

text, which helps me along and drives me mad. The French do not even try to translate. They try to be much more classical than the classics, with astounding results of barrenness and tedium. Tacitus, I fear, was too solid for me. I liked the war part; but the dreary intriguing at Rome was too much. R. L. S.

HYÈRES [Spring 1884].

MY DEAR HENLEY,—“Old Mortality” is out, and I am glad to say Coggie likes it. We like her immensely.

I keep better, but no great shakes yet; cannot work—cannot: that is flat, not even verses: as for prose, that more active place is shut on me long since.

My view of life is essentially the comic; and the romantically comic. *As you like It* is to me the most bird-haunted spot in letters; *Tempest* and *Twelfth Night* follow. These are what I mean by poetry and nature. I make an effort of my mind to be quite one with Molière, except upon the stage, where his inimitable *jeux de scène* beggar belief; but you will observe they are stage-plays—things *ad hoc*; not great Olympian debauches of the heart and fancy; hence more perfect, and not so great. Then I come, after great wanderings, to *Carmosine* and to *Fantasio*; to one part of *La Dernière Aldini* (which, by the by, we might dramatise in a week); to the notes that Meredith has found, Evan and the postillion, Evan and Rose, Harry in Germany. And to me these things are the good; beauty, touched

with sex and laughter; beauty with God's earth for the background. Tragedy does not seem to me to come off; and when it does, it does so by the heroic illusion; the anti-masque has been omitted; laughter, which attends on all our steps in life, and sits by the deathbed, and certainly redacts the epitaph; laughter has been lost from these great-hearted lies. But the comedy which keeps the beauty and touches the terrors of our life (laughter and tragedy-in-a-good-humor having kissed), that is the last word of moved representation; embracing the greatest number of elements of fate and character; and telling its story, not with the one eye of pity, but with the two of pity and mirth.

F., having read thus far, says: “All this is your sight of life, not Henley's. He sees tragedy. That is the trouble in collaboration.

“Triumph!” I cry, “it is an ideal conjunction.”

“Yes,” she says, “if you will understand and respect each other's ground.”

Let us understand and respect. I am no melodramatist, but a Skelt-drunken boy; I am, I know it, the man who went out to find the Eldorado of romantic comedy, and who means to come in sight of it. If we do possess these opposite gifts, we must un-nail the scaffolding: the trim reticule of the French play will hardly hold the pair of us; some liberty, Aristophanic or Shakespearian, some pursuit of nightingales, is necessary. But this would be to look forward to our ripeness.

R. L. S.

(To be continued.)

THE GOSPEL OF RELAXATION

By William James



PROPOSE in the following informal pages to take certain psychological doctrines and show their practical applications to mental hygiene—to the hygiene of our American life more particularly. Our people, especially our teachers, are turning toward psychology nowadays with hopes of guidance, and if psychology is to

justify the hopes, it must be by showing fruits in the pedagogic and therapeutic lines.

The reader may possibly have heard of a peculiar theory of the emotions, commonly referred to in psychological literature as the Lange-James theory. According to this theory our emotions are mainly due to those organic stirrings that are aroused in us in a reflex way by the stimu-

lus of the exciting object or situation. An emotion of fear, for example, or surprise, is not a direct effect of the object's presence on the mind, but an effect of that still earlier effect, the bodily commotion which the object suddenly excites; so that, were this bodily commotion suppressed, we should not so much *feel* fear as call the situation fearful; we should not feel surprise, but coldly recognize that the object was indeed astonishing. One enthusiast has even gone so far as to say that when we feel sorry it is because we weep, when we feel afraid it is because we run away, and not conversely. The reader may possibly be acquainted with the paradoxical formula. Now, whatever exaggeration may possibly lurk in this account of our emotions (and I doubt myself whether the exaggeration be very great), it is certain that the main core of it is true, and that the mere giving way to tears, for example, or to the outward expression of an anger-fit, will result for the moment in making the inner grief or anger more acutely felt. There is, accordingly, no better known or more generally useful precept in the moral training of youth, or in one's personal self-discipline, than that which bids us pay primary attention to what we do and express, and not to care too much for what we feel. If we only check a cowardly impulse in time, for example; or if we only *don't* strike the blow or rip out with the complaining or insulting word that we shall regret as long as we live, our feelings themselves will presently be the calmer and better, with no particular guidance from us on their own account. Action seems to follow feeling, but really action and feeling go together; and by regulating the action, which is under the more direct control of the will, we can indirectly regulate the feeling, which is not.

Thus the sovereign voluntary path to cheerfulness, if our spontaneous cheerfulness be lost, is to sit up cheerfully, to look round cheerfully, and to act and speak as if cheerfulness were already there. If such conduct doesn't make you soon feel cheerful, nothing else on that occasion can. So to feel brave, act as if we *were* brave, use all our will to that end, and a courage-fit will very likely replace the fit of fear. Again, in order to feel kindly toward a person to whom we have been inimical, the

only way is more or less deliberately to smile, to make sympathetic inquiries, and to force ourselves to say genial things. One hearty laugh together will bring enemies into a closer communion of heart than hours spent on both sides in inward wrestling with the mental demon of uncharitable feeling. To wrestle with a bad feeling only pins our attention on it, and keeps it still fastened in the mind, whereas if we act as if from some better feeling, the old bad feeling soon folds its tent like an Arab and silently steals away.

The best manuals of religious devotion accordingly reiterate the maxim that we must let our feelings go and pay no regard to them whatever. In an admirable and widely successful little book called "The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life," by Mrs. Hannah Whitall Smith, I find this lesson on almost every page. *Act* faithfully, and you really have faith, no matter how cold and even how dubious you may feel. "It is your purpose God looks at," writes Mrs. Smith, "not your feelings about that purpose; and your purpose, or will, is therefore the only thing you need attend to. . . . Let your emotions come or let them go, just as God pleases, and make no account of them either way. . . . They really have nothing to do with the matter. They are not the indicators of your spiritual state, but are merely the indicators of your temperament, or of your present physical condition."

But the reader knows these facts already, so I need no longer press them on his attention. From our acts and from our attitudes ceaseless inpouring currents of sensation come, which help to determine from moment to moment what our inner states shall be—that is a fundamental law of psychology which I will therefore proceed to assume.

A Viennese neurologist of considerable reputation has recently written about the *Binnenleben*, as he terms it, or buried life of human beings. No doctor, this writer says, can get into really profitable relations with a nervous patient until he gets some sense of what the patient's *Binnenleben* is, of the sort of unuttered inner atmosphere in which his consciousness dwells alone with the secrets of its prison-house. This inner personal tone is what we can't communicate or describe articu-

lately to others, but the wraith and ghost of it, so to speak, is often what our friends and intimates feel as our most characteristic quality. In the unhealthy minded, apart from all sorts of old regrets, ambitions checked by shames and aspirations obstructed by timidities, it consists mainly of bodily discomforts not distinctly localized by the sufferer, but breeding a general self-mistrust and sense that things are not as they should be with him. Half the thirst for alcohol that exists in the world, exists simply because alcohol acts as a temporary anæsthetic and effacer to all these morbid feelings that never ought to be in a human being at all. In the healthy-minded, on the contrary, there are no fears or shames to discover, and the sensations that pour in from the organism only help to swell the general vital sense of security and readiness for anything that may turn up. Consider, for example, the effects of a well-toned *motor-apparatus*, nervous and muscular, on our general personal self-consciousness, the sense of elasticity and efficiency that results. They tell us that in Norway the life of the women has lately been entirely revolutionized by the new order of muscular feelings with which the use of the *ski*, or long snow-shoes, as a sport for both sexes has made the women acquainted. Fifteen years ago the Norwegian women were even more than the women of other lands votaries of the old-fashioned ideal of femininity, the "domestic *angel*," the "gentle and refining influence," sort of thing. Now these sedentary fireside tabby-cats of Norway have been trained, they say by the snow-shoes, into lithe and audacious creatures for whom no night is too dark or height too giddy; and who are not only saying good-by to the traditional feminine pallor and delicacy of constitution, but actually taking the lead in every educational and social reform. I cannot but think that the tennis and tramping and skating habits and the "bicycle-craze" which are so rapidly extending among our dear sisters and daughters in this country are going also to lead to a sounder and heartier moral tone, which will send its tonic breath through all our American life.

I hope that here in America more and more the ideal of the well-trained and vig-

orous body will be maintained neck by neck with that of the well-trained and vigorous mind, as the two coequal halves of the higher education, for men and women alike. The strength of the British Empire lies in the strength of character of the individual Englishman, taken all alone by himself; and that strength, I am persuaded, is perennially nourished and kept up by nothing so much as by the national worship, in which all classes meet, of athletic out-door life and sport.

I remember, years ago, reading a certain work by an American doctor on hygiene and the laws of life and the type of future humanity. I have forgotten its author's name and its title, but I remember well an awful prophecy that it contained about the future of our muscular system. Human perfection, the writer said, means ability to cope with the environment; but the environment will more and more require mental power from us, and less and less will ask for bare brute strength. Wars will cease, machines will do all our heavy work, man will become more and more a mere director of nature's energies, and less and less an exerter of energy on his own account. So that if the *homo sapiens* of the future can only digest his food and think, what need will he have of well-developed muscles at all? And why, pursued this writer, should we not even now be satisfied with a more delicate and intellectual type of beauty than that which pleased our ancestors? Nay, I have heard a fanciful friend make a still further advance in this "new-man" direction. With our future food, he says, itself prepared in liquid form from the chemical elements of the atmosphere, pepsinated or half-digested in advance, and sucked up through a glass tube from a tin can, what need shall we have of teeth, or stomachs even? They may go, along with our muscles and our physical courage, whilst, challenging ever more and more our proper admiration, will grow the gigantic domes of our crania arching over our spectacled eyes, and animating our flexible little lips to those floods of learned and ingenious talks which will constitute our most congenial occupation.

I am sure that your flesh creeps at this apocalyptic vision. Mine certainly did so; and I cannot believe that our muscu-

lar vigor will ever be a superfluity. Even if the day ever dawns in which it will not be needed for fighting the old heavy battles against Nature, it will still always be needed to furnish the background of sanity, serenity, and cheerfulness to life, to give moral elasticity to our disposition, to round off the wiry edge of our fretfulness, and make us good-humored and easy of approach. Weakness is too apt to be what the doctors call irritable weakness. And that blessed internal peace and confidence, that *acquiescentia in seipso*, as Spinoza used to call it, that wells up from every part of the body of a muscularly well-trained human being, and soaks the indwelling soul of him with satisfaction, is, quite apart from every consideration of its mechanical utility, an element of spiritual hygiene of supreme significance.

And now let me go a step deeper into mental hygiene and try to enlist the reader's insight and sympathy in a cause which I believe is one of paramount patriotic importance to us Yankees. Many years ago a Scottish medical man, Dr. Clouston, a mad-doctor, as they called him there, or what we would call an asylum physician (the most eminent one in Scotland), visited this country and said something that has remained in my memory ever since. "You Americans," he said, "wear too much expression on your faces. You are living like an army with all its reserves engaged in action. The duller countenances of the British population betoken a better scheme of life. They suggest stores of reserved nervous force to fall back upon, if any occasion should arise that requires it. This inexcitability, this presence at all times of power not used, I regard," continued Dr. Clouston, "as the great safeguard of our English people. The other thing in you gives me a sense of insecurity, and you ought somehow to tone yourselves down. You really do carry too much expression, you take too intensely the trivial moments of life."

Now, Dr. Clouston is a trained reader of the secrets of the soul as expressed upon the countenance, and the observation of his which I quote seems to me to mean a great deal. And all Americans who stay in Europe long enough to get accustomed to the spirit that reigns and expresses itself there, so unexcitable as compared

with ours, make a similar observation when they return to their native shores. They find a wild-eyed look upon their compatriot's faces, either of too desperate eagerness and anxiety, or of too intense responsiveness and good-will. It is hard to say whether the men or the women show it most. It is true that we do not all feel about it as Dr. Clouston felt. Many of us, far from deploring it, admire it. We say, "What intelligence it shows! How different from the stolid cheeks, the codfish eyes, the slow, inanimate demeanor we have been seeing in the British Isles." Intensity, rapidity, vivacity of appearance are indeed with us something of a nationally accepted ideal, and the medical notion of "irritable weakness" is not the first thing suggested by them to our mind, as it was to Dr. Clouston's. In a weekly paper not very long ago I remember reading a story in which, after describing the beauty and interest of the heroine's personality, the author summed up her charms by saying that to all who looked upon her an impression as of "bottled lightning" was irresistibly conveyed.

Bottled lightning in truth is one of our American ideals, even of a young girl's character! Now it is most ungracious, and it may seem to some persons unpatriotic, to criticise in public the physical peculiarities of one's own people, of one's own family, so to speak. Besides, it may be said, and said with justice, that there are plenty of bottled-lightning temperaments in other countries, and plenty of phlegmatic temperaments here; and that when all is said and done the more or less of tension I am making a fuss about is a very small item in the sum-total of a nation's life, and not worth solemn treatment in a magazine in which agreeable rather than disagreeable things should be made prominent. Well, in one sense the more or less of tension in our faces and our unused muscles is a small thing. Not much mechanical work is done by these contractions. But it is not always the material size of a thing that measures its importance, often it is its place and function. One of the most philosophical remarks I ever heard made was by an unlettered workman who was doing some repairs at my house many years ago. "There is very little difference between

one man and another," he said, "when you go to the bottom of it. But what little there is is very important." And the remark certainly applies to this case. The general over-contraction may be small when estimated in foot-pounds, but its importance is immense on account of its *effects on the over-contracted person's spiritual life*. This follows as a necessary consequence from the theory of our emotions to which I made reference at the beginning of this article. For by the sensations that so incessantly pour in from the over-tense excited body, the over-tense and excited habit of mind is kept up, and the sultry, threatening, exhausting, thunderous inner atmosphere never quite clears away. If you never wholly give yourself up to the chair you sit in, but always keep your leg- and body-muscles half contracted for a rise ; if you breathe eighteen or nineteen instead of sixteen times a minute, and never quite breathe out at that ; what mental mood *can* you be in but one of inner panting and expectancy, and how can the future and its worries possibly forsake your mind? On the other hand, how can they gain admission to your mind if your brow be unruffled, your respiration calm and complete, and your muscles all relaxed?

Now, what is the cause of this absence of repose, this bottled-lightning quality, in us Americans? The explanation of it that is usually given is that it comes from the extreme dryness of our climate and the acrobatic performances of our thermometer, coupled with the extraordinary progressiveness of our life, the hard work, the railroad speed, the rapid success, and all the other things we know so well by heart. Well, our climate is certainly exciting, but hardly more so than that of many parts of Europe, where, nevertheless, no bottled-lightning girls are found. And the work done and the pace of life are as extreme in every great capital of Europe as they are here. To me both of these pretended causes are utterly insufficient to explain the facts.

To explain them we must go, not to physical geography, but to psychology and sociology. The latest chapter both in sociology and in psychology to be developed in a manner that approaches adequacy is the chapter on the imitative impulse. First Tarde in France, and later

Royce and Baldwin here, have shown that invention and imitation, taken together, form, one may say, the entire warp and woof of human life in so far as it is social. The American over-tension and jerkiness and breathlessness and intensity and agony of expression, are primarily social, and only secondarily physiological phenomena. They are bad habits, nothing more or less, bred of custom and example, born of the imitation of bad models and the cultivation of false personal ideals. How are idioms acquired, how do local peculiarities of phrase and accent come about? Through an accidental example set by someone, which struck the ears of others, and was quoted and copied till at last everyone in the locality chimed in. Just so it is with national tricks of vocalization or intonation, with national manners, fashions of movement and gesture, and habitual expressions of face. We, here in America through following a succession of pattern-setters whom it is now impossible to trace, and through influencing each other in a bad direction, have at last settled down collectively into what, for better or worse, is our own characteristic national type—a type with the production of which, so far as these habits go, the climate and conditions have had practically nothing at all to do.

This type, which we have thus reached by our imitativeness, we now have fixed upon us for better or worse. Now no type can be *wholly* disadvantageous ; but so far as our type follows the bottled-lightning fashion, it cannot be wholly good. Dr. Clouston was certainly right in thinking that eagerness, breathlessness, and anxiety are not signs of strength ; they are signs of weakness and of bad co-ordination. The even forehead, the slab-like cheek, the codfish eye, may be less interesting for the moment, but they are more promising signs than intense expression is of what we may expect of their possessor in the long run. Your dull, unhurried worker gets over a great deal of ground, because he never goes backward or breaks down. Your intense, convulsive worker breaks down and has bad moods so often that you never know where he may be when you most need his help—he may be having one of his "bad days." We say that so many of our fellow-countrymen collapse, and have

to be sent abroad to rest their nerves, because they work so hard. I suspect that this is an immense mistake. I suspect that neither the nature nor the amount of our work are accountable for the frequency and severity of our breakdowns, but that their cause lies rather in those absurd feelings of hurry and having no time, in that breathlessness and tension, that anxiety of feature, and that solicitude for results, that lack of inner harmony and ease, in short, by which with us the work is so apt to be accompanied, and from which a European who should do the same work would nine times out of ten be free. These perfectly wanton and unnecessary tricks of inner attitude and outer manner in us, caught from the social atmosphere, kept up by tradition, and idealized by many as the admirable way of life, are the last straws that break the American camel's back, the final overflowers of our measure of wear and tear and fatigue.

The voice, for example, in a surprisingly large number of us has a tired and plaintive sound. Some of us are really tired (for I don't mean absolutely to deny that our climate has a tiring quality), but far more of us are not tired at all, or would not be tired at all unless we had got into a wretched trick of feeling tired by following the prevalent habits of vocalization and expression. And if talking high and tired, and living excitedly and hurriedly, would only enable us to *do* more by the way, even while breaking us down in the end, it would be different. There would be some compensation, some excuse for going on so. But the exact reverse is the case: It is your relaxed and easy worker, who is in no hurry, and quite thoughtless most of the while of consequences, who is your efficient worker; and tension and anxiety, and present and future, all mixed up together in our mind at once, are the surest drags upon steady progress and hindrances to our success. My colleague, Professor Münsterberg, an excellent observer, who came here recently, has written some notes on America to German papers. He says in substance that the appearance of unusual energy in America is superficial and illusory, being really due to nothing but the habits of jerkiness and bad co-ordination for which we have to thank the defective training of our people. I think myself

that it is high time for old legends and traditional opinions to be changed; and that if anyone should begin to write about Yankee inefficiency and feebleness, and inability to do anything with time except to waste it, he would have a very pretty paradoxical little thesis to sustain, with a great many facts to quote, and a great deal of experience to appeal to in its proof.

Well, if our dear American character is weakened by all this over-tension—and I think, whatever reserves you may make, gentle reader, that you will agree as to the main facts—where does the remedy lie? It lies, of course, where lay the origins of the disease. If a vicious fashion and taste are to blame for the thing, the fashion and taste must be changed. And though it is no small thing to inoculate seventy millions of people with new standards, yet, if there is to be any relief, that will have to be done. We must change ourselves from a race that admires jerk and snap for their own sakes, and looks down upon low voices and quiet ways as dull, to one that, on the contrary, has calm for its ideal, and for their own sakes loves harmony, dignity, and ease.

So we go back to the psychology of imitation again. There is only one way to improve ourselves, and that is by some of us setting an example which the others may pick up and imitate till the new fashion spreads from east to west. Some of us are in more favorable positions than others to set new fashions. Some are much more striking personally and imitable, so to speak. But no living person is sunk so low as not to be imitated by somebody. Thackeray somewhere says of the Irish nation, that there never was an Irishman so poor that he didn't have a still poorer Irishman living at his expense; and surely there is no human being whose example doesn't work contagiously in *some* particular. The very idiots at our public institutions imitate each others' peculiarities. And if you, dear reader, should individually achieve calmness and harmony in your own person, you may depend upon it that a wave of imitation will spread from you, as surely as the circles spread outward when a stone is dropped into a lake.

Fortunately, we shall not have to be absolute pioneers. Even now in New York they have formed a society for the im-

provement of our national vocalization, and one perceives its machinations already in the shape of various newspaper articles intended to stir up dissatisfaction with the awful thing that it is. And, better still than that, because more radical and general, is the gospel of relaxation, as one may call it, preached by Miss Annie Payson Call, of Boston, in her admirable little volume called "Power through Repose," a book that ought to be in the hands of every instructor of youth in America of either sex. You need only be followers, then, on a path already opened up by others. But of one thing be confident—others still will follow you.

And this brings me to one more application of psychology to practical life, to which I will call attention briefly, and then close. If one's example of easy and calm ways is to be effectively contagious, one feels by instinct that the less voluntarily one aims at getting imitated, the more unconscious one keeps in the matter, the more likely one is to succeed. *Become the imitable thing*, and you may then discharge your minds of all responsibility for the imitation—the laws of social nature will take care of that result. Now, the psychological principle on which this precept reposes is a law of very deep and widespread importance in the conduct of our lives, and at the same time a law which we Americans most grievously neglect. Stated technically, the law is this, that *strong feeling about one's self tends to arrest the free association of one's objective ideas and motor processes*. We get the extreme example of this in the mental disease called melancholia.

A melancholic patient is filled through and through with intensely painful emotion about himself. He is threatened; he is guilty; he is doomed; he is annihilated; he is lost. His mind is fixed as if in a cramp on this sense of his own situation; and in all the books on insanity you may read that the usual varied flow of his thoughts has ceased. His associative processes, to use the technical phrase, are inhibited, and his ideas stand stock still, shut up to their one monotonous function of reiterating inwardly the fact of the man's desperate estate. And this inhibitive influence is not due to the mere fact that his emotion is *painful*.

Joyous emotions about the self also stop the association of our ideas. A saint in ecstasy is as motionless and irresponsive and one-ideal as a melancholic. And without going as far as ecstatic saints, we know how in everyone a great or sudden pleasure may paralyze the flow of thought. Ask young people returning from a party or a spectacle, and all excited about it, what it was. "Oh, it was *fine!* it was *fine!* it was *fine!*" is all the information you are likely to receive until the excitement has calmed down. Probably every one of my readers has been made temporarily half-idiotic by some great success or piece of good fortune. "*Good! good! GOOD!*" is all we can at such times say to ourselves, until we smile at our own very foolishness.

Now from all this we can draw an extremely practical conclusion. If, namely, we wish our trains of ideation and volition to be copious and varied and effective, we must form the habit of freeing them from the inhibitive influence of egoistic preoccupation about their results. Such a habit, like other habits, can be formed. Prudence and duty and self-regard, emotions of ambition and emotions of anxiety, have, of course, a needful part to play in our lives. But confine them as far as possible to the occasions when you are making your general resolutions and deciding on your plans of campaign, and keep them out of the details. When once a decision is reached and execution is the order of the day, dismiss absolutely all responsibility and care about the outcome. *Unclamp*, in a word, your intellectual and practical machinery and let it run free, and the service it will do you will be twice as good. Who are the scholars who get "rattled" in the recitation-room? Those who think of the possibilities of failure and feel the great importance of the act. Who are those who do recite well? Often those who are most indifferent. *Their* ideas reel themselves out of their memory of their own accord. Why do we hear the complaint so often that social life in New England is either less rich and expressive or more fatiguing than it is in some other parts of the world? To what is the fact, if fact it be, due, unless to the over-active conscience of the people, afraid of either saying something too trivial and

obvious, or something insincere, or something unworthy of one's interlocutor, or something in some way or other not adequate to the occasion? How can conversation possibly steer itself through such a sea of responsibilities and inhibitions as this? On the other hand, conversation does flourish and society is refreshing, and neither dull, on the one hand, nor exhausting from its effort on the other, wherever people forget their scruples and take the brakes off their hearts and let their tongues wag as automatically and irresponsibly as they will.

They talk much in pedagogic circles to-day about the duty of the teacher to prepare for every lesson in advance. To some extent this is useful. But we Yankees are assuredly not those to whom such a general doctrine should be preached. We are only too careful as it is. The advice I should give to most teachers would be in the words of one who is herself an admirable teacher. Prepare yourself in the *subject so well that it shall be always on tap*; then in the class-room trust your spontaneity and fling away all further care. My advice to students would be somewhat similar, especially at periods when there are many successive days of examination impending. One ounce of good nervous tone in an examination is worth many pounds of anxious study for it in advance. If you want really to do your best in an examination, fling away the book the day before, say to yourself, "I won't waste another minute on this miserable thing, and I don't care an iota whether I succeed or not." Say this sincerely, and feel it; and go out and play, or go to bed and sleep; and I am sure the results next day will encourage you to use the method permanently. I have heard this advice given to a student by Miss Call, whose book on muscular relaxation I quoted a moment ago. In her later book, entitled "As a Matter of Course," the gospel of moral relaxation, of dropping things from the mind, and not "caring," is preached with equal success. Not only our preachers, but our friends the theosophists and mind-curers of various religious sects are also harping on this string. And with the doctors, the Delsarteans, and such writers as Prentice Mulford, Mr. Dresser, and Mr. Trine

to help, and the whole band of school-teachers and magazine readers chiming in, it really looks as if a good start might be made in the direction of changing our American mental habit into something more indifferent and strong.

Worry means always and invariably inhibition of associations and loss of effective power. Of course, the sovereign cure for worry is religious faith, and this, of course, you also know. The turbulent billows of the fretful surface leave the deep parts of the ocean undisturbed, and to him who has a hold on vaster and more permanent realities the hourly vicissitudes of his personal destiny seem relatively insignificant things. The really religious person is accordingly unshakable and full of equanimity, and calmly ready for any duty that the day may bring forth. This is charmingly illustrated by a little work with which I recently became acquainted: "The Practice of the Presence of God the best Rule of a Holy Life, by Brother Lawrence, being Conversations and Letters of Nicholas Herman, of Lorraine, Translated from the French."* I extract a few passages, the conversations being given in indirect discourse. Brother Lawrence was a Carmelite friar, converted at Paris in 1666. "He said that he had been footman to M. Fieabert, the Treasurer, and that he was a great awkward fellow, who broke everything. That he had desired to be received into a monastery, thinking that he would there be made to smart for his awkwardness and the faults he should commit, and so he should sacrifice to God his life, with its pleasures; but that God had disappointed him, he having met with nothing but satisfaction in that state. . . .

"That he had long been troubled in mind from a certain belief that he should be damned; that all the men in the world could not have persuaded him to the contrary; but that he had thus reasoned with himself about it: *I engaged in a religious life only for the love of God, and I have endeavored to act only for Him; whatever becomes of me, whether I be lost or saved, I will always continue to act purely for the love of God. I shall have this good at least, that till death I shall have done all that is in me to love Him.* . . . That

* Fleming H. Revell Company, New York.

since then he had passed his life in perfect liberty and continual joy.

"That when an occasion of practising some virtue offered, he addressed himself to God, saying, 'Lord, I cannot do this unless Thou enablest me;' and that then he received strength more than sufficient.

"That when he had failed in his duty, he only confessed his fault, saying to God, 'I shall never do otherwise, if You leave me to myself; it is You who must hinder my failing, and mend what is amiss.' That after this he gave himself no further uneasiness about it.

"That he had been lately sent into Burgundy to buy the provision of wine for the society, which was a very unwelcome task for him, because he had no turn for business, and because he was lame, and could not go about the boat but by rolling himself over the casks. That, however, he gave himself no uneasiness about it, nor about the purchase of the wine. That he said to God, 'It was His business he was about,' and that he afterward found it well performed. That he had been sent into Auvergne, the year before, upon the same account; that he could not tell how the matter passed, but that it proved very well.

"So, likewise, in his business in the kitchen (to which he had naturally a great aversion), having accustomed himself to do everything there for the love of God, and with prayer, upon all occasions, for His grace to do his work well, he had found everything easy during fifteen years that he had been employed there.

That he was very well pleased with the post he was now in; but that he was as ready to quit that as the former, since he was always pleasing himself in every con-

dition, by doing little things for the love of God.

That the goodness of God assured him He would not forsake him utterly, and that He would give him strength to bear whatever evil He permitted to happen to him; and therefore that he feared nothing, and had no occasion to consult with anybody about his state. That when he had attempted to do it, he had always come away more perplexed."

The simple-heartedness of the good Brother Lawrence, and the relaxation of all unnecessary solitudes and anxieties in him, is a refreshing spectacle.

The need of feeling responsible all the livelong day has been preached long enough in our New England. Long enough exclusively, at any rate—and long enough to the female sex. (I might as well now confess that this article was originally written for the students of a woman's college, and afterward repeated to more than one similar audience.) What our girl-students and woman-teachers most need nowadays is not the exacerbation, but rather the toning-down of their moral tensions. Even now I fear that some one of my fair readers may be making an undying resolve to become strenuously relaxed, cost what it will, for the remainder of her life. It is needless to say that that is not the way to do it. The way to do it, paradoxical as it may seem, is genuinely not to care whether you are doing it or not. Then, possibly, by the grace of God, you may all at once find that you *are* doing it; and, having learned what the trick feels like, may (again by the grace of God) be enabled to go on.

And that something like this may be your happy experience, dear reader, after reading this article, is my most earnest wish.



THE POINT OF VIEW

THE Puritans, we know, had no doubt at all either about the existence or the intense activity of a personal devil. He was as much a factor of the life of the colony as the General Court, which body he somewhat resembled in the comprehensiveness of his functions. He was responsible, of course, for such ills as the eighty-two dangerous heresies springing from the teachings of Mistress Anne Hutchinson; but he was no less to blame for the inclination of the Puritan damsels toward "immoderate greate sleeves, slashed apparel, immoderate greate rayles," etc. He was at the bottom of every mishap, and the most intelligent did not hesitate to ascribe anything unexpected to his direct teachings. "The Indians near Aquidnec," casually remarks Winthrop, "being powwowing in this tempest, the devil came and fetched away five of them;" and the entirely incidental way in which the statement is made, without further comment or elaboration, shows how completely Satan was accepted as a concrete personality to be taken into account in all one's reckonings.

Any plunge into popular literature on social subjects—or into realistic fiction—shows not only that "Circumstance, environment, and heredity have replaced the world, the flesh, and the devil," but that we have substituted for the embodied spirit of evil of the old days, an abstraction, Society, which is responsible for nearly as wide a field of harmfulness as its predecessor. It does not, to be sure, snatch away Indians, preferring the less direct method of moving them onward to some reservation not as yet wanted by the whites; but otherwise it is as active as ever Satan was. Society determines environment, and environment determines character. Society is responsible for the tough on the streets of New York, and for the spiritless failures who drift dejectedly through some of our alleged pictures of Western life. Society is to blame for public corruption and private dishonesty, for drinking, for woman's wrongs, for the woes of the working man, for war, for unsound views on the currency or the tariff or the policy of expansion—for whatever, in fact, happens to be the particular *bête noire* of the particular speaker who holds the floor at a given

moment. Truly, there is no room left for the Prince of Darkness; his occupation is gone, and Society has triumphantly usurped his ancient domain.

Probably most of us feel with regard to the devil as Emerson did concerning the world—that we "can get on very well without him." Nevertheless it is a question whether this substitution of Society for Satan is an altogether fortunate step. For the old attitude presupposed a belief in the individual. Satan dealt with units, and if a man went astray it was because he himself yielded when he might have resisted, so that even in sinning he proclaimed his free will; but who teaches to-day that a man can resist Society, or how can he be held responsible for the results of his environment? In the old belief life was a battle-field, whereon each must wage his own individual conflict with the powers of darkness, at the peril of his own eternal loss; in the newer teaching it is a kind of infirmity, wherein moral invertebrates in mass helplessly accept whatever happens to be nearest at hand, complaining bitterly meanwhile because some power, not exactly defined, has failed to do something not precisely formulated, which would have made matters very different in some fashion not entirely comprehended.

The old doctrine was stern and terrible enough in principle, and trivial enough in some of its workings out; but it encouraged the idea that each man must bear his own burden and fight his own fight. It developed the martial virtues; it trained a race of men, austere and narrow, but so virile, so indomitable and forceful, that their impress is even yet stamped deep upon our national character. Will the new attitude do as much? The man who believes that he is tempted by a definite spirit of evil whom he may resist and ought to resist may yield, or even take sides with the tempter and sin with a high hand, and yet be of heroic mould; but what hope is there for the man who holds himself blameless because his course is shaped by a power too strong for resistance? Is there for him any possibility of brave living and genuine effort? "*Courage, tout le monde; le diable est mort!*" Is his disappearance an unmixed good?