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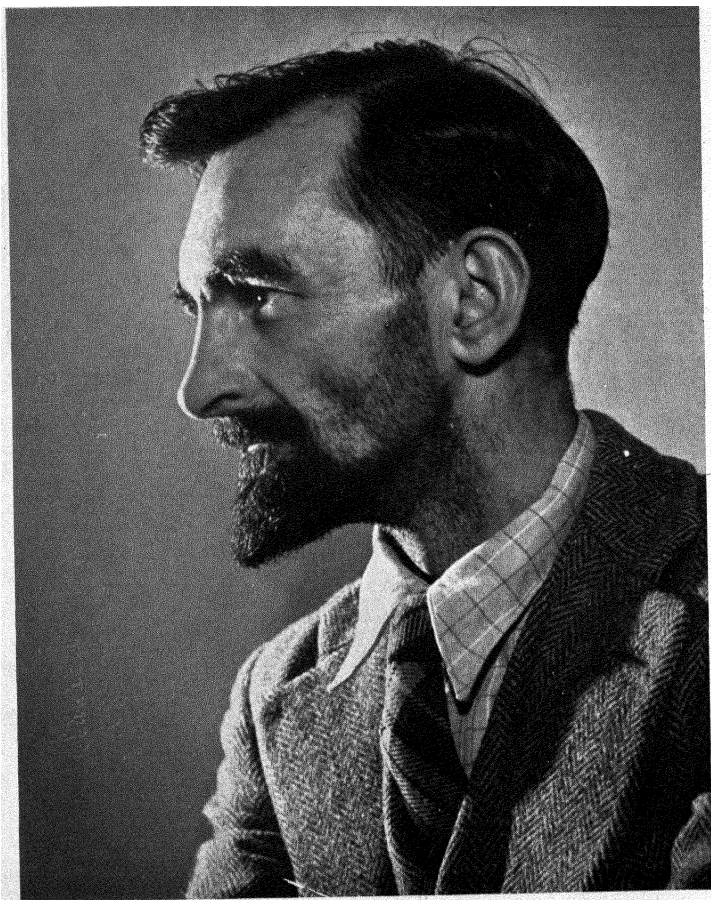
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THE AUTHOR

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WINDOWS

by

DEREK NEVILLE



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DEREK NEVILLE

The Garden of Silence

The Mirror of God

Bright Morrow

Burning Leaves

The Light Without a Name

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to the Publisher.

This book is affectionately dedicated
to
HENRY THOMAS HAMBLIN.

Not only am I grateful for his kind permission to reproduce the majority of these essays—which originally appeared in *The Science of Thought Review*. But his constant encouragement, faith and practical help over the past fifteen years have left me with a debt that I can never hope to repay.

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PART I



WINDOWS

WINDOWS

AT the back of my mind there is a cottage that I would like to have one day. I suppose it is the average man's dream—the usual thing, set in the heart of the country, with gables or thatch, and a window in the roof. I may never get it (though I am more likely to if I keep it in mind), and I would not say that my happiness will be in any way spoiled if I do not. There are riches enough close to the hard pavement, and the stars are just as near to me in town or country. But just as one person likes cornflakes and another prefers porridge, so we all have our own tastes in dwelling-places. And if ever I get my cottage there will be one thing upon which I shall insist—and that will be the window in the roof. Why? Well, because the view from a window is a very important thing. At the moment one window in our house looks out upon a brick wall. Another looks out upon trees with a meadow beyond. And if I were to seek my inspiration from either, I do not think I should have to hesitate as to which to choose.

Windows have always fascinated me. Like so many other things in this world, they hold lessons for us. And apart from that, I have seen so many lovely things through them, both from the inside and the outside. I have seen the stars at night through the glass of windows, and the dark shapes of trees when the world is asleep. I have seen sunsets and dawns, and forms that I love. I have seen strangers pass, not knowing that invisible eyes are watching them. I have seen the world white with snow and the trees brown and gold with autumn. I have seen blossom-time through windows. I have

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seen little faces pressed against the glass and dogs looking out upon the street. I have seen the friendly gleam of lighted windows far, far across the fields. Windows that shone like beacons. On wild nights their warmth calls to one through the wind and the rain. Who has not, at some time or other, looked towards a window for the golden light of home? Or through a window for the sight of the home-comer?

But, coming a little nearer to our true subject, it may be said that the view from a window matters a good deal to most of us. Certainly if we regard our eyes as being windows, such a point will be wholly conceded. And our eyes *are* windows. We do not look with our eyes. We look *through* them. The eye is only a part of the body as a window is part of a house. The occupant of a house gazes through the window into the scene beyond. Or the light of day streams through it, or the lamplight from within radiates outwards into the darkness. But of what use the human eye without the light of the mind and the life of the soul behind it? Our eyes truly are windows, through which we see the world with its ever-changing shadows, through which we observe the needs of our fellows, the pain and the joy and the pageantry.

And the view depends upon what we are.

Yes! It is no sentimental fancy! Not where life takes us, through primroses or pavements, not what we have to do, or how much education we have had or whether we are rich or poor, or high or low. Not upon such things does the view depend. We are spiritual tenants of a spiritual universe, and we live in heaven or hell—see mud or stars. The oft-quoted couplet can be applied :

“Two men once looked through prison bars;
The one saw mud—the other stars.”

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And I fancy that the view from our "windows" depends entirely upon what we are. Our spiritual outlook is determined by an inward spiritual growth.

This truth may be seen to a very large extent in the physical and material world (which is never really separated from the spiritual). The things that delight us are the things that find an echo in our hearts. If we look for the sky above the chimneys, it is because we are seeking the signs of the eternal. When the ground is thick with snow, some see through their windows only visions of burst pipes and subsequent slush. Others see the wondrous hand of God Who has patterned the snowflake with exquisite care. Nor do they miss the anxious gathering of the birds upon the naked branches and they brush the snow from some tree-stump and put out some crumbs. And probably the birds come to that tree-stump as some of us would go to the altar. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden. . . ." So that the mightiest moments of the world's scriptures are recaptured, or can be, by the brushing away of a little snow and the offering of a few crumbs—by a compassionate vision seen through a window!

Yes! What we see and what we do depends upon what we are looking for. The view through a window—be it the glass of the dining-room or the organism of the human eye—such a view depends upon what we are.

A few men and women in the history of humanity have seen the Kingdom of God outside their "windows." They have seen the changing skies, the soft green peace of the grass, the lilies of the field—but they have also seen the angels in their fellows. There was a poet who once wrote to his wife :

"You are no woman! I have seen your eyes
Alive with trees, and meadow-land, and rain;
Nor are there stars in these or other skies
More eloquent of joy behind life's pain."

Such is the vision we need! For it would indeed be a sentimental travesty of truth to speak of the beauties of Nature if one did not affirm that the same source of such beauty awaits the recognition of men and women within their own souls. The beauty within the petal and the star is not foreign to man. It may be imprisoned for the time, just as light was imprisoned when black-out curtains hid our windows. But once draw these curtains, and the beacon light would flash out again across the fields to where the home-comer battles his way in the storm.

The poet we have quoted goes on to say :

“ And if I could bring tribute to your feet
But half the measure of my dumb desire—
’Twould be to make this broken world complete,
A holy love-pulsating place of fire—
With every tear and shadow gone away,
With every sense of worthlessness outweighed
By vision of the Angel in the clay,
And Him on Whom the universe is stayed.”

Yes! Our eyes are little windows. But a little window can look out upon a great scene.

THE IMPERISHABLE BEAUTY

MAN'S powers are limited. He is put into the world with freewill by the use of which he may create either beauty or ugliness. But his powers of creation are limited, as are his powers of destruction. There is an imperishable beauty for ever in the world, for ever calling to man to forsake the foolishness of his ways. It is a beauty that man may not destroy. Indeed, it is a beauty that will itself destroy all in man that is not beautiful.

It is good for us to lift our eyes now and again to the things which man did not make and which man cannot destroy. For in the contemplation of such things we can find a place even in the midst of unrest, and a calm even though all about us may be in turmoil. Nor is this the way of the escapist. It cannot be said that Jesus was a dreamer, for of all men he concerned himself most with facts. Admittedly he sought first one supreme fact that gave birth to his thoughts, words and deeds. But having found the supreme fact, he then showed himself to be more capable of dealing with the ordinary problems of life. So much so that worldly-wise men often sought his advice.

It is worthy of note that the true escapist is the one who concerns himself solely with worldly things, without consideration of the Divinity from whence all things come—for such an one is trying all the time to ignore the imperishable beauty that lives for ever close at hand. There are a thousand things that are speaking to man hour by hour, but he does not hear. There are a thousand witnesses of the imperishable beauty before man's very eyes, but he does not see. All the time he tries to escape the voice of his own soul, for he fears the silence in which the shadows of his illusory world will be chased away.

Let us, then, not be escapists. Let us lift our eyes to the imperishable beauty of life, ever seeking for the master-touch

of God. For by so doing we shall come to know that we are made by that same Hand, intended to be the instruments of Love Divine.

Where shall we look for beauty to-day? What is there left in the world that man has not destroyed? Oh, there is much! Man's little circle of achievement is small against the smallest growing thing. The moss grows upon the building-stone. The little blade of grass springs up between the cracks of the edifice of man.

“ I picture the heart of Science graven in a fine building of stone and steel. I see each girder slipping into place with the smoothness of perfection. I see the cranes, majestic giants, straining upwards to the clouds, and tossing the marble blocks into a perfect symmetry. Until, at last, the thing is finished. Man stands gazing in admiring awe. And then I note that Time is slipping from a boundless reservoir—that, one day, high up upon those walls, there springs a single blade of grass . . . unseen by man; by man not yet disturbed.

“ And again I see the scientific thinkers—all who have been, or are—and watch them laying their discoveries upon posterity's rich altar. Gravity, relativity, steam, oil, light, heat—aye, even medicine (for are not all ills *made* by man who strives to cure them?) I see them all, the size of the huge heap. And then I note that still the lightning flashes and the seas roar upon the rocks. And I pray to the God who made my soul to keep me ever mindful of His generosity. For all our works must bow in homage to the grain of wheat, the drop of water, and the speck of dust. The Maker of human minds has a Wisdom greater than the wisdom of His creations.”

The writer discovered the above passage today in an old manuscript of his that was written seventeen years ago. Yet the words are still true—indeed, to him, they are truer still.

THE IMPERISHABLE BEAUTY

For the years add to the riches of God-made things. The rose grows more beautiful each Summer; the gold of Autumn leaves deepens each passing year; the buds of Springtime bring with them an ever-increasing store of joy; the song of the swollen streams at Winter-time is a song that grows dearer each year—like a well-loved melody often repeated.

The imperishable beauty of this earth does not fail when man is failing. The wide sky calls above the tumult of man's warring foolishness. A little tit calls each morning for his crumbs on my window-sill. He does not bring any ration book. Two bright eyes are enough to declare that he is a registered customer. And it seems to me that those two little eyes are in some way expressing a trusting faith in man—a belief in the imperishable loveliness that is going to win through in spite of all our follies and mistakes.

That is, indeed, one of the things that God has long since planned. It is my faith that He has put many things in this world, many dear and lovely things that are all going to help to win us back to sanity and to enduring peace. Preachers there may be, books and talkers in plenty, to do their share (bless them all!) but my little tit is a great preacher, too. That bundle of coloured feathers and tiny fluttering wings calls to the best in me, fills me with love, and draws me nearer to my real manhood. He is in league, too, with a host of other things. Consider how much the animals have done and are doing to draw us back to God! How many fine and noble instincts have they not aroused in us! (Perhaps many readers will have noticed the lovely spiritual quality of the many drawings by that well-known artist, Margaret W. Tarrant.) How much animals have meant to little children (even some of the grown-up ones!) For they carry a message with them. "Love one another," they say to us. "Love one another. For we are all children of God."

Ah yes! There is an imperishable beauty conserved by God for our salvation. We need not fear the rules of the

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tyrant, nor the boastings of any dictator. He cannot touch the heart of life. Man, in his foolishness, can walk only certain paths, can touch only certain things. He must leave the Springtime alone. He must let Summer have its day. The beauty of the stars he must admit to be imperishable.

My little tit, I suppose, like me, will one day grow old and die. But those fluttering wings will find another sill somewhere. The imperishable beauty will go on, deathless and eternal, until the day shall come when even little children do not seek the crumbs that fall from their masters' tables. For the masters, then, shall be those who serve, and the humble shall be called great, and riches shall be measured in terms of the joy that we give away.

One day it shall be seen that the leaves and the flowers and the dear God-made things of Nature are holy, that they are little priests of the Lord though they carry no special insignia. And perhaps some child shall kneel to my little tit to feed him with cake-crumbs as the wise men knelt when they brought their gifts to the Christ.

For the imperishable beauty will conquer in the end. And men will forsake the foolishness of their ways.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

BEAUTY can only be fully realised when it is linked up with God. Many years ago I was walking in some gardens in Devonshire with a friend, and he asked the old question: "What is beauty?" I could not answer him then, but that night I wrote down in a book: "Beauty is the space between a man's eye and God."

I mention this because I think that the definition is not without value. We may see beauty as the result of some judicious arrangement of form or colour. We may see beauty in the skies or on the earth, but it is only when that which we see leads us to the realisation of the Presence of God that we can understand the full meaning of it all.

I look at a flower. I see the perfection of the petals, the silken texture of the blossom that has pushed its way up to glory from some green shoot. I see the colours there and the little veins that are pulsing with harmony and drenching the air with sweet perfume. But it is not the beauty of form that I see, nor is it the beauty of colour. It is the beauty of holiness.

It is God that I see there—the eternal, living God holding the flowers before my eyes and saying: "This is my body which I have given for you."

Again, I look at some ordinary fruit such as an orange. I see the wonderful way in which it is formed—formed out of nothing except that which it has drawn to itself from the universe in which it came to be. I begin to peel it, and I note the marvels of its construction, the exquisite way in which each segment has been protected, the perfect geometry that has been put into its creation. But it is not the beauty of form that I see, nor is it the beauty of construction. It is the beauty of holiness.

It is God that I see there—the eternal, living God holding the fruit before my eyes and saying: “Drink this in remembrance of Me.”

It is only when beauty becomes like that—a gateway to God—that it is able to pervade our whole beings and to change our lives.

There is reason for this, and the reason is not very far to seek. For God indwells us, and once we reach the understanding that the beauty of outward form is but an indication of His presence, we begin to feel stirring within us a recognition of that Living touch within our own souls.

Then it is that the beauty of holiness becomes a reality to us. We are able to go forward then in the realisation that we have within ourselves the very life of the Divine.

How much difference such a realisation can make to our lives may quite well be assessed by looking at what happens when men and women are unconscious of their divine heritage. We see them walking in fear and uncertainty. We see the accumulation of earthly riches as the driving force to thousands of lives. We see greed and misery in many places.

But the beauty of holiness casts out all fear. It destroys all greed and brings into being the plan and the purpose that is waiting always for its fulfilment.

Look at any life that has experienced the stirring touch of God! Look where you will over the years—without regard to wealth or social position! You will see in such a life the evidence of fulfilment, the consciousness of a Divine plan coming into its own.

“Gone is all fear and doubt
Within, without;
And the warm years being magic things
On angel wings.”

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

Such a life is no longer bound to earth by the bonds of time and space. Nor is its loveliness obscured by greed or envy, fear or hatred. Such a human being walks in the beauty of holiness, aware of the guiding hand of God through all the shadows, supremely conscious of the best and better-than-the-best waiting round the corner.

They tell us it is "wishful thinking." Ah, but they must have called Jesus a wishful thinker, too, for he had little concern with the so-called "Reality" of his time. He faced eternity during every day, saw, not changing forms, but the everlasting beauty of holiness that waited only the recognition of his fellows. Reality, to him, was something unseen, unhandled, uncontaminated by worldly imaginations. He saw, not the mite that the widow cast into the treasury, but the beauty of holiness that was in her heart; not the awful waste of precious ointment, but the beauty of holiness that was poured out over him from a vessel of love; not the hopeless sins of the prostitute that men were ready to acknowledge with stones and venom, but the fine womanhood untried, and the gentle compassion waiting there for the healing of the world.

And there is talk of ostriches hiding their heads in the sand. But let those who utter such words beware lest the hand of time reveals their own heads buried in facts and figures, unconscious of the beauty all around. The facts of the world may appear so splendid on paper, may sound so wise in words. But the paper will rot and the ink will fade, and every single thing to which worldly facts can ever appertain will perish with the passing of the years. Give me the facts of Heaven, that outlast time and all her prejudices. Give me the beauty of holiness—the richest treasure in the universe.

It is the treasure that the greedy may never possess. It is the gem which ever eludes those who want it for themselves. It is the precious thing which disappears at the first sign of strife.

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It is the loveliness that permeates all the common ways of life, ever transforming, never itself being changed by the foolish ways of men.

It is the possession that is secure for ever—the one thing that will never decay and that thieves can never steal. For it dwells within your heart and mine. It is there always—even after seeming failure and defeat. We can come to know it at any moment—even after our blindness. Even when the glittering bubbles of the world have broken, this reality is waiting there to build a new world for us and for our fellows.

THE HIDDEN POWER

THIS afternoon, while a gale was blowing, I stood near a horse-chestnut tree—one of the kind under which the village blacksmith was accustomed to stand. The leaves of this tree were half unfolded (it is nearing the end of April as I write), and, looking at the great trunk, knotted and mighty, I found myself thinking of the hidden roots and the hidden power and the ceaseless activity that must be taking place under the ground.

There was something exhilarating in looking at this tree while the wind tore at her branches. The leaves were sweeping back and forth, but the trunk stood solid and firm without a tremor. It was gale-proof, and in my mind's eye I could see the roots reaching deep down—perhaps even to some spring of water far below the foundations of the village inn. Day by day, all through the winter and all through this much of Spring, those roots have been feeding the stems—drawing the goodness out of the earth, silently, invisibly.

Strange, powerful things of this sort are happening all the time. The earth holds fast to the sun. The stars move in their courses. The puddles disappear in an hour, or the skies empty tons of water upon the thirsty ground. We do not hear most of the vast movement. We only hear the rain as it beats against the windows or the leaves as they swirl in the wind. We do not hear roots growing, reaching searching. . . . We do not hear the sound of the flowers as they open, or the sound of this planet as it rushes through space. We see only fragments. We do not see the grass growing or the water in the moment of evaporation. We miss the hidden power, the mighty silent movements of the world about us.

Yet we are constantly in touch, if we only knew it. At any moment of any day we can discover within ourselves the hidden power—the same power that pushes aside the boulder through the instrument of a slender plant—the same power

that throws up a great tree or that draws the stars on their courses.

For consider. Are there not hidden roots to life? Do we not see the evidence of a force at work in and through the flesh of the world? The hidden power is at work in the lives of men and women. And where the roots go deep you see a life that is proof against the gales of circumstance. And where the mind is open to the knowledge of it, you see an unchanging course set through all the changing ways of life—even as a pilot with the knowledge of his destination will set the course of his ship through the mountainous seas to some as yet invisible harbour.

But, most of all, where the heart or soul is receptive to this hidden power, you see a life of strength and knowledge and beauty. All three are there together in harmony.

For power may be found in a life without knowledge. Or knowledge and power together may be found without beauty. But where there is love, there is infinite wisdom and strength, and the harmony is complete.

Beauty, love, charity—these are but terms. They all stand for the same thing—the hidden life that lends the transforming touch to the world. No wisdom that is unbeautiful can be worth while. Power without love is tyranny. Good works without charity are empty deeds. The hidden power must touch the soul before strength and wisdom find their real foundations.

The secret of my chestnut tree lay in its hidden roots. Those deep searching roots contained in themselves the power that threw up the mighty trunk. They sustained the beauty of the spreading leaves. They gave rise to the perfect symmetry that made the whole.

And in our lives it is the heart attuned to the hidden power of the Lord that can give strength and purpose, beauty and harmony to all that we do.

THE HIDDEN POWER

We are children of God, spiritual beings clothed in flesh and blood. The real part of us is spirit. We cannot escape this fact. We might try to do so. We might see the hope of the world in this system or that system—but the hope of the world is in the human heart or soul. The Saviour of the world is still the living Christ.

A dozen people or a million people might live together in some sort of order if they learned not to commit anti-social acts. But they would only know the real meaning of life if they learned how to serve one another, how to bless, how to give, how to praise—in fact, how to perform acts of social service. For the one is negative and the other is positive.

Life, real life, is something far more positive than a mere refraining from evil. “Thou shalt not” is a miserable commandment at best, and our Lord never makes any such commandment without also adding the positive conclusions.

That is why the hidden power is the secret of successful living. It is not enough to understand with the mind alone. We must draw our real power from the unseen. The power of God in us must be made the foundation of thought, word and deed.

That power will never be found as long as we try to live on the basis that the things seen and temporal are all that matter. We must get away from that which is seen to that which is unseen. We must turn the eyes of the soul inwards from that which is temporal to that which is eternal.

Let us not imagine that this means an attempted withdrawal from the world, or that we have to adopt some kind of escapist attitude. Far from it. It simply means that we can assess material things at their true value—as expressions of the spirit. Once we know the hidden power, then we are able to see the hidden essence of all things. We look at a tree and see the hidden power. We listen to the wind, the surging waves, the song of birds, and we know the hidden power. We look

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at a world torn with agony and war, and we see the hidden power. Or we look at the tired, anxious face of one who is overwhelmed by circumstances, by loss or by sorrow, and we see the hidden power.

Yes! Praise God for it! At such moments we can be conscious of eternal, unutterable peace and strength and wisdom. The dark curtain of the moment cannot screen the shining splendour of God. Our own helplessness is swallowed up as the hidden power surges through us. Our own fears vanish as we give our whole beings into the hands of love.

We become aware that we ourselves are but the expressions of the hidden power—that our bodies, before they crumble into dust, may reveal the inner splendour of the kingdom of forgiveness, and service, and peace.

It is then that we break down, cut every cord that has bound us, and begin to live in utter surrender to the power of God.

And, for myself, I would sooner shake hands with such a person than listen to all the sermons of the wise. For it is in the surrendered life, be it flower or tree or human being, that I come face to face with my God.

MIRACLES

IT is a sad fact that most people do not believe in miracles—in other words, that most people do not believe that anything can happen in this world except it happen according to the laws known and understood by the little minds of men. For that is what it amounts to, and that is where the sadness comes in. It shows us that humanity, for the most part, in spite of the great strides that have been made in evolutionary progress, is still inclined to see no further than its own nose. And until humanity learns to look into the heart of life and to see that all things are possible with God, then men and women will in all probability continue to put their trust in human wisdom and to attempt to live according to human standards.

The first thing that might be said about a miracle is that it is something contrary to the laws known by man, but not contrary to the laws known by God. It is a ridiculous assumption on the part of men to imagine that they understand all the laws of the universe. It is absurd to say this cannot happen because it defies the law of gravity, or that cannot happen because it is a scientific fact that it is impossible. It is as well for us to realise that a “scientific fact” of one generation might be an exploded theory of the next.

The truth is that, viewed from the highest of all levels, there is no such thing as a miracle. But if we are going to make such a declaration we ought also to add that, viewed from the highest of all levels, nothing is impossible.

The “miracle” of today becomes the natural event of tomorrow—but the trouble is that we will not believe until “tomorrow” comes. Many inventions and discoveries that are common knowledge to-day would have been considered “miracles” to people living generations ago. They would not have believed such things were possible. Yet with all the additional proof that we have had of the wealth of unknown powers that are stored away in the universe, we still refuse to open our eyes and to say from our hearts: “We stand in a

world of wonder in which nothing is impossible; we live in a universe of marvels in which a million things are beyond the comprehension of the human mind; we dwell at the feet of God, who has made all things to such perfection."

In a story of mine written some years ago there was portrayed a man who was somewhat puzzled about miracles. As he is walking home from church reflecting upon these matters, he comes to a stile at which he always pauses for a moment. The following passage then occurs :

"The sun was still up, but it was beginning to turn the clouds to gold. Somehow everything seemed to have some connection with miracles. Maybe it wasn't easy to understand how five thousand people could be fed with a few small loaves and fishes, or how a man blind from birth, could be made to see, but Mr. Oddie very much doubted, as he looked away across the fields, whether it was any easier to understand how mighty trees could grow out of their small beginnings. What were miracles indeed but happenings beyond man's comprehension?

"Wasn't it written somewhere, thought Mr. Oddie, that 'the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind'? And weren't these things, these growing things, from the smallest spear of grass to the mightiest oak, weren't they all miracles?

"Somehow these answers to his own questionings were very satisfying. It seemed to him that the God who could mould a million things to make a moment like this for an ordinary man had already performed a miracle that staggered the mind. For there was the quiet, deserted lane, the warm breath of evening, the nearby horse that grazed so peacefully, the tinge of gold in the west—why, there were all the circumstances that led to his being here, perhaps millions of years of human activity that had led up to this one moment by the stile. . . ."

From *Burning Leaves* (Epworth Press), 2/6 net.

MIRACLES

As it happens in this particular story, this very ordinary man is used by God to perform something which seems, to another mind, to be a "miracle," but it is to the above passage that I would draw our attention. For there is much in it that might be applied with profit to our own lives and circumstances.

Are we, for instance, fully conscious of all that has gone into the making of this present moment for us? Can we not see the loving hand of God working through the ages to bring us to this point? Why, the world around us is alive with miracles! There is more in the grain of sand than we may comprehend. The very place in which we stand is filled with wonder. For flesh and blood is caught up out of the dust and only the spirit gives it the power of thought or speech or movement. When that spirit is gone, then the body returns to dust and the form disperses. Is not that a miracle? Is there any mind to understand it?

And these bodies, all spirit-filled, move about the world, taking matter and moulding it to their pleasure, so that we see houses and temples, ships and trains, wheels and levers. Is not that a miracle? Time passes, and the houses and temples fall into ruin; the ships and trains become museum pieces; the wheels and levers have served their little hour.

It is when we realise that God is the upholder of all creation—even of ourselves—that we come to regard all life with wonderment. It is then that we understand that the whole creation is, to the human mind, a miracle. For it is something that the human mind can never understand. Love can understand it. For love is creative and can enter into the realm where the impossible becomes possible. But it is too big for the human mind to comprehend.

It is for this reason that intellectual attainments can often be a hindrance in regard to the realisation of the presence of God. They *need* not be so—but they very often are, and the

reason is because the seeker thinks that God may be understood mentally, and that the great truths of life may be assessed and valued in like manner. But this is not so. Indeed, the truth is quite the reverse. For the presence of God is never more deeply realised than when the mind is still and when thought has given place to worship and to wonderment and to love.

At such a moment all the barriers of the human mind are broken down and the beholder is caught up into a stillness which is yet the centre of all movement—or into a state of non-action which is yet the centre of all action. At such moments we are more than face to face with God. We are at-oned with God; clad in the full knowledge of His presence and of His power. *It is no small wonder that a few seconds of such an experience are in themselves enough to revolutionise a life, and the years of that life which follow.*

Thought is expanded in those few seconds to become universal. And the after-actions are all influenced to become universal in their turn. The subsequent approach to life is not determined any more by what the mind can understand. It is guided by love, upheld by love, determined all the time by what the mind *cannot* understand.

It is for this reason that those who think to lay up for themselves treasures on earth are not likely to appreciate altogether the strange outlook of those who see heaven on earth. The motive force in the one is totally different from the motive force in the other. One seeks to get—the other seeks to give. One is guided only by the seen—the other only by the unseen. One seeks power—the other *knows* power. One does not believe in miracles. The other walks all the time among miracles.

THE WORLD ILLUMINED

“I see the world illumined with loveliness and light,
And multitudes fast moving to splendour out of night;
And gone the hopeless struggling, and gone the bitter tears
Into the broken dreamland of unremembered years.”

IT is beginning to be generally recognised now that what we see in the world around us depends upon what we experience within our own hearts. Our outward environment ultimately depends upon our inward activity. And the measure of beauty that we discover in the material world is inseparable from the measure of beauty that we have discovered in the spiritual life.

The reason for this is because the material world and the spiritual world are themselves inseparable. They are one, the former arising out of the latter.

For this reason it is not left solely to scientists, explorers, astronomers and the like to describe either the actualities or the potentialities of the world—and even of the universe—in which we live.

Granting that there are degrees of truth, it is the widest viewpoint that can give the most reliable description of any given scene. The ant sees mountains in the ant-hill. The dog can look up to see a man. The man becomes conscious of the vastness of the world. The astronomer sees the whole world dwarfed again to a pinprick as he measures it against the constellations. But this is purely from the space viewpoint. When time enters into the matter it becomes the “Long view” that counts, as well as the “wide view.” The butterfly lives for a day. The dog lives for, say, fourteen years. The horse may live twenty, and a man a hundred years. But it is not the day, nor the year, nor the century of years that gives the “long view.” Infinity and Eternity are both available to the soul of man; and it is not until these two are met together and blended into one that we arrive at real Truth—

immeasurable, indescribable, unnameable and beyond comprehension except through the experience of the soul.

From all this it may be seen that in order to arrive at an accurate description of the world in which we live we must come to know the opinion of the soul of man. Mental descriptions are not enough. They are time-bound and space-bound. Only the spirit, wide and free, having broken the bonds of spatial boundaries and time limits—only the voice of the soul can speak the truth that is immortal.

The truth about this world is not what mortal eyes may see. Nor is the everlasting beauty the things that minds may argue about or that voices may name. The truth is the flame that illumines the world when the soul of pure love enters into unity with all things. For then the world is set shining with the glory of the Lord.

It is not just that the sun rises with healing in its wings; not just that the leaves of the tree are all holy and sacred; not just that the eyes of birds and animals are one's own eyes looking out upon oneself; not just that the angels are singing where before there was only a thrush; not just that some tiny flower has suddenly penetrated the consciousness so that all the beauty of life is gathered into five glowing petals. No—it is all these things, and much else.

It is that all the tears of the ages are wiped away by the hand of God. It is that all our mistakes (yes, friend, the mistakes *he* made, the mistakes *she* made, the mistakes *you* made) are taken up and transformed and used in the perfect pattern that shall outlast the years. It is that the blind see, and the deaf hear, and the hard-hearted have learned to love.

“Aye! I touch the dew-wet grasses, and there before my eyes
 A million stems are breathing in the life of paradise;
 And then I see men stooping (that trod with pride before),
 And hearts are hushed and humbled low with reverence
 and awe.”

THE WORLD ILLUMINED

The world that is seen by the soul standing in conscious union with God is a world made beautiful by love. It is the wide view, for it takes in all places and all circumstances. It is the long view, for it takes in past, present and future, shedding a mantle of grace over all. This cannot be understood with the mind, but it is true. Union with God is union with all that God has made. It is union with all things—animate and inanimate.

“For love is at the core of all—
The centre of the wide earth’s soul,
It is the purpose and the plan,
The fashioner of dust to man.
Love enters into all it knows.
It burns the sun and shapes the rose.”

Yes! Love enters into all it knows. It enters into the heart of the whole universe, breaking through space and through time, seeing things at last as they really are.

Most of us as yet are limited in outlook because we try all the time to understand things with the mind. We try to work out our mental relationships with other people. We try to grope a mental way through our problems. We even try to bind the living God in chains by thinking that we can understand Him with our little minds. But all the while we do not understand that we cannot break through time and space with the mind. We cannot find unity with spirit except through the spirit. Only the soul of man is without limit. Only the viewpoint of the soul can see the world as it really is—illumined in every part of its nature with the love of God.

If, therefore, we would see this world as it really is—clad in perfection and shining with the light of God—we must learn to love. We must illumine our own souls, filling our own lives with the joy of peace and the beauty of holiness.

SIMPLE THINGS

LATE one night, some time ago, I was writing a few verses which included the following lines:—

“The robin’s eye, to me,
Spells all eternity.
I beg for crumbs with him
And the wild world grows dim
For both of us.”

The next morning I awoke early to find a robin in my room. He sat on my typewriter—on the very sheet of paper that contained his name—and sang a clear sweet song. And most readers will know that birds do not sing when they are frightened.

Was this mere coincidence? I think not. Perchance if we could see deep into the eyes of our fellows—we should find eternity there—and beg for bread with them and bear their burdens and understand their hopes and fears, their unuttered longings and their silent prayers. And perhaps they would come to us with joy—knowing our love for them, unafraid (for love casts out fear) and expressing their lives more perfectly in a way that might be likened to the song of the robin.

For it may be said with truth that religion is only a matter of feeling love. It is indeed as simple as that. We try to make much more of it in a mental sense. We try to understand the Nature of God and the very processes of Eternity with our minds. But this we cannot do.

“The love of God is broader
Than the measures of man’s mind.”

Yet the remarkable thing is that the comprehension of Eternity, though beyond the boundary of man’s thought, is not beyond the boundary of man’s feeling. For Eternity is

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hidden within the smallest grain of wheat, and is surely to be found within the Soul of man.

We look at the outward colours and shapes and we try to understand life's meaning with our minds. We try to solve human problems by the re-arrangement of outward things, but we fail miserably and will go on failing as long as we miss the secret that all life is based upon feeling. Behind all colours and shapes, upholding all outward movement, guiding and drawing all the destinies of men and women, is the Spirit of God. Once we find this Spirit we are able to know That which is in all other things.

How simple life becomes then! Gone is all need of argument, gone is the mental strain of trying to plumb the depths by means of our brains. To find God, then, we need to do nothing more than to find in our hearts that Love which is Divine. It is not our own possession. It is the inward surge of the Infinite, the touch of the Holy Spirit that makes the beauty of the flowers, the power of the oak tree, the light of the sun and of the stars. It is the touch of stillness that is yet throbbing with all the music of the spheres, the incoming of the power that cleanses and purifies the heart. Our eyes are at last opened. We see new things. We feel new things. Before, we could not see the needs of others. Now, we see them all. Before, we had nothing to offer to others, nor even the desire to offer anything. Now, we have but one desire—to give, to love, to serve.

It is a simple thing. Such a simple thing. And yet it touches the roots of life in every form, in every time, and in every place.

For then do we know that we are spiritual beings. Our bodies are only the expressions of an eternal reality. Our bodies will die and will go back to dust. The truth about us is the spirit that quickens our bodies into life. This indeed is the truth about all things. For all matter is only a passing

expression of the reality that is spirit. Lovely shapes come and go before our eyes. The shapes pass, but the loveliness is always appearing—the same *yesterday, today, and forever*. Have we thought enough about that? Or, rather do we feel enough about it? Think of the many different kinds of flowers. They have their own shapes, their own colours, their own scents. But the Beauty behind them is the same yesterday, today, and forever. It does not change. It is eternal. It is the breath of life that moves across the world from beyond the stars. It is under all things and in all things. Sometimes, when our hearts are quickened by love, compassion, pity or mercy, we can see it shining, nay, *feel* it within us—that Beauty that lights up the world for us.

If I were asked the way to world reconstruction, the way to peace on earth, the way to destroy the many evils of mankind, I should say—“This is the way. To find for yourself that Spirit which is in all things and which men call by a thousand names, though they know that it is Nameless.” And to those who argue that this is too simple a way—that we must be practical, and so on, I would answer that the finding of this Spirit will unlock the doors of all practicality. The one who finds this Spirit does not lose himself in dreams. For love must give, and love must serve. The lover of God gives himself to service and finds that his life becomes intensely practical. For it is this Spirit which has animated man to outward service since the dawn of history.

BEHIND THE SUN

EVERYTHING in life has a purpose. The leaves that appear in the Spring, or the leaves that fall in the Autumn—both have a purpose. It may seem a far cry from the sticky bud to the coal fire, but one sees the relation of each to the other.

The sun, the great ball of fire that swings in the sky, draws all things to life, permeates all things with its own substance. So that now the leaves of some forest of the past are crackling upon my fire, in the form of coal, bringing to me the stored-up heat of the years. And the kettles we boil, the engines we drive, the tools we use, the light of our houses, the gas and oil and petrol that have done so much to blind us to the beauties of Nature—all these spring from the sun. They all bring to us the heat and light and force that once shone down upon the world across millions of miles of space.

Yes, it is worth thinking about, this miracle. We shall do well to look around us at our possessions and the familiar sights with their shapes and colours. For the sun is behind all these things. We can trace the relation of them all to that ball of fire. The wood of our tables once grew somewhere. The beams of our houses were cut down from some forest long ago. The bricks were heated in a kiln. Our carpets grew—either in a field or upon the backs of sheep. Our curtains may have seen the soil of India. The typewriter upon which I write has certainly known the touch of the sun, for its letters have been formed out of molten lead and its carriage has been twisted and shaped in the fire. And beyond this window, as I write, there are the trees tossing and swaying in the Autumn wind. Half the leaves are gone, and those that remain are turning brown and yellow. One can almost hear them whispering: “Yes—we have felt the call of the sun. We felt it when we were buried in the darkness of the earth. And we answered the call. We rose from the earth and took the

sun into our veins. We were called to a purpose. We serve and we are served."

Trees! How one grows to love them! Even in their death they serve us—whether it be the death of the leaves or the death of the trunk, or the death of the blossom or the death of the fruit. "Verily, verily," says the Christ, "I say unto you, except a corn of wheat falls into the ground, and die, it abideth alone." That is why trees are never alone. They are the friends of us all. They watch us when our hearts are breaking; they listen to our confidences; they shelter us, provide for us. They do not abide alone.

But we are straying from our subject. Behind all life there is the sun. It is in all things. Even in water there is hydrogen and oxygen, both products of the sun. Without that ball of fire, grown so familiar and ordinary, life on the earth would cease to be. It is a miracle in a world where men try to deny miracles. It is a wonder in a world where men cut themselves off from wonder.

The grain of wheat and the ball of fire! The hair on the stem of a plant and the flaming majesty of the sun! Unless man, too, acknowledges the power of the sun, his factories sink into insignificance beside the blade of grass.

But when we know the sun and the power of the sun, what then?

Is that the answer to all things? Are we to fall on our knees in worship to that ball of fire? If life were but a system of material growth, if matter were the beginning and the end of all things—yes. Then indeed we should worship the sun as the creator and maker of all things and as the upholding power of our universe.

But life holds other things for us. Matter is but the expression of the spirit. There is a power *behind the sun*. There is the miracle of miracles that started that ball of fire upon its

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journey. There is the final touch that gives to flesh and blood, to leaf and blossom, the stamp of holiness. For the sun may call to life the seed, the twig, the flower. It may give to man the warmth necessary for the life of his body. But the sun cannot give us mercy. It cannot give us beauty. It cannot give us peace.

It is the power behind the sun that creates and upholds us. It is the power behind the sun that calls forth the trees into their beauteous uprising. It is the power behind the sun that stirs us to prayers that lie too deep for words; that puts the smile into human eyes; that gives to man the desire to serve, to heal, to climb.

And who shall write of God? For God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit. God is love and they who would know Him must know love. God is peace, and they who would feel Him about their souls must know peace.

How could words describe even the sun to one who had never known its touch? We might talk of a ball of fire that permeated every part of life; but it would be the experience of sunlight that alone would reveal and bring understanding. How much more, then, must words fall short of the description of God? We might say that God is the creator of all things on, under, or above the earth. We might say that He is in all things at all times; that He dwells in the place of beauty wherever that may be. We might point to him in the song of the birds, in the petals of the flower, in the voice of the child, in the sound of the invisible wind. We might talk of the dawn or sunset, of the stars at night or the scent of some garden at dusk. We might talk for a thousand years of all the beauty that came to our minds and memories—but to what avail?

For the eye that shall see God is the eye of the loving heart. Only in one place may God be found by man or woman—and that place is in the deeps of the human soul. Where pity

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springs, there is the key that will unlock all the doors of pity in the world. Where mercy waits in the heart, there is the key to mercy in our fellows. Where beauty hides the soul, there is the wand that shall touch all things about us into beauty.

Yes, and we shall then see meaning in all things. The shutters of time shall be withdrawn and we shall see no longer through a glass darkly.

Time reveals many meanings. The actions of yesterday are only understood after many tomorrows. But the one who can reach behind the sun—he is the one who can see through the shutters of time. He does not wait for tomorrow to reveal the kindness of yesterday. He *feels* that kindness now. He does not need the explanation of the years. He touches the external soul that does not change from one day to the next.

For he touches the Sun of suns, the Light of all darkness and light, the Joy behind all joys and sorrows, the peace behind all the unrest of the world.

THE DIVINE NATURE

WHEN we have ceased merely to believe in God, but have also come to experience His nature within ourselves, we are able to discover the measure of His activity in human experience.

Even in these more enlightened days, there is still a tendency to regard God as some distant being, or, if not very distant, at least a being who dwells outside the circumference of our lives. The experience of God, however, shatters such ideas, and reveals to our souls the glorious truth that God is present in every place at every moment, and that all the attributes of the Divine Nature are available for all.

The nightingale leaves our shores for the warmth of Africa and travels some two thousand miles in its change of habitation. And the next year it returns to the same little copse to thrill the English night with its song of heartbreak and joy. Instinct? The habit of generations? Or is it a power that guides?

Put God to the test. Give your life into the hands of the Divine Providence. You will find that you will be guided to the right place at the right time. You will feel within your heart your true life unfolding. You will know, even as the nightingales or the swallows know, that you are being guided aright.

“I have been young and now am old,” cries the Psalmist, “yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging their bread.” That is true. Even now, in these times, when half Europe is starving, it is true. Do not ask me how I can dare to say such a thing when thousands are dying of starvation every week. But I do say it. I know that there is a shame upon the human race that there should be starvation at all in a world overflowing with abundance. But I also know that those who have given themselves wholly into the hands of God are provided with every need. Do not

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ask me how. I do not know how the sun strays in the sky, or how, in a universe of cataclysmal forces, this little planet has escaped extinction, or how, in a war of world-wide dimensions, these little islands escaped successful invasion.

Certain it is that God provides. Put God to the test. Give your life into the hands of the Divine and you will find that all other necessary things will come to you at the right time. It is no use, however, trusting God *in order* that He may provide for you. We must be single-hearted in our love towards God. We must give our hearts and minds to the purpose of God because we desire to help the world. Our sole desire should be as to what we can give.

When we are doing our best to give, we can have no thought for what we can get. But God will open the windows of heaven, and will shower down so many blessings that we shall be left in wonderment and thanksgiving.

God heals. As H. T. Hamblin has recently pointed out. He does not cure. He heals. There is all the difference in the world between being cured and being healed. It is the same difference that Jesus was hinting at when He spoke of the living water and the water that men drink. One quenches thirst while the other destroys thirst. It is just the same in this matter. God heals while physicians, admirable as they may be, only cure. True, many people are healed as they are being cured—but the healing has to come from within.

To my mind, one of the most significant things about the healing of God is that certain so-called "incurable" diseases spring more obviously from deep spiritual roots than many others. Cancer, for instance, is often brought about by worry and depression—so is tuberculosis. Medical science owns to be able to do very little for the former. In fact, it more often than not admits to being quite helpless.

The reason is that such a thing must be healed from its source. Its real cause is the breakdown of the living cell owing to a lack of co-operation between spirit and body. The

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in-breathing of the spirit of the divine will strengthen the cells and tissues of the body, will destroy worry and depression, and will heal.

God upholds the world, sinners and saints alike.

He upholds all life on this planet. The man who proclaims his own strength is proclaiming only his own weakness, although he may not know it.

But our weakest moments can be our greatest opportunities. By turning to God we discover that our weakness is turned into strength—for God upholds the world.

The mistakes of the past are transformed by God into things of purpose. Let nobody think that the world-war was a wastage of sacrifice and effort. It was certainly needless. It was certainly not God's will for His children that they should kill and maim, starve and terrify each other.

But as we could learn in no other way, God allowed it to be. And all the carnage, all the suffering, all the tears—all of it was used in the purpose of God. It may be that many came to see the folly of war. It may be that many came to see the opportunities of life. Perhaps some lost their possessions and found the greatest possession of all. Or perhaps some found a new purpose where there was once no purpose. It is certain that adversity strengthened the hearts and minds of thousands, and we can look to the dawn of a new age with confidence.

I remember during the war, laughing at a cartoon that I saw in one of the daily papers. The artist depicted a young man and a young woman—two very ordinary people—looking at each other with that adoration which is the prelude to most marriages. And the caption underneath was to this effect: "Just to think—this war might have happened just to bring us together!"

Yet I do not think the artist was far from the truth! For that is just how God works. The sun flaming in the heavens

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is specially for you! The whole universe is made in all its wonder specially for you!

That is how God redeems these years in the wilderness. In His own mysterious way, He performs His miracles, and tragedy that comes to millions is transformed into blessings for tens of millions.

God redeems. Your mistakes—or the world's mistakes. Have no doubt about it. His love over-rules the world.

A SENSE OF THE ETERNAL

LIFE holds a very real purpose for every human soul. But before we can find it we need to have a sense of the Eternal. We need to have a sense of the things beyond the narrow limits of our own worldly activities. For we are so often apt to be blind to the fact that we are living in a very wonderful universe about which human minds know so very little. We are inclined to think of our lives as turning upon the events of the house in which we live, or upon the office or factory or profession in which we work.

The size and nature of the universe is more likely to be understood by the contemplation of falling rain than by the mental measurement of continents and maps. A sense of the Eternal alone can bring the right perspective to us. The life of the world needs quickening by the knowledge of the life of Heaven. For our pavements have the sky above them, and the roofs of our houses reflect the light of the stars at night. Under our feet there is soil. The fields are in our bread. The grass of the meadow is in our milk. And in the fields and meadows is the warmth of the sun, the breath of the wind, the life-sustaining rain. Perhaps we forget. Perhaps we are too deep in our morning papers to be still and to know. But it is true. We are face to face with the Eternal all the time.

“The rain is glistening in the field,
The roots are damp where corn is green.
And though men eat the harvest yield,
They do not know the great unseen.”

And yet we touch the unseen as we touch every material thing. We stand amid eternal ways as much in the crowded street as anywhere else. The laws of life are at work all the time. We are sowing seeds that we shall one day reap. We are creating the future in the present. We are drawing into

our lives conditions for good or ill. Day by day we are building character, forming habits, losing or gaining the gold of life. Our roots are in the Eternal, and if we do not know this, then we do not know ourselves.

How would we live if we could but realise this to the full? Would we not see that our every thought and word and deed is of the utmost importance? If we were going to die tomorrow, there would come to us, of a sudden, a sense of the Eternal. We would be facing Eternity then, and we would know it. There would be a sense of the nearness of the Unknown—the nearness of God. Life would suddenly extend beyond the borders of the world. Facing death, we would be nearer to the knowledge that we are spiritual beings, and therefore more Christlike. The last hours of many in this world are often hallowed and made beautiful by this awareness.

But we need not wait until our last hours here before we come to this sense of the Eternal. We can practise the presence of God now—right where we are. And by so doing we shall endow our lives with the grace and beauty that is of Heaven.

If I were asked: “What is God?” “What is life?” “What is the purpose of life?” “What is the key to Heaven?” “What is the direct way to God?” or “What is the secret of true happiness?” I should answer in one word: Love.

And by love I mean the feeling that is aroused in us when we see and know beauty. At this moment I have just come in from the garden. Out there I saw the sky flooded with the gold of dawn. There was a little wind on my face and there were the tree-shapes still and silent and friendly. The rain that had fallen in the night was gleaming underfoot, and there was a scent of damp leaves and moist earth. And all

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these things mingled together to tell me that God was in His Heaven and that all was well with the world.

George Borrow tells us the same thing :

“ Life is sweet, brother. There’s night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon and stars, brother, all sweet things; there’s likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother.”

Yes! life is sweet enough when we have a sense of the Eternal, And, because we find life is sweet, we make it sweet for others, for joy is even more contagious than misery.

Today, sometime, I might meet a stranger (who knows what is just ahead? Why—I might save a soul from untold hell!) And, if I do, it may well be that the sense of the Eternal that came with the dawn this morning shall speak through me to him. The trees will still be standing here seemingly with no word to say; the rain may have dried up; the flush of dawn will have disappeared. But if I remember them, maybe I shall speak for them. Perhaps all these things will somehow be in the words I say. Perhaps this stranger, should I meet him, will get from me a sense of the Eternal!

Yes! Any times are stirring times—and we ought to be glad to be alive. But things are happening outside my back door that are as important as anything anywhere else in the world. For God is there—and His Eternity. And in Him we can feel the sap of the trees in our veins and the grace of the flowers in our hearts. In Him we can know that we are bound up, flesh to flesh and spirit to spirit, with our brothers. In Him we can find the link that makes all life one—the sense of the Eternal that brings the stars to the office and the words of Jesus to the common round and daily task.

THE EVERLASTING SWEETNESS

A YEAR passes very swiftly. The seasons come and go—bringing and taking away the things of which they are the guardians. The warm Spring sunshine draws out the leaves from bud, but it is not very long before those same leaves are gathered by the Autumn winds and sprinkled over the earth.

In the warmth of this room, some long sprays of almond blossom have broken into clusters of perfect bloom within the last few days. A week ago there were only pink-tipped buds to be seen. Now there is a mass of blossom beside which even the nine o'clock news seems to pale into insignificance. But even now there is a petal or two dropping. Tomorrow the table will be covered with them, and they will be swept up and thrown away. Yes, even these incredibly lovely things will pass into worthless rubbish, so it seems. A week hence, and the bare twigs will be consigned to the fire.

It is just the same, of course, in every part of Nature. The loveliest garden has its little hour of Summer. But the flowers fade eventually and soon the dry stems are cracking on the bonfire. The tree that expresses a miracle of grace in its foliage is soon gaunt against the cold, grey Winter sky. And when enough years have passed, one can see some proud giant broken and twisted with age.

The same thing may be said, with happier effect, the other way about, but the fact remains that the outward and visible signs of beauty do not last.

“Ah! They pass!

They pass, these changing miracles. The sky of dawn
Floods swiftly, turns to noon, and dies away.

And scarce the magic of the night is born
But moon's kind gold is paling, and 'tis day.”

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But that is not the end of the story. For although the outward and visible signs may pass, there is an everlasting sweetness that remains.

For instance, I have lost the garden of my boyhood. Circumstances have changed and now I am far away from the scenes that I then loved. But the sweetness of it is not lost. There are things burnt in my memory for ever. I can see now the moss growing on the old grey stones, five of them, that bordered one path. I can see Springtime there, when a great sea of blossom filled the air with radiance and glory. I can hear the bees deep in my mind, and I need not even close my eyes to recapture the peace of evening and the warm air soaked with the scent of soil and blossoms. The peace of it all has not gone. The everlasting sweetness is at work in my life and in other lives, this day and every day. For beauty is eternal. It cannot age, nor can it die. It is, in very truth, everlasting.

A panting and apparently hungry dog has just come in from his evening walk and is indicating the extreme urgency of his supper by wagging not only his tail, but the whole of his nether regions. He is a great-hearted friend. He is a miracle of loving energy expressed in bone and fur. It is an unspeakable thing that shines out from his two dear eyes.

But twenty years from now that tail will wag no more. In fact, I cannot say whether, in a metaphorical sense, my own tail will then be operating in the approved fashion. Be that as it may, it is certain that both our bodies will be swept away eventually to pass, with the petals of this almond blossom, out of sight.

But the core and centre of this dog will remain. For it is an everlasting sweetness that is there. The light in his eyes is not just two years old. It is older than the hills.

It is just the same in every part of life, and in all human relationships and experiences. The outward form, the out-

ward circumstance or the outward experience—this changes and passes away. But the inner reality remains.

The musician might reach a certain stage of ecstasy or bliss as he listens to music or plays some instrument; the painter as he looks at a painting or as he uses his brush; the airman as he flies above some storm or beneath the stars. The circumstances may vary, though the inward experience may be the same.

From this it will be seen that there is an inner reality to the whole of life which forms the great cause of all outward shapes and circumstances. And it is this everlasting life that we have to come to before we are completely free and completely in harmony.

In the measure that we base our lives on this inward reality, so do we experience the life of the Divine flowing through us and so do we bring all our circumstances into touch with God. One should say into *conscious* touch with God—for we are always in direct contact with the Divine, of course, though we are very often unaware of the fact. It is an incredible position, but there it is. We live, move and have our being constantly with God Himself “closer to us than breathing, nearer than hands and feet,” but very often we do not understand it, and build up our lives on the very shaky foundations of shadows that quickly change and disappear.

This is what Jesus was getting at when he said: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.” He meant that if we try to build up our lives upon the basis that reality consists of material things that are always changing and passing away, then we are heading for disappointment and suffering, failure, and even disaster. Thieves break through and steal all these things. They are not always armed bandits either. Sometimes it is just Time that comes along and whisks such treasures out of our grasp.

THE EVERLASTING SWEETNESS

But even Time is powerless to steal the pleasures of heaven. Even Time cannot steal the everlasting sweetness that is at the heart of life. That is what Jesus meant when He said :

“ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”

When we bring our hearts and minds into the realisation of the inner reality of life, then we have overcome all the limitations of time. We are face to face with that which is everlasting, and the old saying about the danger of placing all our eggs in one basket is entirely disproved. For that is exactly what we do. We place all our treasures in heaven. We learn to value the things which are unseen more than the things which are seen. We give first place to the spirit and second place to the world. We give first place to cause and second place to effect. In other words we learn to live *normally*.

It is all very simple, really. Nobody in his right senses would suggest that the vast majority of human beings are behaving normally during a war. And yet great numbers of people would say that all this suffering is necessary and natural, that there will always be wars because there always have been wars, and that you can't change human nature, and so on, and so on. Which only goes to prove that large numbers of people are indeed not in their right senses.

This is, in fact, quite true. Without wishing to be hurtful or disrespectful, it is absolutely true to say that the vast majority of people are not in their right senses. They are not clothed in their right minds. They are trying to live life upside down, laying up treasures on earth, living for themselves instead of for others, placing value on things that change and decay without seeing the upholding force that is within all change and behind all decay. They are missing the ever-

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lasting sweetness. They are living in self-made hells when all the time they might be living in a God-made heaven.

But, we are able to reveal that sweetness to the world in our lives. Day by day we can do this, no matter where we are, no matter what lies before us. As we live the life of the spirit, so shall we reveal to all about us the peace and the power and the beauty of God. So will others come to look at the visible world and to see the constant change and decay without fear, knowing that reality remains.

Yes! The shapes pass into nothingness. The leaves turn sere and brown. The petals fall. The stars pale. The lovely moments are gone.

“But do they not leave lingering some Power

Which made their beauty, set their form aflame?

Is there not hid in every lovely hour

Some holiness for which there is no name?”

THE REALITY

LET me admit that the above title has not come to me easily. I know what I want to write about—and it is something which has no name. Therefore when I wanted to give it a title, it seemed as if I could find nothing good enough, no word or words that would do it justice. Yet perhaps the title we have chosen is as good as any, for it is the Love of God that I want to write about, and that, surely, is the *reality* beside which all else takes second place.

There are two little incidents which I remember as clearly now as if they had just happened. The first took place many years ago; the second was more recent.

The first of these happened in the heart of London. It was the first morning of that Spring, the first glimpse of the sunshine of that year. I was walking along an almost deserted square, and my heart was singing within me because I felt God in the sunshine, in the air about me, in the song of some bird that sang nearby. Yes, my soul was singing because I walked in the awareness of the Presence of God. Coming towards me on the same side of the road was a fat, motherly-looking old woman, and as we drew closer to one another we both smiled. It was a lovely thing, this smile that passed between us. It blessed and healed and went winging its way out into the world like the sunshine itself, or like the song of the bird or the look of the grass. And then, as we drew level, this old woman looked at me and said, "Nine nines?" to which I replied "Eighty-one." Then we passed on, into our separate ways.

The second little thing happened early one morning in Summer-time. I was awakened by a noise in my bedroom and, opening my eyes, I saw that a bird, an ordinary sparrow, had entered by the open window and was now trying to depart by flying at the mirror of a wardrobe. I spoke to this bird very gently, and after bidding it "Good morning" I

advised it to turn to the right, where it would find the way out. And I found myself blessing this little wild friend that had entered to awaken me with such a sense of loveliness in its own presence. After a few moments the bird found the open window and disappeared, while I lay quite still, again filled with this singular knowledge of the Presence of God. And then the bird came back. It perched, first of all, on the rail at the foot of the bed. Then it began to flutter towards my face, hovering over me as I lay on my back; its little wings beating quickly so that it remained almost stationary above me. Finally it came to rest in the middle of my chest, and stayed there while we gazed into each other's eyes. Then, quite suddenly, the visitor flew away, out of the open window, this time without the slightest hesitation as to direction.

These two incidents are, of course, trivial matters on the face of things. Yet, as I say, they have remained with me so vividly, and I know that they will remain always. For incidents may not be measured solely by their outward forms. There is enough in a single blade of grass to send a sacred hush over all humanity, if it were rightly understood. And in regard to these two small incidents—why, enough happened to solve all the problems of mankind!

Look at the first one again. It was not just one problem answered (and that without thought!); it was every human problem answered and every need met. It was not just elementary mathematics. It was Divine Mathematics—where God puts one and one together, and still makes one. Or where He adds together the sun, moon and stars, every grain of sand or speck of dust, and still makes one. It was the Logic of God; that just *is*, and doesn't have to be thought about. It was a little piece of the harmony that just happens when we let God take charge.

Or take the second instance. It was not just some coincidence of a wild bird that overcame its fear. It was an example

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of the intimacy which can exist between us and all other forms of life when we stand consciously in the presence of God.

There are barriers that stand between us and the recognition of what life really is. So much so that most of us walk in blindness, beset by fears and doubts, not seeing the beauty and the holiness that is everywhere spread out before us. But when we come to the Reality (and we can only come to it within ourselves), then these barriers melt away and we reach a point of intimacy with all things. Indeed, the word "intimacy" is not strong enough, for it is union. The old woman and I were one. The bird and I were one. And in these brief moments that have been described there existed a natural relationship that was so beautiful as to sweep away the shams that pass for life in the normal way.

Two things are worth noting in particular. One is that the Reality which made these moments was deeper than thought. In each case thought did not enter into it. Especially in the latter case I can recall that my voice spoke to the bird, and I could hear my voice speaking, but it was the soul alone that actuated it. It was the voice of Love that issued from a heart of love. And that is the second point to be noted. The Reality can be experienced only through the operation of Divine Love in the soul. There has to be an active blessing and praising and giving. There has to be an ecstasy brought about by the soul singing to its Maker. Then, at such a point, all barriers are broken down and we enter into the one life that is perfect and harmonious and beautiful beyond description. Then do we know the meaning of those words of the prophet Isaiah :

“Men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen what He has prepared for them that wait for Him.”

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Should there be any young men or women reading these words—perhaps those who have been studying some special subject—they will not need to be told that as we learn more and more about the facts of life—about science, physics or chemistry, about biology, or engineering, or natural history—there comes a sense of adventure springing out of the knowledge of the wonder and mystery of the universe in which we live.

And to them—and to all who read—I would say that this quest for that which is Reality is the way to open up new wonders and the way to hallow all that we do. It is a gateway to the discovery of a world made new in the Light of God, and it leads to inspiration in every part of life. It is the way that reveals religion and life as one, joining heaven with earth, and shedding holiness upon the common paths of men.

PART II



DOORS

DOORS

DOORS and gateways have a fascination all of their own, and I expect there are many people who have occasion to remember the first time they lifted the latch to enter the unknown.

I remember the first time I came here, where I am living now. It was early on a misty October morning, and there were glistening spiders' webs covering the hedges and bushes in the garden like fine lace, with blackberries shining from among the leaves. And, as the result of opening this gate on that morning, we have been living here for the last two years. All that has happened was waiting—the other side of the gate!

Ah! It is a lovely, wonderful thought! Every door that we open, every gate that we enter—leads to the unknown. The opening of a door can be a holy moment. In fact, it always is—did we but know it.

Behind the doors of the dwelling-places of the world there are lives being lived out for good or ill. Much remains hidden from the outside. The doors keep their secrets well.

But doors and gates are not always made of wood or iron, nor are the bolts and bars of the world the only barriers that keep out flesh and blood.

There is another door that leads out of the world of darkness and of pain—into the hidden world of goodness, joy and power. This door is always before us, and the latch can be lifted by a little child, yet how many of us are blind and unaware! We search for the entrance ceaselessly, trying first one way and then another, thinking even to reach it by some process of intellectual logic—but all in vain.

For this is barred by the very bolts of Heaven, and none can enter by force, nor by thought nor by piety, nor by any power save love alone.

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And yet how simple it all is by very reason of this fact! Why men and women have entered heaven in all places, under all circumstances! This fact cuts away everything else. It strikes at the very roots, beneath all creeds, beneath all arguments. It is the supreme fact, the key to everything, the solution to all problems, the one path that all must tread who wish to enter the ways of peace and beauty.

To some, of course, it is dangerous folly. For if love alone matters, then all else is not, strictly speaking, fundamental, and never can be. So much is swept away as being of no paramount importance. And naturally those who have tried to make fundamentals out of surface things are going to try to argue about it. But these will find that there can be no argument. That is the wonderful thing about love. It sweeps away all argument. Nothing that can be said is of any real avail.

They tried arguments against Jesus, and were confounded. They tried other methods when their words were proved futile, but these methods were confounded, too. The love in the heart of Jesus defeated the powers of the world. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another." How those words stand out in the Gospels! We try in vain to cover them up. We try to drown them with noisy arguments, or with complicated doctrines. We try to excuse ourselves by talking of expediency or what is practical in this world.

But though we may be able to convince others—and this simply because they are eagerly waiting to be convinced, ready to listen to almost anything that will enable them to cling to their illusions—we can never convince ourselves. Deep in our hearts we know that love is the solution to all the problems of life. Deep in our hearts we know that love always brings joy and peace, unspeakable and beautiful. We have all proved it in some little moment—even though we may have pushed the truth aside in what we thought were our own

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interests. And yet how wrong we have been, for our own interests are inevitably bound up in the interests of others. He who would find blessing must live to bless. He who would find mercy must reveal it to others. And he who would pass through the door of happiness must take the key of love from his own heart *that others may enter in!*

Oh, how blessed it is to serve! How joyous a thing it is to look upon the world with tenderness and compassion from a heart that has learned to love!

It is a magic thing indeed. For it is the key to the door that divides darkness from light, sorrow from joy, pain from peace.

And that door is everywhere. Make no mistake about it: once we have found the key we shall not have to look very far for the door, this mystic door that leads to happiness and freedom.

For it is everywhere about us. It is found day by day in the common life. A million things before our eyes sparkle with light and speak of the wonder and majesty of God. The flowers become the sacred messengers of the Divine. The trees do, of a sudden, "lift their leafy arms to pray." The hills tell of strength and the skies are eloquent of the wideness of God's mercy. With the sun setting one night, during the war, I saw the clouds of evening moulded in dark shapes and tinged with gold. I watched six aeroplanes disappearing towards the south, little black dots dwarfed by immensity in all its beauty. At my feet the little moths were emerging from the grass and little lowly flowers, scarcely an inch high, were gleaming, inviting me to stoop and bless them, as I did more than once. Indeed, at such moments one blesses everybody—aye and everything—in the wide family of the universe. And, looking up at that great sky and the illumined clouds, some words came floating into my mind:

"For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the

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east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.”

It is all so true. And one has only to learn to love in order to discover heaven on earth. But the door thence is in one's own heart first—and thereafter in a thousand things before one's eyes.

THE FLOOD TIDE

DO you remember, perhaps, standing at some vantage point where you could look down on the sea when the tide was at its height? I do. I can hear now the roar of the waves as they leapt at the rocks. I can see the waters lashed into foaming whirlpools and the spray flying high into the air. I can remember the tang of the sea at such moments and how the thought would often come into my mind, "Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?"

There is a power in the surging tide—a strange mighty power that makes us lift our earth-bound eyes to the far horizons and to the wide sky. When you are worried about some private affair of your own—go and watch the tide coming in, if you can, and when you have had a few minutes of it, think of the moon pulling the waters over, roughly, a quarter of a million miles of space. Or get out under the sky by yourself on a clear night—and lift your eyes to the stars and your mind to the stillness that is full of the power of God. It is more to be recommended than all the advice of your friends.

Shakespeare had something to say about the tide. In Julius Caesar we read:

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings. There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

This magnificent truth applies to both the individual and to humanity as a whole. That it applies to the individual can be borne out in the lives of many who have given witness to it in past centuries. And the pages of history make it no less apparent that all mankind has, from time to time, experienced a great surge forward—as if drawn to new horizons by the foreknowledge of their destiny.

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Can we doubt that the tide is coming in, even now? It is not wrong to say that even the war had its blessings. It is blasphemy to say that God ever willed it. God simply let us do the very thing we wanted to do more than anything else. He let us judge and punish ourselves. We thought that we had been judging and punishing each other. But it was not so, and it never can be so. We are one world, one family, and bombs falling on Berlin or London are pretty much the same—unless, of course, the boundaries of your mind are limited to the boundaries of the city in which you live.

I could never see the war simply as a struggle between two sides. I saw it as one of humanity's great struggles. I saw a common bond of suffering being forged and a common desire for something better being created.

One night, during an air-raid, I stood with a warden looking up at the sky splayed with searchlights and listening to the roar of guns and the whine of aeroplanes. I couldn't see the man's face in the darkness, and, when he spoke, it might have been the common voice of humanity. He said "And they tell you we're getting more civilised! It's the height of insanity!"

Now that, to me, did not sound like a cry of despair. It sounded like the voice of a man who was waiting for the tide to turn. It sounded like the voice of the prodigal son—just before he went home.

Let us be sure that the tide is coming in. Those of us who live through the next twenty years will be called upon to take that tide, and if we are true to the best that is in us we shall see a new dawn and live through a new day.

We notice, in the passage we have quoted, the words "in ourselves". "The fault", says Shakespeare, "is *in ourselves*". Therefore we can rightly assume that the tide is also to be found within ourselves.

THE FLOOD TIDE

It is true. The great steps forward that have been taken by humanity have always been the result of men and women feeling, within their own souls, the call of some eternal purpose, and going forward without fear or deviation to such an end.

I do not doubt but that there will come such a call to many. Already we can feel it stirring, for the tide is on the turn and the waters are gathering. God calls to the best in us, and if we do not resist, we shall be drawn forward to the shores of a new world.

“These things shall be! a loftier race
Than e'er the world hath known, shall rise,
With flame of freedom in their souls
And light of knowledge in their eyes.”

—J. A. SYMONDS.

But this step forward will only come when we are prepared to admit that there is a wisdom far beyond the measure of our minds. Human logic must give way to love. Human justice must give way to forgiveness. In fact, humanity, in its entirety, must give place to Divinity.

OPTIMISM

I ONCE read with some amusement some comments by "Candidus" in the *Daily Sketch* about Robert Browning. The writer appeared to be "defending" Browning from the charge so often made against him of being an "optimist". "Candidus" pointed out that the assumption arose because of two lines that were more often quoted than anything else Browning had written, namely:

"God's in His Heaven;
All's right with the world."

These two lines from "Pippa Passes", the contributor averred, were taken right out of their context and could not be accepted as typical of Browning's attitude to life.

In the first place, I feel quite sure that Browning himself would have no wish to be "defended" against the charge of being an optimist. In fact, I am quite sure that he would make it plain in his forthright manner that every man and every woman had good reason for optimism.

Secondly, of course, I was left with the feeling that "Candidus", whose writings about other matters are often so clear and lucid, knew very little about Browning's faith as expressed through his poetry. One has only to consider the following better-known examples chosen at random from the poet's work to understand that he was a supreme optimist.

"Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be."
(From "Rabbi Ben Ezra.")

"My own hope is, a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
That, after Last, returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be fetched;
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst."
(From "Apparent Failure.")

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Incidentally, both the above are Browning himself speaking—putting forward his faith. Or we could read “Paracelsus” or “Abt Vogler”, from which latter the following well-known lines are taken :

“ All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;

Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power.

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist

When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.”

Whatever may be said about Browning, it must be admitted that he was a true optimist. Much of his work is obscure, because he lets his great intellectual learning get in the way of pure inspiration; but when Browning touches the heights we get real optimism, the sort of thing that can inspire other people with new faith and with new life.

There are two kinds of optimism. One consists of refusing to face facts and of indulging in mere wishful thinking without any relation as to the probable outcome. The other consists of *facing facts* without being blinded by what may be happening at some little moment. One form is cowardice. The other is courage.

“ You can't be optimistic with a misty optic ” runs an old saying. This may not be true literally, but it is certainly true in its deeper meaning.

For if we would be truly optimistic it is essential that we see things clearly and in their right perspective. It is no use looking at what may be happening in one little moment and coming to a final conclusion by reason of what the world so often calls “ facts ”. We have to look at the world from the viewpoint of Eternity. We have to see a fact as something that is changeless and everlasting.

For instance, one might be tempted to look around the world at this present moment and to see cause only for gloom and forebodings. But the very times themselves have brought horror and cruelty and folly up against the greater fact of the love of God and the ultimate purposes of the Eternal, and for this reason there is a real cause for optimism in the world today. One sees men and women everywhere being stabbed wideawake. One sees the realisation growing in the hearts of humanity that all ways are vain except one. People are beginning to understand that most things have been tried once and have been proved failures; that the minds of men are not big enough to conceive any system that is foolproof against the powers of the world; that treaties, and armies, and promises, and pacts are useless while there are greed and selfishness to be overcome. There is a growing perception that but one way is left to humanity—as yet untried.

That way is the way of God. His will has to be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Our self-willing must be dissolved in the awareness of His presence.

The true optimist is one who can see through effects into causes—yes, who can even see through all man-made hells into heaven! For the First Cause of life is Love Divine. This is something that cannot be understood with the mind. The matter-of-fact pessimist who wants an explanation of it all in black and white must ever go on his way with even deeper dejection. The scientist who wants it all explained in some neat little array of test-tubes must go on with his vain search until he tires of it. The logician who wants it carefully explained so that his intellect can grasp it all—he must go on arguing until his mind is tired with argument. The fearful and the self-pitying who want the mystery proved to them before embarking on the waters of faith—these will never find it.

But whoever will become as a little child and regard the many signs set down on the earth for eyes that are looking

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for purity and light, he shall understand this mystery. He shall come to the First Cause. He shall do more than know that God is Love Divine, the author and upholder of all that is and ever shall be—yes, this one shall come to experience the very heart of the universe flowing through him as a river. And afterwards such an one shall walk his way in fearlessness—looking always into Heaven, undisturbed by the passing clouds and breaking storms. He shall walk in peace and in strength, and his ways shall be evidence that others seek but may not understand. And his words shall fall from his lips purified and made mighty by the Most High. Even his presence shall reveal that God is Love Divine. And his thoughts shall flow out into the world to bless, to redeem and to heal.

All this, of course, is nothing that the mind can understand. Nor is it strange. For has the mind of man ever understood the meaning of beauty and holiness? Can the mind of man ever regard the single blossom of a flower and take in its full meaning? Can the human mind reason about things that are far, far beyond reasoning?

Small wonder is it that the true optimist is often scorned by the world! For the world desires to understand beauty and holiness as it would understand the Locarno Treaty or the Fish Zoning Scheme or the Beveridge Report. And this cannot be done. The mind has certain boundaries beyond which it cannot go. The mind should be the instrument of the spirit just as hands and feet should be the instruments of the mind. Back of all our minds there is the Mind of God. Back of all our willing there is the Will of God. Back of all our planning there is the Plan of God.

And this is optimism—to see clearly through the haze of human endeavours into the clear light of the Eternal.

REFLECTIONS

DURING the war I helped a friend to re-plant a magnolia tree which had come from the ruins of a bombed house and garden. Some of the branches were broken—but the roots were good. So we dug a hole and planted the tree again, and as I helped to heap the earth back, I could not help thinking that the roots of many other things would also survive the war.

The realities of life are dictator-proof, bomb-proof and time-proof. Before humanity loses everything of real value, God must be destroyed. And God cannot be destroyed, though He may be, and often is, denied. But denying God does not destroy God. How foolish indeed it is for man to declare “There is no God!” while those around him have hearts and feelings. Religion is not a thing of words and books, creeds and ceremony. These things may be built up on religion but they do not constitute the real heart of it all. Religion is a matter of feelings. The church of Christ is built with stones of pity and with bricks of love. Its windows are human eyes through which the souls within look out upon the Kingdom of God. Stained-glass? Yes—they are often stained with tears and the colours of life run together and form pictures more beautiful than cathedral windows.

And this—the true Church—can never be destroyed. It is universal. It exists wherever human hearts exist. It will live while love lives. It is the very Breath of life itself.

Some of the branches of this magnolia tree were broken. But the roots were good.

Praise God for the lesson which it teaches us! For the roots of the human soul are grounded in heaven. Some branches may be broken, but the roots are good. And as we learn to drink of that living water which destroys all thirst, as we draw nearer to the Love that is the warmth of life, so

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shall there come a day when human activities shall blossom. And the blossoms shall be white. Whiter than snow. Pure and spotless. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Neither shall there be any more sorrow, nor crying. . . ."

Yes! Praise God—for He alone gives us the victory. There can be no other sort of victory. The triumph of force is not victory. The Cross proved that. True victory is the triumph of Love—and God is Love. True victory is the rising up of the Divine out of the human—like the rising up of the magnolia blossoms from those hidden roots.

We can each achieve that victory and thereby contribute to the victory of the whole—all Nationalities alike, for God is a great Linguist and can understand prayers in all languages. God hears the prayers of any heart—be it in child or man, street urchin or bishop. For myself, I say that He hears the silent prayers of flowers and trees, that He listens to thankfulness uprising from the dripping woods after rain, that He accepts the swelling songs that come from the love-filled hearts of birds when they are unmindful of anything save that it is evening or morning and that they stand poised on the topmost bough of a tree with the wide sky above them and with wings and freedom. I know that He sees the prayers in the eyes of dogs—else why should you answer with your eyes and I with mine?

God hears our prayers. He hears and sees, knows the deepest motives behind all words. And only motives count with Him. We can achieve the only victory that counts for anything and that is permanent—each one of us in his or her own life. We have to do nothing in our own powers. We have simply to let beauty triumph. We have simply to give our lives over into higher Hands. For we are not big enough ourselves, nor wise enough, nor strong enough. Our little minds cannot see the wisdom of returning good for evil—for we are too concerned with the petty byways of our own existence. But God's mind sees way across the world and

looks down from over the stars. He sees just one big family—a mixed crowd—*but all His*. And he wants us to give Him a chance to put things right for us. He wants us to learn the meaning of love and to give up thinking that we know all there is to know. He wants us to learn that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

I saw the magnolia tree again soon afterwards. It had not blossomed then, but it had taken root. And no doubt it *did* blossom. The beauty was there—even if it were hidden.

And so it is with humanity. Human nature will blossom. The beauty is there—even if it is as yet hidden. And the white purity of the Divine nature is coming to the surface of life. Goodness and love *will* have the ultimate victory. Pity, mercy and forgiveness will increase and endure until life has taken on a new fragrance. For our roots are sound and the bloom of human nature is fore-ordained.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

WE cannot be fussy about our food as soon as we think of others who are starving. Our little grumbles are shamed into silence the moment we think of the thousands who are homeless. It is a case of the old Arab proverb which says, "I had no shoes, and I murmured—till I met a man with no feet."

We all ought to count our blessings. We all ought to thank God for them every day of our lives. The grateful heart is very near to the loving heart. Gratitude and love go hand in hand.

For most of us there is such a long list of blessings for which we ought to give thanks. For most of us there is health; the safety of our loved ones; our daily food; the sufficiency of all our daily needs. And, as we look at these things, we ought surely to be deeply humble and to lift up our hearts to God. If we really thought seriously about it, we should find it quite impossible to express our gratitude.

"Were the whole realm of Nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Yes! That is about the truth of the matter. The test of our gratitude cannot be in the words we say, nor even in the thoughts we think. The test of gratitude is in our love for the Giver, and if we are truly grateful—then we shall find ourselves re-dedicating our lives to God.

Perhaps that is one of the ways in which the folly and madness of our time is to be redeemed. Perhaps there will be born, in part, a new humanity—a company of men and women who have found the loving-kindness of God moving in the midst of turmoil and destruction.

W I N D O W S

Tragedy is always fraught with blessings. Pain always breaks to joy eventually. Even in the cold prosaic ways of the world, we find that the history book affirms it. The Black Death, that destroyed a third of our population in the fourteenth century, left a blessing in all its trail of destruction. For it led to the Peasants' Revolt, and, after the passing of time, to better conditions for the poorer people. Or, later, it was the Plague of London that revealed the need of better sanitation, and it was the Great Fire of London that prepared the ground for the building of a finer city.

But these cold facts do not constitute the whole of the story. Always, behind historical facts, there is the unrecorded spiritual impetus of the people.

We must not forget the unseen motives that control the destiny of mankind. Of far greater importance than all the deliberations of governments is the prayer that rises to God from your heart and mine. We are the builders of a better world. You and I. For we can resolve so to live that we shall be revealing the love of God in our daily lives.

But what of those who have suffered? During the war, some people lost their homes. Some lost their loved ones. Perhaps some who read this have had all their dreams crash into nothingness.

Friends, if you will but rise to it, you are the elect of God! There is little left for you to lose. By your very suffering you have been sanctified to the service of God. For there is one blessing left to you—and it is something that the world cannot take away. It is the knowledge that you stand in Eternity—a spiritual being and a child of God. Count your sufferings a blessing by reason of the fact that, in the depths, you have found your own soul.

You are the elect of God because, by reason of your own sufferings you are now able to understand the sufferings of others. Your vision is clearer now than ever before. The

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

solid world has been shattered and you have found love at the heart of it all.

“ Ah, love! It is the power than claims
The goodness in a host of names.
It is the secret sacred heart
Of every shape and every part
Of earth, or sky, or sea, or star,
And all we see, and all we are.”

Yes! You are indeed blessed! “ God wants elect men and women—men and women out of whom self and the world have been crushed by a severe bankruptcy of thought—by a bankruptcy so severe that there is left neither hope nor desire of recovery.”

But there is a loveliness behind this paradox. For when we are no longer concerned with ourselves—it is then that we have made ourselves receptive to the power of God. And it is then that God opens the windows of heaven and pours out a blessing so big that there is not room enough to receive it.

THE UNSEEN PRESENCE

IF the world was just what it appeared to be and nothing more—then there would be no point in trying to deal with spiritual values here.

But it is quite obvious that the unseen has a great bearing on the seen. There is no shape or form in all the world except it has come out of the unseen. Every shape was once shapeless. Everything we see was once unseen. For the material is but an expression of the spiritual and the reality—that which never changes from year to year—is the spiritual.

A garden is a spiritual thing. It has its seasons. It passes through changes of form. It needs the application of hand and hoe—but all our efforts could not make it a garden were it not for the unseen force of life that pervades it. Winter or Summer, there is this spiritual force underlying every garden. The magic of creation is there—whether it is sleeping in the soil—or whether it is expressed in blossoms, or leaves, or fruit. And nothing that man can do is able to perform the final miracle of creation. The greatest Gardener in the end—is God.

So it is in this whole round world. We are called upon to work and to serve, to weed, and to tend. But through all the changes of life there is the magic of creation—the unseen presence of the Creator. He abides in every place. He is at the centre of every shape. He is at the back of all sounds, all smiles, all tears. And whether we know it or not—we stand on holy ground day by day and hour by hour.

For long years we have been dealing with material things as though they were separate one from the other, and as though they were all separate from the things of the spirit. We have not seen that spirit is the cause of matter. We have not known that the two worlds are finally interwoven—that one gives rise to, and supports, the other.

THE UNSEEN PRESENCE

Yet it is so. In spite of our blindness—it is so. We are coming to see it slowly. Very slowly, we are drawing near to the knowledge that there is a spiritual world hidden within the world we see and know.

I wonder how many of our readers heard Francis Meynell broadcasting some years ago about Francis Thompson? To me it was a lovely broadcast—for it showed so clearly how God works. Here was a man who had been proved a failure by the standards of the world. He had failed in his examinations. He had failed in his work. He had failed in his life. A disappointment to his father, a disappointment to his employer, he had taken to drugs, and had sunk lower until even the public libraries were shut to him because of his rags. And he was left to work out his own salvation—sleeping on the Thames Embankment—and half starving.

But all these experiences *were the very means of his salvation*. For, added together, they meant that the chains of the world were being stripped from him. He suffered. He sank lower and lower. He must have despised himself. He must have got to that point when he no longer cared what other people thought, no longer feared what life could do to him. But Francis Thompson had his eyes on another world—and in the abyss of his suffering he felt the presence of another Friend.

“There is another world within our own,
Another world, unchanging and divine,
Within the changing pattern of the known,
Whereof all form is but the outward sign.”

Yes—Francis Thompson came to that world. He saw through the screen of the material into the heart of the spiritual. And there he came to know that both were one.

But that, to me was not the only point about this true story worthy of our consideration. Thompson had failed miserably.

To the world he was only an object to be despised, unfit for most things, a dreamer and a good-for-nothing—he had earned for himself the scorn of the world.

But what was it Browning has said?

“ Not on the vulgar mass
 Called ‘ work ’ must sentence pass,
 Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
 O’er which, from level stand,
 The low world laid its hand,
 Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice :
 But all the world’s coarse thumb
 And finger failed to plumb. . . .”

Yes! That was it! God saw in Francis Thompson that which the world could not see. And He had other ideas about the poems that he was to write, other ideas about failure and success. The world was not big enough to keep this man down, nor was its power strong enough to hide his worth to the future generations of the world!

Most people know the story of how Francis Thompson was taken into the home of one who did not wish to be called a benefactor. And there his real worth was at last recognised, his real work at last given to the world.

And today the poems of Francis Thompson are widely read. Tomorrow they will be even more widely read. It is probable that his short poem “ The Kingdom of Heaven ” will eventually be universally recognised as one of the finest poems in our language. And the first four lines of that very poem sum up, in a few words, exactly what I am trying to hint at now.

“ O world invisible, we view thee,
 O world intangible, we touch thee,
 O world unknowable, we know thee,
 Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!”

THE UNSEEN PRESENCE

Francis Thompson came to see that the world of matter and the world of spirit are not separate things—but one life. He came to see that the spirit upholds all matter—that God is ever-present in every place at every time. Through his suffering (when so sad that he could not be sadder), he came to that point when he himself “clutched heaven by the hems” and found Christ walking on the waters of the Thames.

And God, seeing all that the world could not see, took him up and led him step by step into his heritage. That heritage will be measured, not by his cold seat on the Thames Embankment, not by his failures, not by his suffering—but by the wealth that he has given to the world, by the light that he has brought and will bring into thousands of lives.

Can we not all take heart from this story? Can we not all understand that God knows the innermost secrets of our hearts, that He *does* guide, *does* uphold, and *does* take a personal interest in our lives? Our failures are not His concern. Our stumblings are not His main interest. God is with us all the time—looking to the best in us, looking to what we can be, looking to the perfect pattern of our separate destinies.

Let us, therefore, resolve to give our lives into His keeping and to face the issues of the world with our inward eyes fixed upon the eternal truth that never changes.

THE INSTRUMENTS OF GOD

IT has always been a desire of mine to learn how to play the violin. I doubt whether I ever shall, but it must be a fine means of expression and there is no music that I like better.

We cannot all be musicians, but we can all be instruments. What is more, we can be instruments upon which the finest melody in the world can be played.

The violin by itself is a dead instrument, soundless, useless, empty. But, taken up in the hands of a player, it can be made to express the soul of the player, the soul of the composer, and even the souls of those who listen. The bow is drawn across the strings, a finger is pressed for a fragment of time in the right place, and a perfect expression results. Life and expression is given to that which seemed lifeless and dumb.

It would be interesting to know how far this illustration can be applied to our lives. One imagines that it is a perfect parallel, for we are all instruments of God. Without Him we are empty and useless. But the contact of the Spirit upon our souls produces the perfect expression of life.

Indeed, the more one thinks upon the matter the more one is able to see that the whole Universe is one tremendous instrument upon which the melody of life is played. Each little fragment of matter has its own note, each individual thing has its own expression, each life is a movement in one great sonata. Nothing is excluded from the work of the great Composer. The stars have their places, soundless as they seem, for have they not been given voices in the words of poets and in the lives of those who have caught something of their inspiration? The flowers are notes—their blossoms of purity are linked up with all beauty everywhere, just as one note on the violin is linked up with every other note that the instrument is capable of producing.

THE INSTRUMENTS OF GOD

We do not see the wonder of the world except we see God at work, expressing Himself in countless ways. We have eyes and ears, yet we walk the world in blindness and in deafness. We have hearts and minds for the understanding, yet we walk in unawareness of the miracle of creation.

Day by day and hour by hour the melody of life is being played. Everything, animate or inanimate, is related to every other thing and all growth and movement are one. This is the secret that is found by those who find God.

If a note on any musical instrument had the power of thought and feeling, it might be tempted to think that it was a separate creation. But once that note came into contact with the player it would soon discover that it was only a part of the whole; that, while retaining its own individual significance, it was bound up entirely with its fellows, with the bow that crossed the strings and with the hand that held the bow.

So it is with life in all its forms. There is unity at the heart. Every form of life is related to every other form. Any two things in this world, chosen at random from the list of English nouns, can be proved to be related, the one to the other, though such proof will never be believed or understood except by experience.

Where, for instance, does rain begin or end? The drops fall from the skies; sink into the earth; form springs and streams and rivers which flow into mighty oceans. But the story does not end there, for the water is caught up again by the sun and is hidden in the air to fall again in due season. And some of it forms dew, and some the mist of morning. And some is drawn into our homes through pipes and taps. And some is taken into the trunks of trees and the stems of plants for food. Rain is a form of water and water is a form of life. Take away water, and the world would fall into desolation and death.

W I N D O W S

This illustration, however, is but one of countless thousands. For life goes on, day by day, like that. Under the ceaseless movement of the Universe there is an upholding Spirit.

All matter is the instrument of God. He draws His Bow across the strings, and the flowers raise their heads of white and crimson, the golden corn stands in the fields, the leaves form in their millions, the birds break into song. Again, another movement, and the petals fall, the grass is mown and the air is filled with hay-scent. And in the hedges there are scarlet berries among leaves that are turning yellow.

We, too, could live like that—with fruits for the heritage of those who follow after. But there are discords in human lives, and the reason is plain. For our part in the melody of the Universe is a voluntary one. We can give ourselves to service, we can take our rightful places as instruments of God, or we can try to stand apart in the illusion that we have power of our own.

When shall we learn that the only power we possess is the power to hurt ourselves and others? When shall we learn that we are inevitably bound up with all things in the Universe and that, before we can experience the real meaning of life, we must become the instruments of God?

The deep heart of life is good. The melody that God would play is perfect. Once we have given ourselves into the service of Love Divine we are able to know this in a way that is deeper than all human knowledge.

The folly and blindness of men is but a wave that takes its course over the surface of living. It is not the heart of the matter. There is stillness in the deep heart. There is brotherhood waiting for those who will make themselves brothers. There is harmony for those who will fulfil their appointed destiny as the instruments of God.

IMPOSSIBLE

IT is impossible that the world began without a creative power.

This assertion is based both on reason and instinct.

For those who prefer to consider facts, one can point out that there are available all the facts of the universe. There is the ball of fire we call the sun, the billions of stars travelling in their appointed places, the unknown vastnesses of space beyond our ken. Is it possible for a reasonable being to suggest that these things just happened? If so, how did they happen? Was it a change in motion? If so, what caused the change? Is there ever an effect without a cause? Is there ever a shadow without light?

Or consider this one planet out of the universe. Men, machines, flowers, rivers, seas, rocks, birds, sunsets, music, gravity, oxygen, poetry, art—these things just happened? Is it reasonable? Is such a conclusion worthy of any scientific thinker?

The spider spinning its web with a perfection beyond the conception of the most advanced geometrician; the bee building its six-sided cell as the perfect example of the minimum use of space with the maximum usefulness; the snowflake that reveals a master-pattern under the microscope, the violet with its colour, scent and form; the dog with his two dumb eyes; the unspoiled child that puts the major part of adult humanity to shame—these things just happened? Does your reason lead you to this conclusion?

If it does—then just consider the implications of such a viewpoint. . . .

There is no God. The flowers of the world are accidents. Their colours and perfumes mean nothing. All poetry is only a form without inspiration and without life. The beauty of

music ceases to exist. All art is dead. There is no spiritual life behind beauty. The mind of man is complete in itself. There is nothing beyond. Bird-song need not lift up our hearts into joy. Love need not bring its wordlessness or tears. Kindliness is folly—for death is the end and life is only an accident. War and disease, poverty and crime—these things have as much place in the world as peace and health, comfort and sanity—for all are meaningless things of chance. There is no creative power behind them, no purpose hidden among them. The four Gospels are fairy tales—or rather tales of a man who was deluded. We must tear them up—erase them from the literature of mankind—together with all writings that speak of a God of Love.

These are a few of the implications of a belief that this life evolved out of chance.

But we deny them every day of our lives, and a host of witnesses rise up to testify against such a belief. Mankind struggles towards a tomorrow—knowing in his deepest heart that the best is yet to be, and that an unseen purpose is being worked out through all the sweat and agony and tears of the world.

A few minds may look back over the beginnings of time and see there only vacancy; a few voices may declare the futility of a belief in God—but the heart knows, and will not be denied. The leaves of the trees in their rustling are crying “impossible!” The pleading eyes of the creatures are searching for the heart of you that they know to be there. The perfume of the flower saturates the Summer air with its sweet eloquence.

Take away God and you take away all beauty and purpose from the world. Can you conceive a world without beauty? Without any truth that is truth for ever? Without any joy or sanity or laughter?

I cannot. I know that it is impossible.

IN YOU

“There is no endowment in man or woman that is not tallied
in you.

There is no virtue, no beauty in man or woman, but as good
in you,

No pluck, no endurance in others, but as good in you.”

—WALT WHITMAN.

ALTHOUGH Walt Whitman wrote down the above lines,
I incline to believe that he caught the sound of the words
from God.

It is certainly true that there is a Voice ever calling within
ourselves and that it calls us to higher and better things. It
calls our attention to new possibilities, new virtues, and new
endowments.

Within each individual there is a true self, a wonderful
beautiful self but waiting to find expression in the human
form. This true self is a spiritual being made of the substance
of Love and if we surrender ourselves to it, if we allow it to
be revealed in our lives, we shall find ourselves in harmony
with all that is, has been, or ever will be.

There is but one human form. It is many-patterned but
alike in the main. It has many colours, black, white, brown,
yellow; the features are varied in shade; the expressions are
as countless as the sand; but when we speak of the human
form we speak of something that is capable of expressing the
highest truth there is in life.

Within each human form there are Divine potentialities—all
the material necessary for the formation (through God's Grace)
of a perfect man or woman.

“There is no virtue, no beauty in man or woman, but as
good in you,” says Whitman.

W I N D O W S

We would do well to ask ourselves whether this is really true. Is it possible for us to climb higher and higher towards perfection?

The answer is undoubtedly:—"Yes—not in our own powers—but through the Power of God."

No matter where we find ourselves at this moment, no matter what our circumstances may be, it is possible for us to be true to the best that is in us.

This "best" is the same for each of us, for it is nothing less than the Power of God which is ever available within ourselves.

When we surrender our lives to the Goodness which is within, we find our true selves. Our true selves are the children of God, so that when we find our true selves we come to realise that God is our Father Who supplies us with all our needs.

We may be sure that all virtues, all endowments, all beauties, belong to God Who is the maker and giver of all good things. This means, of course, that in God we have a Father Who is able to supply us with all that is necessary, not only for the body but also for the Soul.

In a word, the power to rise is within each one of us.

The unutterably glorious meaning of this truth is perhaps dim when we first consider it. But does not the power to rise infer a Goal? Does not the power to rise point to the veriest heights that are attainable by the Soul?

Just as the power to improve points to the existence of perfection, so does the power to rise to higher and better things point to the summit of the hills of God.

There is an Ideal to which we are called. There is a perfection to which we are beckoned. We are the children of God and He is our Eternal home. In Him we can find the power to rise towards the high calling of perfect love.

IN YOU

This is, of course, exactly what Jesus teaches. The two great commandments, he tells us, are firstly, that we should love God and, secondly, that we should love our neighbours. He also adds that there are no other Commandments greater than these.

When Whitman refers to the endowments, virtues and beauties that are inherent in every man and in every woman, he means this ability to love first God and, through His power, our fellows. He means just this for the simple reason that all Eternal virtues and beauties are born out of love.

Worldly endowments may vary greatly, indeed it is part of God's plan that we should each have gifts and talents to use in His service. But the one Divine heritage upon which all beauty is moulded is common to us all.

There is no man (or woman) who does not possess the inner power of the Spirit—the power to be kinder, the power to show mercy, to forgive, and bless, and love his fellows.

This power is the power that leads us upwards into a wider life of joy and blessing and fruitfulness. It is the power that is beyond the reach of the world. None can take it away. Nothing can separate us from the Love of God if we realise that He indwells the very temple of the Soul!

Let us realise that we have all virtues within ourselves. Perhaps many are hidden away—but they are all open to discovery! Perhaps our lives have not been as beautiful as they might have been—*but through the power of Love we can make them beautiful.*

“None has understood you—but I understand you.

None had done justice to you, you have not done justice to yourself,

None but has found you imperfect, I only find no imperfection in you . . .

. . . Whoever you are! Claim your own at any hazard!”

—WALT WHITMAN.

W I N D O W S

The whisper of the voice Divine is calling deep deep to the depths of each Soul. It calls to the best. It calls to the Image of Itself. It is the voice of a Father calling to His child.

Let it be that we may all be still and silent and filled with a sudden inrush of the spirit of love so that we may speak to ourselves and say :—

“ The child is *in you* ”.

THE UNKNOWN QUANTITY

A FRIEND of mine once spoke of what he called "Divine Mathematics".

We are not all poets, and if we imagine that God is only found in poetry, music, and art, we are quite wrong.

The Love of God is everywhere, and the Divine power is waiting in the slums as well as in the countryside. The love of God awaits the business man as well as the dreamer of dreams. And the miracles of life await the mathematician as well as the poet. Even those who are acutely conscious that two and two make four, can discover that, with God, two and two can make five, six, or any number they care to name. The truth of the matter is that life holds an unknown quantity.

We all come to it in time. None can escape it. The years may slip away, but at some moment we are all brought face to face with—the unknown quantity.

Perhaps that moment comes when all life's treasures seem to have fled from our grasp. Perhaps it comes when nothing else remains.

It doesn't always, of course. Some of us first catch the Divine breath when the sun is shining and the birds are singing. Some of us find it in a garden. Some of us find it by a dust-heap, and I think it is in the latter case that this "Divine Mathematics" seems to apply with even greater force.

It is somehow easy in a garden to sense that all things are possible. The blue sky above and the fragrance of flowers are all whispering the truth that life is Divine. The grass and the trees and the colours are all speaking together of Love and Love's pattern.

But on a dust-heap all these lovely things are gone, or seem to be gone. When all that once made life is reduced to dust,

when all hope and all strength and all that was to have been paradise is lying wrecked before our eyes, how, then, can we build another castle out of the ashes?

Well, it *is* possible. Because when we are reduced to negation there is still something left. And out of that Something are we yet able to rise, until the bird that was always singing no longer sings in vain, until the sun that was always shining bestows its warmth upon our beings.

For that Something is the unknown quantity. That Something is the Divine factor that has no limitations. It is falsity to assume that the love of God abides only near to goodness. The part of God's Nature that I know best, is the part that *forgives*. And the love of God abides very near to sin also. His arms are waiting with an especial tenderness for the prodigal son. His love is glowing with an especial warmth near a dust-heap.

No matter of what that heap is composed, no matter how many vile things have made its pile, nor how many mistakes are mingled with the rubbish, it can yet be transformed into the foundations of a new life. Two and two no longer make four with God. The normal process of human arithmetic changes as we leave human laws and turn to the Divine.

Look again at the dust-heap. Look again at the emptiness, the wreckage, or despair. For the shadow of God is moving in the darkness. His hand is ready to repair the wreckage. His love is waiting to fill the empty cup.

There are very beautiful lines that read :

“ One is nearer God's Heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth.”

but I do not think they are strictly true. One may be more conscious of God's love in a garden, but the Eternal Presence is everywhere, and if there could be any special “ nearness ” of

THE UNKNOWN QUANTITY

the unknown quantity, then I must believe it would be at the cross-roads of life when all that was beautiful lies shattered and broken in the dust.

At such a time, if we use the strength we have left, we must face up to one tremendous fact. Life is never empty. No matter how many of our treasures have slipped away, there is always left the unknown quantity that you have found.

THY BOUNTIFUL CARE

“Two worlds are ours; ’tis only sin
Forbids us to descry
The mystic Heav’n and earth within
Plain as the sea and sky.”

—J. KEBLE.

IN the above words we are plainly told that it is only sin that prevents us from seeing Heaven on earth. If what Keble says is true—then it is true for all time. It is true today—even today when, from one aspect, the world is as much unlike Heaven as anything we can imagine.

“Two worlds are ours,” says the poet. One world is the world of chaos and destruction that fills the minds of most people to the exclusion of all else. The other is the everlasting world that cannot be controlled by the Press, by propaganda, or by any temporary prejudices.

It is very easy to see that these two worlds do, in fact, exist. I myself have evidence of both on this table at the present moment.

One piece of evidence is the daily paper which is entirely given over to the sensations of the moment (including the novel effects of the atomic bomb). The other piece of evidence is a volume of Hymns; Ancient and Modern—which is opened at the following words—written over a hundred years ago by Sir R. Grant :

“Thy bountiful care what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
And sweetly distils in the dew and the rain”.

What a difference there is between the two! How important it is that we choose wisely between them! In one world we are beset by fears and darkness. In the other we see Heaven on earth—“plain as the sea and sky”.

THY BOUNTIFUL CARE

But have we any choice? Can we escape the so-called "facts" of the age in which we live? Indeed, ought we to try to escape what may seem to be the obligations of this generation? These questions may well be asked by many.

In the first place, it is quite certain that we have a choice. It is quite impossible for us to live in both worlds at once. Either we must give our attention to the things of the moment—to the exclusion of all else; or we must set our hearts upon the everlasting verities—and come to see the things of the moment as mere shadows that pass eventually into nothingness. We cannot serve God and mammon.

In the second place, nobody can be unaware of the so-called "facts" of this century. To attempt to escape them would be but to bury our heads in the sand. What we must do is to get them in the right perspective, and to come to see them as effects that will disappear the moment the cause has been removed. This also answers the third question. We are not asked to escape our obligations. Rather are we asked to face up to them and to come to see that the greatest work that we can do is to express in our daily lives the beauty and power of God.

Once we are actively engaged upon such a task we come under the direct action of Divine laws, and the laws of the world cease to have any real power over us. This may seem to be a somewhat startling statement to make—but it is only startling to those who have not considered that the power of God is more powerful than men. Indeed, the remarkable thing is that most of us are so blind to this truth.

One evening, I listened to a man of the Merchant Navy broadcasting about his experiences on the sea. He said that the vastness of the oceans and the mighty power of great storms had given him a sense of awe and reverence—a sense of religion. And one of the striking things he said was that there was no sense of hatred in a storm. It was a sense of power—

quite devoid of any hate. No doubt some of us will go even further than our friend. I myself get a tremendous exhilaration out of a storm. For, to me, it always seems to be a manifestation of power that could snuff the earth out as easily as finger and thumb can extinguish the flame of a candle. And yet I know that we are upheld by the same Hand and for this reason I come to see the loving kindness of the Almighty.

“ I see the mountains formed; the oceans thrown
 Into the scooped-out hollows of the land,
 And then—some feathered seed caught up and blown
 And cherished by that same almighty hand!”

The truth is that there is no tongue that can recite the bountiful care of God. The moment we give our attention to *His* world and *His* laws—we come to know for ourselves just what it means.

It is then that we come under the direct influence of the Divine. We know that we are being upheld day by day because our hearts are set on doing God’s work. We know that no other power can hinder us, nor is there any difficulty that we shall not be able to surmount. We know that we are going forward steadily into our heritage.

The love of God is everywhere. Nothing can separate us from it. The little shadows of the world are in themselves but a proof of the brightness of the Light that shines over all. The bountiful care of God is everywhere.

“ O wisdom of the mind of man!
 O learned talk! O ceaseless brain!
 When will ye learn the hidden plan?
 When will ye learn to love again?
 See! How, above thy blindness, shines
 The sun that calls to birth the flowers!
 And threaded through thy life the signs
 Of heaven working out the hours!”

THE OTHER IMPOSTER

A GOOD many people are ready to accept the fact that failure is an imposter. And so it is. The man or woman who looks towards realities is not likely to be shaken by what seems to be disaster or failure. Most of us know what it is to stumble by the way. Most of us have experienced, at some time or another, momentary defeat.

Yes! But these defeats are good for us. As the great preacher Spurgeon once said—"Many men and women owe the grandeur of their lives to the tremendous difficulties they have overcome". It would not do for life to be a primrose path from beginning to end. There are bound to be dark moments, and testing times. But failure gains no hold on one who remains steadfast—looking always to the aim or purpose that beckons at the end of the road.

Yes! Failure is an imposter. Our stumblings do not matter so much as our aims. Apparent failure does not count in the eyes of God, who sees the motive.

"'Tis the purpose undivided
Spite of failure and defeat,
And the dream they dreamed that guided
Through the bitter to the sweet."

But what of the other imposter? What of success? Here is a danger greater by far than any that failure can produce.

Failure comes without any pretence at being other than what it is. Failure has no disguise. All the cards are laid on the table. There are no illusions about it. One can either give in—or go forward again to build something better.

But success is a far more subtle enemy. Success comes as a wolf in sheep's clothing. It comes with all kinds of silken invitations. It whispers compliments in our ears. It points out all our accomplishments. It marvels at all that we have done.

It praises and applauds until we are ready to accept its gullibility.

But make no mistake about it. Success is simply failure in fancy dress! If failure is an imposter—then success is a double imposter. It is the guise that the devil wore when our Lord was tempted. And one can almost hear the vehemence of his words, “Get thee behind me, Satan!”

How foolish should we be if we refused to own our failures and yet claimed our successes!

The truth about it all is that we should learn to be impervious to failure—whether it comes without disguise or whether it comes in the rich garments of success. We should learn to treat both these imposters with contempt—though we would do well to realise that success is more to be feared than failure, since it is infinitely more subtle and dangerous.

The early Christians had little use for failure. They were able to see beyond the arena where the lions waited. They were able to see beyond the judgment of men and beyond the scorn of their kind. The difficulties that were in the way of their faith only served to kindle within their beings the flame of new resolve.

But when the prosecution ceased and recognition came—when the favours of the State were heaped upon them—it was then that many a flame flickered and died down. Failure had not disheartened them. But success—that other imposter—had beaten them in the end.

Happily, of course, there have always been those in whom the flame has never died. And, today, there are still many within the churches who see themselves as servants of God, and who are not blinded by success or disheartened by failure. These are the figures on whom a great responsibility rests, for if the church is to supply the needs of the coming generation it will only do so through those ministers who are never blinded to the fact that they are servants of one God—the

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Father of all humanity—who expresses Himself in many ways and who can never be confined to one creed or one religion—except that religion be life itself.

And, for all of us, there is a need to beware of that other imposter—success. We must remain humble as little children—always passing on all praises to God—always giving Him the credit for anything that might be done with ourselves as instruments—always breathing from our deepest hearts—“for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.”

THOUGHTS ON ORDINARY THINGS

I HAVE just looked up the word "ordinary" in a dictionary, and the definition is given is "usual, common." So, according to such a definition, the ordinary things of life are the usual things, the common things. And in the same way, we might say that the extraordinary things are unusual and uncommon.

For myself, however, I have yet to discover anything in this world that is not extraordinary. If you think right down to the bottom of the matter, all life is quiet incredible. I know that most of us take it all for granted. We live out our seventy years or so in a world of miracles—and turn blind eyes to the wonder of it all.

But what we are pleased to call ordinary things are in actual fact quite miraculous. That is to say—they are entirely beyond our comprehension. Of course, we think we know all about them. We think we understand them. They have become common-place enough, and we have lost any sense of incredulity concerning them.

But have we ever thought about ordinary things? Have we looked at the great chain that binds everything together link by link? Do we understand that all life is one great whole? That nothing is separate from any other thing?

Ordinary things! Why, I laugh in my soul at the thought of men and women using such a term in such a sense!

There is no ordinary thing in the world! Everything is extraordinary! There is no natural thing in the world! Everything is supernatural!

I look round this room in which I am sitting at the present moment (this "ordinary" room) and I see the whole universe displayed before my eyes. I touch the table and I touch all the trees in the world, and their roots are my roots, and their

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branches are raised towards the sun. And the paper on which I am typing, suddenly becomes wood-pulp, and the ink on the typewriter ribbon is known to be carbon and brother to the coal that glows in the grate. And then, I take a breath (an ordinary breath of ordinary air) and I wonder whether I am perhaps breathing some of the same oxygen that passed over the metal of the typewriter during its conversion to steel. Or was it the same air that somebody breathed centuries ago—since purified by the flowers which breathe in what we breathe out? I look round this room and I know that I sit in the centre of the universe—that every part of me is linked indissolubly with every part of everything that is.

I often think of the blind man who was healed by Jesus and of whom it is written :

“ He looked up, and said, ‘ I see men as trees, walking ’. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up; and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.”—St. Mark, 8 : 24.

There is more in this than we may at first imagine. For we, too, are most part blind. And the same touch that healed this man can heal us. The scales fall from our eyes as soon as we have learned to love. For love brings us to the heart of God.

It is when we are trying to measure things in our own wisdom that we see indistinctly. We are not wholly blind. We see “ ordinary ” things. We see the flowers and the sun in the sky, and our fellows walking the earth. But we do not see these things clearly. They are just indistinct objects—without much meaning, and without much beauty.

But the light of God illumines everything. “ Ordinary ” things are caught up in a sudden glory, and are bound together in a Divine wholeness. They become extraordinary. Strangers become brothers. Other people’s problems become

our problems, and their lives become very much related to our lives. In fact, we see that there is only one great life sustaining all, pervading every particle of the swiftly-moving dust that we call "matter", and drawing all things towards a perfect destiny.

It seems to me that it is such a conception of God that alone can enable us to find in life the beauty and the holiness that is always waiting to be found. It is only when we understand that God is the God of the so-called ordinary things that we shall approach each day as conscious of eternity as if it were our last on earth in this body.

We look at the calendar on the wall for the date. But perhaps we see indistinctly. For, with God, the time is always *now*—just as the place is always *here*.

And real religion is surely the brotherhood of man—an experience of your own heart and soul that can take place now in the place where you stand. For the ordinary things of your life are Divine things, and your eyes look out upon miracles, and you yourself are related to every other atom of the universe.

This is the true brotherhood of man. It is something more than a system built upon codes and man-made laws. It means loving because we ourselves are overflowing with the power of God.

We know, at last who we are—and where we are. We strip ourselves of names and terms, and know ourselves to be the instruments of God—as much expressions of His truth and beauty as are the flowers and the wide sky. We are restored, and see every man clearly, and ordinary things become Divine.

This is the point at which religion and life become one. It is the union of heaven and earth.

THE EYES OF LOVE

ALL life is soaked with beauty. The world is alive with power and aflame with glory. The heart of God is in the common ways of life. The wind and the rain are His angels. Each leaf and petal are His messengers. The grass blades sing "Peace on the earth, goodwill towards men". And the face of every flower whispers: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The sun and the stars cry aloud in their moment: "Glory to God in the highest".

Can you not hear the voices of the trees: "Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden, and I will refresh you"? For they are alive with God. You cannot hear their heart-beat? But you shall if you are still enough. You shall feel your own heart beating in tune with the heart of all things.

For all things are upheld by the same power. Under the screen of Nature there is the heart of God and the pulse of the Eternal.

Francis Thompson says:

"Not where the wheeling systems darken
And our benumbed conceiving soars;
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors."

The fish does not climb to find the ocean, says this poet, nor does the eagle plunge to find the air. Nor do we have to seek God anywhere first except within ourselves. We are the children of God and we are surrounded by His love and care as much as the eagle is surrounded by air and the fish by water. True, we have built shutters of clay around our hearts. We have made prisons for ourselves—prisons, of which Oscar Wilde says:

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“ But this I know, and wise it were
If all could know the same;
That every prison that men build
Is built with bricks of shame
And bound with bars lest Christ should see
How men their brothers maim.”

Though these lines were written in another connection, they are very applicable to the prisons that we build for ourselves. For these shutters of clay that Francis Thompson speaks about—they, too, form prisons for ourselves. They, too, are bound with bars because we imagine we can prevent God from knowing how we treat our fellows in thought and word and deed.

And all the time there is the drift of pinions at the very door of our hearts! All the time there are the Angels of God around us!

“ The Angels keep their ancient places.
Turn but a stone and start a wing.
'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces
That miss the many splendoured thing.”

—FRANCIS THOMPSON.

Yes! We have only to turn our stony hearts to discover the wings of compassion. Only to open the floodgates to feel love welling through us.

For all life is soaked with beauty. The world is alive with power and aflame with glory. We can see the Eternal world here before our very eyes—if those eyes are the eyes of love.

For we do not all see the same. Let me quote a lovely little piece of prose that I found in a book a little while ago. It is by the mystic Blake, who was thought by many people to be mad, and it was written in a reply to one of his contemporaries who had declared that his writings were nonsense :

“ Everybody does not see alike. To the eyes of a miser a guinea is far more beautiful than the sun, and a bag worn with the use of money has more beautiful pro-

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portions than a vine filled with grapes. The tree which moves some to tears of joy is, in the eyes of others, only a green thing which stands in the way."

If we want to see the beauty of life we must look with the eyes of beauty. For beauty is a spiritual thing, and the great spiritual law underlying the whole universe is that we can experience only that which we are prepared to give.

God does not withhold any good thing from us. We put up our own shutters. We shut ourselves off from God. The prodigal son chose the wilderness for himself. It was none of his father's choosing. Indeed, his father longed for him to be back home so much that, when he did return, he came running to meet him.

So it is with God and ourselves. We choose the wilderness. We create our own "estranged faces". And, for all our blindness, the trees are still whispering of the Eternal goodness and the flowers are still breathing the perfume of Heaven. The world, the true world of the spirit, is still aflame with glory, pulsing with love and compassion and mercy. Only we cannot see because we are looking at life through darkened windows—the frosted glass of hearts that are cold as stone.

We need the eyes of love to see life as it really is. For the eyes of love are not blind to anything. They can penetrate below the surface into that hidden world behind the stars, behind the pain, behind the shadows of the sun. The eyes of love can see into Heaven itself.

And there they glimpse a beauty that is unutterable. For they see the potentialities of men. They see the hallowed things of God ready for use. They see there the religion of life—something more than any book or any creed.

The true scriptures belong to flesh. Christ is a warm, living spirit to be felt in hands and feet and hearts. God is no concept. God is a reality to be felt, throbbing, burning, surging in you. And whosoever shall fling open the doors of his

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heart in utter surrender shall find God and shall go forth in God's power to bless and heal in wondrous ways. Yes! He shall feel within his soul the sap of the trees and the glow of the stars. He shall stand with his friends and their hearts shall be set burning with new desires and with fresh courage. And wherever that one goes, God shall be witnessed, felt, seen, known. Whosoever shall fling open the doors of his heart in utter surrender shall reflect the glory of God as much as the flaming sunset or the fragrant flower. Except that there shall be a human voice to utter the words of the Divine and there shall be a human hand to touch with the hand of God. And there shall be human eyes—the eyes of love—revealing the very Heart of the Eternal, gazing out upon the world that He has created.

THE NARROW PATH

THERE is only one path to God. There may be many churches, many religions, many names and terms and outward symbols—but there is only one path that leads to the heart of the Eternal.

It is a narrow path, and those who follow it must turn neither to the right nor to the left, for all the side-turnings lead nowhere. But whoever will keep to the single way, determined to follow this path to the end, he shall come to the place of understanding at last.

This path, of course, is a spiritual path. It is not a way that we tread with our feet, for God may be found in town or country, in village or city, in England or Timbuctoo. It does not matter where we are or where we go in the geographical sense. It is not that kind of path. Nor is it a way we express in our habits. Different people have different tastes. They are made differently with susceptibilities and characteristics. Habits do not make the man, nor are they of supreme importance. It is not that kind of path that we have to tread. Nor is it a path revealed in the things we do, or the amount of learning at our command, or in our "social standing". We are not all made the same, and we are given various gifts and talents to use in the service of the world. Some may be called to go into a monastery. Others may be called to give up all possessions. But for the most of us it is a matter of living in the everyday world and of doing the work for which we are most fitted, or even of doing work for which we do not feel to be specially fitted in the hope that we may find opportunity later. Obviously, this narrow path does not narrow the scope of the life of humanity. God does not mean us all to be the same, all to do the same things, all to know the same things, all to be made to a pattern.

God does not say to every flower: "You shall have five petals. You shall grow to a height of two feet. Your blossoms

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shall be white ". He has a destiny for every flower, but they are more than man can number. He has a song for every bird, but who has heard them all? And who shall choose between the slender poplars and the giant oaks, the tall pines and the silver birches?

Yet with all the varied activities of life, there is still this narrow way. And those who follow it come, in time, to a strange paradox. For they are able to see that the narrow way alone leads to the widest view. None are able to understand the mysteries of life except they tread this way. And none are able to see the Whole except their eyes are upon the One. The way that seems so narrow is proved to cover all of space and all of time.

“What is this way? And why is it called narrow?”

It is the way of love. It is the way of the heart.”

It is the way that underlies all other ways, the depths of every creed, the stillness under all arguments, the peace that remains when all quarrelling is done. It is the way that is never barred. If there is a notice up at all, it is surely to the effect that “Trespassers will be greatly blessed ”! It can be followed by all who have the sincerity, the courage, and the humility. There is no entrance fee except the sacrifice of all our selfishness, no entrance examination except the honest inward scrutiny of our own hearts, no reward except the peace of God and the happiness of others. But it is a way that winds among all the beauty in this or any other world. The fountains of all art spring by the wayside and brotherhood waits at the end of the road.

It is not a path that leaves the world behind. It is simply the way of the spirit that transforms the common world and lifts it up to heaven. It is the one path that unifies the whole of life for everybody.

For instance, these words will be read by many different people at different times, and in different circumstances. You

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may be reading it while you are having breakfast, while you are travelling to work, or returning home, or before you go to bed, or while you are in bed. You may be rich in the things of the world; you may be poor. You may be a scholar, or you may have had little chance of education. You may be facing some difficulty or in the process of making some important decision. You may be out of harmony with somebody, perhaps your husband, perhaps your wife, perhaps yourself even. But all these differences are smoothed away and made equal in the light of love. That is why this path is narrow. It is a single solution to every problem, a single way for every way. It is the answer to the suffering world and to the suffering soul.

If you understand these words *with your heart*, then you are at one with all who understand in like manner. More than that, you are in fellowship with them at once and the world is immediately nearer to a saner life in economics, politics and all the rest of it. You think there is no connection between your own soul and these things? Everything is connected! Star is linked to star and tree to tree. You and the things around you are made of the same substance at rock-bottom. You are connected with every stick and stone in the world in which you live. You are your brother's keeper—and your brother is not one human being more than another, not one name more than another, not one form more than another. For the narrow way is what you *give*, how you *serve*, what you *feel*, what you *are* in your inmost soul.

And to those who will walk this narrow way there shall be given the wide inheritance of all the earth and the knowledge of unity with the Goodness that is at the heart of all.

LOOKING INTO OTHER LIVES

ALTHOUGH all life is fundamentally one, it is a strange fact that many of us live in grooves. Our minds are too often capable of perceiving only sections. Our eyes do not look beyond the evidence of their own vision. Our ears hear spoken words or the notes of music—and do not listen to the deep, still undertones that cause all sounds.

To give a few practical examples. We look at the incoming tide but we do not think of the moon, without which few ships could come in and out of harbour. Or we look at the moon, but we do not think of the sun, and we do not realise that city or town, field or farm, is entirely dependent upon its lifegiving heat. We do not perceive that every common street, the houses in which we live or the offices in which we work, are throbbing with sunlight day by day and hour by hour. We look at a tree, but we do not see the wind and the rain. We look at a heap of pears on some street stall, but we do not see the cloud of blossoms in the orchard. We look at one aspect of life, and too often miss all the other aspects to which it is intimately related.

These examples may be carried still further in another direction. We order a meal in some restaurant; but do we see the waitress at work? Do we see her arriving from her unknown home in the mornings? Do we seek in her face for a little glimpse of her own joys or sorrows? Are we looking solely for the meal which we ordered and measuring only the time it takes before it is deposited upon our table? Or do we look also for the spirit of the man or woman who serves us?

When we board an omnibus that is almost empty, do we make sure that we pay the conductor before we go up to the top deck, so that he will not have to climb the stairs solely for our benefit? Do we see him climbing those stairs? Do we understand his daily work? Do we ever glimpse his life?

LOOKING INTO OTHER LIVES

These are only two instances out of the many thousands that go to make up the experience of a year. In all walks of life our fellow beings are spiritual beings; and yet so often are we blind to all that they stand for except that which is intimately related to the work they are doing.

Yet there is all the difference in the world between the one who spends his days in one special compartment, or groove, and the one who understands that every part of life is related to every other part. For one sees the stars as pinpoints of light which appear in the sky on a clear night; while the other sees the Hand of God sustaining billions of worlds immeasurably bigger than our own with an exactitude and power beyond imagination. Or one sees the bus conductor as the man in uniform who collects the fares; while the other sees a fellow soul living in the same universe and with the same need of the knowledge of pity, mercy and love as man has ever had.

The difference between two such outlooks is a fundamental one. In fact, if I may coin a word, it is a fundaspiritual one. For the roots of life go deeper than the mind. The roots of life are to be found within the world of spirit; and until we know this we do not know ourselves.

There are only two approaches to life. We can either apply the things which we see and feel to ourselves, while holding them to be outside ourselves, or we can apply ourselves to the things which we see and feel, knowing that they are within us and that we are within them.

To put this more simply; we can look at a flower as a thing of beauty that is entirely separate from our own life; or we can know within ourselves the same beauty of the flower, the same life which sustains it, the same purpose which draws it to blossom from the seed. We can look at the sun as a ball of fire which rises in the east and sets in the west and that is entirely separate from our own life. Or we can know within ourselves the same Divine fire that gives the sun its power,

the same life which sustains it, the same ordered purpose which draws it across the heavens each day.

The whole matter depends upon whether we are searching within or without. The deep secrets of life are spiritual secrets. No mind can understand them. No learned book or treatise can explain them. No laboratory can dissect them. The deep secret of life is that love is the upholding force of all creation, and this knowledge is the knowledge that needs a heart for its understanding. Moreover, it needs your heart, my heart. It means an inward search on the part of the individual. Religion must become soul-knowledge instead of head-knowledge.

The flowers grow to their grace in silence. They do not care whether ten thousand people say that God is love, or whether a million people say that might is right, or whether ten million people say that the Kingdom of God will come with the sword. They only know that they came to be because of love, and they share their secrets only with those who love them.

So it is with all things animate or inanimate that have within them the spirit of the Lord. The words of the wise mean less to a dog than the touch of the hand of one who loves him. And before the flaming colours of sunset or dawning the learning of the ages gives way to peace that transcends the mind. And while men seek with fervour and with speed for some new system of life that shall ensure peace and harmony throughout all lands—even while they rush hither and thither promulgating this theory or that theory—the very bodies which they inhabit are pulsing with the life of God, and the stones about them are crying aloud the glory of the eternal, and the voice of the universal Christ is saying in every place at every time: “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”.

Day by day the voice of the Eternal would point the search of man inwards—to the potentialities of his own soul.

LOOKING INTO OTHER LIVES

“ Not in the rushes where they sing
By river’s shady shore;
Not by the altars where they bring
The candles and the law;
Not where you think God ought to be,
Not where you search in vain;
The God you seek is near to thee,
Go seek—and seek again.”

Within ourselves we have the key to other lives. For it is within ourselves, and only within ourselves, that we may discover that all life is one. When we have learnt to love, then we are given new eyes which can see below the surface—behind “facts” and forms—into the very heart of things.

“ Shining through this world there is the inner world of Heaven. We can see it bursting forth in colours rich and rare. We can hear it heralded in gentle voices, in the dripping of raindrops, the whispering of trees, or in music; we feel the touch of it in our souls as we take up the warm earth, or as we run fresh grass through our fingers; we can smell the fragrance of it where there are blossoms, or where the perfume of night is stealing under the sky.”*

—(From *The Garden of Silence*.)

Yes, it is true.

And when we have found Heaven within ourselves, then for every meal that we buy in a restaurant we shall give something of Heaven to the waitress. And for every ticket that we buy from a bus conductor we shall give something of the Grace of God to the man who issues it. And for every burden-bearer, young or old, rich or poor, we shall have peace to give away.

From *The Garden of Silence* (H. R. Davenport) 1/6 net.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

THERE is need of light today. Never was there greater need. But it is no use praying that God may bring light to the world. It is not God's will that there should be darkness. One might as well pray to Him for the world's peace—as if to suggest that He ever desires that there should be any lack of peace!

God *is* light. And God *is* peace. Instead of praying that He may bestow upon the world that which He is, let us rather seek to know Him within ourselves that there may be peace and light overflowing from our souls into the souls of others.

God said: "Let there be light, and there was light." That light is not extinguished, nor can the foolish ways of men ever extinguish it. No doubt during the war we would have blacked out the sun if it had been both advantageous and possible. No doubt we would shut out the starlight at night had our puny hands been able to reach so high. Certainly we would have drawn a curtain over the moon. But we could not do these things. God said: "Let there be light; and there was light." And that is all there is to it. The sun shines when it wants to shine—and mankind can do nothing about it. The stars ignored all the grave utterances of wardens, and the moon shed its reflection upon all participants in the human conflict. Even the glow-worm continued to emit the light that God gave her.

But all this is not the heart of the matter; and I want to deal with the glorious inner meaning of these words.

God said: "Let there be light; and there was light."

Mankind cannot alter the purpose of God. The little minds of men and women cannot fathom the Eternal purposes that uphold them (even in their blindness), far less thwart them. For the ways of God are not the ways of the world, and all

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the petty hatreds and prejudices of men die away and fall into nothingness when they come up against that love so vast.

Obviously so much that is taking place in the world today is foreign to the mind of God and to the heart of Christ. But do we imagine for a single moment that our mistakes can divert the plan that God has for the world? Do we really think that the light of God can be shut out by the blindness of mankind?

There is no need for any who love the things of truth and of beauty to be afraid! The light of God remains for ever.

Those who shut the eyes of their souls against it will not alter that fact. Men cannot kill truth or beauty. They may, by their own selfish willing, turn aside from truth and beauty. They may, in the imagination of their hearts, call that true which is untrue, or that beautiful which is not beautiful.

But God's standard of truth and beauty remains for ever. And the flowers will witness it year by year. And the stars will cry it aloud in every velvet sky. And the wind will send it whispering and the trees will echo it. And wherever there is a loving heart, there shall be reflected that which is everlastingly true and beautiful.

Nor will men and women ever be satisfied by any false truth or any half-light. They may own mental allegiance to this or to that, just as they have so often owned mental allegiance to the shapes and forms of the world. But underneath there has always been, and always will be, a heart-cry, a deep impassioned longing for the living waters that alone can destroy thirst.

The human soul longs and cries for the secret of the wind and the rain. It searches every petal for the deeper colour; it strains at the scent of every flower for the deeper perfume; it looks beyond the stars, beneath all shapes and forms—for that truth and beauty which instinctively it knows to be somewhere hidden within the world. It longs to see through the

windows of the eyes of a friend. It searches, searches, day by day, and hour by hour. Yes! I have seen the soul searching in faces that wonder and fear and try to hide the secret.

This is the quest in which humanity is engaged, and the end of the search is the fulfilment of the purposes of God. Therefore we have no need to fear, for there is light waiting eternally, light that will flood the souls of men and women with understanding at last.

Suffering, disease, poverty, crime and hatred—these things so real in some little hour—these things shall pass. The light of God will dissolve them as the light of the sun dissolves the darkness. These things are just about as real as darkness. They are negative things caused by the absence of the sun. Have you ever thought about darkness in this sense? There is no planet in the sky that sheds the rays of darkness. It is a state caused by the *absence* of something—not the *presence* of something.

And so it is with humanity today. Evil is the emptiness of life without God. It is real as darkness is real—but God dissolves evil as the sun dissolves the night. Goodness and mercy and truth will dissolve brutality and revenge and lies in the same manner. And when these things are experienced in men or in nations, then shall there be understanding and light. It would not even be true to say that evil will be recognised as being unreal. The truth is that evil will be put away and forgotten. It will cease to be, even as darkness ceases to be when light comes.

The light of God floods the whole round world now. It permeates all matter. It is the upholding force of all life.

That light is love, and it reaches into the deepest hell and into the very bowels of suffering. We do not always see it. We do not know it in our sorrows. But the very planet on which we struggle and weep is upheld in space by the mighty force of the Love of God.

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We must find it within ourselves. We must throw away the shame and insincerities that have blinded us to truth. And, standing before God, with all our defences down, we must declare in broken humility that henceforward we give our lives into His hands.

Then the light will come. I would swear it if oaths were not meaningless. Whoever will come this way to God—this way of utter surrender and sincerity—that one shall find the light of life, and shall be a revealer of Eternity to all people.

OPPORTUNITY

A MENTAL survey of the world in which we live must lead one to the conclusion that opportunity is by no means available in equal measure to the sons and daughters of the human race. Without doubt, it is often bought and sold. If knowledge is power, then it must be admitted that our system of education has sold power to the wealthy and kept it from the poor. Indeed, this fact is so far admitted to be true that wise steps are now being taken to remedy such an evil.

The writer knows full well the strange inequality that has for so long resulted from man's selfishness and greed. He recognises that to a great extent there has been one law for the rich and another for the poor. And he welcomes and encourages any steps that may be taken to ensure that every child shall be given the best education that the State is capable of providing.

But the laws which govern our world do not lie wholly on the surface, and for every injustice perpetrated by man there is another way of escape to those who will heed the laws of God.

In regard to opportunity, for instance, we are faced with the strange paradox that many who were born in the poorest circumstances have never been held back by the fact that certain doors were closed to them. For every door that man closes, God opens another. The powers of the world may seem to be overwhelmingly strong in the matter of ordering a man's life; but once that man has come to know the power of God he is able to laugh at the very idea that anything can hold him back. The old saying: "Love laughs at locksmith," holds true in the highest sense. The world may buy and sell opportunity in its respectable markets. God gives *His* opportunities with a free hand to as many who are ready to receive them.

OPPORTUNITY

If the opportunity of the world is the sum total of the chances that are given to us in life, then we have to ask ourselves how men like Abraham Lincoln and Charles Dickens ever rose to the top. For the fact remains that no special arrangement of society is strong enough to hold down any individual who knows that the power to rise is within himself. God moves in most mysterious ways to perform His wonders; and one of the mysteries not generally understood by human minds is that He can unlock every door that many may think have been barred.

In the writer's faith (indeed, in his experience) the man or woman who recognises that God guides and provides will find that the doors of life open to him and that opportunity comes at the right time and in ways that cut right at the roots of any social system that may be prevailing. Nothing can stop the progress of the one whose mind is stayed on God. No prison is strong enough to hold him. No decree of man is valid any more. Eventually the tide of circumstances carries him on despite all the would-be hindrances of the world. And this is quite natural. For the whole universe is the servant of the servant of God.

It is for this reason that, while one welcomes every advancement in our social structure or in our educational system, one recognises that the greatest need is for inner strength and inner wisdom. It will be of small use to teach our children the laws of Euclid and the climatic conditions of the earth if we leave them crammed with facts but empty of real wisdom. Let us teach them that opportunity is theirs to make of life what they will under the power of God. Let us teach them that there is wisdom free and waiting in the heart of a flower or a tree; that brotherhood is theirs the moment they learn to be brothers; that they will reap what they sow because this is an inviolable law of the universe.

But such a decision in itself cannot be the result of some meeting of the Board of Education or a similar august body.

It is something that we must first learn for ourselves—something that we cannot help teaching our children once we *have* learned it.

And the thing that we have got to learn is this. Opportunity is intimately related to the Sermon on the Mount. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." If that statement is true, then it means that the opportunities given to us by God are endless. What may seem impossible when viewed from the standpoint of some existing social system becomes possible when viewed through the eyes of Jesus. Knowledge becomes real power when it breaks the limitations of the mind.

God cannot be understood with the mind. "The love of God is broader than the measures of man's mind, and the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind." The man who can see outside the little ways of the world into the heart of the Eternal is the man who becomes aware that opportunity is provided for all that he may have to do in the service of his Creator.

Nothing can hold him down. Nothing can rob him of the opportunities of God.

"The stars come nightly to the sky,
The tidal wave unto the sea;
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,
Can keep my own away from me."

—JOHN BURROUGHS.

That is what he says.

"The waters know their own, and draw
The brook that springs in yonder height;
So flows the good with equal law
Unto the soul of pure delight."

—JOHN BURROUGHS.

That is what he sees.

OPPORTUNITY

Opportunity? Of course there is opportunity for us all every day of our lives. Opportunity to forgive. Opportunity to serve. Opportunity to give to others the signs of the loving heart of God for which they thirst.

The little shams of place of birth, the false distinctions between the silver spoon and the humble home, the empty worth of this school against that one—these things fade into insignificance, especially when the manger and a bed of straw come into the picture.

The dustman's son, we hope, will go to school with the rich man's son if, as somebody has pointed out, the rich man can afford the fees. But let us see that education is not a matter of fees in that sense of the word. It is rather a matter of the price that we are prepared to pay to learn to serve our fellows.

That price is within the reach of rich and poor alike.

For if God has a plan for your life and mine, He will provide the opportunity for its fulfilment.

THE SWEET MYSTERY

SOME of our readers may know the popular song "Ah! Sweet Mystery of Life," the words of which were written by Rida Johnson Young. I believe both melody and words featured in quite another connection in the film of some years ago, and I expect it was then sung by some heroine of almost devastating beauty to a handsome hero at the climax of adventures which were bound to lead to a situation causing acute satisfaction to the audience.

But I also imagine that the words, when originally penned, were intended to relate to the highest kind of love which, of course, transcends all human loves, though it can also include them. And, for this reason, I can never hear this song sung without experiencing an echo in my heart endorsing it all, and saying "Amen!" Consider them:

"Ah! Sweet mystery of life, at last I've found thee,
Ah! I know at last the secret of it all;
All the longing, seeking, striving, waiting, yearning,
The burning hopes, the joy, and idle tears that fall!
For 'tis love, and love alone, the world is seeking,
And 'tis love, and love alone, that can repay,
'Tis the answer, 'tis the end and all of living,
For it is love alone that rules for aye!"

I feel very sure that anybody who has drawn very near to the heart of Christ will have arrived at these conclusions. For the sweet mystery of life, the elusive secret (elusive because it cannot be taken up in hands, nor understood aright even with the mind)—the secret for which humanity has been seeking through the ages—it is love. Not human love, of course, nor any sentimentality without centre and core. But a love that is rooted and grounded in God, a love that stretches out its arms towards beauty and holiness and grace. A love that *must* be expressed in service. Something that no words can contain nor any human mind can comprehend, but that can

THE SWEET MYSTERY

only find its true expression in the complete trinity of soul, mind and body.

We all feel the call of this search at some point or another in our lives. Experience eventually penetrates pride and prejudice and breaks down the barriers for a moment. And then we feel the call of the Eternal and a sense of something drawing us—something mysterious and precious beyond words. It may be a moment alone under the stars. It may be the impact of a stranger (“Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?”). It may be a complete bankruptcy of thought, the crashing of all our plans and schemes. It may be a great loss. It may be suffering. It may be joy. But the precious moment comes. We know that there is a secret in life, a mystery to be solved, an indefinable something that is calling to us night and day.

It is not strange that such a moment should come to us. Christ stands at the door knocking. Prayers are being uttered at every moment somewhere in the world. The flowers and trees are calling. The stars are looking down. The eyes of the animals are pleading, pleading. The great heart of the universe is calling, calling. Souls in darkness are crying out for light. The great search goes on, threaded in a million million lives, and it is not strange that suddenly we should get a glimpse of the purpose of Eternity.

But this glimpse is only the beginning. It is the prelude to the longing, seeking, striving, waiting, yearning, the burning hopes, the joy, and the tears (not all of them idle, by any means) that fall. Knowing instinctively that there is this sweet mystery to be solved, we cannot rest until we have found the truth. And so we search in countless ways. We read the Scriptures. We listen to men and women talking about God. We pray. We study the world about us. We read history, and the lives of others who have gone before. We discuss and argue. We try this method and that. We search and grope for light.

Yet how simple it all is! For, in spite of the many hundreds of different denominations which have different things to say about God, and different methods of approach to recommend; in spite of the many creeds and dogmas which stand on the surface; in spite of the circumstances in which we find ourselves and the very imperfect world in which we live—there is only one key to this secret, only one thing that matters, only one simple truth about God, which, for all its simplicity, goes right to the depths of all human experience and provides us with the solution to every human ill.

It is indeed the answer, the end and all of living, this fact, that it is love, and love alone, the world is seeking, love, and love alone, that can repay!

Our Lord states this fact in no uncertain terms :

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the laws and the prophets”. (Matt. xxii, 37-40).

“But what is Love?” some might ask. We all know. I am convinced that we all know what is meant by love. Our refusal to acknowledge that we know is usually because we are instinctively aware that an allegiance to love means that we must forsake all other things that stand in the way. Love is the motive power behind thought, word or deed that is for the good of others. Love is the driving-force of real service. Love is the power of God Himself, the power that can come into our lives, using our minds and bodies when we take down the barriers of self. Love is the force of the Spirit that flows through us from the reservoir of God when we have become channels for His service.

I have had it pointed out to me that there is something wrong with the idea of being simply “channels”, that this would seem to destroy our individuality. But this is not so.

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Individuality is not destroyed or in any way impaired by our becoming vessels to be filled with God's love. In fact, the very opposite obtains. We must remember that the vessel or channel is itself free. God does not force Himself upon us. God is Love. Love is no dictator. We are free to choose, and we are made strong in the choice to serve. Our individuality, far from being weakened, is strengthened, lifted up, made holy in the service of the highest. Was the individuality of Jesus weakened by His service? Has any soul in the history of the world been weakened in the flame and zeal of love for God? True, the individual seeks the good of all his fellows rather than his own ends. He dedicates his individuality to the community. But this is a free choice which results in the perfect expression of his individual gifts.

We each have a choice to give to the world that love which humanity is seeking. And the sweet mystery of life is solved in our giving. The mistakes and the wrongs of the past are repaid in our service. It is the answer to the quest—that we love one another, even as God has loved us.

A DOG'S LIFE

I SUGGESTED to my dog that he should write this—but he only grunted and stretched himself out in the sunshine as much as to say “Credit me with a bit more sense . . . what’s wrong with the world, anyway?”

Of course, I can see his point of view. He’s earned his little bit of heaven because he has learnt how to love. He is not worried about such questions as the Inequality of Dog Baskets, or Longer Walks Without Leads. His religion seems to be a simple one—to love his master with all his heart and soul—and to bark at the cat next door—entirely due, so he tells me, to the provocation of the cat concerned. Though that’s what we all say. . . .

It seems obvious to me that he is not given to deep thinking—else he would surely see that it is absolutely necessary for us to build a better world on the ashes of the old. Disease needs to be prevented, poverty and slums must be wiped out . . . brotherhood must be brought about on earth, all the energies of men and women must be harnessed to construction . . . poor blind dog basking in the sunshine!

And yet I think he has a lesson for us. For all these problems which need the urgent application of our minds and bodies, talents and energies—they will all be solved only when we, as individuals, become units in the new order of humanity. If we think that we can change the face of life and living by passing resolutions or by putting legal machinery in motion—then we are greatly mistaken.

The only basis of a happy and harmonious human society is in the heart or soul. When a tree is diseased at the roots, it is of little use to spray the dying leaves, nor is it of any value to graft new life upon the old branches.

But when the roots are good—then is the time for the gardener to tend the outward and visible part of his orchard.

A DOG'S LIFE!

Or again, who does not know the futility of hoeing thistles when the roots are left in the ground? One might clear a piece of garden of all weeds—but as long as the invisible roots are there, the labour is in vain.

And that is where we can learn a lesson from my dog. His visible world, which he so enjoys day by day, is entirely dependent upon the invisible part of him which makes him capable of loving those who minister to him. We would hardly keep a wild dog in the house. On the other hand, we could not expect him to be a tame and very lovable creature were we to treat him cruelly. The whole order of the harmony between this dog and those who know him depends entirely upon the invisible force which the Gospels call love, or charity, or God. He gets his daily food and drink, he gets his walks, he gets understanding for all his dumb needs. And we get the pleasure of having him around the place as a companion who refuses to lose faith in us for all our weaknesses and for all our mistakes.

Poor dog? Blind dog? Not a bit of it. We can conceive of no better world than would result from such a relationship between man and man. It is probably the nearest practical expression of Christianity that the world has ever seen or ever will see. It is, in fact, the very heart of Christ—this unutterable love for one another.

And if a dumb creature—with only eyes for language, and with no special gifts such as the Almighty has given to human beings—can believe and trust and serve so whole-heartedly, how much more ought we so to live? If such a state of harmony can be brought about by love one towards another—how tremendously important it is for us to pray that God may renew a right spirit within us! How vital are these roots of life that can give rise to heaven or hell!

My dog does not know many things. His little world is bounded by a gate or, at most, by the limit of his daily walk. He cannot read. He cannot think as we can think. He knows nothing of the tragedy of starving Europe, nothing of

the soul-destroying selfishness of men. He does not know the slavery of gold and the lust for it which has been the enemy of liberty. His mission on earth is a simple one—just to give humanity a living example of faith and of service. He wags his tail while we, too often, wag our tongues.

But we know. Our world has no such limitations. Our thoughts can take us across continents and oceans, through space to the far stars and beyond. We know all the facts of this busy, teeming world, and we have the responsibility which goes with the gifts that God has given us.

God has sent us to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent us to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and to preach *here and now* the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

But how? Can the blind lead the blind? Can we expect to bring about a new and a happier world of men and women by passing laws alone? Is the Kingdom of Heaven a thing to be arrived at by the passing of resolutions? Or by the study of theology?

God forbid—for my dog knows nothing of laws and resolutions—nor is he any theologian—and yet I see that he is often in heaven—if heaven is the place where the soul is filled with joy.

No! The first essential is that we learn to live close to the very heart of God—the God of Love who, operating in us, can make us think and say and do the kind of things that will make this earth a fairer place.

The invisible part of us must come first. The heart must learn to love first. Then, indeed, laws and resolutions, statements and plans will mean something and will come to fruition.

When the hearts of men are reconstructed they will be capable of giving their minds and bodies humbly to the reconstruction of the world. Then we shall have a religion that is something more than a mere term—a living force for good that will embrace the whole of the common life.

THE HEART'S DESIRE

“ Ah Love! could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Remould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!”

THE above lines which are, of course, taken from *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, express something that hundreds of thousands of people must have felt at some time or other in their lives. In fact, it is the way many people must be feeling today. Certainly it seems “a sorry scheme of things” to many—though it must be admitted that mankind has been given the power to “shatter it to bits”—even if the remoulding is a more complicated process!

Yet how very near to the truth was old Omar—if only he had known it! The old Persian philosopher whose mind had become weary of argument—so weary that he had at length given the whole universe up as a bad job and turned to wine as a solace before death sent him to oblivion—he was very, very near to the greatest thing in the world. One can see clearly how very near he was. All through this poem of his (which Fitzgerald has translated so beautifully for us) there is the thread of his final argument. If we were to paraphrase it in simple (though less lovely) language, we would find him saying something like this:

“ I have finished with all arguments as to the Nature of God and the universe. I have had enough of it all. I have listened to the wise wrangling, and I have heard nothing that enlightens me. I cannot understand why we were born, nor where we are going; and nobody else can either. To me there is only one thing that is certain, namely, that everything in the wide world passes away eventually. No matter whether it is beautiful or ugly—it all passes away. We cannot do anything about it. We

are in much the same position as the ball that is kicked from one player to another on the field, or the pawn that is moved from one square to another on the chessboard. We have just about as much say in the matter. Everything is predestined, and nothing that we can say or do will alter it in any way. Whatever the wise may say about it, God made the snake at the same time as He made Eden; therefore man does not need God's forgiveness. Indeed, it is for man to forgive God for His impertinence in creating us and enmeshing us in sin. Therefore, come with me—eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die!"

We shall never know exactly, I fear, whether Omar came to these views because he had been disappointed in love, or whether it was just that his brain had been dulled by all the arguments to which he had both listened and contributed for so long. But the fact remains that he was precisely in the position in which he could best have understood the truth about life if he had but turned his vision inwards instead of outwards.

For consider. In the first place he saw very clearly that all outward things pass away. To use his own words—as translated for us :

“The worldly hope men set their hearts upon
Turns ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
Like snow upon the desert's dusty face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.”

How true all this is! All outward things pass away. All beauty of colour or of form must perish in due time. Today I have gathered a basket of apples from my garden. I remember the time when the tree was aflame with blossom. But the beauty passed and a new beauty came. In wonder and in perfection these apples were formed out of the substance of the material world. This evening some of them were baked. I think they appeared even more beautiful to

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me as I was about to consume them (being very partial to baked apples!). Be that as it may, they have now gone and are in the process of becoming part of my system.

I suppose that most people would say that I have eaten an apple. But the truth is that I have eaten something entirely beyond all human comprehension. Oh yes! I have eaten the sun and the wind and the rain! I have eaten some blossom that once hung upon the tree. I have eaten the very manna of God—that He formed out of the dust for me through a million years! Old Omar was right. Outward things *do* pass away. All of them. Always. But there is another truth which he fails to remark :

“ All things must go to dust from whence they came.
All lovely things must perish and depart.
But even in the dust there is a Name,
And even in the dust there is a Heart!”

It is left to someone like Browning to cry :

“ Fool! All that *is* at all
Lasts ever—past recall!
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure :
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be. . . .”

Again, in the second place, Omar Khayyam had grown tired of all *argument*. How very near he was, then, to the moment of true realisation!

“ Myself when young (he says) did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint and heard great argument
About it and about : but evermore
Came out by the same door as in I went.”

Many of us may have experienced the same kind of thing. After a long discussion about the profounder things of life, we may have been left with the feeling that we are somewhat exhausted, both physically and mentally, and also that we are

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not really any nearer to the truth. It has all been like passing through a revolving door, so that although it might have appeared that we were getting somewhere, yet at the finish we are not one step nearer in actual fact.

I have been through the same experience myself, and though I know that such arguments or discussions need not always be *entirely* worthless, I have found them to be very poor substitutes for the real thing. Always, in my own life, the greatest moments have been moments when no word was spoken save the word of God in my own soul. It may have been out under the wide sky when the sun poured down her gold upon the leaves of Summer. It may have been when, from some upper window, I have looked down upon the night-shapes of a garden under the stars. Very often it has been when other human voices have been sounding in my ears, perhaps insistent with argument, but when my own voice has been stilled and my own mind has become filled with a healing peace. Always, I say, the greatest moments have been when my voice uttered no word save perhaps a whispered word of praise or thanksgiving or peace, and when my own mind thought no thought at all. And out of these experiences has come the knowledge that God is not to be found in argument or in thought, but only in the worship of the soul, the actual communion of the Divine part of us with its true source.

How very near our friend was, then, when he declared that he had finished with argument. And how near he is when he says those words which we have quoted at the beginning. For the truth is that Love is the very key to the whole thing. It is the Heart's Desire. It is that for which the whole world thirsts. It is that for which men seek in a million ways and by a million paths. It is the one solution to all human problems. It is the very means by which we can all "grasp this sorry scheme of things entire", shatter it to bits, and find that it is already remoulded by a Creator whose compassion and wisdom and mercy we had been too blind to see before.

THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME

CHANCE . . . the turn of the wheel . . . the luck of birth . . . fate . . . opportunities missed and gone for ever. Some of us think of life in this way. Some of us use these and similar phrases and like to imagine that the universe is a series of straws in the wind—straws that are blown hither and thither at the will of some power that cannot even control itself. Given a fortune, we could do so much! Given the opportunities of so-and-so, we could live the life that we have always wanted to live! But the winds of chance are blowing. We cannot compete with a fate that dogs our footsteps all the way.

But look again! Look once more at this world of chance, friend. Do you not see the sun rise and set with such precision that the clock on the kitchen mantelpiece has to learn lessons of regularity from it? Or take a blade of grass in your hand and see the haphazard way in which it is thrown together. Or see the Plough set in the heavens. The streets of the city may be noisy, the buses filled with late passengers, the eyes of men and women may be upon the pavements—but the stars are shining up there above them, held in their appointed places by what? Chance? Or see the spider (blind to so much of the knowledge of man) see her spin her web. Look closely at the finished product. Chance? Never was geometrician more exact! Obeying the impulses of the infinite, the insect reveals a perfect order, an order so perfect that its very conception is at present beyond the reach of the minds of men.

Do not talk to me of chance! For every instance that you may give me of chance, I will give you a thousand instances of perfect order. I will point you to the stems of plants that twine always in the same direction. I will show you a snowflake under the microscope, or a drop of dew on the petal of a violet. I will show you the flowers of the world, the

rainbow, the leaves of the woods and forests, the patterned coat of insect or animal, or the rich and perfectly ordered hues of the feathers of birds. More, I will show you order in the vast things as well as in the little things. For the mighty ocean turns about and recedes at the touch of the finger of God. And the whole of human existence swings on the pivot of the sun—the sun that keeps her distance with such exactitude.

Oh, how incredible is the folly of man—man who switches on his wireless to hear the sounds of music from the far distance, man who catches the waft of perfume from the Summer flowers, man who hears the waking birds at song, and who sees the heavens flaming in rare colours, man who is surrounded constantly by ordered miracles too deep for understanding—to talk of chance as though we are straws blowing in the wind!

Have you ever noticed how a bird will often take up a position in the topmost branches of some tree, perching in such a way that it is in perfect symmetry with its surroundings? Or—a more homely illustration—how a cat will very often sit in the exact centre of a carpet? To my mind it is the same thing as the spider spinning its web, or the bee making its cell, or the flower rising to its perfection. There is an infinite mind at work in and through the veins of the world, a mind that produces perfect order and harmony as the witness of its nature.

And what of human lives? Shall we, then, say that we are the victims of chance? Shall we point to the mistakes of this or other generations and say, “God made us like this”, when in our heart of hearts we know that we have used our free-will to follow the devices and desires of our own hearts?

Chance! There is the chance of a lifetime for all of us, yes, for all, for it is never too late nor too early for adjustment. God is a miracle-worker who laughs at the years. Time is of

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no account with the keeper of the keys of Eternity. Whether we have spent five minutes, five years, or fifty years in blindness, sight is still sight. In fact, the longer the darkness, the more precious it may seem to us. When tears are wiped away, it does not matter how many tears there were. When anguish is gone from our hearts, it is the joy that counts, not the memory of the pain. That is why God can adjust the years that greed and folly may have stolen. He turns our hearts and minds from the unreal to the real. He switches the floodlight of His nature on all that is good and pure, and holy, and the rest ceases to be.

We all have the chance of a lifetime. No matter when we were born or where we were born, there is still before us the chance to know that the heart of the universe is good, or God, and to express that goodness in our lives. The chance of being merciful, tolerant, patient, kindly disposed one towards another is ever present with us, no matter how we may try to hide such possibilities by pointing to our special misfortunes. The chance that was with Jesus is with us, else the four Gospels are meaningless jumbles.

But we all know this really. We wrap up this simple truth in a variety of mysteries because we fear too much the awful consequences. We see instinctively that all our prides and prejudices must go. We know that the seemingly easier way of living at the expense of others must disintegrate before our eyes if we are to launch ourselves upon this ocean of the Infinite. We know that there can be no turning back. And we are sore afraid.

Yet could we but understand, we are our own worst enemies. For there is no need to fear, no reason for turning back. The house of worldly desires is only ever built upon the shifting sands of circumstances, whereas the house of heavenly desires is built upon a rock more sure than the foundation of the world.

The God behind life is a God of Love. He is the beauty revealed wherever beauty has shown itself to us. He is the wisdom within all wisdom, and the perfection within all things that are perfect.

A life surrendered to God cannot show a loss of anything worth while. It can reveal only a harmony and a perfection that is the result of making individual purpose fit in with the purpose of the universe. The one who struggles against the purposes of God is like a swimmer who swims against the tide to gain some object that is reflected in a mirror. If only he would turn the other way he would be carried along to the real thing.

Let us resolve never to listen to those who talk as though life consists of chance against which we can do nothing. There is a chance for each one of us—and it is the chance of a lifetime.

When we surrender our own purposes and desires to the desires and purposes of God, then we shall know that certainty has taken the place of chance.

THE BIGGER THING

“He fought rebellious, yet and yet again!
Resisting Life, Jehovah-wise, made war
Till he relinquished all and Love stood there,
The Crucified! To his eternal gain!”

—RICHARD WHITWELL.

THE above lines are expressive of something that happens to everybody, for the author penetrates to the root of all the world's troubles and indicates the only way out. We are given a little cameo of one who “mapped ambitiously his path before”—a course which is succinctly summed-up in the exclamation of “Ah, foolish-wise!” For our own plans and wills have to be broken until they conform to the will of God. In this case, the writer says:

“Till he relinquished all and Love stood there
. . . to his eternal gain!”

If only we would learn always to look for the bigger thing! We busy ourselves in the little schemes and plans of our own making—forgetting the bigger scheme—the bigger plan—that calls and draws us all the time to a life of purity and holiness and sanity. We fix our eyes firmly on the things of the moment—not seeing the eternal purpose that moves among all the purposes of men. We forget, too often, the bigger thing—the fact that we are here in this world in order to learn to love God and our fellows. Nothing less than that. Nothing more than that. For Love is at once sight, wisdom, beauty, and holiness.

We must not be confused, however, between the bigger thing and the value of little things. The bigger thing is the Kingdom of good upon earth. And it is found in every little thing and in all the common ways of life. It is one of the many strange paradoxes that cannot be understood with the mind. Jesus saw the bigger thing in the widow's gift of a farthing. He saw the bigger thing in the act of the woman

who annointed him with precious ointment. He saw the bigger thing in the flowers that grew to perfection without toil, or in the birds that were cared for by the same loving Father who cares for each one of us.

Some who read this might say: "I wonder if this man knows that thousands of birds die of starvation and exposure every year through no fault of men? I wonder if he knows that the 'loving Father' to whom he vaguely refers is responsible for earthquakes, tornadoes, storms, and so on?"

Oh, yes—I *do* know! And I will tell you the truth about it. The truth is that thousands of men and women are killed in every year through the fault of men. That animals are tortured and sacrificed in great numbers every day through the fault of men. That the time to have this problem answered is the moment when you yourself have come face to face with the Bigger Thing. The regeneration of Nature depends upon the regeneration of men. Later on, probably in a very short time, it will be seen and known and understood that a human being is spiritually linked with every particle of the universe—animate—and inanimate. All his thoughts and all his actions have a definite practical effect upon the world round him. Because men think hatred—we get the practical result of bombs. Because men think selfishly—we get the practical results of famine and war. But though many of us are ready to admit that storms wrecked the Spanish Armada, or that the sea was suitably and miraculously calm for the evacuation of Dunkirk or the invasion of Sicily (presumably due to the acts or motives or prayers of men and women)—we do not generally like to associate the activities of humanity with the climatic or natural conditions of the world in which we live. Yet the two are very much related, as will be understood in the course of time.

The truth is that God is Love. It is a spiritual truth, and it can therefore be understood only with the spirit. That is why we must "relinquish all" before we come to it. We

THE BIGGER THING

have to come to the point where we stand face to face with the truth that life is a spiritual matter—and that all its shapes and substances are only passing expressions of one eternal purpose.

Naturally, such a realisation must include ourselves if it is to include anything at all. Therefore, we see ourselves as the instruments of God. We understand at last, that our bodies will grow old and die and go back to the dust, and that all our treasured material possessions are open to the moth and the rust in like manner. But here we are face to face with the Bigger Thing—a purpose upon which we can safely build our lives and stake our all. Love stands there—to our eternal gain—and more, much more—to the joy and peace of all who may contact us during our sojourn here.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

A SPEAKER on the wireless recently remarked that it was a pity there were people who seemed to think that the Sermon on the Mount was complete in itself.

One ventures to suggest, however, that the Sermon on the Mount relates to more of life than many of us understand. If indeed it were understood and practised, there is little doubt but that the world would be made new. It is worth remembering that we are not in a position to declare that the way of Jesus is incomplete until we have tried it for ourselves and have then found something lacking.

From time to time we hear voices raised to declare that the idea of loving our enemies and of returning good for evil, is an idea that falls short of present needs. Yet one sees that a way of life cannot be rightly condemned unless it first be tried and proved useless. Those who have in any degree tried the way of life suggested in the Sermon on the Mount have discovered its truth for themselves. Those who have hungered and thirsted after righteousness have been filled. Those who have been truly humble and meek have in all cases inherited the earth. The pure in heart have indeed found God, close and indwelling and revealed in all things great and small around them.

Admittedly, this is no way of life for those who value worldly power more than the riches of joy and beauty and holiness. It is no way for those who seek to be served. It is no way for those who are concerned more with their own well-being and comfort than with the well-being and comfort of others. The Sermon on the Mount points to a way of love and the opportunity of giving. It shows one how to serve rather than how to be served.

Apart from this, we ought not to regard the Sermon on the Mount as an ordinary human idea, nor as a philosophy of

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

life devised by man to meet man's needs. The writer does not see *man* speaking to the multitudes in these lovely passages that will never be surpassed in human language. He sees Christ speaking to all humanity through all the years of time. This is no human idea. It is a Divine Idea. It is written not only in the printed pages of a Bible but also in the face of every flower, and in the dawn, and in the stars, in the faces of children, and on the parchment of everything that is beautiful. Perchance these words were heard by the wayside back through the years in the day of their utterance, but the sound of them has not died away, nor will it ever be drowned by the tumult of the world. God is eternal in every part of His nature—including His Word. Humanity may listen for ever when God speaks once.

I hear the Sermon on the Mount in music and in children's voices. I hear it when the wind catches the branches of leafy trees. I hear it when raindrops are spattering to earth. I hear it when the lark circles up and up till it is lost in the blue. All things are whispering: "Hallowed be Thy name!" All beauty everywhere declares: "Thy will be done!"

This is a lovely world in which we live. It needs Spring-cleaning—not recreating. God's way is perfect. The system that upholds the stars and chains the sun is perfect. The Mind that beautifies and makes lovely, the Spirit that stirs in all pure art, in all things done for the sake of love—this is perfect, too.

The imperfections of this world are caused only by these thoughts and actions of men and women which are not in harmony with love. And even they are only like the surface movement of restless waters which vanishes away when the heart is stilled.

It is so easy for us to look around and to point to the flaws of the world about us; but if we are really anxious to see things put right, then shall we not begin with ourselves? If

we see men hating each other, and if we think that such things should not be, shall we not resolve that, by example, we shall point the way? Do we put out fire with fire? Can we hope to remove hatred with hatred? Can we teach others to forgive except we ourselves are ready to forgive all?

There are two ways of living which are directly opposed to each other. One begins in the world around us. The other begins in the human soul. The first sees outward things as causes. The second sees inward things as causes. The first works (or tries to work) from without to within. The second works from within to without. One seeks to *receive*. The other seeks to *give*.

Herein lies the secret of successful living. All the time we are seeking to receive we are laying ourselves open to be hurt and bruised by the intervention of circumstances which more often than not come between men and women and their desires. When once our hearts are changed, however, so that we no longer desire to *get*, but rather to *give*, then nothing can come between us and our desires. The riches within are eternal. They are not subject to circumstances. Nothing in the world can come between a man and his soul, as long as that man of his own free will chooses to serve the highest.

Let us then not declare that the Sermon on the Mount is not enough; let us rather seek to draw nearer to the way and the truth and the life that, by our awareness of all that is beautiful, we may be able to reveal to others the Light which can drive away the shadows of the world.

TRUTH

“Truth is the source of every good to gods and men. He who expects to be blessed and fortunate in this world should be a partaker of it from the earliest moment of his life.”

—PLATO.

IT is a fact obvious enough to be admitted by all, that, in this world, some things are true and others false if, as the one necessary ingredient of truth, we demand the quality of everlastingness.

Some things are true for an hour, a day, or a year. Others are true for ever and ever. Some things change with the passing of time. Others do not change, but go on through all time—constant and unalterable.

It may be said that true wisdom consists, in an essential part, of our being able to distinguish between what is true for ever and what is true for an hour and in building the whole fabric of our lives upon the sure foundation of the former.

It would seem incredibly foolish for any man to build his house upon the edge of a cliff where the sea was encroaching year by year. For sooner or later that house must perish. Though the cliff itself might seem substantial enough for a while, the very fact of it being subject to the power of the sea should be a reminder that it had no security.

Yet we do build our lives upon things that change. We pin our hopes upon the crumbling chalk. We seek for happiness in the running sand. We set our hearts upon coloured bubbles that burst at a touch. We strive to possess the things that must one day be taken from us—blind to moth and rust, blind to the stealing fingers of time, blind to the tides of life that do not stay for all our pleadings and our tears. How foolish we are! How foolish we are—when the world is full

of treasures that time cannot touch and that last for ever and for ever!

“Truth is tough. It will not break, like a bubble, at a touch, nay, you may kick it about all day, like a football, and it will be round and full at evening.”

—O. W. HOLMES.

What, in this life, is true in the sense that it lasts for ever? Is the house that I live in a truth for ever? No! The bricks will crumble and the timbers will rot. Is money a truth for ever? No! For, at one time, men bartered their goods and perchance the commonest household articles will one day be made of gold. My soul, in the time when my body lies rotting in the soil, will not benefit by a fortune in some vault. Is anything that I see or touch a truth for ever? No! For do I touch stone? It wears away. Do I touch metal? It rusts, or melts or mingles with some other element till its form is changed. Do I touch water? It escapes into the air. Do I see green leaves or grass? They perish. Do I see flowers? They die. Do I see faces, beloved faces? They fade into the past, or are gone from me. What, then, is true for ever? What endures? What lasts beyond reckoning?

“This is eternal life; a life of everlasting love, showing itself in everlasting good works; and whosoever lives that life, he lives the life of God, and hath eternal life.”

—CHARLES KINGSLEY.

That which is true for ever is a spiritual quality of which all material things are but the passing expressions. If we would live in eternity then we must seek that Spirit. If we dwell with that Spirit, then we dwell with God.

But we cannot seek things spiritual except with our hearts. We cannot truly worship God with our minds, nor yet with the works of our hands.

TRUTH

“God is Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” John 4: 24.

In *Truth!* Yes—there we have the whole secret. Spirit and truth are one and the same. They are both eternal. They both live for ever. All the loveliness at the root of all beautiful things is perpetual. It is the loveliness we ought to seek. It is the foundation upon which we ought to build.

What is lovely save it be composed of love? And when we have love what good quality do we lack? Can we love and yet not pity the weak? Can we love and yet be grasping? Can we love and yet be unforgiving? Can we love and yet be unmerciful? Can we love and yet not serve?

No! For love is God as surely as God is love and, though we are nothing of ourselves, when we are filled with his Spirit, we are used for all good works, guided by Infinite Wisdom, upheld by Eternal Hands and blessed a thousand times until our whole beings thrill with thanksgiving and praise.

There is little reason for despair when we know that we count God as the Keeper of our treasures. For he is a sure guardian. The powers of the world cannot enter his Heaven. The gate thereto will only admit a little child.

LITTLE THINGS

THE Love of God is the flame that shines through earthly things, making them alive and beautiful and shining. In Nature, it is God who floods the evening sky with swift-deepening hues, or who sends the sunlight over the wide meadows to reveal a thousand colours, shadowed or shining, and all miraculously patterned.

But not only in sweeping majesty is God revealed. He shines through little things, and makes His greatest pictures by adding little things together. It is the little snowflake that we see when we gaze upon the grandeur of some Winter scene. Side by side with millions of his fellows, he is perfect in himself, and reflects God's beauty no less than the whole. It is the single leaf, a million times repeated, that sets the distance gleaming green.

The woods would have no carpet were it not for the single little blossom of blue or yellow; the birds would have no song were it not for each little note, clear and definite and perfect.

God loves little things and lives in little things.

And in this vast universe, from the place where we stand to the far star-filled heavens, there are little treasures, little dreams, little thoughts and words and deeds that go to make up one great loveliness beyond all human comprehension.

Many of us, having experienced in our souls the call of the Infinite, are able to know this loveliness and to realise that there is a Divine harmony over all the earth. And because of such knowledge (perhaps experience is a better word) we feel the urge to climb, the need to get above all imperfections into the pure, clear reality of a life transcendent. We long to live at all times in the awareness of beauty and purity and grace.

But is it not a danger, a subtle and oft-experienced drawback, that we are apt to forget little things as we reach out

LITTLE THINGS

to the perfection that is calling? We long for the high hills, the celestial heights of perfect love, and we cannot stop to consider the little things of the daily round!

Yet we must! Those celestial heights are built upon little things. The perfect love of God takes pleasure in the petal as well as in the rose. The mind of God devises the butterfly's wing and the drop of dew as well as the mist-swathed mountains and the gold of dawn.

So, in our lives, if we could climb upwards to the stars, where angels sing and where praise re-echoes over all the world, we must be mindful of little things.

The little words we speak; the little thoughts we let into our minds; the little acts we perform each day; these must be holy, too!

Any perfect thing must be perfect in all its parts. A beautiful life is made up of beautiful moments, little holy moments that take their places in time just as little flowers that grow side by side to make the glory of some garden.

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.”

We cannot neglect the little things and at the same time attain to great spiritual experiences—for if we cannot overcome little temptations how can we expect to be steadfast when larger things assail?

But the most important aspect of “little things” is that we so often miss the opportunities they afford. We are apt to aim too high—little realising that in little things we are given the chance to experience the fullness of joy and to feel the Presence of the Lord just as much as in the great crises of life.

We can become conscious of heaven by gazing at a single leaf or petal or flower—for God lives in little things as well as in great. His Beauty lies behind things and is seen only by looking through matter into the spiritual. A little window can look out upon a vast scene.

In the same way, a little deed, a little thought, a little movement of the heart towards God, can be the key to a moment in Paradise.

But we shall only have eyes for little things as we come to know and experience the presence of Love Divine.

Love is not blind to the little things that matter. Love has her own eyes and they see life in detail as well as in the whole. Love sees little needs and little heartaches; little tasks to be done; little ways of making joy and easing pain.

Love smooths the pillow and the fevered brow. Love says the right word at the right time. Love *knows* intuitively; shines upon little things and builds them into the structure of the days.

By knowing God we know also the little opportunities of real greatness and, like the woman with her two mites, we are able to cast into the treasury of life the tiny offerings that, in God's sight, are greater than human wisdom can understand.

BEING NATURAL

IT may seem a very strange thing to say, but if one could analyse all the troubles of the world it would be found that they were almost entirely due to our inability to live naturally. I do not mean, of course, that we should dispense with clothing and grow our hair long, or that we should leave the world to get on with its own affairs. I simply mean that the miseries of mankind are, in the main, due to our trying to live unnatural lives—saying things we don't mean, thinking things we dare not utter, and doing things in secret that we would never dare to do openly.

Nor is this all. The abnormalities of men and women lie deeper even than that. For it is an even stranger thing that many of us are so concerned with unrealities that we are ashamed to give voice to our best thoughts and to the things which are most precious to our inmost hearts. This hard, matter-of-fact world—that world which Wordsworth says “is too much with us”—has got such a grip on the minds and characters of many of us that we dare not expose the best part of ourselves for fear of what others should think or say. Indeed, a large part of this artificiality is based on fear. Probably if the truth were known a great many hard-boiled business men are quite nice people underneath the surface. It is just that they have to make the outward expression of their very lives fit in with a world of steel and concrete and bowler hats. In this way the best part of their lives remains so often a secret thing that can be expressed only for the benefit of the household dog or the garden on a Saturday afternoon.

This is more than a pity. For we ought to let our light so shine before men that they may see the best part of us and glorify the Father of us all.

Which brings us to another point. It is a far cry from the ordinary world of business, the common street, the ordinary household, to our Father which is in Heaven. And

yet God is in every place. He is no farther from the heart of London than He is from the countryside when the dawn of Summer breaks the shadows of the morning twilight, turning the dew into sparkling gems of beauty. He is no farther from business, education, art, literature, music, and every other walk of life than He is from that moment in our experience when joy wells up into tears or when words die out in a deep, untellable peace. Why, then, should the one part of life be so unnatural and the other part so real?

Where, we may ask, has the beauty gone?

Surely it is because we have tried to divorce certain parts of life from that which ever sustains them no matter how varied may be the flights of imagination in which we choose to indulge.

We have, for example, the religious life, the scientific life, the industrial or commercial life, the home life. Are we blind? Cannot we see that there is only one life? Cannot we see that all life is religion?

Let it be said without hesitation that any distinction between any one part of life and the presence of God is a false distinction, giving rise to false images and even to false edifices.

So unevolved are some men's conceptions of reality that they must see strength in great buildings of granite block, and power in the factories that men have made—and must see it, moreover, as a thing appertaining to man alone.

I do not see this. I see more power in the drooping blade of grass, I see more power in the golden dust of pollen that I have gathered with my finger from a spray of palm. Indeed, I see that all these false images of men and women whether they be expressed in solid granite, or in solid steel or in powerful financial holdings, must pass into nothingness when the sun has risen a few more times.

BEING NATURAL

We cannot separate one part of life from another and at the same time be natural. If we choose to do it, it must only be in the vain imagination of our hearts, and we cannot expect natural results to follow. But wherever life is consciously linked with the eternal there is revealed a progressive purpose and a beauty as natural as the grace of a flower or the flight of a bird.

If we care to look back over the pages of history to the time when a man was hanged for stealing a sheep, or even farther back to when, in these islands, savages painted their bodies with woad, we shall no doubt perceive certain ways of life which seem to us unnatural. And if we could look forward into some city of the future we might find the inhabitants there filled with amazement and amusement at our own peculiarities. We might find them, for instance, telling one another how foolish were the people who, in the twentieth century, lived more for financial profit than for anything else. It is quite certain that they will regard with astonishment our efforts to make life so intensely complicated and unbeautiful and thus creating enormous difficulties which were entirely beyond even the most scholarly among us to solve. And, if any judgment be passed upon us, it will simply be that we did not know, nor understand, how near to us God was all the time!

For it is true. We may hide our hearts from the world, we may toss aside a religious book with scorn, we may pass by on the other side when we meet those in need of compassion or mercy, we may push sentiment out of the way with hard, matter-of-fact words. But the fact remains that the life of God is pulsing within us all the time, that little children are looking to us for the love that makes their world, that the eyes of animals are looking to us in trust or in fear, that every fellow traveller is searching, searching, for understanding all the time.

W I N D O W S

The rain runs down the windows of city offices and suburban homes, the smoke of every factory rises to the wide sky; or, if it is smokeless, the electric power comes from the sun or from the water. Over and under the life of man, natural or unnatural, there is the divine life that is eternal.

It is when we come to build every part of our individual lives upon that which is real for ever that all false images dissolve and disappear. Then, instead of being ashamed of the best that is in us, we see it as our one unchanging purpose to give expression to a greater mind, a greater power, and a greater nature than any we possess. Life, with all its complications, suddenly becomes a natural journey of progression. With that vision which belongs alone to the loving heart we are able to place an exact finger upon that which is real and that which is artificial. And the great problems which had hitherto appeared insoluble become suddenly identified with that which is artificial.

With the clear vision of the soul we are able to see that the face of life is distorted only by the absence of love. Where there is love there is brotherhood, unity, equality at its highest point, harmony, beauty and peace. Where men and women are living natural lives true to the best that is in them, then these things shine forth as beacon lights in a world of darkness.

And the very breath of God is felt in the presence of men as in the presence of mighty trees; and the very peace of God is known in men as it is known in the quiet glory of a garden at the close of day; and the very light of God is seen in the faces of men as it is seen in the uplifted faces of the flowers.

A NUTSHELL PHILOSOPHY

IT is a very good thing to have a "nutshell philosophy", by which I mean some simple rule of life which can be borne in mind and brought to bear on circumstances as they come to us. We all come across such sentences from time to time. It may be something that somebody says, or it may be some few words that we read in a book. Whichever way it happens, we suddenly find ourselves in possession of a thought that is full of vivid meaning; and we usually remember such a thing all our lives.

It has happened to me very many times, especially in regard to the pages of the New Testament. Passages or sentences have suddenly "come alive" for me, so that I have often felt like a blind man who was healed by Jesus and who afterwards said: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I can see". Other thoughts have come, of course, through books or through what others have said to me. And these maxims can be a very great help to us, because they are easy to remember and can come into our minds even when the world presses close and we seem too busy to think about the things that are everlastingly true and real.

Here are one or two thoughts that have helped me tremendously (and still do):

"He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
That dares not put it to the touch
To gain or lose the whole."

I found that on a calendar! It was written by the Earl of Montrose. Then there are these words by the German poet, Goethe. I cannot remember where I first came across them, but I know that I wrote them out on a card which I had standing in my office:

“What you can do—or think you can—begin it!
 Boldness hath genius, power and magic in it.
 Only engage—and then the mind grows heated.
 Begin—and soon your task will be completed!”

Other favourites of mine include the whole of *Waiting* by John Burroughs, the whole of Francis Thompson's poem *The Kingdom of Heaven*, and very many passages from Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra*. (In fact, I once learned the whole of this by heart, because it seemed to me to be full of profound wisdom). Then there is that sonnet by Shakespeare about *Love*. I forget which number it is, but it is the one which begins: “Love is not love that alters, or bends with the remover to remove.” Also, the sayings of Lao Tzse are difficult to forget once they have been truly absorbed.

One could go on adding to such a list, and I expect readers could join me in such an interesting and profitable occupation. But I want to come to the thing I would choose, I think, if I were to proffer advice to any person, young or old, in the form of a “nutshell philosophy”. Here it is:

“Remember always, it is what *you* do to others that matters—not what they do to you.”

This is not very original, of course, for it is only a different rendering of the words of Jesus. But in my own experience I have found that it can serve to keep my heart and mind in harmony with the ways of God.

The moment we begin to consider the actions of others as being of supreme importance, in that moment we begin to lose our balance. And the more idealistic we are the greater the danger becomes, because the more we hate the things that are opposed to our ideals, the more likely are we to identify other struggling souls with the errors to which they give expression.

On the other hand, if we can only remember that it is what we do to others that matters then we shall help the

A NUTSHELL PHILOSOPHY

world along, shedding light on many a dark pathway, and sharing many a burden that may be proving too heavy for our fellow travellers.

But there is much more to it than all this. For we find that as we put such a philosophy to the test in our daily lives we draw nearer to the understanding of ourselves. Gradually our inner consciousness begins to expand as we come to prove the capabilities of the power within us. Dimly at first, and then more and more clearly, we begin to perceive that perfection is near at hand, actually waiting within our own hearts! It is a tremendous realisation. It is a tremendous responsibility, too. It means that we ourselves can, by the grace of God, offer the world perfection. It means that we can offer the world the one thing that it is looking for—light in darkness and peace amid distraction.

Perhaps, before, we had imagined that life in the world had its foundation on the things that moved outside the windows of our eyes? Perhaps we thought that "life" consisted of the shapes and sounds that came to us as the result of our five senses?

But now we see that the very opposite is true. It is what we ourselves see and know and come to experience when eyes are shut and minds are stilled and bodies are forgotten. It is the sixth sense—the "soul-sense" that creates all other senses; creates them, and holds them together, just as it holds together the great world and the stars that stream in majestic procession through the universe.

"Know yourself", said the old philosopher—and what wisdom he crammed into those two words! You cannot get to know yourself properly without coming to the feet of God! For we may think at first that *we* have something to give to the world. We may think that *we* are shedding pity and mercy and love and peace upon the shadows that are around us. But in due time we understand. And then we die.

W I N D O W S

Yes! We die! And, because we die, we find ourselves truly alive.

I can see now, as clearly as if I were there, a certain village spring I knew as a boy. I often used to lie beside it on a hot day, and I loved to watch the water rising, with many little bubbles, through the sand at the bottom. It seemed so beautiful to me then.

And it seems beautiful now. For I still see the water rising. And it is the Living Water that enters this world through a million springs. I see it rising, rising, in the faces of the flowers; I hear it bubbling from the throat of a bird; I see it poured out in the faces of little children; it flows from the stars and it paints the sky at dawn; it is the sole supply of beauty and of goodness for the world.

It is the one thing we are all seeking. And we shall only find it if we search within ourselves. If we cannot find it there we shall not find it anywhere.

THE CHANGELESS DUTY

THE visible world and all that belongs to it is subject to change. The seasons come and go and all living things are influenced by the mighty powers of sun and wind and rain. The world of matter is interchangeable, and all the time there is a vast movement in operation—a movement by means of which a substance adds to itself the substance of other things or gives to other things the substance of itself.

For instance, if one leaves a piece of iron in the open air it will soon rust. Solid metal has crumbled under the mighty forces which are always in operation. The scientist would call it “chemical action”. And because of this it is not only possible, but highly probable, that the rosy colour in the cheeks of some child once constituted part of an iron girder in some building. Such a startling fact can give rise to profitable thought. For one can discern that the unseen is more powerful than that which is visible, and the contemplation of such a fact can do much to bring us nearer to the very heart of life. Once there, we are able to understand that the outward changes of life do not affect the inner reality. The tree grows from its seed, springs to leaf and blossom, and finally passes into decay. The mighty stones of buildings lose their symmetry and begin to crumble under the powerful influence of climatic conditions. Air, heat and water are all the time exerting their powers upon all things animate or inanimate, from sticks and stones to plants and human beings.

“ God made the dust; and though its form may move
From light to shadow or from life to grave,
The change is all within a changeless Love,
Like waters that remain beneath the wave.”

Yes! It is so. Inside this world of ours there is a changelessness. It is the truth that remains the same yesterday, today and for ever. And it may be said that when we come face to face with this power which men call God, then we find it

possible to base our lives upon the changeless duty. During the war years we heard much of the need for service in one way or other. It was drummed into our ears day by day—almost hour by hour—and it would seem that a sudden need had arisen for men and women everywhere to do their duty to their fellow men. These facts, however, do not constitute anything fresh to those who have come to know that life is based upon spiritual values rather than upon material things. They have always been aware that there is a changeless duty in life. We should not need a war to convince us of these things. Unhappily, it would seem that many people need the power of high explosives to jolt them up and bring them to themselves. This is not God's will, however, and never will be. His will is love, and He will never force His children to do His will. He just lets them go their own way—into the wilderness even if they want to. He lets them rob and steal, commit murders, or indulge in wars. He allows them to put their whole trust in gold, or in force of arms, or in physical strength, or in princes, or in other men. He lets them do all manner of infamous deeds. But one thing He will not let them do. He will not let them stray beyond His Love and care!

No! Whether they go down into some hell of their own choosing—or whether they take the wings of the morning—the Divine Love that is at the centre of life, this goes with them. No man can escape God.

Ah! It is a lovely thing, this knowledge of the presence of God. I look up, and I see the stars floating in the skies above all the foolishness of men. No matter what the deed, no matter how vile, still the stars retain their calm.

“Over all the blind world's crying,
 Over city, field or farm,
 Human purpose born or dying,
 Still the stars retain their calm.”

THE CHANGELESS DUTY

There is a changelessness at back of all our changes. There is a love behind all our pain. There is a light overshadowing all our darkness—and a glory where the road ends. Praise God for it! Nothing is lost. No dream of the human heart that was good is ever finally broken. God is love. There's the beginning and there's the end of everything!

But let no man or woman think that it is necessary for each one of us to explore the worst parts of our own human nature before we can come to the Divine Nature which is of God. It is not necessary for us all to wander away into the wilderness. It is necessary for some who possess strong wills that are not identified with the will of God. It is necessary, then, of course, that those wills must be finally broken down. God does not do this in a direct sense. We do it ourselves. We wander away, like the prodigal son, quite, quite sure that we know better than our Father. And it isn't until we come to the husks that we really find ourselves and turn our faces once more towards home.

But if we would avoid all this needless suffering and pain, then it is for us to turn our attention to the Changelessness that is at the back of all changes. God is love, and beauty and truth and all the fine and splendid things of life rolled into one. God is the power behind all visible beauty. God is the spirit of goodness that pervades the universe and beyond. He is the very life in us. Our bodies are His instruments, and we ourselves are spiritual beings whether we know it or not.

When we have learned to silence the noise of the world by this inward retirement into things, then we come very close to God. It is possible to feel all about us the magic touch of His love. A great peace seems to wrap itself around us—and all the worries and cares and illusions disappear. In the midst of such a peace we become aware of the changelessness of God and, what is more, of our *changeless duty* in this world. To love and to serve. To give each day in every way the treasure

without price that all men are seeking. To shed around us in all our ways the blessing of Love Divine.

Yes! That is the changeless duty. In the peace of prayer it seems so clear. In the quiet place of the human heart or soul it seems so real.

But what of tomorrow? What of the busy street and the crowded bus, the queue, the office, and the home? Is it to be lost, then, this vision, this precious loveliness that seemed so real in prayer? Is it just something for the quiet moments of meditation—something that cannot be taken out into the world of teeming multitudes?

If it is, friend, then it is not the Christ I know, nor is it the redeeming Saviour of the world. A changeless duty is a changeless duty—that is the first and final word about it.

Oh, it will last through all our stumblings and our failures, be sure of that! But let us try to cling to it at all times. Let us try to make it the foundation to the whole structure of our lives—not just one little room set apart from all the others.

For though one who prays sincerely is helping the whole world more than he may understand, yet one whose life is a prayer—this one brings the gold of heaven to transform the greyness of the world.

ON SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

WE have already quoted some words by Goethe which show a deep and true insight into human experience.

“What you can do, or think you can—Begin it!
Boldness hath genius, power and magic in it.
Only engage—and then the mind grows heated;
Begin!—and soon your task will be completed.”

It is probable that there have been many failures through just the lack of beginning. For it is the start of an effort that cannot be neglected if anything is to be achieved. A man may conceive a fine house, and talk about it, and draw up plans. but his dream only begins to come true when the first foundations are being dug. And that man will rejoice when he sees that a start has been made.

These words of Goethe apply to any department of life—but especially to the spiritual quest. For we can read in many places of the kind of life that is possible to us. It is comparatively easy to conceive perfection. But before dreams may be realised, a practical step must be taken, a start must be made, and the words of the poet must be accepted and obeyed.

“What you can do, or think you can—Begin it!”

Our Lord is most emphatic upon the necessity of our doing what He teaches. So much so that He illustrates the difference between two men who build houses, one upon the sand, the other upon a rock. The first is he who hears—but never begins; the second is he who hears—and obeys.

The spiritual life has to be a series of new beginnings. For the higher we climb, the wider becomes the view—until we reach that point where our view becomes nothing less than the inward sight of Holiness everywhere—Holiness that sees and knows all things.

But such progress can never be except we make new beginnings. And in things spiritual, such beginnings must be

spiritual, too. More often than not it is just a tiny movement of the heart from anger to love, from resentment to forgiveness, from callousness to pity—it is such a little movement that can make all the difference between unrest and peace, between heaven and hell.

The stars are often in the night-sky—but we do not see them unless we lift our eyes. The trees “that lift their leafy arms to pray” pass unobserved except we pause to watch their beauty. The bird that sings so joyously is never heard unless we cease the sound of our own voices to listen. Such little movements are ever the introduction to beauty.

And in our lives, too, we cannot experience the beauty of spiritual things unless we make those little movements of the heart that mark the beginnings of all true progress.

How often do we read of the peace and abundant joy that comes of returning good for evil? And yet how easy it is for us to miss the opportunity of putting such mental knowledge into practical heartfelt experience! “It is more blessed to give than to receive”, we are told. And sometimes we have this truth brought home to us in our experience. But life itself can become wholly a matter of giving did we but know it. For there is ever held out before us the prospect of what is possible to us in the power of the Lord.

A moment's quietness with God can make a whole day holy. A little time of prayer can set an Angel over our minds, changing the words we utter and the thoughts we think, and the deeds we do, into holy things. For Heaven is ever ready to drop her still dews of quietness if we will but spend a few moments in a quiet receptive mood.

And here we come to the heart of the matter. For it seems that if we are to progress spiritually, we must take into our lives a power that is beyond all human power, and a peace that is at the back of all Nature, and a harmony that chains the star and draws the tides. And before we can hope to do this,

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we must be still and let go all our willing and even all our thinking. Beyond all thought there is a realm of feeling—a realm of spirit, pure and powerful. It is love, the love that the birds make into music, the love that the flowers reveal in their blossom-time, the love that falls in the rain and is caught up in the wind, and that peeps through material things in such a way that all who watch can only name it Beautiful. More than once this Love has made the human form Divine. The cross of Calvary or the death of Stephen are moments known to us when something more than human nature uttered forgiveness in the face of injustice. And this Spirit—the unchanging Christ—is with us always, even to the end of the world. If only we will be still, if only we will catch, out of the unseen, the beauty that drips from Heaven as the dew that silently sets the grass in shining silver—how lovely a thing life can become!

Is such a dream to remain a dream for ever? Or shall we not see that it needs for its achievement a practical effort—the effort of being still, the effort of putting into practice the Spirit of the Lord?

We know that the poet will forgive us if we take his meaning and lift it into Heavenly realms.

“What you can be (in the power of God), or think you can.
—Begin it!
Boldness hath genius, power and magic in it.
Only engage—and then the mind grows heated;
Begin—and soon your task will be completed!”

THE TERMS OF LIFE

IN algebra it is usual to call an unknown quantity x . In ordinary living, however, we use so many terms to describe manifestations of the same things that we too often lose sight of the unknown quantity to which we are referring.

In this room in which I write there are at the moment many kinds of flowers, including Larkspur, Phlox, Gladioli, Dahlias, Cornflowers, Candytuft, Lavender, Roses, Antirrhinums, and Sweet Peas. These terms are, of course, very useful in order that we may distinguish one variety from another, but when I look deep into the heart of the flowers I find the same thing. It is something nameless—something beyond the reach of terms. It is something eternal that reveals itself in every flower, no matter what the colour, shape, or scent.

In the same way we might look at the world of Nature and come to a million terms. There are the words to describe the parts of time, such as dawn, dusk, noon, morning, evening, and afternoon. In Devonshire the dusk is called the "dimsy". In France the night is called "la nuit". In Spain the word for tomorrow is "manana". Terms and names are but symbols of reality. We may look into the star-spangled sky and find the same nameless something that pervades the presence of the flowers. Or we may see in a drop of dew or the strand of a spider's web the same wisdom and power that drives the universe with a mighty hand.

Under the terms of life we come to the reality that eludes words. Under the doctrines and the creeds of the many religions of the world we come to the one Spirit of the Lord in all humanity. Back of the dumb eyes of tamed creatures I see a deeper wordlessness that my voice and vocabulary cannot express either. Yes, even under the wild, even behind the glaring, fiery eyes that gleam in the jungle, I see the same stillness, feel the same peace, contact the same joy and sanity and love, just as I know that the Kingdom of Heaven lies back

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of man's wildness and man's hatred of his kind.

Terms have their uses, but they must be used aright. They must not be taken for more than symbols. I call my dog Barry, but his soul has no name. The three letters that go to make the word "dog" signify something quite nameless when they are arranged in reverse order. . . .

So, in this life, all terms are but pointers to the eternal. We need to get beneath them and to find the spirit that is the same all the world over—in any language and in any clime. We need to come to the still beauty that is waiting during every lovely hour of life.

I know that it is easy to come to this beauty at certain moments. I remember the sun sinking behind the meadow that bordered the garden in which I first learned to know God as a child. After a hot day the air was full of mingled scents and the birds were sounding their praises in the cool of evening. The trees seemed to whisper then, and I remember the late bees working overtime without thought of reward. They knew as little of trade unions as I did. And I remember the horses thundering round that meadow in the exhilaration of freedom. Or the scent of burning leaves in the autumn. Or the sound of the crackle of wood on the brewhouse fire where the smoke ascended up through the great chimney. That garden with all its terms and names is burnt on my soul with a thousand other scenes. A scent will take me back again across the years. A sound will break the barriers of time.

But life demands more than just the moment of self-paradise. We are given these signs and these great soul-stirring experiences in order that we may come to know the Goodness that is at the heart of all. And then we are asked to live that goodness out in service so that others may come to share the Heaven that is never very far away.

Having broken through the crust of terms, having pierced the screen of Nature, we arrive at the spiritual reality that sus-

tains all life. Under the shapes we find the spirit. Under the forms we find a fellowship with all things. But the matter does not stop there. That is only the beginning. It is not enough to find for oneself a state of paradise and then to forget the world. Indeed, the true meaning of paradise can only come to its fulfilment in service. What is needed is a balance between Heaven and the world, with a distinct emphasis on Heaven. Or, if you like, a balance between spirit and matter, with a distinct emphasis on spirit.

I remember once, when I had been saying at a meeting that we must first get beneath all terms and find the peace that is at the heart of life (I quoted Dryden: "Errors, like straws, upon the surface blow; he who would search for pearls must dive below"), a certain professor said that I reminded him of the captain of a ship who said to a woman during a great storm: "Madam, twenty fathoms below the boat there is peace." He pointed out that we were concerned with the things happening on the surface—with what he called realities.

But there is another story that our friend seemed to have forgotten—another story about a boat in a storm and fearful passengers:

"And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow. And they awake him, and they say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?"

"And he rose . . . and said . . . Peace, be still and there was a great calm."

There we have the balance between spirit and matter, or heaven and the world. While the storm raged there was deep peace in the heart of Jesus. He had broken through all terms. Under the wind, the waves, the storm, the boat, the ocean, He had come face to face with the peace of the spirit.

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Probably He had found that peace and that reality "twenty fathoms" below the surface life of humanity. Certainly He had only come to experience it deep down within Himself. But the point is that He had brought the peace to the surface again—bringing its magic touch to bear upon the sick and the broken-hearted and the fearful. With heaven in His heart He walked the ways of the world.

And we are asked to follow that way. It is the only way, the only truth, and the only life.

We are asked to make our prayers more than words and our lives more than thoughts and deeds. We are spiritual beings dwelling in a spiritual world, and only the ignorance of our true selves separates us from harmony and peace beyond the understanding of the mind.

But, having once discovered our true identity, we are at the starting-point rather than at the end. It is then that we are called to the service of Good. We are asked to bring that magic touch to bear upon all names and terms—to walk the surface of the world with the knowledge of the depths of the universe welling up in our hearts. We must bring the kingdom of heaven up against the Kingdom of the world, that the two may become one and that terms may cease to withhold from us the knowledge of the unity that is at the heart of life.

OUR BEST MOMENTS

SOMETIMES it is very difficult to write down in words exactly what I feel. There is a sense of inadequacy—the knowledge that all the great truths of life cannot be put into language at all. Indeed, were it not for the fact that I believe words can contain something else besides the *sense* of what they express—then I think I would lay down my pen for ever.

But words, even at best, are only symbols. The deeds of men and women are only symbols. The words we speak and the thoughts we think—they are all but symbols—little passing signs of what we are.

It is for this very reason that, in our best moments, we find ourselves wordless and the sense of inadequacy presses close. But the lovely paradox is clear. For, at such times, we ourselves are living expressions of the Divine.

At such moments our conceptions of God are changed into realisations. We cease to speak about God—we speak *for* Him. We cease to act as if we would please God—we act *for Him*. We become ministers—all of us—no matter who we are, or where we are. For our best moments are the moments when we are filled with love.

It does not matter, then, what we have called our religion, nor in what terms we have spoken of God, nor in what way we have worshipped Him. It does not matter what nationality we may claim, nor what colour our skin may be. When love comes to the soul—then all the outward shells of the world are broken into—and we suddenly live from the heart. We suddenly know the real meaning of life, and all the limitations of the world fall away.

Do you see what I mean? In our best moments we reach a divine equality. The person with the finest education possible becomes wordless. Therefore the person with no education at

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all attains to the same eloquence. Those two persons, filled with love, are one and the same. Silk and rags are alike to the soul. Wealth and poverty both become imposters. Failures and success dissolve into nothingness.

In our best moments there comes to us the inflowing breath of the Divine. And at that point all argument dies, all the niceties of human logic wither away. The fears of the world (which are only ever based on our desires to cling to the outward and invisible beauty) are entirely dissolved in the awareness that we have a present and immediate access to all the beauty that ever is, has been, or will be.

I remember once, many years ago now, walking home along a silent and deserted street late at night—or rather early in the morning. There is a strange beauty in the night. Even in a town there is a strange beauty, full of a certain wistfulness. And I remember, on this night, as I looked at the houses and saw the windows and the tiled roofs shining in the starlight, and even the surface of the road glistening with the radiance that came through space, I fell to thinking of the people who slept, of the voices that were stilled, of the prayers that had gone up from all those dwelling places. And quite suddenly I saw that the street was the whole world, and that the love of God was shining down upon it, not only at that moment, but always—every day, every hour, every minute of time. And I wept with joy. And at that moment it did not matter who I was, or where I was. It did not matter whether I had twopence in my pocket or a thousand pounds in the bank. I was quite suddenly transformed into a nameless servant of the universe.

Such an experience may, at first, seem to have no practical value. But it is not so. For such moments are quite unforgettable. They lift us up to God, and life can never be quite the same afterwards. Out of the womb of such moments are born the greatest deeds performed by men and women.

But the great point about such moments is this. They lead to freedom.

It is a mistake to think that we are bound by forces outside ourselves. The truth is that we are bound by our own desires, limited by the smallness of our own viewpoints, imprisoned by the frontiers we have ourselves created.

It is when we have lifted up our hearts to the knowledge of the presence of God—it is then that we see things as they really are, it is then that we become free. It is the freedom that Jesus taught. It is the freedom that he brought in his own soul.

Face to face with his loving heart—men and women found their best moments. And for many it was an experience that remained throughout their lives. And down the years there have been many who have come face to face with God like that. Quite suddenly, they have seen the world the way Jesus saw it—as something to live for, to bless, and to heal.

Yes! I think perhaps that is the key to the whole thing. Most of us live *in* the world. But in our best moments we live *for* it.

BUILDING YOUR OWN WORLD

DAY in, day out, you are building your own world. Whoever you are, wherever you are, there is a ceaseless movement going on—and you are attracting to yourself those things which belong to you.

In the world of your own heart there is a constant creation, and today you are building your tomorrows. All the time you are searching for something—and you are bound to find that for which you search. Nothing can keep it from you. Nothing can withstand the mighty forces of the soul.

We build up around us certain spiritual characteristics. Whether we claim to be spiritual beings or whether we do not makes no difference at all to what we are. The one who hates builds bricks of hate into his own life. The one who loves is paving the streets of the days to come with love. The one who gives shall find that life gives freely. The one who grasps shall find that the lovely things of life are snatched away by an unseen hand.

What things do you treasure? Consider—what things last to the grave and after? Is there not a gold other than the wealth of the world? Is there not a secret place to your heart in which are stored more precious things than all the contents of your home? Are there not qualities for which the world is thirsting, gifts that no money can buy? Perhaps you are poor—yet you can still *give away* these gifts!

The richest gifts in all the world are yours for the taking. The finest things of life are ready for you to use. The qualities that all men might envy, the wisdom that no school or college can teach, the treasures that are not for sale in the market place—all these are yours—you can take them and build them into your life—whoever you are—wherever you are.

No matter what you have been—you can still be what you might have been! No matter how many wrong turnings you

have taken—there is still the way, the truth, and the life for you!

In order to attain any real peace or lasting joy the deep heart of a man or woman must be concerned with giving rather than with getting—with service rather than with self. Service by the people for God and their fellows is the definition of a true democracy.

Many people do not understand how they are building their own worlds day by day, nor how mighty are the forces which they themselves are using to determine their future days on this earth.

I say “on this earth” deliberately—for I am concerned first and foremost with this earth. It is very near to heaven, did we but know it. In fact, we only want peace in the hearts of the people, service as the keynote of living, and love as the vision and inspiration of humanity—and we would find heaven on earth.

Those who say the Lord's Prayer like parrots repeating a well-worn phrase are not fit for the kingdom of heaven and cannot know how near it is. But those who say this lovely prayer with all their hearts—those who dare not utter the words “and forgive us our trespasses” until they have forgiven those who have trespassed against them; those who are prepared to act upon the will of God after saying “Thy will be done”—these are the builders of the new world—these are they who shall be blessed of God in the common ways of their lives.

But to return to our subject—we are attracting into our lives the people and circumstances which find an echo in our hearts. The friends we seek are seeking us. The forces we give out are the very forces that shall be returned an hundred-fold. If we give out hate—then we shall get back hate. If we give out love—then we shall get back love. In both cases we do not look for the same reward—but in both cases it comes unfailingly.

BUILDING YOUR OWN WORLD

The man who hates does not want hate returned—but it is returned in many of his contacts, in his circumstances, and in the ways of his life. It is the thing he recognises more easily than anything else. The man who serves does not want service returned—but it is returned in many of his contacts, in his circumstances, and in the ways of his life. We reap as we sow. We recognise in the world about us that which we have come to know within ourselves.

But this matter goes deeper than many of us imagine. It touches the very central part of life—the core of this ordered universe.

Perhaps you have a garden? Perhaps you have peas that needs sticks? Have they asked you for sticks? Have they spoken their need? No—they reach out tendrils, unseeing, unspeaking tendrils—and sticks are put within their reach by human hands. Perhaps that does not seem so marvellous to you. But it would if you knew that such is the case in our human lives. Our souls reach out into the unseen, and our needs are known even before they pass through the process of thought. And the things we need are put within our reach. Stairs to climb or stairs to descend. A ladder into heaven or a ladder into hell.

“The stars come nightly to the sky;
The tidal wave comes to the sea;
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,
Can keep my own away from me.”

—BURROUGHS.

These lines apply to you whether you are a double-crossing schemer or whether you are a servant of God. Nothing can keep your own away from you. You are building your own world day by day.

I like to think that some readers are sinners. I like to think that some of them have made some big mistakes and that, if they haven't murdered somebody, or committed adultery—

they've at least told a few lies, or swindled somebody, or held thoughts of resentment, or lost their temper from time to time. Because that puts us on common grounds right away—and it means that we are the kind of builders that are going to ring all the chimes of heaven. If ever I had a church of my own, I think I should put up a notice pointing out that sinners were especially welcome.

We are a prodigal society, and most of us have been building with bricks of shame. Let us take the holy gifts of God—the qualities of mercy, forgiveness and love—and build the holy city—first in our own hearts and then in the lives of those around us.

THE ONE THING WORTH SEEKING

IN human lives there are many quests. We dream our dreams and follow them, sometimes reaching achievement, sometimes finding that the forces of life are against us or that missed opportunities never return.

Human purposes are varied because we seek in the outer world that which we have found within our hearts. The miser sees money as the key to happiness, while others see a different gold—the gold of the spirit—as the treasure that does not fade.

It may be said with truth that the worth of any human purpose or achievement depends upon how permanent it is. The miser's gold may be stolen or lost. Human power may be broken in a thousand ways. The key to permanent happiness and peace cannot be found alone in the things that change and decay. The one thing worth seeking must be something that will last—something against which the powers of the world are of no avail.

Where shall we look for this strange elusive secret? Can science tell us? One doubts it—yet. Although she is fast arriving at the secret, and it is probable that her conclusions will lead her to that which we are about to affirm. But it would be a sad position for many of us if the Creator had hidden the secret of human happiness and peace in the involved pages of scientific text-books. Many of us haven't the brain to study them. And the most advanced scientist in the world would be even more ready than his colleagues to declare that the universe keeps a thousand secrets for every one she reveals.

Where, then, shall we look? Is there some other place in which the secrets of life are hidden? Is there some other key—open to all of us—rich or poor, high or low?

We affirm that life may be understood in its entirety when we have found the one thing worth seeking—love to God and

to our fellow-men. We affirm that love is the very life of this and every other universe—the very power that upholds each one of us from day to day.

We cannot prove the truth of this statement—for the proof can only be found in personal experience. But to those who pretend to be realists and who are always saying that they want proof of anything before they will believe—I would point out that they are in the habit of taking for granted a thousand other things which have never been proved—and that it is far more probable that they believe only those things which they want to believe.

Statements made in the newspapers—in this and in other countries—are accepted as true by vast numbers of thinking people, though if a world summary could be taken of them it is probable that half of them would contradict each other. Or, on the other hand, if we are told that there will be an eclipse of the sun at a certain time on a certain day—we believe it. If we are told that the brontasaurus lived in pre-historic times—we believe it. Why? Because we think somebody else must have proved the matter beyond doubt. Even so, we are slow to believe unless we want to believe. It is not so long in history since Gallileo was tortured for saying that the world was round instead of flat, nor since Jesus was crucified for saying that God was love and dwelt in his own soul. And though thousands of our fellows have proved this matter for themselves—though proof is waiting for any who care to put the matter to the test—we are still slow to believe. Why?

Surely it is because we instinctively know that the way of love means the surrender of so many of our own illusory powers. The one thing worth seeking makes so many other things worthless. Revenge, for instance. How many of us think, in ways great or small, that we are “scoring a point” in retaliation? We receive a hard word and give back a harder one. We are stirred up to hit back, to give cruelty for cruelty, resentment for resentment. But what a child’s game

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it all seems when we have found the one thing worth seeking!

Hate cannot put out hate. The acorn raises the oak. We do not sow parsnip seed and expect to grow onions with it. If we want to raise love—we must sow love. This is the simple but profound truth. It is simple enough for children—and big enough for manhood or womanhood.

The one thing worth seeking is love—the art of being kind in the highest sense (and by that we do not mean that we should condone wrong-doing). If love could ever be properly defined, it would seem reasonable to say that it consists largely of basing our thoughts, words and deeds upon the desire to help the other person instead of ourselves. If we think about this we shall see that it means a new kind of life. Resentment goes. Fear goes. Pride goes, there is no place for greed, no place for the selfishness that is at the root of the world's evils.

But this is not the sum total of what happens. These are the things that cease to be. More important still are the new things that come into life when that soul has found the one thing worth seeking.

In the first place there is a wider understanding which increases all the time. One begins by helping one's neighbour in thought, word, or deed. But the final outcome is to see every other person in the world as one's neighbour. Aye, more even than that. For the soul that is fired with love sees that all the world, animate and (so-called) "inanimate", is related to itself.

It is easy to see that a few such souls must have a tremendous effect upon the world in which they live. They are giving to their fellows nothing less than themselves. They are the pure in heart who see and know God everywhere.

THE BALANCED LIFE

GOD has given all human beings certain gifts—the greatest of which is the ability to know the creative force of His love. This knowledge must, therefore, come first. But there are other gifts which must also be used *on the foundation of love*. Speech, hearing, sight—these are gifts. What do we talk about? To what do we listen? What do we read or look for in the world about us? The mind is a gift to be rightly used. What do we think about? Hands and feet are gifts to do His service. Where do those feet take us—and on what business? Taste is a gift—food and drink are gifts. What do we eat and what do we drink? Sex is a gift. To what end are its mysteries employed?

Let it not be thought that the whole body and the whole mind are in any way divorced from the heart, soul or spirit of any one of us. Too often our lives are unbalanced—whereas they should be perfectly balanced and in this way.

The spirit should come first. This should be the driving power. The Kingdom of God should be the eternal motive. The love of God should be the one life that is foundational.

The mind should come second. Our thoughts should be positive, centred upon that which is eternal, so that we may rightly assess the worth of those things which change and decay. We should try to train our minds into thinking the best at all times. Thought is a great power and a great life-transformer. We should use our minds in the service of the highest.

The body should come third. The body should be used as an active instrument to give practical expression to spirit and mind.

This is the right order of things. It is the only true order of things. All these three are indivisibly bound up with each other, and perfect harmony is not possible except this order

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be fulfilled. We can try to divorce one from the other—but the result can never be a perfect expression of God.

We can pray to God and have the right spirit and bless our fellows, and think the body of no account. This is the religion that is limited. It is not the religion of the new age. It is the religion that suggests the Almighty made a mistake in giving us bodies and hands and feet.

We can think beautiful thoughts and do nothing more about them. This is the religion that the starving do not understand. Birds waiting in the snow for bread do not understand it.

We can do the right kind of things—feed the hungry, visit the sick, read the Scriptures, give donations to charity—and leave out the spirit. This is the religion that is dead and useless. It is the cup of water that quenches the thirst for a brief moment. It is the religion that suggests the Almighty made a mistake in giving us souls.

The only religion that matters is the religion that is one with life. When body, mind and soul are in harmony—then there is a holy trinity that even a child can understand.

Such a harmony, in fact, will be clearly understood by our fellows—since it will apply to life in every form. When slums are no more; when our prisons become educational communities; when drink is rationed; when the men and women who go to Parliament are those who are more concerned with service to the world than with a political career; when the Government of the day is preaching the Kingdom of God on earth and the Lord's Prayer is uttered and meant before every session and every debate—then it will be because, in great or small degree, spirit, mind and body are working together in harmony.

GIVING

IT is generally recognised by all who are at all concerned with fundamentals that "giving" is going to be the theme of the age that is dawning. The present chaos is the result of selfishness. The writers of history books in the near future may draw other conclusions and talk of national ambitions and the like, but ultimate history will make it abundantly clear that individual selfishness leads to national disasters just as individual service leads to national and even world—prosperity.

The meaning of service has been brought home to us vividly in recent years. The tragedies of this century have pointed us to the way of escape. The darkness has pointed us to the stars. The futility of man-made plans has pointed us to the perfection of God's plan. And with the world pitted and scarred with ruins, I dare to say that none of it has been in vain. Needless it may have been. Certainly it was not God's will that we should learn that way. But we chose it—through our own selfishness—and if the terrifying results have stabbed many of us wide awake at last, who shall dare to say that the best is not to be?

Out of this disaster will come a new understanding of life. The old days have gone—the old days of separation have grown up like weeds and have perished as weeds must perish. But the flowers will live on. The service that has been given to the world in a million ways, this will come to bloom in the years ahead, added to by the service of our lives and by the efforts of those who come after us.

Giving!—Yes—we must spend our lives in giving now. That which is nearly lost becomes suddenly more precious than before. And no good thing can be finally lost.

"No star is ever lost we once have seen.

We always may be what we might have been."

—A. A. PROCTOR.

GIVING

But how shall we give? And what shall we give? These are things for serious consideration. They can be answered by reflection upon what we ourselves are given.

For the things that give us the greatest happiness are the very things that we must give to others. It is for us to count our blessings—to number the things in our lives which count for real inward peace and happiness. Actually, they are beyond number. They are the things which have spiritual foundations, the things to which we cling all the more firmly when all else is gone.

They are not material things. For many have lost all their material possessions, and yet have felt strangely rich. They are not the things which we count as specially “ours”—for the best things in life belong to all the world. They are not the things which end with so-called “death”, for the riches of life are eternal.

I expect many readers know “An Old-World Creed” by M. Aumonier.

“I believe in all things beautiful—the beauty of simple things. I believe in music where melody is quickly found, and in poems that sound like song. I believe in books that hold no ugly thought, in pictures that rest the eye and soothe the senses, and in plays that keep the heart young. Little things delight me; a sunbeam on a blade of grass; a dewdrop in the heart of a flower; a daisy with a rosy frill. I believe in joy; and quick laughter; in sentiment, in love, in reverence. I believe in all things beautiful. I believe in God.”

This may be an old-world creed, but it is a new-world creed, too. For these eternal things belong both to the old and the new. They do not belong to time. As Lawrence Binyon wrote in another connection :

“ Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn . . .
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.”

And these are the things that we must seek to give to the world during our stay on earth. The eternal things. The things of God.

The old world is dying and is nearly dead. The new world is being born—can be born now—in all of us. And we must learn to give back to God those riches with which He has endowed us. These are the things for which the whole world thirsts. These are the treasures that can bring calm and rest into the hearts that are weary and cold. These are the lights that have shone in the darkness all down the ages. These are the saviours of mankind.

It is beauty that we must give back to the world around us. The beauty that God has planted, like a seed, within the deep soul of each one of us—this must be allowed to spring up, and to blossom, and to seed. And these seeds must be scattered far and wide over the face of the earth. (Do not think that you are limited, any one of you. For the seed that is sown in another's heart may yet scatter the reproduction of itself in a million million places!)

We must give. Yes—we must give *our whole lives* into the hands of the God of all things beautiful, seeking ever to let His spirit lead us and uphold us through all circumstances.

ANGELS

SOME people do not believe in angels. They prefer to keep their feet on the earth. They prefer to deal with known facts.

To me, there is always something very amusing about such people. Sometimes, behind the amusement, there is even a sense of tragedy. For one hears them talk of life as though it were an open book to them—as though nothing in the whole of their experience escaped the slide-rule of the intellect. Whereas I am quite certain that there is no single thing in the life of any man or woman that can be measured by the mind.

Life is not a series of small compartments. It does not consist of little broken experiences. It is all one. And whether you catch the 8.10 to the office every morning, or whether you walk five hundred yards to the mill in which you work, or whether you have a house to dust and children to care for—whether you are rich or poor, high or low, broken-hearted or filled with inexpressible joy—no matter who you are or where you are—all the time the fringes of your own life and experience are inescapably woven into the fabric of the whole universe.

The truth is that you cannot keep your feet on the earth. It is a physical, mental and spiritual impossibility. You can pretend that it is so. You can build up a world of imagination in your own heart, seeing yourself as a being in a small world that you know in detail. But even as you sit in a room talking about keeping your feet on the earth—even there all the known and familiar objects, the chairs, the vases, the pictures, the cushions—everything goes back to the sun and the wind and the rain. Your room is filled with the evidence of other lives, too, and if all the people who had ever laid a hand upon your possessions could all be gathered together, there would probably be a great multitude of people, various

in their outlooks and in their natures. And these are they upon whom you have depended, without realising it, for the comfort of your home. These are the unseen angels who have brought into your life colour and form and beauty such as you know. Escape these facts if you can!

But this is merely an elementary step towards the realisation of the unity of life. It is an interesting step, and one that we ought not to neglect. For the outward and visible signs of our lives are so often brought into manifestation by the labours of others, and even as the beauty of the soul is brought into being oftentimes by suffering and tribulation—so is the beauty of man-made things often made visible by the sufferings of others. The Taj Mahal at Aggra, which is considered to be one of the most beautiful sights in the world, was built by sweating throngs at the order of Shah Jehan. In one way, it was a labour of love—for it was intended to be the tomb for his favourite wife and there must have been considerable feeling and enthusiasm in the man's heart. But in another way, it meant tragedy for the slaves who brought it into being, and the finished work has caused a poet to write :

“ I never thought that tears could stain
 The marble's whitened brow :
 Or stones could sing the saddened strain
 These minarets sing now.”

So it is indeed with many of the familiar objects that we take for granted in the world. Our shirts are woven in mills by human beings—and who knows what invisible threads go into their making? Who knows what angels have been present?

Yesterday, in the corner of a quiet room, I saw a large bowl of peonies. The blood-red petals had dropped on to the polished table and were lying there in heaps. I went over to them and took them in my hands and suddenly there were angels singing and I knew that God would gather up the

ANGELS

tears of His people in like manner. "How lovely are the messengers that preach us the gospel of peace." Across that room stood a television set with its screen lifeless and dead, for it was not switched on. Soon, at evening time, that screen would come into life no doubt, and the other screen—the bowl of peonies—would stand forgotten in its corner, the petals of blood dropping silently one by one on to the table. And round that fireplace, or round some other fireplace, people would be saying "I prefer to keep my feet on the earth"—not hearing the sounds of angels, not hearing the music of God!

So much, so much depends upon the screen we use and the power that we switch on! "The angels keep their ancient places; turn but a stone and start a wing" wrote Francis Thompson. But before we can find the angels and hear the sound of wings, we must switch on the power of love and thus see with the eyes of the soul. For the true world is invisible until we look within. Then it becomes *in*-visible. It is intangible until we touch it with our souls. Then it becomes *in*-tangible. It is inapprehensible until we seek for understanding in our souls. Then it becomes *in*-apprehensible. Just as the difference between all these words is just a matter of the tiniest emphasis—so is the difference between one life and another just a matter of emphasis. A little movement of the heart towards love and lo! the screen of life suddenly glows and takes shape. Angels begin to walk the common life. We see them and we hear them and we realise that life has always been Angelic and Divine. The faces of little children, the branches of trees against the sky, the blue veins on some gnarled old hand, the bird that suddenly shatters the silence with crystal-clear music—are not these things angelic? Are they not all things to wonder at—together with every circumstance of the common life?

And more even than that. There are angels that walk beside the traveller, angels that inspire, protect and guide. Nor

are they all in human guise. For as there are sounds beyond human hearing, sights beyond human seeing, perfumes beyond human scenting—so are there beings beyond human beings. I myself have never been one to stress these matters. To me it seems that life is filled with angels—angels that we can see and know and touch. To me every day is crammed with miracles, and every circumstance Divine. Therefore, this matter of other beings beyond our present ken is no more a matter for sacred whispering than is any dead twig that lies upon the ground, for the latter touches Divinity no less than the greatest and most sublime experience in a lifetime. It is idle indeed to worship first the things farthest away from us. Let us reverence first the angels in our very midst. Let us first stand amazed at life on this planet before we allow ourselves to be startled at life on Mars.

For thus we shall grow in consciousness until we ourselves know the meaning of eternity, and until the music of the spheres is uttered in our souls. And, perhaps, by God's grace, we shall carry with us—in our own thoughts and words and deeds—all that others need for the recognition of the angel in their midst.

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