

mankind. See how God, who gave it, educated, fostered and strengthened it for four thousand years before even his favoured and peculiar people could grasp the great fact of the immortality of the soul. Not until this creative faculty of the mind had been trained to the power of erecting vivid images in the invisible world, did the Saviour of mankind come in due time to bring life and immortality to light beyond the grave. That due time was the space of four thousand years; and if he had come one year sooner he would have been one year too early for the capacity of the human mind to comprehend and realise his great revelation.

What was Christ's view and example in regard to this great faculty of idealism? Why, he created a hundred-fold more fictitious personages and events than Dickens, or Thackeray, or any other novelist ever did. We read that he seldom spoke to the people except in parables. And what were his parables? They were *ideals*, that were more vivid than the abstract *reals* of actual, human life. They were fictions that were more truthful than facts and more instructive. They were fictitious transactions, experiences, and actors; but every one of them had a true human basis, or possibility of fact which carried its instruction to the listener's mind with the double force of truth. Take, for example, the Prodigal Son. Historically he was a fiction. But to the universal and everlasting conscience and experience of mankind, there has not been a human son born into this world for two thousand years endowed with such immortal life and power as that young man. He will live forever. He will give power,

'As long as the heart has passions,
As long as life has woes.'

He will travel down all the ages, and, in loving sympathy and companionship with the saddest experiences of human nature, he will stand at every door and lair of sin and misery

and shame; he will stand there as he stood in his rags, hunger and contrition among the swine, and say to the fallen, with his broken voice and falling tears: 'I will arise and go unto my father and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.'

The good Samaritan historically was as fictitious a being as the Prodigal Son. But what one man has lived on the earth since he was introduced to the world who has been worth to it the value of that ideal character? What one mere human being has worn actual flesh and blood for the last two thousand years, who lives with such intense vitality in the best memories, life, impulse and action of this living generation as that ideal of a good neighbour? What brightest star in our heavens above would we hold at higher worth than the light of his example? Forever and forever, as long as men shall fall among the thieves that beset the narrow turnings of life, or into the more perilous ambush of their own appetites and passions, so long the good Samaritan will seek for them with his lantern in one hand, and his cruet of oil in the other, and pour the healing sympathy of his loving heart into their wounded spirits; so long will he walk the thorny and stony paths of poverty, sin and guilt; and, with a hand and voice soft and tender with God's love, raise the fallen, bind up their wounds, and bring them back to the bosom of the great salvation.

Take away these ideals from the world and what should we have left? How could humanity have ever been lifted above any level on which it groped unless it could have taken hold of something let down to it from above? And what was that something? It was the divine gift of this very creative faculty of the mind, which people nick-name imagination. Where would civilization have been