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The Transfiguration.

THE Transfiguration was the sequel to the conversation about Messiah that took place between our Lord and His disciples near Cæsarea Philippi. It was the symbolic vision of that conversation. So much is clear. It is not so clear to whom this spiritual experience actually came, whether to Jesus or to some of the disciples, or to one of them or to all. From the Lukan account of the scene it is possible to disentangle two versions. One of these, the Marcan account, according to the usual tradition, can be attributed to St. Peter. The other runs as follows (Lk 9^{28a}):

'It came to pass about eight days after these sayings . . . he went *up into the mountain* to pray. And as he was praying his form was altered *and his raiment dazzling*. Two men . . . who appeared in glory and spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep; but having kept awake (perhaps tr. 'on waking') they saw his glory and the two men that stood with them. And it came to pass as they were parting from him . . . as they entered into the cloud . . . and when the voice came *Jesus was found alone*. And they held their peace and told no man in those days any of the things which they had seen.'

No doubt this account included as well some of the matter of the Marcan version. But two points are important: (i) that St. Peter alone is named, and (ii) that the experience came to one or more disciples awaking out of sleep. May we infer, therefore, that the vital experience was St. Peter's alone? The material for the construction of it was vividly impressed on his mind. The confession near Cæsarea had led our Lord to explain

Messiahship in terms of defeat. It was to St. Peter that the rebuke was given—'Get thee behind me, Satan.' That sentence itself suggests that this was the occasion when our Lord told His followers of His early temptation and of the voice of consecration he had heard at the Baptism. The Baptism would lead to the identification of the Baptist with Elijah. Cf. Mt 17¹². Dt 18¹⁵ brought Messiah into association with Moses. The association goes back to the earliest days of the Church, if the apocryphal tradition which gives it to our Lord Himself is unsound. With this one exception, the significant features of the Transfiguration scene were present to St. Peter's mind in a way more direct and touching than to any other of the Twelve. The record of his character reveals him, it is true, as pedestrian in imagination. It also reveals him as a mystic and a seer of visions. The independent matter of Luke and the early chapters of Acts give a coherent picture of this side of St. Peter which the Marcan tradition is inclined to neglect. If at times Peter approached the grotesque, he was also capable of the loftiest reach. With his powers quickened by that period of deepest insight into the Master's mind, he went into the quiet of the mountain and translated what he had heard into that glowing experience.

The Marcan account of the Transfiguration represents St. Peter's own self-depreciation. He shrinks from allowing himself to be a principal. He emphasizes his own prosaic appeal for three tents. A profound spiritual adventure is made to look impersonal, primarily to turn attention away from the man to the Master. In that process for our day much of its touching reality is lost. If this interprets the facts, then the Transfiguration is a spiritual revelation to St. Peter of his own confession at Cæsarea, and he saw on the holy mount what St. Paul was to see on the Damascus road.

E. J. MARTIN.

Rastrick.

Entre Nous.

Living upon a Slope.

Dr. Hutton's literary output is amazing. His publishers announce just now four new books by him—'The Dark Mile,' 'The Tragedy of Saul,' 'Guidance from Francis Thompson in Matters of Faith,' and 'A Golden Book of Francis Thompson.' The one in our hand is *The Dark Mile* (Hodder & Stoughton; 7s. 6d. net). There are some thirty short essays in it in Dr. Hutton's characteristic style. Many of them centre round a phrase with

which he 'deliberately torments himself,' until there opens out a totally unexpected richness of thought in it. In the second essay he takes Mrs. Meynell's opening words in 'Christ in the Universe':

With this ambiguous earth
His dealings have been told us,

and lets his imagination play on the three words, 'this ambiguous earth.' I think, he says, that this word 'ambiguous' is 'a profounder and more

subtle word than Wordsworth's "unintelligible." It is also a more stirring word. "Unintelligible"—if that is the last word, why, then it is the last word. But "ambiguous"—if that be the worst that can be said of life, and it is in fact and in logic the very worst—that life presents a scene where there is indeed much evil, but where also there is much good; a place where indeed the sun sets, but a place likewise where the sun rises; a place of tears, but a place also of a wonderful laughter; if that is all—why, what are we here for but to augment the force and volume of the finer things, to fling ourselves on the side of the desirable thing lest it should sink in the scale?

In fact, *we are here to vote*; and whatever our vote may mean for the world and for the future, *for us one by one, our vote is the casting vote.*

Turning over the volume we come upon another phrase full of meaning—'living upon a slope.' In this phrase, he says, everything that is of consequence in the hypothesis of evolution, in so far as it bears upon us as moral and responsible beings, is contained. Man is on the sloping stairs of life 'urged upward from within, and, despite at times his chafed hands and bleeding knees, confident of his destiny, for he has a hold upon that rope let down from heaven, which God is drawing to Himself!' What is the rope? It is faith in Jesus Christ. And what is important is not, Where did the sloping process begin, but where, by the favour of God, may it not end? 'To build a wretched doctrine of man's nature, to deny God and an ascending moral career to man, simply because his body bears evidence of lowly relationships, is no more just, than it would be to estimate the full nature of man by considering exclusively his meanest physical functions. Man does more than eat and sleep: he thinks, he wills, he loves; he can give up his life for an idea: he can kneel in prayer and rise from his knees to endure, if need be, some intolerable pain. Man lives upon a slope: but it depends how your own face is turned, whether you say it is a slope up, or a slope down.' And the important point to remember is that 'God judges us, not according to our position on the slope—for it may be that one begins higher than another. God judges us according to the position we have attained compared with the position we set out from.'

Individualism and Co-operation.

A number of lectures were delivered lately to the Aberdeen Branch of the Workers' Educational

Association. They have now been published with the title *Ways of Living* (Hodder & Stoughton; 3s. 6d. net). There was one inquiry underlying these lectures—whether a study of the diverse ways of living amongst plants and animals can have any suggestion for man? The parasitic type of life among animals is dealt with by Dr. John Rennie. Here food and shelter are gained with the minimum of effort, and nothing good can be said about it.

The two other modes of living among animals are the individualistic and the social. These are treated by Professor J. Arthur Thomson. They are the two chief ways of reacting in the struggle for existence. The first is to intensify individual effort, to tighten the belt and to set the teeth. This is the way of the eagle and the lion. The other way is to produce mutual aid and to subordinate self. That is the way of the rook and the beaver. Professor Thomson comes to two conclusions about these contrasted modes of living. In the first place, it is wrong to look upon the individualistic as selfish and the co-operative as altruistic, for the individualistic otter is just as true a mother as the co-operative beaver, the golden eagles in their lonely retreat are as devoted parents as the gregarious rooks. The contrast between the two modes of living is not an ethical but a social one.

The second conclusion is that both these modes of living are successful—and both have their disadvantages. 'The advantages of the "each for himself" mode of life are that it fosters all-roundness of development and sturdy vigour. The disadvantages are that the struggle for existence may be intensified to the unendurable uttermost—which spells extinction—that the mastery of the environment is more limited, and that there are fewer opportunities for cultivating the integrative kin-sympathies which flourish in a social *milieu*. On the other hand, the co-operative, gregarious, social mode of life, which certainly makes for stability, achievement, social sentiment, and sometimes external heritage, as in the ant-hill and the beaver-village, is apt to over-subordinate the individual and to throw a shield over variations that were sometimes better dead. It is an extraordinary fact that some ant-species, that can neither collect food nor eat it of themselves, are kept alive by their slaves! Which things are a parable.'

What can Man learn then from Animate Nature? Professor Thomson does not work this out, but the suggestion would seem to be that at some times and in some places he should take the individualistic

animal as his pattern, and at other times and in other places the social. 'The study of animal societary forms is still young, but it cannot fail to be of suggestive value to students of mankind. This value will be increased, not decreased, if man's apartness is appreciated as well as his solidarity. For a human society stands high above the integrates we study among the beasts of the field. Man has language, rising above words; he has reason, or the capacity for conceptual inference, rising above intelligence; he has a more or less clear consciousness of his own history; he has the power, if he would oftener exercise it, of guiding his conduct in reference to ideals; and he has apparently unlimited possibilities of ameliorating his social heritage. Why does he not rise more quickly beyond the adumbrations seen in herd and hive?'

Contemplation.

If, being no student of Hinduism yourself, you wish to read a very attractive and clearly expressed but simple statement of the contribution that Hinduism may make to Christianity and the way in which Christ can bring Hindu ideals to completeness, you should turn to *The Indian Mystic*, by Mr. J. C. Winslow, M.A. (S.C.M.; rs. 6d. net). Put shortly, there are three things which Mr. Winslow says the children of India can teach the West—an intense personal devotion to our Lord; an enthusiasm for renunciation; and the value of the contemplative life. On the last point he says: 'We English Christians, with our stress on the "practical" expression of the Christian life, tend to leave so little room for prayer that we hardly know how to spend half an hour in silence, alone with God.' And then he gives the following incident. 'But I remember on one occasion in India taking some Indian boys with me for a month in the country during the school holidays. We had arranged to begin each day with an hour set apart for meditation, but after the first two or three days some of them came to me and asked that the time might be extended, as they found it impossible to complete their meditation within the hour. These were Christians of quite humble origin and simple education. What may we expect, then, from those with a hereditary tradition of religious training like the Brahmans?'

Sadhu Sundar Singh.

In a small book—containing in fact less than a hundred pages—Messrs. Macmillan have published

a brief description of the spiritual life, its different states of existence, and the destiny of good and evil men as seen in visions by Sadhu Sundar Singh. The title is *Visions of the Spiritual World* (2s. 6d. net). In his Preface the Sadhu says: 'In this book I have attempted to write of some of the visions which God has given me. . . . At Kotgarh, fourteen years ago, while I was praying, my eyes were opened to the Heavenly Vision. So vividly did I see it all that I thought I must have died, and that my soul had passed into the glory of heaven; but throughout the intervening years these visions have continued to enrich my life. I cannot call them up at will, but, usually when I am praying or meditating, sometimes as often as eight or ten times in a month, my spiritual eyes are opened to see within the heavens, and, for an hour or two, I walk in the glory of the heavenly sphere with Christ Jesus, and hold converse with angels and spirits.' But it is only some of the visions that are recorded here, for the Sadhu says later that the angels conversed with him about many other matters, but it is impossible to record them because there is no language in which the meaning of these deep spiritual truths could be expressed, and also because the angels do not wish these visions recorded.

The question which occurs to us is, What is the nature of the Sadhu's visions? And that is the question which occurred also to the Bishop of Lahore, who has written the Foreword. The Sadhu Sundar Singh is his friend, and he has read and carefully weighed these visions. This is what he says, and we cannot do better than accept it: "'There be some here that shall not taste of death till they have seen the Kingdom of God come with power.'" In both S. Mark's and S. Matthew's Gospels these words are so closely linked on to the story of the Transfiguration that I cannot doubt that they interpreted this memorable event in the life of the three chosen Disciples (one of whom was, as it were, the sponsor of S. Mark's Gospel) as a coming of the Kingdom with power. It consisted in the lifting of the veil which shrouds the unseen world, so that the denizens of that world were visible and audible to human eyes and ears, and in the glory of the real Jesus shining through the veil of flesh.

'May it not be that this kind of experience is still given sometimes to God's servants? I personally believe that the Sadhu's experiences recounted in these "Visions" were something of this kind: that for him, as for these other servants of God, the veil which shrouds the real was lifted, so that he saw our Lord as He really is, and that world.'

'Messages that come as the result of such experiences must be revered, but they must also be tested by reference to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. I have tried my best to apply this "test" to these messages, and I find them in accord with that supreme revelation of God's character which we have in our Lord's life and teaching. I therefore gratefully accept them as one more proof that God is still speaking to His people, and I pray that this little book may open the eyes of many to "the real world" that is all round us, to which we are too often blind, for "closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."'

It is not possible to give in short space any account of the visions dealing with What Happens at Death, The World of Spirits, The Judgment of Sinners, and The State of the Righteous. For that the little book must be read through, but one vision stands by itself and we quote it in full.

The Withered Fig Tree.

'I inquired of them, "Everything is created for some purpose, but it sometimes appears that that purpose is not fulfilled; for instance, the purpose of the fig tree was to produce fruit, but, when the Lord found it fruitless, He withered it up. Can you enlighten me as to whether its purpose was fulfilled or not?"'

'A saint replied, "Undoubtedly its purpose was fulfilled, and was fulfilled more fully. The Lord of Life gives life to every creature for a certain specific purpose, but if that purpose is not fulfilled He has power to take back the life in order to fulfil some higher purpose. Many thousands of God's servants have sacrificed their lives in order to teach and uplift others. By losing their lives for others they have helped them, and thus fulfilled the higher purpose of God. And if it is lawful, and a most noble service, for man, who is higher than fig trees and all other created things, to give his life for other men, then how can it be unjust if a mere tree gives its life for the teaching and warning of an erring nation? So through this fig tree Christ taught this great lesson to the Jews, and to the whole world, that those whose lives are fruitless, and who fail in the purpose for which God created them, will be altogether withered and destroyed."

'The facts of history make it abundantly plain to us that the bigoted and narrow Jewish national life of that day was, because of its barrenness, withered away like the fig tree. And in the same way the fruitless lives of others, though outwardly they may appear fruitful, are a cause of deception

to others, and will be cursed and destroyed. If any one should object that, when the Lord cursed this fig tree, it was not the fruit season, and figs should not have been looked for, then he should reflect that for doing good there is no fixed season, because all seasons and times are equally appointed for good works, and that he himself should make his life fruitful and thus fulfil the purpose for which he was created.'

Jesus the Teacher.

'Jesus the teacher is far more than the angelic doctor of lovely precepts conceived by the liberalism of the nineteenth century. Jesus discovered and taught a final wisdom; and this wisdom was such that it could be declared only by being lived. Therefore it can be learned from him only as a person. It is necessary to know the Jesus who went to his death to become Messiah in order that we may know Jesus the teacher; unless we understand his death we shall never fully understand his teaching. But this is not because his death was implicit in his teaching; but because his teaching was implicit in his life. We have to know the loneliness, the courage, the human perfection of the man, in order to approach the living reality of what he taught.'

The Man of Men.

'If we can surprise ourselves into unfamiliarity, and hear them [the words of Jesus] as though they were uttered for the first time to-day, one quality shines out from them above all others. These are not the words of a visionary or a dreamer; they are the words of a man who lived completely in this world of men—and lived in it the more completely because his spirit breathed another air. The fundamental detachment he had conquered gave him a more certain command of the mundane reality, as though he saw it distinctly and fully from a mountain-top. He reckons his adversary and his situation in an instant, lets fly his arrow, soft and swift as a smile; and the victory is his. This carpenter of Galilee was the Man of men.'

¹ P. 62 f.

² J. M. Murry, *The Life of Jesus*, 179.

³ *Ibid.* 247.