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OUR WORK AND HOW TO DO IT.

BY REV. PROFESSOR WILLIAM CLARK, TRINITY COLLEGE, TORONTO.

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THE philosopher Kant, at the close of his great work, "The Critique of Pure Reason," has said that the ultimate object of all inquiry is to give replies to three questions: What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope for? The third question, Professor Huxley has said, we may safely leave, letting consequences take care of themselves so long as the actions are right. But in point of fact all these questions are resolved into the second of the three, What ought I to do? whilst the other two cannot be overlooked, since in some cases we can tell what is our duty only by considering the consequences of our actions, and in all cases our responsibility is limited by our knowledge and ability. It can be no man's duty to perform the impossible or the unknown. On the other hand, it is quite true that, when duty has become clear, we may safely leave the question, What am I to expect? to solve itself, which it will do with strict legality.

What ought I to do? What is my proper work in this world? No sane person doubts the importance, the

supreme importance of that question, since it does, in reality, contain within itself every other great question. "Know what thou canst work at," says Mr. Carlyle,* "and work at it like a Hercules." And further, this is a question which concerns every one, of whatever religious views or convictions. It has, of course, a very serious and solemn import to the Christian, since to him it is the same as inquiring what is his Father's will concerning him, a consideration which may and should become to him a thought of great joy. But it concerns every one who lives in human society, every one who acknowledges any duty to his fellow-men—nay, further, every one who expects anything of those who live around him, since he who depends upon the services of others can reasonably do so only as he is himself ready to yield service in return.

This, then, is the subject which is here proposed to be considered, the work which is assigned to us here on

* "Past and Present."