

## MODERN THOUGHT AND IMMORTALITY.

It is sometimes said that interest in the subject of personal immortality is not what it used to be, that, in point of fact, the world (by which we mean humanity) has become increasingly secular in interest and in outlook. This is the opinion expressed by that great scholar, historian, and thinker, Mr. Lecky, in his "Rise and Progress of Rationalism in Europe." The ministers who are present, and the older men of the congregation, will agree with me that whereas once sermons were always charged with appeals based upon the tremendous issues of conduct, not for time, but for eternity, nowadays we have become so practical that appeals are rarely made to sanctions drawn from the consideration of the judgment to come, the blessedness of heaven, or the terrors of retribution. In history, it has always been true that when the pulpit has taken to moralizing, morality has lost its dynamic. We can learn our morals elsewhere. Prudence teaches us the importance of a certain regard to conduct, but the achievements of conscience in any century have been made, not in accordance with the dictates of prudential maxims, but in obedience to sanctions, drawn from the consideration of man's eternal citizenship.

We are told that today, intellectually, there is more uncertainty about the fact of immortality than there ever has been, and perhaps this is true, though not so true as some might think. We are less certain in some ways, because of the new habit of mind induced by acquaintance with the methods of modern science. Young men, who know nothing at all about science, are under the domination of certain notions derived from the methods of science, and they regard nothing as proven which is not the result of conclusions arrived at after laborious observation and experiment. But there is another kind of proof. The things done daily, the aims of which we are most conscious, and to which we devote our energies with enthusiasm, are not the result of inductive proofs, and have little to do with observation and experiment, but are the fruit of the divine impulse.

## IS THERE A DESIRE FOR PERSONAL IMMORTALITY?

It is also said at the present day that there is a cessation of desire for personal immortality—perhaps, I should say, a comparative cessation. I have met people who said they had no wish for a personal existence beyond the grave. There are several ways in which men could come to take such a position. One is mental ennui. The sense of mystery is so great, the sense of illusion so appalling, the fruits of the noblest efforts so small, that some of the best of men gradually grow tired, and cease to trouble about what may come, and just wait for the great dissolution without expectation and without hope. A larger number is represented by the city man, who, the other day, said to a friend of mine, "I know all you say to me. I went to a Sunday School the same as you did. I used to be a worker in the church. I had my opinions, as you have now, about man's eternal destiny. But I have come to the conclusion that there is no such destiny, and that if there were, I should not seek it. It matters nothing to me. I have worked hard all my life, and my ideal can be thus summed up—to provide a competence for my five children, and let death come as soon as it pleases; I ask for no awakening on the other side." Trouble leads to this position. I have known people who would welcome the time when death would close down all their sorrows in the silence of the grave.

## MEN WANT TO LIVE.

Yet men want to live for the most part. Even those who say they do not would soon change their outlook if they could be assured that the best was the truth, and not the worst.

"Whatever crazy sorrow saith,  
No life that breathes with human breath,  
Has ever truly long'd for death.

"'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,  
Oh life, not death, for which we pant;  
More life, and fuller, than I want."

There are people among my readers to whom life has ceased to signify much since the dearest went away. Most of their interests are now on the other side. They feel that the cruellest thing in their experience has been death in their home, and if they could be assured they would see their dead again, they would not trouble much about their personal immortality, they would be glad to think that "Love can never lose its own." It is for these reasons that men are always asking, in the words of Job, "If a man die, shall he live again?" He will not! for the simple reason that he will never die. We have the highest authority for saying this. Deathless life was in Jesus Christ, the Master of the Universe, who holds the keys of death and hell. He is the One who came to save mankind. The destiny of humanity is bound up with the life of Jesus Christ.

## SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

I will venture upon a prophecy. The next great rehabilitation of the fundamentals of religion will come, not from the side of theology, but from the side of science. Theology was never more than speculation. It always stumbled along in the wake of spiritual experience. Experience came first, and theology afterwards. My belief is that we are at the dawning of the day when the rehabilitation of the great facts of religion will come from the side of that which has hitherto been hostile to it. There are certain great names today

which stand out as exponents of science, and are associated at the same time with an interest in religion. Amongst these, I would like to mention Sir Oliver Lodge, of Birmingham. This eminent scientist and ex-President of the British Association, said, some time ago, that to him the explanation of the world was intimately and immediately concerned with ourselves. Myers, in his "Human Personality," takes the same view. From this new friendly interest in human nature, we have derived certain great ideas. The first is that the world itself is spiritual. It may be neither matter nor mind, but it is something greater than either. If all is soul, whose soul is it that bears a relationship to us, which we cannot repudiate, and with which we cannot dispute? The answer of Christian experience is that it is Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

## PERSONALITY IS THE ULTIMATE REALITY.

The second great idea is this, that personality is the ultimate reality in the whole scheme of things. We are prior to the universe. We are the universe ourselves. Here Jesus speaks again. Our souls are worthy of an eternal destiny, for that reason alone. Christ said little about the life to come, but yet every word he spoke has value. "In my father's house are many mansions." Suffer me to change that phrase. Mansion means a big house now, but it did not mean that when King James' translators gave us our Bible. It meant a place to remain in. "In my father's house are many resting-places. If it were not so, I should have told you."

The sweet authority of Christ also comes to our aid in the spiritual witness of believers. There is one type of man who never doubts personal immortality. That is the saint. The nearer to God, the surer of heaven. Goodness has a claim upon God. Goodness is an apologetic for immortality. Produce a saint, and you produce something far better and worthier to live than this world of bricks and mortar, of sea and air. Death is an episode, an event in a continuous life. Jesus, the soul of the Universe, has charge of ours. When death comes, it is but a message to call personality to its own place. "Now are we sons of God, but it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

## The Old-Time District School.

BY LATHAN A. CRANDALL.

The school-house had never been painted by the hands of man, but storm and sunshine had given it nature's own beautiful coloring of grayish brown. It stood next to the church, and back of both buildings ran the long line of horse-sheds. It was not in a village, for there was not even a blacksmith shop, and the post-office was two miles away. On a corner opposite the church was the home of the minister, shaded by a giant elm with drooping branches, where the orioles came in the early spring to swing their nets, and the robins gathered to lay their plans for robbing the nearby cherry trees. In the meadow back of the minister's house and beyond the side-hill orchard, the strawberries ripened earliest and lingered longest. On another corner lived Uncle Watty Reed, famous in all that section as being incurably afflicted with "that tired feeling"; and just to the south dwelt Uncle Billy Hubbell, whose sneeze was sometimes mistaken by strangers for a powder-mill explosion. Between the church and the parsonage ran a brook—at least it was there in wet weather, and its stony bed was in evidence all the year around. Reckless suckers sometimes ventured to ascend this stream at times of flood, only to perish at the hands of the small boy if they dared to linger after the waters had somewhat subsided. There was a tradition that at some remote period in the past a nameless boy had caught a trout in this stream; but the tradition was vague and not generally credited.

But the door of the old school-house stands invitingly open, and we will visit the school. You can take in all there is to be seen at a single glance, for there is but one room measuring some twenty by thirty feet. No patent desks with stationary ink-wells and modern furbelows meet the eye. Around three sides of the room is a desk attached to the wall and sloping towards the bench which parallels the desk. The desk is used as a resting-place for books, and also furnishes a standing challenge to the small boy's jack-knife; a challenge which is always accepted. The benches are made of slabs with the flat side uppermost, supported by stout legs running through auger holes at either end of the slab. Near the door are shelves for wearing apparel and dinner-pails. In the center of the room stands a big square box-stove, and at the south end of the room, next the door, is the blackboard. The only other furniture consists of the "school-ma'am" and about thirty wiggling children. Of course, on these summer days the windows are all open, and the sounds of the fields come clearly to our ears. The chatter of a mowing machine; the soporific drone of bumblebees, (there were no "humblebees" in those days) the drunken gurgle of a bobolink, these blend one into another to form a medley that soothes rather than distracts. Two of the boys are neglecting their books to watch a woodchuck which is foraging on the hill-side in Aaron Hutchings' pasture, until an unexpected slap from the teacher brings them to a realizing sense of their depravity. George Downey and Jim Deyo, with faces towards the wall and books open as if intent on study, are slyly matchin' g

pins—naughty boys—while the teacher is learning the class in "First Reader." Mary Jane Hammond was caught whispering to Cette House, and is now being punished for her crime by "standing on the floor" in the sight of the whole school. "Squatty" Givens is snoring in the corner, but that is no sure proof that he is asleep, for some abnormal growth in the nasal passage causes him to puff and wheeze at all times and in all places.

Who that ever attended the district school does not recall the joy of the noon hour? Lunch over, what games we had what wrestling matches and 'oo' races. Golf and tennis? Hardly. "I spy," "Pom-pom-pull-away," "Two-old-cat," "Ante-over," "Storm-the-bunker," each had its permanent place in the hearts of the country children a generation ago. Sometimes we sought out the beds of the meadow violets and fought the beautiful flowers against each other under the name of "roosters"; and again, went wading in the near-by brook.

In the winter the "big" boys and girls were in evidence, some of them older than the teacher. The teacher who finished the winter term without meeting trouble, with a big T, was either very wise or very strong or both. If he was a coward, or injudicious, or weak of body, his work generally came to a sudden and ignominious end. After being carried out of doors and plumped down in a snow-drift, his ardor as an instructor of youth was likely to be so thoroughly chilled that he retired to private life. Sometimes we had a horn teacher, like "Liza Bouton," who made the winter long to be remembered because of her beneficent sway and wise leadership. It was at the noon hour in winter that we skated on Virgil Creek, or coasted down the long hills that girdled our valley. When the drift had covered the fences and a hard crust had formed over all, then from the far summit of Bouton Hill, down and across the level meadow and striding down another hill we used to sail on sleds and "jumpers." The great draw-back to our perfect happiness was from the necessity of tugging the sleds up the hill again before we could repeat the performance. Strange how those hills have shrunk. They reached heaven-high in these olden days, but now they have shriveled so that the boy who visited them after an absence of twenty years could hardly recognize his old friends. Do you remember that spelling-school, when they came down from the Geetown district with the avowed purpose of spelling us down? They went back sader and wiser for they had reckoned without taking Sophia Bouton, our champion speller, into account. But what a time we had during the intermission! Of course the spelling-school games are not now to be mentioned in polite society, for they were "snap-and-cat h-em" and "the needle's eye"; games which contain a large amount of osculatory operation. As we recall them they were not altogether distasteful to us at that time, but of course from the height of refinement and true "culchah," to which we have now attained they look shockingly vulgar.

Did we learn anything? Well, just a little, you know. The instruction was not strictly "scientific," and if "pedagogy" and "psychology" had been mentioned in our hearing we should probably have suspected the hearer of trying to swear in some unknown tongue. We did not learn by "unconscious assimilation," and were not allowed to follow our natural bent unguided by the teacher. The instructors of that time had not enjoyed the advantages of modern teacher training, and knew no better than to insist upon our learning the multiplication table by dint of much hard study, being ignorant of the more approved method which demands that the child learn only as the necessity for multiplying arises. Another evil practice of the old-time teacher was to drill the children in spelling. They did not know that such practice was arbitrary and unscientific, and so must not be judged too harshly. We simply had to learn how to spell words whether we wanted to use them in our daily speech or not. Horrible! was it not? And yet as the years have come and gone and our practical vocabulary has grown, it has been no small satisfaction to be able to spell the words which we use.

Another medieval custom of that time was the drill in mental arithmetic. Of course the modern method of counting on your fingers is easier, but somehow we have a lingering for instruction which demands careful and persistent concentration of the mind and gives invaluable training to the memory. With all due respect to modern methods and scientific pedagogy of which our children are the victims, some of us are quite content to have had our primary training in the old district school.—Standard.

Just as you now play a piece without the music and do not think what notes you strike, though once you picked them out by slow and patient toil; so, if you begin to set purpose, you will learn the law of kindness in utterance so perfectly that it will be second nature to you and make more music in your life than all the songs the sweetest voice has ever sung.—Frances E. Willard.

God permits temptation because it does for us what the storms do for the oaks—it roots us; and what the fire does for the painting on the porcelain—it makes us permanent. You never know that you have a grip on Christ or that he has a grip on you so well as when the devil is using all his force to attract you from Him; then you feel the pull of Christ's right hand.—F. B. Meyer.