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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Some Little Things that are Big.[1]

'Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!' —Ja 3[5].

The house where I spend my holidays among the hills and the heather stands at the edge of a birch wood. And in the garden there are some glorious trees. One of them has always been a special favourite, a tall and stately one; and yet the last few years, though it is not old for a tree as yet, more and more of its branches have been getting leafless and withered and bare, and in a year or two it seems the whole tree will have died. The other day I showed it to a man who knows most things about trees, and asked him what was wrong with it. He looked at it for a bit, and pointed to a scar a good way up the stem. 'That is what is killing it,' he said. 'Oh, nonsense,' said I, 'that's nothing at all, I remember when that happened. It was on a wild day about Christmas fifteen years ago that a great rushing wind broke off a big branch that used to be there. But the tree, though not so perfect after that, was never a bit the worse.' 'It was,' he said; 'you didn't know it, and there was nothing for a long, long time to show it you; but it was then the tree began to die. On the raw, broken wood where there was no bark left to shield it, the spores or seeds of a fungus gathered, and it has eaten farther and farther into the huge stem, has reached its very heart. Look! the wood is all soft and crumbly there, and nothing now can save your glorious tree, and in a year or two at most it will be dead.'

Well, it will make a great blank when it goes, and we shall miss it sadly. But you see how much mischief can come from quite a little thing. Why! drop a spark on a dry heather moor and you may have a fire of miles and miles, or a whole forest one great roaring furnace, or many streets ablaze, with men, women, and children running out in terror, and firemen working with their ladders, and people being burned perhaps; and one spark did it all!

And in that same place where I holiday, the first year of the War all the children everywhere were playing at soldiers. And ours asked to be allowed to dig a real big trench and to live in it through the long hot summer days, and be just like the boys out at the front. So they dug it, and played in it, and then they turned to other games, and when we were leaving we forgot to fill it in; and next year a few nettles, blown from who knows where, sprang up in the bare bit of ground, and the next summer again they had spread into quite a patch of them, and the next, why they were seeding themselves everywhere. And ever since, we have had to keep cutting them, and digging up the roots, or they would be all over the place. And it all started in a children's trench twelve years ago! So, again, you see what trouble can come from a little thing.

And you and I must take care, for we may have something like that in our lives—just a little thing as yet, and you and I may think nothing about it; but if it spreads and spreads, or if it eats into our heart, what then? Perhaps you're getting selfish and greedy. Oh, just about little things, of course. It doesn't really matter much who gets the best cake on the plate. In ten minutes we've forgotten all about it. But if your hand always goes out for it, or if, when Dad can take only one in the car you always cry 'Take me'; if it's your game that must be played, if you must get first innings every time, and the first read of the new books—why, look here, hasn't that horrid fungus selfishness blown in somehow from somewhere and isn't it spreading deeper and deeper into your heart? You may never notice, but other people will soon be saying, 'I can't stand that child, he is just a selfish little brat.'

Or, the other night Mother said, 'Now, remember, off to bed at half-past seven!' And you promised, and you meant to go. But, when you looked, it was only twenty past, and so you snuggled down for the next chapter, and at the end of it you had to peep into the next, and not read it, but just see what was to happen. And—it was ten to eight when you went off. Yet when Mother said, 'Did you go upstairs when you promised?' you said 'Yes'! Well, you meant to do it, and it was a kind of accident you didn't go, I know. But if you start that kind of thing, if you're not straight and true and honest, it will grow and grow till you can't help it and are always doing it. The nettles will keep spreading over everything. You know yourself

[1] By the Reverend A. J. Gossip, M.A., Aberdeen.

how easily a habit grows. Last session you started off quite well, not at the top perhaps, still fairly well. And yet all the last term you were about the worst in the whole class. Now why? Wasn't it because a new boy came to live three doors away; and one day you went off with him instead of turning in to work, and somehow after that you kept going nearly every night, and never really settled down to work at all? It began so easily, one little branch broke, that was all at first, yet by and by the whole tree died. If you keep on like that, a day is sure to come when some one has to be promoted in the office, and it should be you, but they will say, 'Oh, no, he's a slacker, comes in ten minutes late, and never puts his heart into his work. He is no use at all,' and they will push up some one else, and leave you where you were.

A little thing can do a heap of damage. So we must take care. My friend told me that if I had painted the raw place on the tree it would have been all right. 'Five minutes would have done it then, but you can't save it now,' he said. And if we had pulled up the five or six first nettles—a sting or two, and all would have been over. But it's hard work now to keep them down. Or if some child had set its foot on that first spark and stamped it out, there would have been no fire. But once it got agoing what could anybody do? And these things in our life, it's a pity we didn't start to cure them sooner, but we have time yet if we don't lose any more. I wouldn't wait another moment. I would go at once to Jesus Christ, who is so clever at mending broken things, like Daddy with your toys, or Mother when you fall and bark your knees. I would go off to Him at once, and say, 'Here is a little lass, or a little laddie, who has let the nettles of temper and sulks and passion into his life and can't get them pulled up, tug how he will, and oh, how they sting! who has allowed the fungus selfishness to eat into her heart and she can't put things right. Will You not help me?' And He will. But we must lose no time. Five minutes would have saved that tree once, but now it must die.

A Knitting Lesson.[1]

'The whole body, knit together . . . grows with a divine growth.'—Col 2[2] (20th Century N.T.).

SOMETIMES you find people studying papers of printed directions that look like a muddled algebra. There is line after line like this: 'k3, p2, repeat for 15 rows; p32, k26,' page after page of it. If you are very clever you know at once that it is not algebra but directions for knitting socks or sweaters or some such thing. But have you ever thought that making a character is very much like knitting a stocking, that both have to be done in very similar ways? Plain and purl, picking up and casting off, one stitch at a time, reach the end of the row and start afresh, following the directions and keeping to the pattern, knitting tightly or knitting loosely, all have their place in life.

Have you ever tried to knit a sock? You started out with tremendous enthusiasm. When you came home from school you could hardly wait to take your things off before you picked up the knitting. You wanted to get up early in the morning to get on with it, and sit up late at night to do a bit more at it, and you put a piece of wool in to see just how much you had done every day. But that enthusiasm did not last very long, did it? In spite of all your work and labour, progress was painfully slow. It seemed as though you never would get down to the heel. You had to work so hard and so long even to get another inch done, and you got tired of it. Still there was no way to get it finished except that steady one row at a time.

In Bedfordshire, where they make wonderful lace on big pillows by winding thread round forests of pins stuck into brown paper patterns, old people used to tell me that when they were children they had to make so much lace every day before they were allowed to play. If they went to a lace school they would have to make so much before they were allowed to go home. Sometimes they would unroll a bit of the lace they had made yesterday and have it measured up with to-day's that they might go out earlier. But you were always found out at the end of the week, for then the whole length was measured and if it was short you had to make it up. You may trick life for a little while, but it will not last, and you will have to make it up in the end.

The stocking gets finished by simply keeping on, stitch after stitch, one row at a time, stitch after stitch. A great English statesman had a friend who was splendid at starting things, but he seldom finished anything. He got tired of his knitting before he reached the heel of his stocking. 'My friend,' said the statesman to him one day, 'you need to observe the postage stamp. When you put it on a letter it sticks to that one thing till it

[1] By the Reverend Wm. J. May, Gosport.

gets there.' If you stick to one thing you *will* get there, right to the finishing-off row at the toe.

And you discover this, the longer you keep on, the easier it becomes. 'You get into the habit of it,' as people say. The first few stitches took a tremendous lot of thinking about. You had to watch carefully and go slowly, but the next row was a little easier, and before long you did not have to watch your needles very much. Some day you hope you will be able to knit as well as Granny can, who can knit and talk and look at something else all at the same time. In fact, there are times when you wish Granny could not see quite as much when she is sitting down quietly knitting.

Learning to knit is like learning to walk. Baby legs take a lot of managing. They always seem to be wanting to go in wrong directions, and Baby seems to have to stop and think what to do next. But before long you get into the habit of walking, and you walk surely and without thinking much about it. When you began to knit, the needles seemed as big and as awkward as broomsticks. Now you can make them do anything you wish.

Good habits are just as strong as bad ones. The longer you knit, the easier knitting becomes. People are always talking about the drinking habit, the swearing habit, the bad temper habit. But why not talk about the kindness habit, the courage habit, the prayer habit, the love habit. For all the things you want to be—courageous, loving, truthful, kind, are like knitting. At first they demand thought and effort, but the longer you practise them the easier they become, and you do them as naturally as Granny does her knitting. You make a habit of it.

'Oh, there! And now I've dropped a stitch!' You have had to say that before to-day. Even the most clever knitters will drop a stitch sometimes. There is only one thing to be done, go back and pick it up. Otherwise, everything will go wrong. The temptation, of course, is to say, 'I won't bother. I won't take any notice of it.' But if you do, all your knitting will be spoiled. That dropped stitch will weaken every other stitch, and the weakness will spread, and your stocking will 'ladder,' and all manner of awful things will happen. Certainly, you must put it right at once.

In South Africa there is a curious thorn known as a grapple-plant. Its long branches have sharp, curved thorns. If one hooked thorn catches itself in your sleeve the first attempt to get free will bend the long, slender branches and a score of other thorns hook themselves in you. If you are hooked by the grapple-plant the only remedy is to keep still, cut off the thorns, and remove them one by one. It is no use trying to say, 'I won't take any notice of that grappling thorn. After all, it was only one.' You will be compelled to take notice of it. You cannot ignore it.

And the longer you try to ignore a dropped stitch the worse it is. It means so much more trouble to undo several rows and go back to that weak place and pick up the dropped stitch, than it does to put it right at once. You will be sure to make mistakes, to drop a stitch now and then. When you try to knit the courage habit you will sometimes forget and be a coward. When you try to be kind you will sometimes forget and be selfish. It is only a stitch. Go back and put it right at once and no great harm will be done. But don't try to ignore it, don't delay putting it right. That way lie sorrow and trouble. Just keep on, one stitch at a time, one row at a time. It will come right at the end.

The Christian Year.

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

The Symbol of Christianity.

'But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.'—Gal 6^{14}.

Christianity is the religion of the Cross. Its subject-matter is called the Cross. Its Author and Lord is the incarnate, risen, and exalted Son of God who died upon the Cross. Its aim, salvation, is accomplished through the Cross. The Cross is the outstanding symbol of Christianity.

What is the meaning of this? Why is this place given within Christianity to the Cross? It is for two reasons. The one is what is vividly suggested by the Cross itself: the other is the Victim in whom Christianity is chiefly interested who suffered upon the Cross. The Cross stands for two things. It stands for the proper fate of the worst of evil-doers. It stands also for the common fate of devoted saviours of their kind. No wonder the Cross should find a prominent place in a religion whose aim is the salvation of sinful men.

But it is Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified, who gives supreme significance to the Cross. But for Him it would never have received attention;

everything turns on Him. When faith reflected on who He was, and received God's testimony to His worth, it saw immediately that if once the meaning of that death were realized, nothing else could mean so much for men as that. And with the light of its meaning breaking in ever greater brilliance around them, Paul in an ecstasy burst forth in the words, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross.' It was its double significance of shame and salvation, elements so signally blended in the experience of the Lord, that made the Cross at once draw and repel. As the poet puts it:

This, that killed Thee, kissed Thee, Lord!
Touched Thee, and we touch it: dear,
Dark it is; adored, abhorred:
Vilest, yet most sainted here.
Red of heat, O white of heat,
In it hell and heaven meet.

1. The Cross of Christ, first of all, witnesses to the completeness of the Divine understanding of, and the intensity of the Divine sympathy with, human suffering and sorrow.

In one of his sonnets in the *Vita Nuova*, Dante distils the essence of sympathy into these two lines. Speaking of one who offered him comfort in his great grief over the death of Beatrice, he says:

Our life revives, since one doth now console
Who sorrows with us, *healing grief with grief.*

That goes to the heart of things. The sympathy that we feel to be most real is that which has behind it a kindred experience, can heal grief with grief. Remember, then, who suffered upon the Cross. It was God incarnate, God in human flesh. Remember the sufferings and the shame of the Passion week which culminated in the Cross. Remember that the Father gave up the Son to suffer all this for us. Are these sufferings not the guarantee to us that God knows by experience what human suffering is, knows what bereavement is, and can feel for the creatures He has made?

Ah, that touch of sympathy! how it tells! A man as little in line with orthodox Christianity as Thomas Carlyle does not fail to appreciate this in Christianity. Carlyle moralizes on the fate of Marie Antoinette. Where must she look for consolation when, on the way to the guillotine, every heart was steeled against her? What do you think he says? 'Think not of these; think of Him whom thou worshippest, the Crucified—who also treading the winepress alone, fronted sorrow still deeper; and triumphed over it, and made it holy; and built of it a "Sanctuary of Sorrow" for thee and all the wretched.'

2. Christianity, for a second thing, bears unswerving testimony to God's absolute antagonism to sin. And the Cross is the symbol of that.

Men knew what they meant by condemning a man to the Cross. It was the brand of their utter execration on what they believed to be his way of life. They meant that they had tracked the dark doings which they utterly abhorred to their lair, and they now dragged them into the light of day; and the miscreant they nailed up upon the Cross as though to say, 'Behold a pest-infested wretch that would pollute the earth were he to remain longer upon it. Let him die the most painful and shameful of deaths.' The Cross was a human testimony against sin, expressed what man in his inmost conscience knew every sin deserved. God endorsed that judgment. It was a God-given instinct that looked with unrelenting eyes on wickedness.

There is a great fact called human solidarity. We are members of one body, and if one member goes wrong all the others suffer with it, cannot escape; personal worth is no protection. And Christ had become a member of this sin-smitten race. He might, He did, avoid all personal participation in its evil ways. But if He went into the waters of baptism, it was because He acknowledged the sin of the race to which He belonged, sin in which therefore He was involved, and He consecrated Himself to save them. And when He suffered on the Cross, submitted to death and all that led up to death there, it was just because on man's behalf He acquiesced in this way in God's judgment upon sin.

3. The human heart has always had the conviction that in certain hands the sharing of suffering and doom can be redemptive. It may be so in the case of the innocent. It may be so for all for whom the innocent stands, for all with whom he is in touch. If one could appear in touch with all humanity animated by a love wide enough, he could stand for them all. But this is to ask for the coming of God, and a Divine sacrifice. Yet men imagined that even that might be. To say nothing of the whole testimony of the Old Testa-

ment, Æschylus thought there was hope for Prometheus, if

> Some God should come to bear his woes
> And pass to Hades' sunless realm,
> And the dark cloudy depths of Tartarus.

Sophocles knew the power of love to save. Œdipus in his misery, seeking for deliverance from the fate that his unconscious sin had brought upon him, cries :

> One soul working in the strength of love
> Is mightier than ten thousand to atone.

Atonement, sacrifice, with all that it involved of substitution and propitiation, all that it expressed of submission, restitution, plea for pardon, was the method to which mankind instinctively betook itself to get rid of the burden on the conscience which we call the sense of guilt.

Now the Cross is the symbol of all that. It says that it was a true instinct in the human heart which said atonement was needed before we could be forgiven. But it also supplies the answer to the challenge and the fear. To the fear that there was no one equal to the task it offers the Son of God. To the challenge 'Why was atonement necessary?' the question 'Is not pardon free?' it offers the suffering Son of God.

Lily Douglas, in *Christus Futurus*, says : 'Reason cries, "If God were good, he could not look upon the sin and misery of man and live ; his heart would break." The Church points to the Crucifixion and says, "God's heart did break." Reason cries, "Born and reared in sin and pain as we are, how can we keep from sin? It is the Creator who is responsible ; it is God who deserves to be punished." The Church kneels by the Cross, and whispers, "God takes the responsibility and bears the punishment." Reason cries, "Who is God? What is God? The name stands for the unknown. It is blasphemy to say we know him." The Church kisses the feet of the dying Christ, and says, "We must worship the majesty we see."'

The only criticism on that beautiful utterance is, that it is not reason that speaks as reason is represented here, but unreason and cavil and pride and sin at bay. Reason is humble and learns at the Cross the solution of many a mystery, but also that there are mysteries like the overcoming of sin which the heart gratefully welcomes and accepts, but which human reason cannot fully fathom or understand. It learns the mystery of the Cross.

4. There is still another side of Christianity, of which the Cross is the symbol. It is the symbol of the life which the Christian is to live.

Before ever His own Cross was set up, Christ said, 'Whosoever will be my disciple, must take up his cross and follow me.' When He said this, it was simply a very vivid figure that could not fail in its message to men who knew too well the methods of a Roman execution. It meant to say that even if following Christ involved a way through life whose only parallel for crushing burden and scorn was to be found in that of a man on his way to execution with his cross on his back, a true disciple must be prepared for it. If loyalty to Christ meant the uncomplaining acceptance of imposition, misrepresentation, ingratitude, and cruelty, the true Christian must not shrink. But how enormously intensified is the force of the words when Jesus has to the very letter borne the Cross along the 'Dolorous Way,' and died on the Cross for men! In the light of that we understand what Amiel says : 'The Cross is the guarantee of the Gospel, therefore it has been its standard.'

It is seven hundred years now since St. Francis of Assisi died. And in October the minds of men will be turning to Italy and to the memorial celebrations there. So let us think of him for a moment. The old tale runs that as St. Francis was walking near the Church of San Damiano, the word came unto him in the Spirit that he should enter in and pray. Having entered in he began to pray fervently before a certain image of the Crucified One. He devoted himself to God's service, and later we have him repeating the words of the text : 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.'

'O my Lord Jesus Christ,' he prayed, 'grant me two graces before I die : the first, that in my lifetime I may feel in my soul and in my body, so far as may be, the pain that Thou, sweet Lord, didst bear in the hour of Thy most bitter passion ; the second is, that I may feel in my heart, as far as may be, that exceeding love wherewith Thou, O Son of God, wast kindled to willingly endure such agony for us sinners.'

The more it is pondered, the more the power of Christianity is found to lie in the Cross. The incarnate Christ, the risen and exalted Christ, and

all His mysterious presence among us and experiences in our midst, become intelligible when we find Him acting for us and upon us by His death on the Cross, acting in us and through us by awakening in us the very spirit that led Him to the Cross. Of course the Cross does not say all. It is but a symbol, and no symbol can. But 'the very power of a symbol lies in the sublime inadequacy and yet practical effectiveness of its suggestion.' And this symbol is associated so intimately with the great critical, crucial event in the Saviour's work for the world's salvation, that we are not surprised that the gospel is called the word of the Cross. The Cross symbolizes the service He did for us. It symbolizes the nature of the service He expects of us. And if it reminds us that the ideal life for man is no smooth, easy progress over carpeted tracks, but strenuous, arduous, often wrestling with things repellent and cruel, it tells us, too, that Christ asks nothing of His followers harder than He has faced for them of His own gracious will, for

Not in soft speech is told the earthly story,
Love of all loves! that showed Thee for an hour;
Shame was Thy kingdom, and reproach Thy glory,
Death Thine eternity, the Cross Thy power.[1]

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Found in Christ.

'That I may be found in him.'—Ph $3^{8.9}$.

The Apostle admits us here into the very sanctuary of his being. There stand revealed to us on this page of Scripture the forces and ambitions which determined and governed his life. The impression produced on us resembles that which attends the contemplation of the huge shafts and cylinders which drive an ocean-liner through the water. What energies wrought within him! What eagerness of mind, what enthusiasm of feeling, what resoluteness of will! And all this tremendous activity was generated by the fires of a single devotion, and concentrated on a single object. If you subtract from the experience of the Apostle Paul his relationship to Jesus Christ, there is only a shell of a personality left. Christ lived in him, and he lived in Christ and for Christ.

Elsewhere in his writings he gives ample expression to the debt of gratitude under which he was conscious of living to Christ. But in this section of his Epistle to the Philippians he tells us how he is affected *towards* Christ. The two things go together like the sides of a coin. Both elements are present in the experience of Christian people. And there exists a direct correspondence between the one and the other. According as a man is affected *by* Christ, so will he be affected *towards* Christ. 'To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.' That principle, which our Lord enunciated at the table of Simon the Pharisee, has a wider application in reference to Himself.

The ardent emotion of the Apostle's heart leapt out in three great flames of longing—that he might know Christ, that he might gain Christ, that he might be found in Christ.

No one ever *knew* Christ more intimately than Paul did. Gifted by nature with rare powers of insight and sensibility, he had exercised them to the full on the Person of his Lord. 'Life,' as it has been well said, 'had set him at the point of view for realizing now one significant fact about Christ, now another.' Enlargement of understanding had accompanied and accrued from apostolic activity, as is always the case. But many-sided and profound as his knowledge was, there was no satisfying him. Unsearched riches in Christ inspired him with a vehement eagerness to mine away in quest of them.

No one ever *gained* Christ more signally than Paul did. The privileges which he enjoyed by birth and training, and the high position he had won in Jewish religious circles by his strictness and zeal, were renounced by him when he became a Christian. Ever since his conversion he had made it his aim to interpret life and duty according to the mind of Christ. The estimates he had formed of the relative value of competing interests and alternative lines of action, had not been cherished by him as mere sentiments. Decisions had invariably been framed on the strength of them. They had been adopted as the working principles of his conscience. His conduct had been based on no other standards, so that he has gained Christ in a most genuine and practical way, and had kept on gaining Christ to the increase of his wealth of moral experience. But to such length will the spirit of covetousness for the best gifts—for God's unspeakable Gift—go, that the ambition of his old age was for still larger acquisitions.

No man, surely, was ever *to be found* in Christ more unmistakably than Paul was. Wherever he

[1] R. J. Drummond, *Faith's Certainties*, 125.

might chance to be, in Jerusalem or Ephesus, Antioch or Athens, Corinth or Rome; whensoever he might happen to be tested—on his tours, during a shipwreck, before his judges, in the lists of controversy; under whatever circumstances he was exposed to discovery, he was to be found in Christ. But as though this relationship to Christ had never been effected before, or were only a matter of recent date, the Apostle was moved by a great impulse of desire to have it sealed and secured beyond all question.

Let us consider that last aspiration of the Apostle's in a little more detail.

1. *We are able to find ourselves.* It is quite usual in ordinary conversation for a man to say, that he found himself doing or saying a certain thing on a particular occasion. The impression which he wishes to convey is that, up to this point, his conduct had not been attended by any larger measure of thought than was required for the mere fulfilment of it. He had not been acting or speaking with deliberation, and a clear recognition of what he was about. Then all of a sudden he awoke to self-consciousness. He saw himself, and heard himself, as distinctly as other people had been doing while he was absent-minded. He found himself using certain words, and performing certain actions.

Now it is undoubtedly the case, that this experience of self-discovery can be cultivated by each one of us. More than that, it ought to be cultivated by each one of us. If, with all our finding, we never try to find ourselves, we are neglecting by far the most important object of investigation within our compass. 'The unexamined life,' wrote Marcus Aurelius, 'is not worth living.' We ought to question ourselves periodically and faithfully concerning the sources from which the guiding ideas of our minds, and the prevailing choices of our wills, come. We must ascertain to whom or to what the character, which our thinking and our conduct assume, is primarily due. We must find ourselves, and find whether we are in Christ.

2. *We are found by the events which happen within our experiences.* There is nothing unfamiliar about that thought. During periods of anxiety occasioned by international complications, no question is more frequently discussed than that of the state in which a hostile movement by a foreign Power might possibly find the defences of this country. Persons placed in positions of responsibility, like ship-captains or engine-drivers, are constantly being commended for having shown, what we describe as remarkable 'presence of mind.' Some emergency or other arose, and found them ready to cope with it.

In the case of every one of us, what we are and where we are is being proved daily by the things that happen to us. A problem, simple-looking enough perhaps, comes up for solution. What do we make of it? An opportunity for doing some one a good turn, or helping on a cause, is presented to us. What response does it get from us? A stroke of good fortune, as the saying is, befalls us. How do we take it? A wrong is done to us. How does it affect us? A sore disappointment occurs to us. In what spirit do we receive it? The events of this present life, then, test us and find us. Do they find us in Christ? The solemn and unfamiliar circumstances of the world to come will likewise test us and find us. Will they find us in Christ?

3. *We are found by those persons with whom we come in contact.* 'How can a man be concealed?' exclaimed Confucius. By what we say and do, by what we abstain from saying and doing, by our looks and our laughter and our tears, we unmask ourselves to others. Our neighbours and our friends, those who work alongside of us and those who work for us, our colleagues and our pupils and our patients find us. Our children grow up in our homes, and there comes a day when, from a remark or a glance, we realize that they have been searching us and finding us. It is inevitable that we should be found. It implies no inquisitiveness, or impertinent curiosity on the part of others, that they do succeed in finding us. What and where, in God's name, would you have yourself found? Is it not the sincere and commanding desire of your heart that, always and by all who find you, you may be found in Christ?

'In Christ.' The relation so expressed is too wonderful ever to be described adequately. But the possibility of it, the reality of it, will never be gainsaid by those who have experience of it. It is an ultimate fact of the Christian life. We are made to correlate with Jesus Christ, and He with us. To keep our union with Him in repair, to renew and strengthen it, are the objects of our worship. We would be hidden more deeply in Him, that, when found, we may be found in Him—undetachable from the Rock of Ages, as the single stone embedded in the granite boulder is inseparable

from the parent mass. We would have our lives and characters inexplicable—not in the sense of being ambiguous, inconsistent, veering between Yea and Nay—but inexplicable in the sense of being incapable of explanation apart from Jesus Christ.[1]

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Religious Teaching of Nature: A Harvest Thanksgiving Sermon.

'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.'—Ps 19[1].

The Harvest Festival is by no means a modern invention; its idea is not even peculiar to the Christian religion. Many of the old world people, too, had their Harvest Festivals, or something corresponding to them. The old Greeks, for instance, had them. As the grain ripened they saw Ceres tending the golden sheaves, and when it was brought home and stored and garnered they poured out libations to her, and kept high festival in her honour. Nay, more than this; what they recognized in the Harvest they recognized everywhere in the world of Nature. Everything that happened there was for them the manifestation of some Divine power, the exhibition of some Divine attribute. When the sea thundered on the beach, it was the god of the ocean rousing himself in his fury. When the sun rose in its strength, it was the god of beauty and light driving his fiery chariot up the steep incline of heaven. When the morning broke, it was the goddess of dawn drawing back with rosy fingers the black curtains of night, or lovely Aphrodite rising from the eastern waves.

What was the main idea at work beneath all these imaginative and poetical forms? Was it not this—that God reveals Himself everywhere in Nature, that it is a great book illumined with His glory, that all its forms of beauty and power are but a thin veil which He has thrown over His face, and that if we raise but a corner of that veil we are ushered into His Presence.

Now it is just the same idea which is embodied in our Christian Harvest Festivals. They are in their essence a protest against the materialistic conception of Nature: they are intended by the Church as occasions on which we are called in a special manner to study the revelation which God makes of Himself there. Through the medium of the harvest-field we are reminded that the same God whom we worship here in church, whom we partake of under sacramental forms, whom we commune with in our meditations, and address in our prayers, and glorify in our praises, is He who keeps the stars in their courses, who fills the world with sights and sounds of mysterious beauty, and who makes that world subservient to the satisfaction of human needs.

1. The first lesson we find in Nature, then, is that of *purpose and design.* Purpose is written right across the whole life of Nature: and is not the same word written across the whole life of spirit as well? Is it not true that the conscious beginning of that life dates from the time when the man realizes that he was put into the world to do some definite work, to carry out some definite design; that life with all its varied capacities and energies was not given to him to be frittered away, to be wasted in unworthy employments and frivolous pursuits; but that He who gave it to us expects us to do something with it, and that something not a vague unimportant thing, but a particular work which is part of a great design, and the neglect of which will make that design proportionately distorted and incomplete? In our hands is placed the tremendous power of free will: the power of working together with God for the accomplishment of that design, or of refusing to take our part in the struggle.

2. A second great law of the spiritual life is brought home to us in Nature—the law of *self-sacrifice.* The first assumption with which we approach the study of Nature is that everything is created for a purpose, but modern science with its doctrines of development and evolution leads us a step farther. For it tells us with increasing distinctness that that purpose is not merely the maintenance of individual life, but that often the individual must be treated as a means to an end; that often its true object is only gained by self-surrender; that Nature itself is a great living organism, in which the parts minister to each other and exist primarily for the sake of the whole. Thus, the seed sacrifices itself to maintain the life of the plant, the plant sacrifices itself to maintain the life of man, and man in turn must sacrifice himself to maintain the life of God.

Men so often fail in finding the true purpose of their lives because they look for it in the wrong place, because they try to find it in their own satisfaction, their own pleasure, their own self-

[1] A. B. Macaulay, *The Word of the Cross*, 102.

formed ideals. But there they will never find it; they must look for it outside themselves, in the living organism of which they form a part, the organism of the Church of God.

The master-motive of the Christian life is not self-culture. The perfect life unfolded to us in the Gospels is moulded on no such ideal. Christ never aimed at the development of self, the culture of self. On the contrary, He absolutely ignored self. It is true, indeed, that the experience of eighteen centuries has proved that the path He trod was in the highest sense the path of personal and social progress. But this was never His conscious motive, nor was it ever presented as such to His followers. We need to grasp this fact with special clearness in these days of educational advance and intellectual aspiration. Christianity lays small stress upon self-improvement, even upon the improvement of our intellectual and spiritual capacities, save as means to a further end. It calls us to place ourselves as instruments in the hands of a Higher Power and to make ourselves fitting instruments, so far as may be.

3. There is one more lesson we may draw from God's revelation of Himself in Nature, a lesson closely related to the last, and that is the lesson of *dependence*, the lesson that we are not complete in ourselves, but that for the full completion of our lives, nay for their very maintenance, we must depend on help given from outside, and that that help can only be gained by submitting ourselves to a definite, external, ordered system of things to which we can adapt ourselves, but which we must recognize as independent of us, and above our control.

This is obvious in the region of our material life. We can sow the seed, but we cannot create it; we can tend it, and cultivate it, but we cannot make it grow. It is the warm sun, and the rain from heaven, and the fertile soil which must do this for us, and these are powers which exist apart from us and in independence of us. If we refuse to recognize them we get no results; if we throw ourselves into opposition to them we may meet with disaster.

All this is obvious enough in the world of Nature; it is equally obvious in the world of Grace, but it is by no means so readily recognized there. We talk, indeed, in a vague way of our dependence on God, of our need of His help, of our inability to do anything in our own strength. But too often our recognition ends there, too often we seem to start with ourselves, our own wishes, our own prejudices, our own views, our own self-formed ideals, and seem to think that God's revealed will must be adapted to them, must be brought to the test of our individual idiosyncrasies.

Against this self-opinionated tendency the voice of Nature re-echoes in emphatic terms the protest of the Church. What we have to learn is this—that if we are to make any progress in our understanding of the mysteries of our faith we must approach the study of that faith as we approach the study of Nature, as something existing apart from us and independently of us, an objective order which our intellects must try to analyse and interpret, but which they are powerless to modify or reconstruct.

These, then, are the three Harvest lessons—the lesson of purpose, the lesson of self-sacrifice, and the lesson of dependence. But these stern laws which form, as it were, the woof of the web of life, are mitigated and softened by a higher law in which they merge—the all-pervading *law of love*. Go out into the countryside on some fair autumn evening during harvest-tide and see the cornfields ready to cast their golden treasures down at the feet of the reapers, look at the sun setting in its glory and bathing the blue hills in seas of liquid gold, watch the great white stars rise up and silently sail across the eternal blue dome of the heavens. What does all this mysterious beauty and splendour mean? What, but an expression of God's love, the higher note in which all Nature's voices combine to produce an eternal harmony of all-pervading praise and joy. The deep undertone of restless purpose is there, the cry of suffering and sacrifice is heard on all sides, so is the majestic utterance of authority and power. Without these the beauty could not be. But when they are combined, see the results. They at once merge their apparent discords in that higher strain which angels sing and which carries our spirits with it to the throne of God.[1]

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The Burning Bush.

'And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.'—Ex 3^3.

1. There is *hope for a man so long as he retains his curiosity*. A thing to be dreaded is the loss of

[1] W. H. Carnegie, in *Harvest Thanksgiving Sermons*, 70.

the spirit of inquisitiveness. When the wonder goes out of the world, out of great things as well as small; when no great upheaval or vast human drama can stir a man's heart, or when the softer things, 'friendship and books, light and the summer rain, beat on his senseless heart in vain,' then a man is but a pale shadow of his true self.

It is a fate that comes sometimes to the man who has fed his sensual nature too richly. He may have been over-blessed with this world's goods—he has stimulated and cajoled his senses until at last they refused to respond to him. It may come to the man who has aimed high and missed. All his dreams have been dispelled, and even actualities can no longer kindle enthusiasm.

It is wonderful how often Nature retains the last power of appeal. Sometimes he whom no human voice can move will hear a voice from a flower. The eye that looked upon the whole world without lustre may kindle even at the sight of a burning bush.

It was one of God's mercies to Moses that he could be attracted by a burning bush. For he was a man who had aimed high and missed. His life had been one of romance until futility had settled down upon it like a cloud. He had been born a slave, the son of a slave. And he who had been a slave became a prince in the House of Egypt. Motherless he seemed to be, and yet had found a wondrous wealth of affection in the slave woman who nursed him. He could never forget the day when she told him that he was not a son of Egypt, but a son of Israel. He remembered how she had taken him out and shown him the slave people toiling in the sun, how her dark eyes had flashed when she told him they were his kin and that he was destined to be their deliverer. Moses had nobly responded to her challenge. He felt the strange burning pulsation of the blood of his race in his veins; he heard the mystic call of the old religion; the moan of the slave tormented his dreams.

So he nursed in his heart a fiery indignation against Pharaoh and his system. One day he struck, but, as so often happens when the fire in a man's heart has been secretly burning, he struck with his own hand before the hand of the clock pointed to the hour. And then forestalled, unprepared, checkmated, no hero but only a common assassin, no prince of Egypt, not even an accredited son of the slave race, merely a refugee and a stranger, he had come to Midian, that little alien land where every newcomer was regarded with suspicion, and for forty years he had lived there, still a stranger. The old fiery dreams had died down into ashes; there was no pleasant thought of the past, no hopeful thought of the future, only day by day monotonous toil. Many flocks of sheep had passed through his hand. Were not all sheep alike? Were not all days alike? To and fro, between the fold and the browsing place, day after day; sun and sand, sheep and solitude, until the last sleep should mercifully come which would put an end to his futility.

Then one day, the burning bush!

What, burning still? But surely this is something strange! Was it not morning when he had first seen it burning, and now the sun is sinking in the west, the lower part of its disk is behind the hills of Horeb, and the shadow of the hills is creeping towards him folding in the sheep. Burning still? Moses is now taut, his face full of interest. 'Why is the bush not burnt?' He will turn aside and see this thing. Now he is striding forward, now he has halted. He is removing the sandals from his feet, and stands there a long while in silence. Now he comes back again. The eyes are bright and keen, the chin is firm, the figure is erect, the steps are full of spring and vitality. The fire that had died down years ago, and which he had thought was cold and dead, is burning once more. The purpose that had been his in the gallant days of his youth, but had been stifled during these forty years, is quivering in his heart again. He has heard the voice of God, and has learnt a new name for Him, a name that gathered all the past and all the present into one vital moment—I AM.

There is the eternal truth in the story, a truth that has laid hold of the imagination, even of the unimaginative West. It is a tale that has been told all the world over; the burning bush is a familiar symbol everywhere. It is the symbol of freedom, of the watchful eye of God, of the unresting, unhasting purpose of the Divine, which is all men's hope.

2. Why *is the bush not burnt?* It is the symbol of the patient God, who waits for men and women, who works deliverance for the multitude by means of individuals and small companies of folk, who

trains men, prepares them for their task, and calls them at last.

> It takes a soul to move a body,
> It takes a whole-souled man
> To move the masses even to a cleaner sty.
> It takes the ideal to blow an inch
> Inside the actual.

We have been told many times of late that we must not trust in progress. A man is only shallow nowadays who is quite persuaded that all things move onward and upward to a great and glorious goal. The fact of the matter is, mankind has an inveterate facility for sinking into bondage. If we have wealth we luxuriate, if poverty we hug our chains. Let Nature yield to men, out of her fertile bosom, stimulants, and lo, they become slaves to them—mere drunkards. Let her give to them narcotics for the assuaging of their pain, and lo, they become slaves to drugs. Let freedom be given, and it becomes low licence. Give them religious freedom, paid for with the blood of sacrifice, and lo, it becomes religious indifference. We are slaves with an almost ineradicable capacity for surrender.

But there is a steady Divine purpose of which the burning bush is the symbol and *the Bible is* very largely *the story of the call of the deliverers*, of the men who will cause the people to resume their struggle for freedom. There is Abraham going out to seek a new land where God may be more truly worshipped. There is Moses, of whom we are thinking just now. There is Samuel, called as a little child in the stillness of the night. There is David, called while he tends his sheep. There is Elijah and many more. It is the book of the call of men. It is the burning bush which manifests the out-flaming of the eternal Divine decree which calls men out of bondage to follow a prophet through the wilderness to a better land.

And it is not only in the Book. You can wander through the centuries and hear this *calling voice everywhere*. There are men and women in all times who find a flame burning in their hearts, they know not why. It burns as though it would consume them, and yet they are not consumed. Is it Luther? Is it Knox? They said of Knox, when they buried him, 'Here lies a man who never feared the face of man,' but hear Knox himself, when this call came to him, professing amid tears his fear of the task that was laid upon him. Is it Cromwell, Washington, Lincoln, Florence Nightingale, Harriet Beecher Stowe, or multitudes of others? They had not sought the task, they had not seemed to be equipped for it; often they were unlearned folk dwelling in inconspicuous solitude or undistinguished among the hosts of men.

There is a name we do not often mention with those of others. It stands alone. It is a name that does not need expressing in so many syllables. We all know it, it is the name of the called, the chosen, the anointed One. When that anointing took place nobody knows; there is a mystery in His Being nobody fathoms. Surely the voice of God penetrated far into the recesses of things when He was called to deliver men from bondage. Surely the flame that burned in His heart was whiter in its intensity and steadier in its glow than ever the heart of another knew. But there is no break in continuity; no change of method. It is only the same wonder, old but ever new, the flaming into visibility of the patient purpose of the buffeted God, the Father and the Shepherd of men. The gospel is all the more credible because it shows at its whitest the flame which is seen everywhere. The Divine quest for redeeming personality never ceases. The fire burns in many a lowly heart. Every man who ever led so much as a platoon into freedom, every woman who gave herself to a clean and noble cause, every youth who committed himself to a high task in life, knows something of that flame, the flame of the seeking eyes of the patient God.

Who knows where it comes from? Who shall say there is no element of mystery in it? Who shall say that this unobtrusive yet all-pervasive God is not continually working among the sons of men? Not progress, the smooth and placid tramping along the paved way, but the eternal conflict between right and wrong, the struggle between freedom and slavery.

> . . . History's pages but record
> One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the Word—
> Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,—
> Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,
> Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own.

It is the flame of the redeeming purpose of God. Many a man has seen it and lost it again. Many a youth, conscious of this flame, has consecrated himself to a high task and then has seen it die down amid the murk and moil and confusion of things. Many a noble ideal has been slowly frittered away, many a god-like purpose weakly surrendered, but yet, even in the wilderness, we never get away from God—never!

The Influence of Philo upon the New Testament.

By J. Rendel Harris, Litt.D., LL.D., D.D., Birmingham.

Students of the New Testament, especially those who, like ourselves, belong to the older generation of scholars, will be sensible that there has been a good deal of change in the estimate which is made of the reaction upon the New Testament from the writings of Philo. It used to be a common and uncontradicted opinion that in certain writings of the New Testament one must not expect to obtain a correct understanding, or produce a useful commentary, without allowing a first place to the great Alexandrian. St. John and the Epistle to the Hebrews were especially marked out as being permeated by Philonean teaching and allegory and symbolism. Was there not the Logos as creative force and immanent being? and whence could it have come except from Greek philosophy, either from Heraclitus at the first, or Philo at the latest? and then there was the Logos as the Manna, and as the Great High Priest, to say nothing of the other terms that describe either the Messiah (in whom Philo did not believe) or the Logos (in whom he believed profoundly). As we have said, there has been a great reduction in the estimate of possible or probable influence from Philo. This has arisen in various ways. The most significant is the discovery that behind the Logos of the New Testament there lies another figure, the Sophia of Proverbs, of whom Philo knows next to nothing, and Sophia herself is thought, on good grounds, to be Palestinian and not Alexandrian. Thus, at one stroke, Philo disappears from the Prologue to the Gospel of John, where he seemed to be most at home. This does not mean that he could not find a place for the sole of his foot elsewhere in the Gospel or in the Epistle to the Hebrews, but it certainly reduces the *à priori* probability that Alexandrian philosophy holds the key to Christian mysticism.

Then there is the further reflection that, if we are going to look for philosophy in the Christian writings, we shall have to remember before we begin the quest, that Philo is not so original in his outlook, as the older schools of criticism assumed. He uses Stoic writers on the grand scale, and we may even have to specify particular Stoic writers like Poseidonios, who were quite capable of influencing the New Testament on their own account; for, if there is any Greek philosophy in the New Testament, it is Stoic philosophy. Thus we may find ourselves relieved from identifying New Testament modes of thought with those of Philo, though, of course, this will not apply to what is properly exegesis of the Mosaic writings; for we can scarcely imagine Poseidonios with a Pot of Manna, or Zeno as introducing the High Priest of the Confession.

In another direction there arises a question as to the reality and extent of Philonean influence. Why do we not find any quotations directly from Philo, such as we might mark by special type in our Greek Testament, or allude to speculatively upon its margins? Why should we, for example, find Tobit and Judith and Wisdom, and Maccabees and Enoch (this last *passim*), and not detect the one who might have been suspect of a larger influence than all the others? Let us see if we can find an actual quotation from Philo in the New Testament.

If we turn to 2 Ti 3^4 we have, amongst the various terms in which the Apostasy of the Last Days is described, those days in which Antichrist puts his *anti-* upon everything that is good and Christian, turning the sheep into wolves, and love into hate (as the Teaching of the Apostles would say), the statement that men shall become

> 'Pleasure-lovers rather than God-lovers';
> φιλήδονοι μᾶλλον ἢ φιλόθεοι.