

disentangle ourselves from the meshes of the past, and with patience win out at last. Conversion is an act of emancipation ; it sets us free for the great adventure of life. It clears our feet of the impedimenta of a materialized culture ; and it purges us of fear. It brings us the knowledge that we can stand all that can happen to us, the calm assurance that beneath the fell blow of circumstance, though our heads be bloody, they shall be unbowed. It sets us on the way to the mastery of life, of the world and all that is in it.

III.—CONVERSION AS EMANCIPATION

This is not the way conversion is conceived where it is most commonly spoken of. The assumption behind the conventional view of conversion is that the world is divided broadly into two classes : the disreputable—consisting of drunkards and harlots, gamblers and thieves ; and the respectable—the decent, well-dressed, law-abiding folk who go to church on Sundays. Conversion is the process which turns the former into the latter. It is not usually recalled that conversion has not infrequently turned respectable men into wild and lawless persons, and has made them (judged by the current orthodoxies) into impossible cranks and dangerous firebrands. The saint has often been regarded as a type of criminal.

This truncated view of conversion springs from a subtle and unrecognized legalism. The preacher may tell us that we are not “ under the law ” ; and