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THE SUPREMACY OF THE SPIRIT

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NEW YORK, N. Y.

THE history of humanity is the story of the gradual emergence of spirit into self-consciousness, freedom and power. In the earliest human life the soul was hardly more than a dormant germ hidden in its calyx of matter like the undeveloped rose slumbering in its bud.

It was only little by little that man waked up to a perception of himself as essentially and radically different from his surroundings. Like an earlier Columbus he discovered within himself a new continent of being wholly unlike the outer self of flesh which he imagined was all there was of him. He found that this new hemisphere of rational and moral life matched and mated the old hemisphere of physical life, was joined with it in making up the rounded whole of manhood, yet was immeasurably superior to it.

Having thus discovered himself, man has been engaged through the centuries in coaxing out these inner faculties which alone give glory and promise to his life, and drilling them for active service. This process of drawing out and disciplining the spirit's powers gives the clear perception, the trained memory, the illuminated intelligence, the trenchant and trustworthy reason, the sturdy conscience, which give nobility and strength to life. It takes education to produce this superb result. It will not come spontaneously, without pupilage of some sort, either in the school of books or of experience.

Emerson says that "in the snake all the organs are sheathed—no hands, no feet, no fins, no wings. In bird and beast the organs are released and begin to play. In man they are all unbound, and full of joyful action. With this unswaddling, he receives the absolute illumination we call Reason, and thereby true liberty." Yes, but while man by his very endowments has larger powers than the creatures that crawl, and swim, and fly—yet this un-

swaddling process is a gradual one, as far as his spiritual powers are concerned. He gets the use of himself by education, as these inner faculties are developed and drilled into efficiency.

THE LIBERATION OF THE SPIRIT

Thus man has been busy through the ages in securing more and more the liberation of the spirit, from the fetters of the flesh, developing its latent forces, and giving it ascendancy increasingly in the conduct of life. Had it not been so, what would man have been but an organized lump of clay, a bundle of appetites and brute forces? But he came to a recognition of himself as a soul, refused to be, or to be called, a worm of the dust, rose up to free his spirit from the domination of the flesh, and by training and discipline gave this inner spirit mastery over his own body, over the powers of nature, over the animal creation.

Every one has to secure this liberation of spirit for himself to a large degree. True, a good heredity gives us an immense advantage to begin with. The garnered treasure of the ages is ours. The victories of the spirit won by a hundred generations before us have lodged their riches in our natures. Yet, after all, we cannot secure for the spirit its full development and mastery except by strenuous endeavor on our own part. George Eliot said that "each of us is only an omnibus, carrying down the leading characteristics of our ancestors." True enough as far as our native gifts are concerned; but each of us is a living will, a creative force, and character is an achievement wrought out by the exercise of this will.

The progress of humanity has been along this line of individual endeavor to give the spirit the right of way. Civilization is but the triumph of the spirit over materializing conditions. Every convenience and comfort in a modern home is a trophy of some victory of mind over matter. Every invention which simplifies labor or multiplies power is a land mark of the advancing dominion of the spirit. When the first man was placed in Paradise he was bidden to "subdue the earth." He has been

doing it more and more as the ages have rolled by, mastering its laws, conquering its forces, compelling its Titanic energies to do his work. And today the domination of the human spirit over the physical realm is marvelous.

Emerson reminds us of a Scandinavian legend, showing that trained intelligence and its inventions make even a pigmy mightier than a Titan. "The daughter of a giantess found a husbandman plowing in the field, a Lilliputian compared with herself. She ran and picked him up with her finger and thumb, and put him and his plow and his oxen into her apron, and carried them to her mother, and said, 'Mother, what sort of a beetle is this that I found wriggling in the sand?' But the mother shuddered with alarm, and said, 'Put it away, child; we must begone out of this land, for these people will dwell in it.'" Her intuition was right, for when the civilized man comes in, the savage disappears.

SOME VICTORIES OF THE SPIRIT.

When the liberated spirit, with its subtle mastery of forces and laws, gets a firm foot-hold in life, brute force is no match for it, but must either submit to its mastery or vanish. When a man comes along who can lasso the stars, and harness them to his chariot; who bottles up the lightning, and runs his car by caged thunderbolts in a cylinder under the seat; or who can sit in his New York office and reach his arm over a thousand miles of space and draw a picture of the man in a Chicago office; we see that spirit, rising to its full height, finds no obstacles it cannot vanquish. And it is easy to believe that the world of the future belongs to heroes of the spirit, to those who develop it and give it the largest possible mastery.

Never was there a time when its victories were so dazzling. Here is a man who proposes to make nitric acid from the air, and thereby produce quickly and cheaply all the nitrates so essential in many lines of work. There is another proposing to light your house with candles of solid alcohol. Here is a man with a pailful of liquid air, a spoonful of which he pours over a dish of strawberries,

which, flung through the room, rattle like bullets from a Gatling gun; and he promises that its evaporation will drive all your engines with a mightier energy than steam.

The triumph of spirit in one direction reinforces the progress of spirit in another; for while we are talking of a World-Association to realize the golden age by making the dreams of universal peace practicable, along comes Mr. Edison with the startling prophecy that within a few years the discoveries in electricity will make war so terribly destructive, that for two nations to engage in it will mean mutual annihilation. Only those will embark in it who are ready for national suicide. One of the most hopeful indications of the spiritual progress of mankind is the plan for a permanent Arbitration tribunal, in which international disputes will be settled by reason and law rather than by cannon and dynamite. And one of the most telling arguments for it is this marvelous control which spirit has won over physical forces. The thunderbolts of Jove are no longer in his keeping; man has snatched them for his own uses, and can make awful havoc with them if he chooses.

But it is not this power over physical nature which alone gives mastery to the spirit. The soul ought to have a developed vigor, and a disciplined skill, and a consummate self-control in every line of action. It ought to stand in such royal and regnant strength of reason, of conscience, of sympathy, of well-rounded character, that all men would do homage to its imperial beauty and acknowledge its power. The ideal life is one that has this masterful control of all material resources, which we have hinted at, but has vastly more—a symmetrical and thoroughly cultured life, intelligent, sympathetic, heroic, noble, godlike. A glorious manhood or an ideal womanhood means more than mere skill or force, either of brain or body; it means truth and love, chivalry and fidelity, a character that images the Divine as a diamond flashes forth the splendor of the sun.

In this inner glory the spirit of man is gaining age by age. We may assert that never before were there so many splendid men and women as today, actuated by high

ideals, inspired with noble purposes, making life glorious by self-sacrificing efforts to help their fellows, and striving to illustrate in their own experience the Divine plan for life.

MATERIALIZING FORCES.

Yet there are tremendous materializing influences in our day. "The flesh warreth against the spirit," as much as in that ancient day when the apostle wrote these words. The very zeal of scientific research, while it develops the spirit by exercise on one side, often tends to benumb and smother it on the other side, because men become completely absorbed in the mere physical features of life.

The marvelous improvements and inventions, too, have given rise to an enormous material prosperity, dazzling the imaginations of men with fortunes such as Croesus never dreamed of, and making them mad for money. Luxury and pleasure, show and style, follow naturally in the wake of such material prosperity, and in the whirl and rush of the scramble for wealth, and in the intoxication of delight in the mere externals of life, there is great danger that the nobler self, the real man or woman, will be neglected, degraded, stifled. The glare of our modern prosperity has often the effect on men of an arc light on the June beetles, which in wild fascination dash at it only to burn to death in its fierce glow. The tremendous growth of our cities, full of glittering show and splendid pomp, has a vast materializing influence over many. The outside of life is everything to them. There must be a tremendous fight made if the spirit is to retain its supremacy, and is not to be shunted into a corner by the passion for money and pleasure.

Perhaps this is especially true in America, where opportunities are so great, and conditions of life are transformed as by magic sometimes. We have now, since the world-war, a new America. We have sprung suddenly, and surprisingly to ourselves, to the very forefront of the world's great powers, and have under our wing, and practically part of our domain, three great island realms. We may hope that the ultimate result will be a wonderful expansion of American ideals, of America's free schools,

free churches, free government in all our vast domain, carrying order, intelligence, blessing to all the people. But a first result has undoubtedly been to fill the minds of many with bewildering visions of material prosperity for our country and themselves by reason of the new conditions. It has increased the passion for mere material gain, and the smoke of our cannon has obscured somewhat the ideals and principles of the higher life.

Yet while it is important to face the fact of these materializing influences, which threaten the integrity and supremacy of the spirit, we have no reason to be pessimistic. Fight against these tendencies we must, but we need not despair. The eternal law of progress which we see in all history will hold true here, and if there are occasional eddies where the water seems to turn and flow backward for a little, yet the great main current of the stream flows steadily onward.

SPIRITUALIZING FORCES.

If there are materializing influences in our life that work against the spirit, there are also great spiritualizing forces that counterbalance them. There are mighty agencies at work to inspire and vitalize the spirit, to make it clear-eyed and strong, to develop it into that imperial beauty and potency that will give it continued and increasing mastery in our life. These spiritualizing forces are represented by several classes of people, to whom we owe an immense debt of gratitude. We ought to increase their power by making larger use of them, and by coöperation with them.

There are, first, the Poets. I do not mean the rhyme-sters, whose "galloping anapests" or dainty dactyls tickle the fancy for a leisure moment, and are then forgotten. But I refer to the masters whose consummate art of musical rhythm and striking phrase is used for expression of the deepest truths of life. The poet is essentially a "seer," then a singer. His eyes are open to the great facts and laws of that eternal realm to which we belong, and he gives the vivid and thrilling picture of the truth he sees. Hence Browning called Keats "God's glowworm." And

Tennyson made us see that insight is the special characteristic of the true singer:

"The poet in a golden clime was born,
With golden stars above;
Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
The love of love.
He saw through life and death, through good and ill;
He saw through his own soul;
The mystery of the everlasting Will,
An open scroll
Before him lay. . . ."

Wordsworth says when he first thought of being a poet, he looked into himself to see if he was fitted for the work, and seemed to find "that first great gift, the vital soul." Not intellect, heart, imagination, conscience alone, but all combined, and all alive, and working together were needed. It enabled him to pierce to the very heart of things, to get beyond accidents and externals, to essentials. He saw and seized the innermost verity which escaped the eyes of others. It is because they are seers and revealers of truth, the deep essential truth of life, that the poets are great benefactors of the race. For truth is the spirit's food. Nay, more, it is humanity's leaven, the secret of its progress.

The Artists, also, are spiritualizing forces, whether they work upon canvas, or in the speaking marble of the sculptor, or in the pillared minster of the architect, or in the tones which the musician weaves into the exquisite harmonies of his song or his symphony. It is an egregious mistake to think of them as mere entertainers, as though they were simply to please the fancy, or to furnish the frills which decorate life. That were a very belittling and false conception of the artist's work. Rather is an artist God's mouthpiece if he works aright, seizing the language of beauty, as the vehicle through which he may express his conception of truth and may thus stir men to noble emotions. Not only does he thus educate the taste, develop the imagination, refine the feelings and rouse the aspirations of those to whom his work appeals, but he brings home to the soul many a truth like a shaft sped from a skilful archer's bow.

Who does not feel that the Laocoon tells the story of the fettering, throttling, crushing power of evil over a man, as thrillingly as any preacher's lips? Who does not feel before the Sistine Madonna, or under the stately arches of the Cologne Cathedral, that the silent voices of those great works of art stir him to noble impulses and purposes, as no eloquence of orator ever did? And the musician's power lies not in the witchery of melody nor the fanciful conceits he may produce, but in his ability to interpret nature and life to his hearers, and to arouse in them the passion of noble sentiments and the purpose of noble deeds.

We welcome the Scientist also, among the potent spiritualizing forces. For while they deal usually with matter and its laws and energies, they are seekers after truth. To know the truth is to be emancipated from fetters that bind the soul. To be sure, some scientists become so absorbed in the study of things material, and so obsessed by their discoveries in the realm of sense, that they lose sight of those realities that lie beyond the reach of their microscopes and test tubes. They can tell us all about the veil that hides the unseen realm, but they cannot lift the veil to disclose the august facts and laws of spiritual existence that lie behind it. It might seem at first sight that such students of the material world hindered rather than helped the spiritualizing process which is slowly lifting humanity up to its best.

On the contrary, all scientific research which reveals more clearly the facts and laws of the outward universe helps to liberate the soul from the shackles of ignorance, and equips it with undreamed of power. Peering into the constitution of matter, it discovers new elements with potencies hitherto unguessed, and thus enlarges the life of man. Bringing under its searchlight the multitudinous features of the earth on which we dwell, it astounds us by the disclosures of the beauty, order and utility everywhere found, and reveals the laws which govern all changes and regulate all life. Reaching out with its telescopes toward the remotest confines of the universe, it not only impresses us with the vastness of the cosmos,

which requires millions of light-years to span it, but it shows it to be all one harmonious system, the same elements and forces and laws in every star and sun as in our own planet. To grasp these truths is to have the mind broadened, and the soul quickened with the consciousness of its wonderful opportunity as a denizen of such a home, though dwelling in this distant corner of it.

Too often have we forgotten the debt we owe to the man in the laboratory for his contribution to the life of the spirit. Copernicus, solving for us the riddle of the heavens; Newton, disclosing that universal law which not only gives us firm footing on the earth, but binds the worlds together; Harvey, tracing in the human body the red river of life; Darwin, laying bare to astonished eyes the creative process by which Divine power through age-long steps develops the highest forms of life from the simplest germ-cells; Langley, putting us on the track of the conquest of the air so that men now "mount up like eagles" and sail through the skies on their journeys; these, and myriads more, have made science a great spiritualizing force, adding much to the vigor, vitality and outreach of the mind of men.

The Philosophers probe still more deeply into the mysteries of existence, and so have their own peculiar contribution to bring. For while the scientists are searching out the constituents of the material universe, the affinities and combinations and mechanical operations and chemical processes and biological wonders of things that can be seen and weighed and measured, the philosophers are looking deeper for ultimate causes, and social forces, and the laws that govern the sweep and trend of great historic events. They find this a rational universe, planned with consummate wisdom. It bears the stamp of mentality in every part. A constructive purpose is evident in it. The push of a mighty purpose is seen in the progress of humanity, which is forever on the move, but always forward and upward. To discover the scope and goal of this progress and the laws that govern it is the desire of the philosopher.

Not only does he seek for a reasonable interpretation

of the macrocosm, but he inquires into the nature and destiny of man who is the climax and crown of the evolutionary process. There is something about him which differentiates him from other products of the creative power. He has qualities and faculties totally unlike anything in the material realm. While in his body man belongs to the animal kingdom, that is but the cradle and vehicle of something within of an entirely different nature. He is a spirit. He is akin to that mighty and mysterious power of which the visible universe is the expression. His real self lies beyond the reach of the microscope and scalpel, and cannot be accounted for by chemical or physical processes. The laws of thought are totally unlike the laws of material nature, and the laws that govern social changes and human progress belong to a different realm from those that control the growth of trees or the sweep of the stars.

Into this vast field of profound inquiry philosophers have entered with keen delight. To know man and his innate powers; to discern the laws of his growth toward ideal manhood; to study the expanding thought of the ages and the accumulating gains of civilization; to examine the historic steps of that wonderful advance through countless centuries from crudest beginnings to the social efficiency and achievements of today; and to trace the path of future progress till man shall be at his best and the social organism shall be as harmonious and perfect as can be conceived—all this has been the endeavor of the philosophers.

What wonder, then, that we should give them high rank as spiritualizing forces? They have given the world the fruit of their studies. They have widened thought, stimulated hope, and given new vigor to the life of the spirit by their books. Plato and Aristotle, Kant and Des Cartes, Pascal and Bergson, Bacon and Spencer, William James and Josiah Royce, and countless other workers in this field, have been mighty ministers to the higher life of our race.

The Authors, editors and other literary craftsmen, may also claim their share of credit in this great work of

spiritualizing the world. For while much of the output of the public press is of doubtful value or worse, a vast amount of it is most helpful. These writers make men think. They disseminate and popularize the conclusions of the great scholars. The books and journals which come from their prolific pens are the leaves of that tree which is for the healing of the nations. They spread information and illumine the darkness of the world.

The great libraries of the world are huge storage batteries of intellectual energy. There seems only inert matter on the shelves, incapable of producing any chemical or biological changes, but they are the stored up thoughts of a multitude of minds, and the electric currents of these thoughts flash into other minds, it may be centuries later, and kindle new life in them.

The world teems with the contributions of writers in magazines and papers, some of which scintillate like a short-lived bonfire, but others add to the permanent illumination of our life. No one can escape the tremendous influence of the press. Even though some of its productions are trivial and others pernicious, on the whole it is an immense benefit to humanity. As we learn to avoid poisons in our food, and, throwing away husks, eat only the nourishing fruit, so we may refuse unworthy literature, and take only the best. This has tremendously promoted the better life of humanity.

We must also add the Educators to the list of the mighty forces which release and enlarge the powers of the soul. Indeed this is the express aim of the teacher. He is to impart knowledge, but much more, he is to show the pupil how to acquire knowledge for himself, and how to use it for practical ends. He is to train him to observe, teach him how to reason, how to follow the thread of thought to its just conclusion. His aim is not chiefly to pour knowledge into the tiny cup, but to enlarge the capacity of the cup. He is to develop and discipline the mind, to strengthen by exercise the intellectual powers till they are equal to all the emergencies of life. Here and there may still be found a teacher who is content merely to cram the textbook into the scholar, but he is behind

the times. The modern educator takes the dull, clumsy, befogged mind and makes it clear, alert, nimble in its working. He draws out the latent powers, and drills them into right habits of thought and action that the pupil may become an expert thinker and may apply his well-drilled faculties to the practical needs of life.

This is preliminary to that specialization in studies which is to equip the pupil for his particular life-task. Before mastering the technique of his future calling, into which many a youth wishes to rush without delay, he should be given the rudiments of that all-round culture which will lead to a full-orbed manhood. He should have as the basis and background of a well-rounded life, as Matthew Arnold says, a knowledge of "the best that has been thought and said in the world." No educator can be content to turn out merely an expert mechanic or engineer or salesman. He wishes also to develop and discipline the inner life so that, enriched by some knowledge of language and literature, of history and psychology, he may enjoy the larger life.

It is interesting to see how some resolute spirits have secured this result by self-education. Without the aid of teachers, or schools, by vigorous self-training they have developed a strength of soul, a vigor of intellect, and a mastery of language which has astonished the world. Abraham Lincoln was a remarkable example of this self-schooling into power. A successful Boston merchant of the last century, also finding himself handicapped by his lack of education, determined to acquire by himself the equipment he needed. Devoting a half hour each morning and each evening to hard study, he became master of three foreign languages (French, Spanish and Latin), read the great masters of English literature, became proficient in economics, and went thoroughly into other branches of knowledge. His writings determined important national legislation and his eminence won the honorary degree of Master of Arts from one of our chief universities. By his persistent self-training he reached a full-orbed manhood.

Unquestionably the Church is one of the chief spiritual-

izing forces. This is its special domain. It holds fast to the conviction that God is a spirit, the imminent, indwelling soul of the universe. It recognizes man as a spirit, the offspring of this spiritual being, imaging in his finite nature the qualities that shine resplendent in the Infinite. The great endeavor of the church is to bring these two into happy harmony and coöperation. Whatever may be the limitations and defects of the church, which is a very human institution, it has had a tremendous and increasing influence upon humanity in making it realize its kinship to God, and awakening a purpose to be at one with him.

This has made it the great character-making institution. It has taught the truths of life, and persuaded men to abide by them. It has won the hearts of men by its ministry to help in their hours of sorrow and need, and drawn them into the way of noble living. It has lifted before their eyes the ineffable beauty of a perfect life as embodied in the Nazarene, and sought to mould them into his likeness. It has not always succeeded, but under its guidance millions of men and women have risen up into lives radiant with purity, unselfishness, noble service, and wonderful self-sacrifice for others. They have kept the animal down, and given the spirit supremacy.

A great Christian in the first century who said, "I keep my body under," declared that the soul, emancipated from bondage to the flesh, gained three great treasures;—faith, hope and love. Faith means vision; it means perception of those great spiritual realities which lie beyond the ken of sense. It opens the eyes of the soul to perceive the deepest truths of life. It sees God, not as a blind, impersonal force, nor a heartless King or Judge, but a Father and a Friend, loving his earthly children and caring for them with ceaseless ministrations. It sees the way of life, along which one may travel upward toward the heights of power and joy. It gives glimpses of a realm of the spirit beyond this world, bright with immortal beauty. Faith kindles hope. This vision of realities invisible to the organs of sense awakens a great expectancy. It transforms timorous doubt and bewildering

fear into courage and confidence. The atmosphere of the church is one of optimism. Its Master was an optimist. He knew that every human being could be lifted up into glorious life. He looked forward to such social transformations as would make earth like heaven. He gave assurance of a life immortal, radiant with peace and joy. If the church did nothing more than thus to open the eyes of the soul, and kindle these exultant hopes, it would prove itself one of the mightiest benefactors of our race.

But faith and hope must be crowned by love if life is to reach its best. Love is the innermost splendor of the divine being. Love transfigures every human life where it is the ruling quality, and gives it a power which nothing else can give. It is the giver of content. They make a huge mistake who imagine that a selfish life will yield the greatest satisfaction. Selfishness is a devil, that will poison and torment its possessor. Give it full swing in any community and it will create hell. The spirit of the Golden rule alone can make a heaven on earth.

Men may criticize the church for its narrow views, its frigid formality, its laggard progress, its lethargic indifference to many social needs. These are faults of individuals in it who are not yet fully developed. But the institution as a whole has kept men face to face with the most august facts of existence, has elevated character and bettered conduct, has exalted the noblest ideals, and has developed in men faith, hope and love. Thus it has liberated the soul and enlarged its powers and prepared the way for its unlimited advance.

To these great spiritualizing forces—the poets and artists, the scientists and philosophers, the authors and educators, and the church with its varied ministries—we might doubtless add other influences working in the same direction. They all conspire toward the same end, to enlarge and empower the inner man, making it victorious over the outer man. To make the intellect keener, the thought broader and clearer, the conscience more sensitive and true, the affections more pure and uplifting, the will more steadfast and persistent, the whole life more jubilant and triumphant over the forces which can

drag it down—this is the result toward which all these forces work. They are to give the soul supremacy over the body. They tend to lift life above the world of chemical combinations and physical forces into a spiritual realm of possibilities as yet undreamed of.

Tanner, the Afro-American artist of Paris, has given in his remarkable painting of "The Annunciation" a significant illustration of a great truth. The beautiful young girl, clad in peasant garb, starts from her couch which is draped with rich oriental coverings. Her gaze is fixed, not on some visible herald from heaven, but on something more startling and mysterious. A great shaft of resplendent light towers like a pillar of gold from floor to ceiling. In that light she finds the message that forecasts the marvelous possibilities of her future. Is there not here a hint regarding the future of humanity? Neither seer nor sibyl nor angel will reveal it to us. But if we fix our eyes upon the light which shines with increasing lustre from age to age it will show us the ascending pathway toward life's best. Whatever adds to knowledge illumines the soul. Discovery, invention, achievement, daily experience are stepping stones of progress. If men live for the spirit, making it dominant over the flesh, they tread the upward way. If they crown the soul as sovereign of the nature, giving it full supremacy in the life, humanity will march toward ideal manhood and ideal womanhood and the ideal society.