

A species of the century-plant, called the maguey, grows in the tropics; grows for years into great thick leaves, broader than two hands, thicker than three, and longer than twenty; and armed with the sharpest thorns. Its juice makes the stupefying *pulque* drink of Mexico. Nothing could be uglier; but, all of a sudden, it shoots up a tall shaft like a small telegraph pole, that crowns itself with a perfect wealth of abundant flowers. So for centuries roll on the dolorous and accursed ages. Men grow into flabby uselessness, they bristle with savage thorniness, they compel the nations to drink the wine of their fermentation. But, all of a sudden, some exceptional man shoots up from the general mass, some Luther, or Wesley, able to reveal that greatness of humanity which God knew all the time was among the capacities of His children. He knows that there are in every man as great possibilities of development, by His help, as have ever been shown by any man.

He only knows the modes of development. Men are ever seeking good or goods by inheritance. God offers them to industry. They pray for results. God answers: "Get them by processes." Men want to vault at once into strength, influence, wealth, heaven. God says, take the steps: creep, stand, walk, run, leap; the way that Abraham, Jesus and the disciples walked must be the way. Infinite power, joined with infinite love, cannot help men but in specific ways—the lawful ways of an ordered universe. It is vain to attempt any other.

God only knows the power of working. Men look at the memory of a Porson, the strategics of Napoleon, the mathematics of a Newton, and despair. But no man need despair of Christian attainment, because of the fullness of power that waits to help men. God speaks, and it is done; commands, and it stands fast. He can make an Abraham, father of the faithful; a John, personator of the love and gentleness of Christ; a Huss, a Luther, a Wesley, a Moody, out of a herdman, a fisher, a

monk, or a carpenter; but the man must take the step, and measureless power teaches every Ephraim to go, holding him by the arms. All these great men have had struggles, not so much to do, as to accept God's way. And, amazed as we are at what God did for them, we should be more amazed if we only knew how much more God would have done for them if they had only let Him. We must always remember that the sufficiency of the power is of God and not of men. He ever waits to fill men with all the fullness of God.

"O little heart of mine! shall pain
Or sorrow make thee moan?
When all this God is all for thee—
A Father all thine own."

Ah, good hearer, how far have you come? How many steps have you taken? You have been strengthened by might by the Spirit in the inner man. Every man has that. The Spirit comes to every man that far, that he may profit withal. By it you have been warned, convicted of unfitness for heaven, unlikeness to God. But the purpose of that strengthening was in order that Christ might dwell in your heart by faith. Has the second step been taken, or is the babe still lying in the cradle, when ability has been offered to walk? Has the third stage been reached—rooted and grounded in love? Know ye the next stage: able to comprehend the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ? Who knows the exuberant joy of being filled with all the fullness of God? At whatever point you are, your only watch-word is progress; your opportunity is through the eternal years; your help is the King of the universe.

Let us join in the doxology of St. Paul: "Now, unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that already worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church that receives and reveals his power, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."