

By proving its blest power to make him loved
Of God and man; and when this power is proved,
And when the opal's charm hath lasted on
Throughout the ages, blessing children's children,
Hereafter, in a thousand thousand years,
Before his seat a wiser judge than I
Shall summon you.—So spake the modest judge.

Here, as I have said, we have the gist of the teaching of "Nathan the Wise," and it is, briefly: That the value of any religion is in direct proportion to its influence for good on the lives and characters of men, and not to the doggedness with which it clings to dogmas which the wit of man can never settle, and which would be valueless if it could. This lesson is at last being slowly learned. Common sense and religion have not married in haste, so they are not likely to repent at leisure. And there is still a good deal to be done before the union is complete. A High Church clergyman once said to me: "I care little what life a man leads, in comparison with what dogmas he holds." A High Church layman once said to me: "I would rather see a man a wicked churchman than a good dissenter." I do not believe that High Churchmen are worse than other religionists, but I have more to do with them than with others, and I hear more of their views. Certainly, in the matter of showing their faith by their works, they occupy a very honourable position; and, in fact, utterances like those I have quoted remind me very much of the rudimentary gills and the intermaxillary bone in man. They serve to illustrate a past or departing stage of religious development. Nathan's thousand thousand years are far from being over, but already the churches are showing a growing tendency to relegate the dogmatic and incomprehensible elements to the background, and to give due prominence to the practical application of their Master's teaching. Looking abroad over the world to-day, the question of the Three Rings would appear already to be pretty well settled in favour of Christianity.

THOMAS CROSS.

"THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD."

PROFESSOR DRUMMOND, commenting on the Apostle Paul's wonderful delineation of the virtue of charity, tells us that love is "the greatest thing in the world." A very admirable discourse it is that he delivers on this theme, and one that has most important implications. After mentioning the several elements that make up what he calls "the spectrum of love," the eloquent author observes that these are all "in relation to men, in relation to life, in relation to the known to-day and the near to-morrow, and not to the unknown eternity." Continuing he says: "We hear much of love to God; Christ spoke much of love to man. We make a great deal of peace with heaven; Christ made much of peace on earth. Religion is not a strange or added thing, but the inspiration of the secular life, the breathing of an eternal spirit through this temporal world." It is now about fifteen years since the present writer, in the columns of the *Canadian Monthly*, was uttering, from a somewhat different standpoint, perhaps, very much the same sentiments as these, with the result, he has reason to think, of seriously offending orthodox opinion. To-day a man who is justly esteemed a pillar, if not of orthodoxy in the strictest sense, at least of religious faith, can place all that is most important in religion on a purely secular basis and in doing so can carry with him the sympathies of large numbers of earnest Christians. Times are evidently changing. In some respects the last fifteen years may have seemed to be years of reaction, but in reality there has been growth, there has been development, and men are evidently preparing to think the wider thoughts, to cherish the larger hopes, to exercise the broader faith that the spirit of the age requires. Perhaps, as they do so, they may extend a little of the charity which Professor Drummond so nobly describes and extols to those who, a few years earlier, caught lispsings of "a change in the dark world," and ventured to announce what seemed to them to be the coming truth.

My object however in referring now to Professor Drummond's book was not to claim justification for aught that I may myself have previously written, but to say a few words in regard to the burden of his teaching. Of love nothing too beautiful, nothing too impressive, can be said. Love cannot be over-praised, for in itself it is something pure and perfect. But even of love we are constrained in these days to take, upon occasion, the "scientific view." We have to ask, Whence comes it? What conditions render it possible? What is its physical basis? The only fault I find with Professor Drummond's treatment of the subject is that he speaks of love too much, as if it were a disembodied something that could come and go as it listed, instead of being, as it is, a function of the human individual that must derive its force from whatever feeds the individual character. I should be sorry to say one word to weaken the impression left by the Professor's excellent address, which contains a much-needed message to the men and women of to-day; but I hardly think it should produce that effect to express the complementary truth which I have just hinted at, that, before love can take any satisfactory form, there has to be a human being fit to exercise the feeling. Can an ill-developed character love? Can a character that lacks native strength love in a true and high sense? Love is magnanimous, but magnanimity implies strength. There is no magnanimity in yielding that which you have neither strength nor courage to make your own. Amongst boys we sometimes find one professing to be very meek and forgiving when he simply lacks pluck. So it is with men; there are many who give

way when they ought to stand firm, and who try to persuade themselves and others that they do it "for the sake of peace." In point of fact they would be willing enough to have war if they had sufficient confidence in their own resolution, and they inwardly despise themselves for their lack of that quality. Now how is this to be got over by love? What is wanted as the very preliminary to love is courage; when a man knows that he can fight his own battles and successfully defend his own rights then he may magnanimously make concessions; but, till then, he only further weakens himself and strengthens his aggressors by every point that he yields. In a word the *ego* must be a centre of force before it can impart itself to others.

Here we come in sight of Herbert Spencer's principle of individualism. He has been accused of preaching selfishness, but the accusation is unjust. He sees that the primary want of society is individuals, and that, just as these are well-developed, will their relations be satisfactory and the general tone of the society good and elevated. We are compelled therefore to ask, what is essential to a perfect individual? We see at once that there must be something stored up in the individual that is his own, that is inseparable from himself, something by which his personality is constituted and which enables him to act on others. In the moral as well as in the physical world action and re-action are equal and opposite. Professor Drummond rather writes as if there could be perpetual action without re-action, perpetual discharge without re-charge. The more actively we love the more do we require a lively consciousness of self, so that we may feel that it is *we* who love, not that a mere stream of feeling is passing through us. In point of fact we know that the most loving natures are the most sensitive. If the sun is radiating heat and light with the most splendid generosity, it is because in him the law of gravitation is acting with unimaginable force. He is a splendid individual and consequently he is luminous and life giving to the furthest bounds of the solar system. Granted that love is the noblest form of activity the truth remains that it has to have its basis, its source of supply, its *point d'appui*, in a well-developed individuality.

Shocking then, as the truth may appear to many, the greatest thing in the world, in the sense of the primal and most essential thing, is not love but *self*. Love is but a function of self, an interaction between self and other selves. True, interaction is the law and condition of development; and it is through the interaction of sympathy that a comparatively rudimentary individual takes on new and higher elements of being; still the great end toward which the work of creation visibly tends is the production of individuals. We cannot hope, therefore, to solve all the problems of human life by simply trying to "rush," if I may use the expression, the capacity for love. The first thing to do is to see that we are ourselves something, so that we may have a love worth giving, a love tainted by no weakness, alloyed by no selfish calculations. To love merely for the sake of developing our own natures—perchance of gaining adventitious rewards here or hereafter—is not truly to love. True love is a pure and simple desire for the good of others; and in order that it may not fail of its object due thought should be given to the question, What really makes for the good of others? In a fit of good humour or of complaisance people will sometimes do that which, while wearing the appearance of kindness, is by no means calculated to be of benefit to the person affected. Pope expressed himself with his usual sagacity when he said:—

Not always actions show the man; we find
Who does a kindness is not therefore kind;
Perhaps prosperity becalmed his breast,
Perhaps the wind just shifted from the east.

But when in a disinterested manner we come to study the real good of others we find that our power of promoting it is decidedly limited. "Charity" in a certain sense has been so abused that the very word has contracted a taint. The best we can give to any one is ourselves, and here again we come back to the necessity of having a *self*. It is enough for happiness simply to be in the company of certain persons; they radiate joy just as the sun radiates light and heat. It is not that we are overpowered by a sense of their interest in us; what we feel is that they are capable of a generous interest in all, and when with them we seem to share in the richness of their nature.

Let us then love as we can, and all we can; for truly love is the highest moral function, but let us remember that our first duty is to *be*, to exist in the plenitude of physical, intellectual and moral manhood or womanhood; and that we cannot make amends for defects of nature by the mere exaggeration of a function. How far most of us fall short of our duty to ourselves, and to a world to whom we owe a better self than any we can offer, we are often painfully conscious. The thought to keep constantly in view therefore is not, *pace* Mr. Drummond, the thought of love, but the thought of life in all its fullness.

'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,

More life, and fuller, that I want.

What the elements of a true and full life are it is not for me, at this moment at least, to say, but life, individual life, is the principal thing, "the greatest thing in the world"; and love, which truly links the individual with the world, and strikes the very chord of self into divinest music, is the highest moral manifestation of life.

Ottawa, July 8, 1890.

W. D. LESUEUR.

THE oracle that speaks in riddles is of no use to a man whose house is on fire.

THE BROKEN CHORD.

Mendelssohn, trying to compose the Fairy Dance in Act IV. (of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*), was interrupted by one of his children who begged him to come and play in the garden. The Musician paying no attention to the appeal, the child caught at his moving hand and so produced a peculiar and beautiful chord, a sort of shivered movement, which Mendelssohn introduced into the "Fairies Dance."—*Walter Powell*, in "The Week," March 7, 1890.

I.

DEAF to all mundane sounds and far away,
Where Queen Titania's fairy followers keep
Their moonlit revels in the forest, deep
From crown'd Athens and the garish day,
The master with the Mighty Poet strayed,
And heeded not the pause in childish play
Nor heard the soft entreaty whispering made
To leave the Athenian swart;
Till bolder grown the impatient childish hand,
Plucked the rapt Master's wandering touch astray,
And all the songs of vanished fairyland
Breathed in that broken chord.
Ah! wanderer in the dusty ways, you pine
World-weary, for the days that knew not sin,
Before the bitter strife and ceaseless din
Of life's long warfare; wouldst thou then resign
Thy bitter knowledge, and with fancy's eye
See the orb'd moon on fairy revels shine,
Once more before the time has come to die?
Thy hope is not all vain.
Take this as witness of a living truth,
A childish, trusting hand if laid in thine,
May touch a silver chord of vanished youth,
And bid thee dream again.

II.

Its clasp shall lead thee where the Fairy King,
Mad Monarch of the misty woodland scene,
Playeth wild pranks to spite his wayward Queen;
Or jests awhile with those who, wandering
From out the City of the Violet Crown,
Strayed to the mazy round where fairies swing,
And on the thymy-shadowed bank lay down
To wait the guiding day.
Oh! mighty poet of the magic pen
And great musician, ever shall ye sing,
The same sweet song to tired souls of men
Who halt upon the way.
Forever, in thy airy fantasy
Bottom, the weaver's hairy ass's head
Crushes the flowers on his fairy bed,
And Cobweb hunts the red-hipped humble bee;
And Puck, misusing love-in-idleness,
Shall make Lysander from his *Hermia* flee;
Forever shall *Helena* in distress
Be righted by the *Fay*,
So that no man can say those days are fled,
But only mortals are too blind to see
That, when *Orion* trembles overhead,
Titania still holds sway.

BASIL TEMPEST.

LITERARY DEFICIENCY.

MONTREAL aims to be a great city. It is the emporium of commerce of the Dominion and aspires to be the rival and equal, commercially and financially, of the great seaport cities of the United States, notwithstanding their advantages in climate and open navigation the year round. It possesses banks, the equal of which our Republican neighbours, with all their wealth, cannot approach, whether for the magnitude of their operations or the solidity upon which they stand, one of them being ranked among the greatest of the world. It is the terminal point and headquarters of management of the greatest line of railway on the Continent, and is the home of one of the largest steamship lines (if not the largest) now existing. It is equipped with factories, commercial entrepôts, church and educational institutions, political, religious and national organizations equal to any to be found abroad. Its architecture, while not highly decorative nor of a pronounced character, is simple, solid and sufficiently ornamental to be pleasant to the eye; while here and there are buildings the equal of any in artistic design seen in more pretentious cities. It is the fountain of wealth of one of the richest Roman Catholic orders of the world; it is the home of capitalists and millionaires, whose individual wealth may be exceeded by a few, but not equalled by many even among our opulent neighbours. To the honour of these wealthy self-made men be it said, their benefactions to the poor and philanthropy to the public rank them the equal of any money benefactors the world has ever had. In churches, charitable organizations, educational, legal and professional institutions, the city may be equalled by older and more populous cities, but is certainly not surpassed by many.

But withal, what of it? The commercial and financial prosperity for which Montreal may be renowned are not the insignia of greatness nor of great minds, nor the existence of great educational and religious bodies, charitable and eleemosynary institutions, indications of a high mental culture. All are ephemeral and transitory. A nation's literature alone is the monument of its mental calibre and in this Montreal is sadly deficient, the reason for which is not far to seek.