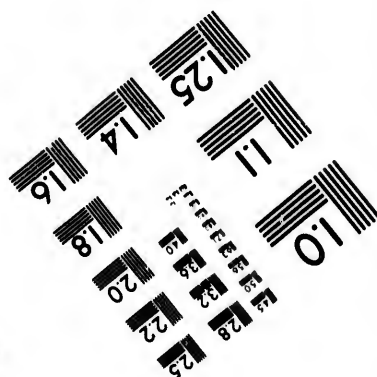
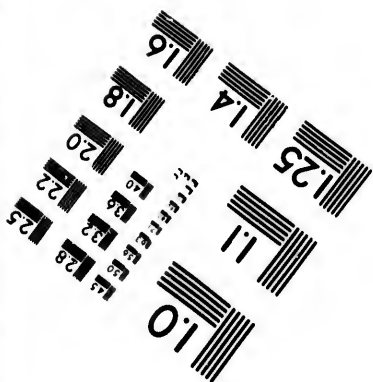
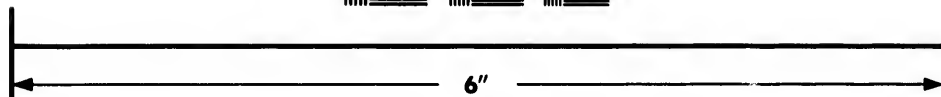
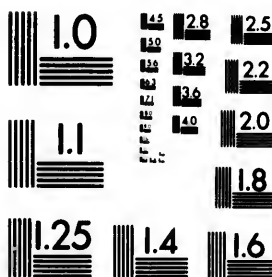


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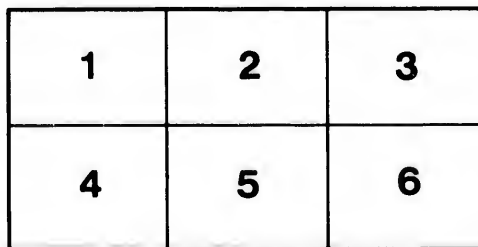
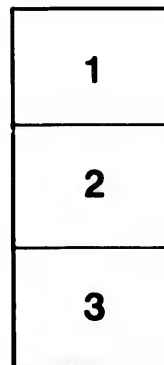
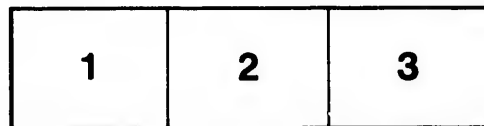
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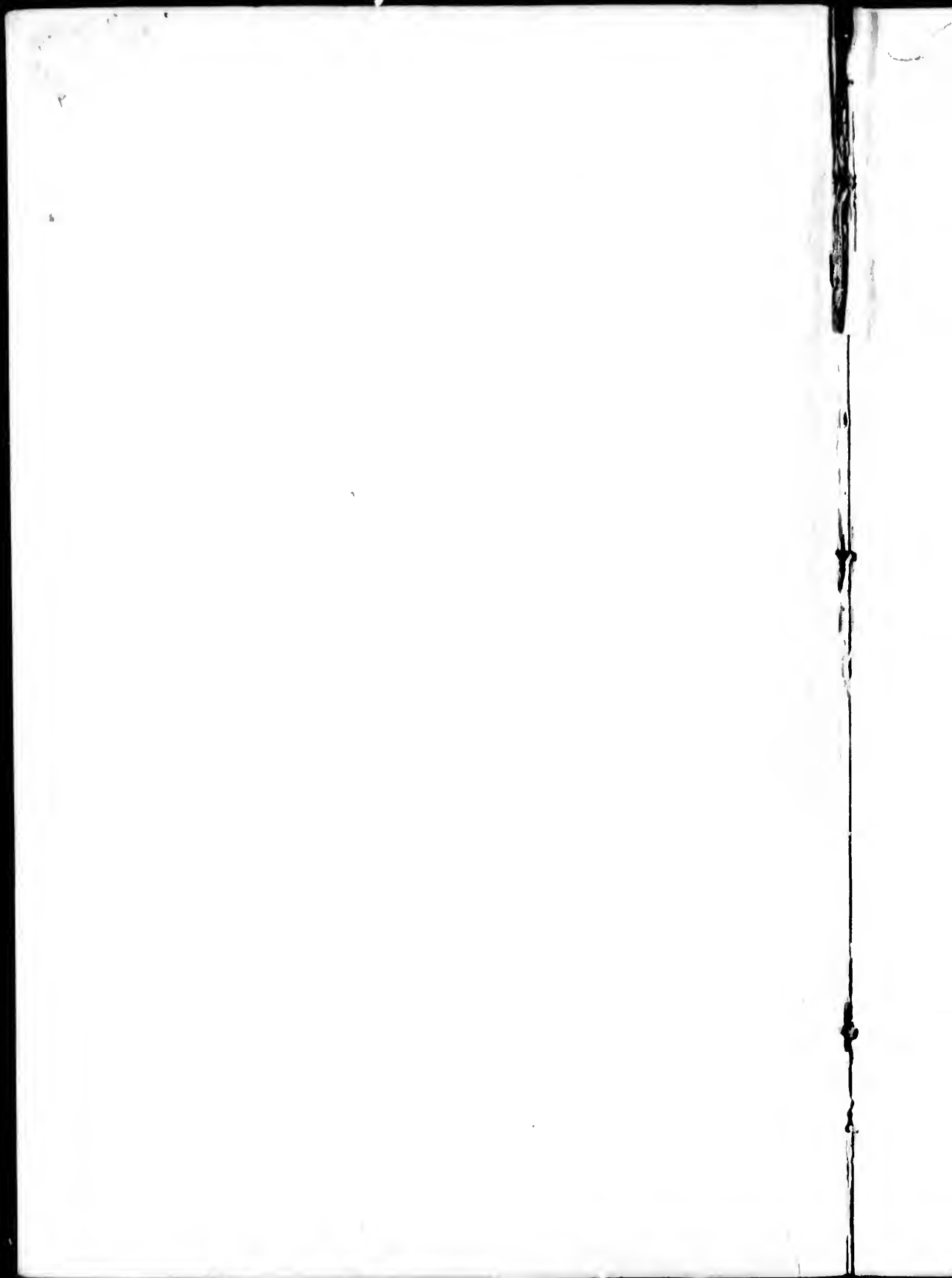
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Who Bids for Your Soul?

AN APPEAL TO YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN,

BY

REV. W. S. RAINSFORD.



TORONTO:
JAMES CAMPBELL & SON.
1878.

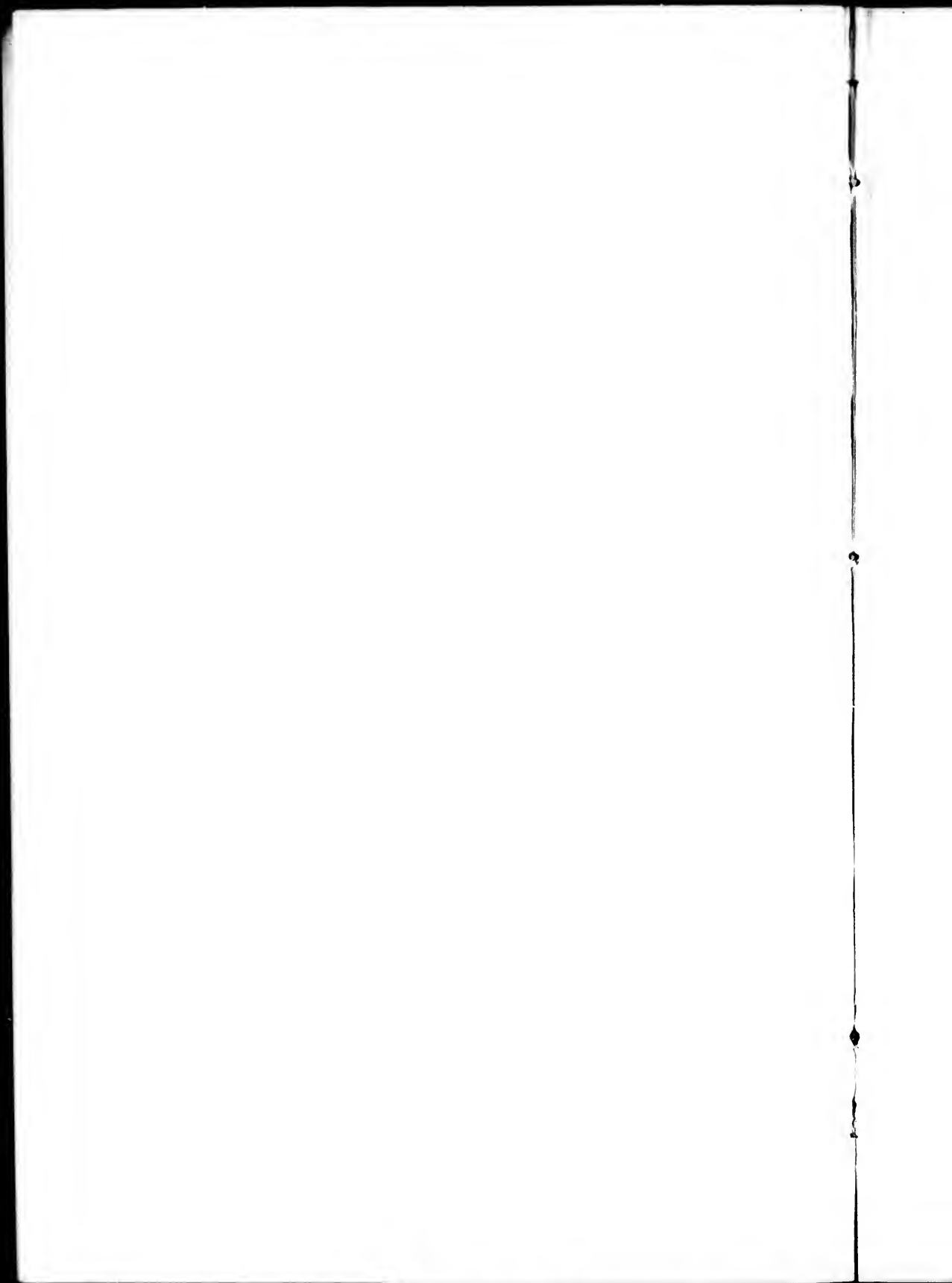
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The following pages have been written during odd moments; this must be my excuse for abruptness and need of polish. But the few thoughts they contain, though their form may be rude, are not hastily conceived, since for some time I have wished to publish them. May our Heavenly Father baptize all into the name of Jesus, pardon the infirmity belonging to them, and employ them in His service.

I take this opportunity of saying to those who may have read the volume of sermons some time since issued in Toronto, without my name, that I do not hold myself in any way responsible for them. The book was printed without my knowledge, the circulation continued against my wish.

W. S. RAINSFORD.

TORONTO, Dec. 12th, 1878.



WHO BIDS FOR YOUR SOUL ?

THE old year has almost passed from us. His voice sounds indistinct and husky, as are the mutterings of the dying. Time, the auctioneer, is for the last time calling on all who bid for him to do it quickly. Each of us has put up his price for 1878; and for good or evil, for success or failure, the bargain will soon be (if it has not already been) concluded, and another lot of 12 months—365 days—will be for sale. Yes, we are all bidders for time, each anxious to use it as he lists; some to squander, some to redeem. And it seems to me equally true, Time bids for us, and bids against eternity—often successfully too.

Some have probably heard the story of one of the greatest preachers of the last century—certainly one of the most eccentric—Rowland Hill—and, I think, Lady Anne Erskine. I cannot remember all the details. Mr. Hill was preaching on the highroad. The crowd listening was so

great as to obstruct the way, so her ladyship's carriage had to come to a halt. As she sat and listened, the strange preacher cried aloud: "I have something to sell at auction. Come, listen to me, all of you, for its value is priceless. Here is Lady Anne Erskine's soul. Who will bid? What have you to say, oh World? 'I,' said the World, 'will bid my recognition—nay, my patronage—all my subjects shall applaud her beauty and praise her wit.' Will you give this for ever, oh World? 'Well, no, I cannot promise that; I bid for this life only.' Then you make no bid for Lady Anne Erskine's soul. Flesh, will you bid anything for this soul? 'Oh, yes; I will satisfy each craving. Sweet, soft hours of luxury shall be hers, or hours wild with the delirium of license.' This for her body, oh Flesh. Can none of you give more for her soul?" Here the strange auctioneer broke off, and throwing all the pathos of his heart into his voice, cried: "Immanuel, will you make a bid for this precious soul?" And Immanuel said, 'I bid two bleeding hands, two bleeding feet, thorn-torn brow and a broken

heart for Lady Anne Erskine's immortal soul." And out of her carriage she stepped, the crowd making way for her, and kneeling at the preacher's feet, cried, "Oh, Mr. Hill, He must have it."

It is because I believe in my soul that this our earth is but one great auction room, and Time the auctioneer, and that during his brief tenure of office we all must conclude a bargain with some bidder, I have sat down to address a short appeal to those who care to follow me—specially to the young. For now as the old year glides into the new, I seem ever to hear the ring of his dread hammer, and to catch the last echoes of the word "done," as some soul has concluded the bargain irreversably. I don't know that I could bring my message to you in a better way than by following Mr. Hill's example. And yet, though I believe there is no change in those who bid at this great sale, there is certainly change in the names. Old bidders find it a successful plan to assume new ones ; and so I shall name three, commonly recognized by all, and try and estimate the value of their offer :—I. THE PRIEST.—II. THE SECU-

LARIST.—III. THE SCEPTIC. This first, though in some quarters he has succeeded in establishing quite a scare, is, I think, almost a retired bidder. Since Rome has fallen from her place, her first-born daughter, Sacerdotalism, cannot keep her usurped queendom. It was her priestcraft that turned what should have been in Rome "a light to lighten the nations," into a wrecker's beacon, luring the unlearned and unwary towards a dangerous coast, where rock or quicksand must shatter or engulf them. I would not on any account be misunderstood to say one word against the many godly men she has at all times retained within her communion; but these have been what they were, not on account of their system, but in spite of it. Whether it call itself Anglican or Catholic, Priestcraft is intolerable. The *consensus* of educated opinion will gradually put it down. Such worn-out superstitions, alas, may still haunt the shrines of the dear old land, but surely there should be no room made for her here, under our clearer skies, and breathing the purer air of our new world. Where she has made

way among us, it is only among a population 35 per cent. of which cannot write! Occasionally our young people are still called to admire the aesthetic tendencies of her system. Be careful, I entreat you, least even by your presence you encourage a power for evil, against which not Protestants alone lift their voices, loudly warning the unwary from those reefs and sands, towards which this wrecker light lures them; but Froude, the historian of to-day, in the name of history, brings a terrible accusation against her. Wherever she (Sacerdotalism) has obtained power, she appears, he says, in her true colors. She has been lazy, sensual, tyrannical. She has alienated every honest mind in Italy and Spain. In Protestant countries, where she is in opposition, she wears the similitude of an angel. She is energetic and devoted. She avoids scandal. She appeals to toleration, and therefore pretends to be tolerant. Elsewhere she has killed the spirit of religion, and those who break from her believe nothing. Just as almost two centuries ago her abuses created Voltaire and his school; or, to take an-

other historic illustration that comes right home to us, the movement called the High Church revival, beginning the early part of the present century at Oxford, excellent as it was in many ways, fruitful as it has been of good to every branch of the Church of Christ in England, so soon as it placed priestly assumption on its banner, grew on the one hand into the excesses of Ritualism, and on the other into that movement which has made Oxford to-day largely sceptic.

I say again, I think it matters little whether the man who would lay claim to special priesthood among us, calls himself Anglican or Catholic, he should receive no encouragement from those who have any wide acquaintance with truth, or competent knowledge of the Word of God. With true acumen the late Prince Consort styled such claims as "the dreams of ecclesiastics out of sympathy with their age, and unable to read its signs." Still the priest spreads his snare, for religiously-minded young men, and alas—more successfully—for religiously-minded young women. Oh fathers, mothers,

brothers, beware how you allow those dear to you to attend *monastery schools*. With Canada's splendid educational advantages there is little excuse for such recklessness. Is the word too strong, as applied to the conduct of those who *allow* their little ones' first priceless years of intelligence to be spent beneath this deadly upas tree, under whose shade no man or nation can thrive?

But another voice is bidding, more powerful than the Priest's. His price, too, in most cases sounds much more tempting. This is he that met the young man, Jesus, once, and told him the great end of life is material good. Phillips Brookes says, sooner or later this devil meets every young man. "All aims not tending to immediate comfort are delusions, and physical ease the only solid prize to be gained," this lying spirit cries. "Look round you and see written on the face of things the truth of this. You don't mean to say so many can be wrong! They are doing no harm, or only a little now and then—an odd slip, you know. They will

tell you they have only time to live for themselves. And why should you, too, not take things easy, why resist that craving, deny yourself that enjoyment? Trouble will come soon enough. Quickly you will lose the keen zest of youth. Take and eat, oh young man. *Taste* at least the many sweet fruits round about you. You need be no Puritan. Life means, first and foremost, enjoyment." Tell me of the man who has not heard lies like these rising within him. Every soul that has fought the good fight against selfishness and sin, knows that such attacks are hardest to resist and need the whole armour of God. But look at it. This secularism is only a gorgeous cloak thrown over *common, vulgar, lustful, self-gratification*. Here is really indifference to all aims in life, except self. "Behold," such an one cries, "oh important me!" There is no spirit more completely irreligious, unchristian, than this. And yet you find a religion the very soul of selfishness, often forming a part of such a life; or rather not of the life, for such a life knows no religion, but

a part of the selfish provision made against any possible harm to come. Selfish men fancy themselves religious, but their religion is like the insurance policy they hold on their house or business, something put safely away against an evil day, *effected at very low rates indeed*. I heard the prayer of such an one offered each morning, ran thus :

"God bless me and my wife,
My son John and his wife,
We four and no more,
Amen."

Our churches are full of these men. They come to the Lord's Table. Some of them are old. There remains small hope of rousing them. But some are young and half unconsciously are gliding into their living death. May I have an earnest word with you? I will speak straight to my own soul; for again and again I find this fiend of self has stealthily crept to the door, whispering of unmanly sloth, unchristian self-indulgence. "Your idea of life itself is wrong," he says. "It is but just that so far as means permit, you should create a life for your taste. Life need surely not

be so filled with privation and self-denial. A pleasant path is before you, a sufficiency of worldly good. Soul, take thine ease; eat the fat; drink the sweet; and while youth is yours, be merry. This dream of other men's claims and needs is but a dream. You cannot set the world right. Take your share of her good things and be thankful. The cold may come—be wise and spin a soft warm cocoon around thyself. Look after No. 1." 'Tis a siren's fatal song that has a fatal charm for us all, The best of us is like a vessel full of liquid more or less clear, but with plenty of sediment at bottom. Stir it up sufficiently and foulness will contaminate all—life becomes a stinking puddle! It is true. Only let all men frame their lives as self will dictate and soon, like a pack of hungry dogs, we would be snarling and fighting for the biggest bone. Look round and see if there are not reasons why you should never yield to this seducing bidder—*self*. Are you contented that your life and death should, as Shakespeare says, like a Turkish mute, lack a

tongue. Are any of us still ignorant of the lesson that

“It is not growing like a tree,
In bulk, doth make men better be,
Or standing long, an oak, three hundred year,
To fall, a log at last, dry, bald, and sear.”

What substance, brother, is there in such a life? I have stood at the stern of an Atlantic steamer as she plunged onward, a glorious night, in mid-Atlantic. The heavens above seemed not to sparkle more than the depth below, and far behind and beneath the keel, the phosphorescent gleaming of the ocean seemed to stretch, a shining trail. But oh how soon, how soon the sparkles flashing vanish; the eddies even are gone; and not a vestige remains to mark the track of the great ship. And like that ship's course in the deep, it seems to me, many lives are passing. A bright and shining trail may even for a moment flash a flame behind them; but like these gleamings of the ocean, they are but sparkles that soon die down. There is nothing to show for the precious opportunity of life after all. In God's name, let us leave something better behind us

than a track of foam. Better, did I say? Have some not left worse? Have not some left things, strewed along here and there, that they even dare not call harmless foam—things we wish to *sink*, but sink they cannot—sink they will not; and but for them the way of our lives had utterly perished. Living for self ends in living for sin.

These are facts, and God knows solemn facts enough; but there is yet another side to this question. The man who tries to form this life just to suit himself cannot stop there. He must create a fanciful world to come that will be as satisfactory as the present. It is scarcely conceivable that man should so succeed in blinding himself, but so it is. His idea of the future is a bigger present—more success, more credit, more freedom, more pleasure, more wealth, more time, more idleness, more sin. *This life* reproduced on a greater scale—none of its drawbacks—is his idea of the *next life*. An image of himself thrown forward into eternity, a shadow gigantic of the present. He lives for it; he cannot bring himself to think it must be ever utterly dragged

from him. He gazes down the future ; there, too, fancy bids him behold a glorified self. The process by which the miracle is wrought is natural enough. He commenced life by turning his back on the Sun of Righteousness—that “light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world”—and as, year after year since then, that sun has sunk lower in the horizon of this self-worshipper’s life, an ever greatening shadow of himself has stretched its dark length before him. Literally he has been “walking in a vain show.” And as that sun still sinks and the shadow deepens, it hides the very brink on which even now his feet stand—and so beyond the grave he dreams of a grander self, a still more important “I.”

How such ideas, how such men, have made God’s whole creation groan! Thank God, it cannot be for ever. This little islet of time has been marred, but the continents of eternity shall know no mark of failure.

The Father’s idea for the life to come is this : the best life possible for the whole creation of God. Love has determined this ; Wisdom plan-

ned it; Almightyness pledged to effect it. No man can be permitted to interfere with it. Come, now, let us reason together, saith the Lord. The kingdom of heaven must have a King. He who has placed the sand for a bound to the sea would woo the strange will of man to reason. I cannot be my own Lord. I cannot hold the tiller of life's ship, if I hoist the black flag of unnatural rebellion against my Father, His kingdom, His laws, His subjects—for this is what it comes to if I am always to rule my life on principles of self-interest. I am drawing an unnatural picture of the sin of living for self—some may say, over-colored. You cannot over-color it. Self-love receives its death-blow when Jesus is allowed entrance to the heart. The very first principle of a Christian's life is: henceforth "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"—living ever in me, to reproduce as I yield *my self, my being*, up to Him, His own life. This Christ taught by word and deed—this the changeless gospel of the grace of God, which men must obey in order to taste God's salvation. Disobey,

here and now you can, but as I said, in that case the tiller of life's ship must be grasped by another hand, and bounds be put to your power of doing harm through continued disobedience. Paul says we are excuseless, even if without the inspired word of God—excuseless if we ignore the fact, so plainly is it taught in the things God has made; the things not seen. He cries, "the invisible things from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God-head"—(Rom. i. 29.) Every day scientific discovery cries Amen to the Apostle's profound assertion. You cannot live for yourself. As the messenger of God, I ask you to stop, reason, think—if you won't love. Be not slow of heart to read what is written on the sky spheres, traced in the mazy network of the stars by night, flashed from the furnace of the sun by day—snow and heat, cloud and vapor, stormy wind, fulfil his word. Rebellion is impossible. No errant world wanders from its course; no anchored island seeks a more sunny sea. The mighty God, the power that has

its centre in the throne of the eternal, rules all. His sceptre controls the furthest wanderings of the most distant star. In all ages men, with the Psalmist of old, have cried, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit—whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me." You cannot ignore God. One rebel star amid God's millioned host cannot fall *alone*. Any astronomer will tell us this. One *permanently* successful sinner would wreck the throne of the Almighty. Man plans his death in refusing the offer of Christ. The Lord Jesus reveals God's purposes in reference to ourselves—what purposes they are! He, the Creator, recognizes (if I may say so) the wondrous possibilities of the creature He has made, and aims to draw the *creature* life nearer and nearer, as ages run, to the Creator. Here is the only true principle of progress for man—a life in which God is more and

more—self, less and less. Take away its material part.

“Let go the breath;
There is no death
To the living soul, nor loss nor harm;
Not of the clod
Is the life of God,
Let it mount as it will from form to form.”

And mount up it shall, since Jesus has come down; for in his ascending resurrection glory, faith can see the earnest of the harvest that is to be.

The question for you to settle is whether your voice shall be one to mingle in that chorus of the redeemed, or by reason of long-continued disobedience to the true interests of your eternal being, and obedience to the fleshly impulses of this hour of trial, you become one of those “things that offend.” Let me entreat you to face the inevitable. In either case you must obey; disobedience cannot be prolonged, for it would be against the interests of all that it should be allowed any longer to rule.

Burke in one of his finest speeches said, “Sirs,

we cannot alter the nature of things." If there is a God—obedience to Him is in the nature of things. Thwart Him we may. Sin for a little moment does. Alter the nature of things none can. The moon, the sun, the stars in their courses say, we know it, we feel it, we cannot alter this "nature of things." The rain and the snow coming in their order cry, "we cannot alter the nature of things." Summer and winter, youth and age, repeat the solemn warning:

"To all things are marked out the place and hour;
The child must be a child, the man a man."

I hear the childrens' laugh ring down the street as the school door opens. No one wonders; it is the nature of things.

And this nature of things you cannot alter. Only one voice dares to whisper that you can be permitted to continue to be your *own centre*, that is the voice of a heart you yourself have trained and encouraged not to be a true prophet, but to prophesy smooth things, to whisper deceits. Even this voice only *dares whisper*.

Call the representatives of all estates in your being to a parliament. Let wisdom be heard; unloose the tongue of conscience. The opposition is weak; but there is yet, you will find, an opposition, with spokesmen too, against the *sordid corrupted*, bribing government, you have set up over yourself. Let the affections plead. Before you irrevocably cast the die for war with your Father, God; let, I beseech you, the whole parliament of your nature speak. Sit down and count the cost. Can you meet HIM who cometh against you? for this He certainly must, and will.

Nay, here is the sole fact, the conclusion of the whole matter: Jesus died, and died and rose, to reveal God's will to me, and to bring my will in sweet eternity of glad willingness, to be a fellow-worker with God, a partner in the plans (I speak reverently) of His life; to enter into them as the bride enters into the plans of her husband. If I will not enter into those plans, I shall not be permitted to hinder them. If I elect not to shine in the great temple of knowledge, of truth, beauty, purity, of holiness and

of glory, I cannot be allowed to shine—a false light—to lure others to their doom. *God will put my light out.* Science tells us that round and round our world, in the dark and silent ether, some small planets are revolving; no ray of light falls from them; in paths of darkness and of silence they move for ever.

Think of it—round and round at the bidding of God to move for ever, not because I loved his will, but because I am a creature and must obey; a star without a light, a soul without a hope.

But to look at this question of living for myself for a moment from another point of view: Live for myself as I may, even then I do not satisfy myself. One thing is absolutely certain about the Lord Jesus: He knew what was in man. If remarkable for nothing else the Gospels give us the most searching expositions of human character that we possess. At the outset of his ministry He said, man was not made to be a mere machine for absorbing and assimilating bread—that there were mechanisms (if I may so say) within him that are no more capable of be-

ing supported on bread, than these bodies of ours could support life on gravel and stones: "Man cannot live by bread alone;" and if nothing else is given or received by him, for lack of food these parts die. This is a simple fact of which each of us can become assured by experiment.

The Lord went on to say that the true man, the better man, can only exist by feeding on God's word. From day to day this part of man needs the reinforcing of every word of God, just as the fleshly coating of us needs constantly to be reinforced by the world of flesh and matter outside; and that where man feeds on nothing but this, better thoughts, better desires, better self, dies; or only from time to time can feebly respond to the knocking of the Saviour at the closed heart's door.

Is this life to have all of you? Is this world to be the octopus that, clinging round you, numbs every better, holier, sensibility of your being?

This life is a great opportunity. I have no sympathy with those who speak of it as a life

where shadows and sounds of dread are alone encountered—one dark, dreary Kyber Pass sort of life. There are passes dark and deep, but there are plains and fair valleys too. This world, as we have it, is a great field to work in, a great garden to play in, a great camp to train in, a great fight to struggle in, a great library to think and read in, a great mart to be busy in, a great tent to rest for a night in, a great temple to worship in. But not field or garden, camp or fight, library or mart, tent or temple, are meats for the soul; and sooner or later the sense of dissatisfaction comes to all. I do not mean to say that the soul is permanently dissatisfied. But which of us can say we have never had *hours of insight*, on this matter, when of all the meats, many and various, spread before us, we knew there was not one dish for the soul; and clearly, unmistakably the immortal within us cried, all these are bread, and I, a *man*, cannot live to bread alone. And till you have deadened all that is best within you, polluted every corner of your life with the sediment of self, stirred up by the gratifica-

tion of every passing whim, you cannot altogether silence God's witness to His own being and rightful claim to you and yours.

Do I not speak the truth? Hear men like Huxley, who have set their faces against a personal God, cry out in agony, that like a drowning sailor at a hen-coop, they clutch at the idea of God.

And why do so many clutch and clutch in vain at the, to them, floating illusion of a God? Oh, because the Christian who loudly proclaims his God is dearer to him than life, seems often just as anxious to clutch self, and slavishly to bow to self interest as any other. He protests he is saved. The world looks in vain to discover—from what. It is an awful caricature of the gospel of Jesus that speaks of salvation as something altogether outside the individual sinner as it were—some work that frees him from all danger, and seemingly from all responsibility as well. If a man is saved, God is an intense reality to him; and to know God means to feel man's responsibility. Is the gospel only a soothing

syrup? Is to have a creed that other men compounded for him, the whole duty of man? Is to live as I like; to be agreeable to the people who are agreeable to me; to give up something only when I don't want it, and to live for eternity as soon as I am tired of living for time—is this the evidence of a child of God? are these the qualifications of a soldier of Jesus?

One winter in Capua did more to ruin the hitherto invincible army of Hannibal than the long march from the Pillars of Hercules to the plains of Lombardy. The warriors that the Gaul could not terrify, the Alps conquer, or the legions of the Roman resist, were invincible no more—one winter's sloth defeated the greatest captain that ever lived.

And the Christian of to-day seems to forget the sacredness of his cause, the solemnity of his vows, and "the terror of the Lord," in the soft elegancies of his existence. His light, that was wont to shine a beacon through the darkness, has no flare about it; Oh no, it just suffices to cast a soft mellow gleam on the luxurious apart-

ments of his religious, or æsthetic being—a shaded lamp for study within, a poor guide in the darkness without. His sword and armor—he labels them carefully, “the whole armor of God”—are there; oh, yes, displayed on the wall they seem to bear but scant evidence of service. He is a carpet soldier; and to any listening on the one hand to his words, and then on the other gazing on his life and acts, the incongruity is so evident, the inconsistency so monstrous and complete, that it is small wonder men believe him to be a sort of religious fossil, having the form of godliness but utterly denying its power. “If this is all Christianity is,” men are saying—“If the self-worshipper is the only heir of those who turned the world up-side down, if Christianity is only a bundle of shells, Christians a bundle of shams, we must have something more in keeping with our age and need.” So the famished soul of man cries for bread, and the Church of God gives, with a smile, a stone. The Lord teach us to come out of our Capuas.

There are earnest men and women who are

living for others, (unconsciously often, I think, living for Jesus), who would blush to utter the excuses current among us.

“Go into the highways and fetch them in. Compel them to come in.” “Ah, Lord,” the Church is replying, “the highways are very *muddy*. I am afraid of soiling my fair white garment.” “What art thou doing for the poor fallen outcast?” “Ah, Lord, we are afraid of contaminating our mothers, wives, daughters; we pay an occasional Bible-woman, though; we teach a class when found for us.” Do many go out and gather in lost lambs?

If asked what true religion is, we reply, James has told us: “True religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. Very simple—so what do we do? We pray once a week in church, and generally twice a day at meals, “that it may please Thee to provide for the fatherless children and widows, and all that are desolate and oppressed.” There it ends. I ask in God’s

sight, is the life that only produces such fruits as these, the life of Jesus Christ in your soul, "the hope of glory."

Then as to giving—you might as well ask some Christian (sic.) men for an eye-tooth, as for a reasonable subscription. The Word of God tells us to put aside a certain part of our income, and to give systematically. We smile and talk of "liberty;" and since the Jew under the law gave from a *sixth to a third* of all he had—the child, the heir, under the Gospel, won't *lend* his Father's cause a *tenth*. Make an honest estimate and see if you have given anything like as much.

Is it any wonder some are clutching in vain at the God of the Bible? If these are Bible Christians, ah, children of God, let us cry with David, "Send out Thy light and Thy truth that they may lead me and guide me." They will most surely lead us, if we will follow, where they led the Psalmist, to *God's altar* (Ps. xliii. 4), there again and again to present to Him a more honestly complete surrender of self.

But let me for a moment once again address

myself to the young men and women among us who do not yet very much care for these things. You say you make no profession of Christianity, and are therefore not guilty of this hypocrisy. Are you prepared to adopt the mean course of self-government you work at in others; have you no ambition beyond that of Æsop's frog, viz.: to blow yourself out and out till you cannot conceive of any being bigger? Are you contented to be "a swell," a coat of broad-cloth and a soul of dirt; to live for sleeping, eating, drinking dressing, and generally enjoying yourself?

"Oh what avails to understand
The merits of a spotless shirt;
A dapper boot, a little hand,
If half the little soul be dirt."

or a mere dawdle, life one saunter, fond of looking in at shop windows; and now I come to think of it, nothing could be more significant of all your life—a life spent in gazing on the industry of others, but no wares of its own to sell. A man sinks pretty low before he arrives at this point; but some have. Can no rebuke shame our young men and women from such an aim-

lessness of existence? It is not life! Can no sense of duty rebuke this devil who tells them life is no more than meat? Sometimes, not often, I have seen men start from this life of yawning, and address themselves in their own strength to the problem of existence and its responsibilities; but in such hearts naturally inclined to blind obedience to self—you need the permanent power within that a personal religion can alone offer. Only the Christian can say aright:

“ Even while I look, I can but heed
The restless soul's incessant fall,
Importunate hours that hours succeed
Each clamorous with its own sharp need,
And duty keeping pace with ali.”

Before middle life most men and women have learned what a pitiful failure self is. Bitter experience has a knack of teaching its lessons, so that once known, they can never be forgotten; but oh, in middle life, how far behind seem the days of youth, how salt are the tears uselessly shed on those early opportunities for ever gone, habits harbored in the soul that will not favour us,

ravens that croak, "never more," hover in the bluest sky of the man's life who has wasted his youth.

That the dawdler and swell are selfish to the core, none can deny. But there are others who unconsciously listen to the coaxing voice of the same devil that met Jesus. Such are they who start in life with purposes good and earnest, at first self-denying—industriously bent on attaining some chosen end. Gradually, almost insensibly, as the fervour of youth cools off, they shrink on their own centre—like the cooling tire of a waggon wheel.

The profession or business used to be, as it ever should be, a means to an end. Fast it becomes the end itself. It becomes all and all. Such a man pays his way—he is proud of it. He gives the market price for everything, whether men, to do the work of his store or office, or potatoes for his table. But the idea of responsibility fast leaves him. I say his life grows narrower and harder—more self-concentred. You remember the legend of Cleopatra—how in

a wild hour of triumph the passionate Queen of Egypt cast a priceless pearl into a cup of vinegar, dissolved it, and drank it down. You are squeezing all the essences of your being into a cup, to become like Cleopatra's, a terrible solvent, in which the priceless pearl of the soul is dissolved and for ever lost. Turn not away thoughtlessly. You cannot afford to blink anything really true. See if self is your God. Test yourself. You can if you will. Left alone with a friend, a political or mercantile man, your conversation would flow on these matters. A lady whose social position made her seem to you one it were well to cultivate, would find you anything but dull. Here is a man, your friend; a girl your companion; he or she has been deeply moved; there is something on the mind; at last it comes out—sin—"how may I have sin pardoned and overcome?" "Oh," sighs the burdened one:

"Oh for a man to arise in me
That the man I am might cease to be."

Come now, you can readily advise your friend

on a plan of business, a point of law, a question of etiquette. Here is something very different. Does it come naturally to you to advise this immortal soul for eternity? Now is your opportunity. Confess your own faith. Lead a poor sin-sick fellow sinner to your own Saviour. The words seem hollow as they come. The more you try to speak of the life of a Christian, the more the whole thing seems to float away from you, mirage like, vanishing into vapor. Judge yourself, dear friend, that you be not judged of the Lord, for you are a secularist, an idol worshipper, the dupe of some false god—a god that will in your extremity fail you too. A false friend is a bitter thing. If a very near and dear one prove false, what a heart-ache it gives. But a false God! He did not satisfy you on earth. He stuffed you with politics, pleasure, fashion, gain, lust—but as bread it only made you crave the more. Now he leaves you altogether. You cannot keep him, you cannot keep anything—you lived to keep yourself. Every stepping stone you had chosen, and then firmly trodden on; but now

another binds you and carries you whither you would not. 'Tis no fanciful picture. You may fling yourself into deepest gulfs of guilt, but beyond the sweep of the arm of God, you never, never, *never* for one moment will be.

Now for the last bidder I have chosen to name—and now-a-days he is certainly the noisiest of the three—the Sceptic. A word or two about scepticism generally, and then let us look at two of its representative schools. Parents are to blame, I am sure, for a larger part of the unbelief among young people than one is inclined to fancy. I don't mean to reiterate charges, alas, too well founded often, of the persistent inconsistency their children are forced to notice from their very earliest days—the to a child, incomprehensible gap between father's praying and reading in the morning, and his acts or conversation during those odd intervals when he comes before his family. This godliness that has the force, but lacks the power, will still supply society with cause of wonderment, how so orthodox parents raise such unorthodox children. I say I need not dwell on

this, since it is not a subject for advice, but one for prayer and self-examination. But there is a mistake made by some whose lives are most consistent, whose acts plainly repeat to all, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." It is this: they *pooh-pooh childish doubt*, and most unwisely reply to childish difficulty. Childish doubt—yes, it is a reality; and if you will only remember what is indisputably true in regard to all honest doubt, viz., that it does not suddenly invade the soul, but grows to it—slowly advances from stage to stage—you will understand how real the danger is. You cannot suppress a child's mind when one of those strange questions, giving maybe a more real glimpse into human nature than any other, is put to you, by saying it is naughty, and changing the subject. You drive the fever of inquiry in, instead of drawing it out, and thereby make a more hurtful mistake than if you had by unwise measures suppressed a fever rash.

The common way children are taught, is to my mind, bad as it well can be. We begin with them

on the outskirts of Christianity, as it were, and work in; instead of beginning at the centre—God's centre, God's revelation of himself—and *so work out*, first of all fixing the growing ideas there. Instead of this, Old Testament stories form the staple of most childish Bible-knowledge. But even where this mistake is made, and the parents through ignorance or some other cause, cannot answer difficulties as they had better be answered, a warm encouragement given to childish confidence will save many a soul from a sea of after-trouble. These first strange shy advances of a child on matters of religion are tender things indeed, and should ever be met, as the glad mother meets her babe beginning to toddle, with open arms. Thank God for them, and set your whole soul to draw them out; and once they have been granted you, from the God of wisdom seek wisdom, nor despise experienced advice, in dealing with them. You may think this is a question on which old men should alone be heard. I can assure you unbelief is commonly traceable to parents' short-sightedness. I have seen it in

scores of cases arise not so much in bad companions without, as in the want of companions at home.

Mark this, if you won't take the child God has given you and bring it up for the Giver other influences will soon bid against you for your own child. If you will not be the High Priest of God, alone admitted to the holy of holies in that young temple, priests of Baal will quickly fill up your place, till at last the holy fire burns out on the altar, and the light dies down within the veil. Yes, I know that much of the infidelity abroad has its rise in the Christian home-training. And now let us give a moment to another fruitful cause.

At the very name of Sceptic there is a genuine panic in the Christian ranks. We are not only afraid to attack, but absolutely tremble for fear of being attacked. And, indeed, there is some reason in this sort of fear; for if I am not strong enough to assail the enemy's position, the enemy will assail mine.

Our Christianity is fast becoming more and

more apologetic. And just so surely as this false system comes in vogue, we lose power and ground. Our Christian men and women dispute loudly about the anise and cummin of their holy religion, and deliver their souls more than occasionally on matters of secondary importance, but don't seem anxious to grapple with the many who deny religion altogether.

Young people round us are swallowing the cheap mental poison, the quack-medicine of the day—swallowing with avidity its gilded pills—while we who say we have tasted the elixir of eternity, who have knelt and drank at the fountain-head of Divine life, are afraid to denounce the quackery of these, lest forsooth they should shake our faith in the great Physician of the soul. Denounce, did I say? Yes, some are willing to *denounce*, and there it ends. At the very name of unbeliever we lift up holy hands, and say, “come not near me, I am holier than thou.”

There is one sort of infidelity, egregiously ignorant, conceited, and dishonest—no root of manly earnestness in it anywhere. But there is another

kind—as widely different from the first as well can be—yet the two are sadly confounded. The first—the young man who, smiling superciliously, gently intimates that he is too wise to be caught by such old woman's stuff as the Bible-stories are made of—is, you may depend, either an empty-headed parrot that repeats the word the last passer-by has put into his mouth, or a man refusing Jesus and finding fault with the Bible—why? Because, first of all, the Bible finds fault with him. Like the godless king Jehudi, who, when the Word of the Lord rebuked his life, first cut it with a penknife, and since it held together still, threw it all into the fire—so our dishonest young unbeliever, rather than have the truth give the lie to his lie, gives the lie to the truth, and in doing so, takes a long step towards searing his conscience and destroying his soul. For the Divine law decrees that faculties left unused decay. Consciences sinned against, day by day, become like sea-shells, thicker and harder. Self-deceived he soon *fancies* he really ought not to believe, what he began by not *wanting* to believe.

He was untrue to himself, untrue to his conscience. God spoke to him by it—but speaks no more.

Now the other kind—it has a sob in it, not a laugh—often has its beginnings in a boyhood devoid of parents' wise sympathy, as I said. Such doubters are not uncommon. They demand our tender pity and prayerful help—denunciation here does harm. They lie wounded, and feel the wound—yet are they distrustful of the balm of Gilead. The loss of every one such to the cause of Christ is incalculable. There are good men and women among us,—lovers of Christ—whose ignorant, harsh dogmatism, will always repel such poor trouble-tossed souls. Instead of pouring in oil and wine, they seem only to be supplied with vinegar, which they freely apply to wounds. They do not understand anybody doubting about anything. Hearts of the nature I now speak of cannot be too gently handled, too carefully examined. By such examination alone can the real cause of trouble be discovered. The ordeal of doubt is a terrible one to pass through.

None can sympathize fully who have not experienced it. Surely least of all can those (a class more numerous than we think) who only believe much that is in their creed because they have never thought about it.

Now, do you not see the danger here? This man whose faith is shaken, comes across one such. He feels repelled. He knows he is misunderstood. He longs for the life that Jesus can alone offer. He wants some one, in short, to preach *Christ to him*. I do not mean the Christ that nineteen centuries have decked out almost as they will, and fenced around with many and sharp-pointed creeds, but the Christ who can give a man victory over himself—who still cries, “if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him”—the Christ who *did* live, *did* die, *did* rise—Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,—the Christ whom none can deny as an historic fact—the Christ seen in the shadows of the Old Testament—the Lord Jesus Christ who has *brought life and immortality to light* in the New. But is this the way we invari-

ably go to work? Do we not begin, as I said, by dwelling on the outlying defences of Christianity, instead of praying the fearful one to gaze on the indestructible foundations of our holy faith, leading him to cry, "Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

If he doubts as to the inspiration of the account we have of those words, don't give him up in despair. Try and make him see that the more he studies the character of Jesus the more naturally do such words as we have, befit Him who "spake as never man spake."

I have no time or space here to attempt replies to doubt. I can only give suggestions as to dealing with the doubter. But I feel I am on firm ground when I say, just to sum up what I have said, the want of success attending the efforts of most Christians in dealing with him arises from the foolish fallacy, that difficulties are best overcome by ignoring them. One would fancy there were no such things as eyes and books in the world, to say nothing of evil communications. No one can be even moderately well acquainted

with the best literature of the day, and not be aware of the constant attacks made on religion and the Bible. Men will accept nothing without test. Thank God for it. No true test can permanently cloud the truth. And no wise Christian will fear to submit to most searching criticism that revelation on which for time and eternity he stakes his all. Those sadly misread the signs and needs of the times who cry out in horror, "sacrilege!" when men, often earnestly seeking the pearl of great price—willing, too, to part with their all for it when found—roughen the surface of our theological fields as they dig for it. In this way the differing theories men have deduced from the revelation of Jesus will sometimes get knocked about—theories not seldom forced on the Church by threat and ban—but the Bible never stood so firmly as it does to-day. All the fiercest rationalistic criticism of Germany cannot lay one finger on the four great Epistles of St. Paul. Any one of them supplies us weapons for a complete armory.

Take unbelief in time, and begin from the

centre. Take what none can deny, and insist on what it includes. Leave the outer defences; men will ever differ as to these (the various theories of atonement or inspiration, for example), till the soul is won by the real Saviour—the life saved by a look at the crucified.

* * * * *

There are two schools of Atheism. We may roughly divide those who don't believe, between the two. I speak of Atheism—not unbelief only—but of Atheism proper, *i. e.* the denial of (1) a personal God; (2) a personal immortality to man.

I have referred for a moment to the students of the first already. This school is unbelief, allied with excess and gross ignorance. It is the infidelity of license. It is cheap, and lying. It reached its highest point, perhaps, in the French Revolution of last century. You know enough of history to recall the difference in the effects of our English Revolution of the seventeenth, and that terrible earthquake causing all Europe to tremble, the French Revolution of the eighteenth century. Religion restrained the one and rendered

its effects permanent, curbing national license, handing down to the Anglo-Saxon race its heritage of freedom. The other had its birth, life, death, in blood—a nation drunk and mad—in the name of reason dethrones morality and God. France since then has snatched short feverish breathing-spells, from which she has been roused by the rattle of musketry in the streets, and the shrieks of crowds ridden down by her own soldiery—Why? Some of her wisest sons have boldly risen up to-day to tell her the truth: because she then chose to swallow lies wholesale; because she openly accepted the atheism of ignorance and conceit.

Once this sort of infidelity was the spectre before which all nations quailed—now a power broken. Nay, I travel too fast. We have men among us, fools enough to be hoodwinked by it still. Noisily it is proclaimed in our public parks—offered as a panacea for all ills to those who are too ignorant to see its falsity. Take away from an ignorant man, the bandages ignorance has blinded him with. Bid him look around.

But don't stop there, or you had better never had unbound him. Let him see a God who has revealed Himself to him, and told him His will; which will it is his duty to obey. If his eye does not rest on such a God, I say you have committed a dangerous act—increased this man's power tenfold, but given him nothing to guide it by.

I only speak the simple, undeniable truth; the poorer classes among us who have some knowledge, but no belief in duty to others or to God, are the most dangerous element in society. The men that teach them these cheap immoral lies, are public enemies. Who are these leaders? You cannot find a man of moderate learning among all. Paine's book, once their creed, no educated man would undertake to defend to-day. (When I was in Boston a year ago, all Boston's infidelity could not save the hall called after him from the auctioneer). They are silly in speech, ignorant in argument, immoral in life, and utterly unlearned. Men seeking the truth in quiet earnestness, we should respect; but such are not the empty bubbles of the ordinary free-thinking society.

Are these teachings so terrible that any ordinarily well-informed Christian need fear to attempt their refutation? Surely not. Yet how common is that fear. And for want of a bold onslaught on these refuges of lies, these foundations of sand, they fancy themselves sometimes on really strong ground.

Not only are many unwilling to meet them, but when from time to time, from the pulpit or platform, they are met and exposed, we hear cries rising, "you are doing more harm than good—you are *suggesting* doubts to those who would never have dreamed of them." And pray what sort of a Christianity is this that not only cannot meet the enemy, but trembles at the very measure of his sword? It is not the true shield of a Christian soldier, but one of our own devising.

If any man is afraid of his house tumbling about his ears at the suggestion of another man's doubt, the sooner it is down and a firmer building on a firmer foundation put up, the better.

Are we to stoop over the sick and wounded with words and smiles of love and sympathy, or are we, because the atmosphere is not as pure as we think it might be, to confine ourselves to shouting the Gospel, as it were, to them from a distance, lest our own most tender life should receive one scratch or breath of harm? Ah, we cannot ever get *at* poor men's needs like that. The Gospel tells not of a life-buoy thrown to a man—a form of words, a creed he can take or leave—it tells of a hand that grasps him, and charges those who have been so drawn to Jesus, to draw others. One man or woman of God, "thoroughly furnished unto every good work" is more useful than any number of invalid Christians, incapable of receiving or delivering an attack as they pass along the King's highway. What to be "thoroughly furnished" includes will of course alter somewhat with the times, for surely it must ever be: first of all a realized experience of Christ's life in one's own soul—its reception, its growth; and next, some practical acquaintance with the

difficulties and doubts that barricade hearts against Him.

But let me ask and answer one more question here, before turning to a very different class of unbelievers. Who are the victims of these empty talkers? (1.) Those who know nothing of religion but the name. (2.) Those who hate its restraint—to whom the idea of an all-seeing eye during life, and an account demanded after life is over, is utterly repulsive. Those who long, without let or hindrance, to indulge the beastly half of their nature. Mind, it is in the interest of such to disbelieve in everything if they can. And most of those who are caught by the vulgar (if I may so call it) unbelief I have referred to, belong to these two classes. Argument with such is worse than useless, since the *will* resists, not the intellect. Conscience is God's last ally here, and we can only fearlessly reason of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come;" for these must first be convinced of sin, and humbled in God's presence.

Christianity may be resisted, but not by such

men or means as these. There is another class of men, another school of unbelief, who as strongly denounce immorality as Christians do. This is the infidelity of knowledge and science, of the laboratory and library. Yet it reaches the same conclusions as the other, viz., there is no personal God—no personal immortality—there is nothing in fact beyond the grave—*to bid and good the end is all alike.*

I will try and put its case fairly, without exaggeration or caricature. We don't need either, I think, to see its weak point, or to find where inevitably it must break down.

First, then, let me remind you of what it seeks to supplant. A life of seventy years span at most, a life not one of us is entirely satisfied with—this life and nothing beyond it—this life full to tears often, of hopes blasted, aspirations unfulfilled—imperfect as it is, supplies a sufficient stimulus to the selfish "I." But have the great men of the ages past, who, like sleepless sentinels, stood on the post of duty, telling their fellow-men how to live and die—have they drawn their

inspiration from this alone? What power kept them as the chill of age crept on, and around them the night grew more lonely and dark? What enabled these to hold aloft to others the torch of knowledge, the lamp of truth? They did not deceive themselves; they knew the times were dark and they old and weary. They believed, ay, as they did in themselves, that the morning must come at last, though before its advent the glass might have told their hours of watching to be over. They believed what was holiest and best within them, was not there simply to be thwarted. So they lived, and worked, and died, strengthened by the belief in a life beyond the grave, a land beyond the sea.

These atheists tell us we must be true and good here, for there is no life beyond.

But again, Jesus, the greatest Watchman, the greatest exponent of Divine and human nature, told the hope of all good souls, in one sentence, when He said, "I lay down my life that I may take it again." I am more than contented to die, He cried, neglected, despised, reviled—the outcast

Jesus, that, as king of life, conqueror of death, and Saviour of mankind from sin, I may take life back again. So I say, in imitation of Jesus, with some small measure of His spirit burning within them, the great watchers of earth have stood. Their souls have longed for a life where dark cloud and fog of sin cannot rise. They have seen enough light below here, enough silver-lining on the clouds, to make them yearn with a great yearning for the sun, for the country, for the time when we shall not need ever to say, "know the Lord, for all shall know Him from the least to the greatest."

Oh, that I had words to express the undying hope of the Christian! Are these thoughts visionary? I want to speak of *facts*. I will state an incontrovertible fact or two.

(1.) This is the Christian's hope. Every man who in the faith of Jesus lays him down to die, does in a true sense say: "Lord, this poor spirit I commend to thee; this poor faulty erring life I lay at Thy feet in sure and certain hope that thou wilt bid me take it up again—no longer that thread-

bare garment I have wearily laid to rest, but a completed body and soul—not with aspirations noble and good alone, but with the power to fulfil them—a body and soul fitted for Thy eternal service, capable of understanding and rejoicing in the companionship of its Creator and its God.

(2.) Another fact:—Christians say the prospect of this complete life gives them power in this incomplete one. That it was the promise of this life beyond the grave first called them from the worship of self, to live for Him who died, that they might know true life.

One more fact:—Statements made by Him who offers this life, not only inspire the good; they restrain—have restrained—the evil.

(a) The thought, for instance, of a judgè of all the earth who will do right, not only makes the Christian to endure the bitterness of false judgments at men's hands—it has made many a Felix tremble.

(b) The hope that there is a book of remembrance kept before the Father, has not only stimu-

lated the Christian, it has kept many an account-book straight as well.

(c) Till now the certain trust in "the inheritance of the saints in light," where it will be easy to do right, as now it is to do wrong, has not only held up the soul struggling against sin, but as men had been on the point of plunging down, down! into the darker, lower abysses of wrong, some thoughts of the purer life, holier light, that they were fast leaving behind them—nay, the belief in a voice calling them to "come to themselves," and think on a reconciled Father—have almost forcibly held them back.

Modern infidelity tells us we must struggle after the good just as much as ever, while it snatches away the hope that impelled or restrained.

Mark this: Jesus gave me (1) something I can attain to; (2) something I can describe to others so that they can attain to it; (3) something I can test when I have attained to—something we have tested, and before God and men declare to be sweeter to us than all life's sweets together, a hundred times told.

At one sweep all this is to go from me, and it is only natural I should require something to take its place.

And, once again, mark this: This something they must give me *this side the grave*, since there is nothing beyond. Such is the tremendous task modern infidelity has before it. To find reasons in this present life, and in this life alone, why the good should stand firm in unselfishness, purity, toil, temptation—live, in short, the life that the best Christians have lived, with this new Gospel as their power—let all hear: "*The universe is aimless; to good and evil the end is all one.*"

I am to be good then, not in the Christian sense as responsible to God, but because it is pleasant. But what is this pleasure? It must, as I say, be something I can attain to here and now; I must be able to describe it to others, so that they can attain to it; then it must be something I can test, even as they test my Christian hope.

If the men who propound such theories—attempt such impossibilities—were men of the

world, instead, as I have said, men of the study they would know that most think it pleasant—very pleasant, indeed—to be bad occasionally, and that all they need is the assurance of death ending all to run to further excess. Yet they have a theory, and here it is:

To be truly happy you must find your happiness in the happiness of others. This they call Altruism. You must not be so unreasonable as to crave any better life beyond the grave, any brighter, holier land beyond the sea for yourself, but you shall live on in the life of your growing race; just as Shakespere lives among us, in his noble and beautiful thoughts speaking to us still, or as Stephenson in his inventions—in short as it has well been said: I am told that my life and labour are only, not utterly, contemptible, because they conduce to a material well being, in which I myself can have no share. I am told by these men that I should be contented to know, that like the leaves sere and dry strewing our sidewalks a few weeks ago, my life must at last fall from the tree of the world's life. I

can no more expect a personal identity after that fall than can the leaf I tread under foot expect to live on the tree again, but I fall and rot, and mingle with my mother earth, and so fulfil my destiny, inasmuch as I help the tree next spring to shoot forth other leaves that will take my forgotten place. This is an uncoloured description of the good—the supreme good attainable in this life, which is to render unnecessary the hope of the life to come. It ought to satisfy me, but it doesn't. Verily I have "called for bread, and they give me but a stone.

Offer these things, these aims, these prospects, to a man who has known the truth as it is in Jesus. Put this phantom of a *soulless* life, a *godless* morality side by side with the life that "now is, and that which is to come," of the Christian. Ask him to change. He will tell you his Saviour has been, in all his life, every corner of it. Jesus has been to him what the fabled philosopher's stone was to the philosopher, it turned all it touched into gold. So have all the common things of life by Him been turned into something precious. Take Him

away, what would life be? the pure fountain of all that has been pure within him suddenly stayed; the strong hand that restrained the animal part of him in a moment gone. The light that glittered on his way; the star that ever shone in his east; the pillar of fire that illuminated his night have vanished into blackness. The eye that watched; the arm that supported—all are myths. And as Coleridge said, life stares at him now all blank and expressionless, like the eyes of a lost friend, who is not dead, alas, but has turned idiot.

From such a creed, good Lord deliver us.

In human life as God designed it, and as to some extent it is to-day, there are depths profound that crave God and immortality, with an unutterable craving; eyes that will strain themselves in looking for a life beyond the grave—for a land beyond the sea. If I may draw a parable from our door, a man's true life seems to me, like the broad deep lake yonder, below the town. The face of this life is often strangely troubled, as the gusts or breezes of time play on it, or the storms

that each must meet, blow. The billows of this life are turbid sometimes and muddy, as foul torrents pour in; but neither the shallows inshore that are muddy, nor the surface out there that is rough, are the lake. Its cool, clear depths remain unpolluted by the one—unmoved by the commotion of the other. Into that lake two rivers pour. Infidelity seems to me like the foul swollen incontinent Don, flowing to east of us, losing itself in a marsh; like it, infidelity has no permanent home in the life of men. It is loud, filthy, destructive; it sweeps down our valley, but cannot abide in its fury for ever, since it is fed by no perennial springs, while the sense of God's reality, of religion, in fact, in man, seems to me like the great St. Lawrence, that has its abiding home in the bosom of the inland ocean of the north, whence for all seasons and all times it pours its bounteous tribute to the sea. Through all her depths the lake feels the pulsings of the St. Lawrence tide. To this, inner, deeper part, God speaks. There he would come to dwell, and rule your whole life from within, not by restraint applied without.

Many called Christians know nothing of Christ as a near, ever-present Saviour, however correct their ideas may be as to His person and offices. But this christianity Christ does not acknowledge, nor does the world respect it. If I would really be a Christian, it is not sufficient to start up and say I will do this—I will give up that; the truth is, the stream of this world's affairs runs too steadily against us. We may lay hold on the oars of duty and effort, and row and row; but the current runs too strong; old habit drags us back. Is the case hopeless then? By such means, quite. A man is often willing to apply to Christ for assistance, who has never been so deeply humbled as to feel he must have Him as a complete Saviour, who takes *him* in as he is, all his wasted past and helpless present clinging round him. Yet, till I feel thus humbled, I do not know what sin and salvation mean—I don't understand the A B C of them even. One of two alternatives I must adopt: either give the Lord Jesus this commanding place within me, yield to Him, come right down before Him, out of all my

foolish pride, casting from me all my changing excuses, since He alone offers me a strength that will carry my life up against the tide; or with this tide I must drift—drift towards dangers I know right well have shattered stronger crafts than mine. It is Christ or nothing. To some who read this, it is Christ now and altogether, or never; for you have sinned so long against what you feel to be true, your whole being is becoming numb and palsied with sin.

Hawthorne tells of a high tower he saw in Rome. On the tower stands an altar, and before the altar burns a lamp. For centuries that lamp has been burning. The owner who lets the flame out, by the provision of his ancestor's will, with its extinction loses his inheritance. In each man's soul there is a high tower, and on its windy summit a holy flame. Woe to the man who puts out the flame of conscience, the holy fire that burns as the oracle of God. He loses a greater than earthly possession. It may be but a spark of a flame, yet the least wish for Jesus tells that it is burning still. If you will, you

can have it quickly kindled—you will not resist God's voice. Oh, here and now, lift but one honest cry, "Save Lord, or I perish;" and not more quickly did He who walked the waves catch poor Peter, than will He be at your side. We need Thee, Lord Jesus, in all time of our poverty, in all time of our wealth.

If there had any where appeared in space
Another place of refuge where to flee,
Our souls had taken refuge in that place,
And not with Thee.

For we against creation's bars had beat,
Like prisoned eagles: through great worlds had sought,
If but one foot of ground to place our feet,
Where Thou wert not.

And only when we found, in earth or air,
In heaven or hell, that such might nowhere be—
That we could not flee from Thee any where,
We fled to Thee.

December 10th.

