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from indecision, and enabled her to know the truth by putting her in the path where it may be found. All men of character have known this. They have pondered long over life's problems, but the time to decide has come to them, and they have willed themselves into agreement with the powers that illuminate and inspire the soul. That was the meaning of the old viking's vow, 'I am thy man.' It gave to the wandering seaman a captain, a place in a regiment, a standing in his world. It is what Jesus would have men do. Will to act in agreement with truth, with God, and truth and God shall be known, the realities that lie deeper than the base of the everlasting hills.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Birthdays of Good Men and Women.

'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.'—Mt 5^8.

THERE is a certain little village in France called Domrémy that is famous because a wonderful young girl was born there. It is an old story; for it was on a January morning as long ago as 1412 that she first saw the light. And she certainly opened her eyes on a lovely spot. There was a winding river near her father's house and a fountain which was on the brink of a great forest. This forest was a wonderfully mysterious place. It was haunted by fairies to such a degree that the parish priest used to read Mass there once a year to frighten them. But little Jeanne, as her father and mother named her at baptism, was never frightened one bit. There were times, indeed, when she wandered about in the woods by herself, hoping all the time that she would meet a fairy.

When the apple trees were in bloom, and the air was soft and warm, then the thought of fairies would grow into a thought of God, and she said the prayers that her mother taught her. It was as if angels and not fairies came round her. Jeanne was a good little girl; she had a pure heart. In the woods she often seemed to get away into the world that cannot be seen with our bodily eyes. Do you wonder, when Jesus Himself said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.'

Not only did Jeanne feel quite sure that she saw the angels, she heard voices, and one voice said, 'Little Jeanne, be good and God will aid thee.'

Her home was a very simple one. Her father Jacques d'Arc and his wife Isabeau were just plain hard-working people. The mother was a deeply religious woman. It was she who taught the little girl to pray, and told her stories which Jeanne liked even better than fairy tales. These were about the Saints, for both the father and mother were Catholics. Though Jeanne could neither read nor write, she was quick to understand and to sympathize. As she listened to her mother's stories, she wept at the sorrows of the holy men and women, and she laughed when she felt they had cause to be happy.

By and by, Jeanne became a shepherdess. Her father had flocks of sheep, and being only a peasant farmer he could not afford to pay outside help, so his little daughter was sent out to tend them. When she was not herding the sheep, she would be spinning beside her mother and sister in the garden or in the house. One can picture the group While little Jeanne kept busy with her hands, her eyes told of thoughts that were far away from Domrémy. She was thinking of her mother's stories, which she went on relating to the whirring accompaniment of the spinning wheels. Jeanne loved no story better than that of the Maid Margaret, the maiden who had walked barefooted in the meadows watching her sheep, and who afterwards died a martyr's death because she would not deny her Lord. She thought of Maid Margaret as she tended her father's sheep, and when she lay in her little bed at night.

But although Domrémy was just a little country village that lay on the borders of a great forest where fairies walk, it was not quite cut off from the great world. There were cross-roads near Jacques d'Arc's house. One of these roads was the great highway between France and Germany; so there were always people passing—wayfarers, we might call them—who brought the news to Jacques d'Arc and his wife Isabeau. Jeanne listened you may

be sure. She knew all about the great battle of Agincourt. Every French peasant was aware that his country had fallen on evil days. After constant fighting for about thirteen years, and having been conquered again and again by the English, the people of France were in despair. They hated England; they thought her a cruel tyrant; but though the simple French folk had the spirit of Scottish highlanders they had become too weak to fight with any spirit. Jeanne, now grown to be a young girl, was sensitive as ever to the voices of the forest. But if in the summer woods she heard music that sounded like a great *Te Deum*, from the cross-roads there came martial strains calling her to battle. And an angel presence made the strains like a glorious battle hymn. Jeanne felt sure that the angel was St. Michael, the warrior archangel about whom her mother had told her. He had in his hand a shining sword, a crown upon his head, and wings folded about him.

'Little Jeanne,' he said, 'it is thou who must go to the help of the King of France; it is thou who must give him back his kingdom.' For five years he kept calling gently but persistently Jeanne, the shepherdess of Domrémy, and she pondered over his message. Her thoughts became wings, until at length she could hold back no longer. There had been other influences than that of St. Michael at work; her mother had trained her from childhood to think of these things; the forest also, with the fountain near it, had played its part, but most powerful influence of all was the voice of God in Jeanne's own heart.

Jeanne went. She presented herself before the Dauphin of France. At first he felt inclined to be amused, but after a bit he resolved to give her mission a trial. She had not a long career 'at the front' as we say; but now, after 500 years, the story of those few months makes the world marvel. She succeeded in setting the Dauphin upon the throne, not by her strength but by the wonderful influence of her presence. For although the soldiers she commanded, like the Dauphin, were at first inclined to ridicule the idea of a mere girl leading them to battle, soon they were fighting as they never fought in their lives. By her mere purity and goodness they became convinced that she had been raised up to deliver their beloved France. They learned to feel shame for all foul speech and foul thought, and followed her as a leader sent from Heaven.

But with Jeanne, it was not as with our great generals. She was never hailed as a heroine for what she had done. She had no wish to be. In fighting she was but obeying the voice of God; and instead of harbouring evil thoughts against the English, it is said that she sent a touching invitation to their leaders to unite with the French in a crusade against infidelity. When reverses came, and it was evident that her work was done, she wept, for she was weary and sad. Then a picture of her dear old home rose before her, and she prayed to God that she might be allowed to go back there and be a shepherdess once more. She remembered the angels of the forest. Doesn't it remind you of how after his battles King David longed to get a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem?

But to Jeanne there only came suffering. After being wounded several times, she was at length betrayed by some of her own countrymen, who handed her over to the English. They, with eyes that saw not as Jeanne saw, believed her to be a witch. That meant prison, and in the end death. Jeanne was burned alive by the English in the market-place of Rouen. To-day we should be ashamed to tell the story did we not believe that nations, like boys and girls and men and women, learn by making mistakes and suffering for them.

What seemed a cruel tragedy turned into glory. We are told that ten thousand men wept the day Jeanne, the Maid of Orleans, gave up her life, and that a soldier who threw a faggot on the scaffold because he had sworn to do it, turned away a penitent for life, saying that he had seen a dove rising upon wings to heaven from her ashes.

The story of Jeanne d'Arc, or Joan of Arc, as I dare say you boys and girls call her, is one of the loveliest stories of girlhood ever told. To-day her influence in France is stronger than ever it has been. On the night that the Germans were nearest Paris and were turned back, the French password was Jeanne d'Arc, and thousands of French peasants believe that the maid appeared once more to save her country.

There are little girls like Jeanne amongst us still. I knew one. When she went to school and had learned to read and write, she was asked to write an essay giving an account of how she spent her summer days at home. 'I remember the evenings best,' she wrote. 'Father is a shoemaker, and when the newspaper came to the workshop, it was

read aloud and the workmen applauded or hissed the men who made the speeches in parliament. It was like being at a big meeting. But sometimes I grew tired listening; then I went out to the garden to look for fairies in the hearts of the flowers.' This girl became a nurse-maid. When I last saw her she was reading a paper at a literary society. Every one kept very still while she read, for it was as if she had seen visions that much more learned people than she was might envy.

Boys see visions and hear voices too. The story of the war is far from being entirely a story of horrors and sadness. It was made glorious by the great army of the 'pure in heart,' many of whom gave up their lives because of the visions that had come to them. 'Their name liveth for evermore.' To you boys and girls here there comes the chance of living in a wonderful age. You have days of making great resolves—days of having visions though you will scarcely believe it. Ask God's help to keep hold of these resolves, these visions; so will you have your share in making the world better.

The Biggest Lesson.

'If I . . . know all mysteries and all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing.'—1 Co 13[2].

If I were to ask each of you this morning, 'Why do you go to school?' I wonder what answers I should receive. I expect most of you would at once reply, 'To learn lessons.' Some of you might answer, 'To learn as little as I possibly can,' and a few might say, 'To play.'

But now I shall tell you the real reason why you go to school? It is to make you into useful and helpful men and women. If you haven't learned that, your knowledge will just be a sort of empty ornament. And what is the key to being the best and most useful men and women? It is just one small word of four letters—LOVE.

St. Paul once wrote a letter to the Christians in Corinth about this very subject. They had been quarrelling amongst themselves as to who had the greatest gift and who should have the place of honour. Those who prophesied said they were the cleverest, but those who did miracles thought they were of more importance, and those who were eloquent, or learned, or knew many languages, claimed to be the wisest, and so on. Their quarrels had led to a great deal of ill-feeling, and envy, and boasting, and pride. And whilst they were squabbling they forgot that the greatest gift the Christian can have is love. That was the biggest lesson the Corinthians had to learn, and they scarcely knew the A B C of it. And Paul told them that, although the other gifts were all good, if they had them all and lacked love they were nothing.

So though you are top of your class in history and geography and arithmetic and science, though you know all the languages dead or alive, and have not love, you are nothing. If you carry off the first prize in everything and are unkind or unjust towards your companions, you count for nothing, and less than nothing.

1. Knowledge is no good unless you can learn to love the boy or girl who won the prize you worked for and missed. To walk up to that boy or girl and shake hands and congratulate them and to do it with a smile, while you choke back the feelings of envy that hurt, that is true pluck and true Christianity. And that is one of the hardest lessons we have to learn not only at school but all through life. If your years at school have taught you that, they have not been spent in vain.

2. Knowledge is not much good unless you can learn to love the person who has done you harm. There is a story told of a great American, General Grant, who commanded the Northern army in the the American Civil War and afterwards became President of the United States. One day some one asked him his opinion of a certain officer in his army. General Grant spoke of this man in the warmest terms, and the questioner exclaimed, 'But do you know that he said this and that of you?' 'Sir,' was the reply, 'you asked me my opinion of him, not his of me.'

To have a heart that cherishes no malice, a mind that is above resenting slights, that is better than all knowledge. It is the most difficult lesson of all. Some of us who are grown-up haven't learned it yet, and we have been trying to learn it all our lives.

3. Knowledge is of little use unless you can love the person who is disagreeable or unattractive. It is easy enough to love some people—those who are pleasant, or beautiful, or kind. But there are others who have come into the world with a twist in their faces or their characters. They are plain, or stupid, or shy, or awkward in their manner, perhaps they are even disagreeable and unkind. Possibly you know a few at your own school—boys

or girls whom nobody wants to love and nobody seems to want to make friends with.

Now there is an eastern proverb which says, 'Through Love bits of copper are made gold.' And there is no saying what we may do to these unattractive people just by loving them. Perhaps it is because they have never been loved enough that they are unattractive, and by loving them we may turn copper into gold.

Do you want to make the world better and happier? Then love. We can never love too much, we may often love too little. Love people who are unattractive. That is what Jesus does. He loves you and me. Jesus loves, and He is going to love the world good.

We can't all be rich, we can't all be clever, we can't all be beautiful, but we can all love. Don't you think that is a grand lesson? Don't you think it is a lesson worth learning?

Written in Ink.

'Paper and ink.'—2 Jn [12].

Do you remember the very first time you tried to write in ink? You had never been allowed to use anything but pencil, but one day mother said you might use a pen and ink. Wasn't it glorious—and messy? And didn't you feel grown-up all in a minute because you were old enough to write in ink?

Well, here is a story about writing in ink, and though the rest of the sermon is for older boys and girls, even the tiny ones may understand the story.

There were once two little maidens named Nancy and Peggy. Nancy was four and Peggy was three. Nancy was a very smart little woman for her age. She knew already all the letters of the alphabet—the great printed capitals, the little printed letters, and even the written letters like those in copybooks. She knew them all by sight, but she could write only a few of them. She was sadly puzzled, for instance, by the written letter 'e.' She had diligently licked her pencil and covered sheet after sheet of paper with attempts at 'e,' but without success. Where she always failed was this. She started all right, but when she came to the loop of the letter instead of going up the right side of the loop, coming back down the left, and then crossing the first line, she went up the left side of the loop then tried to come down the right and make it join neatly at the crossing.

One day Mother was ill, and Auntie, who was in charge, left Nancy and Peggy alone in the sitting-room. By and by they grew tired of playing with their toys and looked for some other amusement. Presently Nancy spied the ink-bottle on the top of Father's desk. Beside it lay paper and pens and a blotting-pad. Ink was forbidden; but here was an opportunity not to be lost. She climbed on a chair, carefully lifted the writing things down and brought them to the table. Then she drew in chairs for Peggy and herself and opened the blotting-pad. What do you think she saw? Why a whole row of 'e's' which somebody had scribbled on the blotting-paper. And suddenly it dawned on Nancy how they were made. 'Oh, Peggy,' she cried, 'watch me make 'e's'! She had no idea how to hold a pen, but Peggy thought you used it like a spoon, so she scooped up penful after penful of ink, and Nancy took each from her and made a few shaky-looking 'e's' and several dozen blots on the paper. And they both gave the table-cloth and their hands and faces a liberal dose of blue-black ink, and then—Auntie came back. You can guess the rest of the story.

Now, boys and girls, God gives us our life like a clean white sheet of paper, but the writing on it is ours. When you are very tiny the things you do seem to be written in pencil. You do what Mother or Nurse or Auntie tells you to do or not to do. If you are naughty or disobedient you get a whipping, or are put in the corner, or are sent to bed early; and somehow the punishment seems to rub out the naughty deed you had written on life's paper.

But a day comes when you no longer write life's doings in pencil. You write them in ink. You no longer do what some one else suggests. You think and act for yourselves. You wake one day to the fact that you are your own master, you can make your own life. You have learnt how to write 'e's.' You are using ink, and the old days of pencil are left behind. There is no more rubbing out now of what you write; once written, it remains for ever.

Now, how are you going to write on life's paper? Are you going to write your story so that at the end you can feel proud of it? Or are you going to make it a blurred mess?—the ink there sure enough, but all in the wrong place; blots and smudges everywhere; the writing slanting now to the right now to the left, now jumping above the

line now dipping below it, what might have been a fair page, ruined; and no hope of making it better! for no eraser, however wonderful, can rub out the mistakes once we have written them.

No, we can never re-write what once is written. But we can do this—we can try to write the lines in front of us better and more carefully. We have always the chance to make the present and the future nobler than the past.

Yes, and we have this too for encouragement. God is also writing on our page of life. Side by side with ours His writing runs. We do not see it now, but one day, when every one's writing is being judged by Him, and we are feeling particularly ashamed of our blotted records, He will tell us to look at them again. And when we look we shall find that the writing we did has vanished, and instead of it there is on the paper God's record of our life. Where we saw only a blot and a failure God has written that we succeeded though we never knew it. Where we saw a desperately uneven line, He has said that the unevenness was there because we were trying so hard to keep to the line and do the right. As for some of the bits of which we were proudest!—God's record may tell us that there we did no great thing, for we wrote it so not for His sake, but that it might look well in the sight of our fellow-men.

Use your ink wisely, boys and girls; write each letter of life's story as in God's sight, and to please Him. Then you need not fear when at the last you lay your written sheets before Him.

The Christian Year.

SECOND SUNDAY IN EPIPHANY.

The Gifts of God.

'Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee.'—Acts 3^6.

Peter and John were full of their new power, and the mystery of their new life stretched out before them, but they did not forget the temple at the hour of prayer.

As they passed through the crowd that was always gathered there, at the door there sat a crippled beggar. He asked Peter and John for charity. They gave him no money; they had none to give him. They were as destitute of the one thing on which his heart was set as he was. Silver and gold they had none. But they had something better. Full of the spirit and the health of Christ they had the power of giving health to him, and Peter took the cripple by the hand and lifted him up, and his feet and ankle bones received strength, and he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God. Little did the beggar think that morning as he left his house and crawled up to the temple of what was coming to him before the night closed in. To gather a few pennies as on other begging days was all he hoped for; but to come back home a straight, strong man, this he never pictured to himself.

If, some day, we find we have no silver and gold, then let us go down to the Beautiful Gate of the Temple and work some simple miracle. We can help some lame man; we can read to some blind man; we can comfort and strengthen; we can bless; and even wanting many things which might be of service, we can do those larger things which Christ has told us of, saying, 'The works that I do shall ye do; and greater works than these.' Let us not forget that this incident at the Temple was but the picture of His life. Silver and gold Christ had none. In not one instance in the gospel did He give this kind of help, but He gave men strength and comfort and eternal life. One thing He always had, and He gave that. That one thing every man has, and, whatever be his property, every man, like Christ, can give—himself. And no man is poor who has himself to give.[1]

1. Now we all know that the best help that has been given to us in life has not come from those who gave us money or anything which money could represent. Prominent as money stands in all our thoughts of charity, we owe more to-day to those who have never given us, perhaps who never could have given us, a penny, but who have given us something that is far more valuable than money—the Peters and the Johns who in some need have said to us as we looked up to them, 'Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee,' and who then have touched some dead and withered part of our nature and by their strong character given it back its strength.

Faculty is the true wealth of man. There is many a poor workman who trudges to his work at sunrise who has a pure joy in beholding the pomp and glow of the eastern heavens, hearing the lark's glad carol, and bathing his brow and breast in the clear morning air, such as Dives never knows through a long lifetime, and would give any price to enjoy. But gold cannot buy that. The joy of a healthy, vigorous faculty in the beauty and riches of God's world, of

[1] A. MacKenzie, in *The Culture of Christian Manhood*, 45 (ed. W. H. Sallmon).

a pure fresh heart in the deeper blessedness of human communion and love, is not priced on any exchange that I know of.[1]

All the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every Beast keep holiday;—
Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts,
thou happy Shepherd-boy!

2. A man gives to another man his ideas, his inspirations, and his consolations, but if he is all that a man may be, then there is something more that he can give. If he has God, if he has taken Christ into his nature so that his life is a continual following of the Lord's, then see what a power of benefaction that man may have. It requires nothing great or exceptional in him. Certainly not great wealth. That has nothing whatever to do with it. Not great ability or knowledge, that has hardly more. Only the power to know God and to tell about Him.

You remember, I am sure, the story that our poet has written of the young knight who rides out after the holy Grail, and as he goes flings a gold-piece to the beggar who sits beside his gate, and the beggar will not lift it from the dust, because it is only 'worthless gold.' But years pass by and when the weary Sir Launfal comes home, old and haggard, there sits the leper still, and then as the knight breaks his single crust and fills his wooden bowl out of the frozen stream and gives the beggar food and drink, the blessing comes to him; the holy Grail, which is Christ's Passover cup is found, is the true act of charity, and the leper speaking with the voice of Christ—'the voice that is calmer than silence'—says, 'Who gives himself with his gift feeds three, himself, his hungering neighbour and me.' It is sad indeed to think of how much money has been lavished which was only 'worthless gold' because the self of the giver was not in it.[2]

I think it might be said my husband was a true 'son of consolation.' Many sent for him in their distress who were not even known to him. It was not that he said much: often he sat silent, and only listened to the tale of sorrow that was told. What he did say was always very brief, as were also his prayers; but there was an indescribable something in his words, and perhaps in the tone in which they were uttered, that reached the heart, drew it very close to the Heart of the Eternal Father, and left it there.[3]

[1] J. Baldwin Brown.
[2] Phillips Brooks, *New Starts in Life*, 134.
[3] *Life and Letters of John Paterson Struthers, M.A.*, 355 (ed. A. L. Struthers).

Third Sunday in Epiphany.

Thomas.

'Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.'—Jn 11[16].

Thomas was not a personal name. It has become, of course, a personal name amongst us, but it was not a personal name as applied to this disciple. It was a sort of nickname. For *Thomas* is just the Hebrew name for 'twin.' There is an old tradition which says that his personal name was Judas. But popularly he was always known as 'the Twin.' The word 'Didymus' is the Greek equivalent of Thomas, and also means 'twin.' It was, naturally enough, by the Greek form of the word that he was known amongst the Greek-speaking Christians of Asia Minor. And as this Fourth Gospel was written especially for them, one can understand the way in which John introduces him: 'Thomas, who is called Didymus.'

1. Now, what manner of man was Thomas, taking this sentence as our guide to his character? Well, first of all, he was a man of *great and unshrinking devotion.* The Christian Church has done less than justice to Thomas. It seems to have been Thomas's fate to be for ever identified with a nickname. He was called 'the Twin' in the first century. He has been called 'the Doubter' ever since. Of course, there is some justification for the nickname. He was the 'doubter' in his attitude toward the resurrection of Jesus. All the same, to call Thomas 'the doubter,' as if the sceptical mind was his chief characteristic, is not only not to do justice to him, it is to give us an absolutely distorted picture of him. For the chief thing in Thomas was not his doubt, but his *great and unshrinking loyalty to his Lord.*

They say that when the Scottish people signed the Solemn League and Covenant in the troublous Stuart days, some of them signed their names with their blood, and added the words 'Until Death.' Well, when Thomas gave himself to the service of Christ, he gave himself absolutely, altogether, and for ever. When Thomas put his hand to the plough he never dreamed of turning back. When he enlisted amongst Christ's followers, it was with the mental resolve that he was His 'until death.' And now death seemed to be the likely price of loyalty.

He loved Christ better than any one or anything

else in the world. He was prepared to hate his own life for that dear Lord's sake. And if in some respects Thomas is a warning to us, in *this* respect he is an example and a pattern. Thomas had the root of the matter in him, he had the one thing needful, for he had a supreme love for Christ. Do you remember that little poem of Watson Gilder, the American? It breathes that spirit of devotion which speaks through these words:

If Jesus Christ is a man,
And only a man, I say
That of all mankind I cleave to Him,
And to Him will I cleave alway.

If Jesus Christ is a God,
And the only God, I swear
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, and the air!

'Let us also go,' said Thomas, 'that we may die with him.'

2. But the other side of Thomas's nature is also revealed in this little incident—namely, his continual melancholy. 'If to say *man* is to say melancholy,' says Dr. Alexander Whyte, 'then to say Thomas, who is also called Didymus, is to say *religious melancholy*.' That is profoundly true. There are some unhappy people who seem constitutionally unable to see the bright side of things. They cannot see the sun for spots. They cannot see the blue sky for clouds. They always see the difficulties, the drawbacks, the obstacles, the sorrows, the griefs, the losses. We all have to pass through the valley of Baca, some time or other. But these dear people seem never to get out of the valley of weeping. We all know such people. We knew them even in connexion with the war—people who fastened their attention on all the gloomy portents and were quite blind to every encouraging sign, people of an essentially melancholy cast of mind. Thomas belonged to that depressed and rather depressing company.

I mentioned in that little book of mine on the Apostle, that I think John Bunyan has drawn Thomas to the very life for us in his picture of Mr. Fearing. I have been reading once again the vivid pages in which Mr. Fearing is described, and I have arisen from the perusal with the feeling confirmed that, to get the right view of Thomas, no one could do better than read the passage in which Mr. Fearing is portrayed for us. This is what Greatheart says about him: 'He was a man of choice spirit, only he was always kept very low, and that made his life so burdensome to himself and so troublesome to others.' He went on to say, 'that Mr. Fearing was one who played upon the Base. He and his fellows sound the Sackbut, whose notes are more doleful than the notes of other musick are' ('Though indeed,' Greatheart says, 'some say the Base is the ground of musick).' 'Only this was the imperfection of Mr. Fearing, he could play upon no other musick but this, till towards his latter end.' There you have Thomas drawn as only the Tinker could have drawn him.

Mr. Fearing in Vanity Fair, says John Bunyan, was like a man possessed. He wanted to fight with all the men in the fair, so hot was he against their fooleries. In that place of danger he was the bravest of the brave. Which is exactly Thomas as we get him here—ready to face death on his Lord's behalf. But death it was he foresaw. Christ's words 'to the intent that ye may believe,' with their suggestion of great events, fell on deaf ears. Judæa conjured up before him only the picture of murderous Jews with stones in their hands. And so melancholy deepened into doubt. He was little inclined, Godet says, 'to subordinate the visible to the invisible.' That is to say, Thomas had not that triumphant and exultant faith which in the deep midwinter can speak of the spring, and in the darkest night can be sure of the dawn, and in the day of reaction and defeat can be absolutely sure of victory. Thomas was apt to allow the facts that were nearest, the dark, disturbing, distressing facts of the immediate present, to absorb his thought and fill his entire horizon. The visible blotted out the invisible. The hostile Jews blotted out the thought of God. 'Let us also go, that we may die with Him.' That was why Jesus said to him, in that wonderful interview after the Resurrection, 'Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'[1]

Fourth Sunday in Epiphany.

The Characteristics of Manhood.

'Quit you like men.'—1 Co 16[13].

What are the characteristics of manhood unveiled by the war, the manhood which the passage of centuries has created in this race of ours?

1. The fact about it that must first strike the least impressionable observer is its genius for comradeship. In our isolated individualist lives at home it is amazingly hard to believe that man is a gregarious animal: the reality of mass consciousness with its present fruits of mutual forbearance and mutual fellowship was evident as soon as the Channel was crossed. However uncongenial the new-comer, he found an immediate welcome and a large charity. However dissimilar the tastes and incongruous the character of his new friends, he found them living together in daily intimacy without quarrels and almost without friction. Men of all ranks were amazingly generous in allowing for the peculiarities and adapting themselves to the angles of their comrades. In every unit was developed a

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Lord of Life and Death*.

sense of membership, of corporate soul, so evident and so vivid that the weakest could stay himself without fear upon its support, and the strongest dared not set up his own will against it. 'Members one of another' is no longer a mere phrase. As of the earliest Church, it might be written that 'the multitude of them were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.'

2. The second notable feature of the life was its gay and irrepressible hope. Most fresh arrivals thought to find at the Front a certain grimness, a never-absent consciousness of the close presence of death, an utter lack of normal as opposed to hysterical confidence. Despite journalistic emphasis upon the cheerfulness of our troops, they expected a death-bed atmosphere such as broods over many households at home. At best they felt that such cheerfulness would have about it the forced joviality of the condemned cell, that it would be hollow and unreal, a cheerfulness more pathetic than tears. To some extent, on the eve of an attack for instance, it was true that the gaiety was transparently artificial: men dared not in loyalty to the corporate soul let themselves go, they must combine to enact a farce where each separately would choose a tragedy. But apart from these spasmodic affectations, there was an underlying hopefulness of a wholly different kind—a hopefulness due to the fact that each one had at some time and once for all passed through the terror of his Gethsemane, had looked death fairly in the face and felt the cold blast turn his blood to ice, and, having counted the cost and learnt to know the worst, could henceforward go on his way with a clear eye and a stalwart spirit. Certainly it was almost universal, this hope of a good time coming. Over and over again, in nearly every one of the thousands of letters, says Mr. C. E. Raven, which it had been my privilege to censor, such hope was expressed. Generally its fulfilment was expected in that vague heaven of the fighting man, the days after the war. Very often it was focussed upon the happy land which to those under the hourly possibility of death seemed hardly more remote. Quite naturally men came to accept and express a confidence in the hereafter, a conviction that this life is not the end, that there remaineth somewhere, somewhen, a rest and a reunion.

3. Much less noticeable or obtrusive was a third quality which probably at first surprised the newcomer by its apparent absence, but which on closer acquaintance was readily discoverable and served to explain the other two. To any one fresh from the phrases of preachers or politicians the lack of all talk of sacrifice here at the Front came as a shock. The average soldier did not bother much about the rights and wrongs of the cause for which he might be called to die. He grumbled in lurid language of the hourly nuisances and discomforts to which he was exposed. He cursed the war and all its ways, declaring himself ready to-morrow for a peace at any price. He left all the talk about liberty and righteousness, humanity and civilization, to the speechifiers and journalists, only wishing that they would come out and go up the line a bit instead of talking. But at the back of it all, too vaguely grasped to be articulate, too sacred to be discussed, was the consciousness that he was in the right place, that he couldn't be elsewhere, that come what may he must do his bit, and that in doing it he was finding a curious, an unexpected and a wholly unacknowledged joy. He realized that a power larger than himself had summoned him to an act of self-denial, to a great adventure, and that in obeying the call he had not only laid down his life but had also in some strange sense found it. He had without knowing it and perhaps for the first time conformed to the law of sacrifice, to the ethics of Calvary, and in doing so vindicated once more the triumph of the Galilean.[1]

Fifth Sunday in Epiphany.

The Beasts.

'If I have fought with beasts.'—1 Co 15[32].

It is generally held that the beasts with which St. Paul fought at Ephesus were not the wild beasts in the arena, but the fierce Ephesians themselves. So our enemies are sometimes human beings who resist and persecute us, and the more fiercely the more they see the likeness to Christ in our words and in our life. But we may take the same liberty as the Apostle, and carry his metaphor from men to our own sins.

1. Between a man and his sins there is enmity. Each hates the other.

(1) In the first place sin hates man. The proof of that is the harm that sin does man, a harm that men are always coming to discover in deeper and

[1] C. E. Raven, in *Faith and Freedom*.

deeper symptoms of it, and of which even the men who cling most obstinately to its service are aware. As soon as we get in the least below the surface of our life, comes the conviction even to the wilful sinner that his sin is his enemy. Do you think he does not know it, the man who, every day while he sins, feels the jewels plucked one by one out of his crown, and the stain sinking deeper and deeper into the very substance of his soul? Do not you yourself know it when you do a wrong act, and almost hear the power of evil laugh as he drags you back one hard step further from your heaven?

(2) And if sin hates man, man hates sin. Is that true? The glory of the Bible is that it is full of the idea that the essential humanity, man as God made him, man 'pure in heart,' man as the child of God, does not love sin, but hates it. With all the intensity with which it asserts man's perverse clinging to sin, it implies, it declares everywhere, that that clinging to sin is diseased; that the true healthy manhood which God first made, and which Christ is trying to restore, shrinks from it and loathes it. Of that manhood we every now and then catch glimpses in the vilest men, something which by its look bears witness to us that it is the truest part of them, which has still left in it something of that antagonism to sin which is the life of the holy God they sprang from.

2. But if a man and his sins are always enemies, the force of the enmity is not felt until a man has turned to God. Dante tells us that it was when he essayed to climb the sunlit hill that his way was challenged. It is a very ancient problem. The psalmist marvelled that, whilst the wicked around him enjoyed a most profound and unruffled tranquillity, his life was so full of perplexity and trouble. John Bunyan was arrested by the same inscrutable mystery. Why should he, in his pilgrim progress, be so storm-beaten and persecuted, whilst the people who abandoned themselves to folly enjoyed unbroken ease? Many a young and eager convert, fancying that the Christian life meant nothing but rapture, has been startled by the discovery of the beasts of prey awaiting him.

3. What are the names of the beasts? The three fierce creatures that challenged Dante's ascent of the sunlit hill were a panther, a lion, and a wolf, and these three represent evils of various kinds and characters. If a man cannot be deterred by one form of temptation, another will speedily present itself. It is, as the old prophet said, 'as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.' If one form of evil is unsuccessful, another instantly replaces it. If the panther is driven off, the lion appears; and if the lion is vanquished, the lean wolf takes its place. But there is more than this hidden in the poet's parable. Did Dante intend to set forth no subtle secret by placing the three beasts in that order? Most of his expositors agree that he meant the panther to represent *Lust*, the lion to represent *Pride*, and the wolf to represent *Avarice*. Lust is the besetting temptation of youth, and therefore the panther comes first. Pride is the sin to which we succumb most easily in the full vigour of life. We have won our spurs, made a way for ourselves in the world, and the glamour of our triumph is too much for us. And Avarice comes, not exactly in age, but just after the zenith has been passed. The beasts were not equidistant. The lion came some time after the panther had vanished; but the wolf crept at the lion's heels. What a world of meaning is crowded into that masterly piece of imagery!

4. The beasts approach each in its own way. The panther crouches, springs suddenly upon its unsuspecting prey, and relies on the advantage of surprise. Such are the sins of youth. 'Alas,' as George Macdonald so tersely says,

> Alas, how easily things go wrong!
> A sigh too deep, or a kiss too long.
> There follows a mist and a weeping rain,
> And life is never the same again.

The lion meets you in the open, and relies upon his strength. The wolf simply persists. He follows your trail day after day. You see his wicked eyes, like fireflies, stabbing the darkness of the night. He relies not upon surprise or strength, but on wearing you down at the last. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth—having beaten off the *panther*—beware of the *lion* and the *wolf*. And, still more imperatively, let him that thinketh he standeth—having vanquished both the *panther* and the *lion*—take heed lest he fall at last to the grim and frightful persistence of the lean *she-wolf*.

It is just six hundred and fifty years to-day since Dante was born; but, as my pen has been whispering these things to me, the centuries have fallen away like a curtain that is drawn. I have saluted across the ages a man of like passions with myself, and his brave spirit has called upon mine to climb the sunlit hill in spite of everything.[1]

[1] F. W. Boreham, *Faces in the Fire*.