

Man mysteriously unites within himself the king and the subject. He is possessed of certain powers which are to exercise the regal functions, and of others which are to occupy the position and exercise the submission of subjects. Happily, there is no difficulty in ascertaining which of these powers are to maintain the supremacy, and which are to be subordinate. Reason and conscience, enlightened and sanctified, are to yield the sceptre; and to these, the thoughts, the imagination, and the passion are to be in subjection. The life of some is made up of conflicts between reason and passion, between conscience and wrongdoing. Reason claims to be the master-power, but the passions dispute its right, and obstinately contend for the supremacy. The love of sin hurries men on into evil, conscience lifts up her warning voice, and if her warning be unheeded, she then condemns and visits with remorse and retribution. Hence, man is a being of strange contrarieties. Mighty forces come into collision on the field of his heart. The evil principles and evil tendencies of his nature hurry him on to wrongdoing; other influences rush on him from another direction to resist and restrain. These hostile forces meet each other with great violence, like the rush of conflicting waters in the tidal river, or the rush of embattled hosts when the steel flashes, and cannons boom, and the smoke flings its dark mantle over the sickening scene to hide it from the pure face of the sun. Every human being is conscious of this moral strife. The man is not born who has not felt these strange internal commotions and collisions. Even the untutored savage is not exempt from them. Is it not a well-authenticated fact, that there obtains in heathen lands the notion, that there are in the universe an evil spirit, and a good spirit, whose power and skill, as the heathen suppose, are tolerably well balanced, and which have constant access to the hearts of men, the one prompting to good, the other to evil? This strange belief is not founded on a written revelation, for of this they are destitute; nor on tradition merely, but on the heathen's internal consciousness. Every pagan feels the contest within him. The struggling forces of good and evil are on the field of his heart. Hence his notion of two great spirits, the one opposed to the

other. To this terrible internal struggle, of which all men, everywhere, are conscious, the Apostle Paul refers, when he speaks of the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; these being contrary the one to the other. This strife is now going on in all our hearts. If we have a thirst for distinction, we may have it by siding with the true and the holy. For we would have our noble youth remember, that, to be ruled by principle and not by passion, by our sense of right and not by our love of wrong, to have the good predominant, and the evil of our nature in entire subjection—this is true heroism. Without it there can be no true nobility.

Our subject is so thoroughly practical that we can scarcely avoid adopting, occasionally at least, the more direct and personal form of address. Moreover, we adopt this form because it will enable us to bring our subject home with greater force and fulness to each individual mind, for the subject is one we want you not only to understand and master, but one that we would have you all practise in every-day life. A sketch of character, or a scene from history, would doubtless have been more attractive on the placard, and perhaps more entertaining to you. Be that as it may, it can do us no harm to shut ourselves up from the outer world, to lose sight of the stirring magnificence of history, and the great characters who have figured on the theatre of human activities, and to spend an evening with ourselves, to study this mysterious thing—our own selfhood, and to see what we can do to improve it, to ennoble it, and to raise it to its proper and destined dignity. In passing, we may glance at a character, here and there, as an example to avoid or imitate; but our theme is *ourselves*. Dry and unattractive as the title we have selected may seem, it is not so in reality. Who among you can fail to be interested, when you understand that we are going to speak to you about yourselves? There are not many of us poor mortals so sublimated, so detached from self, as seriously to object to be either speaking or hearing about ourselves. It is a weakness of human nature, and, we may hope, a very pardonable one. I am quite prepared to believe you would not be pleased with me were I to publish