fact just stated the "freedom" did not amount to very much. As George Herbert had remarked when I told him that the College would not prevent me taking Orders, "the Church will have something to say to that." Moreover, orthodox students were amply provided for in the Colleges established by their own denominations. And so it came to pass that though the Unitarians might have a college open in theory to all and sundry, in practice they would have to keep it to themselves for their own purposes.

Such was Manchester College when I joined the Staff in 1903. There was antinomy between the logic of the College and its practice, comparable in some respects to the antinomy in the British constitution, which is republican in practice and monarchical in theory—comparable to that, but not so happily solved.

Now it so happened that my sympathies were all on the side of the College logic, of its open principle. That it should have become identified, in the eyes of the world, with theological Unitarianism seemed to me a misfortune. There was, and still is, a crying need in the world for a theological college in complete detachment from all denominational interests. Denominationalism had always repelled me, and especially among Unitarians where it ought to have no place. I had joined them years before not because I attached very much significance to their difference from the Trinitarians—I am not and never have been much concerned about that, deeming it a mole hill made into a mountain—but because I hoped that among them I should escape from the poison of denominationalism. True,

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I had found among the Unitarians a group of men, like Martineau, Thom, Charles Beard, James Drummond, Richard Armstrong, Charles Hargrove, Enfield Dowson, Arthur Worthington and Robert Darbishire who disliked denominationalism as much as I did; but on the whole I was disappointed at not finding more of them. These men—great men and true catholics—had not found an unimpeded way. There was little likelihood, therefore, that I could get mine. But at Manchester College I hoped it would be different. I entered upon my work there in the same spirit and with the same intention as those in which I accepted the editorship of *The Hibbert Journal*.

Religion is too pure a thing for corporations. It needs society, "the society of friends," but its vitality begins to wane when the society turns itself into a corporation, a "body," with vested interests which are not religious. A similar declension takes place when human society, which is natural to man, gets converted into the political state with sovereign interests which are not human. But that is another story and belongs to a later part of my confession. Here I merely note the fact that the two phenomena are of the same order.

Throughout the whole of my service at the College, faith in its ideal and desire to make the ideal a reality were the main spring of such contribution as I was able to make to its policy and practice. In the early years of that service both the faith and the desire were greatly strengthened in me by the friendship of Sir Henry Jones, Professor of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow, who for six years (1906-1912) held the appointment in the College of Hibbert Lecturer in Metaphysics, coming down from Glasgow to Oxford to deliver his lectures twice a week. Naturally I was much in contact with him. He spent a summer with his family at my house on Bredon Hill; next year I and a part of my family made common holiday with his at Carsphairn in Galloway. A joyous, fiery, affectionate Welshman; a bonnie fighter wherever iniquity showed its head and a genial lover to whom nothing human was foreign;

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abounding in wit and merry tales, but withal so deeply founded on the spiritual rock and with a grasp so firm on the root of the matter that faith in him never shone brighter than amid the suffering and tribulation that fell upon him in the closing years of his life.¹ Of quickening influences I count his among the best the kind heavens have granted me, and this in spite of his scanty respect for what I was pleased to call my philosophy, while I, though I respected his, could never adopt his method and often disagreed with his argumentation. His Celtic temper was not very tolerant of such disagreement. Though not a Unitarian either by birth or adoption, Jones had in him the high spiritual quality which had most attracted me in Unitarianism, as I saw it exemplified in men like Martincau and Drummond, a quality well defined in the title of his Gifford Lectures, "A Faith that Enquires". We had a further link in the fact that he was a peasant by parentage, as I probably am through some remoter ancestry; the result being that while we generally disagreed when arguing as philosophers (if I may so count myself) we were always in accord on the peasant footing, or when conversing as one elemental with another. When his philosophy ran into poetry, as often happened in his lectures, or kindled with prophetic fire, as it mostly did, I was his man; but otherwise only with reservations which, if I ventured to express them, would evoke an outburst of Celtic wrath not unmingled with contempt for my stupidity. The poetry and the fire of his lectures were such as inevitably break out from a faith that *enquires*. They furthered my religious education and quickened my zeal for the ideals of Manchester College.

¹The story is told in *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Jones* by Sir Hector Hetherington.

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I OVERSHOOT THE MARK

Our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not—
Shakespeare

FOR SOME years after my appointment I was the junior member on a Staff of which the seniors, James Drummond, Estlin Carpenter, Edwin Odgers and W. E. Addis, were distinguished scholars, which I was not. Naturally I had little or no influence in directing policy. It was not until I was appointed Principal as successor to Dr. Carpenter in 1915 that opportunity came for a sustained effort in the direction that interested me—that of bringing the reality of the College into closer coincidence with its principle.

My memory of the part I played in Manchester College from my appointment in 1903 as junior member of the Staff till my retirement as Principal in 1931 is, in many respects, less clear than my memory of the preceding half of my life. This no doubt is partly accounted for by the well known fact that in the retrospects of old age the nearer scenes are less distinct than the more distant. The ghost of myself as a student in the College stands out in sharper outline and more solid substance than the College Professor and Principal. The earlier ghosts respond quickly when summoned from the vasty deep and are more easily interrogated than any of the succeeding apparitions. The latter often require prolonged solicitation, and even then appear only as wavering phantoms.

It may be, however, that the true reason for my memories of the period when I was Principal being relatively indistinct lies not so much in the unwillingness of the ghosts to appear,

I OVERSHOOT THE MARK

as in my unwillingness to summon them. But I will tell the story of it as best I can.

During the years of my Professorship, prior to the time when I became Principal, I read extensively in philosophical literature; largely with a view to enlarging my technical knowledge which had been in a somewhat amateurish or half-forgotten condition at my appointment in 1903. The philosophers that attracted me most were those who tempted me to read between the lines, in other words, to exercise imagination. The chief of these among the classics was, again, Spinoza, of whom I am inclined to say he was an atheist, but only in the sense that God is one. Among the moderns I succumbed to the spell of Bergson, insomuch that I became, virtually, his disciple. His philosophy had on me an effect comparable to that of other "revelations" already recorded. I found myself transported by it from the external fixed position of a spectator, taking a "view," to an internal moving position when I was actually plunged into the time current and became a living element of a living universe; transported, in other words, from the outside of a Copernican universe to the inside of a Ptolemaic. In this no doubt I was reading Bergson between the lines, as I read the others. But the imaginative way of reading philosophy, to which my temperament condemned me, is not the way to get oneself recognized as a professional philosopher. On the theological students for whom I was immediately responsible it made little impression, though there were some who have since told me that I helped them. When I was lecturing on Bergson the lecture room was crowded, most of the hearers coming from outside my own College.

That life is an offense against the repetitive mechanism of the universe and man a natural rebel against the domination of machinery; that man is more truly described as *Homo Faber* than as *Homo Sapiens*;¹ that the bridges are few between logic

¹ If judged by his present suicidal proceedings *Homo Insipiens Damnatus* would be a fitter title than either of the above.

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and life; that life based on pure logic would be a Comedy of Errors; that the intelligence, so adroit in managing the inert, shows clumsiness as soon as it touches the living; that the cleverest intellects are those that deceive themselves the most easily; that our thinking life is much wider than our brain activity; that the brain is not a thinking instrument but a transformer of thought into action¹; that two and two do many tilings besides making four, especially when they *know* what they are doing—such are some of the thoughts, all with a wide range of ministry, which my study of Bergson, and my intercourse with him, left in my mind as a permanent deposit.

In 1910 I published a book called "The Alchemy of Thought" in which many of my "readings between the lines" were reproduced. In this country it received a little notice, and that not altogether unfavourable. But in America it had a better reception and led to an amusing incident which shows how little the book had done to improve my philosophical reputation at home.

A student of Chicago University having read the book, together with others of mine subsequently published, elected to write a thesis on my philosophy for the Chicago degree of Ph.D. and came with a travelling scholarship to Oxford as the natural place to get information and guidance. On being asked what he wished to study by the tutors of the College to which he was attached, he told them that he had come "to study the philosophy of L. P. Jacks." "We did not know," replied the tutors, "that L. P. Jacks had any philosophy."

It will be seen from the above that I had no great reputation as a philosopher when I was appointed Principal of the College in 1915, the second year of the first German war. It was an unfortunate time to begin. The student body, never large, gradually dwindled to a small group mainly consisting of pacifists, a generation with which I have never had much sympathy, and less than ever then, when I had three sons

¹Whoever it was who searched the heavens with a telescope and found no God would not have found the human mind if he had searched the brain with a microscope.—*G. Santayana*.

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serving at the front, and my heart would stop beating every time I saw a telegraph boy approaching the front door.

The position of Principal is naturally one that gives some influence in the shaping of College policy. Autocratic power in the matter I did not possess but, as Principal, I was favourably placed for influencing the governing body in the direction of my hopes and aims. These hopes and aims were as follows.

Experience as a minister had taught me, and experience as Editor of *The Hibbert Journal* was reinforcing the lesson, that religion in the modern world has to maintain its life amid cross currents from many quarters, science, philosophy, literature, art, the changing conditions of social life and many others. No longer a flame burning in a closed room where the air is still, it now burns in the open, blown upon by all the winds of heaven, which may either fan it to a brighter blaze or extinguish it altogether. The control of its form and direction is no longer exclusively in the hands of clerical persons, nor are they the sole channels of its operation. Laymen have now a part to play in these matters, and are obviously playing it.

It is essential that those who are being trained for the clerical office should be accustomed to these conditions and prepared for them. Contact with minds other than those of their own type should be encouraged and provided for. Since religion is no longer a cloistered thing, cloistered conditions should be avoided in the training of ministers. They should learn to understand the human world in which they live, and the human nature which dominates it; and this they should do, not by set teaching on the subject, such as psychology, but by human intercourse. Let the windows of their training colleges therefore be open to the winds of heaven, as the windows of their churches are likely to be. Let there be free ventilation. And especially so if freedom be the principle of training. Let freedom consist, not alone in negative abstention from dogma, but far more in the positive charity to which nothing human is foreign.

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This is what my experience as a minister had taught me, Bergson's philosophy illuminated and contacts as an editor continued to enforce. On the other hand, my experience of theological colleges, intimate in the case of the College of which I had now become Principal, slight but not negligible in others, had convinced me that all of them suffer from *insufficient ventilation*. Differing in respect of the theologies they cultivate, they all seemed much alike in atmosphere. This I can only define as *close*, the students living as a segregated body in a world of their own, and this irrespective of their local environment. Manchester College, for example, was located in the midst of Oxford; but the segregation of the students was not thereby overcome or even sensibly diminished. This seemed to me unfavourable to the education of free minds. Freedom from the fetters of dogma, enjoyed by teachers and students alike, was doubtless a good thing, but only as an element in a larger freedom—the freedom of the open air, in contrast to the confinement of a forcing house. My hope therefore was that the atmosphere of the College, which I thought too confined, might be brought into harmony with its principles, which were as free as any lover of theological freedom could desire them to be.

I observed also that what I have called "insufficient ventilation" would sometimes have effects on the student's mind analogous to those which living in close rooms has upon the body. Mental lassitude was not uncommon, accompanied by irritable tempers, recalcitrancy and ingratitude; from all of which I had suffered myself when a theological student, and mainly due, I think, to a certain *closeness* in the atmosphere. Occasionally signs of something worse would appear—signs of distortion, of lopsidedness, or even a kind of mental *rickets* of which the issue would be that the sufferer, thinking himself a free spirit, would turn out an impossible crank, quarrel with successive congregations, destroy them, and finally disappear from the ministry.

There was another thing which I found extremely difficult

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to deal with. It may be remembered that Carlyle in his attacks on democracy charges it with choosing its rulers, not on the ground of their ability to rule, but on the ground of "ability to get into Parliament." In like manner I found the mind of the student too much concerned in cultivating his chance to get "a pulpit," and the question of "getting pulpits" too prominent in the general outlook. I remember a student who had the habit, in his trial sermons, of talking about "the universe" as though it were something he carried in his waist-coat pocket and could be easily passed round from hand to hand. Coming to me for criticism I told him that the universe was too big a thing to be tossed about in that light-hearted manner, and advised him to read a book on astronomy before talking about it any more. "But," said he, "will astronomy help me to get a pulpit?" I could not prove to him that it would. Indeed I found it difficult to arouse the interest of students in any line of study unless they could see that it had a bearing on their prospect of "getting a pulpit." A similar tendency was also observable in the governing body of the College. When considering the qualifications of a candidate seeking admission they were apt to give much consideration to those of the man's qualities which indicated that he was likely to "get a pulpit" and, if these were satisfactory, to pass lightly over defects in others. When the question was being discussed of admitting women as students for the ministry of religion, I remember how the argument of the opposition centred on the point that, though women were as religious as men, and perhaps more so, they were less likely to "get pulpits." This pulpit-getting preoccupation seemed an unfortunate limitation of scope in a College based on the principle of freedom, though I cannot pretend that I had always been immune from it myself. When however I became Principal of the College and encountered it so frequently in others I began to see the matter in a different light. On the whole it became clear to me that ability to get a pulpit and ability to become a minister of religion were two different things. A

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rather disconcerting discovery for the Principal of a Theological College.

Prior to the time when the old Universities began opening their doors to dissenters in the middle of the nineteenth century, Manchester College had been as much a lay as a clerical institution and it was only when the lay students were drawn off to Oxford and Cambridge that it became, *malgre soi*, purely theological. Theoretically it still remained open to lay students though, for many years, none had sought admission. Here, thought I, is a possible means of bringing that freer ventilation into the College life which the conditions described above seemed to call for. But how and where could laymen be found who would wish to study, in association with theological students, in a College which had become known as exclusively theological and more or less identified with Unitarianism? For all such there were more attractive openings elsewhere and the same causes which had drawn them away from the College in the first instance were now operating in a much wider field. The thing seemed hopeless.

It happened that about this time I had become active in the movement for Adult Education and knew something of the young men, mostly of the working class, who were preparing themselves as teachers in the Workers' Educational Association, and of the interest many of them took in the philosophy of religion. To them Manchester College might possibly prove attractive. Accordingly I persuaded the governing body to set a scheme on foot whereby half a dozen selected candidates of this class might get the training they wanted at Manchester College. On the scheme being advertised the response was immediate. The half-dozen students, all promising men, were easily found; quarters were arranged for them in the College Residence; they shared the Common Room of the theological students; a supervisor of their studies was appointed and a library formed to suit their needs. Thus a beginning was made in reviving the lay side of the College, and a new wind began to stir.

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This however was only the first step on a much longer road that was opening out before me. From what has been said it will have been gathered that I had long ceased to think of religion exclusively in terms of church and chapel activities. The signs of the times indicated clearly that the revival of religion they were all intent on was little likely to come about unless the schools, colleges and universities moved in the same direction. I was all out for a working alliance, for a marriage, between the Church and the School, not in the sense of introducing religion as one subject among others in the time-table of lessons, but in the wider sense of giving a religious aim to education in general. I was even rash enough to believe—how rash I now realize—that it might be the mission of Manchester, as a free college, to take a lead in effecting the synthesis. A series of lectures, followed by discussions and given by eminent lecturers more or less in sympathy with the main idea, was accordingly instituted; they were attended by the internal students and by crowded audiences from Oxford at large. Another draught of fresh air flowed in through the open windows.

But this was not the end of my rashness. Like my predecessor Estlin Carpenter, but in a far less scholarly way, I had become deeply interested in the philosophy and religion of India, and of the East in general. From this source I had learnt something of the unfathomable mystery surrounding that entity which appears so often on these pages, the entity called "I." Through Indian philosophy, I had become an object of wonder to myself, an object repeated in every son of man and expanding until it covered the whole field of existence. All of which had led to the conviction that there would be no "completing the work of the Reformation," a goal I never lost sight of, till the spiritual wisdom of East and West had joined hands. The immediate outcome was that there appeared in the College a new teacher in the person of Professor Radhakrishnan, his first introduction to Oxford, to be followed later by his appointment in the University as Spalding Professor of Eastern

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Philosophy and Ethics. Here was a new window as well as a new wind. I felt the ventilation greatly improved and began to breathe more freely.

It was while these things were going forward that I formed an acquaintance with the late Viscount Haldane, the beginning of a friendship which, happily for me, lasted till his death. It began in our common interest in Adult Education, which naturally led on to our discussing together my hopes and aims for Manchester College. All these I laid before him as I have described them here. He was profoundly sympathetic and encouraging. The notion of an alliance between Church and School he regarded as highly important. But his strongest sympathy, both as statesman and philosopher, was given to that side of the project which looked towards a better understanding between the spiritual cultures of East and West, "if Manchester College can do anything in promoting that," he said, "it will confer a great service on humanity." Of Manchester College he knew something already. He was the Counsel who had given an opinion in favour of W. E. Addis, when his position as an Anglican had been challenged by the extreme Unitarian party. With this knowledge in mind he encouraged me to go ahead.

But I was going too fast—too fast, perhaps, for my own powers, and certainly too fast for the rest of the convoy. I began to realize that the support of the governing body was being given more from kindness to myself, in which it always abounded, than from positive enthusiasm for the general design. It was a design in which success was impossible without united and whole-hearted support from all concerned. This was not forthcoming. It was doubtful whether even my colleagues on the Staff cared very much for what I had in mind; others often complained of upset and inconvenience. Kindly toleration was about all I had to support me, and this, as time went on, became more and more tempered with criticism and doubt. I was presently accused of wanting to transform the College into something it was never intended



THE AUTHOR WITH RABINDRANATH TAGORE AT
MANCHESTER COLLEGE IN 1929

Norman Taylor, Oxford

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to be, insomuch that if this kind of thing were allowed to go on the "pulpits" would be starved. My arguments to the contrary were not believed, and there were mutterings that it would be good for the College if I were got rid of. I was disposed to think so myself and made all my preparations for resigning in 1926. But the opposition at that time becoming acute, the fighting spirit I inherited from my mother, a bit of the old Adam, awoke in me and I resolved to see the matter through to the end. The end was an age limit. I retired under it in 1931.

I now see that success was impossible and blame nobody but myself. Whether or no these goods of mine had the value I assigned them, I had clearly made the mistake of taking them to the wrong market. To say that I had over-estimated my own powers would not be true. I had never estimated them at all. But they were not equal to turning the wrong market into the right.

I see also how the mistake was made, and made by me. For a long time I had been losing interest in religion as a church-and-chapel product or property, which historically it is not, and gaining interest in religion as an attribute of the Common Man, the spontaneous fruit of his experience, which historically it is. My notion of Natural Religion had gradually taken that shape, which differs considerably from the accepted definition of the term. While taking no part with the enemies of the "steeple-house" in any of its varieties, but holding them all in reverence, from Salisbury Cathedral with its lovely spire to the wayside Bethel whose nearest approach to a steeple is the stove-pipe projecting from the roof, and well aware that the building of them all, whether Cathedrals or Bethels, crowned with steeples or stove-pipes, began on the day when Christ rose from the dead—while thus giving honour where honour is due, I had begun to understand why George Fox set his face against steeple-houses and found a better pulpit on the top of a haystack. This Natural Religion, in which neither **church** nor chapel, nor the two together, could claim exclusive

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proprietorship, unsophisticated by the Scribes and Pharisees and untainted by steeple-house politics, seemed to me susceptible of revival and waiting, like a pent-up force, to be released. I conceived the revival as originating with the Common Man, at once the fruit of his experience and the interpretation of it, and as extending itself from him to the steeple-house, with beneficent results to what goes on inside. Why are the churches and chapels so empty of worshippers in these days? Because the people are actually irreligious? Nay, thought I, but rather because they are potentially religious. Why have the Russians turned anti-god? Because the Russians are naturally atheists? Nay, but rather because the god they have turned against is no-god. It was a conception in line with the meaning of 'undenominational', but carried much further. Now Manchester College, though undenominational, had the chapel interest much at heart, was chapel-minded in general outlook and, in view of its history, could hardly be otherwise. To expect an institution so minded to lend itself freely to projects which had the appearance of being anti-chapel, though far from being so in reality, was to expect the impossible. This was my mistake. I had overshot the mark. It was a miss.

What I had been hoping for and aiming at will not be effected by theological colleges, at least not by them *alone*. It will have its rise in the schools, in all their grades and varieties, from the elementary school to the university, organized to educate the Common Man, who is the whole man, the just man, the religious man. There lies the market for my wares, if there be a market for them anywhere.

Towards the end of the period between 1926 and 1931 the work I had set on foot began to peter out. When I retired it was abandoned altogether.

This part of my confession has not been easily made. But it taught me a valuable lesson which I have some satisfaction in recording. I had tried to change the *habit* of an old established

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institution by the force of argument, and learnt, that the force of argument is no match for the force of habit. Old established institutions are not to be reformed in that way, at least not in that alone. They do not change their habitual modes of action merely because it has been proved by somebody that the change is needed—not even when the proof is recognized as conclusive, which it may not have been in my case. The momentum of habit is mightier than the force of argument, and will carry an institution on in the old ways, long after it has been recognized by all concerned that the old ways are not in the right direction. This lesson proved of great value to me when in the years that followed I turned to the study of international affairs and became occupied with the problem of war and peace. If it be difficult to argue a theological College into changing peaceful habits, whose origin is relatively recent, how much more difficult must it be to argue political states out of the war-making habits whose roots are spread over the earth and deep in the soil of history? How difficult by argument alone to persuade these states to change their habit of war-making for the habit of co-operation? My realization of this is largely due to my experience at Manchester College.

Nor is that all. Every man is an old established institution by the time he reaches middle age, or perhaps earlier. How often do we common men, after demonstration given that our ways need mending, agree with the demonstrator, but have to confess not long afterwards "*video meliora proboque deteriora sequor*"¹. The reason is that we are old established institutions, ruled by habit. This was impressed upon me at Manchester College. I became convinced that whenever a change of habit is aimed at we must look to education addressed to the whole man during the whole of his life-time, rather than to ratiocination addressed *ad hoc*.

On the whole, then, I am disposed to believe that this experience, painful at the time, was appointed for me from the beginning and ordained for my good. There is an epitaph on a

¹Seeing the better way and approving it I yet follow the worse.

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deceased American which those who love me might borrow
and inscribe on the tombstone of what I attempted as Principal
of Manchester College:

"He did his damndest:
What angel can do more?"

24

BOOK-WRITING

My stories are not long; but it took me a long time to make them short—*Thorium*

MY CONFESSION now turns to literary activity, better called, in my case, by the humbler title of book-writing. Of this I have done a good deal, having produced in the course of thirty years more than as many books, now at the disposal of my enemies, if I have any, as so many sticks to beat me withal. Book-writing began with me unusually late in life, for I was close on fifty, an age for beginning from which I could hardly hope to make it much of a success. I now perceive, what was hidden from me at the time, that the impulse to write had its origin in the dangerous habit, fatal to my reputation as a philosopher, of reading between the lines of whatever philosophy I was studying and lecturing upon. Most philosophy, as written, left me with a feeling of something arrested, incomplete, half-born, like an aeroplane which taxies over the field and then fails to rise, or like the lion in Milton's account of the creation "pawing to get free his hinder parts." I seemed to be always waiting for the moment when the aeroplane would leave the level earth and soar into the upper air, when the lion would spring free and "shake his brindled mane"; and, when the moment came not, I would surmise that the philosopher had not succeeded in saying what he was trying to say, and perilously guess at it and even venture, a most audacious thing, to say it for him. But it needed a poet to do that, and I was not a poet. Beyond a stanza or two contributed with help from my father to "the Ballad of Samuel

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Clay*' as we walked over the fields from Gedling to Nottingham, I had done nothing in the versifying line—unless you count my imitations of *Paradise host*, which I am certainly not disposed to count myself. All the same my mind was unconsciously seeking some means of expression, other than those of technical philosophical discourse, for bringing to a point the ferment of ideas that was going on, and had gone on, for years inside me. This I now see clearly, though, as I say, I was unaware of it then. The discovery is *apres coup*.

My first book was called *Mad Shepherds*, published in 1909, the title of which was suggested to me by the Australian proverb "mad as a shepherd"¹—a point noticed by none of the book's reviewers. While living in Oxford I still kept my house on Bredon Hill and went on as before with my peasant activities of tree-planting, pig-feeding and dung-spreading. There, as I have already told, I came into contact with a group of rural characters, all variant specimens of the Common Man, who interested me greatly. When among them I experienced a sense of liberation, found myself in my element and the impulse to write about them took possession of me. *Mad Shepherds* was the outcome. I wrote it for the sheer fun of the thing, without any "purpose" or *arriere-pensee* beyond the pleasure of writing it, always starting from some real person or place in my surroundings and then letting the affair exfoliate as it would. I now perceive with some astonishment that all the cardinal ideas which have determined the form of my thinking are present in that book, though in a half-born condition. The idea of the spiritual universe as Ptolemaic, with the Common Man at the centre of it; the idea of religion, not as a possession which some men have and others have not, but as universally present when the Common Man expresses himself in his wholeness, and therefore independent of church- and-chapel patronage; the idea, even, of a union between the spiritual culture of East and West, these and others mentioned in the course of this confession were, as I now see, obviously

¹The lonely life of an Australian shepherd in the bush often ends in madness.

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at work. The mad shepherd "Snarley Bob" is clearly, in essence, myself, though I had not the faintest intention of painting my own portrait or the least suspicion that I was doing so. I thought I was writing about a shepherd in the neighbourhood. Reading the book now, at a distance of thirty years from the writing, I can hardly recognize it as my own work. It strikes me as written by another person, and oddly enough, written about *me*, so that I seem to be conversing with the ghost of myself as I then was.

There was no difficulty in finding a publisher. Mr. Geoffrey Williams, the senior partner of Williams and Norgate, accepted it at once. The first reviews were contemptuous. It was a feeble imitation of Barrie, of Kipling, of "Ian Maclaren," even of Anatole France, all writers beloved by me. To have imitated the whole lot would, I knew, have been impossible. Nevertheless I was frightened and thought myself done for. I knew my weakness for imitation, and feared that it might have betrayed me once more into producing something "forced." However the book got on its feet and marched fairly well, the reviews growing less contemptuous meanwhile, insomuch that Mr. Williams began asking for more. This resulted in my producing, in ten years that followed, half a dozen volumes more or less in the same vein, but with a wider range of characters, some, as in *All men are Ghosts*, being reminiscent of Birmingham, others like *Philosophers in Trouble*, of Oxford; most had the form of the short story. Then came the first German war and the vein dried up under the preoccupation and anxieties of the time. I caught the fever of "reconstruction" then raging and became involved in schemes for setting the world to rights "after the war," only to find when the war ended that the men who made the peace took no notice of any of them.

This experience of "reconstruction" and the disappointment that followed were not without results on my book-writing activities, which an incident of another kind helped to set in train. In 1920 I went with my sons, who had miraculously

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survived the war, to visit the battlefields in Belgium and France where they had been engaged. I saw the ravages of the conflict and even had a taste, or at least a smell, of its horrors at Delville Wood, where I stumbled into a shell hole and found myself among the rotting remains and accoutrements of slaughtered men. This set me writing again and *The Legends of Smokeover* (1921) was the result. In this I threw myself back into the atmosphere of "reconstruction" as I had breathed it during the war, and reconstructed, as best I could, not the world indeed, but the men and women with whom I had been associated in the vain endeavours of that world-mending period.

This time it was not easy to find a publisher. The book was difficult to classify, neither a novel, nor a collection of stories, nor a philosophical treatise nor even the "Legend" it professed to be, and yet having something of all four. No doubt it had other faults as well. That publishers were shy of so hybrid a product is no wonder. I was doubtful about it myself and was half-disposed to consign the whole thing to the fire when John Buchan (Lord Tweedsmuir), whom I knew as a neighbour, and to whom I had shown the manuscript, gave it his approval and put in a good word for it with Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton. I was equally fortunate when the book, on coming out, attracted the attention of Sir Edmund Gosse, who wrote a long and laudatory review of it in *The Sunday Times*—the first public encouragement I had received from a great literary critic. This helped to put the book on its feet. It had a fair success, not approaching that of a best seller, which no book of mine has ever been, but enough to prove that the mixture of elements was not fatal.

In the course of his review Gosse made a statement that came as a surprise to me. He said, in effect, that the book represented a new method in fiction. I doubt if this statement is true exactly as it stands. But the book certainly does represent a conviction to which I had come at the time of writing it and still hold, namely this: that whenever the question is that of

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conveying philosophical ideas or even religious inspiration to the Common Man, the parable is far more effective than the treatise or the discourse. Plato's myths are the most illuminating part of his philosophical writings and the Parable of the Prodigal Son, presented in the Gospel without a word of explanation or comment, has done more towards the making of true Christians than all the theological treatises that have ever been written. Yes: without clearly knowing what I did, I had been writing parables ever since I began with *Mad Shepherds*. Though I take shame to myself in putting my own writing into the same class as that incomparable jewel, the Parable of the Prodigal Son, I had, in my blind and halting way, been following the example of the great Teacher, of whom it is written "Without a parable spake he not unto the multitude"—to the Common Man. Could it be, I asked myself, that I had here unwittingly fallen back on the method by which the wall of division between the cogitations of the philosopher and the mind of the Common Man can best be broken down?

In 1917 I undertook a formidable task in biography—that of writing the Life of my father-in-law, Stopford Brooke, who had died in the previous year. It was published by John Murray, and its moderate success may be gauged from the fact that my share of the profits amounted to about £300. But I was too near to my subject: the perspective was too short and I could not prevent what I wrote from being coloured by admiration and affection for one to whom I was bound by so many ties. I believe I did better with a biography I wrote some years later of my friend Charles Hargrove, which appeared under the title *From Authority to Freedom*. The title referred to the fact that Hargrove had been a Dominican Father, accepting the Church as the final authority in religion, and had passed from that to the free position of a minister among the Unitarians. He was a fine subject for biography, a man exquisitely sensitive and highly cultured, refined but somewhat saddened by reflection, inclining to the left wing

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in theology, but always a little at odds with his Unitarian environment. Among all the Unitarian ministers I have met it was he who attracted and interested me most. Moreover we had something in common: neither of us had been born and bred in the fold. We shared, too, in a common "nostalgia of the altar," though it had a deeper root in him than in me. If my own judgment in such a matter is worth stating, I will say that this book, which had but a small circulation, is the best piece of literary work that I have done.

But I must resist the temptation to advertize my books. Suffice it to say that as the international horizon grew darker under the sinister apparition of Hitler, the vein of parable writing began to dry up. It came to an end with *The Last Legend of Smoheover*, written after the crisis of 1938. What I have since written has been wholly concerned with the sequent crisis through which we are now passing.

Perhaps I have written too many books. The right sleeve of my old study jacket, which I am wearing as I write these lines, is worn through to the shirt by friction with the table as my hand passes along the paper. I like to compare myself to the old navvy who, when challenged by St. Peter for his passport into heaven, showed his worn shovel and was at once admitted to a place of honour. I wonder if my worn jacket will serve as well. It may be doubted.

STANWAY

"Death makes aristocrats of us all"

A UNITARIAN minister, and afterwards Professor in a theological college, I had been living in a relatively small world. But all my life I have been given to breaking bounds, sometimes from curiosity as to what lay beyond, and sometimes from sheer *wanderlust*, for I was born a wanderer, though with little space to wander in. These excursions and escapades into regions for which I had no passport have not been favourable to a consistent life, but they have taught me that the small world to which I was native and the large world beyond it have the same structure, and the Common Man to be found in both.

One effect of my editing and book-writing was to plant me out in a field wider than that in which I had grown hitherto, though this was already much wider than the area I was born in, which had the dimension of a backyard rather than a field. It brought me into contact with many stimulating and delightful people, a few of whom were members of our old aristocracy—a novel experience for me. One, whose memory I shall cherish to the end, was Mary, Countess of Wemyss, Lady Elcho when I first knew her. Stanway, a country home of the Wemyss family, is only a few miles from Bredon Hill, and there I was a frequent guest for more than twenty years from 1913, my visits there leading on to Clouds, Pctworth, and other abodes of ancient peace. England has no country house more lovely in itself and its surroundings than Stanway, and it was made lovable, which is something more, by the dynamically beautiful presence of Lady Wemyss. In those

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surroundings I was able to enter somewhat into the inner life of people on whom I had looked hitherto from the outside and from afar. I was charmed, and influenced, it is to be hoped, for good, by the grace, urbanity and kindness of that atmosphere, qualities which Lady Wemyss gathered round her and of which she herself, with her wonderful daughters, was the diffusing centre. I can only trust—for in such matters one can be easily mistaken—that it was the peasant in me, and not the snob, that delighted in the company of these aristocrats. Far from feeling that they were beings apart from our common life, they seemed rather to represent the Common Man, but in an essence more refined than I had found elsewhere. Such was my impression of the English aristocracy. But let it be noted in whose house I gained the impression, and under what hostess.

I met many distinguished people at Stan way, week-end visitors with myself. I cannot claim them all as friends, our relations not rising beyond the level of acquaintance. There was one, however, with whom my acquaintance went somewhat further than with the others. This was A. J. Balfour. His visits to Stairway were very frequent. Indeed I seldom went there without finding him already installed.

I had many discussions with him on philosophical topics, especially during the time when he was thinking out his Gifford Lectures, which he did mostly, I believe, at Stanway. He took an interest in my way of thought and showed some sympathy for my habit of reading between the lines, more indeed than I have had from any other thinker of equal rank. One day we were together in his car on the way to a golf-course at Malvern, and the conversation turning on the nature of philosophy in general, I made the remark that no philosophy has ever explained its own existence in the universe. "And no philosopher either," he quickly replied, "that is the standing wonder."

Somewhat earlier than this I had persuaded him to write an article on Bergson for *The Hibbert Journal*—the most pene-

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trating study of that philosophy which has so far come my way. It was the reading of it that had suggested to me the remark I made to him in the car. I am, as I have said, a disciple of Bergson. But he shares with all philosophers the disability of not being able to explain himself—I mean, to explain his own existence as a philosopher in the universe his philosophy is intended to explain. Even the philosopher who explains himself by claiming that he is "thinking God's thoughts after Him" has still to explain why God's thoughts should need thinking over again, and above all why A B, rather than somebody else, C D, should be here to think them. Whether Bergson was aware of this disability I do not know. But Balfour certainly was.

As a philosopher Balfour had the advantage of not being a Professor of Philosophy. William James always disliked being called "Professor James" and once rated me soundly for inadvertently calling him so¹. The reason is, I suppose, that a Professor of Philosophy is apt to acquire a vested interest in the sort of philosophy he is professing and to resist the impact of new ideas which, if he accepted them, would discredit his teaching up to date, and put him to the trouble of composing a new course of lectures. This makes it difficult for him to keep alive the spirit of *wonder*, without which, as Plato said, no true philosophy can be, since by wonder alone is the mind kept open and able to play freely round the object before it. In addition to which the Professor of Philosophy is apt to be disturbed in the purity of his meditations by interest concerned with his "chair," the getting of a "chair" in the first instance and the getting of a better one later on—a disturbance analogous to those anxieties about "getting a pulpit" which afflict many students of Theology and which I had found so obstructive at Manchester College. As the saint is apt to be not at his best in a "pulpit," so the philosopher is seldom at his

¹"You can't tell how happy I am in having thrown off the nightmare of my 'professorship.' As a 'professor' I always felt myself a sham. . . . I am now at liberty to be a *reality*, and the comfort is unspeakable—literally unspeakable. I can now live for truth pure and simple." Letter of William James to Henry James. *The Letters of William James*, Vol. II, p. 279.

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best in a "chair." Like Carlyle and Emerson, Balfour had no "chair" and I cannot but think his philosophy was all the better for it. Chairs and pulpits between them have certainly a good deal of unreality to answer for. It has been my own lot to occupy both.

I met Balfour several times at Stanway during the early days of the first German war and remember a conversation I had with him about the kind of peace it would be possible to make with Germany after she had been defeated. I will only say that when peace was made four years later it bore no resemblance whatever to the peace desired by Balfour in 1915. Ideas about the "peace" which wise men entertain in the early stage of a long war, and are practicable enough if the war ended there and then, may be found quite impracticable if the war lasts on for years. In the midst of the conflict now raging (1941) that lesson is constantly present to my mind.

I doubt if Balfour was anywhere more in his clement than in the atmosphere of Stanway. To meet him there was, I believe, to meet him at his best. His image in my memory is less distinct than that of Lady Wemyss, but though time has obliterated some of the detail, it is the clear image of a very perfect gentleman.

Another remarkable man whom I often met at Stanway was Barrie, Sir James Barrie as he then was. In him, too, there was something of the peasant; so much we had in common. And a little more in the fact that both had known hard times in youth. He had been most encouraging about *Mad Shepherds* at a time when I was very downhearted, fearing that I had only made a fool of myself by letting it see the light; and he was highly amused on hearing that a reviewer had condemned it as a feeble imitation of his own work. Once when we were discussing the contemporary novel somebody asked him which among recent novels he considered the best. He answered without hesitation—Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* and Arnold Bennett's *Old Wives' Tale*. I thought it a revealing judgment, though not one I could endorse.

"THE LIVERPOOL CONTROVERSY"

"Can anyone turn me out of the universe? He cannot! Wherever I go there is the sun, the moon, the stars, auguries, communications with God.—*Epictetus*

AN EARLY DEATH had often been predicted for me, but at sixty I was physically more robust than at any earlier period. Perhaps the work of editing *The Hibbert Journal*, which had then continued without a break for eighteen years, and kept me in contact with currents of vitalizing thought coming in from all quarters, had some effect in warding off the approaches of old age. My life up to that time had been marked by several belated new starts, its objectives had been miscellaneous; it would have been judged unsatisfactory by a single-purpose moralist. Of course it had a kind of unity, as every man's life needs must have. There is a kind of unity even in muddle, provided the muddle is vigorously kept up, as in the present system of "control." But unity was a thing which I had never consciously striven to achieve, nor was it, in my own case, any doing of mine. The co-ordination of one thing with another was the work of the shaping divinity, which, as I conceive it, has its headquarters *within*.

There were new starts to come. Parable writing, which I had practised off and on for fourteen years, came to an end for the time being in 1923. In the following year the Hibbert Trustees, whom I had long served as editor of their *Journal*, gave me a commission to deliver a series of public lectures on the fundamental issues of religion, in the great industrial towns. This was to be an entirely different thing from preaching on the one hand and from academical lecturing on the other, in both of which I was experienced. It compelled me to study

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simplicity of presentation, a thing I had long striven after, but now more urgent than ever.

These lectures continued at intervals till 1933, the last series being given under the title "The Revolt against Mechanism," in Birmingham, Bristol, Exeter and Newcastle-on-Tyne. The general subject to which they were all devoted was Elemental Religion, though these words were not used in the title of any of them¹. *Elemental* religion, be it noted, not *elementary*.

The idea underlying this phrase was as follows.

It had been borne in upon me, more by the experience of life than by the study of books, that religion is the natural expression of the *whole* man as an inseparable unity of mind and body. Whenever religion is absent, or lives feebly, or becomes a mere ghost or reminiscence, as Christianity seems mostly now to be, the reason lies in some defect to the *wholeness* of human nature, which leaves the man only partially himself. Given *wholeness* in man, the growth of religion becomes spontaneous, natural and inevitable. But if, instead of wholeness, you have defect, arrest, distraction, distortion, disharmony (as when body works against mind or mind against body) then religion tends to wither, to die, to become a ghost, nor can you invent an argument that will restore it to fulness of life. If therefore you would revive religion you must begin by an effort of education to build up the wholeness of man. That achieved, elemental religion cannot fail to come into being, and the foundation will be there for the philosopher and the theologian to build upon. But not otherwise. If the philosopher and the theologian labour in a medium where there is no elemental religion to respond to their teaching, they will labour in vain. Hearsay knowledge of God, which is not religion, will be the only result, if even that.

I am not sure that this idea was fully formed before the lectures were given. It would be more correct to say that it was, to begin with, a dim notion which emerged into clear

¹They were used however as the title of another series which I gave at Yale, U.S.A., in 1933—the Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching. London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.

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outline during the process of creating and delivering the lectures, a process lasting over eight years. Looking back I can now see that the idea had been struggling to find expression during the long period in which I had been occupied, first, as a minister of religion and, then, as a teacher of philosophy. I owe much to the Hibbert Trustees, but for nothing do I owe them more than for providing me with the occasion and opportunity which led to the emergence of: this idea.

For me its emergence had important consequences. In the first place it brought me face to face with a problem on which, indeed, I had already thought much but written nothing, the problem of Education, and led to my writing a book, *The Education of the Whole Man*, another new start. Regarding the Whole Man as an inseparable unity of mind and body I was naturally led, in that book, to lay great stress on the importance of physical education and the urgent need to co-ordinate it with the education of the mind. This led on in turn to my becoming a sort of amateur apostle for physical education—I, who had never had any, unless you count that physical education which I got from the Crimean veteran who taught me the bayonet exercise in the playground of George Herbert's school, with a Russian soldier for my imaginary opponent. And so for some years I wrote in magazines, and went about giving lectures at educational conferences, in an effort to dissipate absurd misconceptions about physical education and put the thing in a shape which would induce enlightened people to take an interest in it. I stressed the fact that the bulk of our people are "physically illiterate"—meaning that they are in a condition, physically, parallel to what they would be in mentally if they had never learnt to read and write, a state of things which could not fail to have a baneful effect on the education of their minds and to constitute a great social evil. This was another new start, begun at an age when, according to the Psalmist, I had become a trespasser in the universe.

Another opportunity came my way. At a time when I was financially rather hard up, having bought some thirty acres of

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land on Shotover Hill, near Oxford, begun farming it and got myself registered as a milk dealer (no new start, this) I received an invitation to deliver the Stevenson Lectures on Citizenship in Glasgow University at the welcome fee of a thousand pounds. In Glasgow I had some friends, especially Professor Rait and Professor Hetherington, both afterwards Principals of the University, and Macneilc Dixon, Professor of English; the University had already been kind enough to give me an honorary degree and lecturing on "constructive citizenship" would be a fine opening to ventilate my notions about the Whole Man; all of which, with a thousand pounds to boot, was irresistible. The lectures were given; the book in which they were published proved a good seller, especially in America. This, as we shall see, had important consequences.

My Hibbert Lectures were also published and had a large circulation both at home and in America. These books, of which there were five, made me fairly well known as a person who might be trusted to speak in public about elemental religion without attacking the Christian Creeds which had grown out of it, grinding the Unitarian axe or otherwise provoking bitterness. Dissenters of various denominations would frequently ask me to speak in their chapels or address their annual assemblies; I was welcomed by the Modern Churchman's Union in which I had some honoured friends, Dean Inge among them, and on one occasion broadcast an address from the pulpit of St. Martin in the Fields. In America especially, as I shall tell more fully in the next chapter, the fact of my being a Unitarian seemed to make no difference to the willingness of the orthodox religious bodies to hear what I had to say. Out of all this there grew a habit of accepting invitations from reputable sources and *oftaking* it for granted that my presence would not be regarded as a trespass. But it seems I had been too easy-going and presumptuous. I was to be reminded that certain areas in the religious world are forbidden ground to such as I am.

On returning in the spring of 1933 from the last of many

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visits to the United States I was asked by my friend Dean Dwelly to give three addresses at the evening service in Liverpool Cathedral, that noble creation of modern architecture, and a letter followed from the Bishop approving the invitation. I was aware that my doing what I was thus asked to do might involve the authorities at the Cathedral in a breach of Church discipline, but as they seemed to attach no importance to the matter I saw no reason why I should do otherwise. Moreover I was always attracted by invitations from Liverpool. It was the scene of my early labours and of my early married life; my married daughter, to whom I was devoted, lived there; I had many friends in the city and almost looked upon it as a second home. So, without bothering about what reaction might follow, I accepted the invitation and the addresses¹ were duly given in the Cathedral to large congregations.

If anybody took the trouble to ask what I then was in the world of theology the answer would have been, of course, that I was a Unitarian. I never pretended to be anything else, though, with my notions about Elemental Religion and other things, I had ceased to attach much importance to the name. Moreover I had been mixed up in so many activities with which my Unitarianism had nothing to do that other people, if they thought of me at all, would probably class me as a miscellaneous person to whom any one of half a dozen names would be just as appropriate as Unitarian. I held (and still hold) convictions about so many things, other than the nature of the Deity, which there would be no sense in calling Unitarian convictions, that I applied the name to myself only when the matter I happened to be dealing with rendered it the most fitting. And so have continued to do. Theology may be the Queen of the Sciences, but she has no right to compel any of her subjects to call themselves by a doctrinal name and to go about with it stamped on their foreheads. The broadest

¹They are printed at the end of my *Elemental Religion* (Williams and Norgate, London, and Harper, New York).

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theology becomes narrow when too conspicuously labelled as broad. Such, at least, has always been my feeling.

But in 1933 I was no longer on the official list of Unitarian ministers. I had withdrawn my name in 1928 when the Unitarians, for the first time in their history, became an organized denomination¹, a step which seemed to me foreign to the genius of the movement, and likely to destroy its effectiveness as contributory to "completing the work of the Reformation," to help in which I believed was its proper mission. I could not conceive that the addition of one more to the number of organized denominations already in existence would have any other effect than to hinder, rather than help, in that direction. *Vox clamantis in eremo!* Could I have had my way, instead of adding one more to the denominations I would have abolished them all, and then reconstituted the whole lot as a universal Society of Friends. However, there was the fact. A Unitarian, and one known as such, had been admitted to the pulpit of an Anglican Cathedral. This was in June, 1933.

Whatever may have been said privately there were no public protests about the matter at the time, at least none that I was or am aware of. In all probability nothing more would have been heard of it had not the authorities at the Cathedral done a bolder thing four months later by inviting a local and well-known Unitarian minister, the Rev. Lawrence Redfern, to preach, not, as I had done, at the informal evening service, but at a full-dress morning service on Assize Sunday when the Judges on circuit were present. This put the fat in the fire. There were protests in the press and letters in *The Times* in which Mr. Redfern and I figured as "Unitarian divines" and accessories to a sacrilege in Liverpool Cathedral. On this a wag made the comment that "whatever claim Jacks might have to be called a Unitarian divine, he was certainly not a divine Unitarian." This was true, but failed to conciliate the opposition.

The case against the Cathedral was taken up with great vigour by Lord Hugh Cecil. Arguing with irrefutable logic

¹ See the letter of Richard Armstrong to Stopford Brooke on p. 90.

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he called upon the Convocation of York to take such action in the matter as would prevent a repetition of the offence. Under this pressure the Archbishop acted. Whether he and Convocation would have acted as they did had no pressure been brought to bear, I cannot say, but the speech about the matter which he made in Convocation does not suggest that he greatly welcomed the part he had been called upon to play. A long resolution, proposed by Dr. Hensley Henson, Bishop of Durham, contained the following clauses:

"That this House accept the definition of the visible Church implicit in the opening words of the appeal issued by the Lambeth Conference in 1920, viz.:

" 'We acknowledge all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and have been baptized into the name of the Holy Trinity, as sharing with us membership in the Universal Church which is His Body';

"Accordingly this House cannot approve the invitation to preach in any cathedral or parochial church within this Province of any person, however devout and distinguished, who acknowledges membership in a denomination which is known not to accept that Faith or to administer that Baptism, and hope that *no* such invitations will be issued in future."

After prolonged and dignified discussion, in which the note of Christian charity was finely sounded by the Bishop of Liverpool, Dr. David, who was on his defence, the substance of the resolution was adopted by twelve episcopal votes to none. I have been told on good authority that one of the Bishops, one at least, gave his vote reluctantly and in sorrow.

I cannot conceive how, in the circumstances, Convocation could have acted otherwise under the pressure put upon it by Lord Hugh Cecil. The Bishops were confronted with a forced option, that of declaring the presence of Unitarians in a Cathedral pulpit either permissible or not permissible. To expect that they would declare it officially permissible would, I think, have been preposterous. The pity is that they had been forced into a position, remote from reality, in

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which they had no alternative but to perpetrate an anachronism. It was a tragic affair but, like tragedy in general, not without an element of absurdity. Religion, once more, is too pure a thing for corporations. A corporation composed of Bishops is no exception.

Against myself as an individual no charge was brought and nothing unpleasant said; at least nothing came to my ears. I was merely one of the two instruments by which the sacrilege had been wrought, not an author of it: like the murderer's knife, produced as a piece of evidence in court but not charged with the crime. The question had been one of intramural church discipline and Lord Hugh Cecil, whom I knew slightly through meeting him at Stairway, wrote a courteous letter to assure me on the point. Victory was definitely his; but there were some who looked on the whole affair as a sorry spectacle.

As for me, I could now compare myself with the minister in the American story who never knew the correct name of his religion until he was turned out of his church for heresy. I was a Unitarian—and no mistake about it! But "'tis no matter," as Hamlet said. As I write the words German bombs are killing poor men in Liverpool and "the Liverpool Controversy," a bomb that killed nobody, sinks into insignificance.

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Our crimes would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues—
Shakespeare

SINCE THE year spent as a post-graduate student at Harvard, 1886-7, the story of which has already been told, I have made at irregular intervals seven visits to the United States, some of considerable length, and covering nearly all the States in the Union. In addition I spent three of my long vacations in Canada, two in the Maritime Provinces, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and one in the Far West, where my eldest son, prior to the Great War, was working on a ranch.

America must have played a considerable part in making me, for good or evil, what I am. I owe it much knowledge of good, some of it gained by direct contact with the good known, and some, as usual, "bought dear by knowing ill." America is pre-eminently the land of the Common Man: at all events there are fewer wrappings to tear off than at home, and a thinner integument to penetrate before you get at him. There is a certain nakedness in the American soul, and being somewhat of a naked soul I have found myself much at ease in American society. When I came at last to write a book about these experiences the only fitting title I could find for it was "My American Friends."

America, as I found it, may be described as a land where the Common Man is perpetually bidding his fellow go to hell, and at the same time doing his best to get him into heaven. In no country is social intercourse so pleasant, once you have

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learned to take no offence on being consigned to the bottomless pit. Whether this makes the American people a true democracy must be left to the political philosophers to decide; but it goes some way towards making them a Society of Friends, which I am inclined to think is what a democracy should be.

I am grateful to America for taking some of the starch out of me, and glad that I went there early in life, when the elimination is easiest. As a corrective of starch there can be nothing better for us British than residence, or even travel, in the United States, and I heartily commend it to my countrymen for that reason. With the starchiness out of us we shall be appreciably nearer that unity of the English-speaking people which the heavens have decreed, and for which, when in America, I have so often cried "O Lord, how long?"

Until the time of the Great War my personal relations with Americans were confined to a small circle of friends, living mostly in New England. But during the last year of the war, and the years immediately following, several things happened which enlarged the range of my contacts.

Some time after the entry of the United States into the war in 1917, Mr. Francis Stopford, the editor of *Land and Water*, then famous for the war articles of Hilaire Belloc, asked me to write a psychological study of President Wilson. Accordingly, having collected what data I could, I wrote an article under the title "President Wilson's War-Mind." In this I tried to explain by what stages the President's mind, which shortly before was resolutely set for peace ("we are too proud to fight") had become as resolute for war. The attempt was risky. I had little evidence to guide me, and had to make a free use of my imagination in piecing it together. My conscience was not quite easy about the matter, for I had written as though I knew what, strictly speaking, I only imagined or guessed at. To my relief and surprise there came, not long afterwards, the following letter from the President:

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The White House,
Washington.

August 14th, 1918.

My dear Professor Jacks,

I cannot deny myself the pleasure of telling you how much gratified I was by your article, "President Wilson's War Mind," in *Land and Water*. It was not only a very true interpretation of my thought, showing what you will permit me to say seems to me a very extraordinary insight and power of sympathetic interpretation, but it also seemed as I read it to reveal to me things which had not taken precise form in my mind. I mean that the analysis was both true and novel and I am indebted to you for enabling me to understand myself as if I had looked at myself from the outside.

Cordially and sincerely yours,

WOODROW WILSON.

The Wilson article seems to have become known in the United States and to have given my name a certain currency in circles where it had been unheard of before. In the years that followed Mr. Ellery Sedgwick admitted several articles of mine into the *Atlantic Monthly*, one or two of which dealt with the League of Nations, of whose prospects I took from the first an unfavourable view. In these articles it was suggested that the United States had done well to keep out of the League. To this opinion I still hold, believing that the participation of the United States would have extended and perhaps hastened the disaster to which the League was doomed from the outset. These articles, also, provoked a good deal of criticism, favourable and otherwise.

Later on came my *Hibbert Lectures* on religion, *Constructive Citizenship, the Education of The Whole Man*, all of which had a large circulation in the United States. There was also a little brochure called *The Lost Radiance of the Christian Religion*, which had fallen dead in England, but caught on in America and found its way all over the country.—These few facts will explain how it was that a good many Americans, here and there, came to know of my existence.

The consequence was that I began to receive invitations with assurances of welcome from Colleges, religious bodies,

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and educational organizations to come over and lecture, address conferences and such like. Most of them my work at home forbade me to accept. But getting leave of absence in 1924 I gave courses of lectures at Harvard, where I had a close friend in Dean W. L. Sperry, and at Yale, where I had another friend in Professor B. W. Bacon, with much addressing of Clubs, Women's Clubs especially, in between the lectures. At Harvard I was made University Preacher *pro tern.*, there being no Convocation of York in that part of the world to condemn my cargo as contraband.

In 1929 I was able to fall in with a proposal of the American Association for Adult Education to give a series of addresses which carried me as far afield as Texas in the South West and New Orleans in the South. The Whole Man is a being in *time* as well as in space, so that an education which is to cover the whole of him must necessarily be extended into his adult years. Thus, in advocating the education of the Whole Man I had become an advocate of Adult Education, and found myself allied with that movement both at home and in America. All of which, as I have explained before, was connected with my interest in Elemental Religion, so that lecturing on education and writing on religion now became elements of a single purpose. Meanwhile I was trying, as I have also recorded, to persuade the authorities at Manchester College to adopt the same perspective. My life, God knows, has been inconsistent enough in many ways, but in this matter, and at this time, it seems to have been fairly consistent.

My work for the Adult Education Association was quickly followed by the longest and the most instructive of my later visits to the United States. It was undertaken, on my retirement from Manchester College in 1931, under the sponsorship of the American Recreation Association, lasted nine months and took me all over the country.

In 1931 the industrial slump was at its worst. At my previous visit in 1929 I had found the whole country roaring with prosperity. A hostess with whom I was staying in that year

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apologized for some defect in the dinner by telling me that the cook had left suddenly that morning, having just made a small fortune on the Stock Exchange. In 1931 the same hostess wrote to say she could not entertain me, as she had lost everything and was trying to sell her beautiful house which nobody would buy. In 1929 Pullman cars were crowded. In 1931 my wife and I travelled nearly a thousand miles in the South West, sole passengers in a Pullman, with nobody to talk to but the negro porter, who declared that "the whole country was stone broke," and asked me to take him on as my personal servant. "I'll look after you well, boss," said he, "and your lady too." Not long afterwards while staying at an hotel in South Carolina the proprietor asked me for fifty dollars on account, as he had no cash in the house to pay his servants' wages and couldn't get any, the local banks having suddenly closed that morning. This is the kind of thing I encountered everywhere in 1931.

It was the time when "unemployment" was at its height all over the world. *One* of the commonest explanations of this terrible phenomenon ascribed it to the effect of machinery in displacing human labour, and alarming pictures were being drawn by economists of a coming time when multitudes would be left permanently workless and the workers' hours reduced to three or four. What was to be done with all this free time? This was the "Problem of Leisure" which for the time being became one of the most prominent topics of public discussion—as it may well become again. Conferences were summoned for its consideration, eminent thinkers took part, and much space was given to the discussion in magazines and in the daily press. Those who raised it thoughtfully found that they had on their hands a social problem of the first magnitude, one that could not be solved in isolation from a multitude of others involving the entire social structure and closely connected with the aims of education. The situation was not to be met by giving people pedantic advice on "what to do with your leisure time." It called for radical and far reaching changes. Interested as I was in "the Education of the Whole Man," I

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naturally got involved in it. Indeed it gave me a valuable opportunity for bringing just that conception of education into the foreground. Only so far as you were educating the man in his *wholeness*, I argued, was there any likelihood that you would be educating him for his leisure—that part of his life when he was least under restraint and most at liberty to follow the bent of his nature.

I did a good deal of gospelling on those lines, and the National Recreation Association of America getting to hear of it, paid me the honour of asking me to "come over and help them," at a time when unemployment in that country, as in England, had brought "the Problem of Leisure" into the foreground. Among innumerable enterprises in America designed for human betterment I know of none more wisely conceived and closely related to the realities of life than the N.R.A. The Association, organized on a nation-wide basis, is governed by a group of men and women distinguished in American life, which comprised at that time three or four of my most valued friends; among them John Finley, Editor of the *New York Times*, Newton Baker, Secretary of War in Wilson's administration, Joseph Lee, that great lover of children, and J. G. Winant who, though then unknown to me, was later to be my host at his beautiful house in Concord, New Hampshire. I found that "recreation," as these enlightened people conceived it, was re-creation, which is almost another name for re-education—the very thing that I was after. It was this wider aspect of the matter that the Association wished me to deal with under their auspices and with the help of their widespread and powerful organization. I welcomed the opportunity, and being now free from College duties, promptly took it. A friend of mine in Oxford, a Don, hearing that I had placed myself at the service of a "Recreation" society, and not understanding the meaning of the word, was candid enough to tell me that a man at my time of life would be better employed in preparing for the Day of Judgment. I was moved to tell him in reply, that the best way of preparing for the Day of

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Judgment that I know of is to mind one's own business—a fundamental article of my creed.

I had passed my seventieth year, but was in good health and a fairly tough old thing—thanks largely to the hardships of my youth. My friend Dean Sperry of Harvard, when he saw the programme proposed, told me that I should not survive it. But I had taken precautions against perishing by the way, killed perhaps by American kindness. My guardian angel, whom I had first seen as a heavenly vision in Bedford Chapel and afterwards fallen in love with on American soil, went with me. Our six children, all out in the world and doing well, could be safely left to look after our affairs at home, as well as their own.

No experience of my life has given me richer or more instructive contacts with my fellow men. My audiences were of many kinds and dimensions; sometimes a small group of the "key men" in the city, to whom I must explain my mission in an after-dinner speech; sometimes a public audience of three or four thousand. To none of these audiences did I reveal the secret of what I was after—no, not even to my friends the Mormons in Salt Lake City, whose splendid motto I have already recorded. I worked for it by indirection, which I have come to believe is the best way of working for such things. But I may reveal it now. I was working for the education of the Whole Man, the revival of elemental religion, and the completing of the Reformation. Everywhere I seemed to float in a stream of human kindness. Thanks to that, and to my guardian angel, I came through none the worse in the outward man and considerably better in the inward. Dean Sperry was astonished when I turned up alive at the end of it all. Later on he composed an Address in winch my American friends sent their congratulations on my eightieth birthday. From the tone of the Address, I gather that he bore me no ill-will for defeating his prediction.

VACATIONS IN CANADA

"There is a kind of primevalism which is identical with an advanced stage of evolution. In Canada they do not ask 'who's who,' but 'what's what' "

THREE OF MY long vacations were spent in Canada. In 1909 I attended the annual meeting of the British Association at Winnipeg in company with Dr. Herbert Gray ("Bart"), the famous Headmaster of Bradfield, where two of my sons were educated. A man of restless enterprise and unbounded courage, and the best of travelling companions, especially if trouble were afoot, he was then busy with a scheme under which selected boys from the Public Schools might be trained by participation in Canadian life as "sons of the Empire," in which he was a profound believer. He was President that year of the Education Section of the B. A., and when the proceedings at Winnipeg were ended we went on together into Western Canada, his purpose being to purchase and equip a ranch as the starting point of his scheme. Making our headquarters at Calgary we spent some time investigating various ranches in the foot-hill country of the Rockies, making long journeys across prairies and Indian Reserves, with many adventures by the way and contacts with queer types of humanity in outlandish places. Of these types the least attractive to me were the "real estate men," who sent us on these expeditions, and certainly did not impress me as promising candidates for the Kingdom of Heaven. But they had caught a Tartar in Gray. After outwitting many swindlers, he finally purchased a large ranch with a fine house, twenty-five miles west of Calgary.

VACATIONS IN CANADA

It had been arranged that my eldest son, then at Bradfield, would be in the first group of boys to be sent out.

After we had visited British Columbia together, Gray had to return to England, leaving the arrangements at the ranch incomplete. I stayed behind to complete them. Having done this as best I could, I, too, had to return, leaving the ranch well in train to become a going concern.

My friendship with Herbert Gray, highly valued by me, dated from this time and lasted to his death. I count him a great man, great in heart as well as in head, but unfortunate from that time onwards. A temporary breakdown of health, the result of his unresting activity, soon followed and he retired from the headmastership of Bradfield. Affairs at the ranch, in which he had invested a large part of his capital, began to go ill, he quarrelled with the manager he had appointed, and there was progressive loss on the year's working. Gray was not a man to suffer fools gladly and his manner of dealing with knaves—he had been a lightweight boxer in his youth—was sharp and conclusive. After a few years of confused working the difficulties proved insuperable, the ranch was sold and the enterprise, sound and far-seeing in his conception of it, was abandoned. For some time he acted as Treasurer to the Provincial Government of British Columbia and thereafter was appointed Vicar of St. Mary's, Bury St. Edmunds. He was a fine preacher, but I thought him out of place, and believe he did, in that position. The world, which had need of his talents, left them unused. When I last saw him, not long before his death, the fire was still there, but burning intermittently. I saw that his days were numbered.

My further visits to Canada grew out of what I have just recorded. After a year on Gray's ranch my son left it and took the course at Macdonald, the Agricultural College near Montreal, and this led on to his taking up a farm in the Maritime Provinces. Circumstances had brought me into contact with Sir William van Horne, the railway magnate who had played a leading part in carrying the Canadian Pacific across the

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Continent. His country residence was at Ministers' Island, on the shore of the Bay of Fundy, where I was his guest on several occasions. Acting on his advice a farm was bought for my son near Gagetown on the St. John River, in a situation of great natural beauty. Here I spent part of the Long Vacation in 1912 and nearly the whole of it in 1913, working on the farm with my son and otherwise amusing myself.

During the visit of 1913 I went exploring in the neighbourhood and came across a deserted settlement of three or four farm houses in the backwoods. It was a place of some mystery. From the condition of the interiors it would seem that the inhabitants had fled in a sudden panic. The rotting furniture, the beds and bedding, the child's cradle with toys beside it were all in their normal positions; there were plates with knives and forks on the tables and the bones of meat joints—the history of it all unknown. The place was not easy of access, the twenty miles of track between it and my son's farm having been mostly overgrown by the forest. But thinking the place might be useful to my son for summer grazing I bought 400 acres of the land, largely forest-covered, together with a large wooden house in good condition, for 800 dollars. Here we would sometimes camp, the silence of the night broken only by the crashing of moose through the undergrowth or the strange cry of the whip-poor-will, purest and most wonderful of nature's bird-notes. On one of these occasions my companion was the Rev. Henry Gow, the most loyal of friends, who had come out with me for a holiday.

Running through the forest near this place was a virgin stream where the trout were so numerous that "it was a darn sight easier," according to our guide, "to catch 'em than not to catch 'em." In anticipation of this I had provided myself with an elegant three-piece rod, reel, flies and the rest of a fisherman's equipment, expecting to do the thing in style. Much to the amusement of the guide. Discarding the lot as useless, which it certainly would have been in that wild tangle, he cut a short wand, tied on two yards of string and a big

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hook, gave me a bag of worms and bade me go ahead. I was soon completely exhausted by the mere labour of pulling out the fish; but in the excitement of the business had been unconscious that Satan's cohorts, the black flies and mosquitoes, had been making a meal of me. Next day I exhibited the phenomenon of "swelled head" in dimensions appalling to those who saw them, but which fortunately I could not see myself, both eyes being completely bunged up. I recall the physical misery of that swelled head as the most massive and humiliating I have ever endured. The massacre of the trout was avenged.

Some miles away from Gagetown, on the other side of the St. John River, which the farm overlooked, was a vast expanse of water, the Grand Lake, its shores almost uninhabited. One day a small party of us, which included Gow and a young niece of mine named Phyllis Sharp who was living on the farm, managed to get a motor boat transported to this lake, which I had long wished to explore. This led to a curious incident. When we were somewhere in the middle of the lake the engine broke down and all our efforts failed to re-start it. We were becalmed, we had no extra clothing and the cold night came on. By good luck however a wind sprang up about midnight and this, with the help of an extemporized paddle, presently drifted us ashore. It was an utterly lonely place, a wall of forest in front of us, and no sign of a human inhabitation in sight. Pushing our way inland one of us saw a faint light shining in the distance, towards which we at once made our way, stumbling over fallen trees and into bog holes. At last we got into a clearing where there was a large house built of logs and the light shining from one of the windows. We knocked on the door which was presently opened by a tall and dignified old gentleman, with a lantern in his hand. We explained our plight and he with great courtesy bade us enter. The house was large he said, he had beds for us all and was delighted to welcome us, "for," said he, "I have not spoken to a human being for four weeks."

Soon we were seated at the table with an excellent meal

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before us. The urbane old gentleman in answer to our enquiries proceeded to explain himself. "I am a Loyalist," he said, "devoted to my King and my proper title is Lord Balmain. My great great grandfather, the Lord Balmain of those days, was banished to the Americas for siding with the Old Pretender in 1715 and my grandfather fought with the Loyalists for George III in the American Revolution. His property in the States was confiscated and he joined a body of Loyalists exiled to New Brunswick, the British Government giving him the land on which he built this house where his descendants, of whom I am the last, have lived ever since. I live here alone, raise poultry and such like, sell my produce to the monthly steamer and get from it what stores I want."—Was he "kidding" us? I think not, though this was the suggestion made by the Canadian who had come with us to manage the motor boat. The old gentleman was certainly an aristocrat. With his help we got the motor going next day and returned home safely. A good man, and good to remember.

Scattered up and down the St. John Valley I encountered many families descended from the Loyalists of the American War of Independence. Proud of their descent they were not slow to declare themselves "loyalists" when introduced to the Englishman. They claimed, and I believe the claim is supported by competent historians, that it was their fathers who saved Canada for the Empire. Nor was the title "loyalist" an empty name. The British Crown has no more devoted subjects than the Loyalists of those regions. I met some of them afterwards in Nova Scotia; among them descendants of the famous De Lanccy family.

This connexion with New Brunswick came to an end with the outbreak of war in 1914. My son immediately enlisted as a private in King Edward's Horse¹ and the farms were sold

¹ Later on he was given a commission in the infantry, survived Delville Wood and the Somme, was seriously wounded in the Paschendaele fighting, decorated, and served after recovery from his wound in the final battles. He is now General Manager of Ashton Brothers, Hyde, Manchester, and commands a battalion of the Home Guard.

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shortly afterwards. Side trips from the United States took me to Ottawa in 1924 when I was entertained by the Canadian Club and won a bet—twenty dollars at the Ottawa Races by backing a horse recommended by my host, a French Canadian Senator; and to McGill University in 1926 when I stayed with Sir Arthur Currie, the Principal, and received an honorary degree. In the same year I spent some time in the beautiful Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia where my younger sister, the "Anne Bronte" of our family, was then living, surrounded by an ocean of apple blossom. It was there that I put together a course of lectures on "Responsibility and Culture" for the Dodge Foundation at Yale, though I cannot observe that the apple blossom had much to do with the form of them.

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EDITING *THE HIBBERT JOURNAL*

Weaken nothing: strengthen the opposite of that which is too strong
Carlyle in a letter to J. S. Mill

THE WORK of editing *The Hibbert Journal* has been concurrent with all I have had to confess concerning the second half of my life. For forty years it has run as a continuous thread through what might otherwise have been a miscellany. It has had no little influence in determining the aims and characters of my other activities, which have been many, and given them all a measure of unity which, without it, they might have lacked. In my work as Principal of Manchester College, for example, I now see that I was endeavouring to bring the College and the Journal into line. As I had resisted all tendencies to identify the Journal with Unitarianism, I resisted them in the affairs of the College, though under circumstances of greater difficulty and with less power of control. The attitude I have tried to maintain in editing the Journal is catholic, not Roman Catholic of course, but inclusive of that; many Roman Catholics have contributed to its pages.

I now perceive, also, that all I have written about the Education of the Whole Man is nothing else than the advocacy of catholic education. And what is Elemental Religion, so closely connected with the Education of the Whole Man, but Catholic Religion? To the work of editing the Journal I owe an education in catholicity. It has helped to make me what I would still become more completely, a worker for the *Whole*. Imperfect as my response has been, there is nothing in my experience for which I more devoutly thank God.

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Such is the thread which I now discern running through the tangled web of the last forty years. The thread is still in my hands, though the day cannot be far distant when they will hold it no more.

The Journal was founded by the Hibbert Trust in 1902 as a "Quarterly Review of Religion, Theology and Philosophy." My appointment as editor, which greatly surprised me, immediately followed, the sub-editor being Dr. George Dawes Hicks who held the position till his death in 1941, after nearly forty years of collaboration.

It was foreseen that the Journal would take its place among what are known as "the heavies"; a large circulation accordingly was not expected. In the arrangements first made for launching it the assumption was that the circulation would not exceed seven hundred. Two thousand copies were sold of the first number, though this was sufficiently "heavy," and from that point the circulation mounted steadily to its peak shortly before the outbreak of war in 1914. An American agency was established and in 1907, when I visited America in the interests of the Journal, it had found its way to most parts of the United States, and was circulating fairly well in the Dominions, in India and to a smaller extent on the continent of Europe.

In those days the appetite of thoughtful people was keen for the kind of pabulum the Journal was providing. Nor was the appetite confined to the recognized intelligentsia. One day in 1910, when I was walking in Wales, I turned into a country public house for a glass of beer. The publican was sitting behind his counter, reading *The Hibbert Journal*. On learning that I was the editor, the good man was overcome with emotion and paid me the highest compliment I have ever received from a reader of the Journal.

The following were among the rules I laid down for myself in editing the Journal.

First, so far as I could prevent it, the Journal must never become a mission to the converted in any school of thought,

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religious, theological or philosophical. It should be an open forum for competent thinking, irrespective of the "ism" the thinker represented; but closed against nonsense. I knew then, as I have better reason to know now, that much nonsense is written about religion. Well, I would do my best to keep nonsense out and let sense in. In this, of course, I audaciously made myself a judge between the two, but reflected that this is what an editor has to do and take the risk of doing: unless he can face that risk, and the certainty that he will sometimes be mistaken, editorship is not for him. Doubtless I have made mistakes; indeed, I have several bad ones *on* my conscience; but when readers thank me, as they sometimes do, for articles I have published, I ask them to thank me more for *not* publishing others that have been offered.

Another rule was concerned with the difficulty of floating a "heavy" review, of preventing it from sinking under the weight of the cargo; or it might die of superiority to the public. The best remedy I could think of was to insist on clearness of expression. My own experience as a student of "religion, theology and philosophy" had taught me that, much of the literature devoted to these subjects is needlessly unintelligible, and sometimes wickedly so. In selecting articles for publication, therefore, I would give preference, *ceteris paribus*, to those that were clearly expressed. This rule was not easy to apply. Sometimes it would put me under the painful necessity of rejecting an article, containing important matter, on the ground that the writer's bad style or obscure diction had given me so much trouble in understanding what he was driving at that I felt sure most readers would give it up in despair before they were half-way through. After all, I reflected, the point to aim at is not merely to get the Journal written, that is easy enough, but to get it *read* as well, which is more difficult. To point this out to a contributor, and ask him for a clearer version of his thought, I found useless. This would only result in his denying the obscurity and writing me down as a fool for thinking him obscure. Or he might take it as an insult and

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write to the publisher withdrawing his name as a subscriber.

Another rule I have tried to observe arose from my respect, amounting to reverence, for the Common Man, the wisest philosophers, the most enlightened theologians and the most accomplished saints being, in my opinion, those who share most largely in his nature. So far from regarding the Common Man as representative of man in his fallen condition, he seemed to me rather the only man who is not fallen, the true Messiah, or Son of Man, whose mission it was to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on the earth. I was anxious, therefore, that *The Hibbert Journal*, as a review of Religion, Theology and Philosophy should appeal to him and represent him. This it would not do, however, if it became a specialist or professional journal in which experts addressed their fellow experts in technical language which experts alone can understand. "Consider the interests of the Common Man" was, therefore, my rule. Let the expert speak by all means, but let the expert who can speak home to the Common Man be the one to catch the Speaker's eye. Of all my rules this seemed to me most necessary, but the most difficult to observe and, therefore, I fear, the most frequently broken. It could be kept only so far as circumstances permitted, like the rule which proclaims virtue its own reward. It explains the pleasure I felt in the compliment paid the Journal by the Welsh publican as he was drawing me a glass of beer.

The amount of matter offered to the Journal has always been greatly in excess of the space available for publication, and the excess grew as time went on. A proportion of it has been manifest nonsense which I had no qualms of conscience in returning to the writers. But a far greater proportion of the returned matter I would have accepted if space had been available. The rejection of so much good writing has been the most painful part of my work. Doubtless I have made mistakes in rejecting some of it. An editor has to act as though he were infallible; experience soon teaches him, however, or should teach him, that he is not. But more distressing to me

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than the discovery of these mistakes has been the consciousness of the disappointment I was continually causing to painstaking writers by the rejection of their contributions, however justified the rejection might be. A certain amount of resentment on their part is not unnatural, but is apt to be inflamed rather than allayed when the editor "gives reasons" for his rejections. The bill of these resentments, which has been mounting up for forty years, is matter for a nightmare.

Quite early in my editorship I gave up the attempt to explain my decisions, except in cases where special circumstances seemed to require it, and learned to bear as best I could the knowledge that each rejection might be adding one more to the number of persons who regard me as an incompetent editor, or even as the member of a wicked conspiracy to "muzzle" their opinions. I have received scores of letters describing me as one or the other, or both. I fully understand the writers' feelings. I have experienced rejection myself, and have not enjoyed being the victim of it. To be the author of it is not enjoyable either.

As in the case of my books, I wish to avoid the appearance of advertising *The Hibbert Journal*. But I will venture to say that a future historian writing the history of religious thought in the first half of the present century will find in the series of its numbers valuable material on which to base his conclusions. There are few thinkers of eminence in the province of religion, theology and philosophy, belonging to this period, in the English-speaking world whose names will not be found among the contributors. Were I writing such a history myself, in the light of forty years' experience as editor, I should call attention to the following points.

First, to the large part which lay, as distinct from clerical, thinkers have played during the whole period as contributors to thought in all three departments, and to the willingness of the clergy to regard them as partners in the work of religious construction. The growing influence of the lay mind on the form of religion is plainly manifest.

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Second, to a growing disposition on both sides, but more on the lay than on the clerical, to learn from the religion and philosophy of the East, and to seek light from that quarter in establishing the fundamentals.

Third, to certain changes in the atmosphere of religious discussion, which can be arranged roughly as follows: (i) 1902-1910, interest dominated by the question of the relation between religion and science; (2) 1910-1914 by the question of the historical foundations of Christianity; (3) 1914-1920 (war period), by questions of ethical, social and political philosophy; (4) 1920-1940 by the consciousness of moral catastrophe as the prelude either to the revival or to the decay of religion.

I speak only of dominant notes. The note dominant in any one of these periods will be found to have the dominants of the others as undertones. The indication of the periods is also rough.

At the time of writing, 1941, the dominant note of incoming contributions is clearly the consciousness of moral catastrophe.

The mother of Karl Marx on learning that her impecunious son had written *Das Kapital* is said to have exclaimed: "I wish that young man would get some capital instead of writing a book about it." My own mother, after hearing a sermon of mine, once made a similar remark, with "religion" substituted for "capital." At the time, which was long ago, I probably failed to see the point. I see it more clearly now. Long experience in editing *The Hibbert Journal* has left me with the impression that professors of religion spend too much of their energy on discussing the delivery of the goods and too little on the production of the goods to be delivered. This disproportion I have found most noticeable in a class of articles dealing with the question "What is wrong with the Churches?" of which there has been a continuous stream ever since the Journal was founded, mostly products of the belief, characteristic of our age, in the efficacy of getting things *said*, verbal remedies for real evils. They betray a singular monotony both in the real

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evils indicated and the verbal remedies proposed. Though the persistence of the question is profoundly significant, I doubt if the answers to it have advanced since it was first broached in the *Journal* forty years ago.

The assumption constantly repeated in this discussion is that the *wording* of religion by the Churches in creeds and formularies has fallen out of harmony with modern thought; that is what is wrong with the Churches; and the remedy lies in getting things differently *said*, in finding new forms of wording which modern thought can endorse and sanction. The improved forms are variously specified, but there is general agreement in regarding modern thought as the source of the marching orders to which theology must conform its steps. The position of religion in relation to modern thought is thus made subordinate and dependent. But may it not be that the right relationship between the two is here inverted? Can a religion which waits for the sanction of modern thought be rightly called a religion at all? Instead of asking what is wrong with the Churches, ought we not to be asking what is wrong with modern thought? Many ask the first question; few the second.

Like the Minister of Information, whose ministrations seem to consist rather in withholding information than in giving it, the editor of a theological review has to be *on* his guard against publishing matter that would be valuable to the enemy, a problem which has never yet been satisfactorily solved; unless the esoteric practice of the Pythagoreans and the Egyptian priests in keeping the most important information under lock and key can be counted a solution. As we have learnt to our cost in the case of science, truth, when it falls into the hands of the unwise, the incompetent or the wicked, is apt to be used for the undoing of humanity. That the truths of religion, theology and philosophy share this danger with the truths of science is well suggested by the fable of the Devil and the Philosopher. This tells how Satan, disguised as a student of theology (a disguise he often assumes) attended a course of lectures by a famous professor on "the Nature of

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the Good." At the conclusion of the course he presented himself to the lecturer and warmly thanked him for his admirable instruction. "You have made the nature of the Good so clear," said the Devil, "that I shall have *no* difficulty in avoiding the Good for the future." Whereupon he threw off his disguise, gave the astonished professor an encouraging slap on the back, and vanished into space.—The moral seems to be that in order to avoid giving valuable information to God's enemies all theological discussion should be conducted in secret session. Even so, it might be difficult to keep the Devil out.

Of the three Entities composing *The Hibbert Journal* trinity, Religion, Theology and Philosophy, it cannot be said that "none is before and none after." Religion clearly takes the lead. Reviewing the articles published in the Journal, now totalling close on two thousand, my impression is that the cause of religion has been served less by those written directly about religion, and more by those written religiously about other things. The Welsh publican's compliment, too extravagant to be quoted *verbatim*, was somewhat to that effect.

The effect of this long experience on myself is beyond my power to analyse. That it has been profound there can be no doubt. If all else had combined to make my life uninteresting this would have defeated the combination and given me an abiding interest. That it has been for my good is a deduction from faith in the shaping divinity. I cannot prove it otherwise.

The work of reading and assessing a vast number of articles written by Christian writers in the Christian interest led me, especially during the second of the periods named in the third section above, to make a new inquiry into the origins of Christianity and to a discovery of so much importance to myself that it cannot be omitted from this Confession. The next chapter will tell the story of it.

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MY DISCOVERY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Do not read the Times: read the Eternities—*Thoreau*

I WAS WELL over fifty years of age and had long ceased to be an active minister of religion, in the sense of having a "pulpit" of my own, when I discovered the New Testament. When the story has been told, as I will now attempt to tell it, some will say, no doubt, that I found what *is not there*. But that will make no difference to the fact that I believed I had found what *is there*, nor obliterate the effects on my own mind. Others, perhaps, have made the discovery before me. But this, again, will not alter the fact that I made it for myself. Like St. Paul with his gospel "I was taught it of no man."

I had of course studied the New Testament as part of my training in a Theological College, with due regard to questions of date, authorship, textual origins and others cognate to the Higher Criticism. As a student I "did" a good deal of it in the original Greek and passed the required examinations though, I must admit, not very creditably, being at the time out of humour with my College curriculum. In addition to that I continued to read widely in the literature of the Higher Criticism and knew the work of Harnack well, *What is Christianity?* seeming to me the last word on that much debated question.

But all this was piecemeal and secondhand. So far I had made no sustained effort *to find out for myself what it was all about*. I had the notion that there was no one tiling in particular which the New Testament could be described as being *all* about; it was a collection of books rather loosely put together

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by the Canonists, all indeed having to do with Jesus Christ, but in ways not in harmony one with another. Who for instance could find harmony between the Christ of the Apocalypse riding on horseback over his slaughtered enemies and the Preacher of the Sermon on the Mount?

For the homiletic purpose, also, my study of the New Testament had been energetic, constantly searching it for edifying themes of discourse, for texts and for "lessons," which I could translate and expand into sermons appropriate to modern times. But this again was piecemeal and selective, fixing the attention on the high lights of the New Testament to the comparative neglect of the rest and the total neglect of certain parts. Thus I had much to say about Christ as the author of the "Good Samaritan" but nothing about the Christ who rode over his enemies with a sword in his mouth. This conception, and some others, I left severely alone. Moreover, in bringing the selected passages up to the modern level I did not always trouble to inquire whether the interpretation I put upon them was what they really meant to their original authors. So long as something edifying could be made of them, that was enough. What could not be used for edification I passed by. What could, I seized upon and developed.

My notion of the New Testament as a mixed collection of wheat and chaff, the wheat coming from a transcendent religious genius, the chaff from his reporters, required me to treat the documents in this way. That Jesus was "above the heads of his reporters" I had taken for granted ever since the reading of *Literature and Dogma* in my youth. What I tried to do in these edifying discourses was to get beyond the lower ground of the reporters to the higher ground of the reported, as Arnold had done in *Literature and Dogma* and Harnack in *What is Christianity?* There seemed to be a rift between the two levels of reporters and reported which prevented me from seeing the New Testament *as a whole*.

About the year 1910, when I was fifty, a change began in my perspective. At that time *The Hibbert Journal* had to deal

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with an outburst of New Testament criticism, consequent on the "New Theology" movement associated with the name of R. J. Campbell. In 1909 the Rev. R. Roberts, a Congregational minister of advanced views, contributed an article of which the gist was this: that in the joint conception Jesus-Christ, Christ was the original member; the figure of Jesus in the Gospels having been moulded to fit in with it, and not the other way about. This gave rise to controversy, the contention of Roberts obviously affecting the claim of the Gospels to be historical documents. The result was that *The Hibbert Journal*, unable to accommodate the controversialists in its quarterly issues, brought out a special volume under the title "Jesus or Christ?" dealing with the question from all sides. The contributors were the following:

Father G. Tyrrell, E. S. Talbot (then Bishop of Southwark), Professor H. Weinel, Professor Percy Gardner, Professor Paul Willi. Schmiedel, Sir Henry Jones, Richard Morris, Sir Oliver Lodge, Canon Henry Scott Holland, Father Joseph Rickaby, S.J., Dr. Nathan Soderblom, Principal A. E. Garvie, The Rev. R. J. Campbell, Dr. James Drummond, Professor Benjamin W. Bacon, Principal J. E. Carpenter, James Collier, The Rev. R. Roberts.

Having to supervise all this, to select the contributors, examine their contributions and arrange them in orderly sequence, I became myself absorbed in the problem and soon learnt, from the contributions before me, that my own piecemeal and selective method of dealing with the New Testament was quite inadequate to a proper understanding of it, the lesson coming, I think, more from the orthodox contributors than from the unorthodox, though none of them entirely satisfied me. I resolved therefore to make an independent effort to find out for myself what the New Testament was "all about." The symposium had convinced me that it was not a mere collection of books but had a *unitary purpose*, while leaving me in doubt as to what the unitary purpose was. This

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I would try to find out for myself. I would re-read the whole New Testament, not indeed in the order in which the books were printed, that would never do, but in their chronological order as nearly as I could ascertain it. My deficiency in the technique of New Testament scholarship would certainly be a disadvantage; on the other hand it would be an advantage that I was uncommitted to theories in that department. I would try to read without spectacles of one tint or another, and not in fragments, but a whole book, Epistle or Gospel, at a sitting. In this way I should be more likely to get a right impression of "what it was all about."

I kept up this method of study for many years: indeed I keep it up still. To describe in detail all the conclusions to which it has led me would be too long a story and would here be out of place. All that belongs to this confession is the summary result.

The central theme of the New Testament, as it emerged before me in the course of this reading, is *Immortality*—not the immortality of anybody and everybody, but of *the believer in Christ as risen from the dead*. This theme I found everywhere present, both in Epistles and Gospels, either on the surface or beneath it; sometimes in the foreground with the light full on it (as in I Corinthians 15), sometimes in the middle distance, sometimes in the background; but its presence, whether in one position or another, always the unifying element, holding the parts together and making of the New Testament a unitary whole. Very near to Harnack's conclusion in *What is Christianity?* but not identical with it.

This was my discovery of the New Testament as essentially and organically *one*, which it had never been for me before. Previously I had thought of it as a collection which would be more intelligible and more edifying if some parts of it were removed—for instance if we had the Gospels, but not the Epistles, or only those parts of them which seemed to fit in with the Gospels. This I now saw to be a profound error. It became clear to me that all the parts are held together by the

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theme of the believer's immortality, so that if this be withdrawn the whole disintegrates and falls asunder into fragments, many of great value but containing nothing to account for the origin of Christianity, and nothing *on* which the Christian Church could ever have been built.

This central theme I found presented in forms both explicit and implicit. The explicit form is presented in the Pauline Epistles, all of which bear more or less directly on the gift of immortality, the passage from death to life, bestowed on the believer and on him alone, by Christ, declared the Son of God, not (as many have said) by the beauty of his life, nor the grandeur of his teaching, nor, even, by his death on the Cross but *by the resurrection of the dead* (Rom. I, 4). The *whole* of the New Testament seemed to me covered, explained and held together by the saying "If Christ be not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain."

Christ the vanquisher of death, the donor of immortality in virtue of his resurrection, and proved the Son of God by *that*, and by nothing short of that, is the first form in which the Central Figure appears in the New Testament, chronologically earlier than that in the Gospels, not one of which was in existence when the Epistles, which show no knowledge of the Gospel story, were written¹.

The figure of Jesus as presented in the Gospels seems, at first sight, widely different from the Christ of the Epistles both Pauline and Johannine. Whereas in the Epistles the figure is spiritual and in the heavens, in the Gospels it is of flesh and blood on the earth. But, reading the Gospels as wholes and continuously, instead *of* selectively and piecemeal, it was strongly borne *in* on me that the figure is intended to be the same in both. In the Gospel of Mark, for instance, the first verse introduces Jesus as the "Son of God" and thence proceeds through successive stages to the crowning moment at the end, when Jesus is finally *proved* the Son of God by rising from the

¹ Traces of knowledge are alleged by some critics. But I am only stating my own conclusion.

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dead—the culminating act which makes the whole, not a biography of Jesus, which it was never intended to be, but the *Gospel*, the good news, which it professes to be—the Gospel of the saving Christ, the risen Son of God. The same with the other Gospels, and even more plainly. The figure they present is the figure of Him who, when he had done what else became him to do, *rose from the dead*, the common *terminus ad quern* of them all, and who, by rising from the dead, crowned all and revealed himself as the Son of God, the donor of immortality to all who were his. Eliminate the Resurrection from the Dead and you deprive the Gospels, one and all, of their *motif*, and unifying purpose. They would then cease to be *Gospels* and become collections of more or less edifying matter for which it would be hard to find a specific name. Lofty ethics? Deeds of beneficence? Noble words and gestures? Yes, of course. But the ethics, deeds, words and gestures of an Immortal. What else would you expect from one who rose from the dead? All is in keeping.

To these conclusions I had come by reading the Gospels in the manner described, and by letting my mind "play freely" round what I read. But it was a conclusion very different from Matthew Arnold's. In his perspective Jesus was always "above the heads of his reporters." In mine the New Testament writers were not primarily reporters. They were creators who, no matter who they were, had created a *Gospel*.

Nor was this result, here summarized, in accord with the New Testament criticism of Unitarian scholars as I was familiar with it—that, for example, of James Martineau in the *Seat of Authority*. It differed widely from that, both in perspective and content. In perspective it was nearer the orthodox view, but it was not orthodox in content, and could not be harmonized with the creed of Nicaea. Assuming my discovery of the New Testament to be a discovery of what the New Testament really is, the Convocation of York would have as good a case for excluding it from the lectern of Liverpool Cathedral as for excluding Unitarians from the pulpit. There are passages in

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the New Testament which support the creed of Nicaea, there are others which support the current teaching of the Unitarians the former perhaps somewhat stronger than the latter; but the New Testament *as a whole*, in my reading of it, supports neither of them.

When reading the New Testament selectively, for the purpose of edification, interest in the blessings promised to the believer had mainly determined my choice; the doom pronounced concurrently on the unbeliever I had overlooked, or passed by as unimportant and unedifying. Reading synoptically I now saw that the doom and blessing cannot be separated.

Immortality as offered in the Gospel is on a different footing from that of the *Pliaedo*; in the latter it is a property inherent in the nature of the soul as such; in the former an *acquired* property, which the soul lacks by nature but may gain through faith in Him who alone is able to deliver it from the dominion of death—the risen and glorified Son of God. The doom of those who reject the offer, and of unbelievers in general, is extinction, conceived not merely as ceasing to be, but as positive destruction—"their end is destruction." An everlasting fire is imagined in readiness for all such; into this they will be cast, not indeed to burn everlastingly (which is absurd), but to be instantly destroyed. What is good news for the believer is thus bad news for the unbeliever. What brings salvation to the first brings destruction no less to the second; and no pains are spared to let him know it. These two sides may often be found in close association, as in the First Epistle of St. John, where the blessedness of the believer as the heir of eternal life is sharply contrasted with the condition of the "liar" outside. The exclusion of the unbeliever from the benefits of salvation is no less definite in the Gospels. "Whosoever shall deny me before men him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" strikes the keynote. I now heard it reverberating through the entire New Testament.

When these conclusions had been tentatively reached I was greatly helped in clarifying them by the writings of Alfred

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Loisy and by a correspondence with him which grew out of my study of his work. The perspective of this great scholar was identical with my own, which was an amateur's. For him as for me the Gospels were not the root of Christianity but its late and splendid flower. But I was inclined to lay more stress than he would sanction on the point mentioned above, namely, that the salvation offered by the New Testament is primarily and essentially salvation *from death*, that is, *on* immortality. For him, the stress was on the Kingdom of God. But I am not sure that the two can be separated.

A habit of mind more inclined to synthesis than to analysis had already brought me to a cognate conclusion in a wider field. Under Darwin's influence I had long looked upon Nature as "red in tooth and claw," and found that view difficult to reconcile with the Power that makes for Excellence. Studied piecemeal Nature seemed pervaded by a cruel struggle for existence in which the higher values were utterly disregarded. But when analytic study of the trees gave way to synthetic study of the wood I came to see that the struggle for existence between species is subordinate to a wider pattern embracing animated Nature as a whole—that of an organized offensive against death, an economy of co-operative resistance to the forces threatening the common life, in which every living thing plays a part, red in tooth and claw though its part may be. Between this conclusion about Nature and the foregoing about the New Testament there was a certain harmony. The offensive against death, launched on different levels, was common to both.

Among the Christian Churches now extant I know of none whose creed or profession reproduces the original form of Christianity. Judged by that standard they are all heretical. A statement, I perceive, which would give the Convocation of York a double justification for excluding me from Anglican pulpits: first, as a Unitarian, and second as holding the views on the New Testament just described, though these views are not characteristically Unitarian.

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THE SEQUEL TO DEATH

"Our little life is rounded by a note of interrogation"

IN THE course of my experience as editor of *The Hibbert Journal*, which has brought me into contact with so many forms of Christian thought current in the last half century, I have been greatly struck by the comparative silence which seems to have fallen on the belief in immortality, as an essential element of the Christian religion. The philosophers seem to have grown shy of it. Among the thousands of articles that have been offered on the fundamentals of religion and the essentials of Christianity I could count on my two hands those that have dealt with Immortality, and of these few not all were written in defence of the belief. The most definite pronouncements in favour of personal survival, which is not quite the same as immortality, have come from thinkers, like the late Sir Oliver Lodge, who have been convinced by the results of Psychical Research. The theologians, like the philosophers, seem indisposed to commit themselves, and even when I have solicited an article on the subject from one or other of them, the reply has usually been in the negative.

As to current practice in the religious exercises of the Churches my experience is too limited to warrant a generalization. I can only say that in the Churches I have attended I have rarely heard it mentioned from the pulpit and still more rarely explicitly avowed by the preacher. The belief figures prominently in hymn books, though it may be noted that the

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authors of the hymns which avow it belong to a past generation. The pews will join heartily in singing the hymn

There is a land of pure delight
Where saints immortal reign

but the pulpit is silent.¹

The general practice seems to be, not indeed to disavow the belief, but to keep it in cold storage for funeral occasions. It is of course prominent enough—perhaps too prominent—in the Funeral Service of the Church of England. I think it unfortunate, however, that the Fifteenth Chapter of First Corinthians ("Behold, I show you a mystery") should have come to be regarded as specially adapted to funerals. It was not so intended. The intention was to present a summary of the Christian Gospel, declared to be "vain"—if Christ be not risen from the dead.

It was my interest in this belief, which I have never been able to abandon, that brought me into relations with the Society for Psychical Research. Though well knowing that the belief in its Christian form was originally a product of faith, I was anxious to ascertain what, if any, confirmation of it was forthcoming in the scientific province. The result has been, so far as the evidence of Psychical Research is concerned, to leave me open-minded. While none of the proofs of survival is invulnerable to criticism, none so irrefragable but that ingenuity can find a way of interpreting it otherwise, I think that the best of them tend to increase the probability of personal survival.

In 1917 I was elected President of the Society. During my period of office I had several interesting experiences in sittings with the well-known and in my judgment unquestionably genuine medium, Mrs. Leonard. In the midst of much irrelevant and unintelligible patter there would break through from time to time what were, to me, perfectly intelligible statements, apparently coming from departed friends of mine, one or two of whom have been mentioned in this book. Some

¹Stopford Brooke was a notable exception.

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of these communications had a dramatic quality¹ which greatly impressed me, especially those purporting to come from a young friend of mine then recently killed in an air-fight. How far I may have been subconsciously influencing the medium by telepathy—which, after all is only the name of another mystery—I cannot say. But it is certain that the medium had no independent knowledge of what was "communicated." There were also some strange "mix-ups" of one departed person with another, as when a man whom I had known under the name (say) of Montague suddenly changed into a more famous Montague whom I had never known, and began to tell me many details—which turned out to be true—of the strange circumstances under which he had died.

During the same period I had a queer experience—adventure perhaps would be a better name for it—investigating a remarkably well attested ghost, in company with my friend the late Dr. F. C. S. Schiller. The scene was a large country house, the inmates of which, servants included, departed at nightfall, some having seen the ghost and all being terrified, leaving Dr. Schiller and myself in sole possession. It was a nerve trying experience, for the house, like Prospero's Isle, was "full of noises." Neither of us saw the ghost, though I saw several things, which, under the nervous tension induced by sitting alone in the haunted room, might easily have seemed to me visions of the devil. From that I learnt something about the psychology of ghost seeing. I can now accept without criticism the story of Luther flinging his inkpot at the devil's head in the lonely tower of the Wartburg.

I have never seen a ghost—which does not prove that nobody else has—but think I can claim to have *smelt* one. Not, however, the ghost of a human being. Mine was the ghost of a cigar. It happened as follows.

My father-in-law, Stopford Brooke, was a great smoker of Manila cigars, a dozen a day being a moderate allowance. Now the smoke of Manila cigars has a strong odour quite distinct

¹ Which cannot be reproduced in a report of the sitting.

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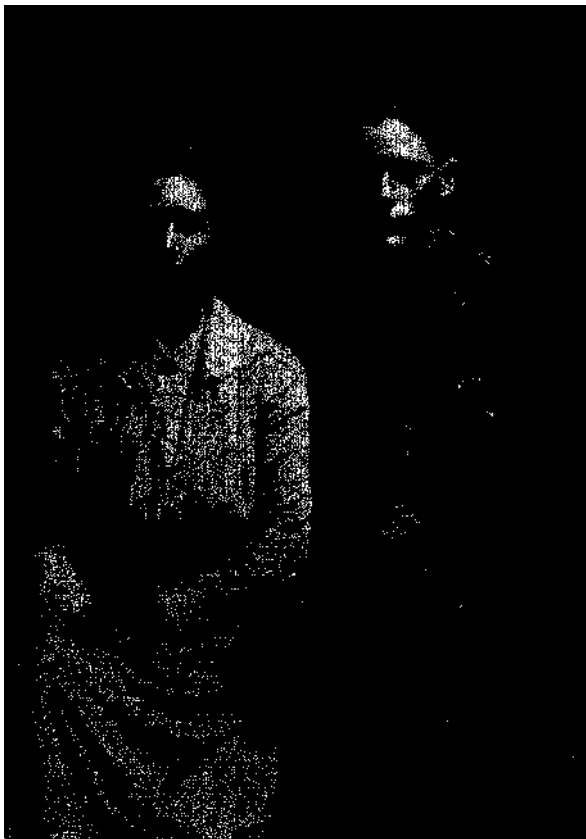
from that of other brands, and Brooke's study was always saturated with it. Well, one night in 1917 I sat up late in my own study, the rest of the household having retired, completing a difficult chapter in *The Life of Stopford Brooke*, on which I was then engaged. I finished my work about one o'clock and was about to put out the lights and go to bed, when quite suddenly the room became filled, almost overpoweringly, with the unmistakable odour of Manila cigars. It lasted some minutes and then went as suddenly as it came. I have no explanation and must leave it to the experts. A scientifically minded friend to whom I was rash enough to tell the story explained it on the hypothesis that I must have inadvertently left the window open and that the policeman on the beat was doubtless solacing himself with a Manila cigar just outside. That is the kind of explanation you must expect when you tell of ghostly experiences, as I am now doing, to an unbelieving generation. I cannot prove that my friend was wrong. If I assure him that the window was shut he will reply that people often think the window shut when it is really open. If I say that my house is a lonely one, on no policeman's beat, he will reply "that night was an exception and the loneliness of the place accounts for the policeman choosing it for his unlawful smoke"—and so on *ad infinitum*. Fools have been divided into two classes: those who believe everybody, and those who believe nobody. The latter strike me as the more foolish.

IN OXFORD

There is too much fencing and scoring of 'points' at Oxford to make construction active—*William James in a letter to Shadworth Hodgson*¹

ON A CERTAIN occasion in 1932 when I had to address an audience in a Western city of the United States, the Mayor, who presided at the meeting, introduced me as "Principal of Oxford University," and enlarged at some length on the honour done to the city by the presence of so distinguished a visitor, whose position, he said, made him "one of England's foremost key-men." The origin of his delusion, which I discovered afterwards, was quite simple. Having never heard of me before, he had rung up a friend of mine in the morning to inquire "who the hell was this bird" he had undertaken to introduce later in the day, and was told in reply that I had been Principal of a College and came from Oxford, both true statements. He had then "combined the information," like the author of the famous article on Chinese Metaphysics, who got his material by looking up first "China" and then "Metaphysics" in the encyclopaedia. An honest man than I would have explained to the audience that my status in Oxford University was considerably short of "Principal," being only that of an honorary M.A. But I was unwilling to disappoint the friendly citizens of so rare a prize as the Principal of Oxford University, and morally too indolent to set the matter right; so I thanked the Mayor for his speech, braved the recording angel and let the description pass without correction. Thanks to the virtues assigned me by chairmen I have often sailed

¹ *The Letters of William James*, Vol. II, p. 307.



THE AUTHOR S WIFE AND THIRD SON
Capt. S. B. L.Jacks, M.C., in 1917

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under false colours, and not in America only, though perhaps chiefly there; but never, I think, under colours quite as false as these.

Was it, I wonder, a like moral indolence, or a like reluctance to deprive the public of a prize, that prevented the followers of Dr. Buchman from disclaiming the title 'Oxford Group' when first applied to them? But, whereas the title has stuck to them and been sanctioned by law, mine evaporated almost as soon as conferred. None the less my conscience has not been quite easy about the matter. I ought to have repudiated the addition on the spot instead of leaving it to evaporate.

I have lived in Oxford and its immediate vicinity for nearly half my lifetime, and enjoyed a priceless intercourse with many Oxford men, all the genuine article; but have never been and never could be the genuine article myself—which is very far from being a claim to superiority. It may be that through the influx of youths from the secondary schools a new type of "Oxford man," more akin to my own cut and figure, is in process of evolution. But if the new type drives out the old the world will be considerably the poorer. My feeling in the matter is identical with that of William James who, after he had been staying with me in Oxford, wrote to Charles Eliot Norton as follows:

"There is a great deal of flummery about Oxford, but if I were an Oxonian, in spite of my radicalism generally, I might vote against all change there. It is an absolutely unique fruit of human endeavour . . . Let other places of learning go in for all the improvements! The world can afford to keep her one Oxford unreformed."

It would have been the height of folly in me to expect from Oxford a reception comparable in warmth to that of the Welsh Publican or the American Mayor, both of whom had acclaimed me as one of the most important men in the world. Had I been disposed to accept these valuations, forty years in the atmosphere of Oxford—nay, one year—would have admin-

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istered the needful corrective. As a School of Humility, or place of correction for swelled heads, Oxford has no rival the wide world over, unless it be the House of Commons. Great men are there so plentiful, and have been for ages past, that even the man whose greatness had better attestation than that of American Mayors or Welsh Publicans would soon discover that he was a commonplace phenomenon, and learn, if he were teachable, to say with Lancelot "in me there dwells no greatness, unless there be some distant far off touch of greatness in knowing well I am not great." However attested a man's greatness may be, Oxford will not regard him as indispensable, and something in the atmosphere will warn him against so regarding himself. When he departs he will be suitably mourned, and his virtues commemorated in orations and monuments; but his place will be swiftly taken by one as good as he, or possibly better. The supply is inexhaustible. The Oxford man knows it, and has the knowledge for consolation on his death bed. Bereaved by his coming death the University may be; but not orphaned nor desolate.

To the enthusiast with a fixed idea, or a formula for mending the world, Oxford listens with benevolent incredulity and responds by asking him to define the terms of his formula. It recognizes the necessity for such enthusiasts: hence the benevolence. But it has found by long experience that they all break down on the definition of terms: hence the incredulity. I found this out when ventilating enthusiasms of my own, such as "physical education," or "completing the work of the Reformation." In the former case I was asked to say what I meant by "education"; in the latter to define "completing"; and broke down on both definitions. My belief in the "shaping divinity" and in the Common Man I have never dared to ventilate, except in occasional sermons, when there was no discussion to follow. Had I offered either notion to the Oxford Philosophical Society, I should have been torn to pieces in the subsequent discussion by logical lions seeking whom they might devour.

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Though I have lived so long in this atmosphere and derived, I believe, much good from that, Oxford has never been my spiritual home. In view of my antecedents it could hardly have been otherwise. Nothing short of a miracle could turn an orphan graduate of London into an Oxford man. During the ten years when I resided in the midst of the Colleges I mingled a good deal in the social life of the University, dined frequently at College high-tables, drank port in many Common Rooms, and formed a few friendships in those quarters, notably with the late Dr. F. C. S. Schiller, that stormy petrel among Oxford philosophers, and with Captain H. V. Knox, whom William James places along with Schiller, among the best talkers and the acutest minds he met in Oxford. But the limitations of the orphan graduate were never entirely overcome.

How far what is called the "Oxford spirit," a real but undefinable thing, got into me I do not know and have no means of finding out. To have lived so long in the atmosphere or even in the neighbourhood of the University without absorbing some of its qualities, good and bad, would be impossible. Guessing at the result I would say that it has made me somewhat less of a Philistine than I was forty years ago and would have remained had I lived elsewhere. One of the family I have never been, and could never have become. My relations to the University have been throughout those of an outsider who has found a lodgment in quarters more polite than those in which he had been born and educated; the relations, one might say, of a lodger who has been admitted into a household of higher culture than his own, and whose manners, in the course of years, have been somewhat improved by contact with his hosts. From the benevolent incredulity I have encountered when ventilating my notions I have certainly received some benefit, more, perhaps, from the benevolence than from the incredulity; nor has the constant challenge to define my terms been altogether thrown away on me. What Oxford owes to me is of course nothing. A thousand such as

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I might come and go with no more effect on Oxford than water on a duck's back.

For twenty-seven years I have lived on Shotover Hill, just outside the city boundaries, with the dreaming towers of the University visible in the valley below—a lovely spectacle on a clear day. Showing the view one day to an American visitor, "You see," said I, "that we look down on Oxford." "Sure you do," replied the visitor, "and they tell me that Oxford looks down on the universe." From this the conversation wandered off into a train of subtleties in the course of which I came to the point that the vision before me when "looking down on Oxford" from my lull-top had come nearer to making an Oxford man of me than anything else. My visitor understood the reasoning and remarked at the finish, "Well, I guess that feller knew what he was talking about when he made you Principal of Oxford University." I had previously told him the story of the Mayor who launched me under false colours in the Western city. I enjoyed my visitor's compliment, but have never received one more outrageous, not even from the Welsh publican. As Bergson remarks, "on tient a. l'eloge et aux honneurs dans l'exacte mesurc ou l'on n'est pas sur d'avoir reussi."

of the Oxford don as depicted in caricature I have had no experience and take leave to doubt whether he exists, unless it be in some inner penetralia of the University to which admission has not been given me. A man whose humanity has been choked by obstructive erudition, looking out myopically on a little world through a pair of Jew-Greek spectacles, devoid of humour, learned but ignorant—at no point does the portrait represent the Oxford don as I have found him, but rather his opposite at all points. Aflame with prophetic fire he certainly is not, but tolerant enough of outsiders who are; tolerant but incredulous, interested in the study of the prophet, a helpful commentator on his message and, above all, generous to him when in distress, as the prophet so often is, but cold and distant if expected to share his enthusiasm. He is wary of

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discipleship. The part of a neutral he plays to admiration; that of a partisan not so well, nor so often. To Art in general he has seemed to me indifferent, unobserving and somewhat insensitive, but he loves a joke, provided it be seasoned with wit. In putting forward his own opinion, whether in private or public, he disarms opposition by his modesty, or at least compels the opponent to keep within the bounds of temperance, as he does himself. In writing his *Memoirs* or his *Autobiography*, as some Oxford dons have done, he will introduce you to Olympian personalities, but always with the air of one who disclaims Olympian qualities for himself.

The startling innovations of the revolutionary leave him unstartled; the sugary suppositions of the wishful thinker pass him by; incendiary opinions kindle him not. To the scorn that burns like a red hot iron, and to the comments of passion in general, he rarely gives expression. In the presence of high-flown absurdities he restrains himself and responds with a quiet suggestion that "the negative may be more reasonably entertained." 'Triumphant irrationality is not for him, and if, in defence of your absurdity, you quote the Frenchman's saying that "only a great genius can be as flagrantly absurd as God," he will again indicate his preference for the negative of the proposition, but this time a little more emphatically. Yet he is not unfriendly to the spirit of reasoned adventure, provided that good authority, such as Aristotle's, can be quoted in support of the reasoning and the adventure stop short of assisting at an earthquake.—I speak of him as I have found him. Let those who have found him otherwise tell their own story.

Among the dons who cultivate philosophy, of whom you will find one or more in every college, a certain magnanimous contempt may be observed in the attitude of each towards the differing opinions of the others. This mutual indifference, one might expect, would be productive of coolness, or even of bad feeling. On the contrary it acts as a bond of union, or at least as a basis for good fellowship, being integral, I suspect, to the common knowledge, which is also a basis for good

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fellowship, that in collegiate Oxford nobody is indispensable; for, if you are not indispensable, it can hardly be otherwise with your opinions, with your philosophy. An Oxford man will naturally recognize this, and all recognizing it together, contempt loses its venom and magnanimity prevails. Thus in Oxford one sees a spectacle which it would be hard to match elsewhere—a community of thinkers held together in brotherly relationships by a common ardour in the search for truth supported by a common agreement to regard each other's findings as of no outstanding importance, and to take it all lightheartedly. Combined with this a trace can sometimes be detected of the cynical belief, born of many disillusiones, that the nearer your opinions approach to the final truth the less likely is mankind to adopt them, and the less need therefore to take them *au grand sérieux*.

It was at the meetings of the Oxford Philosophical Society, which I used to attend regularly, that I was first struck by these humane phenomena. The cheerfulness, whose recurrence Dr. Johnson's friend found so embarrassing in his study of philosophy, seemed there to be the prevailing mood. Even the logical lions, as they crunched a victim's bones, would do it in a kindly spirit, while the victim would appear not to mind it in the least. In all this I noted a contrast between Oxford and the American Universities which I had visited or lectured in. It seemed to me that in the American atmosphere new ideas are apt to be as much overvalued as they are undervalued in Oxford. To men of my temperament the overvaluings of America are more inspiring, though the undervaluings of Oxford are, perhaps, more salutary.

Of the undergraduates in the University, both male and female, my knowledge is casual. I have seen a great deal of the undergraduates; but to see an undergraduate is not to know him—or her. It may be worth while, however, to record here the impression they made on one who was even more of an outsider than I am—a Japanese who had been sent over by

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his government to study the way things are done in our ancient universities, and whom it fell to my lot to take round and show the sights.

After introducing my Japanese to various lecture rooms I took him to the playing fields to see a "rugger" match, for he wished to study the athletic side of the University as well as the academic. His notion of athletics, I found, had been mainly derived from the practice of ju-jitsu, a fine art which aims at the conquest of violence by skill, the attainment of the maximum result by the minimum of effort, and in which, if I remember rightly, he was himself something of an expert. Having never seen a rugger match before he watched the performance in astonished silence. Remembering the German professor who had challenged me to explain "the economy of run-power" in cricket, I prepared for a similar interrogation from the Japanese about football. But no: this was a very different affair. Breaking silence at last he summed up his impressions in some such words as these: "I do not understand this university. In your academics you exercise the minds of the undergraduates as though you meant them to become clergymen. In your athletics you exercise their bodies as though you meant them to become policemen." It was a naive remark, but one I have often found useful in calling attention to the need of co-ordination between mental and physical education. An undergraduate trained mentally to preach a gospel and physically to quell a riot is likely to turn out a queer fellow.

This reminds me of an event which brought me into close and rather unpleasant contact with that section of the undergraduates whom Matthew Arnold, in his elegant but rather spiteful way, distinguishes as "our young barbarians." It was the only occasion on which my relations with the University, or any part of it, had a colour of belligerency.

The occasion was the visit of Keir Hardie, in 1909, to address a public meeting in the Oxford Town Hall. He had just returned from India where, as his manner was, he had been letting himself go rather freely in the cause of the under-dog,

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a plentiful phenomenon in those parts, and to such lengths had he gone in the exposure of iniquity that shouts of "treason" greeted him *on* his return. The young barbarians of Cambridge had already given him a warm reception in these terms, and the young ditto of Oxford, making no secret of what they were about, prepared to give him a warmer. Under these circumstances the local Labour Party, who sponsored the meeting, had difficulty in finding a chairman. After vain application to various notabilities, whom the prospect did not attract, they finally pitched, *faute de mietix*, upon me, as one whose academical dignity was so inconsiderable that the loss of it, by getting mauled in a riot, could be faced with equanimity. Remembering how courageously my father had risked his top-hat at the riot in Nottingham market-place, and feeling the risk to my own dignity hardly more than that, I accepted the invitation. Moreover the experience of being mobbed was one which I had never had in person; at that point there was a gap in my experience of life which it would be interesting to get filled up; a foolish reason, no doubt, which has often got me into trouble before and since, but easily disguised from myself and from others by the pretence that I was taking the chair as a champion of "free speech." I not only accepted the invitation to take the chair but arranged to put Keir Hardie up for the night, my wife backing me up in both propositions and announcing her resolve to face the storm at my side, as she has faced so many others.

The event came up to expectations. Our appearance on the platform was the signal for a fusillade of those ingenious mockeries in which the undergraduate is an expert, followed by a shower of more solid missiles, mostly products of the vegetable kingdom. A tomato squashed on the table before me and spurted its juice into our faces; I was hit, but not put out of action, by a potato; another was adroitly caught in flight by the secretary of the Labour Club amid loud cheers from the audience for "a fine catch, sir." If that can be called a speech which consists of disconnected outbursts or kangaroo-

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leaps of eloquence, Keir Hardie and I both made speeches, sprinting forward whenever there was a lull in the bombardment, but heard only in derision. Thus we kept it up for nearly an hour, enduring much but effecting nothing, and were about to make a show of putting our resolution—I forget in favour of what—to the vote, when suddenly the tempest broke into fury: the whole audience rose to its feet and surged forwards; pandemonium was let loose; there was a vicious rush to the platform, and a *melee* of encounters immediately below it, in which I can still see a student of my own, Marsh Roberts by name, who cultivated pugilism in the intervals of theological study, valiantly at work, with visible results, on the barbarian noses—the one figure in that scuffling crowd of which my memory retains a clear image and recalls with satisfaction. Meanwhile we of the platform—there were ladies among us—were swiftly shepherded by the police into the safety of a back street, all lost save honour, and the cause of free speech, which I had come to champion, trampled under foot of the barbarians.

I rejoiced in making acquaintance with Keir Hardie, whom I found a most lovable old hero and judged to be a true Christian. Though not of his political party, I concluded, as I had often done before, that it was to men such as he, common men, that I must look, rather than to young barbarians, for help in getting the work of the Reformation completed. My wife, who had kept her resolve to see me through, and been hit by potatoes on the platform, fell in love with Keir Hardie, and concurred in my conclusion.

As my home for so many years, in the sense of being the place where I have lived, I love Oxford as I love no other place on earth. There I have watched my children growing up through four of the Seven Ages; three of them, more fortunate than I, are Oxford men. There, as previous chapters have told, the major part of my work has been done. All this with the University as the background of the stage, but not the stage itself. My penetration into its inner life has hardly

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reached below the surface, but I think it has been for the good of my soul. I am grateful to Oxford for giving so much to one who had nothing to offer in return.

33

PENULTIMATE

I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.

—Tennyson

IF THE length of a man's life is three score years and ten, and the rest but labour and sorrow, what should be the length of an octogenarian's confession? Obviously it should be of no length, not even the shortest imaginable. Accepting the Psalmist's formula as the basis of the argument, our octogenarian's proceedings will fall into the category of "labour and sorrow," of which "the rest" is composed, and to which his confessions will merely add another item. Nay more; as a trespasser in the universe by definition, he should at least have the decency to keep silence, and not aggravate the trespass by inflicting his confession on the hearing of lawful wayfarers who, though still within the Psalmist's boundaries, have enough labour and sorrow of their own. On all grounds, therefore, it were better that the confession were not made than made. Thus I imagine the matter might be argued if the order of the day were "fencing and scoring of points," of which, according to William James, there is too much in Oxford. But even as a point scored by Oxford logic it warns me to bring my confession to a close.

To conclude will not be difficult; to finish will be impossible. In order to finish my confession I must needs prolong the story to the final point when "the rest" is not labour and sorrow but "silence," and *dies* the stage direction. The time is short, but

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who knows what may occur between now and then, a death-bed repentance for example, to alter the complexion of all that has gone before? For this reason no man can finish his confession, nor his autobiography. Beyond the penultimate he cannot reach. Would he have the *story finished*? Then he must appeal to another to tell it, as Hamlet with his dying breath appeals to Horatio:

Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story.

of the course my thoughts have taken during the long period of my life in Oxford there remains, however, one thing more to be confessed. Here it was that I lived through the agonizing years of the last great war and here I am now living through the greater agony of the present. To say that I have written this confession as a means of escape from that agony, as a diversion of the mind from preoccupation with the thought of it, would be as true a confession as any I can make. For the last twenty-five years, I have been thinking about these things more than about anything else—as who that thinks at all would not?—seeking for explanation of how such monstrous evils could be in a world peopled by rational beings, and always in the hope that when the explanation was found the remedy would follow. Who would censure an old man for taking refuge, for a time, from problems so burdensome and baffling? In writing this book I have found, as it were, an air raid shelter for the mind, temporary but effective. I shall be glad if it serves the same purpose for anyone who reads it.

As the efforts made by a bad sleeper to go to sleep have the effect of keeping him the more awake, so the means we take to escape from an evil often bring us into its nearer presence, and our resolutions to forget become aids to memory. So it is with me now, and so it will be for any reader who shares my air raid shelter. In the process of making my confession I am brought to a point where I am reminded of what I would forget.

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I am one of those who believe that the present catastrophe might have been averted if measures to avert it had been taken in time, though I now see, as one become wise after the event, that no power existed on the earth powerful enough to take the averting action that was needed. Powers of enormous range our civilization had evolved, but not the moral power, the power of self control, to guide the others and prevent them plunging to disaster. Under these conditions disaster was inevitable, as it must ever be when Understanding is strong and Reason weak¹.

Filled with the belief that catastrophe could be averted, I was recurrently occupied, in the interval between the two wars, with the problem of the averting action, taking what opportunities I could find to ventilate my notions. In this I was one of many, "unqualified practitioners" for the most part. The result was such as unqualified practitioners must expect when launching their ideas in a world ruled by the Profession. Our report was not believed in high places; or, if believed, not adopted.

That the disaster was not to be averted by political engineering, such as was attempted by the League of Nations, seemed to some of us apparent from the first. Unlike the wheels of a clock, the parts with which the political engineer constructs his machine have wills of their own, often bad wills, and are not to be relied upon for concerted action. We urged, therefore, that economic co-operation must come first: that political unity would grow from that as the oak grows from the acorn; that the attempt to create it otherwise would result in a brittle artefact doomed to break the first time it was put under strain. In the year before the outbreak of the present war, when there seemed a possibility that catastrophe might be averted, I wrote a book on these lines. It received little notice and produced no effect; which was to be expected.

When the Nazi system was established, and the ugly outlines of the "new order" it proposes became visible, I judged that

^xI use these terms in the Kantian sense.

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this new order, hateful as it is to Britons and Americans, might well prove attractive to those of other traditions, or, if not positively attractive, at least preferable to the chaos that otherwise seemed to face them; purgatory, perhaps, but better than hell. So judging, and continuing to judge after the war had broken out, I wrote another book urging, this time, the imperative necessity of countering the insidious power of the Nazi "order," by offering the world the alternative of an order better than it, and not less concrete and clearly defined. This, I said, would be no project of appeasement, no substitute for winning the war, but a contribution to winning it. I failed, and still fail, to see how the war can be won otherwise.

Through the ravelled evil called "international policy" I could find no way to a clear issue. As operated by the governments of sovereign States, each armed for the assertion or protection of its sovereignty against the others, I judged "international policy," in the total working, to be an irredeemably evil thing, in which honesty has no chance against guile, and the better elements dance to the piping of the worse, dragging peace-loving nations into the wars they hate. "International policy," in the true sense, was indeed the name of something not yet in existence. What did exist, usurping the name, was a medley of *foreign* policies in which each nation was apt to treat the others, not as consisting of human beings having a common nature with its own, but as foreigners, as aliens, even as bogies, having a different nature and therefore potential enemies. Thus it had come to pass that the interests of the Common Man, which are everywhere essentially the same, had been lost sight of in a cloud of diplomatic fictions and sacrificed to the manoeuvring statecraft which works in that medium of unreality. The international policy arising from all this was neither international nor a policy, but a tangle of cross-purposes, each aiming at *something*, the total aiming at *nothing*, and not one of them long consistent even with itself. It was as though all the national anthems were being badly played in the same room and at the same time, and the noise

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called international music. "By their fruits ye shall know them." And the "fruits" were before me: on the one hand the present apocalypse of international discord and villainy: on the other a numerous body of international reformers with various devices of political machinery for evoking order out of the chaos, and all actuated by belief in the efficacy of Foreign Office statecraft, improved in this way or that, as the instrument of salvation and the cure-all of the common woe.

That belief I could not share. It seemed to me that Foreign Office statecraft, on which so many were basing their hopes for a world order, was itself a cause of the disorder to be coped with, of the disease to be cured, and that each successive application of its arts and medicaments only served to render the imbroglio more inflamed, delirious and bedevilled. Our world had become like a sick man in process of being killed by his doctors, many of them quacks and some rogues by profession.

Such had been the long-term effect of repeated attempts to strike "a balance of power," of innumerable alliances, treaties and pacts, unstable as water, including the League of Nations, which many hoped would be the Grand Remedy and mend all, but which, as we now see, made matters worse by the means taken to make them better. In that well meant but disastrous experiment the nations had fared like the porcupines in Schopenhauer's parable. These spiky animals, faced by the problem of keeping warm in a hard winter, hit upon the plan of rolling themselves into a common ball by way of collective security against the cold, with the result that the ball became a bloody mess and the little porcupines, whose spikes were less formidable, were all killed.

Of such statecraft there is but one system, with Machiavelli for prophet preparing the way, and Hitler for avatar or incarnation; essentially a rogue's game with the trump cards always held by the cleverest cheat at the table. The position of an honest statesman, when circumstances make him a partner in the game, is tragic. Such is the nature of the medium in which

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he works that he must either turn rogue or be outwitted by a rogue, as Chamberlain was outwitted by Hitler.

That the issue of peace-or-war, the lives of millions of human beings and the fortunes of humanity in general should depend upon the outcome of a rogue's game seemed to me intolerable. Accordingly I found myself a rebel against Foreign Office statecraft, at war with the habits of mind which it generates, a disbeliever in the efficacy of it, or of any refinement of it, to do other than further bedevil the existing bedevilment. As I watched the intensifying bedevilment there came to mind another Parable: that of the Repentant Drunkard who resolved to turn teetotaler, and fearing that his resolution might fail drank half a bottle of whisky to strengthen his will—which of course is the principle of *si vis pacem para bellum*. Is not this what foreign policy perpetually does? Can foreign policy do otherwise so long as it remains foreign and fails to become human? All foreign policy, I concluded, is bad policy. The adjective condemns it. "Abandon hope all ye who enter here" is the motto for that gateway. There will be no international policy till the Common Man, whom some call Christ, takes it in hand. Only foreign policy till then, and war as the necessary outcome of its foreignness.

A form of government representative of the Common Man, i.e. of the Just Man, is, as yet, unborn. Democracy, though travelling in that direction, now under the lash of war, is still far from the goal. Even when dealing with their own citizens democracies are not always just, and when dealing one with another can be as unjust as any other form of government. What greater injustice, what fouler betrayal was ever inflicted by one democracy on another than France inflicted on Britain in June 1940? And yet how short was the interval since spokesmen of a government which Dr Inge has described as "the stupidest of modern times" were proclaiming the *entente cordiale* as "the one sure safeguard of European peace!" Long before the crowning disillusion of June, 1940, the temperature of my faith in military and political alliances, as safeguards of

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peace, had sunk to freezing point. I count them mothers of discord, no matter which nations are "the High Contracting Parties," nor how many, nor how few. Allies when victorious quarrel over the spoils and make a bad peace; when defeated they fall out over responsibility for the defeat; when joint custodians of force, over its application in a crisis—*vide* the League of Nations. That way lie divided counsels, feeble compromise and ultimate conflict. By no conceivable ingenuity of power-politics, by no balancing and adjusting of warlike pressures, by no equilibrium or parallelogram of fighting forces, by no massing of power in these hands rather than in those, will the path of nations be diverted from war. Will our next experiment fare better than the ill fated *entente*? To appoint the United States and Great Britain joint controllers of overwhelming power—would that ensure the peace of the world? I think it more likely to imperil the growing unity of the American and British *peoples*—that bright augury for the coming ascendancy of the Common Man. Would you have the nations quarrel? Make them the joint keepers of overwhelming power. Would you have power misused? Make it overwhelming, and wait for the moment when it overwhelms its keepers. Peace has no fellowship with power politics.

If this be political nihilism, then I must confess to having become a political nihilist in my old age. But declining faith in foreign office statecraft has had, for me, a counterpart of rising faith in the Common Man. What may he not accomplish when his day, now beginning to dawn, is fully come, and he takes up his appointed mission of transforming foreign policy into human? That part of my creed is not nihilistic. I am still on the side of Man *versus* the State, as I was in the old days, when, fifty-four years ago, I lifted up a feeble voice in his defence among the Fabians at the Bedford Chapel Debating Society, presided over by Stopford Brooke, and was castigated for my impertinence by Bernard Shaw and Sidney Webb.

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I went through it all twenty-five years ago, when everything that could be "reconstructed," and many which couldn't (since they were not "constructions" to begin with) were to be pulled to pieces and put together in a better shape "after the war." It came to nothing. When the war ended, there was no "reconstruction of society," no new order, no rallying point for the forces that create new order; but, instead of that, there was a general *sauf qui peut* of nations, parties, factions and interests, "some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship." What else was to be expected after such a shipwreck? With nothing constructed in the meantime what else is to be expected when the present war comes to an end? "The foundations of a higher world-order," writes Dr. Rauschnig, "must be laid while the war is actually in progress."¹ Alas, the old vocabulary has come to life again: the same stock phrases, the same catchwords, the same pious platitudes, the same airy projects. This verbiage, unaccompanied by the action which alone can give it force, fills me, not with the hope intended by those who use it, but with the misgivings engendered by a previous disillusion.

To enlarge upon this further would here be out of place. Moreover, in dwelling upon it, I should become immersed in the very thing from which, for the time, I am fain to take shelter—"as if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him, or leaned his hand upon a wall and a serpent bit him."

I rejoice that my life has been spared to be a witness of these splendid but terrible times and to have my share, small as it needs must be, in the present trial of our faith and fortitude. Higher than any ideal that I could hold before my countrymen, is the ideal which they, by their courage and devotion, are holding before me. I bow my head in the presence of our *sailors* and count it a crowning joy of my old age to receive their shining confirmation of my faith in the Common Man.

¹ *The Beast from the Abyss* p. 89.

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That I may live to see him execute God's errand on the wicked, and begin to fulfil his mission as the completer of the Reformation, is my hope. Most assuredly it will be seen, by those for whom it is prepared, in the day appointed by the Shaper of Ends. Others may conclude: He alone can finish.

34

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So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army
—Ezekiel 37, 10.

XT WAS recently said by a writer in *The Times* that preachers would do well if they spent less effort in giving advice, of which there is a superfluity at the present day, and more in recording their experience of life, even to the extent of openly confessing their own faults, failures and deficiencies. I am about to make such a confession.

I hear great talk about the Kingdom of God and the Brotherhood of Man, this mainly in the churches; and about certain ideal social systems which reformers would set up, this mainly on public platforms, in debating societies and books. But when I look into myself I see at once that I lack the personal qualities I should need to play a worthy part either in the Kingdom of God, or in any of the ideal social systems. I am too imperfect a man for the heroic life I should have to live, for the noble deeds I should have to do, if either the Kingdom of God, or the Brotherhood of Man or an ideal social system of any kind were set on foot, with me, poor man, as a member of it. I am not wise enough, not reasonable enough, not self-forgetful enough, not humane enough, not valiant enough for life under any ideal system, whatever name you may call it by. I am lacking in the patience, the self control, the moral skill, the discipline, that would be required of me. I am aware of habits

¹Literally the last sermon I made or preached. For me, in that department, "the rest is silence."

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in myself which would constantly trip me up, and perhaps trip other people as well.

And I cannot help observing the same thing in you, my neighbours, though perhaps it is impertinent to tell you so. The people I meet are mostly good people, many of them, thank God, far better than I, and yet, like me, not good *enough* for living the great life and doing the great deeds an ideal system would require of us all. Even the reformers themselves, who advocate these ideals from the pulpit and the platform, excellent people as they mostly are, are not excellent enough for the City of God. All of us are too incomplete morally, too incomplete intellectually and I must add too incomplete physically, too lacking in the vigour, the vitality, the nervous balance and the self control that would certainly be needed for the heroic, creative, self devoted life of the City of God, or for the Brotherhood of Man. A medical authority stated the other day that sixty per cent, of the people in our great centres of population suffer from disordered nerves; a large percentage of the young men are rejected by the army as physically defective, and I am told that the percentage is about the same of children in the elementary schools who have physical defects of one kind or another. Of course this state of things wouldn't matter so much if the Brotherhood of Man were simply an affair of everybody sitting under his own vine and fig tree and living on friendly terms with other people who were sitting under theirs. But the Brotherhood of Man would have great business to transact, great enterprises to carry through, which would be impossible if sixty per cent, of the brethren were suffering from disordered nerves or such like defects, to say nothing of the mental and moral defects which often accompany the physical.

I am very sure, my friends, that if you and I were suddenly launched into an ideal world, we should be unable to play the part, we should make a terrible mess of that world, and soon wreck it. It would be like a house beautifully designed by the architect, but built of unseasoned timbers, crumbling mortar

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and half-baked bricks. It would fall, and great would be the fall thereof. The qualities needed to sustain the structure are not there, no, not even in the best of us. The beginnings are there; the germs are there, but waiting to be developed, waiting to be educated.

Such is the fact and the sooner we face it the better it will be for us all. And now let us turn to my text: "They stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

"An exceeding great *army*"—I ask you to consider those words for a few moments.

You know the story of Ezekiel's vision, the vision of a multitude of dead men, possibly millions, reduced to bleached bones, now suddenly brought together and called to life. If you try to imagine such a thing happening, how would you picture the scene? I picture it myself as a scene of immense confusion and disorder. I imagine that those millions of suddenly resuscitated men would be utterly lost and bewildered, wondering what had happened to them, a seething helpless mob, milling this way and that and not knowing where they were, nor where to go, nor what to do next, and gazing in astonishment on one another and the world around them.

Ezekiel, you will observe, pictures the scene quite differently. The keynote of it is perfect order. To begin with, each bone finds its way quite correctly to its fellow bone, there are no misfits, legs attached where arms ought to be and arms where legs, ribs where jawbones, one man's bones getting mixed up with another man's, skulls fixed upside-down or screwed on back-foremost. And that is not all. No sooner does the breath of life come into these poor fragments, these *dissecta membra*, now united into workable skeletons clothed in their proper flesh, than they fall into ranks, companies, battalions and stand on their feet an exceeding great army, every man a disciplined, competent soldier; no mob, no crowd, this, but a marshalled host ready to march, wheel, keep step, manoeuvre and go into

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action.—What is the meaning of all that? I think you will agree that it is a very daring stroke of the imagination—this picture of millions of men suddenly rising from the dead as a disciplined army, as a marshalled host, every man knowing not only how to act himself, but how to act in concert with the millions who have been raised from the dead at the same moment—perfect order, perfect discipline, the keynote of the whole affair. What, I repeat, is the meaning?

Perhaps Ezekiel himself could not have told us. He might have answered as many a great poet would answer if you were to ask him what he meant by such and such a poem—"I cannot tell you. The vision just came to me in that way. I am -only the transmitter of it to other people. I must leave it to tell its own tale." Or he might answer as a great painter once answered me when I asked him to tell me the meaning of his picture. "It means," he said, "whatever you find in it."—Let us put it, then, in that way. What meaning can we find in this picture, this vision, of a valley full of dry bones suddenly changed into a disciplined army of marching men?

It tells us, I think, what kind of men and women we should all be if we were suddenly endowed with a full and complete humanity. We should all be standing up together like an exceeding great army. Not a mere crowd of good people milling about the world, like the throng in the streets, not a mob of highly developed individuals jostling one another and getting in one another's way, not a multitude of good natured Christians benevolently smiling at one another, but wandering up and down with no sense of a common purpose—not that, but a great army in perfect order, ready to march, to manoeuvre, to act together as though it were animated by a single mind, every unit in it a skilful, competent, highly disciplined man or woman. That is what we should be, if each of us were suddenly reborn, re-created, in the fullness of his humanity. No, sir, I am not talking militarism. I am not saying that the full grown man is always a fighting man. But I do say he will have something of the soldier in him, this much at least, that

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he will know his place in the ranks and be able to keep it, so that when the order comes to march, the multitudes will keep a united front, move forward like a piece of music, and not get tied up into mobs and bundles, a scene of confusion with everybody jostling everybody else, trying to get to the front and telling his neighbour to stop his shoving and pushing—which is pretty much the state of the world to-day. Your full grown man is much more than a raw recruit on the side of Truth and Justice. He stands on the right side, of course, but what is the use of his *standing* on the right side if he has never learnt to *march* with it when the order comes for it to go into action? Too many of us are content to stand on the right side, or to give our vote for it when election time comes round, the notion being that we do the standing, while the Government or the social system docs the marching. Fatal error!

No, my friends. The Brotherhood of Man is not a crowd of friendly humanitarians. The Beloved Community is not a picnic. The Kingdom of God is not a mere collection of good people who believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is an exceeding great *army* of skilful, disciplined, highly competent men and women; not a *standing* army cither, but a *marching* one, always on the move, always advancing with a united front, with perfect order as the keynote of the advance. Yes, we peace-loving people, we war-haters, we Christians have a great deal to learn from armies. What a pity that all that skill and discipline and competence and courage should be used for the fighting purpose only. If only we could get it into the non-fighting purpose! If only we could find a social equivalent for it; a human equivalent for it! What a difference that would make! What much bigger things we could attempt! How much sooner we should get them done! How much less there would be of rhetorical gammon and how much more of honest work! How far more fruitful our liberty would become! Liberty? Think you that liberty consists in freedom to get things *saidi* Does it not consist much more in freedom to get

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them *done*? A mob may have freedom to get things said. But not to get them done.

That, then, is what Ezekiel's vision suggests to me. I see it as the foreshadowing of some far off divine event, when the spirit of order shall breathe upon the scattered fragments of humanity, when children shall grow up with the instinct for order in their blood and bones, when self-subordination and discipline shall come as naturally to men and women as self-assertion and indiscipline come now, when human skill shall be universally diffused, when human competence shall be in-born in everyone, when freedom shall consist not in everyone doing as he likes and finding very soon that he doesn't like it, but in everyone doing joyfully, willingly and competently what the common purpose requires, all humanity moving forward on a united front, God's army of human brothers, the Brotherhood of Man on the march, irresistible, exulting, triumphant. Ezekiel's vision come true. "Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war, With the Cross of Jesus going on before." The hymn will have some meaning *then*. It hasn't much now.

In all tins I have been using a word which many of you will dislike, and for good reason—the word "discipline." What does discipline suggest to you? You think of it, perhaps, as another name for tyranny and oppression—something that coerces you, restrains you, checks you from self-expression, turns you into a slave of some system or machine—the discipline that is imposed from outside, the discipline of the lash and the firing squad, of which there is a good deal in Europe to-day. No wonder that you hate discipline when it takes that form. But there is another kind of it, which comes from within a man, and which, far from checking his self-expression, is the very highest and freest form his self-expression can take. I will go so far as to say this: that when a man comes to himself, when he changes from a half man to a whole man, from a servant to a son, the first thing that awakes in him is the spirit of discipline. The full grown man needs no drill sergeant to

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bully and curse him; he needs no dictator to order him about and shoot him for disobeying. Your whole man has an instinct for co-operation with others, which the half man has not. And yet we half men have the beginnings of that instinct; the germ of it exists in us all, waiting to be developed, waiting to be educated, waiting to bring us to the full stature of our manhood and womanhood and to put us all on our feet, an exceeding great army.

What would you say is the greatest of England's assets at the present moment? For my part, I say the greatest of England's assets is the people of England, myself among them. We are a population of undeveloped assets, waiting to be developed. Our humanity is only half grown. The greatest problem confronting our country to-day, if we only knew it, the greatest problem confronting the whole world, is to turn the half grown into the full grown, these human fragments into human wholes, these undeveloped assets into developed. That done, there will be no trouble about discipline; no need of the drill sergeant to bully and swear at us, no need of the dictator to order us about and shoot us for disobeying. It was so in Ezekiel's vision. The dry bones became whole men and instantly God's army of brothers was on its feet and ready to march.

Do you know then of anything that helps in this direction? Do you know of any religion, of any form of religion, that helps men and women to grow out of halfness into wholeness, that sets them on the road to the full stature of their humanity? I would say, let that religion be yours. Do you know of any Gospel that reveals the miseries of halfness and the joys of wholeness? I would say, preach that Gospel in season and out. Do you know of any way of educating the young which works in the same direction, which promises to endow the future with a generation of whole men and whole women? I would say, demand that education for your own children, and throw your weight into promoting it for the children of others. Do you know of any social art by which a *crowd* of human beings,

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gathered at random, can be turned into *a fraternity* of human beings—the art of turning crowds into communities, whether for work or for play? I would recommend you to learn that art and practise it. There is such a religion; there is such a Gospel; there is such a way of educating the young; there is such an art. Let us throw our weight behind them all, even though we have not much weight to throw, and only a brief time left us for throwing it, and the distant day will come a little nearer, when God's army of brothers will stand upon its feet and be ready for the grand, heroic, self-devoted, creative life which is the final destiny of the Common Man.

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