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—but the test of the true social leader must be his own character before God, for “by this we know that we love the children of God *when we love God.*” The two truths are inseparable; the decadence of the French nation will be ours if we divorce love of man from love of God, as they did at the Revolution. It is true that he cannot love God who does not love his neighbour, but the converse is equally true that no man can effectually love his neighbour who does not love his God. And again, the altruism of the twentieth century must determine clearly what are the things which it postulates. If a man desires evil things for himself, he does harm to his neighbour by conferring upon him, even unselfishly, the same gifts. So a mere materialism, unaccompanied by any graces of character, will bring no benefit to a race, but the reverse. A hard-and-fast materialistic Socialism would check all progress, would do away with ideals, and remove the motive for evolution. Then decadence and stagnation would ensue. We do not want a hedonism for the masses of the people, neither the hedonism of the champagne-bottle and the realistic novel, nor the hedonism of the pigsty. The people must be taught not to want this themselves. First and foremost it must be impressed upon them that there is One who taught us to love one another, and to Whom all must give an account of their actions—peoples as well as persons, masses as well as units. They must be taught to remember to say: “We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge.” That is what the democracy must learn, that the altruism of these times is not vague and casual, but is the concrete expression of the will of a living Person, to Whom all are responsible.

W. A. PURTON.

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#### ART. VI.—AMBITION.

ON the occasion of our Lord's lesson from the little child, St. Peter had just been honoured by Him with a fresh mark of favour and an extraordinary distinction. He had been selected to find and pay the tribute money. The contrast which our Lord drew between the things of Cæsar and the things of God had again raised the hopes of the disciples to look forward to the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. The wonder of the coin in the mouth of the fish had seemed to them to point out some speedy development. Putting these things together, and anxious to know whether their good old friend Peter was indeed to have a supremacy amongst them in that dawn of glory and happiness to which they were looking forward, they asked the question,

memorable through all time for its reply: "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

The answer of our Lord was first intended for His own disciples, then for those who are called to bear office in His Church, and lastly, for every individual Christian. He put it, according to His emphatic custom, which ensured permanent remembrance, in the form of a very touching symbolical act. He called a little boy unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said: "*Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*"

What a change in all their ideas! Except, He meant, you put aside your notions of supremacy, and primacy, and foremost place and hierarchical dominion; except you become humble and small, like this little child; except you are penetrated through and through with that spirit of modesty which is the most beautiful characteristic of the child, by the child's want of pretension and self-seeking, which enables it to be satisfied with whatever comes before it, without ulterior objects, without seeking or claiming more as its due—you cannot in any true sense be members of the kingdom of heaven. In what does the real greatness of the child consist? In its perfect contentment with its own littleness and dependence. If the child aimed at anything beyond its own simple duties, or tried to achieve more than was required of it, such a claim would necessarily ensure disappointment. It is the absence of pretension, the refraining from all pushing of himself forward, which constitutes that true humility which is a fundamental essential of the Christian character. Only by daily and hourly realizing to ourselves our littleness before God and the brethren, can we hope to realize the life of the kingdom of God, and to grow in that inward grace which is the only greatness that is permitted to the servant of Christ. The greatness will be in proportion to the genuine, unaffected humility; the failure in proportion to its absence.

Now this is not the ordinary view. A recent brilliant historian, for instance, aware of this attitude of the world, in apologizing for the ambition of a great commander, excuses it in a man of the world, on the ground of its usefulness as a tonic. And in those whose lives are not framed on the teaching of our Lord, there can be no doubt that ambition is not without its advantage as an ingredient in a character. What we have to remember is, that to the Christian ideal it is antagonistic. "Self-contained," he writes of his hero, "from early manhood, he began life with the determination to make

a name for himself in the world. A craving for distinction has wrecked the careers of many second-rate men; but it is the ruling principle with most of the best, as well as with many of the worst amongst us. Sages have denounced ambition as beneath the dignity of the true philosopher; holy men have condemned it as dangerous to the soul; and a great poet has pronounced it to be the last infirmity of a noble mind. We have, however," he continues, "Shakespeare's authority for calling it the soldier's virtue, and, in the case of this man, it was assuredly the tonic that saved him from that deterioration of mind and body which follows inevitably upon a life of idleness and luxury." I do not think that the case for ambition in the disposition of a man whose mainspring is other than the Christian ideal could be put better than by this able and discriminating biographer. And we all recognise that the motives of men are infinitely various, and that what is not good in itself may become comparatively useful by taking the place of what is worse. Some medicines are in themselves poisons, but they are given as powerful antidotes to evils that otherwise would prove fatal. We can all see that ambition, meaning a desire to occupy a high place for which a man thinks himself fit, or to be the doer of certain things of which he deems himself capable, is not, in the man of the world, in itself anything bad. It is unquestionable that ambition makes men of the world more active and energetic than they would be without it in the public service. Through ambition men have been lavishly generous; through ambition they have sometimes been widely benevolent; through ambition they have served their country; through ambition they have slaved day and night in Parliament; through ambition they have built great institutions; through ambition many great books have been written, many churches built, many splendid sermons preached, many great and illustrious deeds achieved. "Without ambition," says one, "we creep through life with a snail-like pace, unnoticed and unknown; with it we soar like the eagle, take a station above our fellow-men, and often wield sceptres and govern nations by our nod." "Man is the creature of interest and ambition; his nature leads him forth into the struggle and bustle of the world; love is but the embellishment of his early life, or a song piped in the interval of the acts; he seeks for fame, for fortune, for space in the world's thoughts, the dominion over his fellow-men." Clarendon boldly asserts that "as long as the world lasts, and honour and virtue and industry have reputation in the world, there will be ambition, emulation, and appetite in the best and most accomplished men who live in it." And the calm and judicious Adam Smith assures us that "those great objects of self-

interest, of which the loss or acquisition quite changes the rank of the person, are the objects of the passion properly called ambition—a passion which, when it keeps within the bounds of prudence and justice, is always admired in the world; and has even sometimes an irregular greatness which dazzles the imagination when it passes the limits of both those virtues, and is not only unjust but extravagant.”

When we listen to all this the old man within us is stirred, like the disused hunter that once more hears the hounds giving tongue. Surely, we say, there can be no harm in my wishing to be first? Is there not something of a noble ring in the old Greek motto, *Ἄγειν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπέροχος ἐμμέναι ἄλλων*—Ever to shine in the front, and to make myself greater than others? What is the profession I have adopted? Why should I not wish to excel in it? Why should I not spur myself on by wishing to be Prime Minister, or Lord Chancellor, or a great commander by sea or land, to amass a great fortune, or to achieve a peerage, or to write a famous book, or to sway multitudes by my skill in song, or to rouse the tears and laughter of brilliant audiences night after night by my skill on the stage, or to become a famous orator, or to found a distinguished family? Why should I not all my life be struggling to win prizes, as I strove when I was a school-boy? Why may I not wish to associate my name with important undertakings, and to show that I can do things better than other people, and to be able to remind them that it was I who did this or that, and thus to win their constant gratitude and admiration? It seems to us hard and unreasonable that we should be deprived of those incentives to energy and capacity which we readily allow to the men of the world.

And then we think of the Lord Jesus Christ and His trenchant, unhesitating, unalterable lesson: *“Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said: Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”* The point here is not the simplicity of the belief of the little child, but his utter unworldliness, his absolute humility, his entire ignorance of the aims and objects of the world. Instead of self-assertion, lowliness; instead of grasping at usefulness, thankful contentment with our own allotted duties; instead of any thought of the praise or blame of men, genuine, sincere modesty; that is not only the true Christian temper, but our Lord in His Divine and untemperizing fearlessness tells us that without it we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven at all. We may be highly moral men, we may be Christians in name,

we may be professing adherents of the Cross, we may be useful ecclesiastics, but to us the kingdom of heaven is unknown and untrodden ground.

And there is a chorus of witnesses from experience and observation. "Ambition is a gilded misery, a secret poison, a hidden plague, the engineer of deceit, the mother of hypocrisy, the parent of envy, the original of vices, the moth of holiness, the blinder of hearts, turning medicines into maladies, and remedies into diseases. High seats are never but uneasy, and crowns are always stuffed with thorns." "Say what we will," wrote the observant novelist Bulwer, "we may be sure that ambition is an error; its wear and tear of heart are never recompensed; it steals away the freshness of life; it deadens its vivid and social enjoyments; it shuts our souls to our own youth, and we are old ere we remember that we have made a fever and a labour of our best years." "Ambition," wrote the author of the "Anatomy of Melancholy," "that high and glorious passion which makes such havoc amongst the sons of men, arises from a proud desire of honour and distinction, and when the splendid trappings in which it is usually caparisoned are removed, it will be found to consist in the mean materials of envy, pride, and covetousness." "The ambitious person must rise early and sit up late, and pursue his design with constant, indefatigable attendance; he must be infinitely patient and servile." "Wisdom is corrupted by ambition, even when the quality of the ambition is intellectual; for ambition, even of this quality, is but a form of self-love." And lest skillfulness and discretion in ambition should deceive us, Voltaire with his merciless dissecting-knife uncovers the disease: "The modesty of certain ambitious persons consists in becoming great without making too much noise; it may be said that they advance in the world on tiptoe." What did the ambitious Diotrephes gain, whose love of having the pre-eminence led him to the extraordinary step of declining to receive the last of the Apostles, the gentle and loving St. John, the beloved companion of the Lord Jesus Christ? He gained the unenviable notoriety of being pilloried as a warning and example for ever unintentionally in one of the private letters of that great Apostle, which has been preserved as one of the inspired writings of the Word of God!

There is a tomb in the crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral that is full of a most pathetic interest. It is a block of black marble, carved by the famous Italian sculptor Torrigiano. It covers the ashes of Nelson, and it was prepared for a monument to himself by the great Cardinal Wolsey in that sumptuous chapel which he built at Windsor Castle. From it speaks a voice to any of us Christians who would dare in our own petty degree to push our personal reputation and

advantage, instead of forgetting ourselves and doing our duty. You well know the words :

I have ventured,  
 Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,  
 This many summers in a sea of glory,  
 But far beyond my depth ; my high-blown pride  
 At length broke under me, and now has left me,  
 Weary and old with service, to the mercy  
 Of a rude stream that must for ever hide me.  
 Vain pomp and glory of the world, I hate ye :  
 I feel my heart new opened.  
 . . . . And thus far hear me, Cromwell ;  
 And when I am forgotten, as I shall be,  
 And sleep in dull cold marble, where no mention  
 Of me must more be heard of, say I taught thee—  
 Say, Wolsey, that once trod the ways of glory,  
 And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour,  
 Found thee a way, out of his wreck, to rise in :  
 A sure and safe one, though thy master missed it.  
 Mark but my fall, and that that ruined me.  
 Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition :  
 By that sin fell the angels ; how can man, then,  
 The image of his Maker, hope to win by it ?  
 Love thyself last : cherish those hearts that hate thee ;  
 Corruption wins not more than honesty.  
 Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace  
 To silence envious tongues. Be just and fear not :  
 Let all the ends thou aimst at be thy country's,  
 Thy God's and truth's.

I think we can hardly still ask, Why is ambition an evil? It is poisonous because it is selfish. Selfishness is the abnegation of Christianity. Unless you take up your cross daily and deny yourself, and follow Christ, you cannot be His disciple. Self is an ignoble object to work for, and shuts out the aims that are high and Christlike and pure and true. Where selfishness is, there the essential atmosphere of Christian love is impossible. And ambition is deadly because it is absorbing. It makes men unjust, unfriendly, grasping, jealous, envious, and mean. "Ambition is a mental dropsy, which keeps continually swelling and increasing until it kills its victim." "Ambition makes the same mistake concerning power that avarice makes concerning wealth: she begins by accumulating power as a means to happiness, and she finishes by continuing to accumulate it as an end." The objects of selfish advancement and importance gradually exclude the true spiritual aims of the soul. And, thirdly, ambition is the enemy of peace. The ambitious man can never expect others to give way to his schemes of self-advancement unless he dominates them by mere bluster, or intimidates them into unwilling acquiescence. All men are bound, by their duty to themselves and to their own responsibilities, to oppose the schemes of the ambitious and to keep them in their proper place. True

harmony and understanding can only exist among those who in honour prefer one another, who seek not their own but another's good, and who desire to work for the lasting benefit and happiness of all in whose company they are thrown.

And oh, my friend! you cannot plead that you are under no temptation to this sin. You cannot say that because the great prizes of life are beyond your reach, therefore you have no ambition. It is just as possible to be eager for small honours and distinctions in a petty sphere, as it is to struggle for brilliant results. The ambition to shine in the bar-room of a pot-house is as real as the lust of political power or ecclesiastical fame. Every day you yourself, my friend, have the opportunity of bullying and blustering, and beating down other people, and pushing yourself forward, and seeking your own advantage, and looking out for occasions of assuming the duties and responsibilities of others in order to prove your own importance and necessity. Hardly an hour passes by but you can show your love of grasping and self-seeking. There is not one of us that does not need earnestly to pray for the spirit of the little child.

It was by the ambition of the clergy in the fourth century that the Church left her primitive simplicity, and paved the way for the degradation in doctrine and in morals of the Middle Ages. The social dignity and privileges given to them by the Christian Emperors, their exemption from most of the public burdens, the increasing wealth of the Church, tended inevitably to make its ministry more worldly, and to tempt men to seek it without any spiritual qualifications. The increase of luxury and pomp amongst the clergy of the great cities, especially at Rome, is lamented by Christian, as well as exposed by heathen, writers. The practice of haunting the houses of the rich, and especially of women, by the clergy and monks, in order to obtain gifts, legacies, and the disposition of property, by those devoting themselves to a religious life, to the prejudice of their natural heirs, grew to such a height as to demand restraint by imperial edicts. The bishops, alas! left their primitive humility and close and brotherly relations with their clergy and the people, for the splendour of courts, and the assertion of exclusive dogmatic prerogatives. The spirit of ambition seized specially on the bishops of the ancient capital of the world, and in spite of the resistance of every other Church to the continual invasion of their privileges, in spite of the complete and determined independence of the Churches of the East and Africa, the subtle and sleepless Roman genius step by step, generation after generation, laid the foundation of those claims which resulted at length in the monstrous and anti-Christian tyranny of the Papacy.

*Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the*



midst of them, and said: "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven." What an extraordinary and incredible contrast we cannot help feeling between these tendencies of that most critical fourth century and the Spirit of our Master! And do not for a moment say that, without self-seeking, there would be no energy and progress. The best work that has ever been done in the world by ruler, by bishop, by pastor, by general, by man of science or of letters, by painter, by poet, by benefactor, has been done by him who had the greatest spirit of self-sacrifice in things both small and great. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might;" that is a nobler and more inspiring motive than self-seeking. "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God;" that will produce more true and valuable activity than the worship of self. "The only ambition that is commendable is zeal in the cause of virtue and of good actions." If you are modest, humble, and self-denying in all your actions and pursuits, you will attract a hundred times more co-operation and support than if you are secretive, isolating, exclusive, grasping and selfish.

And then think of the reward! Think of the different degrees of spiritual happiness and satisfaction in the world to come proportionate to the thoroughness and sincerity of our pursuit of righteousness in the present life! The true object of all of us should be to grow in grace for its own sake, and its own present blessing. And in proportion to that development in us of all that is pure, noble, good, true, generous, unselfish, Christ-like, so will the question be determined whether we are to have the one talent, the five talents, or the ten; the greater nearness to Christ; the clearer vision of God; the degree of blessedness in virtue symbolized by the rule over one city, over five, or over ten!

"Ambition is the vice of noble souls?"

As 'tis a vice, then let those souls beware

(Thrice noble though they be, and passing fair

In the world's eye, and high upon those scrolls

Her favoured minions where the world enrolls),

Lest it conduct to shame! Be thine the care,

Soldier of Christ, that nobler strife to dare,

Which the rash spirit of the world controls,

And makes ambition virtue! Be it thine

To win thy bright unfading diadem.

By works of love. Around his brows shall shine

In heaven, from glory's source, the purest beam,

Whose aspect here, with beauty most divine,

Reflects the image of the GOOD SUPREME.

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.