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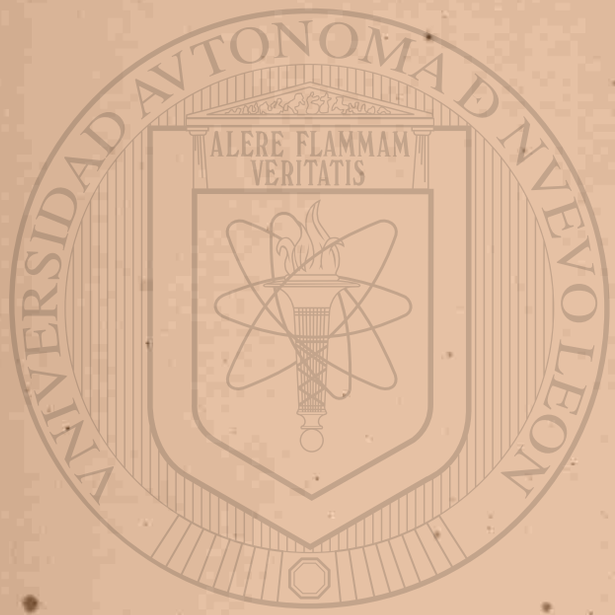

PHASES OF THOUGHT AND CRITICISM

BY

BROTHER AZARIAS

OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

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PREFACE.

A LARGE portion of the present volume has already appeared in print, some of it in pamphlets and some in the pages of the "American Catholic Quarterly Review." Part was read before young men pursuing their studies; part, before the Concord School of Philosophy, and part, before the International Congress of Education held in New Orleans in 1885. The original matter has been revised, partly rewritten, and coördinated with the view of making apparent the unity of design and continuity of thought running through the whole book.

The chapter treating of Newman might have been developed to greater length, now that its subject has passed away and a variety of opinions has been pronounced upon him; but as the pen-picture here given, outlined about fourteen years ago, found recognition and approval at the hand of that eminent Thinker himself, the author deemed it best not to disturb its original dimensions, and contented himself with the filling in of a few additional strokes.

The latter part of the volume is occupied with the interpretation of three of the world's masterpieces. They are analyzed and their underlying meaning is explained from the point of view of thought and criticism expressed in the first seven chapters. In the philosophical principle wrought into the mysticism of the book "De Imitatione Christi," in the spiritual sense giving unity to the "Divina Commedia," and in the mystical elements, partly Christian, partly neo-Platonic, entering into the structure of "In Memoriam," it is sought to determine the soul giving life and being to each of these works as an organic whole. Each expresses a distinct phase of thought, and is the outcome of a distinct social and intellectual force. Each embodies a vivifying ideal. The criticism that busies itself solely with the literary form is superficial. For food it gives husks.

De La Salle Institute, New York, *May* 4, 1892.

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PHASES OF THOUGHT AND CRITICISM

CHAPTER I.

FOURFOLD ACTIVITY OF THE SOUL.

1. The human soul is the informing principle of the human body; it is one and simple — a monad without quantity or extension — as all spiritual substances are one, simple and unextended; incomplete in itself, inasmuch as it must needs be united to the body in order that it may fully exercise many of its functions; immaterial, and therefore void of inertness; active in its operations from the first moment of its existence. According to the mode of the soul's action do we speak of it as having this faculty or that corresponding to the function which it performs. Some faculties are intrinsic to the soul itself, as reason; others, as the imagination, are dependent upon the union of soul and body.

2. Although the essence of the soul is not the immediate principle of its operations, and although its faculties are distinct from its essence, being in themselves certain properties thereof, it is still the same soul, one and undivided, that thinks and

feels, that wills and moves and is moved. It is still the same conscious personality, that amid ever-shifting changes can always recognize its own identity in the formula *I am I*. When we say that the soul has certain faculties, we simply mean that it exercises certain modes of action by placing itself in certain definite relations with certain objects of thought.

3. Faculties of the soul are therefore the soul itself operating upon particular lines of action, and each faculty becomes more or less developed in proportion to the degree of activity exercised by the soul in some one or other direction. Let us consider some of the soul's activities. Now it is the soul analyzing, comparing, inferring, coördinating, passing from known principles to the discovery of unknown truths; viewed in this relation, the soul is called Reason, and, under certain aspects, the Illative Sense.[1] Now it is the soul deciding this to be a good act, and feeling bound to perform it, or thinking that other to be bad, and feeling bound to avoid it; so acting, it is called the Moral Sense. Again, it is the soul moved to pity by the pathos of a scene painted on the canvas or described in the poem; as the subject of this emotion it is called the Æsthetic Sense. Finally, it is the soul leaving the noise and distraction of the outside world, entering into itself and realizing

[1] "This power of judging about truth and error in concrete matters, I call the Illative Sense." . . . "The Illative Sense has its exercise in the starting-points as well as in the final results of thought." Cardinal Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, chap. ix. This chapter is an important contribution to the philosophy of thought.

its own misery and weakness, and seeking the help and strength which it finds not in itself, where alone help and strength are to be found, in the God from whom it comes and on whom it depends; in this highest and noblest action it is called the Spiritual Sense.

4. The Reason is nourished by intellectual truth; the Moral Sense is strengthened by the continuous choosing of right-doing over wrong-doing; the Æsthetic Sense is cultivated by the correcting and refining of taste for things beautiful and sublime; the Spiritual Sense is fostered by the spirit of piety and devotion. This fourfold activity of the soul may be said to cover the whole of the soul's operations. Over all, and the root and principle of all, giving life and being, weight and measure and moral worth to all, is the soul's own determining power, which we call the Will.

5. In the harmonious development of all four activities is the complete culture of the soul to be effected. The exclusive exercise of any one activity is detrimental to the rest. The exclusive exercise of the Reason dwarfs the other functions of the soul. It dries up all taste for art and letters and starves out the spirit of piety and devotion. In the constant development of the Æsthetic Sense, one may refine the organs of sense and cultivate taste and sensibility, but if it is done to the exclusion of rigid reasoning and the superior emotions of the soul, it degenerates into sentimentalism and corruption of heart. So also with exclusive Pietism; it narrows the

range of thought, fosters the spirit of bigotry and dogmatism, and makes man either an extravagant dreamer or an extreme fanatic. Only when truth and goodness walk hand in hand, and the heart grows apace with the intellect, does the soul develop into strong healthy action.

6. Again, truth is the object of Reason; goodness, the object of the Moral Sense; beauty, whether in the physical, moral, or intellectual order, the object of the Æsthetic Sense. Herein I include as a truth knowable by the light of reason, the fact first and supreme above all other facts, that there is a God.[1] Now, the Spiritual Sense takes in all the truth, goodness, and beauty of both the natural and revealed orders, and views them in the light of Faith. The same intellectual light still glows, but added thereto is, so to speak, the splendor of God's countenance.[2]

7. This fourfold activity of the soul does not correspond to any four special faculties. It represents rather four distinct fields upon which all the faculties operate. But we are not here concerned with the intrinsic nature of our respective faculties. We leave that to the psychologist. We will consider those faculties rather in their operations and in their practical applications. And first, let us study that process of the mind in which the Illative Sense is included, and which is commonly called thinking.

[1] *Constitutio Dogmatica de Fide Catholica*, can. ii. 1.

[2] Illuminet vultum suum super nos. Psalm lxvi. 2.

CHAPTER II.

ON THINKING.

I.

1. We read, we converse, we write, we argue, we discuss men and measures; but not to the same extent do we think aright. Let us then seek to determine what is right thinking. It is in the workings of daily life to still the voices of reverie and sentiment and the inclinations of nature, and listen to the language of reason; it is to analyze and discriminate; it is to ask the why and wherefore of things, to estimate them at their real worth, and to give them their proper names; it is to distinguish between what is of opinion and what of speculation — what of reason and inference, and what of fancy and imagination — how much is to be considered certain and how much merely probable; it is to give the true and the false their real values; it is to lay down a clearly defined line between what is of true science and what of surmise and conjecture; it is to know where one's knowledge ends and where one's ignorance begins; above all, it is to arrive at that condition of mind in which one can determine how and when to express what one knows, and in which one performs the more difficult feat of abstaining from speaking about

that of which one knows nothing. This it is to think. Need one be any longer surprised that it is an unknown science to all but the few thoughtful, well-disciplined minds that may be called the educators of the world?

2. Withal, Thought is a most important element in our acting. Weigh its importance for a moment. There is no life without action. Now the soul's activity consists in, and is determined by, its thought. We first feel and think; afterwards we will; then follow action and expression, which are the outward evidence of our inmost living. So that our expressions, our actions, our very lives are ours in proportion as they are the outcome of our own thinking and our own resolve, and not of the thinking and the resolve of others. Not indeed that we all are not in some sense the creatures of circumstance. But though influenced by the external world — though the thoughts and actions of others necessarily condition our own thinking and acting — still, as the plant transforms into its sap the food it draws from the earth in which it is rooted, even thus should the thought we acquire, the action we imitate, the impulse we receive, be so assimilated into our own nature and personality that they become bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of our thinking soul and our moral character.

II.

1. It follows that our duties as thinking, rational beings are not compatible with that mental lethargy

in which we all of us are disposed to live. It is so much easier for us to remember and repeat than to think, that the large majority of us leave the thinking to a few and abide by the word of the hour they choose to give us. We are living in an atmosphere of routine knowledge and of a routine manner of imparting that knowledge; and both the knowledge and the manner are not infrequently accepted without questioning their intrinsic worth, or their correctness, or their fitness for time and place. The professor is under the influence of this spirit. In the lecture-room he is often content with retailing to his class some view of his subject which he adopts from a certain book without taking pains to inquire into its correctness; the author of that book may have taken it on the same credit from some prior work, and thus the opinion passes down from generation to generation — unsuspected, unchallenged. Does it follow that the opinion is correct? By no means. An inquiring mind may one morning awaken to the absurdity of what generations have handed down as a truth not to be gainsaid. Witness the exploded theories still to be found in text-books on chemistry and physics; or see the hold that erroneously constructed grammars of the English language continue to have upon our educational prejudices; or in history, note the gravity with which our manuals repeat the myths of Semiramis and Ninias, of Romulus and Remus, of Hengist and Horsa.

2. Passing beyond the class-room to the various phases of thought among the reading public, we

find the same spirit. Every school of philosophy has its disciples who repeat the sayings of their master with implicit confidence, without ever stopping to question the principles from which those sayings arise or the results to which they lead. Which of them possesses the truth? Is it Hegel or is it Schopenhauer? Is it Herbert Spencer or is it Mill? If we are to believe their respective admirers, each of them holds the secret of all things in heaven and on earth — the clue to all difficulties — the solution to the world-riddle. But when we place their principles side by side we find in them contradiction enough to create a chaos, and we are led to conclude that in many instances these systems are accepted not so much for truth's sake as because they are the intellectual fashions of the day. So it is with schools of criticism in art and literature. Ruskin has talked thousands into a factitious taste that pretends to admire beauties to be found nowhere outside of the glamour his fervid imagination has thrown around objects of art. Paint a daub and call it a Turner and forthwith these critics will trace in it strokes of genius. Think you they understand the real principles of art-criticism? And fares it any better with the Wordsworthian who finds praise for Wordsworth's baldest and prosiest lines, or with the Shelleyite who sees a mystic meaning in Shelley's most meaningless rhapsodies, or with the Browningite who persists in finding in Browning's poems meanings that the poet himself never put into them, and which he even disavowed? The

education of all such schools, when made exclusive, is one-sided, narrow, content with no other proof than a prejudice. True criticism, be it that of literature or of art, is all-embracing.

3. Turning to politics, we find that same groove-spirit. Men repeat the cant of the hour glibly, smoothly, often eloquently, as innocent of what it all means as the child not yet arrived at the use of reason. They have no further cause for belonging to one party rather than to another than that they happen to find themselves there. It was the party to which their fathers belonged, and is therefore good enough for them. But as to seeking the rational grounds on which their political creed is constructed, or the principles that give existence to their party, such things never occurred to them. Grounds and principles were not included in the shibboleth of the hour that they took up and repeated. And so they go on, year after year, in a well-worn routine of political thought, till a crisis comes upon them, and they are led to think, and mayhap they find that they have been half their lives — and all from want of real thought — advocating a policy unsound in its nature, disastrous in its results, and opposed to their own inner convictions. That man has yet to learn the use of his reason, who, in all matters based upon individual opinion, whether they be of politics or religion, has never challenged and weighed and measured the principles upon which his opinions are based.

4. The uneducated classes cannot make use of their reason in this searching manner; it may be

as well for them that it is so; but the educated man owes it to the reason with which he has been endowed — to his friends and neighbors who look to him for a guiding word — as a sacred duty for which he will have to render an account to his Maker, so to train and discipline his thoughts that he shall acquire a habit of thinking and judging with discrimination. When a young man has been so favored by Providence as to be enabled to spend several years in acquiring a thorough education, surrounded by everything calculated to inspire him with a love for study and a thoughtful habit of mind, breathing an intellectual atmosphere that becomes an essential part of his thinking, he thereby assumes a great responsibility. If he has been so privileged, it is in view of his making use of the opportunities placed at his disposal, not for himself alone, but for his less fortunate neighbor as well. If he has been favored with a more brilliant light, it is with intent to illumine the dark places around. If education has been freely lavished upon him, it is in order that in turn he may freely lavish it upon the wide circle over which he is destined to have influence. Therefore it cannot be too solemnly impressed upon those enjoying this privilege to fit themselves in all earnestness, both morally and intellectually, to do the good that it is given them to do. It is well that we all of us hold an exalted opinion of the real dignity of our respective positions in life. To the student whom these pages reach I would say: Gather up with care the treasures of knowledge and wisdom that lie strewn about

you. Guard them with a jealous eye. See that they be not sullied either by the daubing of error or the turpitude of vice. Cherish them as a heaven-sent patrimony by the right use and investment of which you are to purchase your title to eternal glory. All else may pass away, but the wisdom of well-digested knowledge and methodical thought remains through sunshine and storm, making the sunshine more beautiful and the storm less severe.

5. There is some truth in these remarks of the eccentric Thoreau: "It is foolish for a man to accumulate material wealth chiefly, houses and lands. Our stock in life, our real estate, is that amount of thought which we have had, which we have thought out. The ground we have thus created is forever pasturage for our thoughts. I fall back on to visions which I have had. What else adds to my possessions and makes me rich in all lands? If you have ever done any work with those finest tools, the Imagination and Fancy and Reason, it is a new creation, independent of the world, and a possession forever. You have laid up something against a rainy day. You have to that extent cleared the wilderness."[1] But I would have you enjoy all this intellectual wealth, not simply for its own sake and in a spirit of self-sufficiency and self-contentment, as the New England hermit teaches. Thoreau is only a human mole. He lives in the earth, and his thoughts and aspirations are of the earth, earthy. He ignores the clear sky of a spiritual world and the brilliant sunshine of a divine

[1] *Journal*, May 1, 1857.

revelation. It is under this sky and in this sunlight I would have you learn how to think. Confine not your thoughts in the narrow cell of a petty prejudice, or the slough of indolence, or the contracted limits of comfort and ease, when you can roam through the free air of the Infinite. Therefore, discipline your minds. Be not too credulous. There is a wise as well as a foolish skepticism. Science has her superstitions, and her romancings are as unreal and shadowy as those of the most ephemeral literature. Accustom yourselves to the habit of weighing carefully all you read or hear. Be not carried away by every novelty. Learn to sift the chaff from the grain. Remember that he is not the most learned man who has read the greatest number of books. Only in proportion as you digest and assimilate to your own thoughts what you read do you acquire genuine knowledge. Out of the world's thousand ideas make a single one your own, and I assure you that you will have made more intellectual progress than if you were able to repeat Homer or Milton from memory.

CHAPTER III.

EMERSON AND NEWMAN AS TYPES.

I.

1. THAT we may all the better understand the nature and scope of sound thinking, let us consider two typical thinkers of recent days, dwelling in different hemispheres of our globe, standing at opposite poles of human thought, and at the same time recognized masters of their own language. They both possessed this in common, that each was retiring, sensitive, shrinking from mere notoriety, not over-anxious to speak, and speaking only when each had something to say. They were loved in life, and in death their memories are revered by all who knew them; they are still admired by thousands and still misunderstood by thousands more.

2. One of these thinkers is Ralph Waldo Emerson. His was a mind like the Æolian harp. It was awake to the most delicate impressions, and at every breath of thought it gave out a music all its own. His sympathies with Nature were so strong, so intense, so real, that they seemed to take root with the plant, to infuse themselves into the brute creation, and to think and act with his fellow-man. His reading was broad. From the East and from

revelation. It is under this sky and in this sunlight I would have you learn how to think. Confine not your thoughts in the narrow cell of a petty prejudice, or the slough of indolence, or the contracted limits of comfort and ease, when you can roam through the free air of the Infinite. Therefore, discipline your minds. Be not too credulous. There is a wise as well as a foolish skepticism. Science has her superstitions, and her romancings are as unreal and shadowy as those of the most ephemeral literature. Accustom yourselves to the habit of weighing carefully all you read or hear. Be not carried away by every novelty. Learn to sift the chaff from the grain. Remember that he is not the most learned man who has read the greatest number of books. Only in proportion as you digest and assimilate to your own thoughts what you read do you acquire genuine knowledge. Out of the world's thousand ideas make a single one your own, and I assure you that you will have made more intellectual progress than if you were able to repeat Homer or Milton from memory.

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the West he gathered the sweets of all philosophic systems and all literatures, and in the laboratory of his brain wrought them into his own peculiar honey-comb of thought and expression. The deeper realities of life he overlooked. Those chasms that reveal whatever is revolting in life's squalor and misery, those seamy sides which Tolstoï and Ibsen place before us, were ignored by Emerson. His intellectual vision was too near-sighted to perceive them. A thing, be it an institution, or a custom, or a habit, exists; that suffices for Emerson; it must therefore be good, and useful, and beautiful in its own way. He is a passionate lover of the beautiful; he would reduce all morality to a code of æsthetics. Beauty of thought, beauty of expression, beauty of action, beauty of manners, — these are the outcome of his philosophy. Supreme culture is for him supreme human perfection.

3. However, we must not forget that Emerson is a thinker who has learned how to assimilate the best thoughts of the best writers and make them fructify in his own mind. His lines of thought are narrow, but he thinks on them intensely. Not infrequently his language only half expresses that which his mind labors to give utterance to. Some of his assertions are riddles. He speaks with the mysteriousness of the Sphinx. "We use semblances of logic," he tells us, "until experience puts us in possession of real logic."[1] Wherefore he disdains argument. He will not reason with you. He is

[1] *Letters and Social Aims*, p. 9.

content to throw out the hint or the suggestion; you may take it or leave it. He never obtrudes his views upon you. None the less does he pose as a thinker and a prophet. He is the Sir Oracle of Transcendentalism. But on life and death and immortality, Emerson is no wiser than the books he consults; nay, not as wise as some.

4. Unfortunately for Emerson and the value of his utterances, he ignores the supernatural in man. His view of religion is that religion is a merely human institution. He is tolerant only in certain directions. He has never acquired the large-sightedness that is expected from a man of his culture. Let him expatiate on the Nature he loves, on society, on manners, on experience, on representative men, on letters and social aims, and he is admirable, suggestive, original; but once he descends to concrete living issues, we find only the lifeless bones of intolerance dressed up with the time-worn garments of New England puritanical prejudices. I hold this truly eminent writer and thinker up to the reader that the reader may learn both from his strength and his weakness. One can no more make a model of his mind than one can of his style. He is in some respects a law unto himself. The secret of his success lies in this: that he does not isolate a thought; he studies its relations as far as his intellectual vision ranges.

5. Emerson had other limitations. He sought truth in every religious and philosophical system outside of the teachings of the Catholic Church. He attempted to embrace all systems, showing

thereby that he understood none. In vain is he read for a consistent moral code or a complete philosophic creed; groping through his books one not infrequently finds shadow taken for substance, dream for reality, Emerson for truth. Whole worlds of thought lie hidden from his vision as they stand enveloped within the umbra of Self projected into intellectual space. Still, his side-views and his half-utterances are suggestive. The reading of him with understanding is a mental tonic, bracing for the cultured intellect as is the Alpine air for the mountaineer. Could one imbibe his sympathy for Nature without becoming imbued with his pantheism; could one acquire his culture without the dilettanteism that accompanies it; could one make his love for the beautiful in all shapes and under all conditions one's own, — looking above all beyond the mere surface into the deeper and more spiritual beauty of things, — one would be learning a valuable lesson from Emerson's intellectual life.

II.

1. Now that we have had a glimpse of the inner chambers of Emerson's mind, let us study another type of thinker, that we may in admiration, and at a distance, and each in his own sphere, to the best of his ability, follow in the footsteps of this master. He is one whose word carries weight wherever the English language is known. His name is revered by the studious of all classes and of every creed; and it is so because he was, during the whole course

of a long life, thoroughly honest in the expression of his convictions. He did not understand the art of special pleading; he never learned the trick of covering up disagreeable truths or removing out of sight a fact calculated to tell against him. Endowed with an intellect one of the most acute ever bestowed upon man, and well disciplined by severe study and profound meditation, it was his delight to grapple with difficulties. That mind so ingenious and searching never rested till it found the basis of an opinion, or struck the central idea of a system. It is often a source of wonder to me how much patient, earnest thought its eminent possessor must have brought to bear upon an idea before he could see it in so many lights, view it in such different relations, and place it before the reader in all the nakedness of truth. But this is one of the characteristics of great thinkers, and such preeminently was John Henry, Cardinal Newman.

2. It was in 1877 that I first met Newman in the bare, modest parlor of the Birmingham Oratory, and I need scarcely add that that meeting is one of the most precious incidents in my life. I thought the very simplicity of that parlor was in keeping with the greatness of the man. Tinsel, or decoration, or an air of worldliness would have jarred with the simple, unassuming ways of the noble soul I met there. He had then lately returned from his beloved Oxford, where his Alma Mater, Trinity College, did herself an honor and him an act of tardy justice in inducting him as Honorary Fellow This veteran knight of natural

and revealed truth looked old and worn; his hair was blanched; his features were furrowed with the traces of age. His manners were gentle and condescending. His voice was soft and beautiful in its varied modulations, — now serious, now playful, according to the subject he spoke upon. With the most exquisite tact he listened or placed his remark as the case required. There was a charm in his conversation. As it flowed along placid and pleasant, his countenance glowed with a nameless expression; his eyes sparkled, and he spoke with all the strength and clearness of a man whose intellectual vigor is still unimpaired. I was not half an hour in his presence when I felt the spell of that irresistible personal influence which he swayed through life, whether within the walls of Oriel, or from the Protestant pulpit of St. Mary's, or in the retirement of the Oratory. I then understood the power that shook the Anglican Church to its very basis three and thirty years previously. In 1889 I again met this venerable leader of men; within him faintly flickered that brilliant intellectual light that had been the beacon and the comfort of so many souls groping through the mists of doubt and error. As Cardinal he was the same cheerful, pleasant, unassuming man that he had been as plain John Henry Newman. Gladly would I limn for the reader the dear, sweet face, so genial and gentle and serene, that ever haunts me; describe the voice, so feeble and yet so soft and mellow, that continues to reverberate in my ear; catch the genial gleam of those eyes that I still behold with their far-away

look, as though peering into another world and communing with some invisible person.

3. Though endowed with the delicate sensibility of the poet, Cardinal Newman never permitted sentiment or feeling or inclination or confirmed habit to control or divert the severe logic of his noble reason. See, for instance, the caution with which he took the most important step in his long career. For years inclination and grace and the logic of his mind had been leading him into the Catholic Church, but he makes no move that is not first sanctioned by reason and conscience.[1] His sympathies have gone forth to her long before proof or argument points out the way; but he holds aloof till reason becomes convinced.[2] He even keeps others for years from entering her Communion.[3] And whilst writing a book in favor of that Church he does not yet make up his mind to become a member; he reserves to himself the chance of changing his views after the whole argumentative process influencing him has been placed before him in writing.[4] In all this he is acting sincerely and in

[1] "I had no right, I had no leave, to act against my conscience." *Apologia*, 2d ed. p. 150. "All the logic in the world would not have made me move faster towards Rome than I did." *Ibid.* p. 169.

[2] May 5, 1841, he writes: "That my *sympathies* have grown towards the religion of Rome I do not deny; that my *reasons* for *shunning* her communion have lessened or altered it would be difficult perhaps to prove. And I wish to go by reason, not by feeling." *Ibid.* p. 189.

[3] "I kept some of them back for several years from being received into the Catholic Church." *Ibid.* p. 177.

[4] Lastly, during the last half of that tenth year (1844) I was

good faith. Protestants question his honesty; Catholics fear he may be trifling with grace; but none the less he waits and prays, and the truth grows upon him from the gray of dawn to the full light of day. Never for a single moment did he falter through the whole course of the long and painful struggle; from first to last he acted according to his lights; God respected the earnest endeavor and blessed it and crowned it with the grace of conversion. I repeat it, it is this strict and chivalric adherence to truth at all times and under all circumstances that won him the profound respect and admiration of Christendom. He disciplined his mind into the habit of seeing things as they are and of expressing them as he saw them, till it had become an impossibility for him to do otherwise.

4. His is a mind well worth our study. Its logical acuteness was something marvelous. Its analyzing power was searching and exhaustive. Its introspection seemed to be all-seeing. He understood so well the checks and limitations of the human intellect that he was never satisfied to accept an idea for the reasons on its face. Like Emerson, he regarded verbal logic as a mere provisional scaffolding. He went behind the formal demonstration to what he considered the far more powerful motives of credibility. The syllogism

engaged in writing a book (*Essay on Development*) in favor of the Roman Church, and indirectly against the English; but even then, till it was finished, I had not absolutely intended to publish it, wishing to reserve to myself the chance of changing my mind when the argumentative views which were actuating me had been distinctly brought out before me in writing." *Ibid.* p. 186.

says not all. The real convincing and abiding reasons on which a proposition is accepted as true are beyond either the premises or the conclusion. "As to Logic," he remarks, "its chain of conclusions hangs loose at both ends; both the point from which the proof should start and the points at which it should arrive are beyond its reach; it comes short both of first principles and of concrete issues."[1] Besides all this there are undercurrents of sentiment and inclination, associations of ideas, obscure memories, half confessed motives, probabilities, popular impressions that determine the frame of mind and the tone of thought, and they all of them enter into his calculations. "And such mainly is the way," he tells us, "in which all men, gifted or not gifted, commonly reason, — not by rule, but by an inward faculty."[2]

5. Newman was not viewy as was Emerson. He abhorred vagueness. He thought in the concrete. He lived in a clearly defined world of his own. He had his own point of view and his own charming manner of clothing a truth, but he was always careful to make allowance for the personal element that might refract his vision or deflect his inference. His advice to a writer reveals one of the secrets of that giant-like strength which he displayed in controversy, and with which he so effectually overwhelmed his opponents: "Be sure you grasp fully any view which you seek to combat, and leave no room for doubt about your own mean-

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, chap. viii. § i.
[2] *Oxford University Sermons*, xiii. 7, p. 257, 3d ed.

ing."[1] A mind recognizing all these elements of thought and coördinating them, and giving each its value and position, is the highest ideal of a well-thinking mind that I can place before the reader. But I have not yet said all.

6. Cardinal Newman's mind is above all a religious mind. Religion is for him a reality, — an intense reality; it is a sacred tunic clothing all his thoughts and making them holy and earnest; it is an essential part of his existence; it is the life of his life. And this is not simply the religion of sentiment or of the mere viewiness of doctrine and dogma, but religion based upon clear-cut doctrines and well-defined principles. At the age of fifteen we find him resting "in the thought of two and two only supreme and luminously self-evident beings," himself and his Creator.[2] From that age, he tells us in one of those revelations of himself that light up his soul and show the man, "dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion: I know no other religion; I cannot enter into the idea of any other sort of religion; religion, as a mere sentiment, is to me a dream and a mockery. As well can there be filial love without the fact of a father, as devotion without the fact of a Supreme Being."[3] Here is the central thought of Cardinal Newman's intellect. All thoughts, all issues group around that one idea. Every sermon, every essay,

[1] Letter to W. S. Lilly, *Fortnightly Review*, September, 1890.

[2] *Apologia*, p. 49, ed. 1882. London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 96.

every treatise of the eight and thirty volumes penned by his hand, reveals a soul ever questioning, ever struggling with difficulties, ever solving to itself the problems and issues of the day, ever arranging and rearranging in clear, well-defined order its own views and opinions; and all for one object and with one result, that of harmonizing them with the teachings of religion. The thoughts and questionings and theories against which other strong and well-equipped intellects struggled only to be made captives of irreligion and agnosticism, he also wrestled with and became their master, each new effort giving him additional strength; and finally, his laurels won, and looking out upon the intellectual struggles of the day with the repose of a warrior who had been in the fight and had come out of it a victor, he passed away in his ninetieth year, enshrined in a halo of veneration.[1]

[1] The student desirous of understanding the philosophical phase of Newman's mind and method should read the following works in this order: 1. *Apologia.* 2. *Oxford University Sermons.* 3. *Doctrinal Developments.* 4. *Grammar of Assent.* This book restates and coördinates on a more scientific basis the principles discussed in the *University Sermons.* 5. *Idea of a University.*

The spiritual phase of his mind may be traced in his *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, and his *Sermons to Mixed Congregations.*

The purely literary phase of his mind is best illustrated in his *Present Position of Catholics in England*, *Loss and Gain*, *Callista*, and *The Dream of Gerontius.*

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THOUGHT.

I.

1. From these types of thinking let us return to thought itself, and note the higher principle of its existence. Not content with enjoying the light of day, let us look to the sun whence emanates that light. From thinking we pass to the principle of all thinking and all knowing. Truth is of the mind. It is the equation between the intellect and its object. The three elements of every proposition — of every truth apprehended — are subject, object, and their relation. Now, that which we apprehend as truth is truth not because we apprehend it as such, but because it exists as such in the light of the Unchanging Truth that is independent of all modes of apprehension. Without that light our intellectual vision were as darkened as our bodily eyes without the light of the sun. This is the teaching of great thinkers and great saints. In this simple manner does St. Augustine express himself: "If what you say is seen to be true by both of us, and what I say is seen to be true by both of us, where, I would ask, do we see it? Assuredly, neither you see it in me nor I in you; but we both

see it in that unchanging truth which is above our minds."[1] "But," adds another great Doctor of the Church, the angelic Thomas of Aquin, "unchanging truth is contained in the eternal reasons of things, and therefore our soul knows all things as true in those reasons."[2] The intellectual light by which our mind apprehends and pronounces upon truth — that which makes it evident to us that two and two make four, or that it is impossible for a thing to be and not be at the same time, or that every effect has a cause, — that light is in some sense a participation in the Uncreated Light that contains in itself the eternal principles of things and the eternal reasons for all actual and possible truths and existences. Here we have the true source both of the knowledge we possess and the intellects by which we know. The human intellect so illumined is the principle of thought. Such an aspect of our thinking brings us nearer to God. The light of his Divine countenance is stamped upon us.[3] It guides our reason; it strengthens our understanding; it illumines our thoughts; it places its impress on all that is true, all that is good, and all that is beautiful.[4]

[1] *Confess.* lib. xii. cap. xxv. § 35.

[2] *Summa.* Pars prima. Quæst. lxxxiv. art. v.

[3] Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine. Psalm iv. 6.

[4] Per ipsam sigillationem divini luminis in nobis omnia demonstrantur. *Summa*, loc. cit. Whilst the light as from God is uncreated, St. Thomas holds that as received by the human intellect it is participated in in a finite mode, and therefore as it exists in the soul it is a created light. He holds this as against the theory of the *intellectus agens* of Averroës. See his *De Unitate Intellectus contra Averroïstas.*

2. From this elevated point of view one can more easily perceive the true relations of all knowledge, be it in the natural or in the supernatural order. Utterly groundless is the position of the agnostic who rejects as impossible a divine revelation. Since the very light of our natural reason — that primary condition of all knowledge and all certainty — comes from God, why may not the same all-powerful Author, if it so pleases his infinite wisdom, communicate other truths of an order beyond the reach of human discovery? Such a communication were only an additional ray from the same inexhaustible source. The light of that ray may be more dazzling, its warmth more burning, its energy more vitalizing, but it is still a ray from the same Divine Light that illumines this world. And could our weak intellectual vision only bear its full brilliancy we would recognize it as of a piece with other rays less brilliant. For in that Divine Essence whence all truths emanate, there are no broken aspects of things, no wastes of knowledge, no doubt or darkness, no opposition or contradiction of views, nothing of all that belongs to our feeble and limited intelligence; but all those truths that we apprehend in a partial sense, and under various æsthetic, literary, and scientific aspects, are therein harmonized into a single whole.

II.

1. Taking our stand here we shall also be in a better position to judge of the intellectual and so-

cial deviations from old lines of thought and action. The flood of light that a new theory, or a new idea, or an additional aspect of an old truth, throws upon us is for the moment too much for us. We are bedimmed with its splendor. We have therefore to grope in the dark as though there were no light. Men are slow to conceive an idea; slower still to grasp its whole import. It takes many minds and a long period of time to mature a thought. In consequence, what we regard as deviations, when the thing is not evidently false, may be really the shortest route to the whole truth. No man knows where the error ends and at what point the truth begins in any of the doubtful issues that agitate the world. All we may be certain of is that the truth shall finally prevail. It remains for us but to wait and hold firmly by the old moorings till the atmosphere clears and we see our way. The truth suffers most from those over-zealous defenders whose zeal is not according to knowledge; who are guided more by their prejudices than by any enlightened views; who beat the air with wild and whirling words; whose acquaintance with the new is fragmentary and at second-hand; who consider a training in one branch of science or letters sufficient preparation to cope with athletes in every other branch; finally, who enter the arena possessed of no other weapons than dogmatism and presumption. These men mislead the weak-minded; they bring confusion into the ranks; they impede the action of competent thinkers and shut them out from achieving good; they set up difficulties of

their own making, and knock down objections no living opponent of faith and revelation ever dreamed of putting forth. These are the friends from whom truth may well pray to be delivered.

2. Nor is there much to be feared from the attacks — even those of them made in good faith — upon revealed religion. The opponents the most competent have as a rule overlooked some essential element in their calculations; or they have been overhasty in drawing their conclusions; or they have misread the document; or they have made an erroneous assumption in their premises. Careful study and research will set the matter right. Less sincere opponents are too prone to talk about matters whereof they know nothing to injure any but the fickle and the superficial. The accurate thinker makes due allowance for all such shortcomings. By patient self-possession of one's soul may one escape being carried away by the cant of the hour or the intellectual fashion of the day. Because a theory is popular, it does not follow that it is also true. Disease is catching, not health. And so too may error gain proselytes faster than truth. Moreover, the very newness of a new theory or a new doctrine tends to its exaggeration. It stands out in undue prominence. It compels a readjustment of our previous knowledge. We see not at first sight its right relations with other subjects; we grasp only part of the truth, or we overestimate its importance, or we fall short of its true position in our calculations, and all this misleads us in our reasonings upon it. But be it remembered that this mental confusion is only a passing phase.

3. The present generation may not apprehend the real import of a new doctrine or a new theory; at most only a few of the master-minds rightly measure its entire course; but those coming after us, being born into the new light, shall have become accustomed to it, and shall have learned to place the truth on its proper basis and in its most telling position. The age devours all manner of knowledge with equal avidity, be the knowledge wholesome or be the knowledge poisonous. Some it digests and assimilates into the blood and bone and muscle of its thoughts; some it rejects; some again of a poisonous character throws it into fevers and excitements and produces blotches and plague-spots. But it is only the truth that is life-giving and strengthening. All else is imbued with the seeds of death and destruction. The truth alone survives.

III.

1. As all the years of a person's life are wrought into the formation of his nature and character, so does it take all the past centuries of a people's existence to make it that which it is at present. And the characteristic spirit of a people gives tone and color to the spirit of each individual of that people. This remark leads us to some very sugestive reflections. We all of us are the outcome of past influences. Generations have lived

and thought and acted that each of us might be what he is. Were any link in the chain of heredity lacking we would be different in aptitude, in capacity, in very form and appearance. The absence of some faculty, the feebleness of some disposition in some one or other of our ancestors were sufficient to vary the results in the person of each of us. Nature acts with persistence; slowly, it is true, but with the sureness of fate. She never breaks the mould. Types are produced and apparently vanish, perhaps for ages; but they are not lost; all at once, when least expected, they replace their impress on countenance and character and help to shape the course of life and action. Every generation weakens or strengthens some one point or other in character or disposition, in tone or temperament, in intellect or soul. Each individual has his personality stamped with the weight and persistent force of his ancestry. This is an elementary truth; we cannot ignore it, and it is wisdom to recognize and accept its inevitableness, and shape our lives so as to strengthen in ourselves the sources of our strength and weaken whatever contains an element of social or personal disorganization. As it took long periods of heat and of glacial action, of attrition and denudation, of sinking and rising of the earth's surface, and consequent changes of plant and animal life in order to prepare this world for man's habitation, so is it in the throes of ages that the hereditary tendencies of the present generation have had their birth.[1]

[1] A friend suggests that these remarks savor of Evolutionism.

2. What we say of man's organic growth and development applies with no less force to the formation of his thought. Around him and within him, in the very air he breathes, is the wisdom of all past ages and civilizations. No thought is isolated. It has sprung from some previous seed; it has fed upon other prior thoughts; at their expense has it been nourished and has it waxed strong. We think as we do now, because past generations thought as they did in their day; because Greece thought as she did, because Rome thought as she did, and because Greece and Rome have been our educators and the educators of Europe for the past twenty centuries. Truths and expressions that were then new and startling have since become commonplace. That which was the exclusive property of a thoughtful few has with time filtered into the general intelligence.

3. Another source of our ideas is that which results from the transmitted experiences of past generations. One may hear from men who have never

It is a question of truth and not of names. Now every theory that has ever laid hold of the brain of man has done so by reason of some truth contained in it. And Evolutionism is no exception. How much or how little is its share of truth neither we nor its advocates are in position to define. However, it so happens that this is one of the very doctrines the Evolutionists have ignored. Mr. Frederick Harrison thus berates them for it: "Even the philosophers of Evolution consistently forget that the generation of men to be are being daily evolved out of the whole of the generations that have been. Evolutionists are the readiest of all to tear up whole regions of human history as waste paper, or to discharge the product of vast ages of man into the deep, as some dangerous excrement of the race." *Nineteenth Century*, November, 1880.

learned how to read or write the wisest and best sayings in one's Horace. The experiences of life and the workings of the human heart are confined to no privileged order of men. Every people has its proverbs embodying the lessons that time and men's failings and successes alike have handed down. The fables attributed to Æsop were the delight of youth and of old age in Greece; transplanted by Phædrus, they took firm root in Rome; recast into inimitable verse by Lafontaine, they became classic thought in France; but prior to Lafontaine, or Phædrus, or Æsop they had been the daily lessons of children on the banks of the Ganges. They crystallized in a convenient and attractive form the worldly wisdom and the common experiences of mankind; long before they were inscribed in books they had been the joint inheritance of a faithful and tenacious traditionary knowledge.

4. Since, then, the past has contributed so largely to make us what we are — since it supplies the very atmosphere of our thinking and the conditions under which our brain works — it behooves each and all of us to think and read in a temper and mood in keeping with the great thinkers of former times. It is by a wise, discriminating use of past thought in connection with the present that we may hope to secure definite and profitable results in our thinking. This is the legitimate function of books. Only in so far as they supply food for our mental activity do they avail. And for this reason they are not to be overestimated, nor is the worth of a

man's opinions to be measured by the number of volumes that he has read. Nor should we be too hasty to despise the views of men limited in their acquaintance with books. It is the besetting mistake of students. To them I would say: You will find in the world men who have not had your opportunities for book-knowledge; men who have passed through life with open eyes and wide-awake minds; who have read long and diligently in the great book of Nature, be it that of man or that of plant and animal, and who have drawn therefrom lessons of wisdom and usefulness; you will find these men sound in their judgments on every topic within the sphere of their experience; you will find their views of actions and events clear, just, enlightened; still you may be inclined to make but slight estimate of their attainments because they cannot back up their opinions by quotation from some one or other of your favorite authors. This were a serious blunder which the experience of advancing years and a like knowledge of the world will enable you to correct. Your proper and most profitable course would be to modify, strengthen, improve your crude theories by their practical knowledge. What need of their knowing that this man or that wrote the same thought that they thoroughly realize. You tell them that you read their opinion in such and such a classic, and they may well reply in the words of La Bruyère: "I believe it on your word; but I have given the opinion as my own. May I not think a true thing in my own way, after these great authors have thought it in theirs, and

since others shall still think it after I have passed?"[1] Much has been written of late years with the view of determining the extent of Shakespeare's learning. I would ask, to what purpose? Does it not suffice to know that Shakespeare's own mind was fertile enough to conceive, capacious enough to contain, creative enough to originate and send forth, fresh and vigorous in the full bloom and maturity of exquisite expression, all the great thoughts arising from the hearts of all the great poets of all times? In the presence of such a wealth of genius books and authorities go for very little; not that they are to be despised; nor did Shakespeare despise his Plutarch and his Holinshed, his Gower, his Florio's Montaigne, and his Chapman's Homer; but they were in his hands simply the dead men's bones over which the spirit of his genius moved, and forthwith the bones knit together, and flesh grew upon them, and he breathed into them a soul, and they stood erect living creations, distinct personalities, each with a will and a destiny, and the responsibility of his deeds pressing upon him and stamping his character forever. In a like spirit should we all of us learn the use of books. They are aids only inasmuch as they help our thinking.

IV.

1. Right thinking is a habit; it is therefore to be acquired by practice. One may say here and

[1] *Les Caractères*, t. i. p. 118.

now: "I will begin from this hour to think correctly," but it does not follow that forthwith one will become a profound thinker. There remains to consider the ways and means by which to arrive at this habit; one must look to the lets and hindrances that beset one's course; then by slow, patient, and earnest effort one may finally succeed in controlling one's intellect. Every thought has its cause; every action, its motive; every conclusion, its premise. Therefore, the essence of right thinking is this: that he who so thinks is not content with the last word of a chain of thought; he examines the process by which that chain has been constructed; he determines the value of the principles from which the chain starts; he regards the thought in all its bearings and defines its true position in the nature of things.

2. Again, that is the most efficient and best trained thinking which is the most continuous. But continuous trains of thought are possible only with an economizing of brain power. Anything tending to weaken that power, or to scatter it over a large field of observation, is a hindrance to sound thinking. In this category is to be ranked all reading in which fancy or curiosity is allowed to run away with reason and understanding. It were as easy for a man to be successful in life by a constant change of occupation, as for one with no control over his mind to become a profound thinker. I would not be understood as discouraging the reading of works purely imaginative. They have their use. I touch on such works simply to

caution against their abuse. To profit by them one should bring to their perusal a well-defined standard of excellence, a cultivated taste that clearly discriminates between a novel or poem of real merit and the trashy works that now glut the book-market, and a decided and firm resolve to waste neither time nor talent upon reading that is useless or injurious. The man or boy that allows novel-reading — or in fact aimless reading of any description — to become a passion with him, thereby saps his mental, his moral, and his physical energy as surely as the opium-eater destroys this threefold energy by the inordinate use of opium, or the drunkard by excessive drink.

3. Another bane of solid and fruitful thought is reverie. It consists chiefly in a loss of control over the mind and the affections and a total abandonment of the soul to revel and become merged in Nature. It is the passion of delicate, sensitive, and sentimental young men and women. There is for such souls a yearning to commune with Nature and lose themselves in a vague sentiment. Victor Hugo interprets this feeling when he tells us that in the solitude of the woods he feels the presence of a Great Being who listens to him and loves him —

"Je sens quelqu'un de grand qui m'écoute et qui m'aime." [1]

Indeed, one of the most clearly uttered messages that Nature gives to man is that there is a Something beyond the tangible and the visible. It is a message to which every sensitive heart re-

[1] *Contemplations*, liv. iii. 24.

sponds. "There is in man," says Chateaubriand, "an instinctive melancholy, which makes him harmonize with the scenery of Nature." And the same author speaks of "the immensity of the seas, which seems to give an indistinct measure of the greatness of our souls, and which excites a vague desire to quit this life, that we may embrace all Nature and become united with its Author." [1] The bond of sympathy between man and Nature, when properly regulated, is strong and wholesome. There is a soothing effect in the placid lake. A troubled heart becomes calm in the serene presence of mountain scenery. The eternal peace of which every snow-clad summit speaks enters and possesses the soul and lifts it above the worries and annoyances of every-day life. Such communion is beneficial. But the reverie in which the soul becomes diffused through Nature and lost in a weak sentiment, however refined it be, is still sensual and therefore demoralizing to the soul and disintegrating of all robustness of faculties. The faculties of the soul should, in all their functions, operate according to their nature and in their proper order. In reverie that order is broken. The reason, which should always remain supreme and always govern, becomes dethroned and merged in the imagination. Intellectual disorder leads to many other disorders in the moral and spiritual worlds. By all means let us commune with Nature and learn the lessons she would teach us, always bearing in mind that God is her Author and ours, that He

[1] *Génie du Christianisme*, p. ii. liv. iv. chap. i.

is ever present in the material universe, acting in it with a preservative and a coöperative act; acting in it most intimately, but distinct from it; acting behind the ultimate atom of material substance, beneath the primal energy of material force; acting always and containing in Himself as Archetype, in all their fitness and beauty of perfection, the ideals of all good and beautiful things in this world. In this manner shall we avoid the evils of reverie.

4. No less pernicious and equally to be avoided is the opposite extreme of being too introspective. There is such an evil as thinking too much about one's thinking. It is a morbid disposition. It impedes all serious thought and all earnest action. That is pure dilettanteism which amuses itself with itself in its workings. To meddle with the springs of thought whilst thinking is like interfering with the process of digestion whilst eating, or measuring the strain and waste of nerve and muscle whilst acting. Earnest work is unconscious work; so is earnest thinking unconscious thinking. This will be all the more evident when we shall have pursued the subject of thought as a habit upon the fields of literature and of science.

CHAPTER V.

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC HABITS OF THOUGHT.

I.

1. THERE is a wide difference between the habits of thought engendered by literary pursuits and those begotten of scientific studies. The difference is as marked as are the diverse objects of thought. Literature we know to be personal in its nature, in its method, and to a great extent in its object. Science is impersonal, both in its subject-matter and in its treatment. Literature deals with persons and things so far as they affect our humanity; every piece of written composition that appeals to the emotional element in our nature may be regarded as literature. Science deals with persons and things as they are in themselves, or in coördinated relations. It examines, investigates, discusses from an impersonal point of view; utterly regardless of individual bias, it gropes its way through the entanglements and environments of a subject-matter, and cautiously passes from the known to the unknown. Science, in a word, is concerned with the true as true. Its object is truth. Literature, on the other hand, ranges over a wider field. It may be personal or impersonal, subjective or objective, as best suits its inclina-

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tion. It accepts the true and the false, the good and the evil, the beautiful and the deformed, and moulds them all to its own purposes, ultimately with the view of acting upon man's feelings, — now arousing his curiosity, now exciting his wonder and admiration, again working upon his sympathies and stirring his soul. Its object is the ideal of all that is sublime and beautiful in nature.

2. Entering the interior of the thinking-subject, we may note the process the mind goes through in developing a definite course of thought upon some object. Is the object one of a scientific nature? See how cautiously the mind proceeds. It lays down its postulates; it runs over the principles that it holds within its grasp; it casts about among the laws and facts already demonstrated and recognized as certain; these it groups together into classes and sub-classes; it compares them with one another; it considers their various properties; it views the modes and properties and behavior of other facts, or groups of facts, in the light of those well-known and well-understood; it applies to them its demonstrated formula, and draws its conclusions. Throughout this process the scientific mind remains unimpassioned, and regards persons and things as labeled abstractions, rather than as concrete realities. It works within narrow and closely defined lines. It grows impatient of all that does not bear upon the question under consideration, and rejects it as a distraction. The habit of mind thus developed is rigid and exclusive, and unfits its possessor for grasping and treating with facility

other subjects than those upon which it has had life-long practice.[1] It lacks in extension what it gains in comprehension.

3. Is the object of thought one of a literary nature? Here the mind follows a process the reverse of that employed in a scientific pursuit. Its first effort is to grasp the conclusions and work backward to the starting principles. Nothing comes amiss to it. The thought apparently farthest removed from the main idea may throw upon it additional light. All that science, or art, or Nature can contribute, the literary mind makes its own, not for the sake of science, or art, or Nature, nor by way of determining some unknown truth, nor of reaching some scientific discovery, but as so many illustrations drawing out, exemplifying, clearing up more vividly the ideal which it has grasped, and which it labors to express. To every literary mind may be made, and made as little to the purpose, the reproach that the sophist Callicles addressed to Socrates: "By the gods, you never stop talking about shoemakers, fullers, cooks, and phy-

[1] There is a striking confirmation of the above remarks in the experience of Professor Tyndall. Speaking of his student-life in Germany, about the year 1851, he thus describes the state of his mind: "In those days I not unfrequently found it necessary to subject myself to a process which I called depolarization. My brain, intent on its subjects, used to acquire a set resembling the rigid polarity of a steel magnet. It lost the pliancy needful for free conversation, and to recover this I used to walk occasionally to Charlottenburg, or elsewhere. From my experiences at that time I derived the notion that hard-thinking and fleet-talking do not run together." — "My Schools and Schoolmasters," in the *Popular Science Monthly* for January, 1885.

sicians, as though our discourse were of these."[1] All such illustrations are the material out of which the literary mind constructs a body for its conception. Literature is an art, and the process of literature is the process of all art. Note that process. The soul conceives a thought. The thought grows into a central idea, around which group other subordinate ones. It becomes for the soul an ideal. That ideal is nourished by reading, or reflection, or study, or experience, or all of these combined, and quickens into life, and waxes strong, and takes possession, not only of the intellect, but of the whole man, and gives him no rest till he finds for it an adequate expression according to the bent of his genius, be it that of a poem, a novel, an essay, or a historical study, a painting, a statue, or a musical composition.

4. In all this the literary mind experiences, with a thoughtful writer, "how hard it is to think one's self into a thing and to think its central thought out of it."[2] It is not the work of a few days or a few weeks. It is a slow and elaborate process. At the age of four Goethe first witnessed the puppet-show of "Faust." He was still a child when he read the legend.[3] From the start, the idea enters his soul, and takes possession of it, and grows into a thing of life; and forthwith it becomes the ruling idea of his existence, and he makes

[1] Plato, *Gorgias*, cap. xlv.

[2] Hare, *Guesses at Truth*, p. 275.

[3] In an abridgment of Widmann's *Faust-Book*. See Bayard Taylor's translation of Goethe's *Faust*, vol. i. appendix, pp. 397–403.

it the inspiration of his activity, and moulds upon it in many respects both thought and conduct, and picking up all the traits and characteristics of his age, he weaves them into this legend, not hastily, but slowly, studiously, in the spirit of true art, till, finally, in his eighty-second year he pens the last line of his great Faust-poem. The first impression in his fourth, the first line in his twenty-fourth, the last line in his eighty-second year; this is a lesson that who runs may read. The example of Goethe illustrates the spirit of artistic genius. It takes the old and remodels it into a new artistic whole. The scientific genius builds upon the foundations already laid. A Newton or a Descartes may add to the sum of mathematical knowledge; he may give new methods of demonstration and calculation; but he leaves untouched every principle and every proposition that science had previously established. Even when such a scientific genius grasps by anticipation a new law or a new truth, he coördinates it with other known laws, and thereby corrects his first impressions.

5. Not so the literary genius; for, though the man of letters and the man of science have this in common, that the terms they use possess a recognized value, still he of the literary habit makes not — nor does he seek to make — a connection or a continuity with aught of the past; having grasped the ideal, he labors to give it full and adequate expression independently of any other ideal, past or present. He lives and breathes in an atmosphere of opinion and assumption that permeates his think-

ing, and colors both thought and language; he takes it all for granted; he draws from it the material with which to shape and strengthen his own creation. Richter, in contemplating this literary habit of thought, is filled with admiration: "I fear and wonder," he says, "at the latent almightiness with which man orders, — that is, creates his range of ideas. I know no better symbol of creation." [1] It is, indeed, the process of moulding something entirely new and distinct out of material hitherto used for other purposes. It is a creation because it is a launching into existence of an artistic type that preëxisted only as an ideal in the author's mind. As such, it is an imitation — as indeed is all art — in a finite manner, and within the limits belonging to finiteness, of the creative act by which the Infinite First Cause drew all things from nothingness. [2]

6. But there are certain habits of thought in which literary and scientific methods interlace and overlap to the detriment of both letters and science. Scientific habits of thinking, for instance, lead the scientist to look upon persons and things no longer in their concrete nature, but rather as so many abstractions, or, at most, as concrete specimens of an abstract principle. His very feelings and emotions he learns to classify and, as far as possible, separate from himself. He measures the

[1] *Wit, Wisdom, and Philosophy of Jean Paul Friedrich Richter*, § xi. p. 129.

[2] See Gioberti, *Del Bello*, cap. vi. Del Modo in cui la Fantasia Estetica si può dire Creatrice del Bello, p. 105.

worth of things accordingly. They possess value for him in proportion as they explain a difficult problem, or contribute a new truth to the sum of knowledge. It has been well remarked: "Even the feelings of speculative men become speculative. They care about the notions of things and their abstractions, and their relations, far more than about the realities." [1] So that, whilst the scientist may unwittingly bring literary habits to bear upon scientific issues, to the detriment of science, unwittingly also may he bring his scientific habits into affairs of every-day life, and measure persons and things by a false criterion. So, also, may the man of a literary way of thinking use false weights and measures in forming his estimates. "An author's blood," we are told, "will turn to ink. Words enter into him and take possession of him, and nothing can obtain admission except through the passport of words." [2] And, because words do not always represent the full measure of things, or are at times totally inadequate to express the relations of things, the mind living in words becomes guilty of blunders no less egregious than the mind living in abstractions. What, then, is the normal state of the mind?

II.

1. The normal function of the human intellect is to apprehend truth. Its activity feeds upon truth, and by truth is nourished. For truth it was created; by the light and warmth of truth it develops

[1] Hare, *Guesses at Truth*, p. 495.

[2] *Ibid.*

in strength and grasp; without the truth, it gropes in darkness, restless, yearning, in misery, hungering and thirsting for that which alone can satiate its desires. There may be barriers in the way; it may require enduring labor to remove the barriers; opposition only sharpens the eagerness with which the quest is pursued. In this life, subject to the present order of things, with body and sense standing between the soul and the apprehension of all knowledge, it is not easy to determine which is the true and which the false. The gratuitous and unquestioned notions acquired in early training; the habits of thought in which the intellect works; natural likes and dislikes; feeling, sentiment, inclination; prejudices of the age and the race; assumptions and opinions that are the outcome of one's environment, — are all so many hindrances in the way of the clear and simple apprehension of truth. But they are not insuperable barriers. The human intellect, acting in its normal state, and according to the laws of its nature, may with time and patience, and without deceiving itself in the process, attain to the knowledge of truth. It cannot accept error as error; and if error does, as error will, enter into its calculations, it first assumes the garb of truth, and as such alone is it admitted. Thoughtful study, comparison, careful reasoning upon evident principles, truths, and facts, furnish sufficient light to penetrate the mask and reveal the underlying falsity, if falsity there be.

2. It is within the province of the human mind not only to apprehend the truth, but also to recog-

nize it as truth. In this recognition consists the mind's certainty. We know and distinguish with absolute certainty that two and two make four, and not five or three. There is nothing relative either in our knowing this truth or in our being certain of it. The Hottentot and the Indian are equally certain. The agnostic who denies this absolute certainty is also equally certain. If you would inquire how we know that we are certain with an absolute certainty, we can give you no further reason than that, being constructed as we are, we cannot think differently. This certainty is an ultimate fact of consciousness. It is of the very essence of our reason so to think. We are what we are. We find ourselves to be what we are as thinking beings independently of ourselves. We take ourselves on trust. We take on trust all the faculties of our souls. We use them as we find them. What they report to our consciousness — our inner selves — as true, we accept as true. We cannot do otherwise. The attitude of our mind towards all knowledge is the same to this extent: that in all it seeks to discern the true from the false, to reject the false and to accept the true.

3. For this reason we cannot agree with Mr. Herbert Spencer when he tells us that "we are not permitted to know — nay, we are not even permitted to conceive — that Reality which is behind the veil of Appearance."[1] Why not? Where is the hindrance? Since we recognize this reality, do we not conceive it? It would seem as though

[1] *First Principles*, p. 110.

the knowing and thinking of Mr. Herbert Spencer were not the knowing and thinking of the normal intellect. If we are not permitted to know or conceive the reality back of appearance, how come we to know that it exists? And yet Mr. Spencer is sure of its existence and recognizes it as essential to our thinking. Elsewhere he explained himself more fully in these words: "Phenomenon without noumenon is unthinkable; and yet noumenon cannot be thought of in the true sense of thinking. We are at once obliged to be conscious of a reality behind appearance, and yet can neither bring this consciousness of reality into any shape, nor can bring into any shape its connection with appearance. The forms of our thought, moulded on experiences of phenomena, as well as the connotations of our words formed to express the relations of phenomena, involve us in contradictions when we try to think of that which is beyond phenomena; *and yet the existence of that which is beyond phenomena is a necessary datum alike of our thoughts and our words.*"[1] Plato clearly makes the distinction: "That which is apprehended by intelligence and reason always is, and is the same; but that which is conceived by opinion with the help of sensation and without reason, is always in a process of becoming and perishing and never really is."[2] Underlying the confusion of thought in Mr. Herbert Spencer's assertion is an important fact, not

[1] "Last Words about Agnosticism," *Nineteenth Century*, November, 1884.

[2] *Timæus*, Jowett's *Plato*, vol. iii. p. 612.

sufficiently considered by the philosopher of evolution. It is the fact that thought is always more than its expression. But why quarrel on this account with either thought or expression, so long as each is evolved according to the law of our intelligence? That intelligence is limited in its operations; but it is not we who have defined the limits, or set the boundaries. We find ourselves with those limitations; we cannot change them. Our consciousness reports to us the phenomenon; our reason infers that there is no meaning in phenomenon without noumenon. The one connotes the other in our thinking. What substance is to accident, what the ideal is to the actual, what essence is to existence, the noumenon is to the phenomenon. We perceive the one in the other. We perceive it and we know it. We accept the vouchment of our intellect on the subject.

4. True, we cannot pass beyond this vouchment and give the noumenon a local habitation and a name. What then? At this point we discern the fallacy of Mr. Herbert Spencer's conclusions. He seems to forget that the ultimate analysis of any and every thought brings home to us the fact that the clearly defined image of the thought does not represent the whole thought; that that image is only a symbol; that the word in which that image is expressed is also a symbol; and that in this manner every expression is only a symbol symbolizing a symbol of the thing expressed. And it may happen, and it does happen, that we think correctly in terms of things of which we know nothing be-

yond their existence and their relations. Such is the case with space and time. The great intellect of an Augustin wrestled with the problems of these two ideas; the more he sought to fathom them, the greater was his awe. And his verdict on the problem of time is that in which all thinkers must rest. "If nobody questions me, I know; if I should attempt an explanation, I know not."[1] In other words, we know these things to use them rightly in our thinking; but we cannot grasp at a sufficiently clear image of them to explain them to others.

5. Plato, in another of those sublime passages that light up a whole world of thought, thus shows how our knowledge of things is not simply of the transient and the phenomenal, but of essences and eternal principles: "Essence," he says, "which really exists colorless, formless, and intangible," — which, therefore, let me remark, is above the conditions of time and space, — "is visible only to intelligence that guides the soul, and around this essence the family of true science take up their abode. And, as the Divine Mind is nourished by intelligence and pure science, so the mind of every soul that is about to receive what properly belongs to it, when it sees after a long time that which is, is delighted, and by contemplating the truth is nourished and thrives. . . . And it beholds Justice herself, and temperance, and science, not that to which creation is annexed, nor that which is different

[1] Quid est ergo tempus? Si nemo ex me quærat, scio; si quærenti explicare velim, nescio. *Conf.* lib. xi. cap. xiv.

in different things of those we call real,[1] *but that which is science in what really is.*"[2] Therefore, in opposition to Mr. Spencer, we may lay down the proposition that we not only think the noumenon, but we know it and conceive it behind the phenomenon, not indeed as an image distinct from the phenomenon, but as an element in the existence of the phenomenon without which the phenomenon would be unthinkable. Furthermore, we may affirm that although our thinking is circumscribed, words and images are not the measure of its limits.[3]

6. Nor can we agree with Pascal when he tells us: "It is a natural disease of man to believe that he possesses truth directly; whence it comes that he is always disposed to deny whatever he does not understand; whereas in reality he naturally knows only falsehood, and he should take for true only those things whose opposites seem false."[4] Why call that conviction of direct knowledge of the truth a malady? What would become of reasoning and inferring, of all indirect knowledge, if that which we hold directly is not valid? It is all based upon this very conviction. Man is born for the truth; how comes it that falsehood should be more accept-

[1] Or as Jowett more strongly translates it, "Not in the form of created things or of things relative, which men call existence, but knowledge absolute in existence absolute." *Plato*, vol. ii. p. 124, 2d ed.

[2] *Phædrus*, cap. xxvii. p. 713.

[3] Were this the place, it might be shown that this fallacy runs through much of Mr. Spencer's reasoning regarding personality and all the elements of Christian philosophy.

[4] *Pensées*, t. i. première partie, art. ii. p. 154.

able? "If our intellect," says Mivart, "is to be trusted at all, it must be trusted in what it declares to be the most certain of all, namely, necessary truths."[1] But our intellect is to be trusted even as we trust the reality of our own existence; and necessary truths do not come to us by a process of indirection, but are directly and immediately self-evident. We have no other vouchment than that we take upon trust our whole nature, and with it the normal workings of our intellect. You may call it an assumption or any other name you choose to give, but it is none the less a fact the most primary of all facts, underlying all action, be it physical, moral, or intellectual. Universal skepticism is an absurdity; the very act of doubting all things is a positive mental act. Therefore the habit of confidingness is the healthier habit of mind. Speaking of these two habits, Cardinal Newman, with that keenness and practical grasp of his subject for which he is preëminent, says: "Of the two, I would rather have to maintain that we ought to begin with believing everything that is offered to our acceptance, than that it is our duty to doubt of everything. The former, indeed, seems the true way of learning. In that case, we soon discover and discard what is contradictory to itself; and error having always some portion of truth in it, and the truth having a reality which error has not, we may expect that when there is an honest purpose and fair talents, we shall somehow make our

[1] *A Philosophical Catechism for Beginners*, p. 25. This little book is a marvel of clearness and condensation.

way forward, the error falling off from the mind, and the truth developing and occupying it."[1]

7. When, therefore, we are told that "error is inextricably bound up with the spirit of man," we may interpret it in the sense that it is with difficulty, and after long search, man is enabled to discover truth, and disentangle it from the errors with which it not infrequently is bound up. But we must keep this fact distinct from the no less palpable fact that in itself and by the light of reason man's intellect recognizes at sight, and accepts with a certainty beyond cavil, all necessary, self-evident truths as truths necessary and self-evident. Be it remembered that it is the truth that is necessary, and not the error. Truth is of things. Truth is reality. Error is only accidental. And when the writer whom we have just quoted, making error necessary, adds the following remarks, we feel bound not only to dissent from him, but to disengage the truth from the sophism in which he has enveloped it. "This necessary error," von Hellwald tells us, "is the essence of religion, the phantasy, the ideal. Man has an innate tendency to form ideals. It would be blocking the way to every deeper insight into things did we hesitate to consider the first stirrings of religion in man as the first emergence of the ideal."[2] He thus insists that all religion is based upon error and illusion, and makes the ideal the outcome of necessary error.

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, 2d ed. p. 377.

[2] F. von Hellwald, *Culturgeschichte*, bd. i. p. 46. Tilmann Pesch, S. J., *Die Grossen Welträthsel*, bd. ii. p. 501.

Indeed, he considers it a profound saying of the poet, that error alone is life and knowledge is death.[1] This is the last word of the philosophy of negation.

8. Certainly it is a remarkable intellectual feat that bases that which represents whatever is perfect in man's conception and positive in the order of things as the outcome of mere negation. Art has its ideal; life has its ideal; religion has its ideal; civilization has its ideal. Are these ideals the outcome of error and illusion? Has it indeed come to this, that men gather grapes of thorns? that the seeds of error grow up and give forth the ripe and luscious fruit of truth? that deception may be sown and confidence reaped? No; error exists but as the excrescence cast off by truth. There could be no wrong if there were not first a right; there could be no error if truth did not have a prior existence; there could be no ideal if there were not a foundation of absolute truth, absolute goodness, and absolute beauty upon which to build up the ideal. Surely literature and art cannot be the outcome of error. Think you the ideals after which Shakespeare and Dante, Beethoven and Haydn, Rafael and Murillo and Michael Angelo, constructed their masterpieces, are the growth of error? Error and mistake may enter into every human expression of the ideal; but the

[1] Eben so wahr als tief ist des Dichter's Spruch: —

"Nur der Irrthum ist das Leben,
Und das Wissen ist der Tod."

Culturgeschichte, p. 49.

error and the mistake are not of the ideal. It is rather because human hands are unskilled, and human expression is stammering, and human judgment is feeble. Let us dwell a moment on the nature, the origin, and the functions of the ideal, and we shall be in better position to understand how it is that genius is not a living in error, nor art a groping after illusions.

CHAPTER VI.

THE IDEAL IN THOUGHT.

I.

1. A GENIUS conceives and expresses a great thought. The conception so expressed delights. It enters men's souls; it compels their admiration. They applaud and are rejoiced that another masterpiece has been brought into existence to grace the world of art or letters. The genius alone is dissatisfied. Where others see perfection, he perceives something unexpressed beyond the reach of his art. Try as best he may, he cannot attain that indefinable something. Deep in his inner consciousness he sees a type so grand and perfect that his beautiful production appears to him but a faint and marred copy of that original. That original is the ideal; and the ideal it is that appeals to the Æsthetic Sense, and calls forth men's admiration.

2. An analysis of this admiration will lead us to an understanding of the ideal. It is universal. The Æsthetic Sense is as innate to man as is his physical sense of taste or touch. Savage and civilized admire whatever appeals to their admiration. Now, not everything does so appeal. The trivial, the contemptible, the weak, the inferior, are all beneath man's sense of admiration. The virtuous,

the noble, the heroic; whatever expresses strength or power; whatever is beautiful or sublime; in a word, whatever raises man's thoughts and aspirations to a superior plane, — that is for him an object of admiration. Man has within him two opposing elements. One seeks to raise him up into a spiritual and spiritualizing sphere of thought and action; the other tends to drag him down to things earthly and debasing. They are the two steeds that Plato represents the soul as driving, likening it to a charioteer; one steed "leans and presses heavily towards the earth, if he be not well-trained by his charioteer;" the other is "beautiful and noble and of a godlike character."[1] They are the opposing elements — the law in his members fighting against the law of his mind — of which St. Paul speaks in language less allegorical.[2] Now, it is the function of this sense of admiration to raise up and spiritualize the inferior parts of man's nature, so that they grovel not in things earthly, and to strengthen and improve his nobler aspirations. Where man may not imitate, where he may not even love, he can still admire. Wherever an ideal is expressed, there is an object for his admiration. We may not be able to explain this mysterious relation, but we all have the experience of it. Our souls are so attuned as to give out a music responsive to the chords that are touched. This we know and feel. Let us study the impression.

3. Take a Rafael or a Murillo. We gaze upon

[1] Plato, *Phædrus*, cap. xxv. p. 712, t. i. ed. Hirschigii.
[2] Romans vii. 23.

the painted canvas till its beauty has entered our soul. The splendor of that beauty lights up within us depths unrevealed, and far down in our inner consciousness we discover something that responds to the beauty on which we have been gazing. It is as though a former friend revealed himself to us. There is here a recognition. The more careful has been our sense-culture, the more delicately have our feelings been attuned to respond to a thing of beauty and find in it a joy forever, all the sooner and the more intensely do we experience this recognition. And therewith comes a vague yearning, a longing as for something. What does it all mean? The recognition is of the ideal. "The memory," says Plato, "on beholding the beautiful object, is carried back to the nature of absolute beauty."[1] Thus, there is not only a recognition; there is also a reminiscence of a higher spiritual order of things of which the soul has had occasional glimpses; there is a yearning for the home to which it belongs. Cavil as men may, the artistic ideal is an essential element in art work and art criticism; it speaks to something higher than the material sense; it tells of something more than technical detail and exquisite finish. There are moments when, beneath the spell of some great masterpiece, man feels the nearness of the Godhead, and his soul is thrilled with emotions that vibrate beneath the divine touch. There is no denying what is a universal experience. "The ideal," says Charles Blanc, "is the primitive divine exemplar of all things; it is,

[1] *Phædrus*, cap. xxxv. p. 718.

so to speak, a reminiscence of having already witnessed perfection, and the hope of seeing it once again."[1] Charles Blanc is only repeating the magnificent definition of the ideal which has come home to every soul not buried in the inert material, and which has been echoed down the ages ever since Plato gave it expression: "It is," says this wonderful seer, "a recollection of those things our soul formerly beheld when in company with God, despising the things that we now say are, and looking upward towards that which really is."[2] Without admitting the Pythagorean doctrine of a preëxistent state, here implied, we may go farther, and say that without the ideal there is no reality.

4. Nature recognizes the ideal. She has her types, and works by them. Each of her products is a specific realization of a separate type. As genus is a reality, distinct from, and causative of, the species, so is each of Nature's types a reality, distinct from the concrete thing fashioned after it and causative thereof. Hence it is that, in the animal and even in the vegetable world, we daily witness reversions to older types and the reproduction of ancestral traits of character. Nor is this all. Ascending higher still

> "Upon the great world's altar-stairs
> That slope through darkness up to God,"

we come to the prototype of all created types, and find it existing in the Word. Here is the source

[1] See M. Edouard Pailleron's "Discours sur Charles Blanc dans l'Académie," *Le Temps*, 18 Janvier, 1884.

[2] *Phædrus*, cap. xxix. p. 714.

and fountain-head of the ideal. In the Word, from the beginning — before there was a beginning of time, and the voice of God caused created things to leap forth from nothingness, — throughout the cycles of eternity, — in that perpetual Now which has neither past nor future,[1] — God contemplates those types. By the Word were they made real in the order of created things. For the Word is the conception of the Divine Intelligence.[2] In God, who is most pure activity and absolute actuality, being and conception are one and the same thing. And so, the Father recognizing Himself, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and all other things contained in the Divine Intelligence, conceives the Word. Therefore all knowledge, all wisdom, all created things are in the Word and exist by reason of the Word.[3] Were the eternal type not in the Word, the actual existences fashioned after it would not be. And this is why we say that without the ideal there is no reality. We have at last found the origin and source of the ideal. In all earnestness have we sought it; and, hushed in holy awe before the Godhead, in a loving reverence do

[1] Plato expresses this distinction very clearly: "And the terms *it was* — τό τ'ἦν — and *it will be* — τό τ'ἔσται — are generated forms of time, which we have wrongly and unawares transferred to an eternal Essence." *Timæus*, cap. x.

[2] Dicitur autem propriè Verbum in Deo, secundum quod Verbum significat conceptum intellectus. *Summa St. Thomæ.* Pars I. Quæst. xxxiv. art. 1.

[3] Sic ergo uni soli personæ in divinis convenit dici, eo modo quo dicitur Verbum. . . . Pater enim intelligendo se, et Filium, et Spiritum sanctum, et omnia alia quæ ejus scientiâ continentur, concipit Verbum. *Ibid.* ad 3.

we contemplate its splendor. The Word is not only the source of all created existences; the Word is also the light that enlightens this world. Its glory is reflected, now dimly, now clearly, in every created thing. To the Word did we trace the source whence emanate the principles of our thinking. And as the reason is illuminated with a light above and beyond the sparks that it throws out in its workings, that light giving it all necessary and self-evident truths; as the soul is nurtured and strengthened by that mysterious energy called grace, so the created ideal in each individual mind is enlightened and vivified by the uncreated ideal dwelling in the Word. This illumination of the ideal is the expression of the beautiful.

5. We now know whence it is that a thing of beauty becomes for each of us a joy forever. It is the mission of the artist to rend the veil of accidents and accessories in which the ideal is shrouded and present it to us in all its beauty and loveliness. And the beauty reflected therefrom lights up the folds and inner caverns of our souls, and reveals therein a recognition of this ideal, and reflected from our inmost souls is the image of Him from whom we come, and who is our Home — his image and a pale reflex of the splendor of his glory: on beholding which reflection we are moved; our souls are stirred to their very centre; a yearning takes possession of us, — a longing for the Home whence we came, — a groping after the Invisible Ideal, — and we feel our souls vibrate beneath the touch of the Infinite. God is in us and

we are in God, and the sense of our nearness to Him grows upon us. This is the experience that passes over us in the presence of the ideal. It is the experience that Plato has grandly recorded in his wonderful allegory.[1]

II.

1. We are now in position to understand the importance of an ideal in literary habits of thought. It is essential to them. Literature is the form of art the most varied and complicated. Plato hath well and aptly said of a literary structure: "Every speech ought to be put together like a living creature, with a body of its own, so as neither to be without head, nor without hands, nor without feet; but to have both a beginning, a middle, and an end, described proportionately to one another and to the whole."[2] So to construct a literary masterpiece that part fits to part and each is subordinate to the whole requires a central idea. As the parts in the animal organism are determined by the vital principle animating them, in such manner that all unconsciously develop into fitness and harmony, even so is it with the literary production. When the central thought, the animating principle, the ideal, is clearly grasped, it shapes the form in which it would be expressed. This teaching is clear and simple and as ancient as art. It is the teaching

[1] In the *Phædrus*, cap. xxxiii.–xxxviii.
[2] *Phædrus*, cap. xlvii. p. 726.

on which all the masterpieces throughout the ages have been constructed.

2. The artist disentangles the ideal from such accidents and accessories as tend to conceal it, and gives it a new embodiment. Out of the materials that Nature furnishes he fashions for it a body, and breathes into that body the ideal as its living soul, and forthwith the masterpiece stands out a thing of life and beauty and artistic excellence for undying admiration. Defects of detail may enter into its execution, but they are lost, forgotten, absorbed in the general effect produced. It is the "Transfiguration" of Rafael. Who, in presence of that noble scene, would cavil about the posing of limbs or the laws of perspective?[1] It is the "Hamlet" of Shakespeare. Surely, he who overlooks the power, the depth, the philosophy, the dramatic greatness of that tragedy, and quarrels with grammatical structure or obscure expression, has yet to learn the elements of true criticism. Or, it is the "Phædo" of Plato, whose sublime thoughts so frequently recur throughout the sentences here penned. He who should stop at the hard metaphysic or the apparently pointless questions and obscure answers, and should refuse to soar with Socrates in his dying song into the pure regions of truth, proves that he lacks the sympathy and knowledge to appreciate Grecian thought in the days of Plato, and is, therefore, unable to place at its worth one of the sublimest pieces of writing ever penned by

[1] For an instance of such caviling, see Taine's *Italy*, Eng. tr. pp. 142, 143.

human hand.[1] Or, it is the "Divina Commedia." What boots it that Dante's estimates of men and measures are not those of the historian? It detracts naught from the wonderful poem. Men are lost in admiration when they note the care with which word is built upon word, each having a special significance, and all made into a grand allegory wrought out of the politics and the philosophy, the strife and struggle, the fierce hates and the strong loves, in which the author lived and moved and fought. Or, it is Mozart's "Requiem." The critic who would quarrel with that grand composition because in its intricate and complicated structure, speaking of a life's hopes and fears, and the more awful hopes and fears beyond the grave, he misses the sweeter strains of other days would fail to grasp the sublime conception of the piece as a whole. Or, it is the gothic cathedral. Who thinks of making faces at gargoyle or statued niche, where all is emblem and significancy, the stone embodiment of a nation's aspirations? We read in it thought, satire, censure, desire, pathos, passion.[2] In all these instances, behind the mechanical structure, looking out upon us, and peering into our souls, is the ideal.

[1] It is this lack of sympathy that makes the reading of Plato so laborious. Perhaps it is failing to distinguish between the mental habits of the ancient Athenians and those of modern thinkers that has led Mr. Mahaffy, in his admirable *History of Greek Literature* (vol ii. p. 173), to make the criticism noticed above as regards part of the dialogue.

[2] This idea has been grandly drawn out by Victor Hugo, in *Notre Dame de Paris*, liv. iii. chap. 1.

3. This is a doctrine unpopular and distasteful to modern ears. None the less do we here repeat it and insist upon it as a primary factor in all the higher forms of thought and art, and an elementary principle of criticism. It is now claimed that art has no other aim than to construct the form for the form's sake. Now, the art that has only itself for its aim may amuse, may please, may even cause admiration on account of the mechanical skill exhibited; but it is not the art that endures for all time. I shall grant that a Shakespeare or a Goethe may sing as the blackbird sings; but I deny that their art is without purpose, still less without a soul, a vivifying ideal. The ideal, in calling forth our admiration and raising up our thoughts to things higher and beyond the scenes of every-day life, or in purifying the incidents of ordinary duties, is educating our better nature; it is working with a purpose. Ideal and purpose combined determine the form. "To act with a purpose," says Lessing, "is what raises man above the brutes; to invent with a purpose, to imitate with a purpose, is that which distinguishes genius from the petty artists who invent to invent, imitate to imitate."[1] Be it remembered that nothing outside of the Godhead exists for its own sake. The art produced in this spirit is sheer pettiness. Nowhere is this more evident than in the world of letters. Just as a word has value only inasmuch as it expresses an idea, even so any number of words strung together is meaningless and inane, unless it ex-

[1] Prose works, Bohn ed. *Dramatic Notes*, No. 34, p. 327.

presses a thought, not for the expression's sake, but for that of the thought. The sophists of Plato's day attempted to teach expression for the form's sake. He refuses the very name of art to such expression. "She lies," he tells us in his own scathing words, "and is not an art, but an inartistic trick."[1] Indeed, all art worthy of the name is imbued with the earnestness of life. Consciously or unconsciously, the artist's is a mission to crystallize in his work the spirit of the age; it is also his mission to educate his age, to raise it above itself, and to sustain its aspirations upward and onward —

> "*Artistry being battle with the age*
> *It lives in!* Half life, — silence, while you learn
> What has been done; the other half, — attempt
> At speech, amid world's wail of wonderment —
> 'Here 's something done was never done before!'
> *To be the very breath that moves the age,*
> *Means not to have breath drive you bubble-like*
> *Before it — but yourself to blow: that 's strain;*
> *Strain 's worry through the life-time, till there 's peace;*
> We know where peace expects the artist-soul."[2]

III.

1. No less opposed to the doctrine of the ideal is the School of Realism in literature and art. This school either ignores the ideal or regards it as the product of error. If there is no ideal, or if the ideal is only an illusion, then there is nothing beyond the nature we behold and live in; then the supreme effort of all art is to delineate that nature

[1] καὶ οὐκ ἔστι τέχνη, ἀλλ' ἄτεχνος τριβή. *Phædrus*, cap. xliii.
[2] Robert Browning, *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*, p. 110.

in detail with the greatest fidelity; then the sole rule of art is, "Copy, describe, imitate, express minutely whatever you see or hear; the more accurately you follow your model the greater artist you are." There is in this doctrine a mixture of truth and error. True it is that art cannot ignore nature. The world we live in is the material upon which art generally works. Therefore the artist observes men and things; he studies the nature outside himself and the nature within himself; he experiments; he compares, judges, discriminates; in this way does he gather up and select the subject-matter upon which he afterwards labors for artistic purposes. But there is in all this more than mere imitation. It is a wholesome realism, and does not exclude the ideal. It is the realism that Millet paints and Ruskin commends. The art that merely imitates can only produce a corpse; it lacks the vital spark, the soul, which is the ideal, and which is necessary in order to create a living organic reality that will quicken genius and arouse enthusiasm throughout the ages. Let us make the distinction; it is a vital one: Art is not imitation; art is interpretation.

2. This distinction the realistic school in art and letters loses sight of. Accordingly, it abandons all attempt at an ideal; it makes no effort to read the lessons of nature; it sees nothing in nature to read beyond the cold, hard lines that it traces; it holds that as the only knowledge is the knowledge arising out of observation and experiment, upon observation and experiment alone must art work. And, as the novel is the most potent literary influence of

the day, the realist would especially make the novel a mere study in nature and character, in which naught is to be set down save what has fallen under the eye or has been experienced in actual life. On the face of it, this theory is sound enough. By all means, let us have observation and experiment. But distinguish between the observation that takes in all the elements of nature and the observation that regards only the material side of nature. The latter alone falls under the scope of the realistic school. It has no other field for development. In consequence, it deals only with man living and acting out his brute nature in all its cunning and sensuality. The writers of this school give us the result of observations indeed, but their observations are of the street and the tavern; of the slum and the dive; of passion through all its phases wallowing in the mire of depravity. They picture human nature; but it is diseased human nature. Believing only in the animal man, naught else remains for the members of this school to depict. Not saintliness of life; for saintliness of life means to them only hypocrisy, or, at most, warped character. Not nobility of thought or word; for the weak, the erring, the monstrous in human nature is the only theme their art recognizes.

3. But this is not the world in which we live and move. This is not the human nature that we are cognizant of. The circle of our acquaintance includes — we know intimately — men and women of a far different stamp; men and women who are true and faithful in their love and friendship;

grand and generous souls, who are self-sacrificing whenever good is to be accomplished or duty to be fulfilled; who think and say the sweetest and sublimest thoughts; whose lives are pure and disinterested; whose intentions and aspirations are elevated and ennobling; who, in the daily round of their beautiful lives, shed about them loveliness and peace and joy and gladness of heart. These are the men and women that surround us. Here is the reality that we know. Here is the reality that even the realist knows. It is only in his library that humanity is to him such a monster. The lowliest life has its sublime passages. It has wherewith to inspire the artist, for it has its ideal. Millet dignifies on the canvas occupations the most menial; Wordsworth reveals the humblest life thrilled by delicate sentiment or by strong passion. Be the subject what it may, genius will ever discôver in it an ideal that shall elevate the soul. In this thought we place our consolation and our hope for the future of art and letters. "Realism," said an eloquent French preacher, "is a chronic disease; it is the leprosy of art; it is the epidemic of literature in the nineteenth century."[1] This is the proper diagnosis of the case. Let it be treated as a leprosy or an epidemic. It is at most but a passing phase, a new experience.

4. There are influences hovering over epochs and peoples that give them a characteristic coloring, and place upon them a distinctive impress. Our age is preëminently a transition period. Steam and elec-

[1] Père Felix, *Conférences*, 1867, Conf. v. p. 251.

tricity have added wings to thought and action. Theories appear and disappear in rapid succession to be followed by others as transient. New discoveries, new industries, and new sciences are hastily calling for new terms, new habits of thought, and new methods of work. And yet, much of our thinking runs in old grooves. We are groping in mist and darkness, with new and complex problems pressing upon us harder and faster than we can solve them. Each decade brings its riddle. The conjectures of one decade become the conclusions of the next, and are made the elementary truths of the third. Hence it is that so many of the books of the day are mere fleeting records of impressions as fleeting. Hence the mental entanglements and inconsistencies that beset men's thoughts and actions, their reasonings and their sentiments, their formal expressions and their inner convictions. The clearly demonstrated truth in science and the distinctly expressed ideal in art and letters alone remain permanent in the midst of these ever shifting scenes.

5. In the mean time, it is the life-work of each of us, amid the changes in which he lives, to harmonize, in his own person, all the elements that go to make up that personality. Socrates, on that memorable day when he drank the hemlock cup, told the faithful followers who were gathered around him how at different times a dream visited him in diverse forms, exhorting him to apply himself to the cultivation of music.[1] By music Socrates meant not

[1] *Phædo*, cap. iv. ed. Hirschigii, t. i. p. 46.

simply that combination of sounds that catches up a few fragments of this world's harmonies, and with them moves our souls. There is another and a higher music. It is the music of a soul in which dwell order and method; which coördinates all knowledge; which recognizes the ideal; in which the good, the true, and the beautiful are cultivated, each according to its own nature, and by its own method. It is the rhythm of a thoroughly disciplined intellect and a well-regulated life. That dream comes to us all. If we would realize that harmonious development to its full extent we should cultivate both the Spiritual Sense and the Moral Sense with care and assiduity.

CHAPTER VII.

CULTURE OF THE SPIRITUAL SENSE.

I.

1. At the start I would call attention to a modern spirit that is abroad, and that is destructive of spiritual culture and spiritual life. Its tone and temper pervade the pages of magazines and reviews; its meaning runs between lines in popular lectures; its accent is occasionally heard even from the pulpit. Its countenance is severe, its cheek pallid; it seems to groan beneath the burden and the responsibility of human life throughout the whole world. It is a spirit that ponders and weighs and measures the mysteries of life and death, of time and eternity, with the small weights and short measurements of its own estimates, and because they are found inadequate it finds fault, not with the weights or measures, but with the mysteries, and endeavors to ignore them. It is the spirit of agnosticism — a spirit that in the face of the noonday sun will deny the sun's existence and call it a phantasm of the brain. Such an irrational spirit may be thought an impossibility. But is it not guilty of an equally gross piece of absurdity when, recognizing Nature's laws, it denies or ignores or lays aside as unknowable a Mind, a Personality, a First Cause to make

and govern and guide those laws? Agnosticism has it well named itself.[1] Confining its observations to that which is of sense and feeling, rising no higher than the phenomena surrounding it, missing the meaning of life, dreaming dreams of an all-absorbing humanity that devours individual personality, and ignoring all that is spiritual in man's nature, — all the supernatural in his soul, — its knowledge is but one-sided; its thought, a serious distraction; its very essence, a doubt. Its views of moral right and of right-doing are disintegrating and subversive of men's most primary notions of intention and action. It looks upon prayer as a loss of time and a waste of energy; the cultivation of piety is in its eyes the fostering of a useless sentiment without a real object; conscience is not the omnipresent and all-speaking voice of an omniscient Judge, but the inherited disapproval of the tribe; self-reproach is not sincere regret for wrong-doing, but a new social energy intended to give impulse to right action; in a word, wrong is wrong only so far as it injures the race. Agnosticism has its teachers and defenders. Its very newness makes it an attraction for those ill-disposed to work in the old grooves of thought. Minds as brilliant as that of the late Professor Clifford, as patient and possessed of as powerful grasp as that of Mr. Herbert Spencer, have yielded to its seductive voice, and in its service have become the hewers of wood and the drawers of

[1] Professor Huxley, objecting to the word materialist, suggested that he and his school be called agnostics. This was in 1869, at Mr. James Knowles's house in Clapham Common.

water through long and toilsome years. Indolent minds find the spirit of agnosticism congenial to their moods, inasmuch as it teaches them to ignore all mystery and cut the Gordian knot of every difficulty by relegating it to the Unknowable. Corrupted minds make it a cloak for the indulgence of their appetites and passions. And so this spirit has that in it which can fascinate all classes of intelligence. It talks a cant phraseology that would make one believe it to be the embodiment of whatever is noblest in the teachings of Gautama and the Gospels at one and the same time. It gives the shows of things for their reality.

2. Such is agnosticism. The agnostic refuses to acknowledge the Unseen Universe. He is intolerant of any mention thereof. He is aggressive, bullying, and not infrequently insulting in his mode of assertion. With the utmost confidence he assures us that there is no supernatural order. He has proved Christ a myth, the Gospels clever forgeries, and Christianity a huge imposition. He insists that it is all settled beyond controversy; only intellectual babes and sucklings think differently from him to-day. In the name of humanity, — he loves humanity exceeding well, — and in the name of truth, — he reveres truth, — he begs you to set aside all such silly notions as that there exists a God, or that his Providence directs the affairs of men, or that you have a soul. This is indeed a new dispensation. It is the gospel of negation, and the agnostic is its missionary. But in the name of whom or of what does he come? Assuredly, not in the name

of common sense, for the common sense of the whole world holds with absolute certainty the very opposite of his teachings. Not in the name of revelation, for he denies the possibility of a revealed religion. Not in the name of human authority, for he recognizes no authority beyond himself. Not in the name of the reason within him, for in bringing himself to this conviction he ignores the primary laws of all reason. "It is," says Cardinal Newman, "the highest wisdom to accept truth of whatever kind, wherever it is clearly ascertained to be such, though there be difficulty in adjusting it with other known truth."[1] Now here is where the agnostic errs. He has a favorite theory, a pet notion of his own. It is a mere hypothesis that may or may not be true. But he finds difficulty in adjusting his theory with truths that come home to the highest order of intelligence with an irresistible force. So much the worse for the truths and the intellect. His pet conception must stand, and the universally received truths may vanish into oblivion. Of course, his conclusions cannot be broader than his premises. The elements he drops out in the one will naturally be missing in the other. Eliminating the supernatural order, as a consequence there remains in the visible process of his reasoning only the natural order.

3. Withal, the supernatural order exists. It secretly enters into the agnostic's reasoning and becomes a disturbing element in his calculations.

[1] *Idea of a University.* Lecture on Christianity and Scientific Investigation, p. 462.

He may ignore it; he may neglect it; he may deny it; but he cannot destroy it. In moral, social, and historical discussions it crops out at the most unexpected moments, or awaits him at the end of his speculations and forces him into monstrous paradoxes.[1] And, strange to say, the agnostic does not perceive how illogical he is. He even boldly asserts that in recognizing this momentous element in human thought and human action, we thereby lose all claim to science. Now, science is a methodical treatment of facts according to given principles. By means of what principles and according to what method does the agnostic arrive at his conclusion? So far as he has a principle at all, it is reducible to this, that what the study of matter does not reveal is a dream, a shadow;[2] there is no reality beyond the phenomena testified to by consciousness and the senses.[3] That is to say, the agnostic builds up his materialistic theories upon an assumption made expressly to exclude that which he wishes to ignore. Is it just? Is it scientific? And as for method, the agnostic has none. He holds aloof from all religious thoughts and remains in a state of apathy towards all spiritual issues. He may or may not have a soul; it is unknowable. There may or may not be a God; He also is unknowable. All such questions the agnostic regards with sublime indifference. Nay, he considers

[1] For instances see Mr. Mallock's work, *Is Life Worth Living?* chap. ix.

[2] Leslie Stephen, *Dreams and Realities.*

[3] *The Value of Life.* A Reply to Mr. Mallock's Work, p. 72.

it a matter of duty and of wisdom to place them out of sight as fruitless speculation. "By continually seeking to know," says Mr. Herbert Spencer, "and being continually thrown back with a deepened conviction of the impossibility of knowing, we may keep alive the consciousness that it is alike our highest wisdom and our highest duty to regard that through which all things exist as the Unknowable."[1] Now if those issues which are of the natural order and proved by the unaided light of reason, are ignored or denied, how may we demonstrate the existence of the supernatural order which stands beyond the domain of reason upon the higher plane of Faith and God's grace? No chain of reasoning can lead to this invisible region. It is beyond the range of human ken. There yawns a chasm between agnosticism and Christianity that human hands cannot bridge over. Later on we shall watch a great modern poet wrestle with the problem.

4. To the eye of Faith the supernatural world is a reality as real as, in a sense more real than, the natural world. He who denies or ignores it understands not himself, nor humanity, nor the universe in which he finds himself. The human heart knows neither rest nor happiness till it becomes sanctified in this mysterious world. Therefore it is that an Augustin will, while still groping towards this life of grace, cry out from the depths of his own experience: "Lord, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till

[1] *First Principles*, ch. v. p. 113.

it reposes in Thee."[1] Even an Augustin could not enter into the supernatural life by the force of his own genius. Reason and research may prepare the way, but assent to the supernatural truths of religion is elicited from the intellect only by command of the will, and the will cannot move the intellect to such an assent without a special supernatural assistance which we call grace. The truths of the supernatural order are seen in this life darkly as through a glass. They are not to be found at the end of any chain of syllogisms. They are not to be learned from a study of Nature's laws. Human reason and human knowledge, whether considered individually or collectively in the race, are limited to the natural. Knowledge of the supernatural can come only from a Divine Teacher. One may be convinced of every truth of revealed religion and yet not possess the gift of faith. That gift is purely gratuitous. The spirit of God breathes where it will. It follows sincere prayer rather than curious research. But once it opens the eyes of the soul, it reveals beyond all power of doubt, or cavil, or contradiction, the supernatural as a fact solemn, universal, constant throughout the vicissitudes of ages.[2]

II.

1. It is the wisdom of true philosophy to take man as he is and deal with him accordingly.

[1] *Confess.* lib. i. cap. 1.

[2] See Zigliara, *Propædeutica ad Sacram Theologiam*, pp. 11–117.

Now, man to the eye of reason is indeed in his essence and nature a rational animal. But to the eye of faith, man is more. He is also a child of grace. No sooner had he been created man than he became the recipient of God's choicest favors. And when, by the Fall, he had forfeited many of his high prerogatives, he was still granted grace sufficient to enable him to repent and be converted. It is within every man's power to attain the high destiny to which he has been called; but he can do so only by reason of the saving grace that flows from the Word. This is not a law of to-day or yesterday; it is of all time. "We are plants," says Plato, "not of earth, but of heaven; and from the same source whence the soul first arose, a divine nature, raising aloft our head and root, directs our whole bodily frame."[1] We come from God that we may go back to Him. The Word became incarnate for all, suffered for all, died for all, redeemed all in order that all might have life everlasting. Ours, and ours alone, will be the fault if we should wander away from that noble destiny.

> "Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> *But trailing clouds of glory, do we come*
> *From God, who is our home.*"[2]

2. Therefore is it worthy of our noblest efforts and our most undivided attention to foster in ourselves the Spiritual Life. Herein is the highest cultivation of the Moral Sense. No time should

[1] *Timæus*, cap. lxxi.

[2] Wordsworth, *Ode on Immortality*.

be thought too precious to devote to it, for it deals with the things of eternity; no thought too sustained or too painful, for its object is the Light of all intelligence. In the prayers that we make to Him who is the Life and the Light, in the sacraments that are administered to us, in the sermons that we hear and the doctrinal instructions that are given us, do we imbibe the food that will nourish and sustain in us the spiritual life. But it is not with the Spiritual Life that I am now concerned; it is rather with the Spiritual Sense. They are distinct and are not always found together. The sentiment of piety and sensible relish for divine things may be very weak in a nature that is spiritually strong. And also, one may be very weak in the practice of virtue, and still possess this sentiment of piety to a high degree of refinement and cultivation. Should we neglect the cultivation of this Spiritual Sense there would be lacking something to the complete development of our soul-functions. Our life-duties give an outward tendency to the soul; they withdraw it from its inner self and its own immediate concerns. They are therefore to it a species of distraction. But the soul has an inward life; and for the proper development of this inward life, it is important that it enter into itself and cultivate the interior spirit.

3. This is the function of the Spiritual Sense. Without the exercise of this function our thinking were incomplete. It is an incentive to higher and superior culture. Would you know why it is that

the religious life has been at all times a nursery for learning and a fountain-head of original thought? Much is due to the fact that scholars and thinkers have instinctively sought therein a refuge from the noise and whirl of worldly affairs. But much also is due to the cultivation of the Spiritual Sense. It enlarged their intellectual horizon. It threw upon things an additional and far-reaching light. It gave those men a favorable vantage-ground from which they might survey deeds and doers of deeds with unbiased mind. Sheltered in the sanctuary of religion, away from the storms of political strife and free from the struggles and anxieties, the temptations and distractions that beset their less fortunate brothers battling through the turmoil of life, their souls rested in a peaceful calm beneath this spiritual sky that brought joy and contentment to their hearts, and shed upon them a light which beamed forth from their countenances, even as it enhanced the clearness of their intellectual vision. And so, when they looked out upon the world and the things of the world, they saw more distinctly the needs and wants and shortcomings of humanity, and were the first to apply the remedy. They led the van in arts and letters, in science and education, and in all that goes to make up a people's civilization. With no slight reason, then, does Renan speak of monastic institutions as a great school of originality for the human mind.[1] And Ranke, contemplating the un-

[1] Mais il est certain qu'en perdant les institutions de la vie monastique, l'esprit humain a perdu une grande école d'originalité. — *Études d'Histoire Religieuse*, p. 336.

broken progress of intellectual culture that had been going on for ages within the bosom of the Catholic Church, hesitated not to say: "All the vital and productive energies of human culture were therein united and mingled."[1]

4. We have nothing to fear from Religion. She is our strength and our support. "The splendor of the divine truths received into the mind helps the understanding, and far from detracting from its dignity, rather adds to its nobility, keenness, and stability." So speaks His Holiness, Leo XIII., in his noble vindication of Christian philosophy.[2] Such is also the experience of Maine de Biran, whom Cousin pronounces the greatest metaphysician that has honored France since Malebranche.[3] His testimony is all the more valuable because it is the outcome of long and circuitous wanderings through the mazes of philosophic errors, with here and there a glimpse of light, till finally in his mature years, after much groping and great toil, the full splendor of truth burst upon him. He says: "Religion alone solves the problems of philosophy. She alone tells us where to find truth, absolute reality. Moreover, she shows us that we live in a perpetual illusion when we estimate things by the testimony of the senses, or according to our passions, or even according to

[1] *History of the Reformation in Germany*, vol. i. bk. ii. chap. i. p. 251, ed. Austin.

[2] Encyclical *Æterni Patris*, 1879.

[3] *Nouvelles Considérations sur le Rapport du Physique et du Moral*. Ouvrage posthume de Maine de Biran, Préface de M. Cousin, p. vi.

an artificial and conventional reason. It is in raising ourselves up to God and seeking union with Him by his grace, that we see and appreciate things as they are. Certain it is that the point of view of the senses and passions is not at all that of human reason; still less is it that of the superior reason, which, strengthened by religion, soars far above all earthly things."[1] These are not the words of a cloistered monk, nor of a religious teacher. He who penned them had been a materialist in philosophy and a worldling in practical life, and though he had outgrown his materialism, and cast off much of the spirit of the world, still at the time of writing them he did not acknowledge himself a Christian. They are his inmost convictions wrung from him in self-communion by the spirit of truth.

III.

1. But we need not look beyond ourselves for further reason why we should cultivate the Spiritual Sense. Were the reader a young man standing on the threshold of life I would say to him: You now look out upon the world decked in all the roseate hues that your young imagination weaves; your fancy filled with schemes of ambition; bent upon achieving success in some one or other walk of life, you are eager, even to impatience, to start out in your course; and you may think it a loss of

[1] *Journal Intime*. Quoted in A. Nicolas: *Étude sur Maine de Biran* (Paris, 1858). This monograph is a philosophical gem, which deserves to be better known.

time, a diverting you from your main purpose, to enter seriously upon the cultivation of this Spiritual Sense. On the contrary, you will find in it a help. The present is only a passing phase of your existence. Youth soon fades and strength decays; and as shock after shock in your struggle through life demolishes one after another the air-castles which you so long and so laboriously constructed, you will more and more feel the necessity of ceasing to lean upon broken reeds and of looking within your soul's interior for an abiding comfort. If you find there but emptiness, even as you have found hollowness and deceit without, you will grow hardened and cynical. But if, on the other hand, you have learned to commune with yourself and to make your soul's interior the guest-chamber in which to entertain the Divine Word, the Emmanuel dwelling within you, in Him you will find renewed strength to fight your battles with the world, to help you in trouble, to soothe you in pain, and to console you in sorrow and affliction. In cultivating the Spiritual Sense you are also educating yourself up to the larger views of life, and learning the great lesson of patience and forbearance.

2. And there is another moment — a supreme moment — when the language of the soul, the sentiment of piety and relish for divine things, the habit of sweet communion with your Saviour, will be to you a blessing and a comfort. It is when you are prostrate on the pallet of sickness, and life is ebbing fast, and the helpless body seems to be sinking down abysmal depths with the weight of its

own inertness. From time to time the soul's flickering flame lights up into a sudden blaze of consciousness and animation, as if wrestling hard to be free. Dear friends and near relatives may be there, hovering around you, ministering to your every want and gratifying your least desire. But from the questioning eyes that eagerly scan the face of your physician, and the anxious glances that are cast upon you, and the subdued whisperings that speak the worst fears, you learn that you are beyond all human aid. More faintly flickers the vital spark and weaker grows the frame, and loving faces gaze upon you with a more wistful look, and beloved forms pass before you with a more stealthy tread; but they are to you as though they were not. Fainter and feebler you become, and the world recedes farther and farther from you, and those you love so dearly seem afar off, and the distance between you and them grows more and more. You feel yourself sinking into unconsciousness, and you know that your next waking will be in another world, far away from everything in life around which your heartstrings are entwined. The last rites of the Church are administered to you, and as your senses are about shutting out forever the sights and sounds of this world, you catch, as the echo of a far-off voice, the words of the priest, "Go forth, O Christian soul." Happy will you be in that dread hour, if, when you appear before the Divine Searcher of hearts, the pure light of the Word penetrates no corner that you did not know, and reveals

no sin that has not been repented of and atoned for. Thrice happy will you be when you meet the Divine Presence face to face, if, having cultivated the Spiritual Sense and acquired a relish for divine truths, you find that you are familiar with the language of love and adoration, of praise and thanksgiving, which should be yours for all eternity, and that you are not as a stranger in a strange land, but rather as a child welcomed home to his Father's House after a life-long exile. Wise indeed were it that we all of us learn in time this language which must be ours throughout eternity.

IV.

1. There are two manuals of instruction and initiation into this mystical language of the soul which I would especially recommend. One is the Book of the Gospels. We know its contents, but we ought never to weary of its perusal. We shall always find in it something new. It treats of a subject that never grows old. We cannot hear enough of Him, the Meek One, walking among men and doing good wherever He went. Let us always open the Book reverently and lovingly, and let the light of his Blessed Face shine out upon us from its inspired pages. Sweetly and simply it traces his footsteps; in loving accents it recounts the words He spoke, the deeds He did, the miracles He wrought. It reveals the God-Man. It tells of his sufferings from the manger in Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary. It tells of his

patience and forbearance, of his humility and modesty, of his compassion for sinners and his hatred for hypocrisy. His words are as balm to the bruised, rest to the weary, peace to the restless, joy to the sorrowing, and light to those groping in the dark. They penetrate all hearts because they flow from a heart loving man with an untold love. Our familiarity with them from our childhood up may lead us to lose sight of their untold worth. The Sermon on the Mount embodies all that there is of good and perfect in moral thought, moral word, and moral work in the whole life of humanity. The sublimest hymn that was ever poured forth from the lips of man in prayer and the praise of his Creator is the *Our Father*. In its grandeur it rises from the lowest depths of man's nothingness to the throne of Infinite Majesty; in its pathos it searches the heart, touches its feebleness and exposes its wants; in its utterance it speaks with the simplicity and tenderness of a child leaning upon a fond and merciful father. It is at once supplication, exhortation, instruction, praise, and worship. I might go on enumerating the beauties and sublimities of this marvelous Book and never tire, never get done. Its beauty is untold; its wisdom is unfathomable. They are the beauty and the wisdom of Him who is the ideal of all loveliness and the source of all wisdom.

2. That other book which I would recommend to you has garnered a few of the lessons revealed in these Gospels and bound them together in rich and ripe sheaves of thought. A rare harvesting in-

deed is this book. It is known in every tongue and its praises have been sung in every note. Next to its original and source it is the most popular book ever written. I speak of "The Imitation of Christ," which Fontenelle without exaggeration well styles the most beautiful book that ever came from the hands of man.[1] It has been admired by all classes of thinkers and all shades of creeds. Doctor Johnson loved it and used to speak of it as a good book, to receive which the world opened its arms.[2] Jean Jacques Rousseau wept over it.[3] John Wesley published an edition of it as food for the hungering souls to whom he ministered in the Durham coal-pits and on the Devonshire moors. Bossuet called it a volume full of unction; St. Charles Borromeo, the world's consoler; and blessed Thomas More said that the book, if read, would secure the nation's happiness. Surely, a book receiving praise from so many and such diverse sources is worthy of our intimate acquaintance. The author was Thomas Hämerken, of Kempen, commonly known as Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471). We will first consider the man and his times; afterwards we will discuss the spirit, the philosophy, and the influence of the book.

[1] Le plus beau livre qui soit parti de la main d'un homme, puisque l'Evangile n'en vient pas.

[2] Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. ii. p. 143.

[3] *Dublin University Magazine*, June, 1869.

CHAPTER VIII.

SPIRITUAL SENSE OF THE IMITATION.

I.

1. THE century in which Thomas à Kempis saw the light was the transition period between the mediæval and the modern world. The Crusades had done their work; the gothic cathedral had been built; the Miracle-Play had ceased to instruct and edify; Thomas of Aquin had put the finishing hand to Scholastic Philosophy, and left it a scientific monument worthy of his genius and the age; Dante had crystallized the faith and science, the fierce hate and the strong love, the poetry, the politics, and the theology, the whole spirit of mediævalism in his sublime allegory. That old order was breaking up, and in the awakening of the new much anarchy prevailed. In the general crumbling away of institutions the human intellect seemed bewildered. A groping and a restlessness existed throughout; there was a yearning of men after they knew not what, for the night was upon them and they were impatient for the coming of the dawn. Where were they to seek the light? The ignorant and the obstinate, without either the requisite knowledge or the necessary patience to discover the laws of Nature, sought to wrest from her the secrets

deed is this book. It is known in every tongue and its praises have been sung in every note. Next to its original and source it is the most popular book ever written. I speak of "The Imitation of Christ," which Fontenelle without exaggeration well styles the most beautiful book that ever came from the hands of man.[1] It has been admired by all classes of thinkers and all shades of creeds. Doctor Johnson loved it and used to speak of it as a good book, to receive which the world opened its arms.[2] Jean Jacques Rousseau wept over it.[3] John Wesley published an edition of it as food for the hungering souls to whom he ministered in the Durham coal-pits and on the Devonshire moors. Bossuet called it a volume full of unction; St. Charles Borromeo, the world's consoler; and blessed Thomas More said that the book, if read, would secure the nation's happiness. Surely, a book receiving praise from so many and such diverse sources is worthy of our intimate acquaintance. The author was Thomas Hämerken, of Kempen, commonly known as Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471). We will first consider the man and his times; afterwards we will discuss the spirit, the philosophy, and the influence of the book.

[1] Le plus beau livre qui soit parti de la main d'un homme, puisque l'Evangile n'en vient pas.

[2] Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. ii. p. 143.

[3] *Dublin University Magazine*, June, 1869.

CHAPTER VIII.

SPIRITUAL SENSE OF THE IMITATION.

I.

1. THE century in which Thomas à Kempis saw the light was the transition period between the mediæval and the modern world. The Crusades had done their work; the gothic cathedral had been built; the Miracle-Play had ceased to instruct and edify; Thomas of Aquin had put the finishing hand to Scholastic Philosophy, and left it a scientific monument worthy of his genius and the age; Dante had crystallized the faith and science, the fierce hate and the strong love, the poetry, the politics, and the theology, the whole spirit of mediævalism in his sublime allegory. That old order was breaking up, and in the awakening of the new much anarchy prevailed. In the general crumbling away of institutions the human intellect seemed bewildered. A groping and a restlessness existed throughout; there was a yearning of men after they knew not what, for the night was upon them and they were impatient for the coming of the dawn. Where were they to seek the light? The ignorant and the obstinate, without either the requisite knowledge or the necessary patience to discover the laws of Nature, sought to wrest from her the secrets

of which she is possessed by the process of magic, astrology, and simulated intercourse with spirits.[1] Hecate was their inspiring genius.

2. The learned sought the light, on the one hand, through the mists and mazes of the old issue of Nominalism and Realism, which had been revived by William of Ockham (d. 1347), and continued by Jean Buridan (d. after 1350), Albert of Saxony (who taught at Paris about 1350–60), Marsilius of Inghen (d. 1392), and the zealous Peter of Ailly (1350–1425).[2] In their gropings they gathered up little more than an abundance of error, aridity, and intellectual pride. Others, following in the wake of Petrarca and Boccaccio, began to cultivate an exaggerated taste for the ancient classics and to revive the spirit of paganism. Children were instructed in Greek,[3] and the pedantic quarrels of grammarians divided cities and even whole provinces.[4] Others again, weary of the barren disputations of the Schools, sought the light in union with the Godhead through the dark and unsafe paths of Mysticism. Master Eckhart proclaimed it their goal and only refuge. He undertook to point out the way, but became lost in the mazes of neo-Platonism and Pantheism. Under his in-

[1] See Görres, *La Mystique*, trad. par. M. Ch. Ste-Foi. partie iii. *La Mystique Diabolique*, t. iv. chap. viii., xiv.

[2] Ueberweg, *History of Philosophy*, Eng. tr. vol. i. p. 465.

[3] Ambroise, de l'ordre des Camaldules, au commencement de 1400, trouvait dans Mantoue des enfants et des jeunes filles versés dans le grec. Cantù, *Histoire Universelle*, t. xii. p. 578.

[4] Les querelles des pédants hargneux intéressaient, divisaient les villes et les provinces. *Ibid.* p. 589.

fluence whole nations, impelled by an indefinite yearning for spiritual life, rose up as one man in universal clamor for mystical union with the Godhead. They became intoxicated with the New Science. He had taught them that the creation of the world and the generation of the Word were one act; that the soul preëxisted in God from all eternity; that the light of the Word was inseparable from the light of the soul, and that in union with that Word were to be found perfection and knowledge.[1]

3. Although Eckhart tried to hedge in these dangerous tenets with various safeguards and fine-spun distinctions, the people, in their ignorance and enthusiasm, broke loose from all restraint and fell into deplorable disorders. Large numbers formed themselves into societies having as spiritual directors laymen who claimed to be initiated into the secrets of this mystical union with the Godhead. This was a condition of things anomalous as it was dangerous. Sometimes, indeed, under this lay-direction, the people made real spiritual progress, as did the society known as the Friends of God under the guidance of that mysterious layman who so

[1] "The Light, which is the Son of God, and the shining — *das Ausscheinen* — of that light in the creature-world are inseparable. The Birth of the Son and the Creation of the world are one act." Stöckl, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, § III., 6, p. 494. Also 10, p. 495. "The soul, like all things, preëxisted in God. . . . Immanent in the Divine Essence, I created the world and myself." Ueberweg, *History of Philosophy*, vol. i. § 106, in which Eckhart's teaching is accounted for at length by Dr. Adolf Lasson. The article in Stöckl is far more satisfactory.

successfully led the celebrated Tauler into the way of this mystical life.[1] More frequently, they went beyond all control and became mere fanatics, as the Beguines and Begards.[2] Tauler (1290–1361) took the yearning multitude by the hand and led them in the path which he had trodden. So powerful was his eloquence and so great the influence that he wielded, that even at this day his name is a magic wand, capable of stirring the hearts of the descendants of the thousands along the Rhine who clung upon his lips and eagerly fed their hungering souls with the words of life that fell from them. And whilst the rugged earnestness of Tauler pierced their hearts, the gentle suavity of Heinrich Suso (1300–1365), the minnesinger of the love of God, swayed them with no less force and helped to dissipate the atmosphere of false mysticism and erroneous doctrines in which they were enveloped.

II.

1. To this extent had Mysticism become a passion, when Gerhard Groote established the Brethren of the Common Life. The mystical spirit entered into their rule of living, but in so new and

[1] See *Life of Tauler*, prefixed to his Sermons, edited and translated into French by M. Ch. Ste-Foi (Paris, 1855), vol. i. p. 7 *et seq.*

[2] When the organization was dissolved by Pope John XXII. it numbered more than three hundred thousand in Germany alone. Görres, *La Mystique*, t. i. p. 131. They were so called from their institutor, Lambert Begha, who established the organization in 1170.

practical a form that they become known as Brethren of the New Devotion. It pervaded the books they wrote; its spirit was in the very atmosphere of their schools. The children attending them were imbued with it. Amongst those children was Thomas à Kempis. He afterwards became a member of the Order, was ordained priest, and lived to the advanced age of ninety-one years. We read nothing eventful in his life. Like the Venerable Beda, from his youth up he had borne the sweet yoke of religion. Like Beda, also, it had been a pleasure for him to read and teach and write and transcribe what he found best in sacred and profane literature. In order that the intellect might not grow barren in the mechanical exercise of transcribing the thoughts of others, it was made a rule that the Brothers should cull, each for himself and according to his taste, some of the beautiful sayings and maxims of the Fathers and saints, and add thereto pious reflections.[1] This was a labor of love for Thomas, and in performing it he was sowing and fertilizing the seeds of that special book that was to be the child of his genius.

2. Another source of inspiration for that book was the beautiful example of his brethren. His convent was a spiritual garden in which were tended with great care all the virtues of the religious life. He needed only to remember and record. Not only in his great work, but in the numerous lives of the brethren that he has left us, he never

[1] These collections were called *Rapiaria*.

tires of expressing his appreciation of their devotion, regularity, and spirit of faith. And they were equally edified by his amiable character and great humility. They held him in honor and esteem, and his influence amongst them was great.[1] One of the brethren remembers, as an event in his life, how he had seen him and spoken with him: "The Brother who wrote 'The Imitation' is called Thomas. . . . This writer was living in 1454, and I, Brother Hermann, having been sent to the general chapter in that year, spoke with him."[2] Nor was he less appreciated outside his convent walls. The Cistercian monk Adrian de But stops the chronicle of political events to say how he edified by his writings, especially his masterpiece, which the good monk not inappropriately styles "a metrical volume."[3] His fame has continued to grow broader, ripple after ripple, till it fills the whole

[1] Among the small and peaceful circle of the religious Mystics, no man exercised so important an influence as Thomas Hämerken, of Kempen. Gieseler, *Compend. Eccl. History*, v. p. 73.

[2] Mgr. J. B. Malou, *Recherches sur le véritable auteur de l'Imitation*, p. 82.

[3] Hoc anno frater Thomas à Kempis, de Monte Sanctæ Agnetis professor ordinis regularium canonicorum, multos scriptis suis divulgatis, ædificat: hic vitam Sanctæ Lidwigis descripsit *et quoddam volumen metrice super illud, Qui sequitur me. Chroniques relatives a l'histoire de la Belgique*, publiées par M. le Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove, t. i. *The Imitation* as written by à Kempis is both metrical and rhythmical. This is the conclusion of Dr. Hirsche after long and careful study of the original MS. (*Thomæ Kempensis de Imitatione Christi*. Berolini, 1874. Prefatio, pp. xiv, xv.) Henry Sommalius, in 1599, first divided each chapter into paragraphs, and in the seventeenth century several editors subdivided the paragraphs into versicles.

world. And yet, when living, he shrank from notoriety; he loved retirement; he dreaded gossip.[1] On, on, through the years of his long life, through the vigor of youth, through the maturity of manhood, through the gathering shadows of old age, he plied his pen and scattered broadcast devout books. Let us approach still nearer.

3. Figure to yourself a man of medium height,[2] rather stout in body, with forehead broad, and a strong Flemish cast of features, massive and thoughtful, bespeaking a man of meditative habits; his cheeks tinged slightly brown; his large and lustrous eyes looking with a grave and far-off look, as though gazing into the world of spiritual life in which his soul dwelt. This is Thomas à Kempis as he appeared to his contemporaries. Still another glimpse of him, as he walks and speaks with his brethren, has been sketched with a loving hand: "This good Father, when he was walking abroad with some of the Brotherhood, or with some of his other friends, and suddenly felt an inspiration come upon him — namely, when the Bridegroom was willing to communicate with the bride, that is, when Jesus Christ, his Beloved, did call to his soul as His elect and beloved spouse —

[1] "Valde devotus, libenter solus, et nunquam otiosus." *MS.* 11,841, Bibl. de Bourgogne, Brussels, printed for the first time in Appendix to *Recherches sur le véritable auteur de l'Imitation*, par Mgr. J. B. Malou, deuxième ed. p. 388.

[2] "Hic fuit brevis staturæ, sed magnus in virtutibus." *Ibid.* From a measurement of the thigh-bone, Dr. F. R. Cruise of Dublin calculated the height of Thomas à Kempis to be at least five feet six inches. *Thomas à Kempis*, pp. 306, 324, 325.

was wont to say, 'My beloved brethren, I must now needs leave you,' and meekly begging to be excused, he would leave them, saying, 'Indeed, it behooves me to go; there is One expecting me in my cell.' They accordingly granted his request, took well his excuse, and were much edified thereby."[1] In this reverential manner was his memory cherished. We are not surprised to learn that a great many, being attracted by his reputation for science and sanctity, flocked around him, to cultivate his acquaintance and to pursue their studies under his guidance.[2]

4. What was the inner life of this attractive soul? What were the trials, the struggles with self, the temptations through which he passed? Surely, he who is both philosopher and poet of the interior life in all its phases must have traversed the rugged path leading up to perfection with an observant eye for all the dangerous turns and treacherous pitfalls that lurk on the way. Above all, he must have loved much. "The passion," says Michelet, "which we meet in this work is grand as the object which it seeks; grand as the world which it forsakes." And in this love he found strength to overcome every obstacle. In another work he thus lays bare his soul: "Some-

[1] *Opera Omnia Th. de Kempis.* Ed. Georg Pirckhamer. Nuremberg, 1494, fol. xxxv. Kettlewell, *Thomas à Kempis and the Brethren of the Common Life*, vol. i. p. 33. Mgr. Malou, *Recherches*, p. 84.

[2] Hardenberg, *MS. Life of Wessel*, a disciple of Thomas à Kempis. Quoted by Ullmann, *Reformatoren vor der Reformation*, bd. ii. p. 738, Eng. tr. vol. ii. p. 271.

times my passions assailed me as a whirlwind; but God sent forth his arrows and dissipated them. The attack was often renewed, but God was still my support."[1] And in his great book he occasionally gives us a glimpse of himself. Thus we see him at the beginning of his religious career in great mental anxiety as to whether or no he will persevere. "He presently heard within him an answer from God, which said, 'If thou didst know it, what wouldst thou do? Do now what thou wouldst do then, and thou shalt be secure.' And being herewith comforted and strengthened, he committed himself wholly to the will of God, and his anxious wavering ceased."[2] In another place[3] we find him sending up cries for strength and resignation, such as could only come from a heart bleeding and lacerated with wounds inflicted by calumny and humiliation.[4] But it is only a soul that rose above the spites and jealousies of life that could speak the words of comfort and consolation therein to be found. "Verily," hath it been beautifully said, "only a breast burning with pity — a breast that hath never wounded another breast — could have offered that incense to heaven, that dew to earth, which we call 'The Imitation.'"[5] Such was the author. He had learned to repress every inordinate desire or emotion, until

[1] *Soliloquy of the Soul.* See chaps. xv., xvi., xvii.

[2] Bk. i. chap. xxv. 2.

[3] Bk. iii. chap. xxix.

[4] Charles Butler, Life prefixed to Bishop Challoner's translation of *The Imitation*, p. vii.

[5] William Maccoll in *Contemporary Review*, September, 1866.

in his old age he was content with solitude and a book. "I have sought rest everywhere," was he wont to say, "but I have found it nowhere except in a little corner with a little book."[1]

III.

1. It is interesting to study the literary structure of "The Imitation," and note the traces of authorship running through it. We will glance at it for a moment. First of all and above all, the book is saturated through and through with the sacred Scriptures. You can scarcely read a sentence that does not recall some passage now in the Old, now in the New Testament. It reflects their pure rays like an unbroken mirror. To transcribe the Bible had been a labor of love for the author. Echoes of beautiful passages from the spiritual writers that went before him reverberate through the pages of this book which is none the less original. The author drew from St. Gregory the Great.[2] St. Bernard seems to have been a special favorite.[3] So was St. Francis of Assisi.[4] He drew from St.

[1] Charles Butler, *loc. cit.* p. viii. These words are inscribed on the pages of an open book represented in the Gertruidenberg portrait of the author. Dr. Criuse has an autotype copy of this portrait in his valuable and scholarly book.

[2] Cf. Gregory, *Cura Pastoralis*, and *The Imitation*, bk. iv. chap. v.

[3] Cf. the hymn *Jesu, dulcis memoria*, and bk. ii. chaps. vii, viii. For numerous other instances of passages from St. Bernard corresponding with sentences in *The Imitation*, see *Thomas à Kempis*, by F. R. Cruise, M. D., pp. 314–20.

[4] Cf. *Epist.* xl., and bk. iii. chap. l. 8.

Thomas;[1] he drew from St. Bonaventura;[2] he even drew from the Roman Missal.[3] He also laid the pagan classics under contribution. He quotes Aristotle;[4] he quotes Ovid;[5] he quotes Seneca,[6] and there are some remarkable coincidences in expression between himself and Dante.[7] He even quotes the popular sayings of his day.[8] The poem of the "Holy Grail" was not unknown to him.[9] In a word, as with the poet, whatever love inspired, no matter the speech in which the voice came, he wrote at her dictation.[10]

2. In both language and spirit the book exhales the atmosphere of Mysticism in which it was con-

[1] Cf. Office for Corpus Christi, and bk. iv. chap. ii. 1; also chap. xiii. 2, 17.

[2] Cf. the hymn *Recordare Sanctæ Crucis* and bk. ii. chap. xii. 2. The Toulouse Sermons attributed to St. Bonaventura, having many extracts from *The Imitation*, are no longer regarded as authentic. See Mgr. Malou, *Recherches sur le véritable auteur de l'Imitation*, pp. 198–202.

[3] Cf. Prayer for Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, and bk. iii. c lv. 6; Post. Com. Fourth Sunday in Advent, and bk. iv. chap. iv.

[4] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, i. 1, in bk. i. chap. ii. 1.

[5] Ovid, lib. xiii. *de Remed. Am.* in bk. i. chap. xiii. 5.

[6] Seneca, *Ep.* vii. in bk. i. chap. xx. 2.

[7] Cf. Dante, *Inferno*, canto iii. and canto vi. with bk. i. chap. xxiv.

[8] Bk. ii. chap. ix. 1. The expression is: —

"Satis suaviter equitat,
Quem gratia Dei portat."

[9] Cf. in *Le Saint-Graal* (*Les Romans de la Table ronde*, ed. Paulin Paris, t. i. pp. 176–189) the consecration of Joseph as priest, and bk. iv. chap. v.

[10] Io mi son un che, quando
Amore spira, noto ed a quel modo
Che detta dentro, vo significando.

DANTE, *Purgatorio*, xxiv. 52–54.

ceived and written. Its very terms are the terms of Mysticism. And if we would understand the book thoroughly we must make tangible to ourselves this mystical state. In the human soul there is and has been at all times a strong and irrepressible yearning after the higher spiritual things of the unseen Universe. It is not given to all to attain its dizziest heights. It may not even be well for all to aim thereat. But it is something to be proud of, to know that our humanity has reached that state in its elect few. And what is the mystical state? It is a striving of the soul after union with the Divinity. It is therefore a turning away from sin and all that could lead to sin, and a raising up of the soul above all created things, "transcending every ascent of every holy height, and leaving behind all divine lights and sounds and heavenly discoursings, and passing into that Darkness where He is who is above all things."[1]

3. In this state the soul is passively conscious that she lives and breathes in the Godhead, and asks neither to speak nor think. Her whole happiness is to be. She has found absolute Goodness, absolute Truth, and absolute Beauty; she knows it and feels it and rests content in the knowledge. She seeks nothing beyond. She has left far behind her all practical and speculative habits. Her faculties are hushed in holy awe at the nearness of the Divine Presence.[2] Memory has ceased to

[1] Dionysius Areopagita, *De Mystica Theologiâ*, cap. i. § 3, t. i. col. 999. *Patrol. Græcæ*, ed. Migne, t. iii.

[2] See Tauler. *Sermon* for the Sunday after Epiphany; trad. Ste-Foi. t. i. p. 130.

minister to her; Fancy and Imagination walk at a distance and in silence, fearing to obtrude themselves upon the Unimagined Infinite; Reason is prostrate and abashed before the Incomprehensible; Understanding remains lulled in adoration before the Unknowable. She is overshadowed by the intense splendor of the Divine Glory, and filled — thrilled through and through — with the dread Presence, she is raised above the plane of our common human feelings and sympathies into the highest sphere of thought and love and adoration attainable in this life, and is thus given a foretaste of heaven. The soul apprehends with clearness mysteries that are entirely beyond her ordinary power of conception. Such was the experience of a Francis of Assisi, a Heinrich Suso, a Tauler, a Loyola, a Theresa of Jesus. But this experience became theirs only after they had passed through much tribulation of spirit and their souls had been purified; for it is only to the clean of heart that it is given to become intimately united with God in this manner.

4. Men of proud thought and vain desire have attempted without the requisite purification to attain that state; but invariably they became lost in illusions, were confounded, and fell into the deepest follies. Therefore it is that this union is safely sought only through the Redeemer. And so, the writings attributed to the Areopagite make the Chalice of the Redeemer the central point of all Christian mysteries; the Chalice being according to them the symbol of Providence which pene-

trates and preserves all things.[1] This symbol passes down the ages, gathering around it feats of chivalry and love and bravery, — adventure and prowess which are also symbolic, — and men speak of it as the Holy Grail, which only such as the suffering Tituriel and the pure Galahad are permitted to behold.[2] What is it all but a beautiful allegory typifying the struggles of the devout soul before it is permitted to commune with God in this mystical union?

IV.

1. Thomas à Kempis knows no other way by which to lead the Christian soul to the heights of perfection and union with the Divinity than the rugged road trodden by Jesus. The opening words of "The Imitation" strike the keynote with no uncertain tone: "'He that followeth me walketh not in darkness,'[3] saith the Lord. These are the words of Christ, by which we are taught to imitate his life and manners, if we would be truly enlightened and be delivered from all blindness of heart. . . . Whosoever would fully and feelingly understand the words of Christ must endeavor to conform his life wholly to the life of Christ."[4] In this

[1] Crater igitur cum sit rotundus et apertus, symbolum est generalis providentiæ quæ principio fineque caret atque omnia continet penetratque. Dion. Areop. *Ep.* ix. *Tito Episcopo*, § iii. col. 1110. *Patrol. Græcæ*, ed. Migne. t. iii.

[2] The symbol of the Chalice is older than Christianity. It was adopted from the Dionysian mysteries of the Greeks and given a Christian meaning. See Görres, *La Mystique*, t. i. p. 78.

[3] John viii. 12.

[4] Bk. i. chap. i. 1, 2.

manner does the author give us purely and simply, without gloss or comment, the spirituality of the gospel. He does not flatter human nature. He merely points out the narrow and rugged road to Calvary. The "royal way of the holy Cross" is the only safe way: "Go where thou wilt, seek whatsoever thou wilt, thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy Cross."[1] The pious author, in descanting on the merits of the Cross, becomes truly poetical: "In the Cross is salvation; in the Cross is life; in the Cross is protection against our enemies; in the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the Cross is strength of mind; in the Cross is joy of spirit; in the Cross is the height of virtue; in the Cross is the perfection of sanctity. There is no salvation of the soul, no hope of everlasting life, but in the Cross. Take up therefore thy Cross and follow Jesus and thou shalt go into life everlasting."[2] Thus it is that in the language of à Kempis the Cross symbolizes all Christian virtue; and bearing one's trials and troubles with patience and resignation is walking on the royal road of the Cross. It supersedes the symbol of the Chalice.

2. For the student "The Imitation" is laden with beautiful lessons. Thomas à Kempis must have had his own scholars in his mind's eye in penning many a passage. He never tires of recalling to them that there is something better than vain words and dry disputations. "Surely great words do not make a man holy and just.[3] . . . Many

[1] Bk. ii. chap. xii.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Bk. i. chap. i. 3.

words do not satisfy the soul.[1] . . . Meddle not with things too high for thee; but read such things as may rather yield compunction to thy heart, than occupation to thy head."[2] He distinguishes between the reading that goes home to the heart and that which is merely a matter of occupation. The distinction is important. One to whom we have been already introduced draws the same line. Notice how closely the philosopher and man of the world, writing four centuries after, coincides with the monk. "I am," says Maine de Biran, "as agitated by my books and my own ideas, as when occupied with worldly matters or launched in the vortex of Parisian life. . . . I fancy that I am going to discover my moral and intellectual welfare, rest and internal satisfaction of mind, the truth I seek, in every book that I scan and consult; as though these things were not within me, down in the very depths of my being, where with sustained and penetrating glance I should look for them, instead of gliding rapidly over what others have thought, or even what I myself have thought. . . . My conscience reproaches me with not having thoroughly sounded the depths of life, with not having cultivated its most earnest parts, and with being too occupied with those amusements that enable one to pass imperceptibly from time to eternity."[3] In good truth, men may go through life discoursing upon the things of life,

[1] *Ibid.* chap. ii. 2.
[2] *Ibid.* chap. xx. 1.
[3] *Journal Intime.* Apud Nicolas. Étude sur Maine de Biran, p. 54.

formulating their views of the diverse subjects that call for definite opinion; and yet, for want of this introspection, this self-communion, this thoughtfulness of God's presence within them, they may indeed possess many and varied accomplishments, but these are all of the outward man. The inner man is starved to a skeleton. This is why all great thinkers, all the founders of religious orders as well as of schools of philosophy, Pythagoras and Socrates as well as Benedict and Loyola, have laid stress upon the cultivation of this interior spirit. It is not merely the opinion of a devout writer; it is the doctrine of the gospel, made the wisdom of humanity.

3. Again, the author lays down the conditions under which study may be pursued with advantage. He shows the greater responsibility attached to human knowledge, and counsels the students to be humble. "The more thou knowest, and the better thou understandest, the more strictly shalt thou be judged, unless thy life be also the more holy. Be not therefore elated in thine own mind because of any art or science, but rather let the knowledge given thee make thee afraid. If thou thinkest that thou understandest and knowest much, yet know that there be many more things which thou knowest not."[1] Bear in mind that the author is not simply inculcating the modesty and diffidence that belong to every well-educated person, and that may accompany great intellectual pride. He goes deeper, and insists upon true humility:[2] "If thou

[1] Bk. i. chap. ii. 3.
[2] Cardinal Newman, in one of his most beautiful discourses,

wilt know and learn anything profitably, desire to be unknown and little esteemed. This is the highest and most profitable lesson: truly to know and despise ourselves." [1]

4. The author is no less earnest in counseling the student to be simple and pure. "By two wings a man is lifted up from things earthly; namely, by Simplicity and Purity. Simplicity ought to be in our intention; Purity in our affections. Simplicity doth tend towards God; Purity doth apprehend and taste Him. . . . If thy heart were sincere and upright, then would every creature be unto thee a living mirror, and a book of holy doctrine. There is no creature so small and abject, that it representeth not the goodness of God. If thou wert inwardly good and pure, then wouldst thou be able to see and understand all things well without impediment. A pure heart penetrateth heaven and hell." [2] Doctrine as beautiful as it is true. Only to the clean of heart is it given to see God in heaven. Only to the clean of heart is it also given to recognize the splendor of God's glory in the beautiful things that He has created. The poetry and chivalry of the Middle Ages vie with each other in extolling this pearl among the virtues. Percivale's purity of heart wins for him the rare privilege of beholding the Holy Grail. Lancelot fails in his quest because of his sin. Galahad's virgin heart makes him tenfold strong against his foes: —

> "My good blade carves the casques of men,
> My tough lance thrusteth sure,
> My strength is as the strength of ten,
> *Because my heart is pure.*" [1]

shows how modesty accompanied by pride has taken the place of the Christian virtue of humility in the modern world. *Idea of a University*, Discourse viii. § 9, pp. 254-258.

[1] Bk. i. chap. ii. 3, 4.

[2] Bk. ii. chap. iv. 2, 3.

V.

1. The philosophy of "The Imitation" may be summed up in two words. It is a philosophy of Light and a philosophy of Life: the Light of Truth and the Life of Grace. Both the one and the other à Kempis seeks in their source and fountain-head. He does not separate them. It is only in the union of both that man attains his philosophic ideal. Vain words and dry speculations, scholastic wrangling and religious controversy, may furnish food for man's vanity, but they are unable to nourish his soul. And so, the devout author, with Clement of Alexandria, with Augustin and Aquinas, ascends to the Incarnate Word — the Divine Logos — as the source whence proceeds all truth both natural and revealed, for the criterion and the ideal of human knowledge. Here he finds unity and harmony. And if human opinions oppose one another, those alone can be true which are compatible with the revealed and certain dogmas of the Church.[2] Therefore, he begs the student to hush

[1] Tennyson, *Sir Galahad*.

[2] Human reason is feeble and may be deceived, but true faith cannot be deceived. All reason and natural search ought to fol-

the clash of systems, and seek above and beyond all system and all caviling the truth pure and simple as it emanates from the Godhead. In his day the clashing of scholastic opinion was loud and fierce, and the din of the Schools so filled the air that he stepped aside from his usual course of ignoring the issues and contests of the outside world and asked: "What matters it to us about genera and species?" Upon the solution of this problem hinged the endless disputations between Nominalism and Realism ever since Roscelin revived the issue nearly four centuries previously. The students adopted one or other theory according to their nationality. In the University of Prague the Bohemian students were Realists, whilst those of Germany were Nominalists. And when a crisis occurred in the affairs of that institution, thousands of the German Nominalists abandoned its halls and established a new university in Leipzig.[1]

2. Thomas à Kempis has in his book no place for these strifes. In a philosophic poem, which is only less sublime than that with which St. John opens his Gospel, because it is an echo thereof, the devout author lays down the doctrine of truth that runs through his book, even as it has been the actu-

low faith, not to go before it, nor to break in upon it. Bk. iv. chap. xviii. 4, 5.

[1] Cantù, *Hist. Univ.* t. xii. p. 293. Some say 40,000. See Lenfant, *Hist. de la Guerre des Hussites.* Utrecht, 1731, pp. 59, 60, and *Hist. du Concile de Constance*, t. i. pp. 30, 31. Of course, the immediate cause of the difficulty was the retrenchment of certain privileges of the German professors and students by Wenceslaus at the instigation of John Huss.

ating principle of his life: "Happy is he whom Truth by itself doth teach, not by figures and words that pass away, but as it is in itself. Our own opinion and our own sense do often deceive us, and they discern but little. What availeth it to cavil and dispute much about dark and hidden things, for ignorance of which we shall not be reproved at the day of judgment? It is a great folly to neglect the things that are profitable and necessary, and to choose to dwell upon that which is curious and hurtful. We have eyes and see not. And what have we to do with genera and species? He to whom the Eternal Word speaketh is delivered from many an opinion. From one Word are all things, and all things utter one Word; and this is the Beginning which also speaketh unto us.[1] No man without that Word understandeth or judgeth rightly. He to whom all things are one, he who reduceth all things to one, and seeth all things in one, may enjoy a quiet mind, and remain at peace in God. O God, who art Truth itself, make me one with Thee in everlasting love. It wearieth me often to read and hear many things: in Thee is all that I would have and can desire. Let all teachers hold their peace; let all creatures be silent in Thy light; speak Thou alone unto me."[2] Can you imagine a sublimer passage coming from a human hand?

3. This is not a system of philosophy. Like Pascal and St. Augustin, à Kempis soars above system, and in the mystical language so well known

[1] Principium, qui et loquor vobis. St. John viii. 25.
[2] Bk. i. chap. iii.

and understood in his day he reduces all philosophy to this principle of seeing things in the light emanating from the Word. "From one Word are all things, and all things utter one Word. . . . No man without that Word understandeth or judgeth rightly." In vain would you search heaven or earth for a more elevating, more correct, or more fruitful principle in philosophy. Was the author Realist? Was he Nominalist? He was avowedly neither. Not that he was not interested in philosophic discussions; for had he not taken a keen interest in them, he never would have penned those sublime pages. But his genius sought greater freedom than it could have found in any system. No sooner is one committed to a school, than one has to pare down, or exaggerate, or suppress altogether truths and facts to tally with the system taught by the school. Neither truth nor fact is the outcome of system or school; prior to either, both truth and fact existed. Systems and schools, in confessing themselves such, acknowledge by the very fact that they do not deal with truth whole and entire as truth, but with truth as seen from a given point of view. They may be good, they may even be necessary, as aids in acquiring truth; but they are not to be identified with it. They are, so to speak, the scaffoldings by which the edifice of truth may be constructed, and as such are to be laid aside as soon as the structure is completed. In this spirit was it that Thomas à Kempis thought and worked.

4. Was the author opposed to learning? The

many expressions in which he speaks so lightly of purely human knowledge or scholastic disputations would lead one to think that he was inclined to disparage all such. Nothing was farther from his intention. His whole life was devoted to the work of education. He had formed and sent forth, well equipped, many distinguished pupils and disciples.[1] He never lost his taste for books. To transcribe and spread abroad good books both in sacred and profane learning had been his delight. In one of his sermons he exclaims, "Blessed are the hands of such transcribers! Which of the writings of our ancestors would now be remembered, if there had been no pious hands to transcribe them?"[2] But as "The Imitation" treats of the finite and the temporal in their relations with the infinite and the eternal, naturally all things purely human, though not in themselves insignificant, suffer by comparison. In this sense does he define his position: "Learning, science — *scientia* — is not to be blamed, nor the mere knowledge of anything whatsoever, for that is good in itself and ordained of

[1] Ullmann says: "He encouraged susceptible youths to the zealous prosecution of their studies, and even to the acquisition of a classical education. Several of the most meritorious restorers of ancient literature went forth from his quiet cell, and he lived to see in his old age his scholars, Rudolph Lange, Count Maurice of Spiegelberg, Louis Dringenberg, Antony Liber, and, above all, Rudolph Agricola and Alexander Hegius, laboring with success for the revival of the sciences in Germany and the Netherlands. Accordingly Thomas was not without scientific culture himself or the power of inspiring a taste for it in others." *Reformatoren vor der Reformation.* Eng. tr. vol. ii. p. 135.

[2] Sermon on the text: *Christus scribit in terra.*

God; but," he adds, looking at things from his elevated point of view, and in all truth may he say it, "a good conscience and a virtuous life are always to be preferred before it." He condemns not the knowledge, but the pride, the vanity, the worldliness that are sometimes found in its train. "Because many endeavor rather to get knowledge than to live well, they are often deceived, and reap either none or but little fruit." In like manner, the author places true greatness, not in great intellectual attainments, but rather in great love and humility: "He is truly great that hath great love. He is truly great that is little in himself and that maketh no account of any height of honor."[1]

VI.

1. Here we find ourselves at the second word in which the philosophy of "The Imitation" is summed up. It is not only the Light of Truth; it is also the Life of Grace. This life consists in the practice of the Christian virtues; the practice of the Christian virtues leads up to union with Christ; and union with Christ is consummated in the Holy Eucharist. Such is the author's philosophy of life, and in its development does his genius especially glow. He is mystical, eloquent, sublime. He soars into the highest regions of truth in which meet both poetry and philosophy. Following in the footsteps of Christ, heeding his words, living in intimate union with Him, loving

[1] Bk. i. chap. iii.

Him with a love that counts no sacrifice too great, trampling under foot all things displeasing to Him, bearing one's burden cheerfully for his sake — such is the life of the soul as revealed in this wonderful book. Therein is stress laid on the all-important truth that this spiritual life should primarily be built upon doctrine. Conscience must be instructed and trained to form correct decisions: "My words are spirit and life, and not to be weighed by the understanding of man. . . . Write thou my words in thy heart, and meditate diligently on them, for in time of temptation they will be very needful for thee."[1] . . . Then Love steps in and fructifies the soul and makes it bear good actions, actions acceptable and pleasing to God. It is the vital principle energizing the world of Grace. Here à Kempis bursts forth into a canticle of love that finds in every soul a responsive chord: "Love is a great thing, yea, a great and thorough good. . . . Nothing is sweeter than Love, nothing more courageous, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller nor better in heaven and earth; because Love is born of God, and can rest but in God above all created things." One must read the whole poem to understand and taste its great worth.[2] Be it further noted how this canticle of love is followed by a more practical commentary, in the form of a dialogue between Christ and the soul, all written with the most consummate art: —

[1] Bk. iii. chap. iii. 1, 4; iv. 3.
[2] Bk. iii. chap. v.

"CHRIST. My son, thou art not yet a courageous and wise lover.

"SOUL. Wherefore sayest Thou this, O Lord?

"CHRIST. Because for a slight opposition thou givest over thy undertakings, and too eagerly seekest consolation. A courageous lover standeth firm in temptation, and giveth no credit to the crafty persuasions of the enemy. As I please him in prosperity, so in adversity am I not unpleasing to him. A wise lover regards not so much the gift of him who loves him, as the love of the giver." [1]

2. Here I would call attention to a recently expressed misapprehension of this love. We are told: "This 'love' of 'The Imitation' is no longer the naïve, childlike, warmly vital love of the optimistic warrior who in this world cheerfully serves God, like a St. Christopher, because God is the strongest. This new sort of love is a mystical adoration. It produces acts, but they are done in a dream-like sort of somnambulistic ecstasy; they are the acts of one hypnotized, so to speak, by a long look heavenwards. Strength this love has, but it is the strength of gazing; movement it has, but it is an anæsthetic, unconscious sort of movement." [2] Not so have we read "The Imitation." We find in it mysticism, rhapsody, ecstasy; but we nowhere find quietism, dreaminess, hypnotic influence. The love of which à Kempis speaks is eminently practical. The author, in his earnest search for philosophic truth, when taking an estimate of that love, was reckoning upon a natural and purely human basis, whereas à Kempis was dealing with supernatural elements. Hence the misapprehension. It is very difficult for the non-Catholic mind to understand how the love of God may envelop and absorb a soul and yet leave that soul thoroughly practical in every-day affairs. Theresa of Jesus and Ignatius Loyola were both mystics, highly favored with visions and revelations from God, but they were also active and energetic. The activity that grows out of love for God is one of zeal, energy, devotedness, thoroughness. À Kempis was himself a busy, practical man, and he never could have separated the idea of Christian perfection from the duties and responsibilities of life. He never could have inculcated a love that would paralyze action. He was no apostle of quietism.

[1] Bk. iii. chap. vi.

[2] Josiah Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, p. 53.

3. The loving soul is instructed in the diverse ways of guarding and preserving grace and virtue, of overcoming temptations, of fleeing and contemning the world, of trying to be meek and lowly and forbearing, and of seeking intimate union with the Beloved. The inclinations of nature, the windings and subterfuges of passion, the dangers from within one's self and the troubles and annoyances that come from without, are all treated with a terseness, clearness, simplicity, and unction that are not met with outside of the sacred Scriptures from which they are reflected. But the devout soul is especially to seek strength and comfort and consolation in union with Christ in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. This heavenly

gift contains food for the hungering, healing for the sick; it is the fountain at which the weary and parched soul may slake her thirst; it is the fruition of all life, the goal of all struggle, the crowning of all effort. Hear how beautifully the pious author expresses the soul's great need for this saving food: "Whilst I am detained in the prison of this body, I acknowledge myself to stand in need of two things, to wit, food and light. Unto me, then, thus weak and helpless, Thou hast given Thy Sacred Body for the nourishment both of my soul and body; and Thy Word Thou hast set as a light unto my feet. Without these two I should not be able to live, for the word of God is the light of my soul, and Thy Sacrament the bread of life. . . . Thanks be unto Thee, O Thou Creator and Redeemer of mankind, who to manifest Thy love to the whole world hast prepared a great supper, wherein Thou hast set before us to be eaten, not the typical lamb, but Thy most Sacred Body and Blood, rejoicing all the faithful with this holy banquet, and replenishing them to the full with the cup of salvation in which are all the delights of paradise; and the holy angels do feast with us, but yet with a more happy sweetness."[1]

4. Thus it is that heaven and earth centre in the Eucharist. All the yearnings of the devout soul for union with the Godhead find their consummation in the worthy reception of our Lord in this Sacrament of his love. Every act of virtue is an act of preparation for its reception in the future

[1] Bk. iv. chap. xi. 4, 5.

and of thanksgiving for past Communions. And so the Holy Eucharist becomes the central object of all spiritual life. All this is developed with great ingenuity in the fourth book of "The Imitation." There are several editions with this book omitted. Those making the omission little think that they are losing sight of the principle and the motives underlying the other books. But so it is. They are constructing an arch without a keystone. They are giving us the play of "Hamlet" with the part of Hamlet omitted. They are indeed still distributing good and wholesome thoughts; but at the same time they are destroying the unity of the book and mistaking its philosophy. It is no longer Thomas à Kempis; it is Thomas à Kempis diluted and seasoned to suit individual palates.

5. Draper, equally mistaken as to the importance of the fourth book as a clue to the others, imputed to the pious author motives which the author would have repudiated, and assigned his book a purpose for which it was never intended. "Its quick celebrity," this writer tells us, "is a proof how profoundly ecclesiastical influence had been affected, for its essential intention was to enable the pious to cultivate their devotional feelings without the intervention of the clergy. . . . The celebrity of this book was rather dependent on a profound distrust everywhere felt in the clergy both as regards morals and intellect."[1] The assertion is gratui-

[1] *Intellectual Development of Europe*, p. 470. Mr. Lecky calls this work "extremely remarkable." *History of European Morals*, vol. i. p. 105. The writer has found it remarkable in its systematic efforts at misreading history and misinterpreting events.

tous. There was nothing in the life or character of the author to warrant the statement. It is contradicted by the work itself. No man speaks more reverently of the functions of the Altar, or holds in greater esteem the dignity of the priesthood than does this same Thomas à Kempis, himself a worthy priest. "Great is the dignity of priests, to whom that is given which is not granted to angels; for priests alone rightly ordained in the Church have power to celebrate and consecrate the Body of Christ."[1] . . . And he thus concludes his beautiful eulogy on the priest at the altar: "When a priest celebrates, he honors God, he rejoices the angels, he edifies the Church, he helps the living, he obtains rest for the dead, and makes himself partaker of all good things."[2] Thus it is that Thomas places the priest between God and the people as their mediator through the sacrifice of the Mass. Surely he could establish no stronger bond of union between clergy and laity. Where, then, is the distrust of which this writer speaks? You may search the book from cover to cover and you will seek in vain for a single word tending by any manner of means, directly or indirectly, to promote or widen the estrangement of the clergy from the laity. Another writer, a Protestant, regarded Thomas à Kempis in this same relation, but his conclusion was the very reverse. He read, as every truth-loving historian must read, that its author "recognizes the existing hierarchy and ecclesiastical constitution in their whole extent, together with the priesthood in its function of mediating between God and man, and . . . on every occasion insists upon ecclesiastical obedience as one of the greatest virtues."[1] This is the whole spirit and intention of à Kempis. The secret of the celebrity of "The Imitation" goes deeper than the popularity of the hour. Let us consider it for a moment.

[1] Bk. iv. chap. v. 5. [2] *Ibid.* v. 6.

VII.

1. How, it may be asked, was the author able to compass, within the covers of this slender volume, so much wisdom, such a vast spiritual experience, such beautiful poetry and such profound philosophy. And he has done all this with a grasp and terseness of expression to which no translation has ever been able to do justice. It is because Thomas à Kempis is more than a pious monk, picking up the experiences of the saints and Fathers who preceded him; he is one of the world-authors; and "The Imitation" is so clearly stamped with the impress of his genius, that wherever men can read they recognize it as a book that comes home to their business and bosoms for all time. Go where we will, we shall perceive its silent influence working for good, and upon natures that seem least prepared to be affected by it. Thus we read how a Moorish prince shows a missionary visiting him a Turkish version of the book, and tells him that he

[1] Ullmann, *Reform. vor der Ref.* Eng. tr. vol. ii. p. 156.

prizes it above all others in his possession.[1] That prince may not have been a good Mohammedan in so prizing this little book;[2] but if he read it with sincerity and thoughtfulness he was all the better man for it. The transition from the cold and fixed fatalism, the barren piety and fierce tribe-spirit of the Korân to the life and warmth and soothing words of "The Imitation," must indeed have been to him a new revelation that helped to burst the bands and cerements of many a Mohammedan prejudice.

2. Again, the book has always been a consoler in tribulation. Louis XVI., when a prisoner, found great comfort in its pages, and read them day and night. La Harpe, in his love and admiration for what in his day was considered elegant literature, thought the book beneath his notice, even as the Humanists before him had regarded St. Paul. But La Harpe comes to grief, and imprisoned in the Luxembourg meets with it, and, opening it at random, reads: "Behold, here I am; behold, I come to thee because thou hast called Me. Thy tears, and the desire of thy soul, thy humiliation and contrition of heart, have inclined and brought Me to thee."[3] These touching words seemed to come directly out of the mouth of the Consoler

[1] Avertissement d'une ancienne traduction publiée en 1663, prefixed to the edition of Abbé Jauffret, p. x.

[2] A book hath been sent down unto thee: and therefore let there be no doubt in thy breast concerning it. . . . Follow that which hath been sent down unto thee from thy Lord; and follow no guide besides him. *Korân*, chap. vii. 1.

[3] Bk. iii. chap. xxi. 5.

himself. It was like an apparition. He says: "I fell on my face and wept freely." Ever after "The Imitation" was one of La Harpe's most cherished books.

3. Once more: a woman of superior genius grandly weaves into one of her most powerful novels the great influence which this book wields for good. The heroine is represented with her young soul stifling in the atmosphere of sordid aim and routine existence, her desires unsatisfied, her yearnings finding no outlet; groping in thickest darkness, impulsive, thoughtless, imprudent, and withal well-meaning. Trouble and misfortune have come upon her, and she has not yet learned the lesson of Christian patience and long-suffering. Her restive soul beats against the cage of circumstances with hopeless flutter. An accident puts her in possession of a copy of "The Imitation." She reads the book. It thrills her with awe, "as if she had been wakened in the night by a strain of solemn music telling of beings whose soul had been astir while hers was in stupor." It is to her the revelation of a new world of thought and spirituality. She realizes that life, even in her confined sphere of action and routine existence, may be ennobled and made worth living. Was this woman transcribing a chapter from her own life? In reading these magnificent pages we feel that what George Eliot so graphically recorded of Maggie Tulliver, she had found engraven on the heart of Marian Evans.[1]

[1] George Eliot is the *nom de plume* of Marian Evans, successively Mrs. George Lewes and Mrs. Cross.

This is all the more remarkable, as she did not recognize the divine source of inspiration whence à Kempis drew so copiously. But she too had had her soul-hungerings, and had found many a pressing question answered by "this voice out of the far-off Middle Ages" much more efficiently than in feeding on the husks of Positivism and Agnosticism. And with her experience of the magic book well might she pay it this eloquent tribute: "I suppose that is the reason why the small, old-fashioned book, for which you need only pay sixpence at a book-stall, works miracles to this day, turning bitter waters into sweetness, while expensive sermons and treatises, newly issued, leave all things as they were before. It was written down by a hand that waited for the heart's prompting; it is the chronicle of a solitary hidden anguish, struggle, trust, and triumph, not written on velvet cushions to teach endurance to those who are treading with bleeding feet on the stones. And so it remains to all time a lasting record of human needs and human consolations; the voice of a brother who, ages ago, felt, and suffered, and renounced, in the cloister, perhaps, with serge gown and tonsured head, with much chanting and long fasts, and with a fashion of speech different from ours, but under the same silent far-off heavens, and with the same passionate desires, the same strivings, the same failures, the same weariness."[1] Not with the same failures, for this good monk sought only God and God was with him; not with the

[1] *The Mill on the Floss*, bk. iv. chap. iii. p. 272.

same weariness, for possessing God in his heart, he was filled with joy, and in all gladness of soul he took up his burden and bore it cheerfully.

VIII.

1. Here is the secret of the magic influence wielded by "The Imitation." Pick it up when or where we may, open it at any page we will, we always find something to suit our frame of mind. The author's genius has such complete control of the subject, and handles it with so firm a grasp, that in every sentence we find condensed the experience of ages. It is humanity finding in this simple man an adequate mouthpiece for the utterance of its spiritual wants and soul-yearnings. And his expression is so full and adequate because he regarded things in the white light of God's truth, and saw their nature and their worth clearly and distinctly, as divested of the hues and tints flung around them by passion and illusion. He probed the human heart to its lowest depths and its inmost folds; he searched intentions and motives and found self lurking in the purest; he explored the windings of human folly and human misery and discovered them to proceed from self-love and self-gratification. But this author does not simply lay bare the sores and wounds of poor bleeding human nature. He also prescribes the remedy. And none need go away unhelped. For the footsore who are weary with treading the sharp stones and piercing thorns on the highways and by-ways of life;

for the heart aching with pain and disappointment and crushed with a weight of tribulations; for the intellect parched with thirsting after the fountain of true knowledge; for the soul living in aridity and dryness of spirit; for the sinner immersed in the mire of sin and iniquity, and the saint, earnestly toiling up the hill of perfection — for all he prescribes a balm that heals, and to all does he show the road that leads to the Life and the Light. Turn we now from a work inspired in the calm of monastic life to a work indited amid the storms of passion and tribulation, and withal bearing a deep spiritual meaning. Let us consider Dante's great poem.

CHAPTER IX.

SPIRITUAL SENSE OF THE DIVINA COMMEDIA.

I.

A STUDY of the "Divina Commedia," in any of its aspects, must needs be a study of the age in which it was produced, of the man out of the fullness of whose soul it issued in notes strong and clear, and of the various influences that made their impress upon both the man and the poem. Of all the supreme efforts of creative genius, the "Divina Commedia" is that that can least be taken out of the times and circumstances that gave it birth. Its contemporary history and its contemporary spirit constitute its clearest and best commentary. In the light of this commentary we shall attempt to read its chief meaning and significance. Few poems admit of so many instructive interpretations; few so profitably repay earnest study. It is a primary law of criticism, that if we can pluck from the heart of any poem its central conception and vivifying principle, we shall not only grasp its meaning in the main, but we shall also throw light upon many a dark corner within its structure. And in working along the line of the Spiritual Sense of the "Divina Commedia" we shall be most likely to grasp that conception and verify that principle.

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Unfortunately, commentators have so buried the beauty and meaning of the poem beneath the rubbish of conjecture and far-fetched interpretation, that its unity of plan and purpose has in great measure been lost sight of, and its true grandeur but rarely appreciated. We shall first address ourselves to the man and his times; afterwards we shall consider the poem in its general spirit and bearing as the outcome of the times and the man; and finally, we shall endeavor to determine the philosophy and doctrine that are the foundation of its Spiritual Sense, and the nature, action, and expression of that Sense.

II.

1. Dante was born in 1265; he died in 1321. Glance at what had been done before, and what was being done within the compass of those years. Already the piety, zeal, and indomitable spirit of Innocent III. (pope, 1198–1216) had caused the papacy to be respected throughout Christendom, and raised it to a high pinnacle of glory and prestige. It became the controlling power in Europe. St. Louis had led the final Crusade and died in a stranger's land (1270). The last faint echoes of the trumpet-voice that nigh two centuries before had aroused nations and hurled army after army upon the shores of Asia were now dying away within Dante's own hearing. The poet was born into stirring times. Feuds and factions were rife. They were handed down from sire to son and brought in their trail ruin, bloodshed, and desolation. City stood against city, province against province; and both city and province, town, hamlet, and even house, were torn by internal dissensions. No man could escape being embroiled. No man could hold his head up and walk securely, a man among his fellow-men, who did not share the responsibilities of his party, and carry out the vindictiveness of the house with which he was connected. Men were Blacks or Whites; they were Guelf or Ghibelline; they were Cerchi or Donati: they accordingly fought and suffered. This fact made the "Divina Commedia" possible; it gave it some of its color and helped to fashion it into its present shape. It brought Dante exile, poverty, suffering; it hardened him against his enemies; it inspired the gall and bitterness; but it also gave him the leisure to meditate and construct his great poem.[1]

2. The age of Dante was preëminently a Catholic age. It was an age when men lived in one faith, had one ritual, recited one creed, were taught one and the same doctrine and practice, and breathed a common religious atmosphere. The Church extended the mantle of her care and charity over all orders of society, and gave sanction and benediction to institutions founded to meet the spiritual and bodily wants of Christ's poor. Dissenting sects and schools such as the Albigenses and Waldenses

[1] "I went about," he tells us, "almost a beggar, showing against my will the wound of fortune, the blame of which frequently and unjustly is wont to be imputed to the person stricken." — *Convito*, tratt. i. cap. 3.

in France, the Cathari, Paterini, and disciples of Dolcino[1] in Italy, cropped out here and there, but they were the exception. The only recognized form of religion in every nation — that upon which every Christian state in great measure was built — was the Catholic religion. Religion was the supreme affair with the men and women of that day. The world beyond the grave was to them an ever-present reality. Their thoughts and fancies dwelt in it. Their belief in it was intense. They, so to speak, touched it with their hands. It was a powerful factor in their lives. They might be guilty of great excesses; indeed, theirs was an age of excesses; but sooner or later remorse overtook them, and their atonement was as generous as their sins were enormous.[2] Religion was abused, but its beneficial effects continued to be manifest; vice was flagrant, but it never lost the sense of shame; men were cruel, but their cruelty was followed by sincere regrets; misfortunes were frequent and signal, but they were accepted with resignation or with the hope of retrieval, or men gloried in them on account of the cause in which they suffered. "Religion," says Tommaseo, "was not separated from morality, nor science from life, nor were words from deeds."[3] Such was life at that day; such do we find it exemplified in the person of the poet and embodied in his poem.

[1] *Inferno*, xxviii. 55. Villani, *Cron.* lib. viii. cap. 14.

[2] Guido da Montefeltro after a life of violence becomes a Franciscan Friar. See *L'Inferno*, xxvii. 67–129.

[3] *La Divina Commedia*, commentata da Niccolo Tommaseo. *L'Inferno*, art. "Il secolo di Dante," p. xx.

3. This religious spirit inspired the chivalry of the day. Knights passed from land to land in search of adventure, vowed to protect and defend the widow and the orphan and the lonely or oppressed woman at the hazard of their lives; they went about with a prayer on their lips, and in their heart the image of the lady-love whom they had chosen to serve and to whom they had pledged loyalty and fidelity; they strove to be chaste in body and soul, and as a tower of strength for the protection of this spirit of chastity they were taught to venerate the Blessed Mother of God and cultivate towards her a tender devotion as the purest and holiest ideal of womanhood. This spirit of chivalry is the ruling spirit of Dante's life and the inspiration of some of his sublimest flights. As the knight wore the color of the lady of his heart and proclaimed her transcendent qualities to all comers, even so did Dante, in the same spirit, proclaim the beauty and loveliness and virtue of his Beatrice beyond all compare.

4. This religious spirit inspired men and women to go on long and wearisome pilgrimages. Every shrine of prayer had its votaries. With staff and scrip, and in all humility and earnestness; in a prayerful spirit, in penance for sin, for the healing of soul or body, with the view of obtaining through the intercession of a favorite saint some special grace, they walked to the place of pilgrimage, and there in vigils and fastings besought heaven in their behalf. The practices and expressions of pilgrimages became part of men's think-

ing. They entered into the language of spiritual life. Life itself came to be regarded as a pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem. And in this allegory do we find the key to one meaning running through the "Divina Commedia."

5. This religious spirit gave direction to the studies of the day. It was the inspiration of the teachers of the age. It caused to bud and bloom the fruitful thoughts of the great thinkers of this teeming epoch. Pope and king vied with each other in founding universities and schools.[1] It was an age of inquiry and disputation; but over all presided faith and piety. The schools were filled to overflowing. The brilliant philosophic lights, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventura, both died in the eventful ninth year of Dante's life (1274). Albertus Magnus died when Dante was in his fifteenth year (1280); Roger Bacon, when the poet was in his twenty-ninth year. These men represent all that was grandest, noblest, and best in the thought of the schools. Contemporary with our poet were lesser lights, also profound thinkers and instigators to thought: Raymond Lully (1235–1315), Duns Scotus 1265–1308), Ockham (d. 1347). The light of these men

[1] In Dante's own day Boniface VIII. established the University known as the Sapienza. We may, in justice to a much-maligned man, and as an antidote to the bitterness of Dante's verses against him, quote the following tribute: "Religion owes to him the consoling institution of the Jubilee; ecclesiastical jurisprudence, the sixth book of the Decretals; and general science, the foundation of the Roman university known as the Sapienza." Darras's *History of the Church*, vol. iii. p. 456. See Darras's larger work continued by Abbé J. Bareille, t. xxx. pp. 18–124.

set Christendom aglow. Thought was quickened. The very atmosphere vibrated with scholastic disputations. It was the golden era of scholasticism. Dante made careful study of the writings of these thinkers. Some of them he may have heard discourse and expound; for he attended the schools and entered into the discussions that were then considered so essential an element of study and a criterion of proficiency. We learn from Boccaccio how strong in the poet was the spirit of study: "In his eagerness to know, he heeded neither heat nor cold, nor vigils, nor fasts, nor any other bodily inconvenience." Dante retained that spirit, with few intermissions, through life. The writings of his contemporaries and their instructors — especially those of Aquinas and Bonaventura — became his daily food, and they are the basis of his great poem.[1] Nor did he forget Plato and Aristotle so far as they were known and understood in his day. The Stagyrite he calls the master of those who know, and next him in the philosophic family he places

[1] The depth and accuracy of Dante's theological knowledge is something marvelous. The terseness and grasp with which he handles the most abstruse subjects has never been excelled, and has never ceased to elicit the admiration of competent judges. Epitaphs are not always correct; but ages of study and investigation have confirmed that upon the poet's tomb at Ravenna; all are agreed that Dante is not only the glory of the Muses and the popular favorite, but also the theologian lacking naught in doctrine and philosophy: —

"Theologus Dantes, nullius dogmatis expers,
Quod faveat claro philosophia sinu;
Gloria Musarum, vulgo gratissimus auctor,
Hic jacet, et fama pulsat utrumque polum." . . .

Socrates and Plato.[1] Much there was in the discussions of this period that was purely curious, silly, of small edification, and of no profit; much also was there that we of the present may study with advantage; much, indeed, must there have been that was noble and suggestive, since it was the epoch that built the gothic cathedral, dictated the "Summa Theologica," and inspired the "Divina Commedia."

III.

1. Thus it was that over all presided Religion. Religion was the Time-spirit of that age. It permeated thought and word and work. This fact we must bring home to ourselves if we would understand the scope of the great poem under consideration. A word upon the evolution of this spirit may not be out of place. Pagan Rome attained her rounded civilization by reason of the fact that all the elements in the state, whether literary, or political, or religious, or social, or industrial, or artistic, were bound up in harmony, and were subservient to the one universal, all-absorbing idea of Rome. Everything in life and conduct, in religion and morals, was sacrificed to the will, the safety, and the glory of Rome. Then came Christianity.

[1] Vidi il Maestro di color che sanno,
Seder tra filosofica famiglia.
Tutti l' ammiran, tutti honor gli fanno.
Quivi vid 'io e Socrate e Platone,
Che innanzi agli altri più presso gli stanno.
Inferno, iv. 131–135.

It entered as a disturbing element. It brought not peace and concord, but discord and the sword. It undid the harmony existing between the state, religion, and human passion. It taught men to make war upon their unruly passions, and over the corpse of slain evil inclination to walk in the road of self-denial to a higher spiritual life undreamed of in the religion of pagan Rome. That God was more than man, the soul more than the body, eternity more than time; that the practice of virtue was noble and self-indulgence base; that spending and being spent for the good of one's neighbor was laying up treasures in heaven; that to live in Christ and die for Christ was gain; that the love of God and man was the supreme law of life: such were the seeds of doctrine sown broadcast throughout the Roman state, and nurtured by the blood of millions of martyrs. The barbarian came and conquered pagan Rome, to be conquered in turn by the Christianity he found there. And this Christianity sought him in his native wilds and took possession of him. For centuries the fierce spirit of the barbarian struggled against the checks placed upon his untutored nature. Indeed, that spirit has never been wholly overcome. We all of us carry it within our breasts, and it only requires the occasion to arouse its ferocity.

2. Still, in the age of Dante, in spite of great excesses, man had come to recognize the existence of a spiritual life and a spiritual world, and to bow in submission to an authority speaking to him in the name of the higher spiritual power. He

had come to regard the Church as the medium through which God reveals his will to men. At this epoch, we find the secular and religious elements of society more harmoniously blended than they were before or have been since. This blending is strikingly reflected in that one great poem that is the full and clear expression of all mediæval thought and mediæval life.[1] Herein enters an element that is absent from pagan literature. It is the element of spiritual life and spiritual thought. It speaks of the predominance of faith. Faith tinged word and work and made both word and work sincere, earnest, and, says Ruskin, "in a degree few of us can now conceive, joyful."[2] Men lived in hope, sought the light and looked toward the light. Everywhere they found reflections of the Light that enlighteneth this world. In this respect there is a marked contrast between the Time-spirit of that day and the Time-spirit of the present. The great chorus of modern thought is a loud proclaiming of pessimism and the despair that

[1] That there was in Dante's spirit a leaven of the old Roman spirit determining his judgments of things in antagonism with the spirit of Christianity is apparent from these two instances: 1. He condemns Pope Celestine V. for resigning from the Papacy. Now it is certainly a meritorious act to withdraw from any position the duties of which one is unable to fulfill; and that the Church so regarded this act of Celestine is evident from the fact that she canonized the good Pope. 2. The Church condemns suicide as an act of moral cowardice; and yet Dante places the keeping of Purgatory in the care of Cato of Utica, because he renounced life rather than liberty. It is to the point as an allegory, but the spirit of pagan Rome all unconsciously breathes through the admiration of the poet for the old Roman.

[2] *Pleasures of England*, p. 57.

would destroy a hereafter, annihilate the soul, and ignore a Personal Divinity. It acts in open defiance of the whole Christian codes of the spiritual truth and the spiritual law that are essential elements in all modern conduct and modern thinking. "Its crowning dogma," says a recent writer, "is written even now between the lines in many a dainty volume, that evil has a secret holiness, and sin a consecrating magnificence."[1]

3. Now, of this agnostic spirit must we divest ourselves in entering upon a study of Dante's masterpiece. There we will find no doubt. All is intense earnestness. The light of faith guides the poet's steps through the hopeless chambers of Hell with a firmness of conviction that knows no wavering; it bears him through the sufferings of Purgatory, believing strongly in its reality; it raises him on the wings of love and contemplation into Heaven's empyrean, where he really hopes to enjoy bliss far beyond aught whereof he sings. If we would understand the animating principle of the poem, it behooves us to cast aside all idea that these divisions of it were a mere barbarous and cumbersome machinery. Not in this fashion are epoch-making works constructed. Dante believed in the existence of these places and in the reality of their woes and their joys as firmly as he believed in himself. The simple faith pervading this poem contrasts strikingly with the spirit animating "Faust." The latter is designed to represent the innate conflict of the

[1] Rev. William Barry, in *The Fortnightly Review*, March, 1886, art. "The Church and the World."

savage in man against established law and order in the moral, social, and physical world. Mephistopheles is the evil genius of the hero. He impersonates the negation of truth and goodness. But much as the spirit-world figures in Goethe's masterpiece, it does so not as a living reality, but as a mere scaffolding whereby Goethe builds up the artistic structure of the experiences gathered from study and observation, or found in the recesses of his own large worldly heart. And what is the uppermost lesson that one may read on every page of that wonderful panorama of modern life? As we understand it we read simply the dark lesson, that only through the experiences that come of all manner of self-indulgence and self-gratification may one reach the broader view of life and attain perfection. This is attempting to make one's own way out of the wood of error and wrong-doing at the risk of being devoured by the beasts of predominant sin and passion. The hero is guilty of crime the most atrocious; he brings ruin in his wake; up to his last hour he is sensual and covetous; he deserts not his sins; rather his sins desert him. There are regrets; in one instance there is remorse; but there is no conversion. And yet, as though in mockery of the Christian ideal of personal purity and holiness, this sinful soul is triumphantly borne to heaven amid the song of angels. The poet represents him as saved by the only saving principle on, or above, or under the earth — the principle of Love: "Whoever striving exerts himself, him can we redeem, *and if he also participates in the love*

from on high, the Blessed Host shall meet him with heartiest welcome."[1] Faust, like Dante in his poem, is the special object of womanly love. She whose heart he broke pleads in his behalf before the Mater Gloriosa, and her prayer is heard. Faust is saved. Through wreck and ruin of soul and body he reaches the solution of life's riddle. But surely the perfection of heaven is not the satiety of self-gratification. The will must be turned towards the good. It has been truly said that "not until the Ethiopian changes his skin and the leopard his spots, can he do good that is accustomed to do evil."[2] And this has been still more forcibly emphasized by St. Paul: "And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it availeth nothing."[3] Now, where in the heart of Faust is that charity that St. Paul insists upon? What charity did he extend toward his neighbor except in so far as it gratified himself and was in accordance with his conception of things? He seeks regeneration, not in repentance, but in oblivion and communion with Nature. "Faust" is a poem of selfishness. How does Dante treat the same theme of struggle and salvation? How does he introduce the same element of womanly love? Beatrice, after upbraiding Dante for his sins, says: "God's high destiny would be broken if Lethe

[1] *Faust*, part ii. act v. Chorus of Angels bearing the soul of Faust.

[2] Susan Blow, *A Study of Dante*, p. 39.

[3] I. Corinthians, chap. xiii. 3.

were passed and such food were tasted without the repentance that breaks forth in tears."[1] Such is womanly love in Dante's conception: spiritual, elevating, ennobling, strengthening, ideal. These characteristics we fail to see in Goethe's conception. To his mind, womanly love is merely a blind love, all-enduring and all-forgiving. But "Faust" is the world-poem of this century, even as the "Divina Commedia" is of the thirteenth. Goethe is the mouthpiece of the modern world; the Middle Ages sing through Dante. And as each was a child of his age, the personality of each is a determining element written into the fibre of both great poems.

IV.

1. Dante, as revealed to us by time and his writings, stands out in bold relief as a man proud, fiery, irascible, the bitterness of exile and poverty corroding his soul and dropping gall from his pen, and withal humble and gentle and tender;[2] a man strong to hate and strong to love, —

> "Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
> The love of love," —

a man sincere in all he says and does, truth-loving and truth-telling, sparing no one, neither himself nor his friends, nor his enemies. His was a varied career. He imbibed at his mother's breast the traditionary feuds and traditionary hates of his

[1] *Purgatorio*, xxx. 142–145.

[2] Witness the tenderness with which the poet always speaks of the relations of mother and child (*Inferno*, xxiii. 38–42).

family; he nurtured them and fought for them. He was acquainted with the ease and comfort of wealth; he tasted the pleasure of having had honors thrust upon him; he was wise in council and prudent in diplomacy; he felt the shock of battle and witnessed the carnage of war. He traveled from land to land studying men and things, his keen eye penetrating beneath the surface, finding naught too small to be unworthy of note, naught too grand for his expansive intellect to compass. He strayed from the paths of virtue and drank the cup of vice to its nauseous dregs,[1] and in his own soul he experienced the hell of remorse. He repented, gave himself to prayer and meditation, and even in all probability to the austerities of religious life;[2] he relapsed, recovered himself again,[3] and died an edifying death, clad in the habit of St. Francis.[4] He was exiled; he wandered from place to place, an outcast upon the earth, tasting the insipidity of another's salt and the weariness of going up and down another's stairs;[5] yearning to return to his beloved Florence, which he loved with all the love of a son for a mother; always yearning, but never returning, and hating his enemies all the more fiercely for keeping him out. How insatiable was his thirst for knowledge through all his

[1] *Purgatorio*, xxx., xxxi. *Paradiso*, xv. 121–123; xxiii. 121–123.

[2] Balbo, *Vita*, lib. i. cap. vii. pp. 94–98. The poet's familiarity with spiritual life could not have been well acquired outside of a novitiate.

[3] *Paradiso*, xxii. 107, 108.

[4] Balbo, *Vita*, lib. ii. cap. xvi. p. 422. Pelli, p. 144.

[5] *Paradiso*, xvii. 55–66.

troubles we have already seen. There was no subject taught that he did not master: medicine, law, letters, music, mathematics, painting, physics, philosophy, and with great breadth and depth, his favorite, theology. He absorbed in all of these whatever was worth knowing. In some subjects he even went beyond his teachers and anticipated modern theories.[1]

2. Such is the man as we see him walk among men: silent, reserved, haughty, taking no liberties and allowing none to be taken. Can Grande wonders why the poet with all his learning cannot amuse half as well as his buffoon. Dante retorts with all the scorn of his soul that he supposes it to be because like is pleased with like.[2] Not after this fashion does he seek amusement. Not every man is a companion for him; and so we find him restless and wandering, writing his soul into his great poem.[3] That is a characteristic picture left of him by the prior of a monastery which he visited: "Dante has been here," writes Brother Hilary; "as neither I nor any of the brothers recognized him, I asked him what he wished. He made no answer, but gazed silently upon the columns and

[1] Il notar solamenti i luoghi degli scritti danteschi, e segnatamente del poema, in cui l' autore fa prova di singolar virtù filosofica e anticipa talvolta i pensieri e i trovati piu recenti, vorrebbe un lungo discorso. Chi crederebbe, per esempio, che Dante abbia divinato il sistema dinamico? Gioberti, *Del Bello*, cap. x. p. 238. See Opere, ed. Lombardi, vol. v. p. 89. See, also, Tiraboschi, *Vita*, in Opere, vol. v.

[2] Similis simili gaudet. Hettinger, *Die Göttliche Komödie*, p. 55.

[3] Mais ce qu'il raconte, c'est sa propre conversion. Edmond Scherer, *Litt. Contemp.* p. 60.

galleries of the cloister. Again I asked him what he wished and whom he sought; and slowly turning his head, and looking around upon the brothers and me, he answered, '*Peace!*'"[1] Brother Hilary takes him apart and speaks a kind word to him, and the reticence and reserve melt away, and beneath the haughty crust, hardened by adversity, is found the gentleness of woman. The kind word and the kind treatment draw from his bosom the precious fragment of his great poem lying there, and he hands it to the prior with the words, "Here, brother, is a portion of my work which you may not have seen; this remembrance I leave with you; forget me not."[2]

3. In this manner do we catch glimpses of the circumstances under which the great poem was written. The author suffered much; but his sufferings purified his soul and raised him out of the transitory into the sphere of the permanent and the ideal. They were his purgatorial fire. Nor should we judge him rashly. We should be lenient towards the gall his pen has dropped, for it has been distilled in his soul by the exile, poverty, persecution, and degradation to which he was subjected. "If," says one who reveres him, "from the dearest illusions of youth, wrapped in the halo of a benevolent imagination, the wickedness of men has

[1] It is the same peace the poet sought from world to world: —

"quella pace,
Che, dietro a' piedi di sì fatta guida,
Di mondo in mondo cercar mi si face."

Purgatorio, v. 61–63.

[2] Balbo, *Vita*, p. 290; Cantù, *Histoire des Italiéns*, t. v. p. 484.

thrown you out of the circle of your activity, your affection, your early hopes and aspirations, into the midst of cruel deceptions; if you have been deeply sensitive like Dante, and like Dante have suffered the persecutions of an age that never pardons one raising himself above it; then, and then only, have you the right to condemn his explosions of wrath."[1]

V.

3. But if the "Divina Commedia" contained only the ventings of private spleen — if it were simply the effect of a mind seeking self-glorification, or were it merely an esoteric expression of some unorthodox clique[2] — it would not live as it has lived, nor would it deserve to rank among the great world-poems. These outbursts are the least portions of it. The poet's soul was too great to be tied down by any party, or a slave to any transitory bond. Reared a Guelf,[3] circumstances and his convictions throw him into the Ghibelline party, but he finds words of rebuke for both Guelf and Ghibelline. Both have run into extremes; he knows not which to censure most;[4] so, raising himself above both, he finds the path of honor in making a party for

[1] Cæsar Cantù, *Histoire des Italiéns*, t. v. p. 516.

[2] Such were the opinions of Ugo Foscolo, Rossetti, Aroux. See Cæsar Cantù's reply to Aroux in *Histoire des Italiéns*, t. vii. p. 531.

[3] Balbo, *Vita*, p. 229.

[4] L' uno al pubblico segno i gigli gialli
Oppone, e l' altro appropria quello a parte,
Sì ch' è forte a veder qual più si falli.
Paradiso, vi. 100–102.

himself.[1] In like manner did he burst the bonds of passion that held him to earth. He walks through exile and suffering, his soul dwelling apart from and far above the fleeting and transitory; reading in all things the ideal beyond sign and symbol; treading this earth as though it were a mere shell whose mysterious murmurings bring him tidings of the sea of eternity and infinitude far beyond; bearing in his heart a love pure and bright and elevating, that raises him up when he has fallen and bears him triumphantly through trial and temptation.

2. At a tender age — in his ninth year[2] — when the bloom of innocence is still upon his youth, a glance at a child, younger than himself by some months, awakens in him consciousness and enkindles in him a spark of love sweet and pure and ideal; and the spark grows into a flame, and the flame burns clear and steady, a beacon directing his whole career. He has risen to a New Life. The child grows to womanhood, marries another, and dies young, all unconscious of the love that consumes her poet-lover. And the poet-lover also marries other than his first love, and has children born to him, and grows in greatness and influence, and becomes a leader of men in his beloved Florence, one to be relied on by his friends and feared by his enemies. Still the passion of his boyhood

[1] Di sua bestialitate il suo processo
Farà la prova, sì ch 'a te fia bello
Averti fatta parte per te stesso.
Paradiso, xvii. 67–69.

[2] *Vita Nuova*, ii.

becomes the cherished ideal of his bosom. He goes astray, but the thought of the loved one reclaims him; another demands his care and attention, but he communes with this one in his dreams and has visions of her in glory. He sings of her in his waking hours. Her image is the talisman whereby to banish all unworthy thoughts and desires. He extols her; he idealizes her; he embalms her forever in his immortal poem. He identifies her with, and makes her the impersonation of Theology; and henceforth the name of Beatrice shall stand before men as the synonym of whatever is inspiring in love and ennobling in womanhood. The passion of boyhood followed her to the heavenly abode in which he fancied her, and waxed with years into a most ideal and spiritual influence, until it finally ripened in the poet's heart, through long and laborious study, into the fulfillment of his early promise "to say of her what was never said of any woman."[1] This spiritualized type of womanhood stands out unique in the whole range of literature. It is Dante's own creation; rather it is the creation of the Christianity that reveres and honors the Virgin Mother. Love was the actuating principle of the poet's life. Not love of woman only, but love of country, love of study, love of religion; and not simply love, but love enlightened and strengthened by a faith that pierces the veil of the visible and transient and beholds the regions of the spiritual and eternal.[2]

3. Dante's love for the religion of his birth

[1] *Vita Nuova*, xliii.

[2] See N. Tommaseo, *L'Inferno*, Int. p. xlvi.

grew into a passion. Neither the Guelf hatred of his youth nor the Ghibelline hatred of his later years against the persons of several popes ever for a moment obscured his mind to the truth of the doctrines of the Church or the sacred office of the papacy. In his view, the greatness of ancient Rome was decreed solely to render it worthy of being the Holy Place in which should sit the successors of the Fisherman.[1] The mystical vine of the Church still grows, and Peter and Paul who died for it still live.[2] He holds by that Church; he begs Christians not to be moved, feather-like, "by every wind of doctrine." "You have," he tells them, "the Old Testament and the New, and the Pastor of the Church who guides you; let this suffice for your salvation."[3]

4. With this profound respect for the Church, he loved her ceremonies, her dogmas, her teachings, her institutions. He to whom the heavens and all that they contain were symbols of the spiritual essences they veil could not fail to grasp the poetry and the meaning of every prayer and ceremony and office of that Church who, through whatever is in

[1] La quale, e il quale, a voler dir lo vero,
Fur stabiliti per lo loco santo,
U' siede il successor del maggior Piero.
Inferno, ii. 22–24.

[2] Pensa che Pietro e Paolo, che moriro
Per la vigna che guasti, *ancor son vivi*.
Paradiso, xviii. 131, 132.

[3] Avete il vecchio e il nuovo Testamento,
E il Pastor della Chiesa che vi guida:
Questo vi basti a vostro salvamento.
Ibid. v. 76–78.

and about her temples, speaks eloquently to men in sign and symbol. There is not a stone in her cathedrals that has not its mystical meaning; there is not a garment with which her priest vests himself that is not emblematic of some spiritual truth; there is not an anthem or antiphon in her offices that does not help to draw out the beauty and significance behind it all. "The elements and fragments of poetry," says the Dean of St. Paul's in his scholarly monograph, "were everywhere in the Church — in her ideas of life, in her rules and institutions for passing through it, in her preparation for death, in her offices, ceremonial, celebrations, usages, her consecration of domestic, literary, commercial, civic, military, political life, the meanings and ends she had given them, the religious seriousness with which the forms of each were dignified — in her doctrine and her dogmatic system, her dependence on the unseen world, her Bible. From each and all of these, and from that public feeling which, if it expressed itself but abruptly and incoherently, was quite alive to the poetry which surrounded it, the poet received an impression of greatness and beauty, of joy and dread."[1] How far the poet made use of the impulses emanating from one and all of these influencing agencies is known only to him who has made a complete and thorough study of the poem embodying their inspirations. For we must not lose sight of the fact that the poem is, in all the grandeur and depth of its mystical meaning, made up of the spirit and

[1] Rev. R. W. Church, *Dante*, p. 111.

doctrine of the Church.[1] The spites and personal animosities are but specks scattered here and there upon the whole surface of crystalline beauty. Shining out in pristine splendor is the Spiritual Sense. Let us now glance at the philosophy and doctrine underlying that Sense.

VI.

1. There is a common ground on which all supreme intelligences assemble. It is the region of the Ideal. It is ascended only by the long and arduous labor of study and thought. There meet poetry and philosophy in their highest soarings. They meet and converse and stand upon the footing of mutual understanding. Poetry is permeated by the philosophic spirit, and philosophy dons the garb of poetry. Few are the souls assembled upon that supreme height. Plato and Virgil dwell there; so do Shakespeare and Goethe. And, consummate singer, profound philosopher, and skilled theologian, by every right and title, as being each and all of these, Dante there also has his home. Sweetest of singers, he is at the same time profoundly

[1] Dante cristiano, cristianissimo sempre nel Poema e in tutte le opere; Dante cattolico sempre. . . . Balbo, *Vita*, lib. ii. cap. ii. p. 232.

In truth, he anticipated the most pregnant developments of Catholic doctrine, mastered its subtlest distinctions, and treated its hardest problems with almost faultless accuracy. Were all the libraries in the world destroyed, and the Holy Scriptures with them, the whole Catholic system of doctrine and morals might be almost reconstructed out of the *Divina Commedia*. Hettinger, *Dante's Divina Commedia*, p. 234.

scientific; his mental vision sees the nicest intricacies and the most delicate distinctions; eminently religious, he also gathers up the fragments of ancient mythologies and ancient systems that he finds stranded upon his age, and pieces them together, giving them deeper import in the light of the Christian mysticism in which he is immersed. "He brought back," says Gioberti, "the Gentile mythology and symbolism to their source, rendering them anew esoteric and poetic."[1] He made them wholly subordinate to the Christian spirit, and by means of them conveyed practical lessons that are balm to the weary and drink to the thirsty. In like manner did he treat the science of his day. He made it the handmaid of the great spiritual truths he would impart. For this reason it is of small moment whether his theories be superseded by others apparently more probable; the moral and spiritual lesson still remains, and still speaks to the same human heart and the same human aspirations. So also did he make use of allegory.

2. Allegory there was before the time of Dante. Vision, too, was there. Such were the visions of Alberic;[2] such the vision of Paul,[3] and many others.[4] The language of allegory and vision was the favorite mode of conveying spiritual advice.[5] But

[1] *Del Bello*, cap. x. p. 214.

[2] Tommaseo, *L'Inferno*, p. 416. Discorso: Altre visioni infernali.

[3] Ozanam, *Dante et la Philosophie Catholique au XIIIme. Siècle*, p. 473.

[4] *Ibid.* pp. 484–491.

[5] Ozanam calls attention to the general analogy between the pas-

all previous visions and allegories are to the great allegorical vision of Dante what the old plays and stories out of which our own Shakespeare constructed his immortal masterpieces are to those masterpieces themselves. In the one case and in the other, we may trace phrases and expressions and conceptions, and even whole trains of thought, to their sources; but to what avail? The master-mind has given to the phrase or sentence a new application and a larger scope, and with grasp of purpose and sureness of aim has reset sentence and phrase in a sense in which through all time they will be recognized as the ideal forms. To achieve this is the exclusive mission of genius. And in a marked degree was this the mission of Dante. Critics find fault with his occasional coarseness of diction. True it is that Dante does not employ words with the view of concealing the image he would portray. His descriptions are always vivid. He "condenses aphorisms into pictures, and sums up chapters of morality in portraits."[1] Whatever there is in his poem that is beautiful or tender — and much there is of beauty and tenderness — he expresses with delicacy and sweetness the most exquisite; but when the poet would describe the loathsome and the horrible, he makes use of language best calculated to leave a

sage of the soul through the spheres of the *Paradiso* and the favorite titles of the ascetic treatises of St. Bonaventura: *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum; Formula aurea de gradibus virtutem; De vii itineribus æternitatis.* — *Loc. cit.* p. 335.

[1] A. J. Symonds, *Introduction to the Study of Dante*, p. 163, 2d ed.

loathsome or horrible impression. Critics should not forget that elegance and prettiness of phrase are not grandeur and strength; that they are wholly incompatible with grandeur and strength; that if Dante were always elegant and pretty in his phrasings Dante would never have been great or sublime, nor would his poem tower through the vista of the ages one of the grandest monuments of human thought and human skill ever conceived and executed. And the secret of it all lies in the poet's intense earnestness.

3. This earnestness asserts itself throughout the poem chiefly in three lines of thought: (1) A devoted patriot, loving his country, suffering for it, and yearning for its welfare with all the energy of his being, he launches notes of warning and denunciation against its vices, its enemies, and its false friends, and with invective the most scathing vilifies all who seemingly stand between it and its well-being. This burning patriotism has made the poem the great national epic.[1] (2) A child of the Church, true and attached, though at times wayward, the poet takes the liberty of a child free-spoken and free to speak, to utter words of censure against what he considers abuses in the external administration of the Church and the policy of her Pontiffs.[2] (3) Finally, Dante's chief mission, the prime motive of his intense earnestness, is the

[1] *Inferno*, xxvi. 1–10; *Purgatorio*, vi. 75–151; *Paradiso*, xv., xvi. To understand the political aspect of the poem it is essential to read the author's work *De Monarchia* and some available history of that period, say Villani or Cæsar Cantù.

[2] *Inferno*, xix. 88–117; *Paradiso*, xviii. 115–136; xxvii. 19–66.

Spiritual Sense underlying his poem. This he has not left to be discovered. He takes pains to inform the reader. He tells him that leaving aside all subtle investigation, the end and aim of his poem briefly put, both as regards the whole and its parts, is to remove therefrom men living in a state of misery in this life, and lead them to one of happiness.[1] This he does upon an ethical basis.

4. The poet recognizes free-will as the basis of all human responsibility, and the consequent amenability of the soul to reward or punishment: "Inborn in you is the virtue that keepeth counsel and that should guard the threshold of assent. Here is the principle whereto occasion of meriting in you is attached, according as it gathers up and winnows out good or guilty loves."[2] The argument of his poem is man receiving at the hands of Divine Justice his deserts according to the motive and nature of the actions he performs.[3] Man passes from the darkness of sin and the wilderness of error into the light of truth and grace. The poem is a song of emancipation. It chants the breaking of the bonds of sin, and the passing into the light and freedom of the children of God. It is a song of hope. Evil is indeed mighty, and great is the havoc it plays among souls; but mightier still is God's grace. It is a

[1] Sed omissa subtili investigatione, dicendum est breviter, quod finis totius et partis est, removere viventes in hac vita de statu miseriæ, et perducere ad statum felicitatis. *Epistola*, xi. Ep. ad Kani Grandi de la Scala, § 15.

[2] *Purgatorio*, xviii. 61–66. See the whole of this important passage. Cf. *Summa*, ii. 1, Quæst. cxiv. art. iv.

[3] Ep. xi. § 11.

song of light and life. Its tendency is upward and onward to the triumph of spirit over matter. It is ever pouring into our souls to the music of

> "one clear harp in divers tones,
> That men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things." [1]

5. The poem is, therefore, practical. The thought, the energy, and the earnestness of the whole age are concentrated upon it. Speculation abounds in it; but it is in order that knowing all the better one may do all the better. The poet is careful to tell us that if he speaks by way of speculation, it is not for the sake of mere barren words, but rather that such may tend to action.[2] The intellect is made for truth; its ultimate perfection consists in the contemplation of truth.[3] The poet never forgets that true wisdom consists in right-knowing and right-doing.

VII.

1. In the development of this thought we have the mystical meaning and central idea of the "Divina Commedia." It is the drama of human nature sinning, struggling against vice, straining

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, i. 1.

[2] Ep. xi. § 16. "Non ad speculandum, sed ad opus inceptum est totum."

[3] Così della induzione della perfezione seconda le scienze sono cagioni in noi; per l' abito delle quali potemo la verità speculare, ch' è ultimà perfezione nostra, siccome dice il Filosofo nel sesto dell' *Etica*, quando dice che'l vero è 'l bene dello intelletto. *Convito*, ii. 14, p. 153, ed. Fraticelli.

after perfection, and making for the Supreme Good by means of Knowledge and Power: the primary knowledge of one's duties towards one's self, one's neighbor and God, and the larger knowledge of the relation and coördination of those duties in the light of philosophy and theology; the power flowing from this knowledge aided by prayer and grace and the assistance of the unseen, spiritual world.

2. The element that gives life to the knowledge and makes effective the power is Love. Love is the inspiration of all knowledge. Without love there can be no philosophy;[1] it is the form — the soul — of philosophy.[2] Be it remembered that philosophy is not, in the intention of Dante, mere speculation. It is an intimate union of the soul with wisdom in all-absorbing and undivided love.[3] Therefore it is that only those living according to reason can become philosophers. Those leading merely the life of the senses can know or experience naught of the mysteries and consolations of this true philosophy.[4] Nor can intelligences exiled from their supernal home, such as fallen angels and damned souls, philosophize, for the reason that love has become extinguished in them and malice prevails.[5] Love is the soul of philosophy; wisdom is its body; morality its beauty; such is the underlying conception of Dante's doctrine.[6] He recognizes no truth that is

[1] A filosofare è necessario amore. *Convito*, tratto iii. cap. 13, p. 226.

[2] Amore è forma di filosofia. *Ibid.* p. 229.

[3] Filosofia è uno amoroso uso di sapienzia. *Ibid.* cap. 12, p. 225.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 224.

[5] *Ibid.* cap. 13. p. 226.

[6] *Ibid.* cap. 14.

not a ray of the Divine Intelligence; no good that does not flow from the Infinite Love; no beauty that is not clothed in the morality born of the Eternal Law. "The Alpha and Omega of all writing that Love reads me is the Supreme Good that contents this Court."[1] So speaks he in his sublime vision to the Apostle of Love. And he enlarges upon it in this fashion: "By argument of philosophy, and by authority descending hence, such Love must needs on me be stamped; for Good, so far as it is good and comprehended as such, enkindleth Love, and enkindleth it all the greater as more of goodness is therein comprised. Therefore, towards that Essence — so supreme that every good which is found outside of It is but a ray of Its light — more than towards aught else, it behooveth the mind of each one discerning the truth whereon is based this evidence to move in love."[2] From that Divine Essence have come all things; to the same should all things tend. And as regards man, both reason and revelation urge him to keep for God the sovereign use of all his loves.[3]

3. Nor does the poet stop here. With depth and force and admirable grasp of expression, he penetrates to the workings of Love in the Godhead. He determines It to be not only a principle of Light, but also a principle of Life. Here he is mystical, sublime, suggestive. He stands upon the highest plane of Christian philosophy. He contemplates the Trinity in the creative act. He beholds the

[1] *Paradiso*, xxvi. 16–18. [2] *Ibid.* 25–36.
[3] *Ibid.* 45–47.

Triune Godhead in the bosom of the Word. And thus the Word, which is the central fact of all history, the central thought of all philosophy, the central germ of all speech, becomes for Dante the central Idea of the "Divina Commedia." He says: "That which dieth not and that which can die are naught else than the splendor of that Idea[1] which in His love our Lord begetteth. For that living Light[2] — which so goeth forth from Its source[3] that It ceases not to be one therewith,[4] as well as with the Love[5] that maketh Three-in-One — of Its bounty[6] unites Its rays as though mirrored in nine subsistences,[7] Itself remaining eternally One and Undivided. Thence It descends to the ultimate potentialities, passing down from act to act, till It makes no further than brief contingencies;[8] and these contingencies I understand to be things generated, which the moving heavens[9] produce with and without seed."[10] The sum and substance of this sublime doctrine is that Love produces all things, from the heaven of heavens and the celestial spirits down to the least and most evanescent

[1] The Word.
[2] The Word, the Son.
[3] The Father.
[4] Ego et Pater unum sumus. Joan. x. 30.
[5] The Holy Ghost, the Third Divine Person.
[6] That is, of Its goodness, not through necessity.
[7] In the nine heavens, or in the nine motive intelligences. Bianchi.
[8] That is, extending down from the more active to the less active till It comes to the least existence in the chain of created things.
[9] Divine Light moving the heaven, produces things generated. Tommaseo.
[10] *Paradiso*, xiii. 53–66.

creature. With St. Thomas the poet here holds the influence of the heavenly bodies as secondary causes.[1] With the Angelic Doctor also he holds that beings are perfect in proportion as they reflect the Divine attributes:[2] "If burning Love disposes and stamps the clear view of the Prime Virtue, all perfection is there acquired. Thus was the earth once made worthy of all the perfection of living things; thus was the Virgin made a mother."[3] In Dante's philosophy the Ideal becomes the standard of all beauty. Grand vistas of thought here open up to our contemplation; but we must not tarry. One remark, however, may be permitted. It has been well said: "See deep enough and you see musically; the heart of Nature being everywhere music if you can only reach it."[4] If it has ever been given to human intellect to look back of sign and symbol and behold the essence and relation of things, it has been given to Dante. And this is why he has seen so musically. He sees virtue and justice and suffering all blended in their true relations; he notes the harmony between the natural and the supernatural orders, between faith and reason, grace and free-will, time

[1] Corpora cælestia sunt causa inferiorum effectuum mediantibus causis particularibus inferioribus, quæ deficere possunt in minori parte.

Virtus corporis cælestis non est infinita; unde requirit determinatam dispositionem in materia ad inducendum suum effectum et quantum ad distantiam loci, et quantum ad alias conditiones. *Summa*, I. quæst. cxv. art. vi. ad. 1, 2.

[2] *Ibid.* I. ii. quæst. iv. art. 5.

[3] *Paradiso*, xiii. 79–84.

[4] Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, lect. iii.

and eternity, the divine and the human, and the harmony fills him with wonderment, and its music enters his soul, and he sings it in accents so sweet that he who lets the sweetness enter into his heart, may well say with the poet on hearing Casella sing one of his own hymns: "Still sounds its sweetness within me!"[1]

VIII.

1. That deep insight into the moral and physical world has enabled Dante to see in Love not only the Light and the Life of all things created — and even of the Uncreated One in whom Love, Light, and Life are one infinite identical activity — but also the principle and source of sin and passion: "Neither Creator nor a creature . . . was ever without Love, be it natural or be it spiritual; and well thou knowest. The natural is always free from error; but err the other may by evil objects, or by excess, or by defect of vigor. Whilst well-directed in the first, and in the second it moderates itself, it cannot be cause of evil delight; but when to ill it turns aside, or when with more care than it ought, or with less, it runs after good, then against the Creator works his own creation. Hence it behooves you to understand how Love should be in you the seed of every virtue as well as of every deed deserving punishment."[2] In this strain the poet continues, holding with the Angelic

[1] Che la dolcezza ancor dentro mi suona. *Purgatorio*, ii. 114.

[2] *Ibid.* xvii. 91–105.

Doctor that there is no passion, not even excepting Hate, that does not presuppose Love.[1] For, as the great Schoolman teaches, there is no passion that is not moved towards, or does not rest in, some object. And it is so because of some kind of harmony or adaptability between the subject moved or resting and the object towards which it moves or in which it rests. But Love consists in the accord of the one loving with the object loved.[2] Now the human heart seeks the good, yearns for the good, loves the good, and is content only in the possession and enjoyment of the good. This is a primary law. No system of philosophy has ever soared higher than that question every Christian child learns from the Little Catechism: "Why did God make you? — God made me to know Him, to love Him, and serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next."[3] It contains the solution of the whole mystery of man. It names the Supreme Good towards which tends all Love.

2. But it frequently happens that the Supreme Good becomes clouded from man's vision and intent, and he seeks bliss in loving the lesser goods that are more palpable to his view. Herein is how Love becomes the source of all that is sinful in thought and word and work on the part of man. (1) Now it is Love excessive. As such it seeks

[1] *Summa*, I. ii. quæst. xxvii. art. 4.

[2] *Ibid.* I. ii. quæst. xxix. art. 2.

[3] *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, lesson i. "On the End of Man."

happiness in imaginary perfection, or in the praise of men, or in a sense of self-sufficiency that causes one to ignore one's origin, or helplessness, or dependence upon the aid of Grace. This is Pride or Vanity. Again, this worldly love impels one to seek happiness solely in the external sufficiency that wealth can bring. This is Avarice; and it is at the root of treasons, frauds, deceits, prejudices, anxieties, violence, and insensibility to misery.[1] The same Love seeks bodily gratification either in eating or drinking to excess — and this is Gluttony; or in the enjoyment of the carnal and sexual appetites — and this is Lust. (2) Now it is Love defective. As such, it is lax and sad in attending to things spiritual, and is known as Sloth. (3) Finally, it is Love distorted. As such, it grudgingly looks upon a neighbor's prosperity as an obstacle in the way of one's preëminence — when it is called Envy; or it changes into wrathful feelings that seek to be revenged for real or fancied wrong. It is then called Anger. These various forms of misapplied Love are known as the Seven Capital Sins, and are the chief sources of all evil.[2]

3. The poet takes these sins and all the sins that flow from them, and holds them up to our view in all their loathsome nakedness. And he does so, not as a mere matter of sport, but that he and his

[1] *Summa*, II. ii. Quæst. cxviii. art. 8.

[2] *Ibid.* I. ii. Quæst. lxxxiv. art. 4. See *Inferno*, xi. and Tommaseo's tract appended to this canto, entitled "Dottrina Penale di Dante," p. 120. The poet gives the genesis of the Seven Capital Sins on the same line of reasoning with St. Thomas, whom we have here followed in substance. See *Purgatorio*, xvii. 106–139.

readers may learn to hate them, and from witnessing their torments may get some faint conception of their enormity, and may be led to exclaim: "Wisdom Supreme, how great is the art Thou showest in heaven, on earth, and in the evil world, and how well Thy Goodness dispenseth justice!"[1] The poet transports us to the Hell that he so vividly pictures; we there are told the dire consequences of sin to persons and families and peoples upon earth; we meditate upon the dread lessons embodied in this song of woe and wrath, of wailings and regrets, and our soul learns to recoil from aught that could break the golden chain of Law and Love with which the Creator binds all his creatures to Himself. It is a solemn preparation for the more practical lessons conveyed in the other two parts of the poem. Their Spiritual Sense at once becomes apparent. Indeed, it is the clue to their proper appreciation. For the poem gives us, as no other purely human production gives us, "the solution of the great, eternal, and sole problem of our life, namely, deliverance from evil and final bliss in God as the source of all Truth and all Love."[2] Let us, in a cursory manner, follow the evolution of that Spiritual Sense.

IX.

1. The poet is in the midway of life.[3] He has become entangled in the woods of sin and error.

[1] *Inferno*, xix. 10–12.
[2] Hettinger, *Die Göttliche Komödie*, p. 56.
[3] *Inferno*, i. 1.

He is beset by three predominant passions that are about to devour him. These are the lion of pride and over-vaulting ambition, the leopard of concupiscence, and the she-wolf of avarice. Mary, Mother of Divine Grace, sees his plight, and forasmuch as he has venerated her, she does not abandon him in his peril. She sends Lucy, or Illuminative Grace, to his assistance. Lucy commands Virgil — that is, Reason, enlightened by her directions — to save him. As he is about returning upon his evil course,[1] Reason tells him that he must take another road if he would escape the beasts and be rid of the errors of his ways.[2] He obeys. The journey is long and dismal and dreary. Sometimes the poet is discouraged and desires to return.[3] Sometimes he requires, in an especial manner, the assistance of Virgil: as when the Roman poet turns him around and with his own hands closes his eyes that he may not behold the Gorgon; all of which means that there are certain sins and temptations in life that cannot be overcome by human nature unaided by reason and God's redeeming grace. Such is sensuality, which hardens the heart, even as the head of the Gorgon was fabled to turn to stone those looking thereon. In giving the figure the poet would have us look to the spiritual sense: "O you who have sane intellects, note the doctrine veiled beneath those strange verses."[4] At

[1] *Inferno*, xv. 50–52.
[2] E non c' era altra via
Che questa per la quale io mi son messo.
Purgatorio, i. 62, 63.
[3] *Inferno*, viii. 100–103.
[4] *Ibid.* ix. 50–63.

times Virgil himself is unable to make headway against the powers of darkness. But a heavenly messenger comes and dispels all dread, and opens the entrance, and forthwith Dante and his guide walk securely and without molestation.[1] They find no further opposition. Indeed, it is only by reason of heavenly grace that Virgil is able to lead Dante through the dread region: "From on high descends virtue, which enables me to lead him."[2] Whereby the poet would teach that human reason, good and admirable as it may be in itself, is not sufficient to contend against the world of passion and the evil spirits that inspire wrong-doing. Again, at times the poet would rest. But there is no resting-place for the soul struggling with evil till it frees itself therefrom. We thus have the grand lesson of work and energy in overcoming indolence and sloth and evil habit: "It now behooveth thee to shake off all slothfulness, said the Master, for fame comes not to him who sits on down or lies abed; without which whoso consumes his life, leaves on earth such trace of himself as smoke in air or foam on water. Arise, therefore! Conquer thy panting with the soul that conquers every battle, so be it that it sinks not down with its heavy body."[3] And we have the further lesson that mere sorrow of the lips and outward observance of the law, or reception of the Sacraments, will avail little unless accompanied by change of heart

[1] *Inferno*, ix. 100–105.
[2] *Purgatorio*, i. 68, 69.
[3] *Inferno*, xxiv. 46–54; cf. Wisdom ix. 15.

and sincere detestation of sin: "He cannot be absolved who doth not first repent; nor can he repent the sin and will it at the same time, for this were contradiction to which reason cannot consent."[1] Thus, in picturing sin and its punishment in such colors as human conception has never approached, the poet is teaching us the lesson of struggle with self, of abhorrence of wrong-doing, and of striving towards personal holiness.

2. This is especially the lesson of the "Purgatorio." Before entering these realms of hope and sweet contentment amid great suffering — hope and contentment because accompanied by Love — the poet must first be washed of the grime and filth that have clung to him in the evil world, the contemplation of which so saddened his eyes and weighed down his heart. He is, furthermore, to be girt with a lowly and pliant rush. "Go then," says Cato, "and gird this man with a smooth rush; then wash his face so that therefrom thou mayst put away all filthiness; for it were unseemly, with eye obscured by any cloud, to go before the first Minister who is of them of Paradise."[2] In which words is conveyed the wholesome lesson that after one has been cleansed from the grime of sin, one must gird on the plain rush of humility; for as pride is the chief of all capital sins, so is humility the foundation of all virtue; and with meek and lowly heart must one walk in the narrow way, fearing lest one fall, and remembering that one carries heavenly treasures in a frail vessel. And once the

[1] *Inferno*, xxvii. 118–120. [2] *Purgatorio*, i. 94–99.

soul has set out upon the road of virtue and right-doing, she must not go back: "Let not your returning be hitherward. The Sun which is now rising will show you where to take the mountain at an easier ascent."[1] In proportion as the soul becomes enlightened by prayer and meditation will she find all the easier the ascent up the mountain-heights of perfection.

3. It is only through humble obedience in all right-doing and humble submission in all right-thinking that the soul can attain the great object of this pilgrimage. This is the only road to liberty. And liberty of spirit is what the poet seeks: "He goeth in search of liberty, which is so dear, as he knoweth who for it gave up his life."[2] He goes in search of the highest spiritual good. And he can only advance in the light: "To go upward in the night may not be."[3] Only by grace and mercy can one progress in the path of perfection. Still, freedom of will is respected, and so the poet may retrace his steps in the darkness: "Well might one therewith turn downward and wander about the hillside whilst that the horizon holds the day closed."[4] The poet arrives at the gate of purgation. It is guarded by an angel whose face is radiant with beauty and who bears a sword and

[1] *Purgatorio*, i. 106–108.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 71, 72. Cato taking his own life rather than renounce liberty is symbolical of the soul, destroying all selfishness that it may attain the light and freedom of spiritual life. See Bianchi's *Divina Commedia*, note to those lines, p. 245, ed. 1863; p. 253, ed 1868.

[3] *Purgatorio*, vii. 44.

[4] *Ibid.* vii. 58–60.

keys. There are three steps. The first is of white marble so polished that therein the poet may see himself mirrored. The second is a fire-burnt rock tinted more deeply than perse,[1] with a cross through its length and breadth. The third is porphyry flaming as blood spirting forth from a vein.[2] The poet, striking his breast, begs for mercy, and asks to enter.

"Nearer now we drew,
Arriv'd, whence in that part, where first a breach
As of a wall appear'd, I could descry
A portal, and three steps beneath, that led
For inlet there, of different colour each,
And one who watch'd, but spake not yet a word.
As more and more mine eye did stretch its view,
I mark'd him seated on the highest step,
In visage such, as past my power to bear.
Grasped in his hand a naked sword, glanc'd back
The rays so toward me, that I oft in vain
My sight directed. 'Speak from whence ye stand:'
He cried: 'What would ye? Where is your escort?
Take heed your coming upward harm ye not.'
'A heavenly dame not skilless of these things,'
Replied the instructor, 'told us even now,
"Pass that way: here the gate is."' — 'And may she
Befriending prosper your ascent,' resum'd
The courteous keeper of the gate: 'Come then
Before our steps.' We straightway thither came.
The lowest stair was marble white, so smooth
And polish'd that therein my mirror'd form
Distinct I saw. The next of hue more dark
Than sablest grain, a rough and singëd block,
Cracked lengthwise and across. The third, that lay
Massy above, seemed porphyry, that flam'd
Red as the life-blood spirting from a vein.

[1] Perse is a mixture of purple and black, the black predominating. Dante, *Convito*, iv. 20.

[2] *Purgatorio*, ix. 90–102.

On this God's angel either foot sustain'd,
Upon the threshold seated, which appear'd
A rock of diamond. Up the trinal steps
My leader cheerly drew me. 'Ask,' said he,
'With humble heart, that he unbar the bolt.'
Piously at his holy feet devolv'd
I cast me, praying him for pity's sake,
That he would open to me: but first fell
Thrice on my bosom prostrate. Seven times
The letter, that denotes the inward stain,
He on my forehead with the blunted point
Of his drawn sword inscrib'd. And 'Look,' he cried,
'When enter'd, that thou wash these scars away.'
Ashes, or earth ta'en dry out of the ground,
Were of one colour with the robe he wore,
From underneath that vestment forth he drew
Two keys of metal twain: the one was gold,
Its fellow silver. With the pallid first,
And next the burnish'd, he so ply'd the gate,
As to content me well. 'Whenever one
Faileth of these, that in the keyhole straight
It turn not, to this alley then expect
Access in vain.' Such were the words he spake,
'One is more precious: but the other needs
Skill and sagacity, large share of each,
Ere its good task to disengage the knot
Be worthily perform'd. From Peter these
I hold, of him instructed, that I err
Rather in opening than in keeping fast,
So but the suppliant at my feet implore.'
Then of that hallow'd gate he thrust the door,
Exclaiming, 'Enter, but this warning hear:
He forth again departs who looks behind.'
As in the hinges of that sacred ward
The swivels turn'd, sonorous metal strong,
Harsh was the grating; but so surlily
Roar'd the Tarpeian, when by force bereft
Of good Metellus, thenceforth from his loss
To leanness doom'd. Attentively I turn'd,
List'ning the thunder, that first issued forth;
And 'We praise thee, O God,' methought I heard

In accents blended with sweet melody.
The strains came o'er mine ear, e'en as the sound
Of choral voices, that in solemn chant
With organ mingle, and, now high and clear,
Come swelling, now float indistinct away." [1]

4. The allegorical veil is here so thin that whoso chooses may penetrate it in the light of Catholic doctrine and Catholic practice. "We need hardly be told," says one who has written a charming book instinct with beautiful thoughts and suggestions, "that the gate of St. Peter is the Tribunal of Penance. . . . The triple stair stands revealed as candid Confession mirroring the whole man, mournful Contrition breaking the hard heart of the gazer on the Cross, Love all aflame offering up in satisfaction the life-blood of body, soul, and spirit; the adamantine threshold-seat as the priceless merits of Christ the Door, Christ the Rock, Christ the sure Foundation and the precious Corner-Stone. In the Angel of the Gate, as in the Gospel Angel of Bethesda, is discerned the Confessor; in the dazzling radiance of his countenance the exceeding glory of the ministration of righteousness; in the penitential robe the sympathetic meekness whereby restoring one overtaken in a fault, he considers himself lest he also be tempted; in the sword the wholesome severity of his discipline; in the golden key his divine authority; in the silver, the discernment of spirits whereby he denies absolution to the impenitent, the learning and discretion whereby he directs the penitent." [2]

[1] *Purgatorio*, ix. 65–137, Cary's translation.
[2] Maria F. Rossetti, *A Shadow of Dante*, pp. 112, 113. See the

5. Repentant and with good resolve, the soul now goes forth on her final pilgrimage of purification. There is still upon her the impress of the Seven Capital Sins. To rid herself of the last trace of these is her first endeavor. And as the angel brushes away the trace of one sin after the other,[1] and the soul advances farther and farther in the way of perfection, she finds herself growing all the lighter for having got rid of the burden of her imperfections, and the more eager is she to mount to the summit.[2] Charity takes possession of the soul, and she would see all men ascend with her: "O race of men," admonishes the poet, "born to fly upwards, why at a little wind fall ye so down?"[3] He also upbraids us for allowing ourselves to remain blind to the beauty and splendor of things spiritual, and becoming absorbed in things earthly: "Heaven calls you, and revolves around you, showing you its eternal beauties; and your eye gazes only on the earth, wherefore He who discerns all chastises you."[4] We here perceive too that in affliction and trouble the soul has come to recognize the Hand that punishes: "He who discerns all chastises you;" and she accepts her trials as coming from the hand of a loving Father, and offers them up in expiation for past sin and as a source of merit.

Dissertation of Tommaseo appended to *Purgatorio*, ix. *Penitenza e Correzione*, pp. 127–30.

[1] *Purgatorio*, xii. 140 *sqq.*

[2] — Pungemi la fretta
Per la impacciata via.
Ibid. xxi. 4. 5.

[3] *Ibid.* xii. 95, 96.

[4] *Ibid.* xiv. 149–151.

6. Finally, the poet passes through the fire that cleanses him whole, and Virgil says to him: "The temporal fire and the eternal hast thou seen, my son, and thou art come to a part where of myself no farther do I discern. With reason and with art have I brought thee hither. Take for guide thine own good pleasure; beyond the steep ways and the narrow art thou. Yonder is the sun that shines upon thy forehead; here are the young grass, the flowers and the shrubs, which the land of itself alone brings forth. Whilst rejoicing come the fair eyes that with their weeping made me go to thy aid, thou mayst sit down and mayst go among them. Await no more word nor sign from me; free and upright and sound is thy Free-will, and it were wrong not to do its bidding; wherefore thee over thyself I crown and mitre."[1] The soul has conquered. Therefore Virgil leaves the poet free from the dominion of his passions; more than free, a king crowned triumphant over himself; more than king, a mitred priest, ruling the cloister of his heart, his thoughts and his affections, and mediator and intercessor before the Divine Mercy for himself and those commending themselves to his prayers. Through speculation and through right-doing has he been led by reason as far as reason can lead him. He now passes into the hands of Divine Theology, and in the radiance beaming from her eyes, dispelling many a mist of ignorance, he will read profitable lessons of wisdom and of spiritual perfection. He meets Beatrice. Henceforth neither fear of

[1] *Purgatorio*, xxvii. 127–143.

eternal torments, nor hope of mere earthly reward, nor consolations of sense and feeling will be his incentive to right-doing. Love alone shall lead him. In the company of Beatrice, basking in her sweet smile and receiving her loving admonitions, will he walk from sphere to sphere and traverse the empyrean. She begins by showing him how great is the distance between the mere science of reason and speculation and the high and holy Light that is now to be a guide to his feet. The poet asks: "But why so far above my sight flies thy wished-for speech, that the more my vision strains to see it the more it loses it?" And Beatrice answers: "To the end that thou mayst know the School that thou hast followed; mayst see how its doctrines can keep pace with my speech; mayst also see that your way is from the Divine way as far apart as from earth in distance speeds the highest heaven."[1] Henceforth the soul will tread God's way. And in what consists that way?

7. It is a way not unknown to every soul seeking after spiritual perfection and union with God. It is the way of personal purity and holiness. Well and truly hath it been said: "The only obstacle to spiritual growth lies in ourselves. Goodness Divine, which 'spurns from Itself all envy,' is forever shining in ideal beauty and drawing the soul with cords of love. If we do not see the heavenly vision, it is because we are blinded by sin; if we do not press forward towards it, it is because

[1] *Purgatorio*, xxxiii. 82–90; cf. *De Imitatione Christi*, lib. iii. cap. xxxi. 32.

we are clogged by sin."[1] The chief mission of the Church — that to achieve which she makes use of all the means at her command — is to enable the soul to divest herself of sin and become united with the Supreme Good. In the Church flows the spirit of regeneration. She is the mystical vine perennially shooting forth branch and leaf and luscious fruit throughout the ages, and in every fibre retaining vigor and freshness. Her mystical sap continues to nourish souls and impart to them a healthful and health-giving growth and development. And that mystical sap is none other than Love Divine. It glows in the heart of every member grafted on her mystical body. It inspires the spirit of charity and fosters the communion of saints. In this spirit did Dante write his great poem, and in this spirit must that poem be read. It is the story of a soul seeking perfection in unison and harmony with the Church, by the light of Faith, and borne upward by the supreme law of Love.

8. The scales of selfishness and worldly wisdom and earthly motives and measures fall from the poet's eyes, and he sees things as they are in the light of God's presence. The beauty of virtue and personal holiness, the nobility and dignity of obedience, the exalted grandeur of humility, the great excellence of poverty and the numberless blessings accompanying it; the necessity of being detached from things of earth; the intrinsic worth of riches, honors, and pleasures; the wonders of the

[1] Susan Blow, *A Study of Dante*, p. 65.

Incarnation and Redemption and the exhaustless oceans of grace flowing therefrom; — all these subjects, and many more as well, are dwelt upon directly or impliedly, amid the music of the spheres and the hosannas of angels and saints, catching up and reëchoing in heaven the hymns and offices sung by the saints on earth, with a wealth and gorgeousness of expression, and a sustained music, borrowed from the heavenly music that had entered the author's heart and welled forth again with a rhythm and a harmony becoming the sublime theme. This new vision is of the essence of the Illuminative way. The soul has grown detached from the things of this world. She has renounced sin and the vanities of life. She has become enamored of the spiritual goods of prayer and the sacraments. The Love and the Light wherewith she is filled diffuse themselves upon her neighbor in charitable thought and kind word and helping deed. Hence, she is zealous for the spiritual well-being of her neighbor, and seeks to make it assured by prayer and edification. She has left the way of Nature, "which respecteth the outer things of a man," and adopted those of Grace, "which turneth itself to the inward."[1] She finds comfort in God alone, and regards all else as vain and trifling, except in so far as it leads to God.

9. In this spirit, and animated by these sentiments, does Dante move from sphere to sphere — each moment soaring higher on the wings of love; for in his own words, "The kingdom of heaven

[1] *De Imitatione*, lib. iii. cap. xxxi. 5.

suffereth violence of burning love and of living hope, which conquer the Divine Will;"[1] each moment revealing to him some new truth, each moment adding to the brilliancy of the smile of his Beatrice as she approaches nearer to the Fountain of Light and Life and Love — admiration on his lips, love in his heart, and ecstasy in his soul; all in harmony with that "harmony and sweetness that can never be known, save where joy is everlasting."[2] The splendor of the eternal Sun that illumines all the lights in heaven now comes within his vision, and through the living light appears the shining substance of the glorified body of the Redeemer, and its radiance dazzles his gaze: "Here are the Wisdom and the Power which opened the roads between heaven and earth."[3] And now Beatrice would wean the poet from interpreting all things in her countenance, and initiate him into a higher state of spiritual life by contemplating heavenly things in themselves: "Why," she says, "so enamors thee my face that thou turnest not to the beautiful garden which flowereth under Christ's beams? Here is the Rose wherein the Divine Word was made flesh; here are the lilies whose odor attracted into the good way."[4] It need not be said that Mary is emblemed in that mystical Rose. She is preëminent among all God's

[1] *Regnum cœlorum* violenzia pate
Da caldo amore, e da viva speranza,
Che vince la Divina Voluntate.
Paradiso, xx. 94–96.

[2] *Ibid.* x. 146–148.

[3] *Ibid.* xxiii. 38, 39.

[4] *Ibid.* xxiii. 70–75.

creatures. Her effulgence adds to the brilliance of the whole heavens. Saint and angel love her with a special love and pay her a special honor of praise and veneration, their deep love attracting them towards her as the babe is drawn towards the mother.[1] She is extolled with a special fervor, and her name resounds with a special enthusiasm.[2]

10. It were an injustice to the Catholic spirit of the poem to overlook the loving homage paid to Mary from its first canto, when she sends succor to Dante, to its last, when St. Bernard sings her praises with a sweetness of expression, a depth of philosophy, and a tenderness of feeling that have never been surpassed in human language. Agnostics may not have any sympathy with this devotion; but none the less should they appreciate its beneficial influence upon conduct, art, and letters. Dante gave us the lofty creation of a Beatrice — so ideal and spiritual — because he was devout to Mary. Were there no Virgin-Mother, of immaculate purity, and dowered with every grace and every virtue, there would have been no ideal of womanhood, such as Dante conceived; and, let us add, the less reverent Goethe would have missed in his masterpiece the central conception of the purifying influence of woman's love, and the

[1] *Paradiso*, xxiii. 121–126.

[2] Così la circulata melodia
Si sigillava, e tutti gli altri lumi
Facean sona lo nome di MARIA.
Ibid. xxiii. 109–111.

meaning-laden words — "the Eternal-Womanly — *das Ewigweibliche* — draws us on and upward" — would have remained uninscribed among the ineffaceable expressions of world-thought.

11. The poet ascends into the empyrean. He is now in a transition state, passing from the Illuminative Way to intimate union with the Godhead. New and wonderful visions present themselves to his admiring gaze, bringing home to him truths equally new and wonderful in that resplendent temple "bounded only by love and light." Beatrice tells him in accents clear and sweet: "We have issued forth from the last body to the heaven which is pure light; light intellectual full of love; love of true good full of joy; joy surpassing every sweetness."[1] Round him flashes a living light. Its effulgence at first dims all vision; but gradually its grandeur and beauty and significancy unfold themselves. "The Divine Light first is seen in the form of a River, signifying Its effusion on the creatures; the living Sparks issuing from It are the Angels; the Flowers they ingem, the Saints. Then in the changing of the River's length to the Lake's roundness is figured the return of all creatures into God as their Centre and End."[2] Finally, the

[1] Noi semo usciti fuore
Del maggior corpo al ciel ch' è pura luce;
Luce intelletual piena d' amore,
Amor di vero ben pien di letizia,
Letizia che trascende ogni dolzore.
Paradiso, xxx. 39–43.

[2] Maria F. Rossetti, *A Shadow of Dante*, p. 272, in which the author refers to Venturi as the source of this interpretation.

Light Divine assumes the shape of a Rose composed of souls burning with love and basking in the unveiled Presence: "In form of a white Rose displayed itself to me the holy company whom Christ in his own blood espoused."[1] And the hosts of angels flit like bees, descending to the Rose and ascending to where its bliss abideth evermore, in a constant tremor of love and gladness, and dispensing throughout the Rose the peace and the ardor with which they are thrilled.[2] This wonderful Rose exhales the love with which it is fed, and it thrills with the gladness diffused by the threefold light of God, penetrating the whole universe and making it to smile. High up does his Beatrice take her place, reflecting in dazzling radiance the eternal glory.

12. The poet now enters upon the Unitive Way, under the guidance of the contemplative — *quel contemplante*[3] — St. Bernard. Benign joy suffused his eyes and his cheeks, in gesture kind as befits a tender father.[4] In this state the soul has no further need of doctrine; she has transcended the reasonings and imaginings of men; she is about to enter upon the beatific vision, and who more competent to induct her than he who experienced it in his own life and beautifully described it in his book?[5] "This joyous existence," Bernard cautions the poet, "will not be known to thee, if thou only

[1] *Paradiso*, xxxi. 1–3. [2] *Ibid.* xxxi. 7–17.
[3] *Ibid.* xxxii. 1. [4] *Ibid.* xxxi. 61–63.
[5] In his treatise on the Love of God. See Görres, *La Mystique*, t. i. p. 101.

holdest thine eyes down."[1] Whereby the saint would inculcate that one must first be detached from things of earth if one would enjoy the state of perfect union with God. But this is not given to man upon his own merits; it is a special favor of Divine grace and mercy, and can be obtained only by earnest prayer. And so, Bernard beseeches for the poet the special grace of ecstatic union with the Godhead, through Mary's intercession, in that marvelous outburst of song that exhausts all that can be sung or said in praise of Heaven's Queen, though it seems never to exhaust the admiration bestowed upon it: —

"Thou Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son,
Humble and high beyond all other creature,
The limit fixed of the eternal counsel,

Thou art the one who such nobility
To human nature gave, that its Creator
Did not disdain to make himself its creature,

Within thy womb rekindled was the love,
By heat of which in the eternal peace
After such wise this flower has germinated.

Here unto us thou art a noonday torch
Of charity, and below there among mortals
Thou art the living fountain-head of hope.

Lady, thou art so great, and so prevailing,
That he who wishes grace, nor runs to thee,
His aspirations without wings would fly.

Not only thy benignity gives succor
To him who asketh it, but oftentimes
Forerunneth of its own accord the asking.

[1] *Paradiso*, xxxi. 112–114.

In thee compassion is, in thee is pity,
In thee magnificence; in thee unites
Whate'er of goodness is in any creature.

Now doth this man, who from the lowest depth
Of the universe as far as here has seen
One after one the spiritual lives,

Supplicate thee through grace for so much power
That with his eyes he may uplift himself
Higher towards the uttermost salvation.

And I, who never burned for my own seeing
More than I do for his, all of my prayers
Proffer to thee, and pray they come not short,

That thou wouldst scatter from him every cloud
Of his mortality so with thy prayers,
That the Chief Pleasure be to him displayed.

Still farther do I pray thee, Queen, who canst
Whate'er thou wilt, that sound thou mayst preserve
After so great a vision his affections.

Let thy protection conquer human movements;
See Beatrice and all the blessed ones
My prayers to second clasp their hands to thee."[1]

Forthwith the saint's prayer is granted. "My vision becoming undimmed," says the poet, "more and more entered the beam of light, which in itself is Truth."[2] The veil has dropped. The poet enjoys the ecstatic vision. He penetrates essences. In that single glance mysteries the most profound become unraveled. He sees the harmony existing through all grades of the universe, bound together in ineffable beauty and order — their music penetrating his soul — and all united in the golden bonds of Love Divine. He sees and feels; the

[1] *Paradiso*, xxxiii. 1–39, Longfellow's trans.
[2] *Ibid.* xxxiii. 52–54.

sweetness born of the vision is infused into his heart; but language has no word in which to express the splendor he beholds and the rapture that thrills him. He says:—

"From that time forward what I saw was greater
Than our discourse, that to such vision yields,
And yields the memory unto such excess.

Even as he is who seeth in a dream,
And after dreaming the imprinted passion
Remains, and to his mind the rest returns not,

Even such am I, for almost utterly
Ceases my vision, and distilleth yet
Within my heart the sweetness born of it;

Even thus the snow is in the sun unsealed,
Even thus upon the wind in the light leaves
Were the soothsayings of the Sibyl lost."[1]

The vision confirms him in good resolve and strong purpose. In that blissful state, where each longing is perfect, ripe, and whole,[2] his yearning for the Good and the Perfect changes to determination of will to seek and possess them: "Already," he tells us, "my desire and my will rolled onward, like a wheel in even motion, swayed by the Love that moves the sun and all the stars."[3] Henceforth the sole law of his action shall be the Love that rules the universe. In obedience to the Divine Will shall he work out his mission on earth; in

[1] *Paradiso*, xxxiii. 55–66.
[2] *Ibid.* xxii. 64.
[3] *Ibid.* xxxiii. 143–145:—
"Ma già volgeva il mio disiro e il velle,
Si come ruota che igualmente è mossa,
L'Amor che muove il sole e l'altre stelle.

all things resigned thereto and living therefor; walking through life in the clear light of Faith, with heart beating high in Hope, and soul aflame with all-embracing Charity.

X.

1. Such is the Spiritual Sense of the "Divina Commedia." We have traced it, a golden thread running through the whole extent of the poem; we have found that sense, with the prophet of old, dictating the first line;[1] its notes resound strong and clear in the very last verses; on it are strung the brightest pearls of thought and the rarest gems of diction; by means of it are all the parts solidly welded together, and unity and harmony given to the whole; it has been the chief inspiration of the poet, sustaining him in his highest soarings and dictating his sublimest songs. Other senses are to be found in the poem. In parts it has its political sense; in parts it has its purely moral sense; in others again it has its philosophical sense; but the sense that pervades the whole, determines its meaning and bearing, and makes of it one of the great world-poems, is the Spiritual Sense. The other senses are employed critically: to find fault, or to sound the note of warning; to praise, approve, or commend; to expound a theory or explain a difficulty. The Spiritual Sense is used constructively. It has built up the poem into that grand climax of thought and aspiration — among the

[1] Isaiah xxxviii. 10.

grandest ever reached by human genius — with which the poet closes. The clue to this sense, indeed every clue to the poem, is to be found in the "Paradiso." Carlyle called this portion, to him, "a kind of inarticulate music."[1] It is not to be wondered at. The music of the "Paradiso" is the music of spiritual life; and the music of spiritual life can be interpreted only by those into whose existence spiritual life enters as a living, breathing reality. It is a music articulate and familiar to each religious man. It throbs in his every aspiration. His ear has been attuned to its exquisite cadences; its harmony vibrates through the pages of the spiritual book he reads; it is reëchoed in the sermons and exhortations he hears and in the hymns he chants; his whole life is the clearest commentary upon this poem, — rather his life is itself the living poem from which Dante has made a marvelous though still imperfect transcript. In the noblest themes of that transcript he recognizes echoes of the thoughts, sentiments, and aspirations that in his own breast are continuously humming unspeakable music. The fervor and love and high thought that are all so grandly intensified in the terse rhythm of the "Divina Commedia" are the fervor and love and high thought that are daily moving tens of thousands of men and women to lead the spiritual life therein portrayed in obedience to the Love Divine that rules hearts and sways the heavens in perpetual harmony. The religious man in sauntering through the vast aisles

[1] *Heroes and Hero Worship*, lect. iii.

and chapels of this noble cathedral of song, here admiring a tender and touching picture, there gazing upon a scene of terror penciled in vivid colors, again drinking in the sweet and inspiring strains of its clear organ-tones, feels that beneath its solemn arches his soul may rest, for he is at home in his Father's House.[1]

2. From the study of mediæval thought and aspiration we shall now turn to the study of a soul plunged in grief over the death of a friend, harried by the spirit of modern doubt concerning the unseen universe, and by means of Christian faith and Christian charity, attempting to reach the haven of rest attained by Dante and Thomas à Kempis. We shall seek the Spiritual Sense of Tennyson's "In Memoriam."

[1] The learned Dominican, Father Berthier, is at present issuing an illustrated edition of the *Divina Commedia* in which every passage is interpreted according to the spiritual sense, as it has been here outlined, and the interpretation confirmed, by numerous references and quotations from St. Thomas of Aquin. He also throws light upon many an obscure passage, by reproducing the paintings, mosaics, and frescoes that embody the traditional meaning. The work bids fair to be a minute and exhaustive study of the poet. See, for instance, Father Berthier's interpretation of "il veltro" (*Inferno*, i. 101) and the light thrown upon this interpretation by his reproduction of the frescoes attributed to Simone Memmi in the Spanish Chapel at Florence (*La Divina Commedia con commenti secondo la Scholastica*, del P. Gioachino Berthier, del Pred. vol. i. fascicolo 1, pp. 14, 15, 31, 32).

CHAPTER X.

SPIRITUAL SENSE OF IN MEMORIAM.

1. "In Memoriam" contains one hundred and thirty-one lyrics with a prologue and an epilogue. These lyrics, primarily commemorating the death of Arthur Hallam,[1] are to all seeming simply what Tennyson himself has described them to be —

> "Short swallow-flights of song, that dip
> Their wings in tears, and skim away."

[1] Arthur Henry Hallam, the son of Henry Hallam, the historian, was born in London in 1811. When only nine years old he showed great precocity in learning modern languages and in writing ambitious tragedies. He studied at Eton till 1827, and afterwards passed eight months in Italy with his parents, during which time he became familiar with the works of Dante and Petrarca. In 1829 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, and then began that memorable friendship with the Tennysons which is embalmed in the *In Memoriam*. He left Cambridge in 1832. In 1833 he accompanied his father to Germany, and on the fifteenth of September, 1833, he died from a sudden rush of blood to the head. His remains were brought to England and interred in the chancel of Clevedon Church, Somersetshire, January 3, 1834. He was engaged to be married to Tennyson's sister Emily. He was a brilliant young man, and endeared himself to all with whom he had relations. Lord Houghton and Dean Alford left pleasant reminiscences of him, and Mr. Gladstone pays him this tribute: "There perhaps was no one among those who were blessed with his friendship — nay, as we see, not even Mr. Tennyson — who did not feel at once bound closely to him by commanding affection

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No doubt they so stood in the poet's original intention. The elegiac part was very probably written during the first nine years. In the Epithalamium the poet so measures the time: —

"Though I since then have numbered o'er
Some thrice three years."

And during the remaining eight years he revised, recast, arranged, and developed the poem to its present shape. "It is a fact," says Gatty on what seems to be Tennyson's own word, "that the poem was written at both various times and places: through a course of years, and where the author happened to be, in Lincolnshire, London, Essex, Gloucestershire, Wales, anywhere as the spirit moved him."[1] During the seventeen years that it took Tennyson to compose and finish the poem, the subject grew upon him, and his intellectual vision extended far beyond the range of a mere dirge over a departed friend. He wove into the original lamentations the fears and doubts and struggles of the age with atheism and infidelity, its hopes also and aspirations, and transformed dreamy musings of sorrow and the mere expression of baffled selfishness into the history of a human soul groping through affliction and doubt towards the light. Tennyson has thus crystallized the thought of the

and left far behind by the rapid growth and rich development of his ever-searching mind; by his —

"'All-comprehensive tenderness,
All-subtilizing intellect.'"

See *Alfred Tennyson, His Life and Works*, by Walter E. Wace, pp. 24–36.

[1] *A Key to In Memoriam*, p. 26, note.

nineteenth century. It is our purpose to make a careful study of the poem, and by the application of certain solvents to test the character of the doctrine that pervades it. How far do its teachings coincide with Catholic dogma? Wherein do they differ? What is their intrinsic worth? Important questions these for every Catholic reader to know and to be able to answer. We shall bear them in mind while discussing the nature and structure of the poem and the author's point of view.

I.

1. It is now conceded that the structure of the poem, as regards its form, follows the metre used by Lord Herbert of Cherbury.[1] The poet made a happy selection. This form gives him great freedom. He is not tied down to any set number of stanzas. He can always stop when the inspiration ceases. It has become in his hands a most pliant instrument for the expression of many and various notes.

2. As regards its matter, "In Memoriam" takes color and tone from the sonnets and odes of Petrarca upon the death of Laura. In Petrarca are to be found the same clear vision of life beyond the grave, the same hope of being once more with the

[1] Mr. J. Comyns Carr, *Cornhill Magazine* for February and July, 1880. Here is a specimen stanza: —

"Oh! no, beloved, I am most sure
These virtuous habits we acquire,
As being with the soul entire,
Must with it evermore endure."

However, see Jennings' *Lord Tennyson*, p. 125.

friend who has passed from earth, the same pangs of grief upon beholding scenes and incidents connected with the memory of the dear departed one, the same dreams in which the absent one returns and consoles the yearning friend — all told in the same subdued and polished verse. But here the likeness ceases. Petrarca had but one refrain, the burden of which was Laura. He envied the earth that clasped her mouldering body; he envied the heavens that received her chaste soul; he was unwearied in singing the glow of her eyes, the sheen of her hair, the perfect shaping of every limb, and her graceful bearing. He loved to recall when she smiled and when she frowned. He drew from all that is beautiful in earth and sky the wherewith to show forth her virtues and her perfections. He followed her in spirit to her heavenly abode. She came to visit him in his dreams; she came to visit him in his waking hours. With pleasure and with no slight edification does the reader notice trace after trace of the earthly love drop from the poet as his thoughts and affections become spiritual; and when at the close Petrarca addresses that noble hymn to the Virgin Mother of God: —

"Vergine santa, d' ogni grazia piena;
Che per vera et altissima umilitate
Salisti al ciel, onde miei preghi ascolti;
Tu partoristi il fonte di pietate,
E di giustizia il Sol, che rasserena
Il secol pien d' errori oscuri e folti," —[1]

[1] Holy Virgin, full of all grace, who through thy humility, so true and noble, didst ascend to heaven, where thou hearest my prayers; thou didst bring forth the Fount of Mercy and the Sun of Justice, which enlightens this world full of darkening errors. Canzone viii, stanza iv.

the reader feels his heart lifted up and he also would have all that is weak and sinful in him consumed in the love of Jesus through the intercession of Mary.

3. Tennyson is no less untiring in sounding the praises of his dear Arthur, the friend of his bosom, the more than brother to him, who had he lived would have been one of the makers of the world's history: —

"Becoming, when the time has birth,
A lever to uplift the earth
And roll it in another course." [1]

But Tennyson adds other and weightier matters than personal feelings of love and admiration to the burden of his song.

4. The lyrics of "In Memoriam" have also something in common with the sonnets of Shakespeare. It was the Shakespeare of the sonnets that the poet had in his mind's eye when he wrote: —

"I loved thee, spirit, and love, nor can
The soul of Shakespeare love thee more."

And that he made a thoughtful study of the sonnets while working out his conception of "In Memoriam" is evident from many a turn of phrase common to both. A surface-reading reveals this much in common: that both series of poems express intense love of man for man; that in both is this love analyzed, probed, expounded; that both ultimately assert the self-abnegation of love; that both confess to the inadequacy of words to express the deeper feelings and the true worth of the object of their love.[2]

[1] *In Memoriam*, cxiii. 4.
[2] Cf. *Ibid.* lxxv. 2, and *Sonnet* lxxxiii.

5. It is also evident that Tennyson read the deeper meaning beneath the outward expression of the sonnets. For Shakespeare, after the fashion of his time, and indeed of nearly all mediæval love poetry, infused into these sonnets a sense other than that revealed upon the surface. Dante has explained to us the very process by which he allegorized his love poems. The love of Petrarca will also bear a spiritual interpretation. The love of Shakespeare is to all seeming certainly of the earth, earthy. But in his day nearly everything in sonnet form was expressive of Platonic love, Platonic sentiment, and Platonic allegory. Shakespeare caught up this spirit, and it may safely be asserted that he never would have given his sonnets to the world were they not capable of a philosophical meaning which redeems their occasional grossness. "Shakespeare," says Richard Simpson, "is always a philosopher, but in his sonnets he is a philosopher of love."[1] The whole series represents the struggle ever waging between the spiritual and the carnal man.

6. But there is another influence working through "In Memoriam." In June, 1821, Shelley wrote "Adonais," which he had caused to be printed in Pisa. In 1829, when Arthur Hallam entered Cambridge, he brought with him a copy of this slender volume. It was read by Tennyson and his circle of friends, and so greatly was it admired, "it was then issued at Cambridge, at the instance of Lord Houghton (Mr. Richard Monckton Milnes) and

[1] *Introduction to the Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, p. 6.

Mr. Arthur Hallam."[1] Little did young Hallam think when making known this poem on the premature death of Keats that he was laying the foundation of a similar monument to be erected to his own memory. But so it came to pass. The "Adonais" is not more interpenetrated with Bion's elegy on Adonis, Moschus's elegy on Bion, and Milton's "Lycidas," than is "In Memoriam" interpenetrated with the "Adonais." True, Tennyson has assimilated few or none of the ideas or sentiments of Shelley in the sense in which Shelley absorbs his predecessors. The two poets have this in common: that each mourns a spirit snatched from earth in the bud and bloom of springtide promise; each finds in nature a reflection of the desolation that fills his soul on the death of his friend; each rises above his dream and sings a pæan rejoicing in the friend's triumph over the grave. When Milton sang:—

> "Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,
> For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,"

his was the strong faith of the Puritan believing that the soul of his friend Edward King would survive the decay of the grave; his was the Christian idea of a future life. But when Shelley exclaims:—

> "Peace, peace! he is not dead; he doth not sleep,"

he holds views far different. His is the belief that the soul of his friend has been merged in the universal Soul of Nature, and that "he is a portion of the loveliness which once he made more lovely."

[1] W. M. Rossetti, *The Adonais of Shelley*, p. 39.

"He is made one with Nature. There is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird.
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath and kindles it above." [1]

7. This doctrine Tennyson considers to be "faith as vague as all unsweet." He believes that the human soul will retain its identity and individuality through all eternity. He has no sympathy with the pantheism of Shelley. And if in one of his closing lyrics he sings of his Arthur as a "diffusive power" in star and flower, whose voice is heard in the wind "and where the waters run," it is only as a memory ever-present and ever-cherished. In another of his most significant lyrics he for a moment dreams himself to be such a poet as Shelley. Nature has grown sterile, yielding only the remnants of dead myths and allegories of bygone poets; he feigns himself wandering through the wood of the errors of skepticism and pantheism, wearing a crown of thorns, in consequence of which, with Shelley his brow was "branded and ensanguined," [2] and he was an object of mockery until he became relieved and comforted by faith.[3]

8. Tennyson, like Shakespeare, while apparently dealing with personal impressions and personal experiences, rises to a meaning that is of universal

[1] *Adonais*, xlii. See *Tennyson's In Memoriam*, by John F. Genung, pp. 32–40.

[2] *Adonais*, xxxiii, xxxiv.

[3] *In Memoriam*, lxix.

application. The love which Arthur inspires is, like the love inspired by Beatrice and Laura, chastening and ennobling. Like Petrarca, the poet lingers lovingly upon the past and recalls the various scenes and incidents in which his friend figured; like Dante, he soars far away into regions of speculation, and grapples with the problems of the age. Matters of religion and morality and science are all touched upon with the reverence and gravity becoming the occasion. Although Tennyson has neither the grasp, force, fullness, nor burning intensity of expression that we find in Dante, we may in some sense call "In Memoriam" a miniature "Divina Commedia." The poem is religious, it is mystical, it is philosophical. To a certain extent it is autobiographical. It is a psychological analysis of sorrow through all its moods, from that of an overwhelming sense of bereavement which will not be comforted to that of cheerful resignation soothed and nourished by Christian faith and Christian hope.

9. Indeed, the poem may be not unfitly called a lyrical drama of the soul. It may be divided into certain cycles or periods through which run two distinct currents of thought, namely, the emotional and the intellectual. The diverse periods are separated by chorus-poems [1] which allude to the season of the year, or revert to the thoughts and emotions of a previous cycle. It is only by surveying the

[1] Attention was first called to the existence of a series of chorus-poems by Dr. John F. Genung in his very charming and very sympathetic volume *Tennyson's In Memoriam*.

poem in all its bearings that one can form a clear conception of its real strength and greatness. Men are only too apt to rest content in the enjoyment of particular fragments of the poem. An admirer of Tennyson writes: "Every mourner has his favorite section or particular chapel of the temple-poem, where he prefers to kneel for worship of the Invisible."[1] We shall respect the mourner searching through the poet's pages for the expression of sorrow that suits his mood; that the poem can soothe and comfort under such circumstances is evidence of its power; but it shall be our task to consider the poem as a whole under both its emotional and its intellectual aspect.

II.

1. The poem may be naturally resolved into two parts, and each part may be subdivided as follows:

Prologue.

This lyric sums up the poet's musings and impressions. It constitutes his final act of faith. It is to the whole what Petrarca's Hymn to the Blessed Virgin is to his sonnets and lyrics on Laura, or what Dante's last Canto is to the whole of the "Divina Commedia."

Introductory Lyric. — i.

This lyric contains the argument of the whole drama.

Part I.

Group I. — ii. – xix.

These lyrics record the poet's feelings during the period between the death and the burial of his friend Arthur Hallam.

[1] Roden Noel, *Contemporary Review*, 1885, p. 223.

Chorus-poems. — xx., xxi.

Group II. — xxii. – xxvii.

In this group the poet asserts and justifies his grief.

In xxiv. 2, the line, —

"Since our first sun arose and set,"

originally read, —

"Since Adam left his garden yet."

One of the group is speculative (xxiii.).

Chorus-poems. Christmas of 1833. — xxviii. – xxx.

Group III. — xxxi. – xxxvi.

Musings on the life beyond the grave.

Three are speculative (xxxiii., xxxiv., xxxv.).

Chorus-poem. — xxxvii.

The poet discusses the propriety of speculation upon matters of Faith. The line, —

"And dear to me as sacred wine,"

formerly read, —

"And dear as sacramental wine."

Group IV. — xxxviii. – xlvii.

Surmises regarding the life beyond the grave.

Lyric xxxix. first appeared in the edition of 1872–73.

Lyric xlvii. is speculative.

Chorus-poem. — xlviii.

The poet would have it understood that these brief lays are intended rather to soothe his own sorrow than to allay the grave doubts proposed throughout the poem.

Group V. — xlix. – lvi.

Gropings as to the state of the soul in the future life

This group contains many of Tennyson's inmost opinions.

Chorus-poem. — lvii.

The poet would rest in a settled peace of soul and a calmer hope.

PART II.

2. The poet emerges from the dark weeds of his first intense and merely human sorrow, and dons a brighter and more hopeful garb.

Introductory. — lviii., lix.

Lyric lix. is supplemental to lyric ii. In the earlier poem, the poet indulges in a violent sorrow that would not be comforted. In the later poem, he asks Sorrow to live with him as a comforter and a helpmeet. This poem was added to the fourth edition in 1851.

Group I. — lx. – lxxi.

The poet analyzes his dreams and impressions, and makes surmises as to the present relative attitude of Arthur towards him.

Chorus-poem. — lxxii.

This lyric commemorates the first anniversary of Hallam's death. Cf. Dante, "Purgatorio," xi. 91–106.

Group II. — lxxiii. – lxxvii.

The poet discusses Hallam's kinship with the great ones of earth. The fleetingness of fame is touched upon — even of the poet's verses. Cf. lxxvii. and Petrarca's sonnet xxv. in "Morte di Laura."

Chorus-poem. — lxxviii.

Christmas chorus of 1834.

Group III. — lxxix. – lxxxii.

The poet shows wherein his love was more than

brother's love, and how the real bitterness of death is in the interruption of communion. Cf. lxxxii. 2, and Dante, "Purgatorio," x.

Chorus-poem. — lxxxiii.

The poet begs the New Year not to tarry, but to bring with it a renewal of hope.

Group IV. — lxxxiv., lxxxv.

Musings as to what Hallam might have been to the poet. Lyric lxxxv. takes up the refrain of xxvii.: —

> "'T is better to have loved and lost,
> Than never to have loved at all."

and touching tenderly upon his friend's death, considers the good influence of his memory. Cf. lxxxv. and Petrarca, sonnet xi. in "Morte di Laura."

Chorus-poem. — lxxxvi.

Group V. — lxxxvii. – cv.

Some of the most remarkable lyrics in the poem are in this group. Lyric xcv. 9, 10 formerly read, —

> "*His* living soul was flashed on mine,
> And mine in *his* was wound —

instead of the present reading, —

> "*The* living soul was flashed on mine,
> And mine in *this* was wound."

Lyric c. formerly read "I wake, I rise," instead of the present opening "I climb the hill." Lyric xci. is a continuation of lyric xcix. commemorating the second anniversary of Hallam's death. Lyric cii. records the fact that Tennyson's family quit their native Lincolnshire. Lyrics civ., cv. speak of Christmas — the Christmas of 1835. But it is spent in a strange land, therefore held solemn to the past. Cf. Petrarca, in "Morte di Laura," sonnets xlii, xliv.

Chorus-poem. — cvi.

This is a New Year's lyric, one of the noblest in any language.

Group VI. — cvii. – cxiv.

In cvii. the poet celebrates Hallam's birthday. His sorrow assumes a more cheerful aspect. In cx. the line which originally read, —

"While I, thy *dearest*, sat apart,"

now reads, —

"While I, thy *nearest*, sat apart."

cxiv. is speculative. In cxiii. the line which originally read, —

"With *many* shocks that come and go,"

now reads, —

"With *thousand* shocks that come and go."

Chorus-poem. — cxv.

Spring wakens in the author's breast.

Group VII. — cxvi.-cxxx.

Retrospection. Lyrics cxviii., cxx., cxxiii., cxxiv. are all philosophical. Tennyson sings a pæan of joy and hope that through Love he shall not lose his friend in the future. Through Doubt and Darkness he has risen to the pure light of Faith.

Final Lyric. — cxxxi.

This poem contains the key to the poet's successful struggle with Doubt and Sorrow and his rising into the clear light of Faith. No amount of reasoning will lead to Faith. This from a rational being requires, above all, an act of the will. Cf. the poem named *Will*.

Epithalamium.

This lay was written about 1842, on the occasion of the marriage of a younger sister, Cecilia Tennyson, to E. L. Lushington. He is the "true in word, and tried in deed," to whom Tennyson speaks in lyric lxxxv. 2. The whole poem is written in a pleasant key. The poet can rejoice with those he loves — even while not forgetting his deceased friend.

III.

1. Such is the poem in barest outline. In order to interpret it aright we should know the environment in which it was produced. What was the state of thought in England during the seventeen years that Tennyson was engaged upon this poem? In 1833 Arthur Hallam died. In 1833 Newman began to feel within him the first stirrings of reform; groping after the light of duty, he wrote that beautiful invocation, "Lead, Kindly Light." While Tennyson was maturing his poem Newman had run his course in the Anglican Church, had moved the flower of English minds to great depths of religious thought, and had brought to a haven of rest in the bosom of the Catholic Church many noble and beautiful souls. Maurice and Arnold were influencing religious minds in the direction of Broad-Church liberalism. The volume entitled "Essays and Reviews" was sowing broadcast seed of infidelity and free-thinking among educated Protestants. Carlyle was infusing a decoction of German transcendentalism into the thinking body, and weaning young men from the spiritual life of purely dogmatic Christianity. Strauss had forged

his mythic theories concerning the Life of our Lord, and was attempting to undermine the stronghold of Christian faith. Darwin was cruising in "The Beagle" and maturing those theories that were to revolutionize the study of natural history. Faraday was making captives of the thunderbolts of heaven and pressing them into the service of man. The spirit of political reform was in the air. O'Connell had only recently wrung Catholic Emancipation from an unwilling ministry. Cobden had been equally successful in bringing about a repeal of the corn-laws. The people were beginning to think for themselves. Woman's position in society was growing in importance, and discussion upon it was broadening. There was a general awakening throughout the body, religious, social, and political. It was amid the eddies and currents of thought set in motion by all these agencies that Tennyson wrought out the life-drama of "In Memoriam."

2. He saw these various currents; he studied and calculated the flow of some; he drifted into the influence of others; but what is his own point of view upon the great issue of life and death that is the burden of his poem? To begin with, greatly as he admires and exults in the progress of the age, he does not find mere knowledge the road to all excellence. He can solve more problems of life by making appeal to Christian faith and to the primary instincts of the human heart, rather than by mere speculation. He distinguishes between knowledge and the deeper wisdom that regulates intellect and heart and conduct. The distinction is

fundamental with Tennyson. He had already written:

"Knowledge comes, but Wisdom lingers, and he bears a laden breast,
Full of sad experience, moving towards the stillness of his rest."[1]

In the present poem he shows how worse than helpless — how destructive — is knowledge without wisdom. He looks upon it as a thing

"Half-grown as yet, a child, and vain —
She cannot fight the fear of death.
What is she, cut from love and faith,
But some wild Pallas from the brain

"Of Demons? fiery-hot to burst
All barriers in her onward race
For power. *Let her know her place;*
She is the second, not the first.

. . . . . .

"*For she is earthly of the mind,*
But Wisdom heavenly of the soul."[2]

In these words we have the clue to Tennyson's attitude towards all speculation. Though placing knowledge second, the poet does not belittle it.

"Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall rail
Against her beauty? May she mix
With men and prosper! Who shall fix
Her pillars? Let her work prevail."

Herein he differs from his great contemporary and brother poet, with whom all knowledge is only a thing relative, and who holds that what man calls knowledge to-day, he may call ignorance to-morrow.

[1] *Locksley Hall.*
[2] *In Memoriam*, cxiv. 2, 3, 5.

"Ignorance overwraps his moral sense,
Winds him about, relaxing, as it wraps,
So much and no more than lets through perhaps,
The murmured knowledge — 'Ignorance exists.'" [1]

3. Another fundamental doctrine in the poet's creed is that in the relations of good to evil all things shall turn to good. He says: —

"Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill." [2]

Is not this also the teaching of Browning? Does he not tell us that somehow, through ways and means that are beyond our ken, all will end for the best?

"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." [3]

This doctrine of the ultimate triumph of good over evil is with Tennyson not a dogma, but a trust, an instinctive feeling, a hope. He does not know; he is not sure: —

"Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last — far off — at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring." [4]

And with touching pathos he thus alludes to man's helplessness in the presence of this great mystery: —

[1] Browning, *Parleyings with Certain People* (Francis Furini).
[2] *In Memoriam*, liv. 1.
[3] *Apparent Failure.*
[4] *In Memoriam*, liv. 4.

"So runs my dream: but what am I?
An infant crying in the night:
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry." [1]

4. It is evident to the poet that everything in life has an aim, which it has, and that nothing in life misses its aim, which were true did each of God's creatures act according to the laws and limitations set down by the Creator in pursuing its aim. But the human will enters into all calculations of human action. And that will is free. The poet had stated, as one of the mysteries of our nature for which we cannot account, that our wills are ours to make them one with the will of God. Now while wills are free and at the same time prone to evil — and we all of us know that we are free to do right or wrong — there must needs be deviations from the well-known and clearly formulated will of God, and therefore from the ultimate aim of the Supreme Good for which all men were created. So great, so awful is the respect in which God holds man's will, He even permits man to damn himself rather than that by Divine omnipotent interference man's free will should be destroyed.

"The greatest gift that in his largess God
Creating made, and unto his own goodness
Nearest conformed, and that which He doth prize

Most highly, is the freedom of the will,
Wherewith the creatures of intelligence
Both all and only were and are endowed." [2]

[1] *In Memoriam*, liv. 5.
[2] Dante, *Paradiso*, v. 19–24, Longfellow's translation.

5. The half-truth that vice forms an essential part of human progress, that good is reached through evil, upon which Browning bases his optimism, we know to have been derived from the half-truth of Bernard de Mandeville's "Fable of the Bees." Browning tells us as much. Addressing Mandeville, he says: —

> "As with body so deals law with soul
> That 's stung to strength through weakness, strives for good
> Through evil, — earth its race-ground, heaven its goal,
> Presumably: so far I understood
> Thy teaching long ago." [1]

We cannot so easily lay finger upon the original of the optimism of Tennyson. But we can trace a close relationship between his views and the teachings of his friend Frederick Denison Maurice. Both breathing the same intellectual atmosphere and thinking in the same tone and temper, it is not surprising that there should be a kinship in their ideas. We can best illustrate this kinship by the following parallel passages. Speaking of man's inadequacy to grasp God's purposes and the insufficiency of man's theories and systems, Maurice says: "The old proclamation of a divine kingdom . . . is not in any sense whatever our scheme or theory of the Universe, *but is sent to confound, to break in pieces our theories of the Universe, to show how feeble and contemptible we and our theories are; what absolute need all creatures have of a Living God*, who will reveal to us himself; what relation there is between us and Him; *how He works in us*

[1] *Parleyings with Certain People* (Bernard de Mandeville).

to bring us to know his purposes, and to move in accordance with them." In another place he would have us "look out upon the world, *and see a valley covered with dry bones of different systems.*" And farther on in the same lecture, he speaks of our obligations to infidels, "if they have been employed to convince us *that human systems must indeed perish, one and all*, that what survives must be something of a higher derivation, of a more eternal character." [1] Two years later Tennyson crystallized the underlying idea of these extracts in lines which are now memorable: —

> "Our wills are ours, we know not how;
> Our wills are ours, to make them thine.
>
> "Our little systems have their day;
> They have their day and cease to be:
> They are but broken lights of thee,
> And thou, O Lord, art more than they." [2]

6. From the teachings of Maurice, Tennyson learned to tone down all dogma to the haziness of Universalism. Therein did he find confirmed his conviction that nothing is without a purpose, and that that purpose must needs be good. Therein did he imbibe a conception of the Incarnation, half Christian, half pantheistic. Therein he found "Christianity translated out of time into eternity," — to use an admirable phrase of Dr. Martineau; he found the kingdom of God operating in the hearts of men, leavening the human race and lead-

[1] *The Religions of the World*, lect. viii. pp. 247, 248, 257. London, 1847.

[2] *In Memoriam*, Prologue, 4, 5.

ing it to a higher life; he read that "all the higher human relations are but faint echoes of relations already existing in an infinitely more perfect form in the divine mind." It is a religious theory that appeals strongly to the poetic fancy. "It may seem paradoxical," says Dr. Martineau, "yet it is hardly hazardous, to say that the Maurice theology owes its power not less to its indulgence than to its correction of the pantheistic tendency of the age. It answers the demand of every ideal philosophy and every poetic soul for an indwelling Divine Presence, living and acting in all the beauty of the world and the good of human hearts." [1] Such a theology, while preserving the distinction between right and wrong and recognizing God as a Righteous Will, can still hold out the hope and lay to the human soul the flattering unction that somehow all will ultimately end in a reign of universal good. The poverty and squalor, the misery and suffering, the heart-aches and the soul-pangs that devour the large majority of humanity, are only slightly scanned in the glamour of this soothing philosophy, from the elevated plane of comfort and culture and well-being on which Frederick Maurice and his friends stand. And here is where Tennyson has taken refuge. He recoiled from the pessimism that had been broadening and deepening at the time that his mind was subject to formative influences. Therefore is he the poet of progress — in Browning's own trenchant words: —

[1] Introductory chapter to *Taylor's Religious Life of England*, p. 9.

"Progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
Not God's and not the beasts'; God is, they are,
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be."

7. Tennyson's conception of progress is distinct from that of Browning. To Browning's mind progress is a development of every human instinct and impulse; but the characteristic of this development is that the more highly wrought instinct or impulse becomes, the less satisfaction accompanies its exercise. It is a progress of aspiration unfulfilled and of desire ungratified — a seeking after the infinite and never reaching the goal. Tennyson's idea of progress is one in which the soul advances to greater serenity and contentment in attune with the growth of the ages in knowledge and wisdom and the higher law. "His imagination," says Professor Dowden, "dwells with a broad and tranquil pleasure upon whatever is justified by the intellect and the conscience, and continuously energetic within determined bounds." [1] He holds a personal growth in each one from the purely animal, moving upward, "working out the beast," to a higher spiritual life.[2] He holds a growth in national well-being, not indeed with Shelley through the revolutionary spirit — "the red fool-fury of the Seine" — but as the outcome of a gradual evolution till the millennium, —

"When the war-drums throb no longer, and the battle-flags are furled,
In the Parliament of man, the federation of the world."

He holds a universal progress of the world in science and art, and he looks forward to the time

[1] *Studies in Literature*, p. 113. [2] *In Memoriam*, cxviii. 7.

when a crowning race shall reap the fruit of all we did and suffered. [1]

8. This optimistic teaching of Tennyson and Browning and Maurice, with all its shades of difference, is of ancient date. We find that consciously or unconsciously — probably unconsciously — they have been transcribing a leaf out of a very old book which has exercised great influence upon thought, especially as popularized by Marsilius Ficino and Reuchlin at the Renaissance. According to that old book there is nothing absolutely bad. Nothing is accursed forever, not even the archangel of evil. A time will come when God shall restore him his angelic nature and the good name and standing which he once bore in heaven. Hell also shall disappear and shall be transformed into a place of delights; for at the end of all time there shall be neither chastisements, nor trials, nor troubles, nor guilty persons; life shall be an eternal feast, an endless Sabbath. This picture is almost a literal transcript from the teachings of the Cabala. Is it not also the doctrine of that modified Universalism which still retains the distinction between good and evil and believes in a temporary state of retribution? [2] From the point of view of the author we now pass to the poem itself.

[1] *Epithalamium*, 33.

[2] See Ad. Franck, *Dictionnaire des Sciences Philosophiques*, p. 803. The chief doctrines of the Cabala are to be found in the volume known as *Zohar*. This book is written in the form of a commentary on the Pentateuch. In its present shape it is a compilation of the thirteenth century; but many of its doctrines ascend to Plato (*e. g.* the division of the soul; cf. *Symposium*), the Alexandrian School and the Jewish traditions embodied in the *Mishna*.

IV.

1. The introductory lyric was among the last composed. It contains the argument of the whole drama. That argument is that loss may become gain when grief is cherished by love. The author begins: —

> "I held it truth, with him who sings
> To one clear harp in divers tones,
> That men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things."

There has been much speculation as to the poet here referred to. The Rev. Alfred Gatty decides the matter in the following words: "It may be stated on the highest authority, that the special passage alluded to in the opening stanza cannot be identified, but it is Goethe's creed." And we are further told that the "dead selves" of the poet "are neither our vices nor our calamities; but, rather, our general experiences, which all perish as they happen." [1] Faust, in Goethe's great life-poem, emerges from the ruins of his dead self to a higher life and a broader assertion of selfhood. It is still the same self trampling upon the narrower and lower experiences of life. But Tennyson would not

[1] *A Key to* "*In Memoriam*," third edition, pp. 1, 2. This edition has been revised by Lord Tennyson, and whenever Mr. Gatty uses italics he is giving Tennyson's own interpretation. This gives Mr. Gatty's volume an authoritative value that cannot be attained by any other gloss, however ingenious.

forget the past; he would cherish his grief and twine it around the present and the future. He would, in spite of all obstacles, "reach a hand through time to catch the far-off interest of tears."[1] So he would have love to clasp grief — even in its excess — and carry it through the lapse of time beyond all power of being lost or forgotten. Let us trace the progress of that grief. Forthwith the poet enters upon the first stage of his sorrow, when that sorrow is so intense that it will not be comforted. He finds the emblem of his despondency in the old yew —

"And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
I seem to fail from out my blood,
And grow incorporate into thee."[2]

In this mood he rails against sorrow. He will not listen to the commonplaces of consolation. The blank despair of his bereavement is reflected in the material universe: —

"And all the phantom, Nature, stands —
With all the music in her tone,
A hollow echo of my own, —
A hollow form with empty hands."[3]

His grief is still in that selfish state that will not be intruded upon. The only comfort he will admit is that flowing from the exercise of his pen. Labor and time are two physicians likely to bring

[1] *In Memoriam*, i. 2; cf. Shakespeare, *Sonnet* xxxii.: —
"How many a holy and obsequious *tear*
Hath dear religious love stol'n from mine eye
As *interest* of the dead."

[2] *In Memoriam*, ii. 4. [3] *Ibid.* iii. 3.

a healing balm to the soul. His grief will not, in its present acute stage, permit him to sleep, and in the gray dawn of early morning he visits the house of Hallam in Wimpole Street: —

"Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street;"[1]

The house is deserted, the friend who was its light and warmth is not there, and the poet's soul feels as desolate as the scene before him, while

"ghastly through the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day,"[2]

and he reverts to the ship that is bearing the remains of his friend from where within

"Vienna's fatal walls
God's finger touched him, and he slept."[3]

Earth is darkened, and all things reminding him of the lost friend are a pang to his heart. However, the first paroxysm of grief becomes spent. The calm that has settled upon Nature images the apparent quiet that possesses his soul; for the quiet is only seeming, and in his heart there abides

"if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair."[4]

2. Not long after the poet describes his mood as one of "wild unrest,"[5] and recovering himself from the first stunning shock of his grief, and reviewing its action and its effects, he wonders if it has not unbalanced his mind: —

"And made me that delirious man
Whose fancy fuses old and new,

[1] *In Memoriam*, vii. 1. [2] *Ibid.* vii. 3. [3] *Ibid.* lxxxv. 5.
[4] *Ibid.* xi. 4. [5] *Ibid.* xv. 4.

And flashes into false and true,
And mingles all without a plan." [1]

Indeed, so great is his grief at this period that it takes an exertion of his will-power to prevent himself from dying and following his friend.[2]

3. But this violent sorrow abates. The presence of the corpse in English soil brings a certain amount of comfort: —

"'T is well; 't is something; we may stand
Where he in English earth is laid,
And from his ashes may be made
The violet of his native land." [3]

The grief-stricken friend begins to reflect upon his mood. He considers the objections raised in regard to his sorrow, and defends himself against those who would accuse him of idly nursing a barren sentiment: —

"Behold, ye speak an idle thing:
Ye never knew the sacred dust:
I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets sing." [4]

His reverence for the dead is most Christian. It extends to the remains, "the sacred dust," of the body as well as to the soul.

4. The poet has now sufficiently recovered from the first shock to be able to look back upon the portion of his life that he had spent with his

[1] *In Memoriam*, xvi. 5. [2] *Ibid.* lxxxv. 10.
[3] *Ibid.* xviii. 1; cf. Shakespeare, in *Hamlet*: —

"Lay her in the earth,
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring."

[4] *In Memoriam*, xxi. 6.

mourned friend. The "four sweet years" through which they walked together pass before him, and death is still so present to him that he cannot divest himself of the thought

"that somewhere in the waste
The Shadow sits and waits for me." [1]

"Somewhere in the waste." Such is life to him in his present mood — a waste. Even while he wanders towards where the Shadow sits, "often falling lame" in the doubts and difficulties by which he is sore beset, he will persist in contrasting the dreary path he now treads with the pleasant land through which he journeyed with his friend —

"When each by turns was guide to each,
And Fancy light from Fancy caught,
And Thought leapt out to wed with Thought
Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech." [2]

He cherishes his sorrow even as he cherishes the memory of his friend. He loves the very pain that accompanies it, and triumphantly, in words that have become familiar wherever the English language is spoken, he says: —

"I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it, when I sorrow most;
'T is better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all." [3]

Sadly falls the first Christmas eve after the death of Arthur. Its rejoicings are dimmed "with an awful sense of one mute Shadow watching all." But Faith brings hope and consolation, and with

[1] *In Memoriam*, xxii. 5. [2] *Ibid.* xxiii. 4.
[3] *Ibid.* xxvii. 4.

the breaking of the morning the poet, full of the thought of the Infant Saviour, bursts forth in song: —

"Rise, happy morn, rise, holy morn,
Draw forth the cheerful day from night:
O Father, touch the east, and light
The light that shone when Hope was born."[1]

5. Here occur those two beautiful lyrics in which the poet sings the raising of Lazarus from the grave. He wonders what the risen man had to say of the life beyond the grave. Did his sister Mary question him regarding those four days that he was dead? Did he reveal to her any of the secrets of the new state in which he found himself? No answer. But great must have been the rejoicings in that little town of Bethany. And there Mary sits, —

"Her eyes are homes of silent prayer," —

feasting those eyes upon the brother who has been restored to life and to her; and with love and reverence she looks upon Him who hath worked the miracle, and who is the Resurrection and the Life, and she worships Him, and bathes his feet with costly spikenard and with tears: —

"All subtle thought, all curious fears,
Borne down by gladness so complete."[2]

Another great poet who also believes in the Divinity of Christ has made Lazarus the subject of one of his most perfect poems. Browning's mode of treating the subject has nothing in common with

[1] *In Memoriam*, xxx. 8. [2] *Ibid.* xxxii. 3.

Tennyson's. Where Tennyson is calm, reflective, running his comments along an even tenor of subdued feeling, Browning is forcible and probing, seeking to grasp in detail the new life of the risen man with

"Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven."

It is a life apparently out of joint with all around. Lazarus is with his neighbors but not of them. His higher knowledge of things spiritual causes him to lose all interest in things of earth. He seems out of place. He only sees the unworldly side of things: —

"He holds on firmly to some thread of life —
(It is the life to lead perforcedly)
Which runs across some vast, distracting orb
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet —
The spiritual life around the earthly life:
The law of that is known to him as this,
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here. . . .
Indeed the especial marking of the man
Is prone submission to the heavenly will —
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is."[1]

This is as an outsider would regard the spiritual aspect of the new life of Lazarus. The words are placed in the mouth of an unbeliever — an Arabian physician. Beneath the dramatic character of the poem lie some important truths. One is that it is best for man and best for the world that man knows not the whole mystery of life. Such a knowledge would destroy all the effort and all the purpose of man in the directions in which they now run

[1] *Epistle of Karshish, the Arab Physician.*

most forcibly. Another is that the chief thing in all living is spiritual growth and development, and that this may best be attained in "prone submission to the heavenly will." This is also the outcome of Tennyson's study of the sister of Lazarus: —

"Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure;
What souls possess themselves so pure,
Or is there blessedness like theirs?"[1]

Gratifying is it to see two poets so different in tone and temper — so diametrically opposite in artistic method and execution — still on the same fundamental issue arrive at the same conclusion.

6. Returning to our analysis of the poet wrestling with his sorrow, we find that a reaction sets in; once more his grief asserts itself and overwhelms him; darkness closes around him, and with weary steps he loiters on through life. Springtide brings him no joy, and he only finds a doubtful gleam of solace in the very lyrics he is weaving. He again recurs to the old yew-tree in the churchyard. He finds it a fitting type of his sorrow. As the gloom of the yew is for a short season kindled at the tips, and its brighter green passes into gloom again, even so does his sorrow after the brief spell of comfort and solace that seemed to soothe his spirits return with renewed force.[2]

7. And now, in poem after poem, Tennyson dwells upon his separation from his friend and the vast distance between their respective states. He reasons upon the state of the happy dead; he

[1] *In Memoriam*, xxxii. 5. [2] *Ibid.* xxxix.

gropes about for some clear word of hope and assurance that his soul is immortal and will recognize Arthur in the other life; still the grief remains unchanged: —

"Beneath all fancied hopes and fears
Ay me! the sorrow deepens down,
Whose muffled motions blindly drown
The bases of my life in tears."[1]

8. The poet once more rises out of the depths, and seeks solace in the thought of the nearness of his friend. He fancies Arthur's spirit free to come to him, and he begs him to be near him. He hungers for the presence of the departed soul, and strives to render himself less unworthy of the companionship. In this mood his soul opens to other influences, and he attains greater mastery over his grief.

V.

1. In the second part of "In Memoriam" the poet's sorrow takes up a more hopeful and helpful note. He who formerly found naught but desolation in the whisperings from the "lying lips" of sorrow, now woos that same sorrow to be to him a helpmeet to aid him in rising to higher things: —

"O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me
No casual mistress, but a wife,
My bosom-friend and half of life."[2]

The grief that would not be comforted — the purely human grief — has become tempered by faith. Hitherto the poet had been wholly absorbed

[1] *In Memoriam*, xlix. 4. [2] *Ibid.* lix. 1.

in his waking thoughts. But we now come across a remarkable series of lyrics in which he reveals the working of his brain when in his bed at night. The first illustrates how the poet's last thought before sleep and first thought upon waking are of his friend. He is in bed, and as the moon's rays creep through his room he thinks of the same rays passing over the tablet in the little church by the sea.

"Thy marble bright in dark appears,
As slowly steals a silver flame
Along the letters of thy name,
And o'er the number of thy years." [1]

The moonbeams vanish, and he sleeps to awaken in the early morning and think how in the same dark church the same tablet, like a ghost, glimmers in the dawn. Time was when he could not have thus calmly transported himself in imagination to the church and read the record of his friend's death, and slept soundly afterwards.

2. In the next lyric the poet dreams of Arthur not as dead but as living: —

"When in the down I sink my head,
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, times my breath;
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, knows not Death,
Nor can I dream of thee as dead." [2]

He dreams of him as he looked and spoke when still in the morning of life. But Arthur's face wears an air of trouble that is new to it. By a trick of the brain, the trouble of the poet's early and uncontrolled grief is transferred to the friend he is grieving for: —

[1] *In Memoriam*, lxvii. 2. [2] *Ibid.* lxviii. 1.

"It is the trouble of my youth
That foolish Sleep transfers to thee."

Professor Davidson rightly calls this "a fine piece of psychological observation." [1]

3. In the third lyric the poet has a strange dream. The dream is too consistent not to be also allegorical. He dreams that Nature's reproductive power is lost; spring brings with it no revival, and the poet wanders about helpless and aimless. He enters a wood with thorny boughs and binds his brow with a crown of thorns. We are at once reminded of Dante entangled in the forest of error. Perhaps Tennyson considers the speculations and the difficulties with which he is wrestling as fruitless and barren. All thought is made sterile by the touch of skepticism. The crown of thorns may be regarded as the emblem and heritage of prophecy and martyrdom, of which the poet considers himself unworthy, and so he is scoffed at by all: —

"I met with scoffs, I met with scorns
From youth and babe and hoary hairs:
They called me in the public squares
The fool that wears a crown of thorns." [2]

Or it may be that the wreath of poetry he was weaving out of his barren sorrow and no less barren doubt and despair was in itself harsh and thorny and but ill-suited to command respect. But a change came over the poet. He tells us: —

"I found an angel of the night;
The voice was low, the look was bright." [3]

[1] *Prolegomena to In Memoriam*, p. 60.
[2] *In Memoriam*, lxix. 3. [3] *Ibid.* lxix. 4.

This angel is belief in the saving truths of Christianity, which is never loud in its utterance, like modern creeds and modern systems of human origin. The belief is an angel, for it is heaven-born. One touch of this heaven-born faith causes the wreath to bloom. The presence of the angel dispels the darkness of night. Many doubts vanish in the presence of a heartfelt "I believe." We are further told: —

> "The voice was not the voice of grief,
> The words were hard to understand." [1]

All the mysteries of our holy religion speak to us in words that are hard to understand, but we accept their saving doctrine on the authority of Divine revelation. The poem that were a barren expression of merely human grief becomes with the assistance of religion a flourishing wreath. This lyric is one of the poet's happiest inspirations.

4. Another psychological phase that the poet depicts in this series is the state between sleeping and waking, during which he strives to represent to himself the face he knows so well, and to paint its features in the gloom before him. But their outlines escape him, and in the stead nightmare and confusion usurp his fancy, till suddenly, in a passive state, the dear familiar face stands out from the darkness: —

> "Till all at once beyond the will
> I hear a wizard music roll,
> And through a lattice on the soul
> Looks thy fair face and makes it still." [2]

[1] *In Memoriam*, lxix. 5.

[2] *Ibid.* lxx. 4.

In this lyric a complex phenomenon and a difficult piece of soul-analysis are exquisitely described.

5. In the final lyric of the present series sleep at last favors the poet and forges "a night-long Present of the Past," in which with his friend he lives over again a pleasant day spent in "summer France." [1] It was in 1832 that the two friends made a tour of that country, and passed through the scenes revisited in his sleep. Tennyson has left a memento of another visit paid to one of these cherished scenes in 1864: —

> "All along the valley, stream that flashest white,
> Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night,
> All along the valley, where thy waters flow,
> I walked with one I loved two-and-thirty years ago." [2]

Here ends the series of the lyrics of sleep and dream and reverie.

VI.

1. Another group of lyrics is introduced by one commemorating the first anniversary of the death of Arthur. This leads Tennyson to think of all that his friend might have become had he lived, for he bore the marks of kinship with the great and wise. But since he did not live to achieve all that he gave promise of, and since the world heeds only things done, silence shall guard his fame here, the poet being convinced that in Arthur's new state whatever he puts hand to must win great

[1] *In Memoriam*, lxxi.

[2] *In the Valley of Cauteretz.*

applause. Moreover, his own lay is too short lived. Though the world's poems of early days,

" the matin songs, that woke
The darkness of our planet, last " —

the poet avers that his cannot survive the life-time of an oak. Still, like Petrarca, he will sing for a higher purpose: —

" My darkened ways
Shall ring with music all the same;
To breathe my loss is more than fame,
To utter love more sweet than praise." [1]

2. With every advance we find the poet's grief abating and his sympathies broadening. There are still fluctuations. There must needs be fluctuations if the poet is to be true to nature. Were he to ignore them, were his song to be one pæan of joy after the first outburst of sorrow, his poem were not worthy of our study. No soul rises at once above the bereavement into which it is plunged by the death of one near and dear. There must needs be a struggle and a constant effort of will-power. Not the least interesting aspect of the poem consists in the record of the soul's fluctuations in grief as their proportions diminish, while the soul itself rises higher and higher into regions of faith and hope and trust in the future. Such a lapse is here recorded. While painting the beautiful domestic life that Arthur might have led had

[1] *In Memoriam*, lxxvii. 4; cf. Petrarca in *Morte di Laura*, xxv.: —

" E certo ogni mio studio in quel temp' era
Pur di sfogare il doloroso core
In qualche mode, non d' acquistar fama.
Pianger cercai non già del pianto onore."

he lived and married the woman who was engaged to him, the poet's sister Emily — this lyric in itself a charming idyll — the pang of loss seizes him, and he exclaims: —

" What reed was that on which I leant?
Ah, backward fancy, wherefore wake
The old bitterness again, and break
The low beginnings of content." [1]

3. In the very next lyric the poet recovers his equilibrium, and addressing E. L. Lushington, " true in word and tried in deed," the early friend who is to marry his sister Cecily, " clasping brother-hands," he explains his affliction for Arthur and Arthur's abiding influence over him for good: —

" I felt and feel, though left alone,
His being working in mine own,
The footsteps of his life in mine; "
. . . . . .
" And so my passion hath not swerved
To works of weakness, but I find
An image comforting the mind,
And in my grief a strength reserved." [2]

Feeling that he is best pleasing his departed friend by holding out a brother's hand to this other friend, and letting his feelings and his sympathies flow more freely through the social body of which he is a member, he sings: —

" My pulses therefore beat again
For other friends that once I met;
Nor can it suit me to forget
The mighty hopes that make us men.

" I woo your love: I count it crime
To mourn for any overmuch;

[1] *In Memoriam*, lxxxiv. 12. [2] *Ibid.* lxxxv. 11, 13.

I, the divided half of such
A friendship as had mastered Time." [1]

And so he gathers strength in the remembrance of his friend; his vision broadens; his song grows more blithe. His harp will persist in striking out notes of joy: —

"And I — my harp would prelude woe —
I cannot all command the strings;
The glory of the sum of things
Will flash along the chords and go." [2]

He must sing the triumph of good over evil and truth over error. It will flash out through the notes of sorrow he began with, even as the nightingale is supposed to sing a double note of joy and grief.

VII.

1. We enter upon another stage in the progress of the poem. Tennyson has already spoken of sleep as kinsman "to death and trance and madness." With the madness of uncontrolled grief, with the dreams of sleep, and with death he has been making us familiar. Now he would sing to us of trance. He is no longer content with waking fancies or the shadows of dream-land. He would hold direct communion with the dead. He does not believe in apparitions. Should they happen he would regard them merely as presentiments. But spirit with spirit can meet, and why may not the soul of Arthur commune with the yearning soul of his friend under certain conditions? These conditions are laid down in detail: —

[1] *In Memoriam*, xxxv. 15, 16. [2] *Ibid.* lxxxviii. 3.

"How pure at heart and sound in head,
With what divine affections bold
Should be the man whose thought would hold
An hour's communion with the dead." [1]

Now the poet records that on a special occasion and under peculiar circumstances his soul blended with the soul of his friend in intimate and ecstatic communion. Tennyson, from his boyhood days, has been subject to trance. Writing to a medical friend he says: "I have never had any revelations through anæsthetics; but a kind of 'waking trance' (this for lack of a better word) I have frequently had quite up from boyhood when I have been all alone. This has often come upon me through repeating my own name to myself silently, till all at once as it were out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being — and this not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, utterly beyond words — where death was an almost laughable impossibility — the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction but the only true life. I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words? But in a moment when I come back to my normal state of 'sanity' I am ready to fight for *mein liebes Ich*, and hold that it will last for æons of æons." [2] This fact the poet has expressed in one of his latest and most mature poems as follows: —

[1] *In Memoriam*, xciv. 1.

[2] Letter written to Dr. Blood in 1874, and quoted by Professor Davidson in his *Prolegomena to In Memoriam*, p. 83.

"More than once when I
Sat all alone, revolving in myself
The word that is the symbol of myself,
The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
And passed into the Nameless, as a cloud
Melts into Heaven. I touched my limbs, the limbs
Were strange, not mine — and yet no shade of doubt,
But utter clearness, and through loss of Self
The gain of such large life as matched with ours
Were Sun to spark — unshadowable in words,
Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world."[1]

2. In the "In Memoriam" Tennyson gives us the details of just such a trance, and he avers that while in that state he communed with the soul of his friend. When the household had retired for the night there came upon him a great yearning for his friend, and he began to satisfy its craving by reading Arthur's old letters. We shall let him put the sequel in his own inimitable form: —

"So word by word, and line by line,
The dead man touched me from the past,
And all at once it seemed at last
The living soul was flashed on mine,

"And mine in this was wound, and whirled
About empyreal heights of thought,
And came on that which is, and caught
The deep pulsations of the world,

"Æonian music measuring out
The steps of Time — the shocks of Chance —
The blows of Death. At length my trance
Was cancelled, stricken through with doubt."[2]

The poet would like to believe without a shadow of doubt that the objective reality corresponded to his subjective impressions. Was Arthur's spirit really

[1] *The Ancient Sage.* [2] *In Memoriam*, xcv. 9–11.

present in fond embrace and communion with his own?[1] Or was it simply the intense yearning that still possessed him while in the trance, thus leaving upon his imagination the impression of his friend's presence? Was Tennyson's that state defined by St. Theresa as coming "from an imagination formed by the understanding itself?"[2] Communion with the dead is to all of us a consolation. We love to believe that our dear departed ones are near us, that they read our thoughts, and that they can reach our souls in intimate union when indeed our souls become sufficiently purified from the dross of earth.

3. Let us analyze the author's impressions. He tells us that in union with his friend he "came on that which is;" that is, he distinguished essences beneath appearances, the noumenon behind the phenomenon, reality beyond all images of reality. This is also the teaching of Plato: "Do you not see," he says, "that in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be able to bring forth, *not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of a reality)*, and bringing forth and nourishing true

[1] Immediately after writing this sentence I came across the following from the pen of Mrs. Chenoweth: "As I read my *In Memoriam* hushed to utter restfulness in its breadth and height and depth, I am powerless to ask, 'Did young Arthur's spirit indeed respond to the poet's anguished cry for comfort?' As I read, I *know* that it did so." *The Arena*, March 1891, art. "The Unclassified Residuum." Mrs. Chenoweth is a member of the London Society for Psychical Research of which Tennyson is also a member.

[2] *Autobiography*, chap xxv. p. 221, Eng. tr.

virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may."[1] Again, the poet tells us that in his trance he caught "the deep pulsations of the world, æonian music measuring out the steps of Time." Have we not here an allusion to the musical numbers by which the soul of the world is extended and diffused from the centre of the earth?[2] He also describes his soul as wound in the soul of his friend. This is the kind of impression that the neo-Platonist records of the soul seeking communion with the Good. "In the vision," says Plotinus, "which has the Good for its object, the soul contemplating makes but one with the object contemplated."[3] And speaking of the initiated into the mysteries, the same philosopher says: "The truly initiated identified himself with the object of his contemplation; he was divested of all his faculties, of motion and passion and desire, of reason and thought, and even of his personality in order that he might be enraptured and possessed by God."[4] St. Augustin, who was familiar with neo-Platonic doctrine and practice, describes a similar experience on the eve of his conversion, in which he passed from the phantasms of the things of sense, and seeking the light found the unchangeable preferable to the changeable. With the flash of one trembling glance, he arrived at the recognition of *That Which Is*, and he saw the invisible things understood by the things that are

[1] *Symposium*, Jowett's trans. ii. p. 62.
[2] Timæus. See Grote's *Plato*, vol. iii. p. 254.
[3] *Enneades*, lib. vi. cap. ix. 10.
[4] *Ibid.* lib vi. cap. vii. 11.

made.[1] The Cabalists also recognized this state. In their chief manual we read: "By means of the intuition of love the soul divests itself of the consciousness of its existence, and becomes transformed into its principle to the extent of having no other thought or will than the thought or will of God."[2] Dante when describing the state of ecstasy of the soul in the mystical unitive way of the spiritual life also expresses the vision of essences:—

"I saw that in its depth far down is lying
Bound up with love together in one volume,
What through the universe in leaves is scattered;

Substance and accident, and their operations,
All interfused together in such wise
That what I speak of is one simple light."[3]

But in his vision of Beatrice he speaks more reservedly and seems not to have lost his identity. He says: "The life of my heart was wont to be a sweet thought which often went to the feet of the Lord, . . . and I would have it understood that I was certain, and am certain, through her gracious revelation, that she was in heaven, whither I, thinking oftentimes, according as was possible for me, went, as it were seized up. And the sweetness of this thought was such as to make me desirous of death that I might go where she was."[4] The trance of Tennyson stands on no higher plane. It is of a purely natural character. It is a psychic fact. One mode of concentrating thought aids another. The fact that the poet had been from his youth in

[1] *Conf.* lib. vii. cap. 17.
[2] *The Zohar.*
[3] *Paradiso*, xxxiii. 85–90.
[4] *Il Convito*, ii. 8. p. 135.

the habit of depolarizing the organs of his brain, and of thus suspending the activity of the sensory nerves, prepared him for similar results by any other mode of concentrating thought. And so, his trance is not to be confounded with the ecstasies of a Francis of Assisi or a Theresa of Jesus. These are of a supernatural character and the fruition of grace. They are, in the language of Bonaventura, "a mystical and most secret thing, which no one knows save him who receives it, and no one receives it save him who deserves it." [1]

4. This trance — be its nature what it may — marks the climax of the poet's feelings. Thereafter his note assumes a more subdued tone. The doubt he had — and indeed all sincere doubt — he defends against those who would call it devil-born, and he asserts that

> "there lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds." [2]

Here it behooves us to distinguish. The assertion cannot be accepted in a universal sense. Where the articles of one's creed are received upon purely rational grounds as matters of opinion, or credence, or presumption, or as highly probable, there is always room for honest doubt. But where one's creed is a matter of faith pure and simple, not at all depending on one's reason, but grounded upon a Divine revelation speaking through an infallible church, doubt concerning the mysteries of one's religion and the articles of one's faith is out of place and is in itself sinful. No Catholic may apply these lines to the truths of his faith. Elsewhere

[1] *Itinerarium*, chap. vii.

[2] *In Memoriam*. xcvi. 3.

the poet cautions men against entering the chilling shadow of doubt, and defines the character of the faith of which he would approve: —

> "Wherefore thou be wise,
> Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
> And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith." [1]

But we recognize our faith in our forms. The forms are not more than the faith, but when vivified by the faith they become part of it. After all, is there not some cant in speaking of faith without form? Is it not like talking of religion without dogma? However, though a Catholic may not doubt the essential truths of his religion without incurring guilt, still it does not follow that the articles of his creed are free from difficulties. On this point there exists no better commentary than the lucid words of another great light in English literature. He says: "I am far, of course, from denying that every article of the Christian Creed, whether as held by Catholics or by Protestants, is beset with intellectual difficulties; and it is simple fact that for myself I cannot answer these difficulties. Many persons are very sensitive of the difficulties of religion; I am as sensitive as any one; but I have never been able to see a connection between apprehending these difficulties, however keen, and multiplying them to any extent, and doubting the doctrines to which they are attached. *Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt, as I understand the subject; difficulty and doubt are incommensurate.*" [2]

[1] *The Ancient Sage.*

[2] Cardinal Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Suâ*, part vii. pp. 265.

5. One indeed the poet knew who had honest doubts, and wrestled with them, and gained renewed vigor in the struggle: —

> "He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
> He would not make his judgment blind,
> He faced the spectres of the mind
> And laid them." [1]

God was with him because he was in earnest. 'God is with every sincere searcher after truth. It may be presumed that the one here alluded to is Arthur Hallam. [2]

6. Another year brings round the anniversary of Arthur's death. The sorrow of his friend has in the mean time divested itself of all selfishness. His uppermost thought is kinship with those who like him bewail the absence of dear departed ones: —

> "O wheresoever those may be,
> Betwixt the slumber of the poles,
> *To-day they count as kindred souls;*
> *They know me not, but mourn with me.*" [3]

The poet's family is about to move from his native Somersby. This gives rise to an admirable series of musings with which Hallam's memory is interwoven. Every scene recalls some incident or other in the life of his departed friend: —

> "But each has pleased a kindred eye,
> And each reflects a kindlier day;
> And, leaving these, to pass away,
> I think once more he seems to die." [4]

7. The night before leaving the old rectory the

[1] *In Memoriam*, xcvi. 4.
[2] Gatty, *A Key to In Memoriam*, p. 104.
[3] *In Memoriam*, xcix. 5. [4] *Ibid.* c. 5.

author has another dream which reminds one of the passing of Arthur in the "Idylls of the King." The dream is allegorical. The process of uprooting old affections and tearing himself away from life-long associations has wrought upon his imagination, and this parting from the familiar scenes with which the memory of his friend is commingled, he projects into the future when he shall pass from life and meet this much-yearned-for friend. The dream 'bringing home to him the fact that every change is only another step to that final meeting' is to him a source of comfort. He begins: —

> "Methought I dwelt within a hall,
> And maidens with me: distant hills
> From hidden summits fed with rills
> A river sliding by the wall." [1]

So does Tennyson still dwell within the hall of his own consciousness and personality. All alone with his talents and accomplishments — with those maidens known as the Arts and the Muses — has he been living, while beneath him flows the river of Time fed by the rills of the hours and the minutes. In the centre of this hall stood a veiled statue to which the maidens sang. It is the spotless memory of Arthur to which he is consecrating these lays. But a dove — emblem of love — brings him a summons from the sea. He feels called to other life-duties than those of weaving songs around the memory of his friend. He must proceed to fullfil those duties. The maidens weep lest they should now be neglected; but they accompany him. And

[1] *In Memoriam*, ciii. 2.

he dreams that with the passing of time the maidens — his faculties and his poetic power — "gathered strength and grace and presence, lordlier than before," and that he himself felt a new energy in his life, as his muses poured out song after song: —

> "As one would sing the death of war,
> And one would chant the history
> Of that great race, which is to be,
> And one the shaping of a star." [1]

And now the frail shallop of his mortal life becomes too frail for the rolling waves and the foaming tides; there looms into view the safe and stately ship on which he finds embarked his long-lost friend now grown to great dimensions in every power of his soul, and Tennyson passes to the more secure vessel and falls in silence upon the neck of Arthur. Thereupon the maidens set up a wail on being left behind: —

> "Whereat those maidens with one mind
> Bewailed their lot; I did them wrong:
> 'We served thee here,' they said, 'so long,
> And wilt thou leave us now behind?'
>
> "So rapt I was, they could not win
> An answer from my lips, but he
> Replying, 'Enter likewise ye
> And go with us': they entered in." [2]

In these stanzas the poet would convey his belief that in the life beyond the grave man shall continue to possess every talent and every perfection of soul that helped to make life noble and beautiful on earth.

[1] *In Memoriam*, ciii. 9. [2] *Ibid.* ciii. 12, 13.

8. Here ends the purely psychological portion of the drama. The remaining lyrics are chiefly retrospective. But in order to make their meaning apparent we must now return and take up another series which are speculative and scientific, and which run through the whole drama like a silver thread, giving it unity and strength.

VIII.

1. "In Memoriam" is not only an elegy embalming the memory of a dear friend; it is also the poetical expression of a soul's moral and intellectual growth through sorrow and through strife with the difficulties that beset the truths and mysteries of religion. He that has never known sorrow has yet to penetrate the inner sanctuary and the most sacred chambers of life, and the meaning of existence is for him a sealed book; he that has not wrestled with the difficulties that beset an act of religious faith is still in a state of mental childhood. Through suffering and tribulation of spirit man rises to strength and power and greatness of soul; through profound study he climbs heights in which his mental vision has a clearer atmosphere and a more expansive horizon. And so, the lesson of the poem is that the soul may rise to higher things by overcoming grief and silencing doubt.

2. This lesson is not perceptible upon a first reading. And that it is not is due to the fact that the poet never loses sight of the fundamental distinction between poetry and philosophy. The

sphere of each is distinct; the method is distinct; the aim is distinct. Philosophy deals with abstractions; it lays down its premises with care, and sees that no link in the chain of its reasoning is wanting; it formally draws its conclusions. Poetry is concerned with the concrete, or if it introduces abstract truths it renders them concrete by giving them a local habitation and a name; it places itself in the heart of a subject, and expresses in rhythmic language the thought still palpitating with life. Tennyson has defined the poetic method as pursued by himself in the present instance: —

> "From art, from nature, from the schools,
> Let random influences glance,
> Like light in many a shivered lance
> That breaks about the dappled pools." [1]

But that which is apparently random has none the less a purpose running through it. The silent work — the earnest thought and deep study — is not visible, but it is there, making of the poem a thing of life and power. Though the poet speaks throughout in the first person, it is not his own doubts he is solving; it is not the progress of his own soul he is tracing; it is the story of the inner life of humanity he is narrating. "'I,'" to use his own words, "in these poems, is not always the author speaking of himself, but the voice of the human race speaking through him." [2] To this canon of interpretation we shall supply another. It has

[1] *In Memoriam*, xlix. 1.

[2] Note signed "A. T.," prefixed to Gatty's *Key to In Memoriam*.

been asserted with some show of reason that Tennyson's eulogy of his friend Hallam is exaggerated. Though the young man gave promise of much, he never could have achieved all the greatness fancied for him by the poet. Mr. Peter Bayne discusses the matter in an apologetic tone. "Exaggeration, however, on this point," he says, "was the most venial of faults in the writer of 'In Memoriam,' and he, I think, must be base indeed who fails to perceive the inimitable marks of sincerity and affection in Tennyson's delineation of his friend." [1] But here as elsewhere Mr. Bayne has misunderstood the intentions of Tennyson. Precisely as the "I" of the poem came to stand for the whole human race, even so the "Arthur" of the poem has become idealized into the representative of all that is or could be excellent in a deceased friend. Arthur is intended to embody the highest type of humanity cut off in the bud. These distinctions are of the utmost importance. They throw light upon much in the poem that would otherwise remain obscure. The progress of the soul is revealed in the recording of its various moods when wrestling with doubt, or questioning science, or solving some ethical difficulty. The reader is led to infer what is going on beneath the surface expression. This much the poet is careful to hint at in the following stanzas: —

> "If these brief lays, of Sorrow born,
> Were taken to be such as closed

[1] *Lessons from my Masters*, p. 309.

Grave doubts and answers here proposed,
Then these were such as men might scorn:

"Her care is not to part and prove;
She takes, when harsher moods remit,
What slender shade of doubt may flit,
And makes it vassal unto love." [1]

3. Before the awful mystery of the grave, in presence of the clash and force of unknown energies, humanity asks many difficult questions, and doubt and infidelity suggest many serious objections, but Love finds the answer and Faith reads the solution. Love is the key with which Tennyson unlocks all difficulties: —

"If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice 'believe no more,'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

"A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath *the heart*
Stood up and answered 'I have felt.'" [2]

The very instincts of the heart cry out in solemn protest against the sophistries of materialism and atheism. The fool may deny that there is a God, but man exclaims: "I have felt his presence within my heart of hearts; I have heard his voice speak to my conscience."

4. Let us now see how the poet makes use of this key. Every cultured mind is in duty bound to face the issues of the day and study to unravel their intricacies. What is the solution that Tennyson proposes? In the first influx of his grief we find him puzzled about the multiplicity of creeds. He often stumbles — "often falling lame" — while wandering towards where sits Death, —

[1] *In Memoriam*, xlviii. 1, 2.

[2] *Ibid.* cxxiv. 3, 4.

"The shadow cloaked from head to foot
Who keeps the keys of all the creeds." [1]

We have already found his solution in a faith beyond all forms and the Universalism of his friend Frederick Maurice. We have also seen how he regards doubt. Had he in his religious gropings ever touched upon the creed that in its fullness contains all the truth of all the other creeds? He has given no evidence of it; but as we are studying his poem from the Catholic point of view, we may quote the following remarks: "He regards as sacred whatever links the soul to a divine truth. He has many friends who are Catholics, and we have heard that he has expressed sincere anxiety to publish nothing relative to the Catholic religion calculated to give offense to its followers." [2]

5. The poet thus admonishes him who would meddle with this life of simple faith — who would blight or poison it with his doubts or sneers — the man who has in his own conceit raised himself above all forms of creed and dogma: —

"Leave thou thy sister when she prays,
Her early heaven, her happy views;
Nor thou with shadowed hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days.

[1] *In Memoriam*, xxiii. 1, 2.

[2] J. C. Earle in *The Catholic World*, vol. vii. p. 146.

"Her faith through form is pure as thine,
Her hands are quicker unto good:
Oh, sacred be the flesh and blood
To which she links a truth divine!"[1]

The divine truth she has linked to flesh and blood is the seeing of God incarnate in the Person of Christ. But the author not only defends the simple faith and the life of prayer and good works based on the divinity of Christ; he goes farther and cautions the pantheist,

"Whose faith has centre everywhere,"

who would be a law unto himself, to beware lest in this sinful world for want of the Sacred Type and Model he fail: —

"See thou that countest reason ripe
In holding by the law within,
Thou fail not in a world of sin,
And even for want of such a type."[2]

6. Is there a future life? His own existence has meaning only in the assumption that there is an hereafter, else life's struggles were aimless and hopeless and God were naught to his creatures: —

"My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is."[3]

Going deeper still, Tennyson finds in the love he bears his friend — in all true love — an argument for his immortality; for true love is the one thing

[1] *In Memoriam*, xxxiii. 2, 3. [2] *Ibid.* xxxiii. 4.
[3] *Ibid.* xxxiv. 1; cf. Browning, *La Saisiaz*, Am. ed. vol. vi. p. 62

worth living for, and though assured that this life were the be-all and the end-all, he would still think it worth living for the sake of that love: —

"Might I not say, 'Yet even here,
But for one hour, O Love, I strive
To keep so sweet a thing alive.'"[1]

But then without the instinct of immortality love had not been: —

"O me, what profits it to put
An idle case? If Death were seen
At first as Death, Love had not been."[2]

Browning in his "Easter-Day" has forcibly and magnificently brought home the truth that the absence of the higher love of God were the death of all human love. But reason how we may upon the dark truths centred in our mystic frame, we have an unfailing refuge against all our doubts and the questionings of our soul in our Lord and Saviour; for in Him shall we find the embodiment of all wisdom, the meaning of all life, and the solution to all our difficulties: —

"And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought."[3]

7. And now, the poet having found "comfort clasped with truth revealed," believing in the im-

[1] *In Memoriam*, xxxv. 2. [2] *Ibid.* xxxv. 3.
[3] *Ibid.* xxxvi. 3; cf. Browning, *A Death in the Desert*, 474-477: —

"I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it,
And has so far advanced thee to be wise."

mortality of the soul, he follows Arthur in various conjectures as to the nature of his future state. What if in this new life Arthur should grow beyond his reach?

"Though following with an upward mind
The wonders that have come to thee,
Through all the secular to-be,
But evermore a life behind."[1]

What if Arthur would gladly renew intercourse with his friend when they meet in the other world —

"And he the much-beloved again,
A lord of large experience, train
To riper growth the mind and will?"[2]

Or what if sleep and death be truly one, and he should slumber on in one long trance and then awaken to the old thoughts and the old love? This conjecture was no fancy of Tennyson's brain. It was taught and defended in the last century by Priestley. He believed in a resurrection of the body, but he held that there was no soul apart from the body. "If therefore," he writes, "any person does firmly believe that he shall live again, and receive according to his works . . . of what consequence is it whether he believe he has a soul or not? It is enough that he believes that his power of thinking (which is the only province of a soul) will be restored to him at the resurrection, *and that he will have a perfect recollection of all the transactions of the present life.*"[3] And so, the

[1] *In Memoriam*, xli. 6. [2] *Ibid.* xlii. 2.

[3] *Letters to Young Men of Oxford and Cambridge*, 1788, iv. § 5, p. 72.

poet dwells upon this theory of death, and fancies that through the long sleep, —

"love will last as pure and whole
As when he loved me here in Time,
And at the spiritual prime
Rewaken with the dawning soul."[1]

Or again, regarding the Platonic doctrine of preexistence, he asks: What if it is with Arthur in the other life as it is with man here below, who though he forgets his preëxistent state has still an occasional glimpse — "a little flash, a mystic hint" — of the past, and Arthur also gets an occasional glimpse of the old life: "some dim touch of earthly things" surprises him? And he addresses his friend: —

"If such a dreamy touch should fall,
O turn thee round, resolve the doubt;
My guardian angel will speak out
In that high place, and tell thee all."[2]

Be the conjecture what it may, the author is convinced that there will be a loving recognition, and that his chilling fears arising from the spectral doubt that he would no longer enjoy companionship with Arthur are vain.

8. Here I would call attention to a peculiar doctrine woven into the poem as regards both past and future states of the soul. In the lyric last quoted we find clearly stated the doctrine of preëxistence:

"Here the man is more and more;
But he forgets the days before
God shut the doorways of his head.

[1] *In Memoriam*, xliii. 4. [2] *Ibid.* xliv. 4.

"The days have vanished, tone and tint,
And yet perhaps the hoarding sense
Gives out at times (he knows not whence)
A little flash, a mystic hint." [1]

That this doctrine of preëxistence is part of Tennyson's thinking — part at least of his poetical furniture; the distinction is an important one — becomes clear from a glance at his works. We read it in that thoughtful poem, "The Two Voices:" —

"It may be that no life is found,
Which only to one engine bound
Falls off, but cycles always round.

"As old mythologies relate,
Some draught of Lethe might await
The slipping through from state to state.
. . . . . .
"Moreover, something is or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams —

"*Of something felt, like something here;*
Of something done, I know not where;
Such as no language may declare."

Evidently the doctrine here laid down is opposed to our Christian belief in the resurrection of the body. For if there be no life bound to "one engine," that is, to a single body, then indeed does every new cycle of the soul call for a new habitation. And yet, in a poem upon the death of his friend Spedding we read: —

"Lie still, dry dust, secure of change," [2]

whereby the writer would convey the idea of another state for the dust. Be this as it may, it is

[1] *In Memoriam*, xliv. 2, 3. [2] *Lines to J. S.*

of Catholic faith that every human body has within itself the germ of immortality, and that the soul will once more be united to the body in another state, and under another order of existence. "The soul," says St. Thomas, "is naturally united to the body, for according to its very essence it is the form of the body. It is therefore unnatural that the soul remain without the body. But nothing that is opposed to nature can so continue forever. Therefore the soul cannot exist perpetually without the body. Hence, if the soul is to exist perpetually it must become reunited to the body, which is the resurrection. And so, the immortality of the soul calls for a future resurrection of the body." [1] And this teaching is in accord with reason. For the perfection of any creature consists in this, that nothing be wanting to its nature as conceived or planned by the Creator, even as God's own perfection consists in the completeness of his infinite Nature.[2] Therefore do human perfection and human happiness imply a union of body and soul, as the two essential elements of a human personality.

IX.

1. Tennyson holds another peculiar doctrine regarding the future states of the soul. He holds that the soul passes from state to state through the various cycles of the æons that are to be, gathering strength according to the degree of its well-

[1] *Contra Gentes*, lib. iv. cap. 79.
[2] *Summa. Theol.* Supp. Quæst. lxxvii. art. 1. ad. 4.

doing in each for nobler and more perfect functions in the succeeding state. The past is left behind as a butterfly leaves its chrysalis: —

"Eternal process moving on,
From state to state the spirit walks,
And these are but the shattered stalks,
Or ruined chrysalis of one." [1]

A soul growing and developing may afterwards resume possession of its body, and the body may reflect the splendor of its higher state. But a soul undergoing transformations, each one of which is a distinct state or a distinct plane of existence, is rather to be conceived as passing away forever from its earthly tenement. So the Essenes held. Although believing in the immortality of the soul, they denied the resurrection of the body.[2] There is a similar doctrine of future states touched upon by Browning in his "Evelyn Hope:" —

"Delayed it may be *for me more lives yet,*
Through worlds I shall traverse not a few:
Much is to learn, much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you."

2. This is an ancient doctrine not to be confounded with the teachings of Buddha. Nor is it to be in all respects identified with neo-Platonism. Plotinus did not hold it. Traces of it are to be found in the writings of Origen.[3] Porphyry, who is supposed to have made some studies under Origen, attempted to reconcile the doctrine with the ideas of Plotinus. Proclus saw no limit to

[1] *In Memoriam*, lxxxii. 2.
[2] C. D. Ginsburg, *The Essenes*, p. 22.
[3] Huet, *Origeniana*, liv. ii. cap. ii. quæst. 6.

the descent of the soul to earthly life and back again to spiritual existence. He held the soul to be "in continual movement descending in generation and ascending towards the gods incessantly." [1] It was passed down among certain sects of the early Christians as an esoteric teaching known only to an initiated few. It was condemned in the fifth Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople in the year 381. St. Jerome cautions the virgin Demetriada against the doctrine as "an hereditary evil." [2] The doctrine of preëxistence was fundamental in the teachings of the Jewish Cabala. Therein was it taught that every soul is created with the indestructible germs of a certain degree of perfection; that if its first life on earth has not been such as to cause these germs to develop to their full bloom of flower and harvest of fruit, the soul assumes another body and develops other perfections, and continues to return until every germ has been fully developed.

3. This idea of bodily resumption after the present stage of existence both Tennyson and Browning have rejected for what they consider the more spiritual idea of life rising and expanding through cycles of æons in other states of existence. And has not Tennyson a trace of the following teaching in his doctrine of reminiscence? We read: "Just as before creation all beings were present in the divine thought, under the form proper to them, even so *all human souls before descending to this world*

[1] Vacherot, *Histoire Critique de l' Ecole d' Alexandrie*, t. ii. p. 368.
[2] Epist. cxxx. 16, *Ad Demetriadem.*

existed with God in heaven under the form that they preserved here below, and all that they learn on earth they knew before arriving thereon."[1] St. Cyril held that they were believers in a preëxistent state, who asked our Lord: "Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?"[2] Perhaps some holding the belief of the Essenes had become disciples of Jesus, and they did not all at once rid themselves of the false teaching. The doctrines of preëxistence and of future states of development for the soul have passed down to the present day in a continuous stream of tradition and in various forms, from pre-Christian times, with other esoteric theories. It is evident that Tennyson and Browning imbibed these doctrines from some or several of the many channels through which they flowed. Accordingly, Tennyson fancied his friend working out the undeveloped germs of his greatness and his perfections, and meriting applause in his new state: —

"But somewhere, out of human view,
Whate'er thy hands are set to do
Is wrought with tumult of acclaim."[3]

4. It need scarcely be said that the whole doctrine of progressive development from state to state beyond the present is not the Christian doctrine of the life succeeding death. Not that the Christian

[1] *Zohar*, quoted in *Dict. des Sc. Phil.* p. 854. The doctrine of the *Zohar* has been formally revived in more recent times by Pierre Leroux and Charles Fourier. Browning may have become imbued with it in getting up material for his *Paracelsus*.

[2] See Maldonatus, *Comment. in Joan.* cap. ix. 2.

[3] *In Memoriam*, lxxv. 5.

does not recognize progress in the new state. The soul will ever grow in wisdom and knowledge. It will never cease to learn, for it contemplates an infinite essence the riches of whose glory are inexhaustible. St. Augustin becomes indignant over the neo-Platonic theory of recurring cycles. He asks, "Who, I say, can listen to such things? Who can accept or suffer them to be spoken? . . . God forbid that there be any truth in an opinion which threatens us with a real misery that is never to end, but is often and needlessly to be interrupted by intervals of fallacious happiness."[1] And in another place the same holy doctor, speaking of the various periods of the world's history ending in the everlasting Sabbath enjoyed by the saints in heaven, says: "After this period God shall rest on the seventh day, when He shall give us (who shall be the seventh day) rest in Himself. . . . The seventh day shall be our Sabbath, which shall be brought to a close, not by an evening, but by the Lord's day, as an eighth and eternal day, consecrated by the resurrection of Christ, and prefiguring the eternal repose not only of the spirit, but also of the body. There we shall rest and behold, behold and love, love and praise. This is what shall be in the end without end. For what other end do we propose to ourselves than to attain to the kingdom of which there is no end?"[2] This is the Catholic doctrine of heaven. It is the doctrine that Dante has transmitted in his noble

[1] *De Civ. Dei*, lib. xii. cap. xx.

[2] *Ibid.* lib. xxii. cap. xxx. 5.

poem: "We have issued forth," he says, "from the last body to the heaven which is pure light: light intellectual full of love; love of true good full of joy; joy surpassing every sweetness." [1]

X.

1. Tennyson continues to grapple with the problem of life beyond the grave. Who can solve all the questionings that arise in the presence of death? But there are certain truths which are postulated by him regarding the future state. Among these is the truth that we retain our identity. The babe is not conscious: —

> "But as he grows he gathers much,
> And learns the use of 'I,' and 'me,'
> And finds 'I am not what I see,
> And other than the things I touch.'" [2]

Man is one in substance and one in all his operations; one in his senses and one in his thoughts; this one so feeling and thinking and acting is a combination of body and soul which forms a distinct personality. Now this consciousness of self must remain with the soul hereafter; it is in the economy of things that it should, otherwise

> "had man to learn himself anew
> Beyond the second birth of Death."

Another truth postulated in the poem is that while in time the past is foreshortened and memory forgets many things, in eternity the mental vision must needs be clear: —

[1] *Paradiso*, xxx. 39-43.

[2] *In Memoriam*, xlv. 2.

> "There no shade can last,
> In that deep dawn behind the tomb,
> But clear from marge to marge shall bloom
> The eternal landscape of the past." [1]

2. Tennyson rejects the pantheistic notion of the neo-Platonists that the human soul should be finally remerged in the general Soul. He calls it "faith as vague as all unsweet," and says: —

> "Eternal form shall still divide
> The eternal soul from all beside,"

and avers that each soul shall know the other. But as a final fancy, he for a moment admits the supposition of absorption in this general Soul, and says that even should the individual soul be destined ultimately to lose its identity, he holds love to be so strong and so persistent that the spirit of his friend would await his own, to clasp it and bid it farewell before losing itself in the light: —

> "He seeks at least
> Upon the last and sharpest height,
> Before the spirits fade away,
> Some landing-place, to clasp and say,
> 'Farewell! we lose ourselves in light.'" [2]

And since the soul is immortal, and here below in a transition and probationary state, the poet would have his friend near him — that is, the man so believing would have departed souls whom he loved with a pure and elevating love near him — in every crisis of life, in sickness and temptation, and at the hour of death. This is not unlike the Catholic doc-

[1] *In Memoriam*, xlvi. 2.

[2] *Ibid.* xlvii. 3, 4. This has been erroneously interpreted as a formal expression of Tennyson's supposed pantheism.

trine of the Communion of Saints, save that Tennyson's is a natural desire, whereas the Catholic doctrine stands upon a supernatural plane. The saints are souls to whom men look with reverence and admiration, the very thought of whose lives and virtues is inspiring, and who as God's special friends have power to hear and help us. Note how in this same lyric the poet lashes those anti-Christian writers who assail the faith, deposit their poisonous words in men's souls, and then pass to their deserved oblivion: —

"Be near me when my faith is dry,
And men the flies of latter spring,
That lay their eggs, and sting and sing,
And weave their petty cells and die." [1]

3. An objection occurs to the poet. Can we bear that the dead should read our hearts with all their frailties? He asks: —

"Do we indeed desire the dead
Should still be near us at our side?
Is there no baseness we would hide?
No inner vileness that we dread?" [2]

And he answers that the dead see our frailties and our sins, but they see them

"with larger other eyes than ours,
To make allowance for us all."

He, furthermore, brings us the consoling doctrine that though sin attaches to all, in the end the true shall be sifted from the false, the good from the evil: —

"So fret not, like an idle girl,
That life is dashed with flecks of sin.

[1] *In Memoriam*, l. 3. [2] *Ibid.* li. 1.

Abide: thy wealth is gathered in,
When Time hath sundered shell from pearl." [1]

This, we take for granted, implies repentance for the sins committed, and as far as possible reparation for the injury done one's neighbor. Otherwise Tennyson does not rise above the false position of Goethe in his "Faust," who, as has already been seen, saves his hero without either repentance or reparation: —

"The noble spirit now is free,
And saved from evil scheming:
Whoe'er aspires unweariedly
Is not beyond redeeming.

"And if he feels the grace of Love
That from on high is given;
The Blessed Hosts that wait above,
Shall welcome him to Heaven." [2]

4. The poet is here led to touch upon ethical difficulties. He knows many a dignified father of a family, who is now a pattern to his boys, but who in his younger days was reckless enough. Dare it be said that this father is all the better for his early wildness? Tennyson does not encourage such teaching. It is a snare and a delusion to youth, however encouraging it may be to the man who has survived "the heats of youth." So he will have no tampering with the lines between good and evil. He insists upon keeping them clearly defined: —

"Hold thou the good: define it well:
For fear divine Philosophy

[1] *In Memoriam*, lii. 4.
[2] *Faust*, Pt. ii. Chorus of the Angels. Bayard Taylor's translation, p. 424.

Should push beyond her mark, and be
Procuress to the Lords of Hell." [1]

True it is, as we have already noticed, Tennyson weakens his position, and almost undoes what is sound in his teaching by proclaiming in the very next lyric that all things converge to a universal good, and that even as every winter changes to spring so shall good be the final goal of ill. This we have found to be one of the cardinal points of his creed.

XI.

1. Still another serious objection arises: it is evidently a divine instinct implanted in man that he should desire to see everything in this life fulfill its aim, and that he should trust to see in the other all the broken threads taken up and woven into the plan and purpose of God's will. But, on the other hand, here is Nature so improvident, and so careless of the individual life, seemingly destroying thousands that a single type may be preserved. How reconcile the fact with the divine instinct?

"Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life." [2]

It is a mystery to him. He cannot solve it. He can only grope in the dark, holding by the clue of faith, and trusting in the larger hope that somehow all shall be for the best. His own fine words in which he has so deeply and beautifully expressed

[1] *In Memoriam*, liii. 4. [2] *Ibid.* lv. 2.

his intellectual weakness and his spiritual trust will bear repetition: —

"I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,

"I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope." [1]

2. In the mean time science suddenly rent the veil that had been concealing some of nature's laws, and revealed other mysteries that increased the poet's difficulties. In 1845 Charles Darwin called attention to the fact that Nature was not careful even of the type, that there were vast chasms of silence in her records, that the species as well as the individual was not infrequently obliterated. And Tennyson read these words: "To admit that species generally become rare before they become extinct, to find no surprise at the comparative rarity of one species with another, and yet to call in some extraordinary agent and to marvel greatly when a species ceases to exist, appears to me much the same as to admit that sickness in the individual is the prelude to death; to feel no surprise at sickness, but when the sick man dies, to wonder and to believe that he died through violence." [2] In a later book the great naturalist thus more succinctly formulated his conclusions: "We have every reason

[1] *In Memoriam*, lv. 4, 5.
[2] *Journal of Researches*, London, 1845, p. 176.

to believe from the study of the tertiary formations, that species and groups of species gradually disappear, one after another, from first one spot, then from another, and finally from the world." [1] Tennyson's keen vision takes in the whole bearing of Darwin's first announcement; still less does he find Nature's course to tally with man's instinctive trust that no life may fail beyond the grave, and he resumes the subject in another lyric, in which he expresses Darwin's conclusion with grasp and force not excelled by the scientist's own form: —

> "'So careful of the type?' but no.
> From scarpëd cliff and quarried stone
> She cries, 'A thousand types are gone:
> I care for nothing, all shall go.'" [2]

It would indeed seem, in the light of this new discovery, as though Nature were confirming the materialist's doctrine that "the spirit does but mean the breath." The poet asks with alarm, shall this be the end of man, with all his noble aspirations, and elevated ideals, and great achievements, that he shall

> "be blown about the desert dust,
> Or sealed within the iron hills?
>
> "No more? A monster then, a dream,
> A discord. Dragons of the prime,
> That tare each other in their slime,
> Were mellow music matched with him." [3]

Terrified and perplexed by these revelations and analogies of modern science, he despairs of solving

[1] *Genesis of the Species*, 1859, p. 318.
[2] *In Memoriam*, lvi. 1.
[3] *Ibid.* lvi. 5, 6.

the overwhelming enigma in this life, and seeks refuge in the other: —

> "What hope of answer, or redress?
> *Behind the veil, behind the veil.*" [1]

He would have man, against evidence to the contrary, in the midst of doubt and darkness, hold by the clue of a future life in which all mystery shall be made clear.

3. Elsewhere, and at a later date, Tennyson dwelt more forcibly upon the barrenness of life without these fundamental truths. In his poem called "Despair" he has grandly shown how in any view of the world that destroys belief in a moral government, in a hereafter, and in a personal God, the light from the stars shines forth a lie, "bright as with deathless hope;" man a worm writhing in a world of the weak trodden down by the strong; darkness everywhere — "Doubt lord of this dung-hill, Hope with broken heart running after a shadow of good," and Love dead — rather, a delusion that had never existed. In still another poem he depicts the overwhelming vastness of the universe from the materialist's point of view, and shows how that awful sense of inert immensity can alone be counteracted in the soul's life and aspirations: —

> "Many a hearth upon our dark globe sighs after many a vanished face,
> Many a planet by many a sun may roll with the dust of a vanished race.
>
> "Raving politics, never at rest — as this poor earth's pale history runs, —
> What is it all but a trouble of ants in the gleam of a million million of suns? . . .

[1] *In Memoriam*, lvi. 7.

"What is it all, if we all of us end but in being our own corpse-coffins at last,
Swallowed in Vastness, lost in Silence, drowned in the deeps of a meaningless Past?

"What but a murmur of gnats in the gloom, or a moment's anger of bees in their hive? —
Peace, let it be! for I loved him, and love him forever: the dead are not dead but alive." [1]

Was ever the sense of oppressiveness arising from contemplation of the vastness of the universe more powerfully expressed? Were man a mere spawn of matter — a mere development of protoplasm — born for time and ending with time, that vastness and that oppressiveness would be overpowering. But with a profound sense of his greater majesty as a spiritual being, and conscious of his capacity for undying love, — for is not love stronger than death? — this undying love represented by the author's love for Arthur, — man in that consciousness raises himself above and beyond the whole length and breadth and height and depth of this material universe; its vastness shrinks into insignificance by the side of a single spiritual act of an immortal soul. Man loves; his love, when pure, above all when supernatural, grows and strengthens with his years, and he cherishes it because it is to outlive all conditions of time and place.

"Peace, let it be!" — even so in the "In Memoriam" does the poet turn aside from the nightmare horrors of Nature, shrieking against his belief in another and a better world: —

[1] *Vastness.*

"Peace; come away: the song of woe
Is after all an earthly song:
Peace; come away: we do him wrong
To sing so wildly: let us go." [1]

4. In another lyric Tennyson contemplates this earth in its evolution from "tracts of fluent heat" till it has assumed its present form, and "at the last arose the man," and he watches the course of human progress through joy and sorrow, man himself being in his view only "the herald of a higher race;" but he cautions us not to lose our hold upon the clue of immortality, —

"Nor dream of human love and truth,
As dying Nature's earth and lime.

"But trust that those we call the dead
Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends." [2]

And he would have all men drive out of themselves the beasts of passion and raise themselves to higher things: —

"Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die. [3]

XII.

1. Here ends the struggle. The poet can now look back on it all and say: —

"I trust I have not wasted breath:
I think we are not wholly brain,

[1] *In Memoriam*, lvii. 1. [2] *Ibid.* cxviii. 1, 2.
[3] *Ibid.* cxviii. 7.

Magnetic mockeries; not in vain,
Like Paul with beasts, I fought with Death;

"Not only cunning casts in clay:
Let Science prove we are, and then
What matters Science unto men,
At least to me? *I would not stay.*

"Let him, the wiser man who springs
Hereafter, up from childhood shape
His action like the greater ape,
But I was born to other things." [1]

2. This singer of Christian hope would not stay with the science that speaks in the name of materialism. Evolution — progress spiritual, intellectual, material — he can understand, but he will none of materialism. He is unwearied in reiteration of this truth. Science reveals change in the earth's crust: —

"There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
There where the long street roars, hath been
The stillness of the central sea." [2]

"But," paraphrasing in the words of one who made a loving study of the poem, "there is one thing fixed and abiding — that which we call spirit; and, amid all uncertainty, one truth is certain — that to a loving human soul a parting which shall be eternal is unthinkable." [3] And equally fixed in human consciousness is the conviction that there is a loving God. This is proven, in the argument of the poem, not by the things of Nature, though the material

[1] *In Memoriam*, cxx. 1, 2, 3. [2] *Ibid.* cxxiii. 1.
[3] E. R. Chapman, *A Companion to In Memoriam*, p. 67.

universe suffices to prove it, but rather by the universal yearning of the human heart. On this point both Tennyson and Cardinal Newman struck the same chord. In prose no less noble than the poetry of Tennyson the Cardinal says: "The world seems simply to give the lie to that great truth, of which my whole being is so full; and the effect upon me is in consequence, as a matter of necessity, as confusing as if it denied that I am in existence myself. . . . Were it not for this voice speaking so clearly to my conscience and my heart, I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, or a polytheist when I looked into the world. I am speaking for myself only; and I am far from denying the real force of the arguments in proof of a God, drawn from the general facts of human society, but they do not warm me or enlighten me; they do not take away the winter of my desolation, or make the buds unfold and the leaves grow within me, and my moral being rejoice." [1]

3. Strengthened and inspired by the virtues of faith and hope and love, the poet — and with him humanity — rises triumphant over all difficulties, and looking back upon the strife he can now sing: —

"And all is well, though faith and form
Be sundered in the night of fear;
Well roars the storm to those that hear
A deeper voice across the storm." [2]

When the virtues he would sing are not merely natural virtues, but possess the supernatural char-

[1] *Apologia*, p. 267. [2] *In Memoriam*, cxxvii. 1.

acter of the theological virtues, the soul's triumph is indeed complete. And the dead who have passed through the strife and have come out of it victorious overlook the tumult from afar, and smile, "knowing all is well." For Tennyson considers faith in human progress, in spite of all apparent evidence to the contrary, as akin to divine faith; and he still sees, however darkly, that all things work towards a good end: —

> "I see in part
> That all, as in some piece of art,
> Is toil coöperant to an end." [1]

4. The author leaves out in his calculation the one element that explains the anomalous state of things, the retrogressions of races, otherwise than as mere eddies of time: —

> "No doubt vast eddies in the flood
> Of onward time shall yet be made,
> And thronëd races may degrade:"

but that element, that great factor in humanity, Cardinal Newman has supplied. He says: "And so I argue about the world: *if* there be a God, *since* there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity. It is out of joint with the purposes of its Creator. This is a fact — a fact as true as the fact of its existence; and thus the doctrine of what is theologically called original sin becomes to me almost as certain as that the world exists, and as the existence of God." [2] Had the poet reckoned with this element he would have caught a clearer glimpse of the infinite love

[1] *In Memoriam*, cxxviii. 6. [2] *Apologia*, p. 268.

of God for man, his pæan of victory would have been none the less jubilant, and his sense of dependence would have been all the more profound.

5. But what can excel the clarion note in which Tennyson in this last group asserts the communion of the living and the dead? Alluding to his trance, he sings that if Arthur was with him then, none the less can this friend be with him whenever the great desire to commune with the departed spirit grows upon him: —

> "If thou wert with me, and the grave
> Divide us not, be with me now,
> And enter in at breast and brow,
> Till all my blood, a fuller wave,
>
> "Be quickened with a livelier breath,
> And like an inconsiderate boy,
> As in the former flash of joy,
> I slip the thoughts of life and death;
>
> "And all the breeze of Fancy blows,
> And every dewdrop paints a bow,
> The wizard lightnings deeply glow,
> And every thought breaks out a rose." [1]

In his final song every trace of doubt has vanished. The feeling of an immortal existence has become part of his thinking. His friend that was, is and shall be his beyond all power of separation: —

> "Sweet human hand and lips and eye;
> Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
> *Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine.*"

And therefore the image of his friend is mingled everywhere: —

[1] *In Memoriam*, cxxii. 3, 4, 5.

"Behold, I dream a dream of good,
And mingle all the world with thee." [1]

6. That there is between the dead and the living something in common, that they are intimately united, that there exists an unseen and an unspeakable communion between them, is a conviction borne in upon the author with a force beyond all resistance. Is this truth not also the common heritage of humanity? He addresses Arthur: —

"Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee though I die." [2]

But all this triumph of faith and hope and love over doubt and materialism is not of man's own merit. He should will it; he should pray for the grace of it; he should place himself in the hands of the Supreme Will, the guide and strength-giver of all finite wills. And so Tennyson addresses the Divine Will: —

"O Living Will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow through our deeds and make them pure." [3]

He asks that our deeds may be made pure in order that we may all the more readily rise to faith in the truths that we cannot prove, or in his own apt words: —

"And trust,
With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved

[1] *In Memoriam*, cxxix. 3. [2] *Ibid.* cxxx. 3.
[3] *Ibid.* cxxxi. 1.

Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul." [1]

Faith, though based upon knowledge, springs not from knowledge alone. It is not commensurate with science. It is a gratuitous and a gracious gift of God, and not infrequently descendeth where it is least expected.

7. The song that was begun as a dirge over the dead ends in a marriage-lay. Now that the poet has found life worth living, he sings the marriage of a dear sister with another bosom friend, as a pledge and a hope of a future generation that shall approach nearer to, and hasten the reign of the universal good that he descries in the far-off future, where abide: —

"One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves." [2]

8. Finally, as Petrarca ends his lyrics and sonnets upon Laura with a beautiful prayer to the Blessed Virgin, as Goethe finds in woman through the same immaculate Mother redemption from the ills of life, so does Tennyson conclude the work of his poem of sorrow, and struggle, and triumph over the powers of darkness infesting the age, with a magnificent hymn to Him who is Light and Love and Life: —

"Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove." [3]

[1] *In Memoriam*, cxxxi. 3. [2] *Epithalamium*, 36.
[3] *Prelude*, 1.

Thus, the final note of Tennyson's song, which he makes the prelude of his poem, terminates where the final note of Dante's song terminates, in that Love which moves the world, the sun and all the other stars.[1]

XIII.

"In Memoriam," viewed from the ground upon which we now stand, is a highly finished expression of the heart-hunger of a soul groping after the fulfillment of its desires and aspirations, searching into science and art, and challenging heaven and earth to yield up the secret of happiness and contentment, and in the primitive instincts of human nature together with the essential truths of the Christian religion — in these alone interpreted in the light of faith — discovering the meaning of life and answers to the questionings of doubt and materialism. In this fact lies the claim of the poem to rank with "Faust" and the "Divina Commedia," not indeed in degree of greatness and fullness of expression, but in kind. "In Memoriam" is also a world-poem.

[1] *Paradiso*, xxxiii. 131.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

1. In the previous pages we have sought the ideal in thought and applied the principles of criticism which we regard as most fruitful in word and work. Had the writer known a more elevating doctrine he would have imparted it cheerfully, were the expression of it ever so inadequate. The mere negations of criticism are barren of results; the mere clash and clamor of controversy only too frequently end in personal animosities and the strengthening of prejudice. Meanwhile thought is starving and paralyzed for want of the warmth of life and the nourishment of life-giving food in men's teachings. Keen and bright intellects, hungering and thirsting, grope in cold and darkness after spiritual meat and drink with a yearning and an earnestness that are rarely witnessed in the history of human thought.

2. Beneath the rationalism and agnosticism of the day there is a strong religious feeling crying out for light and life and warmth. Witness the neo-Christian movement in France. It is a reaction against the barrenness of materialism in philosophy and the rottenness of realism in literature. It is a school of choice spirits who refuse to subscribe to

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the doctrine that there is no unseen world, and who would converge their best thoughts upon the soul and its destiny. These writers hold by the reality of spiritual life. They crave nourishment for that life. Faith in that life and religious truth and moral right they regard as integral portions of human activity. With Renan they hold a man's worth to be in proportion to the amount of religious sentiment he has preserved from his early training, that religious sentiment giving fragrance to his whole life.[1] Religion is from their point of view as great a need for the intellect as philosophy. They do not vouch for the truth of their conception of religion, but they have no doubt whatever concerning its beauty and goodness. "Faith," says M. Edouard Rod, "has an answer for every curious question; it explains all. It gives the reason for our existence, since it proves to us that we are the centre of the world; it lends us the courage to support our sufferings, since it teaches us that they are a preparation for a better destiny; it imparts a relish for life, since it convinces us that life is eternity. By plunging into mystery it has caused all fear thereof to vanish; its affirmations have banished doubt, and in the triumph of its certitude it has established a marvelously constructed system upon an imaginary basis, which, designed as it is to meet every intellectual want, leaves no room for despair."[2]

[1] *Feuilles Détachées*, pref. p. xvii.

[2] *Le Sens de la Vie*, p. 26.

3. So speaks one of the apostles of the neo-Christian movement. He talks of faith; but faith in what? — there 's the rub. The new creed speaks respectfully of religion, but it accepts no dogma; it assumes the Christian code of morality without the Christian sanction and the fundamental religious truths upon which both code and sanction are based. It is merely a vague sentiment. Christian morality without the Christian religion is an abstraction; religion without dogma is a chimera of the brain. In attempting to appropriate from Christianity its beautiful morality, its consoling faith, its all-embracing mysteries, without the doctrine and the dogma of Christianity, the neo-Christian disciples are plucking flower and leaf, leaving behind the root and stem through which life-giving nourishment flows. As well expect the plucked flower to ripen into fruit as this admiration for Christianity to be productive of spiritual life and growth or to end in the robust activity that is a mark of every genuine Christian institution.

4. Nothing can supersede the Catholic Church as a great social and intellectual force — the Church of Clement and Augustin and Aquinas, the Church that inspired Dante and à Kempis — with its unchanging dogma, its harmoniously developed doctrine, its significant ritual and ceremonial; with its priesthood, its sacraments, its hymns and prayers; its all-embracing charity embodied in the various institutions established throughout the world for the healing of human misery and

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