

Self Discovery Secrets To Success

Brought To You By:
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CHAPTER I

The Land of Self

"... Go to your own bosom; Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know."
—Measure for Measure.

Someone complained of the apparently slow progress a young lad was making in a noted school. The head master replied, " I have been watching that boy. He possesses some fine qualities that he does not yet suspect. One day he will make the discovery— something far more important than anything he will learn from books—the discovery of himself, what sort of a fellow he really is and what he is good for. Then, mark my words, he will make good in whatever he undertakes."

The remark was not a complimentary guess on the part of this prominent educator, but a conclusion based upon many years' study of many young minds and characters. He knew that in human life, as in plant life, time must be allowed for rooting, and that the tap-root which goes deepest is knowledge of oneself.

One of the saddest things to observe is the failure, in all that makes life most desirable, not only of the hosts of incompetents, the brainless and forceless, but of many possessed of unusual talents and industry. This is ordinarily because they have not understood their own faculties, and have never rightly directed their endeavors. They are like inexpert farmers who should plant orange groves in Canada and wheat in South Carolina cotton swamps. They have never tested their own mental climate and soil.

Sometimes these people are excellent advisers of others. They possess a knowledge of many things, and often have a shrewd ability in keeking through other people, whom they could set to their proper duties as accurately as they could lay out chessmen on a board. But of themselves they know nothing. They are the Psalmist's fools, whose " eyes are at the ends of the earth," while they fail to note the ground they are walking upon. They have large circumspection, but slight introspection. They can no more read their own minds than they could turn their eyes backward and see the working of their own brains. One of the wisest counselors the writer of this book ever had was a perfect genius for making mistakes in his own behalf; as he said, he always planted his corn with the crows for spectators. He reaped little from the world except the hearty sympathy of his friends for his ever-recurring misfortunes.

The apparent wastes in nature, such as desert plains, barren peaks, and wild growths that feed no life save their own, are not more noticeable than these wastes of humanity. By knowledge of agricultural chemistry, the adaptation of seeds to soils, and by processes of irrigation, we are annually reclaiming vast tracts of once useless land. So, let us hope, by special training of young people to recognize their individual adaptation to the various industries and professions that are open to them, we may redeem for the use of the world vast multitudes who, through ignorance of themselves, are growing nothing, or who, at best, are only " going to seed " in their own mistaken conceits.

Every wise teacher will use as the text-book of most importance the pupil's own mind and

character. Unfortunately few teachers in our schools are competent to read that text-book; or, if they are competent, the large number of scholars prevents their giving adequate attention to each. One wise preceptor, who would make himself sufficiently companionable to learn a pupil's habit of thought, his predilections and tastes, his forceful elements of character and wherein he is weak; who could detect the fresh sproutings of hitherto unsuspected genius, and would nourish these new germs with wise prompting;—such a teacher would be worth to most young people more than a whole university faculty of distinguished scientists, philosophers and literateurs, who ordinarily have no such personal touch with students.

A lad had been dropped from several of our large preparatory schools in which he had acquired the reputation of being both mentally and morally delinquent. The printed pages of the text-book were little more suggestive to him than the flyleaves. The caprice of a moment made him oblivious to the commonest maxims of conduct. The evident contempt of some of his instructors and the equally apparent pity of others led him to depreciate himself even more than was due. He became hopeless for himself, his highest ambition being to become a tramp, a sailor or a cowboy. There was in New England a teacher who believed in the possibility of developing the poorest youthful stuff into good, sturdy manhood, and who had, moreover, a personally attractive power akin to the electric force that extracts from abandoned mines remunerative particles of ore. As a last resort the lad was sent to this man's summer camp. The teacher sought not so much to discipline as to companion the boy. Through close intimacy he discovered valuable mettle in his pupil; that he had latent tastes and talents which others had not suspected, and withal a sort of deep subsoil of moral purpose which needed only some long-rooted alfalfa kind of incentive to reach. It suffices to tell the sequel;—the young man has graduated with goodly honors from the university, is making an enviable record in his chosen profession, and has acquired the grateful confidence of his community for philanthropic and Christian work.

The writer was once one of three speakers at a juvenile reformatory. The other two confessed that they had themselves once been inmates of this same institution, and owed their subsequent careers of usefulness to the wisdom of certain instructors who made them realize that they were worth saving.

But however acquired, through the help of wise instructors or by the habit of studying one's own make-up, self-knowledge is as essential as it is for a navigator that he shall be able to take his own latitude and longitude before he ventures far upon the deep, lest, though he may be familiar with all the tides and coasts of the ocean, he come to grief not far from his own shores. We can thus account for many of the derelicts on the social sea, even where there are no sunken rocks of mischance and where there have been no storms of adversity—derelicts that are picked up by friends who find little profit in the salvage.

Our Lord's question, " Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and count-eth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?" has an application to other than religious matters. We are all builders. We would construct something with and about our lives. This instinct is almost as strong in men as it is in wasps, bees and beavers. If selfish we plan for our own security and happiness; if larger minded, for the welfare of others. The material for whatever we would build is furnished by the world. The trades and professions, the arts and industries, these are our quarries and forests and mines. But there is no free exploitation of them; we must pay for what we take out; and our capital is limited to that which is stored in our brains, our hearts, our consciences; in the various energies with which we are naturally

endowed, or which we have developed through self-discipline into forms of second nature.

Writers make much of environment. It is the literary fashion to emphasize the determining force of circumstances, the help or the handicap one finds in social conditions, the wealth and culture that foist us into high condition, or the poverty and need that drag us down with the persistency of a landslide. Young people talk much of pulls and tips and lucky ventures. But old business men, who learned the art of succeeding before the good fairies of modern imagination began to flit through the street, smile at the credulity of the rising generation, and quietly make a mental note that they wouldn't hire one of these visionary youths for any position of trust.

There is much in environment; but we must remember that the most significant environment lies closer to us than any outward circumstances can. It is, indeed, a part of ourselves ; the first enclosing envelope of the soul; that follicle in which lie, like seeds, our special faculties, tastes, dispositions and characters.

To change our illustration, we may look upon our inner endowments and acquisitions as constituting a sort of spring-basin through which the mysterious thing we call our spirit first emerges to run its course through the fields of life. We must carefully consider the height on which that fountain is located, and which direction it takes. Does the land slope eastward ? We will do worse than waste our energies if we attempt to make the stream go westward; a mistake not greater than that often made by young people who are led to engage in pursuits for which they themselves have no personal fitness. We should also note how full a current that spring-head supplies. No mere impulse of ours, and no circumstantial lay of the land in after years, will transform what is sufficient for only the meadow brook of a commonplace career into a Mississippi of public influence. Nor, on the other hand, can a forceful disposition be drained back into itself and made to feed only a dull and inactive life, any more than we can confine in stagnant pools the torrent strong enough to turn mill-wheels or display itself in the plunge of the cataract.

No one doubts Shakespeare's trite wisdom. There is "... a tide in the affairs of men Which taken at the flood leads on to fortune."

But whether or no we take these tides at their flood will depend upon certain qualities within ourselves ; as, for example, whether we have ability to note the favorable moment, when the tide has really ceased to ebb and begun to flow; whether we have sufficient spirit for the venture, so that we feel the call of the piping breeze ; whether we have alertness of will which spontaneously answers to the judgment, as the skillful hand on the helm answers the pennant: whether we know our own capabilities, our tonnage and draught, that we do not ground the craft on the harbour bar; whether we know the providential significance of our abilities, as mariners guess the destined port from the goods embarked and the provisions laid in store.

Doubtless there are many instances of " accidental success," where men have had "greatness thrust upon them." But in a hundred cases to one the happy individual has known himself and his equipment well enough to grapple with the passing circumstances. One of the champion football teams of the country has a reputation for " pulling itself out of a hole " through lucky chances. The captain says that these chances are what he looks for in every contest, and that, if the men never take their eyes off the ball, they are sure to profit by these accidental

turns in the game if their opponents are not equally wary.

There is no courage or alertness like that which comes from confidence in one's abilities to do certain things. In his great Florentine statue of David Michael Angelo has finely expressed this self-knowledge of the young hero. One sees in the shepherd's face and pose more than his celestial faith. The champion of Israel feels the strength and steadiness of his long muscles, and is absolutely sure of his aim. His lips are seemingly saying to himself, "I can tip a bird from the limb. I can drop a running fox in his tracks. Surely the big ox-brow of that giant will be an easy mark. Lose my courage in this fight? Haven't I held a mountain lion by the beard while I took from his jaws the lamb he had stolen from my flock? Am I the sort of man to fear this moving mass of brass? "

The face of David is also the index of his lofty and tremendous moral purpose. The young shepherd has no more doubt of the righteousness of his cause than he had of his duty in rescuing the lamb. Furthermore the great artist has made the countenance of his subject to fairly shine with a lustre of faith, as if from a light within the metal. The shepherd knows his God, confides in Him, and seems to be speaking the words, "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts; for the battle is the Lord's. He will give you into my hand."

David knew himself, his ability, his duty, and his God:—three things we will consider in this book.

Goliath's challenge was every Jew's chance. But only one Jew knew himself well enough to take that chance.

CHAPTER II

The Discovery of Intellectual Self

THERE are many provinces of self-discovery. We note first that of mental ability; the character and force of our special intellectual gifts, and what in these respects nature may have withheld from us.

The variety of faces is not greater than the variety of talents. It is presumable that every well organized brain is the seat of a full complement of faculties, but the measure of each and the balance of all shows as infinite diversities as the blending of the features in the countenance.

One of the most important questions to be answered is, What can I do best ? Or put it otherwise, What will I be likely to do most poorly, if I can do it at all ?

Perhaps it will be wiser to consider this latter problem first. In order to know ourselves we must know our limitations. In locating a country on the map we bound it; point out the lands that are adjacent to it, but do not belong to it; which its inhabitants may visit, do business with and know much about, but which its rulers cannot control. So there are talents possessed by others which you and I have very limited use of; fields that we cannot hope to exploit, because, though we possess no less general ability than our neighbor, our minds are not so especially adapted to utilize and develop the peculiar riches found therein.

Society is not unlike an orchestra. The harmony it makes is due to each instrument keeping to its own prescribed part. If the trombone should attempt to grunt its notes in the score of the violin, or the high piping oboe, presume to fill the part of the cymbals, it would not be a worse performance than that of some people in the arts and professions.

The weakness of the pulpit is due in large measure to its occupancy by men who are without the voice, elocutionary art and rhetorical tact and taste required for effective preaching; who dry sticks that never effloresce in sacred are or any other kind of eloquence. This may account for the fact that so many leave the ministry and become teachers, editors, canvassers, insurance agents, summer boarding-house keepers, or follow other pursuits into which they have grubbed their way in search of a living.

Many enter the law who are innocent of logic, unable to draw quick and correct inferences from legal principles, slow to correlate proven facts, and with no verbal skill for forensic repartee; and thus serve only to swell the crowd of briefless advocates that chokes the corridors of our courts ; men who, if without conscience, practically steal a living by pettifoggery; or, if honest, literally scratch out a livelihood by clerking it for more successful practitioners.

Publishers complain that they receive stacks of manuscripts written by persons who never mastered the rules of grammar, much less those of rhetorical construction.

Wall Street is sometimes a sort of Cave of Adul-lam, where men who are unable to keep out of personal debt assume the responsibility of financing the fortunes of others. Perhaps the majority of those who solicit the patronage of clergymen, lonely widows, back-country farmers

and others of the reputedly gullible sort, are men who have lost so much and so easily in speculation that they are willing to share their experience.

These " ne'er-do-wells " are not necessarily dull witted. They may have strong faculties for doing things other than those they are doing. They are simply misfits. Worse than that, they bungle themselves, as when one puts a left shoe on the right foot. A careful inspection of their intellectual boundaries, certainly a common sense lesson from their past experiences, would have taught them not to perpetuate their mistake. But unfortunately they come to realize their folly only when they had used up so much of the cloth of life that there was not enough left for the cutting of another pattern.

A marked example of misapplied talents is the case of the recent incumbent of a noted pulpit in Scotland who could put to rout the most patient congregation. A stranger to the customs of a church under state patronage wonders how this clergyman obtained a license to preach. In the desk he lacked courage to look into the faces of his unfed hearers, and seemed to have an equal dread of raising his eyes to heaven which he must have been conscious of poorly serving ; so he apparently endeavored to preach his sermon back into the manuscript, focusing his spectacles upon the document and thumping it soundly, as if inflicting penance upon the paper and ink for having allowed such diluted thought to be written with them.

Yet this man was a great genius. His manse was an art gallery. Hallway and parlours, dining-room and bedchambers were adorned with exquisite sculptures largely the work of his own hand. More than one of his productions had found prominence in the great exhibitions. Who was to blame for this waste of life under the pretense that its virtue was being poured out upon a sacred altar? Surely, the ecclesiastical vandalism that cuts up a statue by Phidias in order to provide paving blocks for the floor of a Roman cathedral is less to be deprecated. The latter may be pardoned to an exaggerated religiosity; the former is a robbery of religion itself.

Christian parents no doubt often make a similar mistake in "dedicating the child to the ministry " in infancy, before it is certain that he will have either sufficient intelligence or character to support the holy profession. By their persistency in holding that sacred ideal before the mind of the youth, as if it were sacrilege for him to consider a secular calling, and by damming back every show of other impulses, they succeed in making an artificial channel which prevents the natural and more forceful flow of his life. They thus thrust the boy upon the Lord, when, by a careful study of the Lord's will as shown in the lad's mental and heart qualities, they might readily have discovered that he was providentially designed for a totally different occupation. The Turkish Janissaries trained lads from early childhood for the Sultan's service; but they showed their wisdom in allowing that service to range from the command of armies to camp pot washing. If the ministry had a similar gradation of duties according to the equipment of candidates, there might be some excuse for the zealous folly of fond parents and denominational education committees.

The writer recently met with a sad illustration of such ill-advised piety. He was called upon by a man of about thirty, whose face showed indisputably the marks of dissipation, and whose attire suggested the tramp.

"Do you not know me ? I am George----- "

He was remembered as a sunny-faced lad whom the ladies of a congregation had, some seventeen years before, selected as their protégé, and educated in college and divinity school.

"Have you lost your faith?"

"I have lost everything," was the response. "I soon discovered that I was totally unfit for the ministry. I could not follow it. Then I was ashamed to have taken the aid of the church. I was equally ashamed to openly announce my renunciation of the profession by adopting another. I disappeared.

Then came the loss of self-respect; and when that centre-pole of the tent fell, the whole tabernacle of my life fell with it. The wild life of the plains first attracted me; then the lure of the city. I need not tell you more. I wouldn't have told you this were it not that last night, attracted by the light in your church, I went in—the first service I have attended for several years. Old times came back to me "

The young man had grievously sinned against himself; but was there not significance in what he called the "holy folly " of some good people?

Such illustrations of "the round peg in a square hole" may be found in every department of life. Sometimes one is kept from following the line indicated by his talent and choice because of the early necessity of earning a living. There is a well-known village artisan who has been invited more than once to a chair in a scientific institution, the meager salary in which would be insufficient for the support of this man's family, consisting as it does of a number of impecunious relatives. The educational fund which augments the stipends of professors will accomplish a purpose not primarily intended by the founders, but equally beneficial to the community at large.

Frequently, too, one is led astray from his proper occupation by a foolish ambition; an envy of certain others who have made success in lines for which they, but not he, are especially fitted. Yet by a sort of insane vanity this person is impelled to imitate and, if possible, surpass the repute of his neighbor. The desire to see one's name in print accounts for a large portion of our ephemeral literature, and for all sorts of similar crazy attempts to gain notoriety. Ruskin, speaking of the desire for applause, says, "That thirst, if the last infirmity of noble minds, is also the first infirmity of weak minds ; and, on the whole, the strongest impulsive influence of average humanity."

We repeat, then, that to know one's real self is first of all to know one's limitations, what one cannot reasonably hope to do well, the stature and shape into which one's nature will not grow. This will save one many aches that are not growing-pains, and many a discomfiture in life that we cannot attribute to misfortune or the indifference of Providence.

Possibly the highest order of genius cannot be suppressed even by being buried under incessant occupation with things that give it no incentive to display itself. A strong root will crop out of the most unfavorable soil. There may be a few " mute, inglorious Miltons," but one with real poetry in him will at least babble as a brook if he cannot sound like the ocean. Great intellectual powers will shine, though it be only like a searchlight through the fog. Unusual ability and disposition to command will make itself heard, if not on battle-fields or in the

leadership of industries, at least in the club coterie or village crowd. As Hood says, "Genius has the power of kindling its own fire." It will generate its own passion; it will shine with a luster that is its own. But talents of a lower than the highest order may pass unnoticed even by their possessor; or, if suspected, they may be willingly forgotten, as we have seen, under the stress of immediate needs or of ambitions that divert the attention.

Let us turn our inquiry from the negative to the positive form. What am I best fitted to do? This is one of the first questions a young person should habituate himself to ask, although it is not at all likely that it will be a primary question to answer.

Here and there is a person who is endowed with such a potency of genius that it overflows at the very spring-head, as the Jordan bursts full-flooded from the earth at Banias. Mozart was self-transported by the music that was born in him, and attained local celebrity when he could scarcely climb the piano stool. Titian illumined the white walls of Piave di Cadore, his native village, with the flashes of his talent before he had taken a lesson in the art of which he was destined to become a master.

But such characters are exceptional. Most cases of precocity are as disappointing as they are unexpected. Few early spring flowers last through the summer. Perhaps ordinarily the talent that excites the hope of fond parents and friends dies out as the other and really stronger faculties reach maturity. Its early budding was due to the fact that it had no competition, and absorbed all the strength of the mental soil for its own growth. But when other ideas once got root they starved out the premature occupant.

Prematurity generally means immaturity, and suggests weakness rather than strength; as, in our Lord's parable, the plants "sprang up quickly because they had not depth of earth"; and for the same reason they withered quickly. It is not an unusual thing to find adults positively dull in the very respects that gave them infantile repute as prodigies.

Young people should not be impatient in making self-discovery. Talents can be tested fully only by experiment, and during early school days one has not the opportunity to try many things. No school or even college curriculum anticipates the various pursuits that will open to one as he goes out into the world. At best such education only tones and strengthens the mind to tackle whatever it may encounter; it does not map the battle-fields. Our first notions of special fitness may be utterly dissipated when we leave the academic shades and go to the open.

In this connection the advice once given by a distinguished jurist to a sophomore may be repeated. The young man had announced his prospective career as that of the law. "Don't decide that yet," replied the judge. "As a Soph you are scarcely out of your intellectual shell. Wait until you have sampled the trees before you pick your nest. And, even if you think you have made up your mind, don't tell anybody; for the pride of seeming consistency may tempt you to follow a course that your secret judgment pronounces inexpedient." Before graduation the student found that his predilection as well as his peculiar talent pointed in an entirely different direction.

Perhaps as often as otherwise even after having left the university the student is for a long time uncertain in what direction his talents should lead him. This is because our strongest abilities are often realized only after having been exercised. We are surprised to find that we

can do easily and pleasurably things which at first were irksome from a sense that we were not capable of doing them. The exercise of the talent warmed it into free play, and free play is necessary for strength in mind as in muscle. A prominent surgeon shrank from the profession until a forced experience on the battlefield ever after fascinated him with its work. Frequently one's special talent is revealed by some fortuitous circumstance; as the invention of beer is attributed to a Roman soldier campaigning with Caesar in Britain, who, coming upon a hop vine, thought it a species of grape, and tried to distill wine from its berries. Many a rich mine has been discovered by the careless foot uncovering the head of a lode.

A dreamy fellow student who, from the fact that neither he nor any one else had discovered what he was good for, had come to the conclusion that he was good for nothing, and was on the point of leaving college to make this hypothesis the practical theory of his life. But the war drums of 1861 sounded. He said that they affected him as the discharge of artillery above the water where one has been drowned brings the dead body to the surface. But this man proved not to be dead; indeed, one of the most alive men of his day. He entered the army, and quickly developed a genius for military command. He fell at the head of his brigade in one of the most skillful as well as most daring charges ever made on the field of battle.

A man now prominent in literature passed his fortieth year before he became aware that he had any special power in romantic invention or graphic description. Even then he would not have suspected his gift had not some friends been impressed with the charm of a little story he casually told them, and insisted that he should let his genial thoughts gleam from his pen.

One whom Dr. Holmes said was, next to Thoreau, the first of American naturalists, and who was as skillful with the brush and graving tool in depicting the beauties of leaf and wing as he was accurate in discerning the habits of plants and animals, conceived the youthful idea that he was especially endowed of God to be a life insurance agent. One day he visited the workroom of an engraver. While watching the ply of the tool, he said to himself, "I could draw more out of blocks of wood than I can get out of people's pockets by soliciting premiums on their lives." He bought the blocks and the tools and quickly became the handiest man around the office of an illustrated magazine. Copying natural objects led him to study them more closely, and soon he was recognized even in the universities as an expert in ornithology and botany. He died at forty-four years of age world-famous for things that at first he did not regard himself as qualified to attempt.

One of the most phenomenal cases of early development is that of Napoleon Bonaparte; yet his memoirs, written at St. Helena, confess to only a gradual lifting of the curtain that revealed him to himself. In the military school he noted the quickness and clearness with which he grasped the various trial problems given by the instructors, and, with perhaps a pardonable conceit, recorded his opinion of his fellow students as those who were "thinking in moonshine." The conviction there formed, that he was destined for some goodly rank in the army, was afterwards confirmed and the ambition enlarged when on the thirteenth Vendémiaire, having been placed in command of Paris, by almost instantaneous planning and a celerity of execution that astounded all the world save himself, he stopped the long lingering horror of the French Revolution with a "whiff of gunpowder," as men stop a conflagration by dynamiting the buildings that feed its progress. Again, the victory of Monteménotte, the first decisive battle of his Italian campaign, prompted a confidential remark that he could out-general any field officer of Europe. He then saw himself as the sword-arm of all France.

Later came the final scene in this self-revelation of his genius. Let him tell it in his own words:

"The thirteenth Vendemiaire and the victory of Montemenotte did not induce me to believe myself a superior character. It was after the passage of Lodi that the idea shot across my mind that I might become a decisive actor on the political theatre. Then arose for the first time the spark of my great ambition"(i. e., to be the ruler of cabinets, as well as of councils in the field).

Biographies of distinguished persons narrate abundantly similar periods of the awakening of the consciousness of some peculiar power, some special adaptation to a career, some vision of opportunity, or the sounding through the soul of a hitherto unheard voice summoning it to a high duty, often transforming the character and transfiguring the life. Psychologists find no more fascinating study than that of these "nerve centers " of experience.

Sometimes the awakening comes all at once. A flash of intellectual lightning suddenly illumines the whole landscape, and the man never loses the impression. He has seen the map of himself, and evermore directs his life thereby.

Doubtless religious experience will furnish the best-known illustrations, but "twice born men " are found elsewhere than in the realm of spiritual faith. Thoreau tells of his awakening to a soul-thrilling impression of nature such as had its counterpart only in the stories of religious transformation. Poets have suddenly caught their primal inspiration and burst out into melody, as when the statue of Memnon sang at sunrise. Inventors suddenly realize that they have a genius for seeing things not yet embodied in actual mechanism, and cannot rest until they have made the ghosts of their vision materialize.

But ordinarily these revelations of one's intellectual self are progressive. Each life begins like a tiny stream, but it does not flow far before it is augmented by new springs in its channel, or by some confluent stream of influence from without which floods the mind with a sense of wider opportunity and deeper obligation.

If the youth is wise enough to recognize the significance of these things and to open his nature to them, there will come a corresponding sense of power. If, on the other hand, these feelings are neglected, or if not supplemented by the resolution they were designed to inspire, only disaster can follow. The early inspiration, finding no channel of practical endeavor prepared for it, dissipates itself as overflowing waters do, and in later life the man looks back regretfully to what might have been.

CHAPTER III

The Discovery of Moral Self

MORE important than a knowledge of one's mental is that of one's moral quality. We have talents; we are characters. Abilities are like one's hands, agents with which we do things; moral disposition is like the blood which pertains to the vital quality of the whole being.

So true is this that in the formation of our language "conscience" and "conscious" were the same word and signified self-knowledge. Until men more technically analyzed their inner states conscience fathomed the whole soul; all psychology belonged to what we now call moral science.

Hence the philosopher Fichte was both practical and profound when he said, "Man is built up around a conscience." That is, moral character provides the essential shape of manhood. The other faculties, talents, tastes, affections, will, only add their accretions; they enlarge, ornament, give power to, possibly modify, but in no respect alter, the substantial structure, which is oneself. The word "virtue" is from the Latin "vir," a man, indicating how closely morality and manhood are allied.

This belief, that the moral is the essential element of the inner man, has led to the theory of some very wise people that only those who are possessed of true conscientiousness can survive death; that, radically considered, morality is the necessary condition of immortality.

Whatever truth there may be in this theory of the future life, the fact that the conscience is such an absorbing and dominating element in present human nature as to suggest the theory gives weight to our subject. To understand oneself one must ask, What am I morally? What is my prospect of real success in a world where, as Matthew Arnold says, "there is a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness"? What is my hope, if the Bible is correct in teaching mankind that "justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne"?

The search for moral self-discovery should follow two lines.

First, one should inquire, Of what type is my conscience? What standard does my nature demand? What is my moral ideal? A writer says, "My ideal is what I myself am." The Bible puts it thus, "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." Just as we judge a tree, not by the minor details of its shape, but by its form-type, as a pine, a palm or an elm, so we may judge moral manhood by its ideal, its standard, the pattern after which it strives to shape itself in conduct.

The second inquiry should be, What moral force have I with which I pursue that ideal? How much of a fight can I put up to reach my standard? With what courage do I cleave my way through temptations? What enthusiasm is excited by moral issues as I conceive them? There is many a coward under a good flag; am I a hero in that which my soul approves?

First, then, what is my moral type? In almost any large group of individuals we might discover, if we had the ability to read their souls, as great a variety of the ethical genus homo as in a congress of races.

The Spartans felt no disgrace in thievery when uncaught in the felonious deed. Nor did my neighbor, a lawyer of repute, blush or even drop into sotto voce when he sang the praises of his own sharp practice by which he had secured for a client a court decision in face of the evidence that the property in question really belonged to the other party.

A Bedawin exacts baksheesh from a traveler as compensation for allowing him safe intercourse with the tribe. My friend calls the same thing "taking commission," when he allows his own employer to do business with certain customers only as they scratch his palm.

Mediterranean pirates used to give the freedom of the seas only to those merchants who were willing to share their legitimate gains under the shadow of the black flag, and went so far as to endanger the existence of any government that dared to pass laws which could not be easily evaded by these high seamen. Our political boss has the same sort of conscience when he takes his toll of office-holders, and puts an embargo on all bills that have not bought from him their right of way through the legislature.

There are reputable young women who give themselves in marriage, for the sake of a fortune or great family name, to men whom they know to be unprincipled or even lecherous. Wherein does this differ from the pride that used to be shown by female captives in war when their beauty commended them to the embraces of their conquerors; or that of those women who thought themselves fortunate to be chosen houris in the harems of Sultans.

On the other hand, there are women about us with vestal delicacy and modesty; men with the same chivalric honor for the sex that marked knighthood in the chronicles of romance; persons to whom speaking the truth is as essential as it was reputed to be to the noble Persians before they became contaminated by the conquest of the lower grade nations about them; men who conduct their business and social intercourse with as strict regard to the divine requirements as was ever shown by ascetic saints in the performance of their vigils.

We do not really know one another. Society moves largely in a masked function; or, to speak more politely of our kind, we come to the competitions of life as to a tournament, with our visors down.

We are ordinarily well enough aware of the uncertainty of the characters of our comrades to be on our guard against them, avoiding credulity, carefully inspecting and keeping one another on due probation before we put our personal interests out of our hands into theirs, and demanding credentials where we are still in doubt. But most people are less cautious about trusting their own characters on a slight acquaintance. They have never seen themselves in the mirror of honest inspection. They make the toilet of their souls with their veils on, — the disguises of their hasty conceits of what they are. Untempted, they say, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" Tempted, they do that thing, wondering that they ever thought it to be unseemly. They are utterly ignorant as to what law is engrossed on the books of their own nature and disposition, whether it be that of Moses or of Baxter Street. Hence they are sometimes rudely awakened by their own conduct, which shows them to have the ideals of the savage, when in their Sunday clothes they thought themselves enamored with the saints. Or the reverse may be the case; a man slips easily into some indulgence that is not condemned even in polite circles, but finds that it gives him a sort of moral nausea; he follows a business custom, but at night he curses himself for a thief: half preoccupied with other things he closes his hand against an appeal for charity, but on reconsidering the matter

finds his heart bleeding in sympathy for the suffering.

It is sad to find out one's nobler ideals only as they are shattered through our blundering, to discover one's purer nature only through our having soiled it, to learn our native tenderness only by wounding it. On the other hand, it is tragic to wake up to find oneself a villain, after having dreamed that we were of the elite. If possible find out what you are before the revelation is thrust upon you.

Biographies of many noted characters are interesting studies on this line. Schopenhauer once ran into a man on the street, who retaliated the awkwardness of the philosopher with the query, " Who are you anyway ? " The great man, whose introspective mood was always more in evidence than his habit of noticing external things, and who was only partially brought back to the realm of his senses by the knock, replied dreamily, " Who am I ? How I wish I knew !" Possibly he was thinking of the general problem of existence, but those familiar with the life of the great pessimist will remember him as a moral curiosity; a man kept in profound self-ignorance by the impenetrable thickness of his conceit; a bragging bully who was at heart a cringing coward; an indecent liver who plumed himself as a moralist; the impersonation of superstition and terrorized by all sorts of shadowy notions, who posed as a free-thinker. Morally who was he ? He was a puzzle to the world, and confessed that he was to himself a bottomless and ray-less abyss.

A man was recently hanged for murder committed during burglary. He proved to have been a past hero in life-saving, having many times rescued persons from drowning. It seemed a mere chance that displaced a string of Carnegie medals for the hangman's rope about his neck. What was he ? A brute or a philanthropist ?

Louis Napoleon was oversensitive to human suffering in individual cases, and would share his last sou with a needy person; yet his ambition was cruel; he trampled Europe into battle-fields. Was his make-up humanitarian or hellish? He possessed such a command of his faculties that he spent the night after his surrender at Sedan in reading an English novel in order to find relief from his own leaden thoughts; yet he was known to be utterly impotent to restrain a purpose of personal vengeance or to suppress the pettiest jealousy. He thought himself to have inherited the spirit of the greater Bonaparte, and essayed the conquest of nations; but he lacked the patience and persistency to see that his own armies were trained and fed. He astutely deceived the diplomats of Europe; yet was throughout his career a colossal instance of self-deception. When he pledged the Italians on his imperial honour to stand by them until the Austrians were driven out of Lombardy did he have any inner suspicion that he was about to desert them after the battle of Solferino, and that he would propose to them new chains of his own gilding? Doubtless not.

The greatest of Roman moralists, Seneca, whose teachings suggest the purity of the Gospels, gave away his own wife to the embraces of a friend. What was the real quality of his virtue ?

One of the finest orations on public virtue was pronounced by a young man who, in after years, having reached almost the highest bench, was impeached for taking bribes. Was he consciously dishonest when making the speech? Perhaps not. He did not then know that his enthusiasm for virtue was only the up-current turn of the little waves, while utter selfishness filled the channel of his moral nature, and would drift him downward.

Do I know myself? To what type of manhood do I really belong ?

The answer does not, perhaps, concern the outer world, since the sphere of my influence upon it may be very small. But it does concern myself. Each one of us is a world all to himself. Not only does the inner sense of dignity or shame mean much for our happiness; it is a root that vivifies or poisons the soul. It more concerns us than any physical health or malady. Yet how much bodily condition signifies! One of our nerves means more to us than the iron tracks that cross the continent. That the ray of light should give the right reflection from our retina is more important than that the stars should keep their courses. A fever in our veins is more threatening to us individually than the rising lava flood of Etna. But in comparison the soul has pain or pleasure of which the agony or thrill of the nerve is but a simile; of which blindness or vision are but pictorial hints. Maeterlinck says truly that " the heart of him who has committed an unjust act becomes the scene of an ineffable drama, the paramount drama of human nature." Surely the heart that knows itself capable of unjust actions is in a perpetual tragedy, self-mutilated, dungeoned in darkness. It needs no Promethean vulture, for it gnaws itself.

What, then, am I morally? What sort of a creature am I in a world where right is to soul what light is to physical well-being ? where purity of thought is as necessary as purity of air if one escape the infection of the damned ?

Let us make a graduated scale for self-judgment.

(1) The highest standard is our conception of what God would demand of us. This is to set our consciences by the divine righteousness, as we set our watches by the sun.

Most of us are accustomed from hereditary habit to take the Bible precepts as the expression of the Infinite Conscience. Where the Scriptures have been unknown the wisest men endeavoured to refine their moral conceptions to the utmost, eliminating everything born of human passion or conceit. They called these conceptions the voice of God speaking within them. Socrates used to hear it. It was his Daemon whose admonitions he felt constrained to obey against all the calls of the world and of the flesh. Marcus Aurelius doubtless borrowed the idea from the Greek sage when he wrote,— " Philosophy consists in keeping the Daemon within a man free from violence and unharmed, superior to pains and pleasures, doing nothing without a purpose, nor yet falsely and with hypocrisy." Epictetus was of the same opinion and experience,— " Some portion of the God is within you."

The Christian apostle more clearly expressed the thought, " Be ye imitators of God as dear children." The Old Testament writers declared that God would lay the line for the walls of life as by a plummet; they must be built in the absolute perpendicular which stretches from the zenith to the centre of the earth, from the heart of God above to the heart of man beneath.

It would be impossible for us to get the true perpendicular without the plummet or some visible indication of the absolute zenith and the heart of the earth. It is equally impossible for any unaided man to conceive the absolute righteousness. Hence the character of Jesus, " full of grace and truth."

Now can I take such righteousness as Jesus taught and exemplified as my ideal of life ? Thousands have done so. It is true that they have not attained their chosen standard. But in

effort they have carried to the very death that standard, refusing to voluntarily lower it, and letting it sink only as they themselves fell bewildered in unexpected temptation. They were true to the ideal, and that meant everything as respects their own nobility. Says Browning:

" Greatly begin, though thou have time But for a line, make that line sublime; Not failure, but low aim is crime."

Do I belong to this order of moral beings who are satisfied with nothing lower than the highest as my standard?

(2) A lower than this divine ideal, but still a lofty standard, is that exhibited in the lives of the noblest men and women. Moral hero-worship has kept the generations from decadence. Those who feel no religious incentive are sometimes inspired by the example of their fellow men.

At the battle of Mill Spring the Federal and Confederate forces faced each other at close quarters, neither daring to begin the assault. On either side the commands to charge were unheeded by the men. At length a Union officer advanced a few paces, drove his sword into the ground, and stood alone beside it; but only for an instant, the whole line advancing to him. In the enthusiasm thus excited he gave the order to charge, and led the way. His troops dashed across the field and carried the enemy's position.

In the moral campaign, but for similar examples, the strongholds of wrong and vice had seldom been taken, few popular movements for social improvement gained momentum, patriotism would have been drained away by innumerable individual selfishness, and philanthropy been buried beneath the incubus of our more brutal instincts and passions.

If you have not reached the height of Christian consecration to duty, do you at least belong to this ethical peerage of the world ?

(3) A lower grade of moral principle is that which finds its ideal in mere expediency.

An Italian statesman was much praised for his utter frankness in dealing with the diplomats of Europe. Sotere proclaimed that, with his noble example, the medieval precepts of Machiavelli had become obsolete, and that henceforth the business of empire would be conducted as honestly as that of common trade, in which men are expected to at least keep their word. The Italian statesman had made no concealment of the policy he was aiming, and, as he said, showed his hand fully in playing the game, the stakes of which were the possession of all Lombardy. But his apparent honesty was itself only a part of that game. He had observed that diplomats were not expected to tell the truth, nor did they trust one another. To talk out his mind honestly was simply on his part a method of misleading his opponents, and putting them on the very reverse track to that he was really taking. Guizot, the French statesman, remarked,— " There are several very astute men in European politics, notably Bismarck and Cavour; and I lay my cards every time on the little Italian." Cavour was only exemplifying the threadbare maxim, " Honesty is the best policy." Policy was with him the main thing; honesty was only a means, and therefore of no moral meaning at all.

" The first thing is to win the confidence of our customer," said a prominent business man to his clerks. " They must learn that here they will always get full measure and right bookkeeping." They did—from the clerks—but the head of the house was arrested for

defalcation in one of his larger transactions.

There is no staying quality in honesty as a policy. If the virtue is not a property of the soul itself it will wash out in very slight temptation. Though we may be theoretically convinced that in the end the right will invariably be triumphant, few of us are accustomed to direct our lives by such ultimate considerations. Our controlling motives are those that are ever present. A Syrian peasant lad refused to take a piece of gold from a traveller, preferring a brass coin as more immediately usable. So men are daily throwing away the prospect of the larger success of life for the " pleasures of sin for a season." Expediency aims are not usually fitted with telescopic sights.

(4) A still lower standard is that of current morality, social conventionality, or the habits of trade. To follow this is practically to demit conscientiousness altogether; to lay down the oars, and commit oneself to the drift.

This common drift of moral opinion is generally far below the candid judgment of even those individuals who make up the crowd. Allowances which were originally made in charity, because of one's weakness or over-temptation, come to be the rule. With each drop to a lower level the momentum downward is greater. Society is thus debased until it becomes the target for its own satirists. Business men learn to distrust one another. Politics becomes a synonym for graft: the medical profession crowded with charlatans : the bench venal: the pulpit an auction block for applause, and the chief ritual of worship that of equipages and bonnets. Then comes revolution. Only out of the ruin will appear the nobler individuals possessed of an independent conscience, who are to serve as nuclei for a new order of affairs. This is in epitome the history of civilization.

Question. Have I an independent conscience? Do I determine my own conduct ? Or am I only a pinch of sawdust on the stream ?

(5) The lowest mark on the moral thermometer is where conscience is interpreted by passion. Vice not only saturates the lower nature; it fumes the higher; blears the moral vision; crazes the judgment. There is an element of truth in the pessimistic philosophy that habitual criminals and vicious livers are demented. It is not a new notion; the wise man of old said, " Madness is in their heart while they live, and afterwards they go to the dead."

We need not ask any reader of this book if his conscience catches on this lowest notch in the moral scale. We pass to the second chief consideration. Assuming high ethical purpose in my life, how much force can I command in following my ideal ? What sort of a fight can I put up against temptations to lower the standard in practical living ? How quickly do I respond to its promptings ?

Men and women of the highest theoretical virtue are sometimes unco weak in applying those principles. They have plenty of light, but need more of the blue flame in which the heat and force reside.

Electrical energy is everywhere in space, but largely without manifestation and unfelt. The dynamo gathers into itself somewhat of this subtle force, compacts it, and discharges it in definite direction according to the wires. So righteousness may be regarded as a force everywhere throughout the moral universe. Conscience is a sort of dynamo which receives

into itself a portion of this force, according to its capacity, and sends it out again through the medium of speech and action. We have electrometers which record the dynamo's power. We should have concio-meters by which one could become aware of his own moral ability, the amount of ethical force he stores up within himself, the degree in which he can rely upon the steadiness of his better impulses, the impact of his will as he puts his goodness into execution.

Frederick W. Robertson, the famous Brighton preacher, originally purposed to enter the army, but was diverted to the ministry. His spirit of adventure and pugnacity found a new field—still a battle-field—that of moral issues. He used to say that he could not realize the full zest of life unless he were fighting down some evil of sufficient dimensions to challenge his full fury. Many, perhaps most people, have the same sentiment; but alas ! it is not in dynamic play. Under sufficient provocation they can emit some sparkles of righteous indignation ; they feel a pittance-pity for those who are wronged and hurt. So we can get electric prickles and sparkles from a cat's back.

My friend, how hard a blow can you strike for any sort of righteousness that summons you? How long can you keep up the hammering ? What is your moral voltage ?

Nearly every young person, brought up in decent circumstances, and accustomed to read anything higher than the criminal columns of the yellow newspaper, catches at times the thrill of moral chivalry. He would go out to valiant deeds. He would be a Hercules, and cut off the heads of the hydra; a Saint George with his spear through the neck of the dragon. Is he of such a spirit really ? Let him test his mettle against the common temptations of life. Can he conquer his sensual propensities? Can he give an Ithunal spear thrust that puts a quietus on the thought he would blush to speak? How will he vanquish dragons if he is afraid to scare away the buzzards that flap their wings in his very face as they scent the carrion spots in his disposition?

A prominent lawyer in one of our smaller cities, a man of fine address and practical political ability, was recently waited upon by a number of citizens who begged him to lead them in a crusade against certain vicious resorts that were bringing disgrace to the community. The lawyer made no favourable response. A few days later he explained his seeming indifference to the pastor of the church he attended. He said he was intensely interested in the movement, more so than most other citizens, and that for a reason that he disclosed. He had himself fallen a victim to these very vices, and was unwilling to add the sin of seeming hypocrisy in publicly opposing them. He confessed to a habit that had so scorched his moral nature that it had become like tinder; at any moment he was liable to blaze out as a startling exhibition of some of the vices he was asked to crush. This confession was made with tearful frankness. No one had suspected the tragedy that for years had been enacted behind the curtains of his private life; the wounds that left him utterly impotent for any part in the movement for the bettering of the community. He could pledge himself to assist only in matters that were purely financial, sanitary or political. A few years later what he anticipated happened. The moral rot had affected not only his conscience, but even his brain, destroyed his business judgment, and sapped his physical energy.

Such cases are too common, and account for a multitude of young people who attract others by their brilliant gifts, yet prove to be utter disappointments to their communities. Maeterlinck accounts for the sudden collapse of really strong characters by the giving way of a strand in

their being, generally a moral strand, which, however, is interlaced with all their other qualities. Speaking of the consciousness of inner wrong, he says, " It must always shake the confidence the man has had in himself and his destiny. At a given moment, and that generally the gravest, he has ceased to rely on himself—nor will he ever be again wholly himself. He has confused and probably corrupted his future by the introduction of strange powers. He has lost the exact sense of his personality." This author even goes so far as to attribute the ultimate failure of Napoleon Bonaparte, not so much to untoward outer events as to the loss of moral confidence in himself after certain wretched things he had done, though they had no apparent relation to his military ability.

George Eliot made an illuminating remark which we especially commend to the reflections of young men in our colleges, who are apt to think that scholarship, literary or professional paraphernalia, are the chief output of the educational machine:

"Learning is valuable only as it enlarges and enlightens the bounds of conscience."

CHAPTER IV

The Discovery of Spiritual Self

PERHAPS most people are less acquainted with their spiritual than with their intellectual and moral natures. This is because the affairs of daily life appeal incessantly to our various abilities and to our consciences. In the wildest whirl of affairs we ask ourselves the questions, Is this wise? Is this right? Religion, on the other hand, gains our attention chiefly when the mind is more or less abstracted from external things, and gives itself up to purposeful introspection. A few moments under the spell of some preacher's words, a flash or two from somewhere deep down in our souls as we lie awake at night, an honest in-look to which we are forced by some danger from sickness or accident, a bereavement that forces us to wonder if death really ends all,—these are with most people the sole occasions of spiritual diagnosis. Moreover, these brief experiences are just sufficient to convince us of the fact that we have natures deeper than the surface soil in which passing interests seed themselves; but they are not enough to make us seriously inquire, as it were, what riches of mineral wealth may be concealed, or what subterranean forces may be working beneath that soil.

Hence the general religious indifference, which is seldom due to intellectual doubts or infidel conclusions, but to the fact of mere superficial engrossment.

There are, however, men and women to whom have come, with more or less vividness, real soul revelations. Their natures seem to have been rent as by an earthquake. They have stood on the brink, and gazed into their own depths. Ever after, not the velvet lawns of pleasure, not the hard-packed highways of business, nor even the stars of scientific speculation, mostly engross them; but they themselves and the Divinity above and around and within them are the tremendous things in the universe.

It is these constantly occurring experiences of self-discovery, in every age,—none the less in ours, for all our seeming obsession by materiality,—that prevent any such thing as the ultimate decadence of religion. The masses may continue dull and unresponsive to religious appeal, but men and women of finer make feel themselves, and feel the touch of a power that is not themselves.

No human being is proof against such experience. In the consciousness of the weakest and the worst there remains at least a spark-lit ember which may burst into flame at any moment when the Spirit which, like the wind, "goeth as it listeth," breathes upon him. Hence Jerry McAuley, the pot-house gambler, and Mike Dunn, the forty years' jail-bird, feel the inner fire, just as in old age Andrew Jackson and Thurlow Weed, and in the innocency of childhood Harriet Newell and Catherine Booth, felt it.

But why leave oneself to the mere possibility of such casual experiences, or to the excitation of religious interest by things beyond our will and control? Why not stir one's own embers? Is it not enough that we know of the fire potency within us to stimulate spiritual ambition?

The folly of savages who live upon wind-sown grain without cultivating the soil that lies about them, and have no wealth of minerals except the particles that the rush of the waters of mountain streams or their own stumbling feet have uncovered, is surely no more pitiable than

the folly of those who neither sow the fields nor mine the riches of their own natures. Why are we not wiser than we are, when all, at some time or other, have monitions of tremendous possibilities and dangers?

If we are downright honest the answer will in most cases be similar to that of a colored porter on a Pullman car who, when asked by a traveling evangelist why he was not a Christian, replied, " I'm afraid, sah, ob de process." The same cowardice that sometimes leads a merchant to leave his business book unexamined lest the pages should show that his suspicions that he was about bankrupt are correct, prevents the honest inspection of our hearts.

But this fear of spiritual bankruptcy will be found to be unwarranted, if we make that inspection a thorough one. There are two sides to the ledger. While self-examination will humiliate us in many ways, it will at the same time discover to us facts regarding our natures which, if properly valued, will produce confidence, indeed warrant an enthusiasm for spiritual things.

The assets of the soul almost infinitely outweigh its liabilities. These assets are not, let us admit, " quick assets " that can be cashed into happy experience at a moment's thought. They are for long investment, require patience and much self-denial in dealing with them, but they are as substantial as the soul itself, and have the endorsement of the soul's Creator.

Spiritual self-discovery will be on some such lines as these:

(1) I am a spirit. I live in a material world; I possess a body; but I am not a body, nor are material things essential to my existence; / am a spirit.

A realization of this will disillusion us. We are tyrannized by " the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." The senses are so vivid that they weave the fabled veil of gold threads before the face of the soul; the glistening absorbs the attention and shuts out the larger vision. We have contracted the habit of thinking material good the only excellence. A second and grosser nature incrusts itself about the inner and finer nature. What we can look upon outwardly, what we can touch, what we can possess under written laws and customs, what we can eat and drink and put on,— these seem everything. We are so engrossed with the pictures on the walls of our environment that we fail to look out of the windows where there are fairer things than were ever portrayed with the pigments of matter, and vibtas too vast to be indicated by any laws of perspective known to physical science.

Yet from without the windows lights flash in upon us, and inspired voices speak to us. Sooner or later we become somewhat conscious of these greater things; we catch glimpses between the gold threads of the veil; we are startled as by lightning and thunder without. Then the soul feels the material world to be, if not a prison, at least only a schoolroom, a temporary confinement preparatory to some larger life beyond.

This feeling is soon increased by our experience of the adversities of life. Our secular ambitions get stranded; that sea is not deep enough for the business of the soul. One might think that poverty, sickness, bereavements, and the like would drive one to infidelity by destroying faith in divine goodness; but the reverse is the fact; it destroys confidence in the good of material things, and drives one to the spiritual for relief. Hence we find, as the apostle

says, " the poor in this world rich in faith, and the heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him."

Even where we succeed in secular projects, the soul in its deeper parts fails to find its satisfaction. Nothing sooner wearies than the monotony of ease and luxury. The material food we would gather dries on the stalk, and, before we can eat it, loses its bloom and the taste of its early ripening. Even the body goes back on us. The nerves which once brought delight lose their power to pass the thrills, or transform them into aches and pains.

So it comes about that before we have fairly learned the business of sensuous life the business closes up. Every man, as Job said, is cut off in the midst of his material hopes.

But this is only one side of the ledger of life. We become dissatisfied with material things because the soul realizes that it is too great a thing to be satisfied with them. It frets at the cage because it has wings.

Then happily it makes the discovery that it can break the bars. Again and again it essays short flights into the spiritual; very brief at first. The ether is too rare for it. Spiritual things are also too undefined for its vision. Scientists tell us that even the physical eye would be as if blind amid the glare of the astronomical spaces were it not for denser objects like the stars, which intercept the light. Possibly our spirit eyes see but little, not because of the darkness, but rather because of the brightness that shines about us. However that may be, the soul at first quickly wearies with its flights, and returns to its attempted rest in material interests.

But it has learned a lesson of which it will ever after have vivid consciousness;—it is itself a spirit, not a body; its true environment is spiritual, not material. That consciousness awakens a cry, ever after the chronic questioning of the soul,— " Oh, that I knew where I might find " It knows not what it would find—only that Something which, if it does not fill, will at least interpret the spiritual which " lies round us like a cloud."

But soon that cry becomes more definite,— " Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" It was the cry of David, and also of Edward Newman, the sceptic, who could find no words so articulate with the desire of his heart as those of the Psalmist.

Why the cry of the soul is for "Him" and not "It" will appear when we note some other lines of spiritual self-discovery.

(2) Whatever may be the thronging associations of the outward life, each one of us is a solitary being, a lonely spirit, longing for fellowships which the world does not provide. Who does not feel this? Our deepest thought we tell to no one, not even to the one whose heart-throbs we can feel as another life interweaves itself with ours. No one fully fathoms our feeling, however close' our love. Our lives touch as do the grapes upon the cluster, but the juices do not intermix; nor will they until we realize a higher unity of souls, perhaps that of which Jesus spoke, when the communion of love shall be from one cup. In this life every " heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger inter-meddleth not with its joy."

We are conscious of this solitude even in the thick of society and the frankness of boon comradeship. We put on conventionalities as we wear clothing, possibly with a little sense of

shame, lest our souls should be seen naked. We measure out our thoughts in words, as liquor in bottles, duly inspecting each, lest we should give out more of our real selves than is prudent.

We are oppressively conscious of this solitude when those closest to us pass away. Their voices silenced, the stillness settles about our hearts as if to stop their throbbing.

Then the soul realizes that it was made for love and intimacy closer than any that ever wore face and form. It longs for some sort of spiritual communion which the world of sight and sound, with all its sparkling eyes and sweet voices, does not supply, and which the world, if it should pass away, could not interrupt.

Is there such a communion of spirits ? The cry of the soul is for something personal. As a great philosopher said, " I want not a metaphysical conception, but One who is heart to heart with me. Oh, that I knew where I might find Him ! "

(3) Spiritual self-discovery brings us face to face with the fact that, however powerful and proud we may be as respects men about us, we are practically helpless in matters relating to our own personal condition and destiny.

We cannot determine our lives; neither their bounds nor their contents. He who boasts that he has conquered the world often dies prematurely and miserably on the field of victory.

We are especially helpless in respect to our inner life. A man is brilliantly intellectual; can build with his knowledge marvellous theories of the physical universe, and, with his metaphysics, anatomize the very fibres of the mind; yet he sits bewildered before the problem of his own personal existence, scarcely knowing whether he is a reality or a dream, a soul filling a body as the light globes itself in the sun, or a body imprisoning a soul as a spark is held flickering amid ashes.

He discourses of love and hope; works a wonderful tapestry of all the sentiments, ablaze with romance or delicately illumined with poesy; yet is unable to control his own feeling; himself a ragged tangle of conflicting emotions ; vain or humiliated; charitable or envious; now jubilant, now discontented and morose; here confident and hopeful, like a giant in armour, there writhing in despair within dented helm and casque.

He preaches down the unrest of humanity, yet when a bereavement touches him he cries with Thomas Carlyle, " Now the light of life has gone out for me ! "

He engineers great schemes for the happiness of the world, as some build reservoirs to quench the thirst of cities; yet, as poor Hazlitt confessed, " digs wells in the desert, and draws up nothing but sand " for himself.

Why this misery? Because the man feels his weakness? Just the reverse. He feels his strength, but the forces playing upon him are temporarily stronger than he. He was not made for this helplessness. His blows are tremendous, but as when one beats the air he wrenches his own muscles. If only he could lay hold on something,—on that great Something! " Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!"

(4) Further, this self-discovery uncovers the conscience. One cannot deeply probe the soul without cutting through the moral sensibilities, which are to the spiritual what nerves are to the physical person. John Stuart Mill described the depression which he felt at times over the unsolved problem of existence as something akin to what Methodists call "conviction." The stronger our conscientiousness the more we realize our unworth, because we feel more acutely the pressure of that infinite right which, as we say, is "in the very nature of things."

The cry of the awakened spirit is for a gracious-ness in the heart of the Eternal which can pass over our moral deficiency, and for some new spring-head of righteousness which will pour a purer stream through the soiled waters, and by its superabundance clarify our moral natures. "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him" who can forgive the past and perfect the future!

(5) A final revelation of spiritual self;—we are dying, yet are possessed by a passion for continuance. We do not pity the animal that ends its present life, because that life is apparently without anticipation. The brute finds satisfaction in the answer to its immediate appetites. On the other hand, a man cannot live only in to-day. To-morrow, the forever, is in his thought, as distance is always a part of physical vision. "God has set eternity in his heart," says the Scripture.

That his pictures of futurity are often fantastic does not lessen the fact of his innate passion for painting them. Lacking definiteness of vision he may force himself to say, "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die;" but he dies with the cry for more life upon his stiffening lips. Like a vessel stranded upon the bar, he feels the moving of the eternal tide beneath and around him, and awaits the reflooding. His life may have been miserable, but as when one drinks the sweet wine in a cup of bitter acacia wood, he thirsts for the wine, and hopes that he will some day drink it untainted. He cries, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him" who is the life, and the giver of life!

Thus every soul that knows itself, that can analyze its own essential qualities, is a religious inquirer as truly as he who sits upon the "anxious bench" or consults a priest. Is there any answer to this cry?

Let me narrate an incident in the life of a "twice-born man" whose name is held in affectionate remembrance by thousands who knew him in his later years. He was a graduate of a noted German university, an honour man in more than one branch of study. He was especially versed in philosophy and the history of human thought. When the writer first met him he was an advanced rationalist, a self-satisfied materialist. He did not, as many do, pause upon the brink of speculation and apologetically call himself a mere agnostic as he looked into the abyss of universal uncertainty, confessing that he could not know the deep mysteries of existence. He thought that he had solved the "Riddle of Existence" as thoroughly as Haeckel. He regarded himself as sufficiently furnished with the facts of present science to warrant confidence in atheism, and proudly derided every form of religious doctrine. As he saw no indication of a divine law or volition in the natural world, so he admitted no divine influence in individual experience and no providence in human affairs. His frequent saying was that Plato was greater than Jesus, neither of whom reached the attainment of the modern scientific mind.

Yet this scorn of religion did not prevent his study of its various systems. He was curiously

entertained by the phenomena of the different faiths of mankind; an accomplished mythologist, familiar with the fantasies of the superstitious tribes of men, among which, and as possessing a similar importance, he was accustomed to class the fabrications of the church of Rome and the theology of Presbyterians.

He was, moreover, thoroughly conversant, not only with books, but with the active life of the world. He had served as an officer in the English army in the Crimean War, as a promoter of the cause of Don Carlos in Spain, as an agent of Central American revolutionists. Proud of his attainments as a scholar, confident of his abilities, absolutely independent in his convictions and conduct, he was a typical product of the best and the worst of the free-thinking movement of the day.

Circumstances led this man to sojourn for a while in a small back-country hamlet where, without books and genial comrades, he was left much to his own musings. Within a few months he made a very humble confession of conversion in the country church. The repute of his scholarship, and of his change of convictions, led to his being called to a professorship in one of our denominational colleges. Here for thirty years he taught, winning the love of students and the admiration of fellow professors, not only for his rare intellectual powers, but as well for the charm of his simple Christian character.

We need not go back to the days of Augustine or Francis of Assisi for the proofs of the transforming power of the religious spirit.

In the confidence of our later intimacy this man told the writer the drift of thought which led him to reverse his opinions. He had made a spiritual self-discovery. A light flashed within him, in comparison with which all philosophy and science were a deepening twilight. All his life previously he had looked at truth only objectively, from without. As he said, he had been seeking God in the blank spaces between the stars; tried to find His footprints in the arid dust and tangled jungles of partially written history. But in his retreat from the outward excitements of life he communed with his own deeper self. He tried to fathom the depths with such questions as these:

"Who am I? What am I? " No answer.

"What is my destiny?" No answer.

"What has been my life?" The reply came like the rush of waters breaking through a mountain dam and deluging the land below ;—" My life has been an utter failure, unsatisfactory to reasonable judgment, to conscience, to sense of relationship to my fellow men, supplying no generous incentive for further living."

As he uncovered the dark depths of his soul Plato and the philosophers gave him no light, save a sort of phosphorescent gleam through the surface spray.

He then reread carefully the teachings of Jesus. He sought to analyze that prodigious personality and character. They baffled all his acumen; he felt that they belonged to things infinite.

Though he could not understand the Christ, he found that the Christ-light enabled him to

understand himself. The lips that spoke to men in Palestine seemed to speak familiarly with him :

"I see no God anywhere." "True," said the Master. "'No man hath seen God at any time, save the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal Him.' "

"I want no God who is a mere force beneath the material world, for nature is destroying me," groaned the human spirit. "True," said Jesus. "You need divine companionship. - Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world.' "

"I need counsel. My thoughts are darkling and mislead me." "True," replied the invisible speaker. "' My Spirit will guide you into all truth.' "

"This is not for me, not for me. My life has been too sinful for such communion." "True," said the Monitor. "But did I not say to one who was even lower than you, ' Neither do I condemn you. Go in peace'? Did I not inspire My disciple to write, ' If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things'?"

"I want higher and holier incentive. I could not be a Christian. My life is a shipwreck. I can no longer gather up its dissipated energies." "True," said the Voice. "But • My grace is sufficient for thee.' Did I not make of fishermen and publicans the leaders of the religion that is now conquering the world? And cannot I help you with your trained mind to gather up your powers in sublimest consecration?"

Then the proud man bowed, and breathed a prayer which was also a vow,—"Help me, O Christ, and I will follow Thee."

Thus, as naturally as the molten bronze fills all the indentations of the mould, the new Christian thought shaped itself in the empty places of his heart. He had discovered himself; and, as he gazed into the still depths of his own being, he discovered God, as the heavens reflect themselves in quiet waters.