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Title: Eminent Victorians

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Posting Date: February 21, 2012 [EBook #2447]

Release Date: December, 2000

[Last updated: August 19, 2012]

Language: English

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EMINENT VICTORIANS

by Lytton Strachey

Preface

THE history of the Victorian Age will never be written; we know too much

about it. For ignorance is the first requisite of the historian--ignorance,

which simplifies and clarifies, which selects and omits, with a placid

perfection unattainable by the highest art. Concerning the Age which has

just passed, our fathers and our grandfathers have poured forth and

accumulated so vast a quantity of information that the industry of a

Ranke would be submerged by it, and the perspicacity of a Gibbon would

quail before it. It is not by the direct method of a scrupulous

narration that the explorer of the past can hope to depict that singular

epoch. If he is wise, he will adopt a subtler strategy. He will attack

his subject in unexpected places; he will fall upon the flank, or the

rear; he will shoot a sudden, revealing searchlight into obscure

recesses, hitherto undivined. He will row out over that great ocean of

material, and lower down into it, here and there, a little bucket, which

will bring up to the light of day some characteristic specimen, from

those far depths, to be examined with a careful curiosity. Guided by

these considerations, I have written the ensuing studies. I have

attempted, through the medium of biography, to present some Victorian

visions to the modern eye. They are, in one sense, haphazard

visions--that is to say, my choice of subjects has been determined by no

desire to construct a system or to prove a theory, but by simple motives

of convenience and of art. It has been my purpose to illustrate rather

than to explain. It would have been futile to hope to tell even a precis

of the truth about the Victorian age, for the shortest precis must fill

innumerable volumes. But, in the lives of an ecclesiastic, an

educational authority, a woman of action, and a man of adventure, I have

sought to examine and elucidate certain fragments of the truth which

took my fancy and lay to my hand.

I hope, however, that the following pages may prove to be of interest

from the strictly biographical, no less than from the historical point

of view. Human beings are too important to be treated as mere symptoms

of the past. They have a value which is independent of any temporal

processes--which is eternal, and must be felt for its own sake. The art

of biography seems to have fallen on evil times in England. We have had,

it is true, a few masterpieces, but we have never had, like the French,

a great biographical tradition; we have had no Fontenelles and

Condorcets, with their incomparable eloges, compressing into a few

shining pages the manifold existences of men. With us, the most delicate

and humane of all the branches of the art of writing has been relegated

to the journeymen of letters; we do not reflect that it is perhaps as

difficult to write a good life as to live one. Those two fat volumes,

with which it is our custom to commemorate the dead--who does not know

them, with their ill-digested masses of material, their slipshod style,

their tone of tedious panegyric, their lamentable lack of selection, of

detachment, of design? They are as familiar as the cortege of the

undertaker, and wear the same air of slow, funereal barbarism. One is

tempted to suppose, of some of them, that they were composed by that

functionary as the final item of his job. The studies in this book are

indebted, in more ways than one, to such works--works which certainly

deserve the name of Standard Biographies. For they have provided me not

only with much indispensable information, but with something even more

precious--an example. How many lessons are to be learned from them! But

it is hardly necessary to particularise. To preserve, for instance, a

becoming brevity--a brevity which excludes everything that is redundant

and nothing that is significant--that, surely, is the first duty of the

biographer. The second, no less surely, is to maintain his own freedom

of spirit. It is not his business to be complimentary; it is his

business to lay bare the facts of the case, as he understands them. That

is what I have aimed at in this book--to lay bare the facts of some

cases, as I understand them, dispassionately, impartially, and without

ulterior intentions. To quote the words of a Master--'Je n'impose rien;

je ne propose rien: j'expose.'

L.S.

A list of the principal sources from which I have drawn is appended to

each Biography. I would indicate, as an honourable exception to the

current commodity, Sir Edward Cook's excellent Life of Florence

Nightingale, without which my own study, though composed on a very

different scale and from a decidedly different angle, could not have

been written.

Cardinal Manning

HENRY EDWARD MANNING was born in 1807 and died in 1892. His life was

extraordinary in many ways, but its interest for the modern inquirer

depends mainly upon two considerations--the light which his career

throws upon the spirit of his age, and the psychological problems

suggested by his inner history. He belonged to that class of eminent

ecclesiastics--and it is by no means a small class--who have been

distinguished less for saintliness and learning than for practical

ability. Had he lived in the Middle Ages he would certainly have been

neither a Francis nor an Aquinas, but he might have been an Innocent. As

it was, born in the England of the nineteenth century, growing up in the

very seed-time of modern progress, coming to maturity with the first

onrush of Liberalism, and living long enough to witness the victories of

Science and Democracy, he yet, by a strange concatenation of

circumstances, seemed almost to revive in his own person that long line

of diplomatic and administrative clerics which, one would have thought,

had come to an end for ever with Cardinal Wolsey.

In Manning, so it appeared, the Middle Ages lived again. The tall gaunt

figure, with the face of smiling asceticism, the robes, and the biretta,

as it passed in triumph from High Mass at the Oratory to philanthropic

gatherings at Exeter Hall, from Strike Committees at the Docks to

Mayfair drawing-rooms where fashionable ladies knelt to the Prince of

the Church, certainly bore witness to a singular condition of affairs.

What had happened? Had a dominating character imposed itself upon a

hostile environment? Or was the nineteenth century, after all, not so

hostile? Was there something in it, scientific and progressive as it

was, which went out to welcome the representative of ancient tradition

and uncompromising faith? Had it, perhaps, a place in its heart for such

as Manning--a soft place, one might almost say? Or, on the other hand,

was it he who had been supple and yielding? He who had won by art what

he would never have won by force, and who had managed, so to speak, to

be one of the leaders of the procession less through merit than through

a superior faculty for gliding adroitly to the front rank? And, in any

case, by what odd chances, what shifts and struggles, what combinations

of circumstance and character, had this old man come to be where he was?

Such questions are easier to ask than to answer; but it may be

instructive, and even amusing, to look a little more closely into the

complexities of so curious a story.

I

UNDOUBTEDLY, what is most obviously striking in the history of Manning's

career is the persistent strength of his innate characteristics. Through

all the changes of his fortunes the powerful spirit of the man worked on

undismayed. It was as if the Fates had laid a wager that they would

daunt him; and in the end they lost their bet.

His father was a rich West Indian merchant, a governor of the Bank of

England, a Member of Parliament, who drove into town every day from his

country seat in a coach and four, and was content with nothing short of

a bishop for the christening of his children. Little Henry, like the

rest, had his bishop; but he was obliged to wait for him--for as long as

eighteen months. In those days, and even a generation later, as Keble

bears witness, there was great laxity in regard to the early baptism of

children. The delay has been noted by Manning's biographer as the first

stumbling-block in the spiritual life of the future Cardinal; but he

surmounted it with success.

His father was more careful in other ways.

'His refinement and delicacy of mind were such,' wrote Manning long

afterwards, 'that I never heard out of his mouth a word which might not

have been spoken in the presence of the most pure and sensitive--except,'

he adds, 'on one occasion. He was then forced by others to repeat a

negro story which, though free from all evil de sexu, was indelicate. He

did it with great resistance. His example gave me a hatred of all such

talk.'

The family lived in an atmosphere of Evangelical piety. One day the

little boy came in from the farmyard, and his mother asked him whether

he had seen the peacock. 'I said yes, and the nurse said no, and my

mother made me kneel down and beg God to forgive me for not speaking the

truth.' At the age of four the child was told by a cousin of the age of

six that 'God had a book in which He wrote down everything we did wrong.

This so terrified me for days that I remember being found by my mother

sitting under a kind of writing-table in great fear. I never forgot this

at any time in my life,' the Cardinal tells us, 'and it has been a great

grace to me.' When he was nine years old he 'devoured the Apocalypse;

and I never all through my life forgot the "lake that burneth with fire

and brimstone". That verse has kept me like an audible voice through all

my life, and through worlds of danger in my youth.'

At Harrow the worlds of danger were already around him; but yet he

listened to the audible voice. 'At school and college I never failed to

say my prayers, so far as memory serves me, even for a day.' And he

underwent another religious experience: he read Paley's Evidences. 'I

took in the whole argument,' wrote Manning, when he was over seventy,

'and I thank God that nothing has ever shaken it.' Yet on the whole he

led the unspiritual life of an ordinary schoolboy. We have glimpses of

him as a handsome lad, playing cricket, or strutting about in tasselled

Hessian top-boots. And on one occasion at least he gave proof of a

certain dexterity of conduct which deserved to be remembered. He went

out of bounds, and a master, riding by and seeing him on the other side

of a field, tied his horse to a gate, and ran after him. The astute

youth outran the master, fetched a circle, reached the gate, jumped on

to the horse's back and rode off. For this he was very properly

chastised; but, of what use was chastisement? No whipping, however

severe, could have eradicated from little Henry's mind a quality at

least as firmly planted in it as his fear of Hell and his belief in the

arguments of Paley.

It had been his father's wish that Manning should go into the Church;

but the thought disgusted him; and when he reached Oxford, his tastes,

his ambitions, his successes at the Union, all seemed to mark him out

for a political career. He was a year junior to Samuel Wilberforce, and

a year senior to Gladstone. In those days the Union was the

recruiting-ground for young politicians; Ministers came down from London

to listen to the debates; and a few years later the Duke of Newcastle

gave Gladstone a pocket borough on the strength of his speech at the

Union against the Reform Bill. To those three young men, indeed, the

whole world lay open. Were they not rich, well-connected, and endowed

with an infinite capacity for making speeches? The event justified the

highest expectations of their friends; for the least distinguished of

the three died a bishop. The only danger lay in another direction.

'Watch, my dear Samuel,' wrote the elder Wilberforce to his son, 'watch

with jealousy whether you find yourself unduly solicitous about

acquitting yourself; whether you are too much chagrined when you fail,

or are puffed up by your success. Undue solicitude about popular

estimation is a weakness against which all real Christians must guard

with the utmost jealous watchfulness. The more you can retain the

impression of your being surrounded by a cloud of witnesses of the

invisible world, to use the scripture phrase, the more you will be armed

against this besetting sin.'

But suddenly it seemed as if such a warning could, after all, have very

little relevance to Manning; for, on his leaving Oxford, the brimming

cup was dashed from his lips. He was already beginning to dream of

himself in the House of Commons, the solitary advocate of some great

cause whose triumph was to be eventually brought about by his

extraordinary efforts, when his father was declared a bankrupt, and all

his hopes of a political career came to an end forever.

It was at this time that Manning became intimate with a pious lady, the

sister of one of his College friends, whom he used to describe as his

Spiritual Mother. He made her his confidante; and one day, as they

walked together in the shrubbery, he revealed the bitterness of the

disappointment into which his father's failure had plunged him. She

tried to cheer him, and then she added that there were higher aims open

to him which he had not considered. 'What do you mean?' he asked. 'The

kingdom of Heaven,' she answered; 'heavenly ambitions are not closed

against you.' The young man listened, was silent, and said at last that

he did not know but she was right. She suggested reading the Bible

together; and they accordingly did so during the whole of that Vacation,

every morning after breakfast. Yet, in spite of these devotional

exercises, and in spite of a voluminous correspondence on religious

subjects with his Spiritual Mother, Manning still continued to indulge

in secular hopes. He entered the Colonial Office as a supernumerary

clerk, and it was only when the offer of a Merton Fellowship seemed to

depend upon his taking orders that his heavenly ambitions began to

assume a definite shape. Just then he fell in love with Miss Deffell,

whose father would have nothing to say to a young man without prospects,

and forbade him the house. It was only too true; what WERE the prospects

of a supernumerary clerk in the Colonial Office? Manning went to Oxford

and took orders. He was elected to the Merton Fellowship, and obtained

through the influence of the Wilberforces a curacy in Sussex. At the

last moment he almost drew back. 'I think the whole step has been too

precipitate,' he wrote to his brother-in-law. 'I have rather allowed the

instance of my friends, and the allurements of an agreeable curacy in

many respects, to get the better of my sober judgment.' His vast

ambitions, his dreams of public service, of honours, and of power, was

all this to end in a little country curacy 'agreeable in many respects'?

But there was nothing for it; the deed was done; and the Fates had

apparently succeeded very effectively in getting rid of Manning. All he

could do was to make the best of a bad business.

Accordingly, in the first place, he decided that he had received a call

from God 'ad veritatem et ad seipsum'; and, in the second, forgetting

Miss Deffell, he married his rector's daughter. Within a few months the

rector died, and Manning stepped into his shoes; and at least it could

be said that the shoes were not uncomfortable. For the next seven years

he fulfilled the functions of a country clergyman. He was energetic and

devout; he was polite and handsome; his fame grew in the diocese. At

last he began to be spoken of as the probable successor to the old

Archdeacon of Chichester. When Mrs. Manning prematurely died, he was at

first inconsolable, but he found relief in the distraction of redoubled

work. How could he have guessed that one day he would come to number

that loss among 'God's special mercies? Yet so it was to be. In after

years, the memory of his wife seemed to be blotted from his mind; he

never spoke of her; every letter, every record, of his married life he

destroyed; and when word was sent to him that her grave was falling into

ruin: 'It is best so,' the Cardinal answered, 'let it be. Time effaces

all things.' But, when the grave was yet fresh, the young Rector would

sit beside it, day after day, writing his sermons.

II

IN the meantime, a series of events was taking place in another part of

England, which was to have a no less profound effect upon Manning's

history than the merciful removal of his wife. In the same year in which

he took up his Sussex curacy, the Tracts for the Times had begun to

appear at Oxford. The 'Oxford Movement', in fact, had started on its

course. The phrase is still familiar; but its meaning has become

somewhat obscured both by the lapse of time and the intrinsic ambiguity

of the subjects connected with it. Let us borrow for a moment the wings

of Historic Imagination, and, hovering lightly over the Oxford of the

thirties, take a rapid bird's-eye view.

For many generations the Church of England had slept the sleep of the

...comfortable. The sullen murmurings of dissent, the loud battle-cry of

Revolution, had hardly disturbed her slumbers. Portly divines subscribed

with a sigh or a smile to the Thirty-nine Articles, sank quietly into

easy living, rode gaily to hounds of a morning as gentlemen should, and,

as gentlemen should, carried their two bottles of an evening. To be in

the Church was in fact simply to pursue one of those professions which

Nature and Society had decided were proper to gentlemen and gentlemen

alone. The fervours of piety, the zeal of Apostolic charity, the

enthusiasm of self-renunciation--these things were all very well in

their way and in their place; but their place was certainly not the

Church of England. Gentlemen were neither fervid nor zealous, and above

all they were not enthusiastic. There were, it was true, occasionally to

be found within the Church some strait-laced parsons of the high Tory

school who looked back with regret to the days of Laud or talked of the

Apostolical Succession; and there were groups of square-toed

Evangelicals who were earnest over the Atonement, confessed to a

personal love of Jesus Christ, and seemed to have arranged the whole of

their lives, down to the minutest details of act and speech, with

reference to Eternity. But such extremes were the rare exceptions. The

great bulk of the clergy walked calmly along the smooth road of ordinary

duty. They kept an eye on the poor of the parish, and they conducted the

Sunday Services in a becoming manner; for the rest, they differed

neither outwardly nor inwardly from the great bulk of the laity, to whom

the Church was a useful organisation for the maintenance of Religion, as

by law established.

The awakening came at last, however, and it was a rude one. The liberal

principles of the French Revolution, checked at first in the terrors of

reaction, began to make their way into England. Rationalists lifted up

their heads; Bentham and the Mills propounded Utilitarianism; the Reform

Bill was passed; and there were rumours abroad of disestablishment. Even

Churchmen seemed to have caught the infection. Dr. Whately was so bold

as to assert that, in the interpretation of Scripture, different

opinions might be permitted upon matters of doubt; and, Dr. Arnold drew

up a disquieting scheme for allowing Dissenters into the Church, though

it is true that he did not go quite so far as to contemplate the

admission of Unitarians.

At this time, there was living in a country parish, a young clergyman of

the name of John Keble. He had gone to Oxford at the age of fifteen,

where, after a successful academic career, he had been made a Fellow of

Oriel. He had then returned to his father's parish and taken up the

duties of a curate. He had a thorough knowledge of the contents of the

Prayer-book, the ways of a Common Room, the conjugations of the Greek

Irregular Verbs, and the small jests of a country parsonage; and the

defects of his experience in other directions were replaced by a zeal

and a piety which were soon to prove themselves equal, and more than

equal, to whatever calls might be made upon them. The superabundance of

his piety overflowed into verse; and the holy simplicity of the

Christian Year carried his name into the remotest lodging-houses of

England.

As for his zeal, however, it needed another outlet. Looking forth upon

the doings of his fellow-men through his rectory windows in

Gloucestershire, Keble felt his whole soul shaken with loathing, anger,

and dread. Infidelity was stalking through the land; authority was

laughed at; the hideous doctrines of Democracy were being openly

preached. Worse still, if possible, the Church herself was ignorant and

lukewarm; she had forgotten the mysteries of the sacraments, she had

lost faith in the Apostolical Succession; she was no longer interested

in the Early Fathers; and she submitted herself to the control of a

secular legislature, the members of which were not even bound to profess

belief in the Atonement. In the face of such enormities what could Keble

do? He was ready to do anything, but he was a simple and an unambitious

man, and his wrath would in all probability have consumed itself

unappeased within him had he not chanced to come into contact, at the

critical moment, with a spirit more excitable and daring than his own.

Hurrell Froude, one of Keble's pupils, was a clever young man to whom

had fallen a rather larger share of self-assurance and intolerance than

even clever young men usually possess. What was singular about him,

however, was not so much his temper as his tastes. The sort of ardour

which impels more normal youths to haunt Music Halls and fall in love

with actresses took the form, in Froude's case, of a romantic devotion

to the Deity and an intense interest in the state of his own soul. He

was obsessed by the ideals of saintliness, and convinced of the supreme

importance of not eating too much. He kept a diary in which he recorded

his delinquencies, and they were many. 'I cannot say much for myself

today,' he writes on September 29th, 1826 (he was twenty-three years

old). 'I did not read the Psalms and Second Lesson after breakfast,

which I had neglected to do before, though I had plenty of time on my

hands. Would have liked to be thought adventurous for a scramble I had

at the Devil's Bridge. Looked with greediness to see if there was a

goose on the table for dinner; and though what I ate was of the plainest

sort, and I took no variety, yet even this was partly the effect of

accident, and I certainly rather exceeded in quantity, as I was fuzzy

and sleepy after dinner.' 'I allowed myself to be disgusted, with--'s

pomposity,' he writes a little later, 'also smiled at an allusion in the

Lessons to abstemiousness in eating. I hope not from pride or vanity,

but mistrust; it certainly was unintentional.' And again, 'As to my

meals, I can say that I was always careful to see that no one else would

take a thing before I served myself; and I believe as to the kind of my

food, a bit of cold endings of a dab at breakfast, and a scrap of

mackerel at dinner, are the only things that diverged from the strict

rule of simplicity.' 'I am obliged to confess,' he notes, 'that in my

intercourse with the Supreme Being, I am be come more and more

sluggish.' And then he exclaims: 'Thine eye trieth my inward parts, and

knoweth my thoughts ... Oh that my ways were made so direct that I might

keep Thy statutes. I will walk in Thy Commandments when Thou hast set my

heart at liberty.'

Such were the preoccupations of this young man. Perhaps they would have

been different, if he had had a little less of what Newman describes as

his 'high severe idea of the intrinsic excellence of Virginity'; but it

is useless to speculate.

Naturally enough the fierce and burning zeal of Keble had a profound

effect upon his mind. The two became intimate friends, and Froude,

eagerly seizing upon the doctrines of the elder man, saw to it that they

had as full a measure of controversial notoriety as an Oxford common

room could afford. He plunged the metaphysical mysteries of the Holy

Catholic Church into the atmosphere of party politics. Surprised Doctors

of Divinity found themselves suddenly faced with strange questions which

had never entered their heads before. Was the Church of England, or was

it not, a part of the Church Catholic? If it was, were not the Reformers

of the sixteenth century renegades? Was not the participation of the

Body and Blood of Christ essential to the maintenance of Christian life

and hope in each individual? Were Timothy and Titus Bishops? Or were

they not? If they were, did it not follow that the power of

administering the Holy Eucharist was the attribute of a sacred order

founded by Christ Himself? Did not the Fathers refer to the tradition of

the Church as to something independent of the written word, and

sufficient to refute heresy, even alone? Was it not, therefore, God's

unwritten word? And did it not demand the same reverence from us as the

Scriptures, and for exactly the same reason--BECAUSE IT WAS HIS WORD?

The Doctors of Divinity were aghast at such questions, which seemed to

lead they hardly knew whither; and they found it difficult to think of

very apposite answers. But Hurrell Froude supplied the answers himself

readily enough. All Oxford, all England, should know the truth. The time

was out of joint, and he was only too delighted to have been born to set

it right.

But, after all, something more was needed than even the excitement of

Froude combined with the conviction of Keble to ruffle seriously the

vast calm waters of Christian thought; and it so happened that that

thing was not wanting: it was the genius of John Henry Newman. If Newman

had never lived, or if his father, when the gig came round on the fatal

morning, still undecided between the two Universities, had chanced to

turn the horse's head in the direction of Cambridge, who can doubt that

the Oxford Movement would have flickered out its little flame unobserved

in the Common Room of Oriel? And how different, too, would have been the

fate of Newman himself! He was a child of the Romantic Revival, a

creature of emotion and of memory, a dreamer whose secret spirit dwelt

apart in delectable mountains, an artist whose subtle senses caught,

like a shower in the sunshine, the impalpable rainbow of the immaterial

world. In other times, under other skies, his days would have been more

fortunate. He might have helped to weave the garland of Meleager, or to

mix the lapis lazuli of Fra Angelico, or to chase the delicate truth in

the shade of an Athenian palaestra, or his hands might have fashioned

those ethereal faces that smile in the niches of Chartres. Even in his

own age he might, at Cambridge, whose cloisters have ever been

consecrated to poetry and common sense, have followed quietly in Gray's

footsteps and brought into flower those seeds of inspiration which now

lie embedded amid the faded devotion of the Lyra Apostolica.

At Oxford, he was doomed. He could not withstand the last enchantment of

the Middle Age. It was in vain that he plunged into the pages of Gibbon

or communed for long hours with Beethoven over his beloved violin. The

air was thick with clerical sanctity, heavy with the odours of tradition

and the soft warmth of spiritual authority; his friendship with Hurrell

Froude did the rest. All that was weakest in him hurried him onward, and

all that was strongest in him too. His curious and vaulting imagination

began to construct vast philosophical fabrics out of the writings of

ancient monks, and to dally with visions of angelic visitations and the

efficacy of the oil of St Walburga; his emotional nature became absorbed

in the partisan passions of a University clique; and his subtle

intellect concerned itself more and more exclusively with the

dialectical splitting of dogmatical hairs. His future course was marked

out for him all too clearly; and yet by a singular chance the true

nature of the man was to emerge triumphant in the end. If Newman had

died at the age of sixty, today he would have been already forgotten,

save by a few ecclesiastical historians; but he lived to write his

Apologia, and to reach immortality, neither as a thinker nor as a

theologian, but as an artist who has embalmed the poignant history of an

intensely human spirit in the magical spices of words.

When Froude succeeded in impregnating Newman with the ideas of Keble,

the Oxford Movement began. The original and remarkable characteristic of

these three men was that they took the Christian Religion au pied de la

lettre. This had not been done in England for centuries. When they

declared every Sunday that they believed in the Holy Catholic Church,

they meant it. When they repeated the Athanasian Creed, they meant it.

Even, when they subscribed to the Thirty-nine Articles, they meant it-or

at least they thought they did. Now such a state of mind was

dangerous--more dangerous indeed--than they at first realised. They had

started with the innocent assumption that the Christian Religion was

contained in the doctrines of the Church of England; but, the more they

examined this matter, the more difficult and dubious it became. The

Church of England bore everywhere upon it the signs of human

imperfection; it was the outcome of revolution and of compromise, of the

exigencies of politicians and the caprices of princes, of the prejudices

of theologians and the necessities of the State. How had it happened

that this piece of patchwork had become the receptacle for the august

and infinite mysteries of the Christian Faith? This was the problem with

which Newman and his friends found themselves confronted. Other men

might, and apparently did, see nothing very strange in such a situation;

but other men saw in Christianity itself scarcely more than a convenient

and respectable appendage to existence, by which a sound system of

morals was inculcated, and through which one might hope to attain to

everlasting bliss.

To Newman and Keble it was otherwise. They saw a transcendent

manifestation of Divine power flowing down elaborate and immense through

the ages; a consecrated priesthood, stretching back, through the mystic

symbol of the laying on of hands, to the very Godhead; a whole universe

of spiritual beings brought into communion with the Eternal by means of

wafers; a great mass of metaphysical doctrines, at once incomprehensible

and of incalculable import, laid down with infinite certitude; they saw

the supernatural everywhere and at all times, a living force, floating

invisible in angels, inspiring saints, and investing with miraculous

properties the commonest material things. No wonder that they found such

a spectacle hard to bring into line with the institution which had been

evolved from the divorce of Henry VIII, the intrigues of Elizabethan

parliaments, and the Revolution of 1688. They did, no doubt, soon

satisfy themselves that they had succeeded in this apparently hopeless

task; but, the conclusions which they came to in order to do so were

decidedly startling.

The Church of England, they declared, was indeed the one true Church,

but she had been under an eclipse since the Reformation; in fact, since

she had begun to exist. She had, it is true, escaped the corruptions of

Rome; but she had become enslaved by the secular power, and degraded by

the false doctrines of Protestantism. The Christian Religion was still

preserved intact by the English priesthood, but it was preserved, as it

were, unconsciously--a priceless deposit, handed down blindly from

generation to generation, and subsisting less by the will of man than

through the ordinance of God as expressed in the mysterious virtue of

the Sacraments. Christianity, in short, had become entangled in a series

of unfortunate circumstances from which it was the plain duty of Newman

and his friends to rescue it forthwith. What was curious was that this

task had been reserved, in so marked a manner, for them. Some of the

divines of the seventeenth century had, perhaps, been vouchsafed

glimpses of the truth; but they were glimpses and nothing more. No, the

waters of the true Faith had dived underground at the Reformation, and

they were waiting for the wand of Newman to strike the rock before they

should burst forth once more into the light of day. The whole matter, no

doubt, was Providential--what other explanation could there be?

The first step, it was clear, was to purge the Church of her shames and

her errors. The Reformers must be exposed; the yoke of the secular power

must be thrown off; dogma must be reinstated in its old pre-eminence;

and Christians must be reminded of what they had apparently

forgotten--the presence of the supernatural in daily life. 'It would be

a gain to this country,' Keble observed, 'were it vastly more

superstitious, more bigoted, more gloomy, more fierce in its religion,

than at present it shows itself to be.' 'The only good I know of

Cranmer,' said Hurrell Froude, 'was that he burned well.' Newman

preached, and soon the new views began to spread. Among the earliest of

the converts was Dr Pusey, a man of wealth and learning, a professor, a

canon of Christ Church, who had, it was rumoured, been to Germany. Then

the Tracts for the Times were started under Newman's editorship, and the

Movement was launched upon the world.

The Tracts were written 'with the hope of rousing members of our Church

to comprehend her alarming position ... as a man might give notice of a

fire or inundation, to startle all who heard him'. They may be said to

have succeeded in their objective, for the sensation which they caused

among clergymen throughout the country was extreme. They dealt with a

great variety of questions, but the underlying intention of all of them

was to attack the accepted doctrines and practices of the Church of

England. Dr. Pusey wrote learnedly on Baptismal Regeneration; he also

wrote on Fasting. His treatment of the latter subject met with

considerable disapproval, which surprised the Doctor. 'I was not

prepared,' he said, 'for people questioning, even in the abstract, the

duty of fasting; I thought serious-minded persons at least supposed they

practised fasting in some way or other. I assumed the duty to be

acknowledged and thought it only undervalued.' We live and learn, even

though we have been to Germany.

Other tracts discussed the Holy Catholic Church, the Clergy, and the

Liturgy. One treated of the question 'whether a clergyman of the Church

of England be now bound to have morning and evening prayers daily in his

parish church?' Another pointed out the 'Indications of a superintending

Providence in the preservation of the Prayer-book and in the changes

which it has undergone'. Another consisted of a collection of 'Advent

Sermons on Antichrist'. Keble wrote a long and elaborate tract 'On the

Mysticism attributed to the Early Fathers of the Church', in which he

expressed his opinions upon a large number of curious matters.

'According to men's usual way of talking,' he wrote, 'it would be called

an accidental circumstance that there were five loaves, not more nor

less, in the store of Our Lord and His disciples wherewith to provide

the miraculous feast. But the ancient interpreters treat it as designed

and providential, in this surely not erring: and their conjecture is

that it represents the sacrifice of the whole world of sense, and

especially of the Old Dispensation, which, being outward and visible,

might be called the dispensation of the senses, to the FATHER of our

LORD JESUS CHRIST, to be a pledge and means of communion with Him

according to the terms of the new or evangelical law.

They arrived at this idea by considering the number five, the number of

the senses, as the mystical opponent of the visible and sensible

universe--ta aistheta, as distinguished from ta noita. Origen lays down

the rule in express terms. '"The number five,"' he says, '"frequently,

nay almost always, is taken for the five senses."' In another passage,

Keble deals with an even more recondite question. He quotes the teaching

of St. Barnabas that 'Abraham, who first gave men circumcision, did

thereby perform a spiritual and typical action, looking forward to the

Son'. St. Barnabas's argument is as follows: Abraham circumcised of his

house men to the number of 318. Why 318? Observe first the 18, then the

300. Of the two letters which stand for 18, 10 is represented by 1, 8 by

H. 'Thou hast here,' says St. Barnabas, 'the word of Jesus.' As for the

300, 'the Cross is represented by Tau, and the letter Tau represents

that number'.

Unfortunately, however, St. Barnabas's premise was of doubtful validity,

as the Rev. Mr. Maitland pointed out, in a pamphlet impugning the

conclusions of the Tract. 'The simple fact is,' he wrote, 'that when

Abraham pursued Chedorlaomer "he armed his trained servants, BORN IN HIS

OWN HOUSE, three hundred and eighteen". When, more than thirteen

(according to the common chronology, fifteen) years after, he

circumcised "all the men of his house, BORN IN THE HOUSE, AND BOUGHT

WITH MONEY OF THE STRANGER", and, in fact, every male who was as much as

eight days old, we are not told what the number amounted to. Shall we

suppose (just for the sake of the interpretation) that Abraham's family

had so dwindled in the interval as that now all the males of his

household, trained men, slaves, and children, equalled only and exactly

the number of his warriors fifteen years before?'

The question seems difficult to answer, but Keble had, as a matter of

fact, forestalled the argument in the following passage, which had

apparently escaped the notice of the Rev. Mr. Maitland:

'Now whether the facts were really so or not (if it were, it was surely

by special providence), that Abraham's household at the time of the

circumcision was exactly the same number as before; still the argument

of St. Barnabas will stand. As thus: circumcision had from the

beginning, a reference to our SAVIOUR, as in other respects, so in this;

that the mystical number, which is the cipher of Jesus crucified, was

the number of the first circumcised household in the strength of which

Abraham prevailed against the powers of the world. So St. Clement of

Alexandria, as cited by Fell.'

And Keble supports his contention through ten pages of close print, with

references to Aristeas, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and Dr. Whitby.

Writings of this kind could not fail in their effect. Pious youths in

Oxford were carried away by them, and began to flock around the standard

of Newman. Newman himself became a party chief--encouraging, organising,

persuading. His long black figure, swiftly passing through the streets,

was pointed at with awe; crowds flocked to his sermons; his words were

repeated from mouth to mouth; 'Credo in Newmannum' became a common

catchword. Jokes were made about the Church of England, and practices,

unknown for centuries, began to be revived. Young men fasted and did

penance, recited the hours of the Roman Breviary, and confessed their

sins to Dr. Pusey. Nor was the movement confined to Oxford; it spread in

widening circles through the parishes of England; the dormant devotion

of the country was suddenly aroused. The new strange notion of taking

Christianity literally was delightful to earnest minds; but it was also

alarming. Really to mean every word you said, when you repeated the

Athanasian Creed! How wonderful! And what enticing and mysterious vistas

burst upon the view! But then, those vistas, where were they leading?

Supposing--oh heavens!--supposing after all they were to lead to--!

III

IN due course, the Tracts made their appearance at the remote rectory in

Sussex. Manning was some years younger than Newman, and the two men had

only met occasionally at the University; but now, through common

friends, a closer relationship began to grow up between them. It was

only to be expected that Newman should be anxious to enroll the rising

young Rector among his followers; and, on Manning's side, there were

many causes which impelled him to accept the overtures from Oxford.

He was a man of a serious and vigorous temperament, to whom it was

inevitable that the bold high principles of the Movement should strongly

appeal. There was also an element in his mind that element which had

terrified him in his childhood with Apocalyptic visions, and urged him

in his youth to Bible readings after breakfast--which now brought him

under the spell of the Oxford theories of sacramental mysticism. And

besides, the Movement offered another attraction: it imputed an

extraordinary, transcendent merit to the profession which Manning

himself pursued. The cleric was not as his lay brethren; he was a

creature apart, chosen by Divine will and sanctified by Divine

mysteries. It was a relief to find, when one had supposed that one was

nothing but a clergyman, that one might, after all, be something

else--one might be a priest.

Accordingly, Manning shook off his early Evangelical convictions,

started an active correspondence with Newman, and was soon working for

the new cause. He collected quotations, and began to translate the works

of Optatus for Dr. Pusey. He wrote an article on Justin for the British

Critic, "Newman's Magazine". He published a sermon on Faith, with notes

and appendices, which was condemned by an evangelical bishop, and

fiercely attacked by no less a person than the celebrated Mr. Bowdler.

'The sermon,' said Mr Bowdler, in a book which he devoted to the

subject, 'was bad enough, but the appendix was abominable.' At the same

time he was busy asserting the independence of the Church of England,

opposing secular education, and bringing out pamphlets against the

Ecclesiastical Commission, which had been appointed by Parliament to

report on Church Property. Then we find him in the role of a spiritual

director of souls. Ladies met him by stealth in his church, and made

their confessions. Over one case--that of a lady, who found herself

drifting towards Rome--he consulted Newman. Newman advised him to

'enlarge upon the doctrine of I Cor. vii';

'also, I think you must press on her the prospect of benefiting the poor

Church, through which she has her baptism, by stopping in it. Does she

not care for the souls of all around her, steeped and stifled in

Protestantism? How will she best care for them by indulging her own

feelings in the communion of Rome, or in denying herself, and staying in

sackcloth and ashes to do them good?'

Whether these arguments were successful does not appear.

For several years after his wife's death, Manning was occupied with

these new activities, while his relations with Newman developed into

what was apparently a warm friendship. 'And now vive valeque, my dear

Manning', we find Newman writing in a letter dated 'in festo S. Car.

1838', 'as wishes and prays yours affectionately, John H. Newman'. But,

as time went on, the situation became more complicated. Tractarianism

began to arouse the hostility, not only of the evangelical, but of the

moderate churchmen, who could not help perceiving in the ever-deepening,

'catholicism' of the Oxford party, the dread approaches of Rome. The

"Record" newspaper an influential Evangelical journal--took up the

matter and sniffed Popery in every direction; it spoke of certain

clergymen as 'tainted'; and after that, preferment seemed to pass those

clergymen by. The fact that Manning found it wise to conduct his

confessional ministrations in secret was in itself highly significant.

It was necessary to be careful, and Manning was very careful indeed. The

neighbouring Archdeacon, Mr. Hare, was a low churchman; Manning made

friends with him, as warmly, it seemed, as he had made friends with

Newman. He corresponded with him, asked his advice about the books he

should read, and discussed questions of Theology--'As to Gal. vi 15, we

cannot differ.... With a man who reads and reasons I can have no

controversy; and you do both.' Archdeacon Hare was pleased, but soon a

rumour reached him, which was, to say the least of it, upsetting.

Manning had been removing the high pews from a church in Brighton, and

putting in open benches in their place. Everyone knew what that meant;

everyone knew that a high pew was one of the bulwarks of Protestantism,

and that an open bench had upon it the taint of Rome. But Manning

hastened to explain:

'My dear friend,' he wrote, 'I did not exchange pews for open benches,

but got the pews (the same in number) moved from the nave of the church

to the walls of the side aisles, so that the whole church has a regular

arrangement of open benches, which (irregularly) existed before ... I am

not today quite well, so farewell, with much regard--Yours ever, H. E.

M.'

Archdeacon Hare was reassured.

It was important that he should be, for the Archdeacon of Chichester was

growing very old, and Hare's influence might be exceedingly useful when

a vacancy occurred. So, indeed, it fell out. A new bishop, Dr.

Shuttleworth, was appointed to the See, and the old Archdeacon took the

opportunity of retiring. Manning was obviously marked out as his

successor, but the new bishop happened to be a low churchman, an

aggressive low churchman, who went so far as to parody the Tractarian

fashion of using Saints' days for the dating of letters by writing 'The

Palace, washing-day', at the beginning of his. And--what was equally

serious--his views were shared by Mrs. Shuttleworth, who had already

decided that the pushing young Rector was 'tainted'. But at the critical

moment Archdeacon Hare came to the rescue; he persuaded the Bishop that

Manning was safe; and the appointment was accordingly made--behind Mrs.

Shuttleworth's back. She was furious, but it was too late; Manning was

an Archdeacon. All the lady could do, to indicate her disapprobation,

was to put a copy of Mr. Bowdler's book in a conspicuous position on the

drawing-room table, when he came to pay his respects at the Palace.

Among the letters of congratulation which Manning received, was one from

Mr Gladstone, with whom he had remained on terms of close friendship

since their days together at Oxford.

'I rejoice,' Mr Gladstone wrote, 'on your account personally; but more

for the sake of the Church. All my brothers-in-law are here and scarcely

less delighted than I am. With great glee am I about to write your new

address; but, the occasion really calls for higher sentiments; and sure

am I that you are one of the men to whom it is specially given to

develop the solution of that great problem--how all our minor

distractions are to be either abandoned, absorbed, or harmonised through

the might of the great principle of communion in the body of Christ.'

Manning was an Archdeacon; but he was not yet out of the woods. His

relations with the Tractarians had leaked out, and the Record was

beginning to be suspicious. If Mrs. Shuttleworth's opinion of him were

to become general, it would certainly be a grave matter. Nobody could

wish to live and die a mere Archdeacon. And then, at that very moment,

an event occurred which made it imperative to take a definite step, one

way or the other. That event was the publication of Tract No. 90.

For some time it had been obvious to every impartial onlooker that

Newman was slipping down an inclined plane at the bottom of which lay

one thing, and one thing only--the Roman Catholic Church. What was

surprising was the length of time which he was taking to reach the

inevitable destination. Years passed before he came to realise that his

grandiose edifice of a Church Universal would crumble to pieces if one

of its foundation stones was to be an amatory intrigue of Henry VIII.

But, at last he began to see that terrible monarch glowering at him

wherever he turned his eyes. First he tried to exorcise the spectre with

the rolling periods of the Caroline divines; but it only strutted the

more truculently. Then in despair he plunged into the writings of the

early Fathers, and sought to discover some way out of his difficulties

in the complicated labyrinth of ecclesiastical history. After months

spent in the study of the Monophysite heresy, the alarming conclusion

began to force itself upon him that the Church of England was perhaps in

schism. Eventually he read an article by a Roman Catholic on St.

Augustine and the Donatists, which seemed to put the matter beyond

doubt. St. Augustine, in the fifth century, had pointed out that the

Donatists were heretics because the Bishop of Rome had said so. The

argument was crushing; it rang in Newman's ears for days and nights;

and, though he continued to linger on in agony for six years more, he

never could discover any reply to it. All he could hope to do was to

persuade himself and anyone else who liked to listen to him that the

holding of Anglican orders was not inconsistent with a belief in the

whole cycle of Roman doctrine as laid down at the Council of Trent. In

this way he supposed that he could at once avoid the deadly sin of

heresy and conscientiously remain a clergyman in the Church of England;

and with this end in view, he composed Tract No. 90.

The object of the Tract was to prove that there was nothing in the

Thirty-nine Articles incompatible with the creed of the Roman Church.

Newman pointed out, for instance, that it was generally supposed that

the Articles condemned the doctrine of Purgatory; but they did not; they

merely condemned the Romish doctrine of Purgatory--and Romish, clearly,

was not the same thing as Roman. Hence it followed that believers in the

Roman doctrine of Purgatory might subscribe the Articles with a good

conscience. Similarly, the Articles condemned 'the sacrifices of

masses', but they did not condemn 'the sacrifice of the Mass'. Thus, the

Mass might be lawfully celebrated in English Churches. Newman took the

trouble to examine the Articles in detail from this point of view, and

the conclusion he came to in every case supported his contention in a

singular manner.

The Tract produced an immense sensation, for it seemed to be a deadly

and treacherous blow aimed at the very heart of the Church of England.

Deadly it certainly was, but it was not so treacherous as it appeared at

first sight. The members of the English Church had ingenuously imagined

up to that moment that it was possible to contain, in a frame of words,

the subtle essence of their complicated doctrinal system, involving the

mysteries of the Eternal and the Infinite on the one hand, and the

elaborate adjustments of temporal government on the other. They did not

understand that verbal definitions in such a case will only perform

their functions so long as there is no dispute about the matters which

they are intended to define: that is to say, so long as there is no need

for them. For generations this had been the case with the Thirty-nine

Articles. Their drift was clear enough; and nobody bothered over their

exact meaning. But directly someone found it important to give them a

new and untraditional interpretation, it appeared that they were a mass

of ambiguity, and might be twisted into meaning very nearly anything

that anybody liked. Steady-going churchmen were appalled and outraged

when they saw Newman, in Tract No. 90, performing this operation. But,

after all, he was only taking the Church of England at its word. And

indeed, since Newman showed the way, the operation has become so

exceedingly common that the most steady-going churchman hardly raises an

eyebrow at it now.

At the time, however, Newman's treatment of the Articles seemed to

display not only a perverted supersubtlety of intellect, but a temper of

mind that was fundamentally dishonest. It was then that he first began

to be assailed by those charges of untruthfulness which reached their

culmination more than twenty years later in the celebrated controversy

with Charles Kingsley, which led to the writing of the Apologia. The

controversy was not a very fruitful one, chiefly because Kingsley could

no more understand the nature of Newman's intelligence than a subaltern

in a line regiment can understand a Brahmin of Benares. Kingsley was a

stout Protestant, whose hatred of Popery was, at bottom, simply

ethical--an honest, instinctive horror of the practices of priestcraft

and the habits of superstition; and it was only natural that he should

see in those innumerable delicate distinctions which Newman was

perpetually drawing, and which he himself had not only never thought of,

but could not even grasp, simply another manifestation of the inherent

falsehood of Rome. But, in reality, no one, in one sense of the word,

was more truthful than Newman. The idea of deceit would have been

abhorrent to him; and indeed it was owing to his very desire to explain

what he had in his mind exactly and completely, with all the refinements

of which his subtle brain was capable, that persons such as Kingsley

were puzzled into thinking him dishonest. Unfortunately, however, the

possibilities of truth and falsehood depend upon other things besides

sincerity. A man may be of a scrupulous and impeccable honesty, and yet

his respect for the truth--it cannot be denied--may be insufficient. He

may be, like the lunatic, the lover, and the poet, 'of imagination all

compact'; he may be blessed, or cursed, with one of those 'seething

brains', one of those 'shaping fanatasies' that 'apprehend more than

cool reason ever comprehends'; he may be by nature incapable of sifting

evidence, or by predilection simply indisposed to do so. 'When we were

there,' wrote Newman in a letter to a friend after his conversion,

describing a visit to Naples, and the miraculous circumstances connected

with the liquefaction of St. Januarius's blood,

'the feast of St. Gennaro was coming on, and the Jesuits were eager for

us to stop--they have the utmost confidence in the miracle--and were the

more eager because many Catholics, till they have seen it, doubt it. Our

father director here tells us that before he went to Naples he did not

believe it. That is, they have vague ideas of natural means,

exaggeration, etc., not of course imputing fraud. They say conversions

often take place in consequence. It is exposed for the Octave, and the

miracle continues--it is not simple liquefaction, but sometimes it

swells, sometimes boils, sometimes melts--no one can tell what is going

to take place. They say it is quite overcoming-and people cannot help

crying to see it. I understand that Sir H. Davy attended everyday, and

it was this extreme variety of the phenomenon which convinced him that

nothing physical would account for it. Yet there is this remarkable fact

that liquefactions of blood are common at Naples--and, unless it is

irreverent to the Great Author of Miracles to be obstinate in the

inquiry, the question certainly rises whether there is something in the

air. (Mind, I don't believe there is--and, speaking humbly, and without

having seen it, think it a true miracle--but I am arguing.) We saw the

blood of St Patrizia, half liquid; i.e. liquefying, on her feast day. St

John Baptist's blood sometimes liquefies on the 29th of August, and did

when we were at Naples, but we had not time to go to the church. We saw

the liquid blood of an Oratorian Father; a good man, but not a saint,

who died two centuries ago, I think; and we saw the liquid blood of Da

Ponte, the great and holy Jesuit, who, I suppose, was almost a saint.

But these instances do not account for liquefaction on certain days, if

this is the case. But the most strange phenomenon is what happens at

Ravello, a village or town above Amalfi. There is the blood of St.

Pantaleon. It is in a vessel amid the stonework of the Altar-it is not

touched but on his feast in June it liquefies. And more, there is an

excommunication against those who bring portions of the True Cross into

the Church. Why? Because the blood liquefies, whenever it is brought. A

person I know, not knowing the prohibition, brought in a portion, and

the Priest suddenly said, who showed the blood, "Who has got the Holy

Cross about him?" I tell you what was told me by a grave and religious

man. It is a curious coincidence that in telling this to our Father

Director here, he said, "Why, we have a portion of St. Pantaleon's blood

at the Chiesa Nuova, and it is always liquid."'

After leaving Naples, Newman visited Loreto, and inspected the house of

the Holy Family, which, as is known to the faithful, was transported

thither, in three hops, from Palestine.

'I went to Loreto,' he wrote, 'with a simple faith, believing what I

still more believed when I saw it. I have no doubt now. If you ask me

why I believe it, it is because everyone believes it at Rome; cautious

as they are and sceptical about some other things. I have no antecedent

difficulty in the matter. He who floated the Ark on the surges of a

world-wide sea, and enclosed in it all living things, who has hidden the

terrestrial paradise, who said that faith might move mountains, who

sustained thousands for forty years in a sterile wilderness, who

transported Elias and keeps him hidden till the end, could do this

wonder also.'

Here, whatever else there may be, there is certainly no trace of a

desire to deceive. Could a state of mind, in fact, be revealed with more

absolute transparency?

When Newman was a child he 'wished that he could believe the Arabian

Nights were true'. When he came to be a man, his wish seems to have been

granted.

Tract No. 90 was officially condemned by the authorities at Oxford, and

in the hubbub that followed, the contending parties closed their ranks;

henceforward, any compromise between the friends and the enemies of the

Movement was impossible. Archdeacon Manning was in too conspicuous a

position to be able to remain silent; he was obliged to declare himself,

and he did not hesitate. In an archidiaconal charge, delivered within a

few months of his appointment, he firmly repudiated the Tractarians. But

the repudiation was not deemed sufficient, and a year later he repeated

it with greater emphasis. Still, however, the horrid rumours were

afloat. The "Record" began to investigate matters, and its vigilance was

soon rewarded by an alarming discovery: the sacrament had been

administered in Chichester Cathedral on a weekday, and 'Archdeacon

Manning, one of the most noted and determined of the Tractarians, had

acted a conspicuous part on the occasion'. It was clear that the only

way of silencing these malevolent whispers was by some public

demonstration whose import nobody could doubt. The annual sermon

preached on Guy Fawkes Day before the University of Oxford seemed to

offer the very opportunity that Manning required. He seized it; got

himself appointed preacher; and delivered from the pulpit of St. Mary's

a virulently Protestant harangue. This time there could indeed be no

doubt about the matter: Manning had shouted 'No Popery!' in the very

citadel of the Movement, and every one, including Newman, recognised

that he had finally cut himself off from his old friends. Everyone, that

is to say, except the Archdeacon himself. On the day after the sermon,

Manning walked out to the neighbouring village of Littlemore, where

Newman was now living in retirement with a few chosen disciples, in the

hope of being able to give a satisfactory explanation of what he had

done. But he was disappointed; for when, after an awkward interval, one

of the disciples appeared at the door, he was informed that Mr. Newman

was not at home.

With his retirement to Littlemore, Newman had entered upon the final

period of his Anglican career. Even he could no longer help perceiving

that the end was now only a matter of time. His progress was hastened in

an agitating manner by the indiscreet activity of one of his proselytes,

W. G. Ward. a young man who combined an extraordinary aptitude for a

priori reasoning with a passionate devotion to Opera Bouffe. It was

difficult, in fact, to decide whether the inner nature of Ward was more

truly expressing itself when he was firing off some train of scholastic

paradoxes on the Eucharist or when he was trilling the airs of Figaro

and plunging through the hilarious roulades of the Largo al Factotum.

Even Dr. Pusey could not be quite sure, though he was Ward's spiritual

director. On one occasion his young penitent came to him, and confessed

that a vow which he had taken to abstain from music during Lent was

beginning to affect his health. Could Dr. Pusey see his way to releasing

him from the vow? The Doctor decided that a little sacred music would

not be amiss. Ward was all gratitude, and that night a party was

arranged in a friend's rooms. The concert began with the solemn

harmonies of Handel, which were followed by the holy strains of the 'Oh

Salutaris' of Cherubini. Then came the elevation and the pomp of

'Possenti Numi' from the Magic Flute. But, alas! there lies much danger

in Mozart. The page was turned and there was the delicious duet between

Papageno and Papagena. Flesh and blood could not resist that; then song

followed song, the music waxed faster and lighter, until, at last Ward

burst into the intoxicating merriment of the Largo al Factotum. When it

was over, a faint but persistent knocking made itself heard upon the

wall; and it was only then that the company remembered that the rooms

next door were Dr. Pusey's.

The same entrainment which carried Ward away when he sat down to a piano

possessed him whenever he embarked on a religious discussion. 'The thing

that was utterly abhorrent to him,' said one of his friends, 'was to

stop short.' Given the premises, he would follow out their implications

with the mercilessness of a medieval monk, and when he had reached the

last limits of argument, be ready to maintain whatever propositions he

might find there with his dying breath. He had the extreme innocence of

a child and a mathematician. Captivated by the glittering eye of Newman,

he swallowed whole the supernatural conception of the universe which

Newman had evolved, accepted it as a fundamental premise, and 'began at

once to deduce from it whatsoever there might be to be deduced.' His

very first deductions included irrefutable proofs of (I) God's

particular providence for individuals; (2) the real efficacy of

intercessory prayer; (3) the reality of our communion with the saints

departed; (4) the constant presence and assistance of the angels of God.

Later on he explained mathematically the importance of the Ember Days:

'Who can tell,' he added, 'the degree of blessing lost to us in this

land by neglecting, as we alone of Christian Churches do neglect, these

holy days?' He then proceeded to convict the Reformers, not only of

rebellion, but'--for my own part I see not how we can avoid adding--of

perjury.' Every day his arguments became more extreme, more rigorously

exact, and more distressing to his master. Newman was in the position of

a cautious commander-in-chief being hurried into an engagement against

his will by a dashing cavalry officer. Ward forced him forward step by

step towards-no! he could not bear it; he shuddered and drew back. But

it was of no avail. In vain did Keble and Pusey wring their hands and

stretch forth their pleading arms to their now vanishing brother. The

fatal moment was fast approaching. Ward at last published a devastating

book in which he proved conclusively, by a series of syllogisms, that

the only proper course for the Church of England was to repent in

sackcloth and ashes her separation from the Communion of Rome. The

reckless author was deprived of his degree by an outraged University,

and a few weeks later was received into the Catholic Church.

Newman, in a kind of despair, had flung himself into the labours of

historical compilation. His views of history had changed since the days

when, as an undergraduate, he had feasted on the worldly pages of

Gibbon.

'Revealed religion,' he now thought, 'furnishes facts to other sciences,

which those sciences, left to themselves, would never reach. Thus, in

the science of history, the preservation of our race in Noah's Ark is an

historical fact, which history never would arrive at without

revelation.'

With these principles to guide him, he plunged with his disciples into a

prolonged study of the English Saints. Biographies soon appeared of St.

Bega, St. Adamnan, St. Gundleus, St. Guthlake, Brother Drithelm, St.

Amphibalus, St. Wuistan, St. Ebba, St. Neot, St. Ninian, and Cunibert

the Hermit. Their austerities, their virginity, and their miraculous

powers were described in detail. The public learned with astonishment

that St Ninian had turned a staff into a tree; that St. German had

stopped a cock from crowing, and that a child had been raised from the

dead to convert St. Helier. The series has subsequently been continued

by a more modern writer whose relation of the history of the blessed St.

Mael contains, perhaps, even more matter for edification than Newman's

biographies.

At the time, indeed, those works caused considerable scandal. Clergymen

denounced them in pamphlets. St. Cuthbert was described by his

biographer as having 'carried the jealousy of women, characteristic of

all the saints, to an extraordinary pitch'. An example was given,

whenever he held a spiritual conversation with St Ebba, he was careful

to spend the ensuing ours of darkness 'in prayer, up to his neck in

water'. 'Persons who invent such tales,' wrote one indignant

commentator, 'cast very grave and just suspicions on the purity of their

own minds. And young persons, who talk and think in this way, are in

extreme danger of falling into sinful habits. As to the volumes before

us, the authors have, in their fanatical panegyrics of virginity, made

use of language downright profane.'

One of the disciples at Littlemore was James Anthony Froude, the younger

brother of Hurrell, and it fell to his lot to be responsible for the

biography of St. Neot. While he was composing it, he began to feel some

qualms. Saints who lighted fires with icicles, changed bandits into

wolves, and floated across the Irish Channel on altar-stones, produced a

disturbing effect on his historical conscience. But he had promised his

services to Newman, and he determined to carry through the work in the

spirit in which he had begun it. He did so; but he thought it proper to

add the following sentence by way of conclusion: 'This is all, and

indeed rather more than all, that is known to men of the blessed St.

Neot; but not more than is known to the angels in heaven.'

Meanwhile, the English Roman Catholics were growing impatient; was the

great conversion never coming, for which they had prayed so fervently

and so long? Dr. Wiseman, at the head of them, was watching and waiting

with special eagerness. His hand was held out under the ripening fruit;

the delicious morsel seemed to be trembling on its stalk; and yet it did

not fall. At last, unable to bear the suspense any longer, he dispatched

to Littlemore Father Smith, an old pupil of Newman's, who had lately

joined the Roman communion, with instructions that he should do his

best, under cover of a simple visit of friendship, to discover how the

land lay. Father Smith was received somewhat coldly, and the

conversation ran entirely on topics which had nothing to do with

religion. When the company separated before dinner, he was beginning to

think that his errand had been useless; but, on their reassembling, he

suddenly noticed that Newman had changed his trousers, and that the

colour of the pair which he was now wearing was grey. At the earliest

moment, the emissary rushed back post-haste to Dr. Wiseman. 'All is

well,' he exclaimed; 'Newman no longer considers that he is in Anglican

orders." Praise be to God!' answered Dr Wiseman. 'But how do you know?'

Father Smith described what he had seen. 'Oh, is that all? My dear

father, how can you be so foolish?' But Father Smith was not to be

shaken. 'I know the man,' he said, and I know what it means. 'Newman will

come, and he will come soon.'

And Father Smith was right. A few weeks later, Newman suddenly slipped

off to a priest, and all was over. Perhaps he would have hesitated

longer still, if he could have foreseen how he was to pass the next

thirty years of his unfortunate existence; but the future was hidden,

and all that was certain was that the past had gone forever, and that

his eyes would rest no more upon the snapdragons of Trinity.

The Oxford Movement was now ended. The University breathed such a sigh

of relief as usually follows the difficult expulsion of a hard piece of

matter from a living organism, and actually began to attend to

education. As for the Church of England, she had tasted blood, and it

was clear that she would never again be content with a vegetable diet.

Her clergy, however, maintained their reputation for judicious

compromise, for they followed Newman up to the very point beyond which

his conclusions were logical, and, while they intoned, confessed, swung

incense, and burned candles with the exhilaration of converts, they yet

managed to do so with a subtle nuance which showed that they had nothing

to do with Rome. Various individuals underwent more violent changes.

Several had preceded Newman into the Roman fold; among others an unhappy

Mr. Sibthorpe, who subsequently changed his mind, and returned to the

Church of his fathers, and then--perhaps it was only natural--changed

his mind again. Many more followed Newman, and Dr. Wiseman was

particularly pleased by the conversion of a Mr. Morris, who, as he said,

was 'the author of the essay, which won the prize on the best method of

proving Christianity to the Hindus'. Hurrell Froude had died before

Newman had read the fatal article on St. Augustine; but his brother,

James Anthony, together with Arthur Clough, the poet, went through an

experience which was more distressing in those days than it has since

become; they lost their faith. With this difference, however, that while

in Froude's case the loss of his faith turned out to be rather like the

loss of a heavy portmanteau, which one afterwards discovers to have been

full of old rags and brickbats, Clough was made so uneasy by the loss of

his that he went on looking for it everywhere as long as he lived; but

somehow he never could find it. On the other hand, Keble and Pusey

continued for the rest of their lives to dance in an exemplary manner

upon the tight-rope of High Anglicanism; in such an exemplary manner,

indeed, that the tight-rope has its dancers still.

IV

MANNING was now thirty-eight, and it was clear that he was the rising

man in the Church of England. He had many powerful connections: he was

the brother-in-law of Samuel Wilberforce, who had been lately made a

bishop; he was a close friend of Mr. Gladstone, who was a Cabinet

Minister; and he was becoming well known in the influential circles of

society in London. His talent for affairs was recognised not only in the

Church, but in the world at large, and he busied himself with matters of

such varied scope as National Education, the administration of the Poor

Law, and the Employment of Women. Mr. Gladstone kept up an intimate

correspondence with him on these and on other subjects, mingling in his

letters the details of practical statesmanship with the speculations of

a religious thinker. 'Sir James Graham,' he wrote, in a discussion of

the bastardy clauses of the Poor Law, 'is much pleased with the tone of

your two communications. He is disposed, without putting an end to the

application of the workhouse test against the mother, to make the remedy

against the putative father "real and effective" for expenses incurred

in the workhouse. I am not enough acquainted to know whether it would be

advisable to go further. You have not proposed it; and I am disposed to

believe that only with a revived and improved discipline in the Church

can we hope for any generally effective check upon lawless lust.' 'I

agree with you EMINENTLY,' he writes, in a later letter, 'in your

doctrine of FILTRATION. But it sometimes occurs to me, though the

question may seem a strange one, how far was the Reformation, but

especially the Continental Reformation, designed by God, in the region

of final causes, for that purification of the Roman Church which it has

actually realised?'

In his archdeaconry, Manning lived to the full the active life of a

country clergyman. His slim, athletic figure was seen everywhere in the

streets of Chichester, or on the lawns of the neighbouring rectories, or

galloping over the downs in breeches and gaiters, or cutting brilliant

figures on the ice. He was an excellent judge of horse-flesh, and the

pair of greys which drew his hooded phaeton so swiftly through the lanes

were the admiration of the county. His features were already beginning

to assume their ascetic cast, but the spirit of youth had not yet fled

from them, so that he seemed to combine the attractions of dignity and

grace. He was a good talker, a sympathetic listener, a man who

understood the difficult art of preserving all the vigour of a manly

character and yet never giving offence. No wonder that his sermons drew

crowds, no wonder that his spiritual advice was sought for eagerly by an

ever-growing group of penitents; no wonder that men would say, when his

name was mentioned, 'Oh, Manning! No power on earth can keep HIM from a

bishopric!'

Such was the fair outward seeming of the Archdeacon's life; but, the

inward reality was different. The more active, the more fortunate, the

more full of happy promise his existence became, the more persistently

was his secret imagination haunted by a dreadful vision--the lake that

burneth forever with brimstone and fire. The temptations of the Evil One

are many, Manning knew; and he knew also that, for him at least, the

most subtle and terrible of all temptations was the temptation of

worldly success. He tried to reassure himself, but it was in vain. He

committed his thoughts to a diary, weighing scrupulously his every

motive, examining with relentless searchings into the depths of his

heart. Perhaps, after all, his longings for preferment were merely

legitimatehopes for 'an elevation into a sphere of higher usefulness'.

But no, there was something more than that. 'I do feel pleasure,' he

noted, 'in honour, precedence, elevation, the society of great people,

and all this is very shameful and mean.'

After Newman's conversion, he almost convinced himself that his 'visions

of an ecclesiastical future' were justified by the role that he would

play as a 'healer of the breach in the Church of England'. Mr. Gladstone

agreed with him; but there was One higher than Mr. Gladstone, and did He

agree?

'I am pierced by anxious thoughts. God knows what my desires have been

and are, and why they are crossed.... I am flattering myself with a

fancy about depth and reality.... The great question is: Is God enough

for you now? And if you are as now even to the end of life, will it

suffice you?... Certainly I would rather choose to be stayed on God,

than to be in the thrones of the world and the Church. Nothing else will

go into Eternity.'

In a moment of ambition, he had applied for the Readership of Lincoln's

Inn, but, owing chiefly to the hostile influence of the Record, the

appointment had gone elsewhere. A little later, a more important

position was offered to him--the office of sub-almoner to the Queen,

which had just been vacated by the Archbishop of York, and was almost

certain to lead to a mitre. The offer threw Manning into an agony of

self-examination. He drew up elaborate tables, after the manner of

Robinson Crusoe, with the reasons for and against his acceptance of the

post:

FOR AGAINST

1. That it comes unsought. 1. Not therefore to be accepted. Such

things are trials as well as leadings.

2. That it is honourable. 2. Being what I am, ought I

not therefore to decline it--

(1) as humiliation;

(2) as revenge on myself

for Lincoln's Inn;

(3) as a testimony?

And so on. He found in the end ten 'negative reasons', with no

affirmative ones to balance them, and, after a week's deliberation, he

rejected the offer.

But peace of mind was as far off from him as ever. First the bitter

thought came to him that 'in all this Satan tells me I am doing it to be

thought mortified and holy'; and then he was obsessed by the still

bitterer feelings of ineradicable disappointment and regret. He had lost

a great opportunity, and it brought him small comfort to consider that

'in the region of counsels, self-chastisement, humiliation,

self-discipline, penance, and of the Cross', he had perhaps done right.

The crisis passed, but it was succeeded by a fiercer one. Manning was

taken seriously ill, and became convinced that he might die at any

moment. The entries in his Diary grew more elaborate than ever; his

remorse for the past, his resolutions for the future, his protestations

of submission to the will of God, filled page after page of parallel

columns, headings and sub-headings, numbered clauses, and analytical

tables. 'How do I feel about Death?' he wrote.

'Certainly great fear:

1. Because of the uncertainty of our state before God.

2. Because of the consciousness--

(1) of great sins past,

(2) of great sinfulness,

(3) of most shallow repentance.

What shall I do?'

He decided to mortify himself, to read St Thomas Aquinas, and to make

his 'night prayers forty instead of thirty minutes'. He determined

during Lent 'to use no pleasant bread (except on Sundays and feasts)

such as cake and sweetmeat'; but he added the proviso 'I do not include

plain biscuits'. Opposite this entry appears the word 'KEPT'. And yet

his back-slidings were many. Looking back over a single week, he was

obliged to register 'petulance twice' and 'complacent visions'. He heard

his curate being commended for bringing so many souls to God during

Lent, and he 'could not bear it'; but the remorse was terrible: 'I

abhorred myself on the spot, and looked upward for help.' He made out

list upon list of the Almighty's special mercies towards him, and they

included his creation, his regeneration, and (No. 5) 'the preservation

of my life six times to my knowledge:

(1) In illness at the age of nine.

(2) In the water.

(3) By a runaway horse at Oxford.

(4) By the same.

(5) By falling nearly through the ceiling of a church.

(6) Again by a fall of a horse. And I know not

how often in shooting, riding, etc.'

At last he became convalescent; but the spiritual experiences of those

agitated weeks left an indelible mark upon his mind, and prepared the

way for the great change which was to follow.

For he had other doubts besides those which held him in torment as to

his own salvation; he was in doubt about the whole framework of his

faith. Newman's conversion, he found, had meant something more to him

than he had first realised. It had seemed to come as a call to the

redoubling of his Anglican activities; but supposing, in reality, it

were a call towards something very different--towards an abandonment of

those activities altogether? It might be 'a trial', or again it might be

a 'leading'; how was he to judge? Already, before his illness, these

doubts had begun to take possession of his mind.

'I am conscious to myself,' he wrote in his Diary, 'of an extensively

changed feeling towards the Church of Rome ... The Church of England

seems to me to be diseased: 1. ORGANICALLY (six sub-headings). 2.

FUNCTIONALLY (seven sub-headings) ... Wherever it seems healthy, it

approximates the system of Rome.'

Then thoughts of the Virgin Mary suddenly began to assail him:

(1) If John the Baptist were sanctified from the womb,

how much more the B.V.!

(2) If Enoch and Elijah were exempted from death,

why not the B.V. from sin?

(3) It is a strange way of loving the Son to slight

the mother!'

The arguments seemed irresistible, and a few weeks later the following

entry occurs--'Strange thoughts have visited me:

(1) I have felt that the Episcopate of the Church of England is

secularised and bound down beyond hope....

(2) I feel as if a light had fallen upon me. My feeling about the

Roman Church is not intellectual. I have intellectual

difficulties, but the great moral difficulties seem melting.

(3) Something keeps rising and saying, "You will end in the Roman

Church".

He noted altogether twenty-five of these 'strange thoughts'. His mind

hovered anxiously round--

(1) The Incarnation,

(2) The Real Presence,

i. Regeneration,

ii. Eucharist, and

(3) The Exaltation of S. M. and Saints.

His twenty-second strange thought was as follows: 'How do I know where I

may be two years hence? Where was Newman five years ago?'

It was significant, but hardly surprising, that, after his illness,

Manning should have chosen to recuperate in Rome. He spent several

months there, and his Diary during the whole of that period is concerned

entirely with detailed descriptions of churches, ceremonies, and relics,

and with minute accounts of conversations with priests and nuns. There

is not a single reference either to the objects of art or to the

antiquities of the place; but another omission was still more

remarkable. Manning had a long interview with Pius IX, and his only

record of it is contained in the bald statement: 'Audience today at the

Vatican'. Precisely what passed on that occasion never transpired; all

that is known is that His Holiness expressed considerable surprise on

learning from the Archdeacon that the chalice was used in the Anglican

Church in the administration of Communion. 'What!' he exclaimed, is the

same chalice made use of by everyone?' 'I remember the pain I felt,'

said Manning, long afterwards, 'at seeing how unknown we were to the

Vicar of Jesus Christ. It made me feel our isolation.'

On his return to England, he took up once more the work in his

Archdeaconry with what appetite he might. Ravaged by doubt, distracted

by speculation, he yet managed to maintain an outward presence of

unshaken calm. His only confidant was Robert Wilberforce, to whom, for

the next two years, he poured forth in a series of letters, headed

'UNDER THE SEAL' to indicate that they contained the secrets of the

confessional--the whole history of his spiritual perturbations. The

irony of his position was singular; for, during the whole of this time,

Manning was himself holding back from the Church of Rome a host of

hesitating penitents by means of arguments which he was at the very

moment denouncing as fallacious to his own confessor. But what else

could he do? When he received, for instance, a letter such as the

following from an agitated lady, what was he to say?

'MY DEAR FATHER IN CHRIST,

' ... I am sure you would pity me and like to help me, if you knew the

unhappy, unsettled state my mind is in, and the misery of being

ENTIRELY, WHEREVER I AM, with those who look upon joining the Church of

Rome as the most awful "fall" conceivable to any one, and are devoid of

the smallest comprehension of how any enlightened person can do it....

My old Evangelical friends, with all my deep, deep love for them, do not

succeed in shaking me in the least....

'My brother has just published a book called "Regeneration", which all

my friends are reading and highly extolling; it has a very contrary

effect to what he would desire on my mind. I can read and understand it

all in an altogether different sense, and the facts which he quotes

about the articles as drawn up in 1536, and again in 1552, and of the

Irish articles of 1615 and 1634, STARTLE and SHAKE me about the Reformed

Church in England far more than anything else, and have done so ever

since I first saw them in Mr. Maskell's pamphlet (as quoted from Mr

Dodsworth's).

'I do hope you have some time and thought to pray for me still. Mr.

Galton's letters long ago grew into short formal notes, which hurt me

and annoyed me particularly, and I never answered his last, so,

literally, I have no one to say things to and get help from, which in

one sense is a comfort when my convictions seem to be leading me on and

on, and gaining strength in spite of all the dreariness of my lot.

'Do you know I can't help being very anxious and unhappy about poor

Sister Harriet. I am afraid of her GOING OUT OF HER MIND. She comforts

herself by an occasional outpouring of everything to me, and I had a

letter this morning.... She says Sister May has promised the Vicar never

to talk to her or allow her to talk on the subject with her, and I doubt

whether this can be good for her, because though she has lost her faith,

she says, in the Church of England, yet she never thinks of what she

could have faith in, and resolutely without inquiring into the question

determines not to be a Roman Catholic, so that really, you see, she is

allowing her mind to run adrift and yet perfectly powerless.

'Forgive my troubling you with this letter, and believe me to be always

your faithful, grateful and affectionate daughter,

'EMMA RYLE.

'P.S. I wish I could see you once more so very much.'

How was Manning, a director of souls, and a clergyman of the Church of

England, to reply that in sober truth there was very little to choose

between the state of mind of Sister Emma, or even of Sister Harriet, and

his own? The dilemma was a grievous one: when a soldier finds himself

fighting for a cause in which he has lost faith, it is treachery to

stop, and it is treachery to go on.

At last, in the seclusion of his library, Manning turned in agony to

those old writings which had provided Newman with so much instruction

and assistance; perhaps the Fathers would do something for him as well.

He ransacked the pages of St. Cyprian and St. Cyril; he went through the

complete works of St. Optatus and St. Leo; he explored the vast

treatises of Tertullian and Justin Martyr. He had a lamp put into his

phaeton, so that he might lose no time during his long winter drives.

There he sat, searching St. Chrysostom for some mitigation of his

anguish, while he sped along between the hedges to distant sufferers, to

whom he duly administered the sacraments according to the rites of the

English Church. He hurried back to commit to his Diary the analysis of

his reflections, and to describe, under the mystic formula of secrecy,

the intricate workings of his conscience to Robert Wilberforce. But,

alas! he was no Newman; and even the fourteen folios of St. Augustine

himself, strange to say, gave him very little help.

The final propulsion was to come from an entirely different quarter. In

November, 1847, the Reverend Mr. Gorham was presented by the Lord

Chancellor to the living of Bramford Speke in the diocese of Exeter. The

Bishop, Dr. Phillpotts, was a High Churchman, and he had reason to

believe that Mr. Gorham held evangelical opinions; he therefore

subjected him to an examination on doctrine, which took the form partly

of a verbal interrogatory, lasting thirty-eight hours, and partly of a

series of one hundred and forty-nine written questions. At the end of

the examination he came to the conclusion that Mr. Gorham held heretical

views on the subject of Baptismal Regeneration, and he therefore refused

to institute. Mr. Gorham, thereupon, took proceedings against the Bishop

in the Court of Arches. He lost his case; and he then appealed to the

judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

The questions at issue were taken very seriously by a large number of

persons. In the first place, there was the question of Baptismal

Regeneration itself. This is by no means an easy one to disentangle; but

it may be noted that the doctrine of Baptism includes: (1) God's

intention, that is to say, His purpose in electing certain persons to

eternal life--an abstruse and greatly controverted subject, upon which

the Church of England abstains from strict definition; (2) God's action,

whether by means of sacraments or otherwise--concerning which the Church

of England maintains the efficacy of sacraments,' but does not formally

deny that grace may be given by other means, repentance and faith being

present; and (3) the question whether sacramental grace is given

instrumentally, by and at the moment of the act of baptism, or in

consequence of an act of prevenient grace rendering the receiver

worthy--that is to say, whether sacramental grace in baptism is given

absolutely or conditionally.

It was over this last question that the dispute raged hottest in the

Gorham Case. The High Church party, represented by Dr. Phillpotts,

asserted that the mere act of baptism conferred regeneration upon the

recipient and washed away his original sin. To this the Evangelicals,

headed by Mr. Gorham, replied that, according to the Articles,

regeneration would not follow unless baptism was RIGHTLY received. What,

then, was the meaning of 'rightly'? Clearly it implied not merely lawful

administration, but worthy reception; worthiness, therefore, is the

essence of the sacrament; and worthiness means faith and repentance.

Now, two propositions were accepted by both parties--that all infants

are born in original sin, and that original sin could be washed away by

baptism. But how could both these propositions be true, argued Mr.

Gorham, if it was also true that faith and repentance were necessary

before baptism could come into operation at all? How could an infant in

arms be said to be in a state of faith and repentance? How, therefore,

could its original sin be washed away by baptism? And yet, as every one

agreed, washed away it was.

The only solution of the difficulty lay in the doctrine of prevenient

grace; and Mr. Gorham maintained that unless God performed an act of

prevenient grace by which the infant was endowed with faith and

repentance, no act of baptism could be effectual; though to whom, and

under what conditions, prevenient grace was given, Mr. Gorham confessed

himself unable to decide. The light thrown by the Bible upon the whole

matter seemed somewhat dubious, for whereas the baptism of St. Peter's

disciples at Jerusalem and St. Philip's at Samaria was followed by the

gift of the Spirit, in the case of Cornelius the sacrament succeeded the

gift. St. Paul also was baptised; and as for the language of St. John

iii 5; Rom. vi 3, 4; I Peter iii 21, it admits of more than one

interpretation. There could, however, be no doubt that the Church of

England assented to Dr. Phillpotts' opinion; the question was whether or

not she excluded Mr. Gorham's. If it was decided that she did, it was

clear that henceforward, there would be very little peace for

Evangelicals within her fold.

But there was another issue, even more fundamental than that of

Baptismal Regeneration itself, involved in the Gorham trial. An Act

passed in 1833 had constituted the Judicial Committee of the Privy

Council the supreme court of appeal for such cases; and this Committee

was a body composed entirely of laymen. It was thus obvious that the

Royal Supremacy was still a fact, and that a collection of lawyers

appointed by the Crown had the legal right to formulate the religious

doctrine of the Church of England. In 1850 their judgment was delivered;

they reversed the decision of the Court of Arches, and upheld the

position of Mr. Gorham. Whether his views were theologically correct or

not, they said, was not their business; it was their business to decide

whether the opinions under consideration were contrary or repugnant to

the doctrine of the Church of England as enjoined upon the clergy by its

Articles, Formularies, and Rubrics; and they had come to the conclusion

that they were not. The judgement still holds good; and to this day, a

clergyman of the Church of England is quite at liberty to believe that

Regeneration does not invariably take place when an infant is baptised.

The blow fell upon no one with greater violence than upon Manning. Not

only was the supreme efficacy of the sign of the cross upon a baby's

forehead one of his favourite doctrines, but up to that moment he had

been convinced that the Royal Supremacy was a mere accident--a temporary

usurpation which left the spiritual dominion of the Church essentially

untouched. But now the horrid reality rose up before him, crowned and

triumphant; it was all too clear that an Act of Parliament, passed by

Jews, Roman Catholics, and Dissenters, was the ultimate authority which

decided upon the momentous niceties of the Anglican faith. Mr. Gladstone

also, was deeply perturbed. It was absolutely necessary, he wrote, to

'rescue and defend the conscience of the Church from the present hideous

system'. An agitation was set on foot, and several influential

Anglicans, with Manning at their head, drew up and signed a formal

protest against the Gorham judgment. Mr. Gladstone however, proposed

another method of procedure: precipitate action, he declared, must be

avoided at all costs, and he elaborated a scheme for securing

procrastination, by which a covenant was to bind all those who believed

that an article of the creed had been abolished by Act of Parliament to

take no steps in any direction, nor to announce their intention of doing

so, until a given space of time had elapsed. Mr. Gladstone was hopeful

that some good might come of this--though indeed he could not be sure.

'Among others,' he wrote to Manning, 'I have consulted Robert

Wilberforce and Wegg-Prosser, and they seemed inclined to favour my

proposal. It might, perhaps, have kept back Lord Feilding. But he is

like a cork.'

The proposal was certainly not favoured by Manning. Protests and

procrastinations, approving Wegg-Prossers and cork-like Lord

Feildings--all this was feeding the wind and folly; the time for action

had come.

'I can no longer continue,' he wrote to Robert Wilberforce, 'under oath

and subscription binding me to the Royal Supremacy in Ecclesiastical

causes, being convinced:

(1) That it is a violation of the Divine Office of the Church.

(2) That it has involved the Church of England in a separation

from the Universal Church, which separation I cannot clear of the

character of schism.

(3) That it has thereby suspended and prevented the functions of

the Church of England.'

It was in vain that Robert Wilberforce pleaded, in vain that Mr.

Gladstone urged upon his mind the significance of John iii 8. ['The wind

bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst

not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is

born of the Spirit.']

'I admit,' Mr. Gladstone wrote, 'that the words might in some way be

satisfied by supposing our Lord simply to mean "the facts of nature are

unintelligible, therefore, be not afraid if revealed truths be likewise

beyond the compass of the understanding"; but this seems to me a meagre

meaning.'

Such considerations could hold him no longer, and Manning executed the

resignation of his office and benefice before a public notary. Soon

afterwards, in the little Chapel off Buckingham Palace Road, kneeling

beside Mr. Gladstone, he worshipped for the last time as an Anglican.

Thirty years later the Cardinal told how, just before the Communion

service commenced, he turned to his friends with the words:

'I can no longer take the Communion in the Church of England.' 'I rose

up, and laying my hand on Mr. Gladstone's shoulder, said "Come". It was

the parting of the ways. Mr. Gladstone remained; and I went my way. Mr.

Gladstone still remains where I left him.'

On April 6th, 1851, the final step was taken: Manning was received into

the Roman Catholic Church. Now at last, after the long struggle, his

mind was at rest.

'I know what you mean,' he wrote to Robert Wilberforce, 'by saying that

one sometimes feels as if all this might turn out to be only another

"Land of Shadows". I have felt it in time past, but not now. The

theologia from Nice to St. Thomas Aquinas, and the undivided unity

suffused throughout the world, of which the Cathedra Petri is the

centre, is now 1800 years old, and mightier in every power now than

ever--in intellect, in science, in separation from the world; and purer

too, refined by 300 years of conflict with the modern infidel

civilisation--all of this is a fact more solid than the earth.'

V.

WHEN Manning joined the Church of Rome, he acted under the combined

impulse of the two dominating forces in his nature. His preoccupation

with the supernatural might, alone, have been satisfied within the fold

of the Anglican communion; and so might his preoccupation with

himself--the one might have found vent in the elaborations of High

Church ritual, and the other in the activities of a bishopric. But the

two together could not be quieted so easily. The Church of England is a

commodious institution; she is very anxious to please, but somehow or

other, she has never managed to supply a happy home to superstitious

egotists. 'What an escape for my poor soul!' Manning is said to have

exclaimed when, shortly after his conversion, a mitre was going

a-begging. But, in truth, Manning's 'poor soul' had scented nobler

quarry. To one of his temperament, how was it possible, when once the

choice was plainly put, to hesitate for a moment between the respectable

dignity of an English bishop, harnessed by the secular power, with the

Gorham judgment as a bit between his teeth, and the illimitable

pretensions of the humblest priest of Rome?

For the moment, however, it seemed as if the Fates had at last been

successful in their little game of shunting Manning. The splendid career

which he had so laboriously built up from the small beginnings of his

Sussex curacy was shattered--and shattered by the inevitable operation

of his own essential needs. He was over forty, and he had been put back

once more to the very bottom rung of the ladder--a middle-aged neophyte

with, so far as could be seen, no special claim to the attention of his

new superiors. The example of Newman, a far more illustrious convert,

was hardly reassuring: he had been relegated to a complete obscurity, in

which he was to remain until extreme old age. Why should there be

anything better in store for Manning? Yet it so happened that within

fourteen years of his conversion Manning was Archbishop of Westminster

and the supreme ruler of the Roman Catholic community in England. This

time the Fates gave up the unequal struggle; they paid over their stakes

in despair, and retired from the game.

Nevertheless it is difficult to feel quite sure that Manning's plunge

was as hazardous as it appeared. Certainly he was not a man who was

likely to forget to look before he leaped, nor one who, if he happened

to know that there was a mattress spread to receive him, would leap with

less conviction. In the light of after-events, one would be glad to know

what precisely passed at that mysterious interview of his with the Pope,

three years before his conversion. It is at least possible that the

authorities in Rome had their eye on Manning; the may well have felt

that the Archdeacon of Chichester would be a great catch. What did Pio

Nono say? It is easy to imagine the persuasive innocence of his Italian

voice. 'Ah, dear Signor Manning, why don't you come over to us? Do you

suppose that we should not look after you?'

At any rate, when he did go over, Manning was looked after very

thoroughly. There was, it is true, a momentary embarrassment at the

outset: it was only with the greatest difficulty that he could bring

himself to abandon his faith in the validity of Anglican Orders, in

which he believed 'with consciousness stronger than all reasoning'. He

was convinced that he was still a priest. When the Rev. Mr. Tierney, who

had received him into the Roman Catholic communion, assured him that

this was not the case, he was filled with dismay and mortification.

After a five hour discussion, he started to his feet in a rage. 'Then,

Mr. Tierney,' he exclaimed, 'you think me insincere.'

The bitter draught was swallowed at last, and, after that, all went

smoothly. Manning hastened to Rome, and was immediately placed by the

Pope in the highly select Accademia Ecclesiastica, commonly known as the

'Nursery of Cardinals', for the purpose of completing his theological

studies. When the course was finished, he continued, by the Pope's

special request, to spend six months of every year in Rome, where he

preached to the English visitors, became acquainted with the great

personages of the Papal court, and enjoyed the privilege of constant

interviews with the Holy Father. At the same time, he was able to make

himself useful in London, where Cardinal Wiseman, the newly created

Archbishop of Westminster, was seeking to reanimate the Roman Catholic

community. Manning was not only extremely popular in the pulpit and in

the confessional; he was not only highly efficient as a gleaner of

souls--and of souls who moved in the best society; he also possessed a

familiarity with official persons and official ways, which was

invaluable. When the question arose of the appointment of Catholic

chaplains in the Crimea during the war, it was Manning who approached

the Minister, interviewed the Permanent Secretary, and finally succeeded

in obtaining all that was required. When a special Reformatory for

Catholic children was proposed, Manning carried through the negotiation

with the Government. When an attempt was made to remove Catholic

children from the Workhouses, Manning was again indispensable. No wonder

Cardinal Wiseman soon determined to find some occupation of special

importance for the energetic convert. He had long wished to establish a

congregation of secular priests in London particularly devoted to his

service, and the opportunity for the experiment had clearly now arisen.

The order of the Oblates of St. Charles was founded in Bayswater, and

Manning was put at its head. Unfortunately, no portion of the body of

St. Charles could be obtained for the new community, but two relics of

his blood were brought over to Bayswater from Milan. Almost at the same

time the Pope signified his appreciation of Manning's efforts by

appointing him Provost of the Chapter of Westminster--a position which

placed him at the head of the Canons of the diocese.

This double promotion was the signal for the outbreak of an

extraordinary internal struggle, which raged without intermission for

the next seven years, and was to end only with the accession of Manning

to the Archbishopric. The condition of the Roman Catholic community in

England was at that time a singular one. On the one hand the old

repressive laws of the seventeenth century had been repealed by liberal

legislation, and on the other a large new body of distinguished converts

had entered the Roman Church as a result of the Oxford Movement. It was

evident that there was a 'boom' in English Catholicism, and, in 1850,

Pius IX recognised the fact by dividing up the whole of England into

dioceses, and placing Wiseman at the head of them as Archbishop of

Westminster. Wiseman's encyclical, dated 'from without the Flaminian

Gate', in which he announced the new departure, was greeted in England

by a storm of indignation, culminating in the famous and furibund letter

of Lord John Russell, then Prime Minister, against the insolence of the

'Papal Aggression'. Though the particular point against which the outcry

was raised--the English territorial titles of the new Roman bishops--was

an insignificant one, the instinct of Lord John and of the English

people was in reality sound enough. Wiseman's installation did mean, in

fact, a new move in the Papal game; it meant an advance, if not an

aggression--a quickening in England of the long-dormant energies of the

Roman Church. That Church has never had the reputation of being an

institution to be trifled with; and, in those days, the Pope was still

ruling as a temporal Prince over the fairest provinces of Italy. Surely,

if the images of Guy Fawkes had not been garnished, on that fifth of

November, with triple crowns, it would have been a very poor compliment

to His Holiness.

But it was not only the honest Protestants of England who had cause to

dread the arrival of the new Cardinal Archbishop; there was a party

among the Catholics themselves who viewed his installation with alarm

and disgust. The families in which the Catholic tradition had been

handed down uninterruptedly since the days of Elizabeth, which had known

the pains of exile and of martyrdom, and which clung together an alien

and isolated group in the midst of English society, now began to feel

that they were, after all, of small moment in the counsels of Rome. They

had laboured through the heat of the day, but now it seemed as if the

harvest was to be gathered in by a crowd of converts who were

proclaiming on every side as something new and wonderful the truths

which the Old Catholics, as they came to be called, had not only known,

but for which they had suffered for generations. Cardinal Wiseman, it is

true, was no convert; he belonged to one of the oldest of the Catholic

families; but he had spent most of his life in Rome, he was out of touch

with English traditions, and his sympathy with Newman and his followers

was only too apparent. One of his first acts as Archbishop was to

appoint the convert W. G. Ward, who was not even in holy orders, to be

Professor of Theology at St. Edmund's College--the chief seminary for

young priests, in which the ancient traditions of Douay were still

flourishing. Ward was an ardent Papalist and his appointment indicated

clearly enough that in Wiseman's opinion there was too little of the

Italian spirit in the English community. The uneasiness of the Old

Catholics was becoming intense, when they were reassured by Wiseman's

appointing as his co-adjutor and successor his intimate friend, Dr.

Errington, who was created on the occasion Archbishop of Trebizond in

partibus infidelium. Not only was Dr. Errington an Old Catholic of the

most rigid type, he was a man of extreme energy, whose influence was

certain to be great; and, in any case, Wiseman was growing old, so that

before very long it seemed inevitable that the policy of the diocese

would be in proper hands. Such was the position of affairs when, two

years after Errington's appointment, Manning became head of the Oblates

of St. Charles and Provost of the Chapter of Westminster.

The Archbishop of Trebizond had been for some time growing more and more

suspicious of Manning's influence, and this sudden elevation appeared to

justify his worst fears. But his alarm was turned to fury when he

learned that St. Edmund's College, from which he had just succeeded in

removing the obnoxious W. G. Ward, was to be placed under the control of

the Oblates of St. Charles. The Oblates did not attempt to conceal the

fact that one of their principal aims was to introduce the customs of a

Roman Seminary into England. A grim perspective of espionage and

tale-bearing, foreign habits, and Italian devotions opened out before

the dismayed eyes of the Old Catholics; they determined to resist to the

utmost; and it was upon the question of the control of St. Edmund's that

the first battle in the long campaign between Errington and Manning was

fought.

Cardinal Wiseman was now obviously declining towards the grave. A man of

vast physique--'your immense', an Irish servant used respectfully to

call him--of sanguine temperament, of genial disposition, of versatile

capacity, he seemed to have engrafted upon the robustness of his English

nature the facile, child-like, and expansive qualities of the South. So

far from being a Bishop Blougram (as the rumour went) he was, in fact,

the very antithesis of that subtle and worldly-wise ecclesiastic. He had

innocently looked forward all his life to the reunion of England to the

See of Peter, and eventually had come to believe that, in God's hand, he

was the instrument destined to bring about this miraculous consummation.

Was not the Oxford Movement, with its flood of converts, a clear sign of

the Divine will? Had he not himself been the author of that momentous

article on St. Augustine and the Donatists, which had finally convinced

Newman that the Church of England was in schism? And then, had he not

been able to set afoot a Crusade of Prayer throughout Catholic Europe

for the conversion of England?

He awaited the result with eager expectation, and in the meantime he set

himself to smooth away the hostility of his countrymen by delivering

courses of popular lectures on literature and archaeology. He devoted

much time and attention to the ceremonial details of his princely

office. His knowledge of rubric and ritual, and of the symbolical

significations of vestments, has rarely been equalled, and he took a

profound delight in the ordering and the performance of elaborate

processions. During one of these functions, an unexpected difficulty

arose: the Master of Ceremonies suddenly gave the word for a halt, and,

on being asked the reason, replied that he had been instructed that

moment by special revelation to stop the procession. The Cardinal,

however, was not at a loss. 'You may let the procession go on,' he

smilingly replied. 'I have just obtained permission, by special

revelation, to proceed with it.' His leisure hours he spent in the

writing of edifying novels, the composition of acrostics in Latin Verse,

and in playing battledore and shuttlecock with his little nieces. There

was, indeed, only one point in which he resembled Bishop Blougram--his

love of a good table. Some of Newman's disciples were astonished and

grieved to find that he sat down to four courses of fish during Lent. 'I

am sorry to say,' remarked one of them afterwards, 'that there is a

lobster salad side to the Cardinal.'

It was a melancholy fate which ordained that the last years of this

comfortable, easygoing, innocent old man should be distracted and

embittered by the fury of opposing principles and the venom of personal

animosities. But so it was. He had fallen into the hands of one who

cared very little for the gentle pleasures of repose. Left to himself,

Wiseman might have compromised with the Old Catholics and Dr. Errington;

but when Manning had once appeared upon the scene, all compromise became

impossible. The late Archdeacon of Chichester, who had understood so

well and practised with such careful skill the precept of the golden

mean so dear to the heart of the Church of England, now, as Provost of

Westminster, flung himself into the fray with that unyielding intensity

of fervour, that passion for the extreme and the absolute, which is the

very lifeblood of the Church of Rome. Even the redoubtable Dr.

Errington, short, thickset, determined, with his `hawk-like expression

of face', as a contemporary described him, 'as he looked at you through

his blue spectacles', had been known to quail in the presence of his,

antagonist, with his tall and graceful figure, his pale ascetic

features, his compressed and icy lips, his calm and penetrating gaze. As

for the poor Cardinal, he was helpless indeed.

Henceforward, there was to be no paltering with that dangerous spirit of

independence--was it not almost Gallicanism which possessed the Old

Catholic families of England? The supremacy of the Vicar of Christ must

be maintained at all hazards. Compared with such an object, what were

the claims of personal affection and domestic peace? The Cardinal

pleaded in vain; his lifelong friendship with Dr. Errington was plucked

up by the roots, and the harmony of his private life was utterly

destroyed. His own household was turned against him. His favourite

nephew, whom he had placed among the Oblates under Manning's special

care, left the congregation and openly joined the party of Dr.

Errington. His secretary followed suit; but saddest of all was the case

of Monsignor Searle. Monsignor Searle, in the capacity of confidential

man of affairs, had dominated over the Cardinal in private for years

with the autocratic fidelity of a servant who has grown indispensable.

His devotion, in fact, seemed to have taken the form of physical

imitation, for he was hardly less gigantic than his master. The two were

inseparable; their huge figures loomed together like neighbouring

mountains; and on one occasion, meeting them in the street, a gentleman

congratulated Wiseman on 'your Eminence's fine son'. Yet now even this

companionship was broken up. The relentless Provost here too brought a

sword. There were explosions and recriminations. Monsignor Searle,

finding that his power was slipping from him, made scenes and protests,

and at last was foolish enough to accuse Manning of peculation to his

face; after that it was clear that his day was over; he was forced to

slink snarling into the background, while the Cardinal shuddered through

all his immensity, and wished many times that he were already dead.

Yet, he was not altogether without his consolations; Manning took care

to see to that. His piercing eye had detected the secret way into the

recesses of the Cardinal's heart--had discerned the core of simple faith

which underlay that jovial manner and that facile talk. Others were

content to laugh and chatter and transact their business; Manning was

more artistic. He watched his opportunity, and then, when the moment

came, touched with a deft finger the chord of the Conversion of England.

There was an immediate response, and he struck the same chord again, and

yet again. He became the repository of the Cardinal's most intimate

aspirations. He alone sympathised and understood. 'If God gives me

strength to undertake a great wrestling-match with infidelity,' Wiseman

wrote, 'I shall owe it to him.'

But what he really found himself undertaking was a wrestling-match with

Dr. Errington. The struggle over St. Edmund's College grew more and more

acute. There were high words in the Chapter, where Monsignor Searle led

the assault against the Provost, and carried a resolution declaring that

the Oblates of St. Charles had intruded themselves illegally into the

Seminary. The Cardinal quashed the proceedings of the Chapter;

whereupon, the Chapter appealed to Rome. Dr. Errington, carried away by

the fury of the controversy, then appeared as the avowed opponent of the

Provost and the Cardinal. With his own hand he drew up a document

justifying the appeal of the Chapter to Rome by Canon Law and the

decrees of the Council of Trent. Wiseman was deeply pained: 'My own

co-adjutor,' he exclaimed, 'is acting as solicitor against me in a

lawsuit.' There was a rush to Rome, where, for several ensuing years,

the hostile English parties were to wage a furious battle in the

antechambers of the Vatican. But the dispute over the Oblates now sank

into insignificance beside the rage of contention which centred round a

new and far more deadly question; for the position of Dr. Errington

himself was at stake. The Cardinal, in spite of illness, indolence, and

the ties of friendship, had been brought at last to an extraordinary

step--he was petitioning the Pope for nothing less than the deprivation

and removal of the Archbishop of Trebizond.

The precise details of what followed are doubtful. It is only possible

to discern with clearness, amid a vast cloud of official documents and

unofficial correspondences in English, Italian, and Latin, of Papal

decrees and voluminous scritture, of confidential reports of episcopal

whispers and the secret agitations of Cardinals, the form of Manning,

restless and indomitable, scouring like a stormy petrel the angry ocean

of debate. Wiseman, dilatory, unbusinesslike, and infirm, was ready

enough to leave the conduct of affairs in his hands. Nor was it long

before Manning saw where the key of the whole position lay. As in the

old days, at Chichester, he had secured the goodwill of Bishop

Shuttleworth by cultivating the friendship of Archdeacon Hare, so now,

on this vaster scale of operations, his sagacity led him swiftly and

unerringly up the little winding staircase in the Vatican and through

the humble door which opened into the cabinet of Monsignor Talbot, the

private secretary of the Pope. Monsignor Talbot was a priest who

embodied in a singular manner, if not the highest, at least the most

persistent traditions of the Roman Curia. He was a master of various

arts which the practice of ages has brought to perfection under the

friendly shadow of the triple tiara. He could mingle together astuteness

and holiness without any difficulty; he could make innuendoes as

naturally as an ordinary man makes statements of fact; he could apply

flattery with so unsparing a hand that even Princes of the Church found

it sufficient; and, on occasion, he could ring the changes of torture on

a human soul with a tact which called forth universal approbation. With

such accomplishments, it could hardly be expected that Monsignor Talbot

should be remarkable either for a delicate sense of conscientiousness or

for an extreme refinement of feeling, but then it was not for those

qualities that Manning was in search when he went up the winding stair.

He was looking for the man who had the ear of Pio Nono; and, on the

other side of the low-arched door, he found him. Then he put forth all

his efforts; his success was complete; and an alliance began which was

destined to have the profoundest effect upon Manning's career, and was

only dissolved when, many years later, Monsignor Talbot was

unfortunately obliged to exchange his apartment in the Vatican for a

private lunatic asylum at Passy.

It was determined that the coalition should be ratified by the ruin of

Dr. Errington. When the moment of crisis was seen to be approaching,

Wiseman was summoned to Rome, where he began to draw up an immense

scrittura containing his statement of the case. For months past, the

redoubtable energies of the Archbishop of Trebizond had been absorbed in

a similar task. Folio was being piled upon folio, when a sudden blow

threatened to put an end to the whole proceeding in a summary manner.

The Cardinal was seized by violent illness, and appeared to be upon his

deathbed. Manning thought for a moment that his labours had been in vain

and that all was lost. But the Cardinal recovered; Monsignor Talbot used

his influence as he alone knew how; and a papal decree was issued by

which Dr. Errington was 'liberated' from the Coadjutorship of

Westminster, together with the right of succession to the See.

It was a supreme act of authority--a 'colpo di stato di Dominiddio', as

the Pope himself said--and the blow to the Old Catholics was

correspondingly severe. They found themselves deprived at one fell swoop

both of the influence of their most energetic supporter and of the

certainty of coming into power at Wiseman's death. And in the meantime,

Manning was redoubling his energies at Bayswater. Though his Oblates had

been checked over St. Edmund's, there was still no lack of work for them

to do. There were missions to be carried on, schools to be managed,

funds to be collected. Several new churches were built; a community of

most edifying nuns of the Third Order of St. Francis was established;

and L30,000, raised from Manning's private resources and from those of

his friends, was spent in three years. 'I hate that man,' one of the Old

Catholics exclaimed, 'he is such a forward piece.' The words were

reported to Manning, who shrugged his shoulders.

'Poor man,' he said, 'what is he made of? Does he suppose, in his

foolishness, that after working day and night for twenty years in heresy

and schism, on becoming a Catholic, I should sit in an easy-chair and

fold my hands all the rest of my life?'

But his secret thoughts were of a different caste.

'I am conscious of a desire,' he wrote in his Diary, 'to be in such a

position: (I) as I had in times past; (2) as my present circumstances

imply; (3) as my friends think me fit for; and (4) as I feel my own

faculties tend to.

'But, God being my helper, I will not seek it by the lifting of a finger

or the speaking, of a word.'

So Manning wrote, and thought, and prayed; but what are words, and

thoughts, and even prayers, to the mysterious and relentless powers of

circumstance and character? Cardinal Wiseman was slowly dying; the

tiller of the Church was slipping from his feeble hand; and Manning was

beside him, the one man with the energy, the ability, the courage, and

the conviction to steer the ship upon her course. More than that; there

was the sinister figure of a Dr. Errington crouching close at hand,

ready to seize the helm and make straight--who could doubt it?--for the

rocks. In such a situation the voice of self-abnegation must needs grow

still and small indeed. Yet it spoke on, for it was one of the paradoxes

in Manning's soul that that voice was never silent. Whatever else he

was, he was not unscrupulous. Rather, his scruples deepened with his

desires; and he could satisfy his most exorbitant ambitions in a

profundity of self-abasement. And so now he vowed to Heaven that he

would SEEK nothing--no, not by the lifting of a finger or the speaking

of a word. But, if something came to him--? He had vowed not to seek; he

had not vowed not to take. Might it not be his plain duty to take? Might

it not be the will of God?

Something, of course, did come to him, though it seemed for a moment

that it would elude his grasp. Wiseman died, and there ensued in Rome a

crisis of extraordinary intensity. 'Since the creation of the

hierarchy,' Monsignor Talbot wrote, it is the greatest moment for the

Church that I have yet seen.' It was the duty of the Chapter of

Westminster to nominate three candidates for succession to the

Archbishopric; they made one last effort, and had the temerity to place

upon the list, besides the names of two Old Catholic bishops, that of

Dr. Errington. It was a fatal blunder. Pius IX was furious; the Chapter

had committed an 'insulta al Papa', he exclaimed, striking his breast

three times in his rage. 'It was the Chapter that did it,' said Manning,

afterwards; but even after the Chapter's indiscretion, the fatal

decision hung in the balance for weeks.

'The great point of anxiety with me, wrote Monsignor Talbot to Manning,

'is whether a Congregation will be held, or whether the Holy Father will

perform a Pontifical act. He himself is doubting. I therefore say mass

and pray every morning that he may have the courage to choose for

himself, instead of submitting the matter to a Congregation. Although

the Cardinals are determined to reject Dr. Errington, nevertheless I am

afraid that they should select one of the others. You know very well

that Congregations are guided by the documents that are placed before

them; it is for this reason that I should prefer the Pope's acting

himself.'

But the Holy Father himself was doubting. In his indecision, he ordered

a month of prayers and masses. The suspense grew and grew. Everything

seemed against Manning. The whole English episcopate was opposed to him;

he had quarrelled with the Chapter; he was a convert of but few years'

standing; even the congregated Cardinals did not venture to suggest the

appointment of such a man. But suddenly, the Holy Father's doubts came

to an end. He heard a voice--a mysterious inward voice--whispering

something in his ear. 'Mettetelo li! Mettetelo li!' the voice repeated,

over and over again. Mettetelo li! It was an inspiration; and Pius IX,

brushing aside the recommendations of the Chapter and the deliberations

of the Cardinals, made Manning, by a Pontifical act, Archbishop of

Westminster.

Monsignor Talbot's felicity was complete; and he took occasion in

conveying his congratulations to his friend, to make some illuminating

reflections upon the great event.

'MY policy throughout,' he wrote, 'was never to propose you DIRECTLY to

the Pope, but, to make others do so, so that both you and I can always

say that it was not I who induced the Holy Father to name you--which

would lessen the weight of your appointment. This I say, because many

have said that your being named was all my doing. I do not say that the

Pope did not know that I thought you the only man eligible--as I took

care to tell him over and over again what was against all the other

candidates--and in consequence, he was almost driven into naming you.

After he had named you, the Holy Father said to me, "What a diplomatist

you are, to make what you wished come to pass!"

'Nevertheless,' concluded Monsignor Talbot, 'I believe your appointment

was specially directed by the Holy Ghost.'

Manning himself was apparently of the same opinion.

'My dear Child,' he wrote to a lady penitent, 'I have in these last

three weeks felt as if our Lord had called me by name. Everything else

has passed out of my mind. The firm belief that I have long had that the

Holy Father is the most supernatural person I have ever seen has given

me this feeling more deeply. 'Still, I feel as if I had been brought,

contrary to all human wills, by the Divine Will, into an immediate

relation to our Divine Lord.'

'If indeed,' he wrote to Lady Herbert, 'it were the will of our Divine

Lord to lay upon me this heavy burden, He could have done it in no way

more strengthening and consoling to me. To receive it from the hands of

His Vicar, and from Pius IX, and after long invocation of the Holy

Ghost, and not only without human influences, but in spite of manifold

aria powerful human opposition, gives me the last strength for such a

cross.'

VI

MANNING'S appointment filled his opponents with alarm. Wrath and

vengeance seemed to be hanging over them; what might not be expected

from the formidable enemy against whom they had struggled for so long,

and who now stood among them armed with archiepiscopal powers and

invested with the special confidence of Rome? Great was their amazement,

great was their relief, when they found that their dreaded master

breathed nothing but kindness, gentleness, and conciliation. The old

scores, they found, were not to be paid off, but to be wiped out. The

new archbishop poured forth upon every side all the tact, all the

courtesy, all the dignified graces of a Christian magnanimity. It was

impossible to withstand such treatment. Bishops who had spent years in

thwarting him became his devoted adherents; even the Chapter of

Westminster forgot its hatred. Monsignor Talbot was extremely surprised.

'Your greatest enemies have entirely come round,' he wrote. 'I received

the other day a panegyric of you from Searle. This change of feeling I

cannot attribute to anything but the Holy Ghost.' Monsignor Talbot was

very fond of the Holy Ghost; but, so far, at any rate as Searle was

concerned, there was another explanation. Manning, instead of dismissing

Searle from his position of 'oeconomus' in the episcopal household, had

kept him on--at an increased salary; and the poor man, who had not

scrupled in the days of his pride to call Manning a thief, was now duly

grateful.

As to Dr. Errington, he gave an example of humility and submission by at

once withdrawing into a complete obscurity. For years the Archbishop of

Trebizond, the ejected heir to the See of Westminster, laboured as a

parish priest in the Isle of Man. He nursed no resentment in his heart,

and, after a long and edifying life of peace and silence, he died in

1886, a professor of theology at Clifton.

It might be supposed that Manning could now feel that his triumph was

complete. His position was secure; his power was absolute; his prestige

was daily growing. Yet there was something that irked him still. As he

cast his eyes over the Roman Catholic community in England, he was aware

of one figure which, by virtue of a peculiar eminence, seemed to

challenge the supremacy of his own. That figure was Newman's.

Since his conversion, Newman's life had been a long series of

misfortunes and disappointments. When he had left the Church of England,

he was its most distinguished, its most revered member, whose words,

however strange, were listened to with profound attention, and whose

opinions, however dubious, were followed in all their fluctuations with

an eager and indeed a trembling respect. He entered the Church of Rome,

and found himself forthwith an unimportant man. He was received at the

Papal Court with a politeness which only faintly concealed a total lack

of interest and understanding. His delicate mind, with its refinements,

its hesitations, its complexities--his soft, spectacled, Oxford manner,

with its half-effeminate diffidence-such things were ill calculated to

impress a throng of busy Cardinals and Bishops, whose days were spent

amid the practical details of ecclesiastical organisation, the

long-drawn involutions of papal diplomacy, and the delicious bickerings

of personal intrigue. And when, at last, he did succeed in making some

impression upon these surroundings, it was no better; it was worse. An

uneasy suspicion gradually arose; it began to dawn upon the Roman

authorities that Dr. Newman was a man of ideas. Was it possible that Dr.

Newman did not understand that ideas in Rome were, to say the least of

it, out of place? Apparently, he did not--nor was that all; not content

with having ideas, he positively seemed anxious to spread them. When

that was known, the politeness in high places was seen to be wearing

decidedly thin. His Holiness, who on Newman's arrival had graciously

expressed the wish to see him 'again and again', now, apparently, was

constantly engaged. At first Newman supposed that the growing coolness

was the result of misapprehension; his Italian was faulty, Latin was not

spoken at Rome, his writings had only appeared in garbled translations.

And even Englishmen had sometimes found his arguments difficult to

follow. He therefore determined to take the utmost care to make his

views quite clear; his opinions upon religious probability, his

distinction between demonstrative and circumstantial evidence, his

theory of the development of doctrine and the aspects of ideas--these

and many other matters, upon which he had written so much, he would now

explain in the simplest language. He would show that there was nothing

dangerous in what he held, that there was a passage in De Lugo which

supported him--that Perrone, by maintaining that the Immaculate

Conception could be defined, had implicitly admitted one of his main

positions, and that his language about Faith had been confused, quite

erroneously, with the fideism of M. Bautain.

Cardinal Barnabo, Cardinal Reisach, Cardinal Antonelli, looked at him

with their shrewd eyes and hard faces, while he poured into their ears

which, as he had already noticed with distress, were large and not too

clean--his careful disquisitions; but, it was all in vain--they had

clearly never read De Lugo or Perrone, and as for M. Bautain, they had

never heard of him. Newman, in despair, fell back upon St. Thomas

Aquinas; but, to his horror, he observed that St. Thomas himself did not

mean very much to the Cardinals. With a sinking heart, he realised at

last the painful truth: it was not the nature of his views, it was his

having views at all, that was objectionable. He had hoped to devote the

rest of his life to the teaching of Theology; but what sort of Theology

could he teach which would be acceptable to such superiors? He left

Rome, and settled down in Birmingham as the head of a small community of

Oratorians. He did not complain; it was God's will; it was better so. He

would watch and pray.

But God's will was not quite so simple as that. Was it right, after all,

that a man with Newman's intellectual gifts, his devoted ardour, his

personal celebrity, should sink away out of sight and use in the dim

recesses of the Oratory at Birmingham? If the call were to come to him

to take his talent out of the napkin, how could he refuse? And the call

did come. A Catholic University was being started in Ireland and Dr.

Cullen, the Archbishop of Armagh, begged Newman to become the Rector. At

first he hesitated, but when he learned that it was the Holy Father's

wish that he should take up the work, he could doubt no longer; the

offer was sent from Heaven. The difficulties before him were very great;

not only had a new University to be called up out of the void, but the

position was complicated by the presence of a rival institution--the

undenominational Queen's Colleges, founded by Peel a few years earlier

with the object of giving Irish Catholics facilities for University

education on the same terms as their fellow-countrymen. Yet Newman had

the highest hopes. He dreamt of something greater than a merely Irish

University--of a noble and flourishing centre of learning for the

Catholics of Ireland and England alike. And why should not his dream

come true? 'In the midst of our difficulties, he said, 'I have one

ground of hope, just one stay, but, as I think, a sufficient one, which

serves me in the stead of all other argument whatever. It is the

decision of the Holy See; St. Peter has spoken.'

The years that followed showed to what extent it was safe to depend upon

St. Peter. Unforeseen obstacles cropped up on every side. Newman's

energies were untiring, but so was the inertia of the Irish authorities.

On his appointment, he wrote to Dr. Cullen asking that arrangements

might be made for his reception in Dublin. Dr. Cullen did not reply.

Newman wrote again, but still there was no answer. Weeks passed, months

passed, years passed, and not a word, not a sign, came from Dr. Cullen.

At last, after dangling for more than two years in the uncertainties and

perplexities of so strange a situation, Newman was summoned to Dublin.

There he found nothing but disorder and discouragement. The laity took

no interest in the scheme; the clergy actively disliked it; Newman's

authority was disregarded. He appealed to Cardinal Wiseman, and then at

last a ray of hope dawned. The cardinal suggested that a bishopric

should be conferred upon him, to give him a status suitable to his

position; Dr. Cullen acquiesced, and Pius IX was all compliance.

'Manderemo a Newman la crocetta,' he said to Wiseman, smilingly drawing

his hands down each side of his neck to his breast, 'lo faremo vescovo

di Porfirio, o qualche luogo.' The news spread among Newman's friends,

and congratulations began to come in. But the official intimation seemed

to be unaccountably delayed; no crocetta came from Rome, and Cardinal

Wiseman never again referred to the matter. Newman was left to gather

that the secret representations of Dr. Cullen had brought about a change

of counsel in high quarters. His pride did not allow him to inquire

further; but one of his lady penitents, Miss Giberne, was less discreet.

'Holy Father,' she suddenly said to the Pope in an audience one day,

'why don't you make Father Newman a bishop?' Upon which the Holy Father

looked much confused and took a great deal of snuff.

For the next five years Newman, unaided and ignored, struggled

desperately, like a man in a bog, with the overmastering difficulties of

his task. His mind, whose native haunt was among the far aerial

boundaries of fancy and philosophy, was now clamped down under the

fetters of petty detail and fed upon the mean diet of compromise and

routine. He had to force himself to scrape together money, to write

articles for the students' Gazette, to make plans for medical

laboratories, to be ingratiating with the City Council; he was obliged

to spend months travelling through the remote regions of Ireland in the

company of extraordinary ecclesiastics and barbarous squireens. He was a

thoroughbred harnessed to a four-wheeled cab--and he knew it.

Eventually, he realised something else: he saw that the whole project of

a Catholic University had been evolved as a political and ecclesiastical

weapon against the Queen's Colleges of Peel, and that was all. As an

instrument of education, it was simply laughed at; and he himself had

been called in because his name would be a valuable asset in a party

game. When he understood that, he resigned his rectorship and returned

to the Oratory.

But, his tribulations were not yet over. It seemed to be God's will that

he should take part in a whole succession of schemes, which, no less

than the project of the Irish University, were to end in disillusionment

and failure. He was persuaded by Cardinal Wiseman to undertake the

editorship of a new English version of the Scriptures, which was to be a

monument of Catholic scholarship and an everlasting glory to Mother

Church. He made elaborate preparations; he collected subscriptions,

engaged contributors, and composed a long and learned prolegomena to the

work. It was all useless; Cardinal Wiseman began to think of other

things; and the scheme faded imperceptibly into thin air. Then a new

task was suggested to him: "The Rambler", a Catholic periodical, had

fallen on evil days; would Dr Newman come to the rescue, and accept the

editorship? This time he hesitated rather longer than usual; he had

burned his fingers so often--he must be specially careful now. 'I did

all I could to ascertain God's Will,' he said, and he came to the

conclusion that it was his duty to undertake the work. He did so, and

after two numbers had appeared, Dr. Ullathorne, the Bishop of

Birmingham, called upon him, and gently hinted that he had better leave

the paper alone. Its tone was not liked at Rome; it had contained an

article criticising St. Pius V, and, most serious of all, the orthodoxy

of one of Newman's own essays had appeared to be doubtful. He resigned,

and in the anguish of his heart, determined never to write again. One of

his friends asked him why he was publishing nothing. 'Hannibal's

elephants,' he replied, 'never could learn the goose-step.'

Newman was now an old man--he was sixty-three years of age. What had he

to look forward to? A few last years of insignificance and silence. What

had he to look back upon? A long chronicle of wasted efforts,

disappointed hopes, neglected possibilities, unappreciated powers. And

now all his labours had ended by his being accused at Rome of lack of

orthodoxy. He could no longer restrain his indignation, and in a letter

to one of his lady penitents, he gave vent to the bitterness of his

soul. When his Rambler article had been complained of, he said, there

had been some talk of calling him to Rome.

'Call me to Rome,' he burst out--'what does that mean? It means to sever

an old man from his home, to subject him to intercourse with persons

whose languages are strange to him--to food and to fashions which are

almost starvation on the one hand, and involve restless days and nights

on the other--it means to oblige him to dance attendance on Propaganda

week after week and month after month--it means his death. (It was the

punishment on Dr. Baines, 1840-1, to keep him at the door of Propaganda

for a year.)

'This is the prospect which I cannot but feel probable, did I say

anything which one Bishop in England chose to speak against and report.

Others have been killed before me. Lucas went of his own accord

indeed--but when he got there, oh!' How much did he, as loyal a son of

the Church and the Holy See as ever was, what did he suffer because Dr.

Cullen was against him? He wandered (as Dr. Cullen said in a letter he

published in a sort of triumph), he wandered from Church to Church

without a friend, and hardly got an audience from the Pope. 'And I too

should go from St. Philip to Our Lady, and to St. Peter and St. Paul,

and to St. Laurence and to St. Cecilia, and, if it happened to me as to

Lucas, should come back to die.'

Yet, in spite of all, in spite of these exasperations of the flesh,

these agitations of the spirit, what was there to regret? Had he not a

mysterious consolation which outweighed every grief? Surely, surely, he

had.

'Unveil, O Lord, and on us shine,

In glory and in grace,'

he exclaims in a poem written at this time, called 'The Two Worlds':

'This gaudy world grows pale before

The beauty of Thy face.

'Till Thou art seen it seems to he

A sort of fairy ground,

Where suns unsetting light the sky,

And flowers and fruit abound.

'But when Thy keener, purer beam

Is poured upon our sight,

It loses all its power to charm,

And what was day is night ...

'And thus, when we renounce for Thee

Its restless aims and fears,

The tender memories of the past,

The hopes of coming years,

'Poor is our sacrifice, whose eyes

Are lighted from above;

We offer what we cannot keep,

What we have ceased to love.'

Such were Newman's thoughts when an unexpected event occurred which

produced a profound effect upon his life: Charles Kingsley attacked his

good faith, and the good faith of Catholics in general, in a magazine

article. Newman protested, and Kingsley rejoined in an irate pamphlet.

Newman's reply was the Apologia pro Vita Sua, which he wrote in seven

weeks, sometimes working twenty-two hours at a stretch, 'constantly in

tears, and constantly crying out with distress'. The success of the

book, with its transparent candour, its controversial brilliance, the

sweep and passion of its rhetoric, the depth of its personal feeling,

was immediate and overwhelming; it was recognised at once as a classic,

not only by Catholics, but by the whole English world. From every side

expressions of admiration, gratitude, and devotion poured in. It was

impossible for one so sensitive as Newman to the opinions of other

people to resist the happy influence of such an unlooked-for, such an

enormous triumph. The cloud of his dejection began to lift; et l'espoir

malgre lui s'est glisse dans son coeur.

It was only natural that at such a moment his thoughts should return to

Oxford. For some years past proposals had been on foot for establishing

there a Hall, under Newman's leadership, for Catholic undergraduates.

The scheme had been looked upon with disfavour in Rome, and it had been

abandoned; but now a new opportunity presented itself--some land in a

suitable position came into the market. Newman, with his reviving

spirits, felt that he could not let this chance go by, and bought the

land. It was his intention to build there not a Hall, but a Church, and

to set on foot a 'House of the Oratory'. What possible objection could

there be to such a scheme? He approached the Bishop of Birmingham, who

gave his approval; in Rome itself there was no hostile sign. The laity

were enthusiastic and subscriptions began to flow in. Was it possible

that all was well at last? Was it conceivable that the strange and weary

pilgrimage of so many years should end at length in quietude, if not in

happiness, where it had begun?

It so happened that it was at this very time that Manning was appointed

to the See of Westminster. The destinies of the two men, which had run

parallel to one another in so strange a fashion and for so many years,

were now for a moment suddenly to converge. Newly clothed with all the

attributes of ecclesiastical supremacy, Manning found himself face to

face with Newman, upon whose brows were glittering the fresh laurels of

spiritual victory--the crown of an apostolical life. It was the meeting

of the eagle and the dove. What followed showed, more clearly perhaps

than any other incident in his career, the stuff that Manning was made

of. Power had come to him at last; and he seized it with all the avidity

of a born autocrat, whose appetite for supreme dominion had been whetted

by long years of enforced abstinence and the hated simulations of

submission. He was the ruler of Roman Catholic England, and he would

rule. The nature of Newman's influence it was impossible for him to

understand, but he saw that it existed; for twenty years he had been

unable to escape the unwelcome iterations of that singular, that alien,

that rival renown; and now it stood in his path, alone and inexplicable,

like a defiant ghost. 'It is remarkably interesting,' he observed

coldly, when somebody asked him what he thought of the Apologia: 'it is

like listening to the voice of one from the dead.' And such voices, with

their sepulchral echoes, are apt to be more dangerous than living ones;

they attract too much attention; they must be silenced at all costs. It

was the meeting of the eagle and the dove; there was a hovering, a

swoop, and then the quick beak and the relentless talons did their work.

Even before his accession to the Archbishopric, Manning had scented a

peculiar peril in Newman's Oxford scheme, and so soon as he came into

power, he privately determined that the author of the Apologia should

never be allowed to return to his old University. Nor was there any lack

of excellent reasons for such a decision. Oxford was by this time a nest

of liberalism; it was no fit place for Catholic youths, and they would

inevitably be attracted there by the presence of Father Newman. And

then, had not Father Newman's orthodoxy been impugned? Had he not been

heard to express opinions of most doubtful propriety upon the question

of the Temporal Power? Was it not known that he might almost be said to

have an independent mind? An influence? Yes, he had an influence no

doubt; but what a fatal kind of influence to which to subject the rising

generation of Catholic Englishmen!

Such were the reflections which Manning was careful to pour into the

receptive car of Monsignor Talbot. That useful priest, at his post of

vantage in the Vatican, was more than ever the devoted servant of the

new Archbishop. A league, offensive and defensive, had been established

between the two friends.

'I daresay I shall have many opportunities to serve you in Rome,' wrote

Monsignor Talbot modestly, 'and I do not think any support will be

useless to you, especially on account of the peculiar character of the

Pope, and the spirit which pervades Propaganda; therefore, I wish you to

understand that a compact exists between us; if you help me, I shall

help you.' And a little later he added, 'I am glad you accept the

league. As I have already done for years, I shall support you, and I

have a hundred ways of doing so. A word dropped at the proper occasion

works wonders.'

Perhaps it was hardly necessary to remind his correspondent of that.

So far as Newman was concerned, it so fell out that Monsignor Talbot

needed no prompting. During the sensation caused by the appearance of

the Apologia, it had occurred to him that it would be an excellent plan

to secure Newman as a preacher during Lent for the fashionable

congregation which attended his church in the Piazza del Popolo; and, he

had accordingly written to invite him to Rome. His letter was

unfortunately not a tactful one. He assured Newman that he would find in

the Piazza del Popolo 'an audience of Protestants more educated than

could ever be the case in England', and 'I think myself,' he had added

by way of extra inducement, 'that you will derive great benefit from

visiting Rome, and showing yourself to the Ecclesiastical Authorities.'

Newman smiled grimly at this; he declared to a friend that the letter

was 'insolent'; and he could not resist the temptation of using his

sharp pen.

'Dear Monsignor Talbot,' he wrote in reply, 'I have received your

letter, inviting me to preach in your Church at Rome to an audience of

Protestants more educated than could ever be the case in England.

'However, Birmingham people have souls; and I have neither taste nor

talent for the sort of work which you cut out for me. And I beg to

decline your offer.

I am, yours truly,

JOHN H. NEWMAN.'

Such words were not the words of wisdom. It is easy to imagine the

feelings of Monsignor Talbot. 'Newman's work none here can understand,'

he burst out to his friend. 'Poor man, by living almost ever since he

has been a Catholic, surrounded by a set of inferior men who idolise

him, I do not think he has ever acquired the Catholic instincts.' As for

his views on the Temporal Power--'well, people said that he had actually

sent a subscription to Garibaldi. Yes, the man was incomprehensible,

heretical, dangerous; he was "uncatholic and unchristian."' Monsignor

Talbot even trembled for the position of Manning in England.

'I am afraid that the old school of Catholics will rally round Newman in

opposition to you and Rome. Stand firm, do not yield a bit in the line

you have taken. As I have promised, I shall stand by you. You will have

battles to fight because every Englishman is naturally anti-Roman. To be

Roman is an effort to an Englishman an effort. Dr. Newman is more English than

the English. His spirit must be crushed.'

His spirit must be crushed! Certainly there could be no doubt of that.

'What you write about Dr Newman,' Manning replied, 'is true. Whether he

knows it or not, he has become the centre of those who hold low views

about the Holy See, are anti-Roman, cold and silent, to say no more,

about the Temporal Power; national, English, critical of Catholic

devotions, and always on the lower side.... You will take care,' he

concluded, 'that things are correctly known and understood where you

are.'

The confederates matured their plans. While Newman was making his

arrangements for the Oxford Oratory, Cardinal Reisach visited London.

'Cardinal Reisach has just left,' wrote Manning to Monsignor Talbot: 'he

has seen and understands all that is going on in England.' But Newman

had no suspicions. It was true that persistent rumours of his

unorthodoxy and his anti-Roman leanings had begun to float about, and

these rumours had been traced to Rome. But what were rumours? Then, too,

Newman found out that Cardinal Reisach had been to Oxford without his

knowledge, and had inspected the land for the Oratory. That seemed odd;

but all doubts were set at rest by the arrival from Propaganda of an

official ratification of his scheme. There would be nothing but plain

sailing now. Newman was almost happy; radiant visions came into his mind

of a wonderful future in Oxford, the gradual growth of Catholic

principles, the decay of liberalism, the inauguration of a second Oxford

Movement, the conversion--who knows?--of Mark Pattison, the triumph of

the Church.... 'Earlier failures do not matter now,' he exclaimed to a

friend. 'I see that I have been reserved by God for this.'

Just then a long blue envelope was brought into the room. Newman opened

it. 'All is over,' he said, 'I am not allowed to go.' The envelope

contained a letter from the Bishop announcing that, together with the

formal permission for an Oratory at Oxford, Propaganda had issued a

secret instruction to the effect that Newman himself was by no means to

reside there. If he showed signs of doing so, he was blandly and suavely

('blande suaviterque' were the words of the Latin instrument) to be

prevented. And now the secret instruction had come into

operation--blande suaviterque: Dr. Newman's spirit had been crushed.

His friends made some gallant efforts to retrieve the situation; but, it

was in vain. Father St. John hurried to Rome and the indignant laity of

England, headed by Lord Edward Howard, the guardian of the young Duke of

Norfolk, seized the opportunity of a particularly virulent anonymous

attack upon Newman, to send him an address in which they expressed their

feeling that 'every blow that touches you inflicts a wound upon the

Catholic Church in this country'. The only result was an outburst of

redoubled fury upon the part of Monsignor Talbot. The address, he

declared, was an insult to the Holy See. 'What is the province of the

laity?' he interjected. 'To hunt, to shoot, to entertain. These matters

they understand, but to meddle with ecclesiastical matters they have no

right at all.' Once more he warned Manning to be careful.

'Dr. Newman is the most dangerous man in England, and you will see that

he will make use of the laity against your Grace. You must not be afraid

of him. It will require much prudence, but you must be firm. The Holy

Father still places his confidence in you; but if you yield and do not

fight the battle of the Holy See against the detestable spirit growing

up in England, he will begin to regret Cardinal Wiseman, who knew how to

keep the laity in order.' Manning had no thought of 'yielding'; but, he

pointed out to his agitated friend that an open conflict between himself

and Newman would be 'as great a scandal to the Church in England, and as

great a victory to the Anglicans, as could be'. He would act quietly,

and there would be no more difficulty. The Bishops were united, and the

Church was sound.

On this, Monsignor Talbot hurried to Father St. John's lodgings in Rome

to express his regret at the misunderstanding that had arisen, to wonder

how it could possibly have occurred, and to hope that Dr. Newman might

consent to be made a Protonotary Apostolic. That was all the

satisfaction that Father St. John was to obtain from his visit to Rome.

A few weeks later, the scheme of the Oxford Oratory was finally quashed.

When all was over, Manning thought that the time had come for a

reconciliation. He made advances through a common friend; what had he

done, he asked, to offend Dr. Newman? Letters passed, and, naturally

enough, they only widened the breach. Newman was not the man to be

polite.

'I can only repeat,' he wrote at last, 'what I said when you last heard

from me. I do not know whether I am on my head or my heels when I have

active relations with you. In spite of my friendly feelings, this is the

judgment of my intellect.' 'Meanwhile,' he concluded, 'I propose to say

seven masses for your intention amid the difficulties and anxieties of

your ecclesiastical duties.'

And Manning could only return the compliment.

At about this time, the Curate of Littlemore had a singular experience.

As he was passing by the Church he noticed an old man, very poorly

dressed in an old grey coat with the collar turned up, leaning over the

lych gate, in floods of tears. He was apparently in great trouble, and

his hat was pulled down over his eyes as if he wished to hide his

features. For a moment, however, he turned towards the Curate, who was

suddenly struck by something familiar in the face. Could it be--? A

photograph hung over the Curate's mantelpiece of the man who had made

Littlemore famous by his sojourn there more than twenty years ago--he

had never seen the original; but now, was it possible--? He looked

again, and he could doubt no longer. It was Dr. Newman. He sprang

forward, with proffers of assistance. Could he be of any use? 'Oh no,

no!' was the reply. 'Oh no, no!' But the Curate felt that he could not

run away and leave so eminent a character in such distress. 'Was it not

Dr. Newman he had the honour of addressing?' he asked, with all the

respect and sympathy at his command. 'Was there nothing that could be

done?' But the old man hardly seemed to understand what was being said

to him. 'Oh no, no!' he repeated, with the tears streaming down his

face, 'Oh no, no!'

VII

MEANWHILE, a remarkable problem was absorbing the attention of the

Catholic Church. Once more, for a moment, the eyes of all Christendom

were fixed upon Rome. The temporal Power of the Pope had now almost

vanished; but, as his worldly dominions steadily diminished, the

spiritual pretensions of the Holy Father no less steadily increased. For

seven centuries the immaculate conception of the Virgin had been highly

problematical; Pio Nono spoke, and the doctrine became an article of

faith. A few years later, the Court of Rome took another step: a

Syllabus Errorum was issued, in which all the favourite beliefs of the

modern world--the rights of democracies, the claims of science, the

sanctity of free speech, the principles of toleration--were

categorically denounced, and their supporters abandoned to the Divine

wrath.

Yet it was observed that the modern world proceeded as before. Something

more drastic appeared to be necessary--some bold and striking measure

which should concentrate the forces of the faithful, and confound their

enemies. The tremendous doctrine of Papal Infallibility, beloved of all

good Catholics, seemed to offer just the opening that was required. Let

that doctrine be proclaimed, with the assent of the whole Church, an

article of faith, and, in the face of such an affirmation, let the

modern world do its worst! Accordingly, a General Council--the first to

be held since the Council of Trent more than 300 years before--was

summoned to the Vatican, for the purpose, so it was announced, of

providing 'an adequate remedy to the disorders, intellectual and moral,

of Christendom'. The programme might seem a large one, even for a

General Council; but everyone knew what it meant.

Everyone, however, was not quite of one mind. There were those to whom

even the mysteries of infallibility caused some searchings of heart. It

was true, no doubt, that Our Lord, by saying to Peter, 'Thou art Cephas,

which is by interpretation a stone', thereby endowed that Apostle with

the supreme and full primacy and principality over the Universal

Catholic Church; it was equally certain that Peter afterwards became the

Bishop of Rome; nor could it be doubted that the Roman Pontiff was his

successor. Thus it followed directly that the Roman Pontiff was the

head, heart, mind, and tongue of the Catholic Church; and moreover, it

was plain that when Our Lord prayed for Peter that his faith should not

fail, that prayer implied the doctrine of Papal Infallibility. All these

things were obvious, and yet--and yet--might not the formal declaration

of such truths in the year of his grace 1870 be, to say the least of it,

inopportune? Might it not come as an offence, as a scandal even, to

those unacquainted with the niceties of Catholic dogma? Such were the

uneasy reflections of grave and learned ecclesiastics and theologians in

England, France, and Germany. Newman was more than usually upset;

Monseigneur Dupanloup was disgusted; and Dr. Dollinger prepared himself

for resistance. It was clear that there would be a disaffected minority

at the Council.

Catholic apologists have often argued that the Pope's claim to

infallibility implies no more than the necessary claim of every ruler,

of every government, to the right of supreme command. In England, for

instance, the Estates of the Realm exercise an absolute authority in

secular matters; no one questions this authority, no one suggests that

it is absurd or exorbitant; in other words, by general consent the

Estates of the Realm are, within their sphere, infallible. Why,

therefore, should the Pope, within his sphere--the sphere of the

Catholic Church--be denied a similar infallibility? If there is nothing

monstrous in an Act of Parliament laying down what all men shall do, why

should there be anything monstrous in a Papal Encyclical laying down

what all men shall believe? The argument is simple; in fact, it is too

simple; for it takes for granted the very question which is in dispute.

Is there indeed no radical and essential distinction between supremacy

and infallibility? Between the right of a Borough Council to regulate

the traffic and the right of the Vicar of Christ to decide upon the

qualifications for Everlasting Bliss?

There is one distinction, at any rate, which is palpable: the decisions

of a supreme authority can be altered; those of an infallible authority

cannot. A Borough Council may change its traffic regulations at the next

meeting; but the Vicar of Christ, when in certain circumstances and with

certain precautions, he has once spoken, has expressed, for all the

ages, a part of the immutable, absolute, and eternal Truth. It is this

that makes the papal pretensions so extraordinary and so enormous. It is

also this that gives them their charm. Catholic apologists, when they

try to tone down those pretensions and to explain them away, forget that

it is in their very exorbitance that their fascination lies. If the Pope

were indeed nothing more than a magnified Borough Councillor, we should

hardly have heard so much of him. It is not because he satisfies the

reason, but because he astounds it, that men abase themselves before the

Vicar of Christ.

And certainly the doctrine of Papal Infallibility presents to the reason

a sufficiency of stumbling-blocks. In the fourteenth century, for

instance, the following case arose. John XXII asserted in his bull 'Cum

inter nonnullos' that the doctrine of the poverty of Christ was

heretical. Now, according to the light of reason, one of two things must

follow from this--either John XXII was himself a heretic, or he was no

Pope. For his predecessor, Nicholas III, had asserted in his bull 'Exiit

qui seminat' that the doctrine of the poverty of Christ was the true

doctrine, the denial of which was heresy. Thus if John XXII was right,

Nicholas III was a heretic, and in that case Nicholas's nominations of

Cardinals were void, and the conclave which elected John was illegal--so

that John was no Pope, his nominations of Cardinals were void, and the

whole Papal succession vitiated. On the other hand, if John was

wrong--well, he was a heretic; and the same inconvenient results

followed. And, in either case, what becomes of Papal Infallibility?

But such crude and fundamental questions as these were not likely to

trouble the Council. The discordant minority took another line.

Infallibility they admitted readily enough, the infallibility, that is

to say, of the Church; what they shrank from was the pronouncement that

this infallibility was concentrated in the Bishop of Rome. They would

not actually deny that, as a matter of fact, it was so concentrated; but

to declare that it was, to make the belief that it was an article of

faith--what could be more--it was their favourite expression--more

inopportune? In truth, the Gallican spirit still lingered among them. At

heart, they hated the autocracy of Rome--the domination of the

centralised Italian organisation over the whole vast body of the Church.

They secretly hankered, even at this late hour, after some form of

constitutional government, and they knew that the last faint vestige of

such a dream would vanish utterly with the declaration of the

infallibility of the Pope. It did not occur to them, apparently, that a

constitutional Catholicism might be a contradiction in terms, and that

the Catholic Church, without the absolute dominion of the Pope, might

resemble the play of Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark.

Pius IX himself was troubled by doubts. 'Before I was Pope,' he

observed, 'I believed in Papal Infallibility, now I feel it.' As for

Manning, his certainty was no less complete than his master's. Apart

from the Holy Ghost, his appointment to the See of Westminster had been

due to Pio Nono's shrewd appreciation of the fact that he was the one

man in England upon whose fidelity the Roman Government could absolutely

rely. The voice which kept repeating 'Mettetelo li, mettetelo li' in his

Holiness's ear, whether or not it was inspired by God, was certainly

inspired by political sagacity. For now Manning was to show that he was

not unworthy of the trust which had been reposed in him. He flew to Rome

in a whirlwind of Papal enthusiasm. On the way, in Paris, he stopped for

a moment to interview those two great props of French respectability, M.

Guizot and M. Thiers. Both were careful not to commit themselves, but

both were exceedingly polite. 'I am awaiting your Council,' said M.

Guizot, 'with great anxiety. It is the last great moral power and may

restore the peace of Europe.' M. Thiers delivered a brief harangue in

favour of the principles of the Revolution, which, he declared, were the

very marrow of all Frenchmen; yet, he added, he had always supported the

Temporal Power of the Pope. 'Mais, M. Thiers,' said Manning, 'vous etes

effectivement croyant.' 'En Dieu,' replied M. Thiers.

The Rome which Manning reached towards the close of 1869 was still the

Rome which, for so many centuries, had been the proud and visible apex,

the palpitating heart, the sacred sanctuary, of the most extraordinary

mingling of spiritual and earthly powers that the world has ever known.

The Pope now, it is true, ruled over little more than the City

itself--the Patrimony of St. Peter--and he ruled there less by the Grace

of God than by the goodwill of Napoleon III; yet he was still a

sovereign Prince, and Rome was still the capital of the Papal State; she

was not yet the capital of Italy. The last hour of this strange dominion

had almost struck. As if she knew that her doom was upon her, the

Eternal City arrayed herself to meet it in all her glory.

The whole world seemed to be gathered together within her walls. Her

streets were filled with crowned heads and Princes of the Church, great

ladies and great theologians, artists and friars, diplomats and

newspaper reporters. Seven hundred bishops were there from all the

corners of Christendom, and in all the varieties of ecclesiastical

magnificence in falling lace and sweeping purple and flowing violet

veils. Zouaves stood in the colonnade of St Peter's, and Papal troops

were on the Quirinal. Cardinals passed, hatted and robed, in their

enormous carriage of state, like mysterious painted idols. Then there

was a sudden hush: the crowd grew thicker and expectation filled, the

air. Yes! it was he! He was coming! The Holy Father! But first there

appeared, mounted on a white mule and clothed in a magenta mantle, a

grave dignitary bearing aloft a silver cross. The golden coach followed,

drawn by six horses gorgeously caparisoned, and within, the smiling

white-haired Pio Nono, scattering his benedictions, while the multitude

fell upon its knees as one man. Such were the daily spectacles of

coloured pomp and of antique solemnity, which so long as the sun was

shining, at any rate--dazzled the onlooker into a happy forgetfulness of

the reverse side of the Papal dispensation--the nauseating filth of the

highways, the cattle stabled in the palaces of the great, and the fever

flitting through the ghastly tenements of the poor.

In St. Peter's, the North Transept had been screened off; rows of wooden

seats had been erected covered with Brussels carpet; and upon these

seats sat each crowned with a white mitre, the 700 Bishops in Council.

Here all day long rolled forth, in sonorous Latin, the interminable

periods of episcopal oratory; but it was not here that the issue of the

Council was determined. The assembled Fathers might talk till the

marbles of St. Peter's themselves grew weary of the reverberations; the

fate of the Church was decided in a very different manner--by little

knots of influential persons meeting quietly of a morning in the back

room of some inconspicuous lodging-house, by a sunset rendezvous in the

Borghese Gardens between a Cardinal and a Diplomatist by a whispered

conference in an alcove at a Princess's evening party, with the gay

world chattering all about. And, of course, on such momentous occasions

as these, Manning was in his element. None knew those difficult ropes

better than he; none used them with a more serviceable and yet discreet

alacrity. In every juncture he had the right word, or the right silence;

his influence ramified in all directions, from the Pope's audience

chamber to the English Cabinet. 'Il Diavolo del Concilio' his enemies

called him; and he gloried in the name.

The real crux of the position was less ecclesiastical than diplomatic.

The Papal Court, with its huge majority of Italian Bishops, could make

sure enough, when it came to the point, of carrying its wishes through

the Council; what was far more dubious was the attitude of the foreign

Governments--especially those of France and England. The French

Government dreaded a schism among its Catholic subjects; it disliked the

prospect of an extension of the influence of the Pope over the mass of

the population of France; and, since the very existence of the last

remnant of the Pope's Temporal Power depended upon the French army, it

was able to apply considerable pressure upon the Vatican. The interests

of England were less directly involved, but it happened that at this

moment Mr. Gladstone was Prime Minister, and Mr. Gladstone entertained

strong views upon the Infallibility of the Pope. His opinions upon the

subject were in part the outcome of his friendship with Lord Acton, a

historian to whom learning and judgment had not been granted in equal

proportions, and who, after years of incredible and indeed well-nigh

mythical research, had come to the conclusion that the Pope could err.

In this Mr. Gladstone entirely concurred, though he did not share the

rest of his friend's theological opinions; for Lord Acton, while

straining at the gnat of Infallibility, had swallowed the camel of the

Roman Catholic Faith. 'Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galere?'

one cannot help asking, as one watched that laborious and scrupulous

scholar, that lifelong enthusiast for liberty, that almost hysterical

reviler of priesthood and persecution, trailing his learning so

discrepantly along the dusty Roman way. But, there are some who know how

to wear their Rome with a difference; and Lord Acton was one of these.

He was now engaged in fluttering like a moth round the Council and in

writing long letters to Mr. Gladstone, impressing upon him the gravity

of the situation, and urging him to bring his influence to bear. If the

Dogma were carried--he declared, no man who accepted it could remain a

loyal subject and Catholics would everywhere become 'irredeemable

enemies of civil and religious liberty'. In these circumstances, was it

not plainly incumbent upon the English Government, involved as it was

with the powerful Roman Catholic forces in Ireland, to intervene? Mr.

Gladstone allowed himself to become convinced, and Lord Acton began to

hope that his efforts would be successful. But, he had forgotten one

element in the situation; he had reckoned without the Archbishop of

Westminster. The sharp nose of Manning sniffed out the whole intrigue.

Though he despised Lord Acton almost as much as he disliked him--'such

men,' he said, 'are all vanity: they have the inflation of German

professors, and the ruthless talk of undergraduates'--yet he realised

clearly enough the danger of his correspondence with the Prime Minister,

and immediately took steps to counteract it. There was a semi-official

agent of the English Government in Rome, Mr. Odo Russell, and around him

Manning set to work to spin his spider's web of delicate and clinging

diplomacy. Preliminary politenesses were followed by long walks upon the

Pincio, and the gradual interchange of more and more important and

confidential communications. Soon poor Mr. Russell was little better

than a fly buzzing in gossamer. And Manning was careful to see that he

buzzed on the right note. In his dispatches to the Foreign Secretary,

Lord Clarendon, Mr. Russell explained in detail the true nature of the

Council, that it was merely a meeting of a few Roman Catholic prelates

to discuss some internal matters of Church discipline, that it had no

political significance whatever, that the question of Infallibility,

about which there had been so much random talk, was a purely theological

question, and that, whatever decision might be come to on the subject,

the position of Roman Catholics throughout the world would remain

unchanged.

Whether the effect of these affirmations upon Lord Clarendon was as

great as Manning supposed is somewhat doubtful; but it is at any rate

certain that Mr. Gladstone failed to carry the Cabinet with him; and,

when at last a proposal was definitely made that the English Government

should invite the Powers of Europe to intervene at the Vatican, it was

rejected. Manning always believed that this was the direct result of Mr.

Russell's dispatches, which had acted as an antidote to the poison of

Lord Acton's letters, and thus carried the day. If that was so, the

discretion of biographers has not yet entirely lifted the veil from

these proceedings Manning had assuredly performed no small service for

his cause. Yet his modesty would not allow him to assume for himself a

credit which, after all, was due elsewhere; and when he told the story

of those days, he would add, with more than wonted seriousness, 'It was

by the Divine Will that the designs of His enemies were frustrated'.

Meanwhile, in the North Transept of St. Peter's a certain amount of

preliminary business had been carried through. Various miscellaneous

points in Christian doctrine had been satisfactorily determined. Among

others, the following Canons were laid down by the Fathers: 'If anyone

does not accept for sacred and canonical the whole and every part of the

Books of Holy Scripture, or deny that they are divinely inspired, let

him be anathema.' 'If anyone says that miracles cannot be, and

therefore, the accounts of them, even those in Holy Scriptures must be

assigned a place among fables and myths, or that the divine origin of

the Christian religion cannot rightly be proved from them, let him be

anathema.' 'If anyone says that the doctrines of the Church can ever

receive a sense in accordance with the progress of science, other than

that sense which the Church has understood and still understands, let

him be anathema.' 'If anyone says that it is not possible, by the

natural light of human reason, to acquire a certain knowledge of the One

and True God, let him be anathema.' In other words, it became an article

of Faith that Faith was not necessary for a true knowledge of God.

Having disposed of these minor matters, the Fathers found themselves at

last approaching the great question of Infallibility.

Two main issues, it soon appeared, were before them: the. Pope's

infallibility was admitted, ostensibly at least, by all; what remained

to be determined was: (1) whether the definition of the Pope's

Infallibility was opportune, and (2) what the definition of the Pope's

Infallibility was.

(1) It soon became clear that the sense of the Council was

overwhelmingly in favour of a definition. The Inopportunists were a

small minority; they were outvoted, and they were obliged to give way.

It only remained, therefore, to come to a decision upon the second

question--what the definition should actually be.

(2) It now became the object of the Inopportunists to limit the scope of

the definition as much as possible, while the Infallibilists were no

less eager to extend it. Now everyone, or nearly everyone, was ready to

limit the Papal Infallibility to pronouncements ex cathedra--that is to

say, to those made by the Pope in his capacity of Universal Doctor; but

this only served to raise the ulterior, the portentous, and indeed the

really crucial question--to WHICH of the Papal pronouncements ex

cathedra did Infallibility adhere?

The discussions which followed were, naturally enough, numerous,

complicated, and embittered, and in all of them Manning played a

conspicuous part. For two months the Fathers deliberated; through fifty

sessions they sought the guidance of the Holy Ghost. The wooden seats,

covered though they were with Brussels carpet, grew harder and harder;

and still the mitred Councillors sat on. The Pope himself began to grow

impatient; for one thing, he declared, he was being ruined by the mere

expense of lodging and keeping the multitude of his adherents. 'Questi

infallibilisti mi faranno fallire', said his Holiness. At length it

appeared that the Inopportunists were dragging out the proceedings in

the hope of obtaining an indefinite postponement. Then the authorities

began to act; a bishop was shouted down, and the closure was brought

into operation. At this point the French Government, after long

hesitation, finally decided to intervene, and Cardinal Antonelli was

informed that if the Definition was proceeded with, the French troops

would be withdrawn from Rome. But the astute Cardinal judged that he

could safely ignore the threat. He saw that Napoleon III was tottering

to his fall and would never risk an open rupture with the Vatican.

Accordingly, it was determined to bring the proceedings to a close by a

final vote. Already the Inopportunists, seeing that the game was up, had

shaken the dust of Rome from their feet. On July 18th, 1870, the Council

met for the last time. As the first of the Fathers stepped forward to

declare his vote, a storm of thunder and lightning suddenly burst over

St. Peter's. All through the morning the voting continued, and every

vote was accompanied by a flash and a roar from heaven. Both sides, with

equal justice, claimed the portent as a manifestation of the Divine

Opinion. When the votes were examined, it was found that 533 were in

favour of the proposed definition and two against it. Next day, war was

declared between France and Germany, and a few weeks later the French

troops were withdrawn from Rome. Almost in the same moment, the

successor of St. Peter had lost his Temporal Power, and gained

Infallibility.

What the Council had done was merely to assent to a definition of the

dogma of the Infallibility of the Roman Pontiff which Pius IX had

issued, proprio motu, a few days before. The definition itself was

perhaps somewhat less extreme than might have been expected. The Pope,

it declared, is possessed, when he speaks ex cathedra, of 'that

infallibility with which the Redeemer willed that His Church should be

endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals'. Thus it became

a dogma of faith that a Papal definition regarding faith or morals is

infallible; but beyond that, both the Holy Father and the Council

maintained a judicious reserve. Over what OTHER matters besides faith

and morals the Papal infallibility might or might not extend still

remained in doubt. And there were further questions, no less serious, to

which no decisive answer was then, or ever has been since, provided.

How was it to be determined, for instance, which particular Papal

decisions did in fact come within the scope of the definition? Who was

to decide what was or was not a matter of faith or morals? Or precisely

WHEN the Roman Pontiff was speaking ex cathedra? Was the famous Syllabus

Errorum, for example, issued ex cathedra or not? Grave theologians have

never been able to make up their minds. Yet to admit doubts in such

matters as these is surely dangerous. 'In duty to our supreme pastoral

office,' proclaimed the Sovereign Pontiff, 'by the bowels of Christ we

earnestly entreat all Christ's faithful people, and we also command them

by the authority of God and our Saviour, that they study and labour to

expel and eliminate errors and display the light of the purest faith.'

Well might the faithful study and labour to such ends! For, while the

offence remained ambiguous, there was no ambiguity about the penalty.

One hair's-breadth from the unknown path of truth, one shadow of

impurity in the mysterious light of faith, and there shall be anathema!

anathema! anathema! When the framers of such edicts called upon the

bowels of Christ to justify them, might they not have done well to have

paused a little, and to have called to mind the counsel of another

sovereign ruler, though a heretic--Oliver Cromwell? 'Bethink ye, bethink

ye, in the bowels of Christ, that ye may be mistaken!'

One of the secondary results of the Council was the excommunication of

Dr. Dollinger, and a few more of the most uncompromising of the

Inopportunists. Among these, however, Lord Acton was not included.

Nobody ever discovered why. Was it because he was too important for the

Holy See to care to interfere with him? Or was it because he was not

important enough?

Another ulterior consequence was the appearance of a pamphlet by Mr.

Gladstone, entitled 'Vaticanism', in which the awful implications

involved in the declaration of Infallibility were laid before the

British Public. How was it possible, Mr. Gladstone asked, with all the

fulminating accompaniments of his most agitated rhetoric, to depend

henceforward upon the civil allegiance of Roman Catholics? To this

question the words of Cardinal Antonelli to the Austrian Ambassador

might have seemed a sufficient reply. 'There is a great difference,'

said his Eminence, between theory and practice. No one will ever prevent

the Church from proclaiming the great principles upon which its Divine

fabric is based; but, as regards the application of those sacred laws,

the Church, imitating the example of its Divine Founder, is inclined to

take into consideration the natural weaknesses of mankind.' And, in any

case, it was hard to see how the system of Faith, which had enabled Pope

Gregory XIII to effect, by the hands of English Catholics, a whole

series of attempts to murder Queen Elizabeth, can have been rendered a

much more dangerous engine of disloyalty by the Definition of 1870. But

such considerations failed to reassure Mr. Gladstone; the British Public

was of a like mind; and 145,000 copies of the pamphlet were sold within

two months. Various replies appeared, and Manning was not behindhand.

His share in the controversy led to a curious personal encounter.

His conversion had come as a great shock to Mr. Gladstone. Manning had

breathed no word of its approach to his old and intimate friend, and

when the news reached him, it seemed almost an act of personal injury.

'I felt,' Mr. Gladstone said, 'as if Manning had murdered my mother by

mistake.' For twelve years the two men did not meet, after which they

occasionally saw each other and renewed their correspondence. This was

the condition of affairs when Mr. Gladstone published his pamphlet. As

soon as it appeared, Manning wrote a letter to the New York Herald,

contradicting its conclusions and declaring that its publication was

'the first event that has overcast a friendship of forty-five years'.

Mr. Gladstone replied to this letter in a second pamphlet. At the close

of his theological arguments, he added the following passage:

'I feel it necessary, in concluding this answer, to state that

Archbishop Manning has fallen into most serious inaccuracy in his letter

of November 10th, wherein he describes 'my Expostulation as the first

event which has overcast a friendship of forty-five years. I allude to

the subject with regret; and without entering into details.'

Manning replied in a private letter:

'My dear Gladstone,' he wrote, 'you say that I am in error in stating

that your former pamphlet is the first act which has overcast our

friendship.

'If you refer to my act in 1851 in submitting to the Catholic Church, by

which we were separated for some twelve years, I can understand it.

'If you refer to any other act either on your part or mine I am not

conscious of it, and would desire to know what it may be.

'My act in 1851 may have overcast your friendship for me. It did not

overcast my friendship for you, as I think the last years have shown.

'You will not, I hope, think me over-sensitive in asking for this

explanation. Believe me, yours affectionately,

'H. E. M.'

'My dear Archbishop Manning,' Mr. Gladstone answered, 'it did, I

confess, seem to me an astonishing error to state in public that a

friendship had not been overcast for forty-five years until now, which

your letter declares has been suspended as to all action for twelve ...

'I wonder, too, at your forgetting that during the forty-five years I

had been charged by you with doing the work of the Antichrist in regard

to the Temporal Power of the Pope.

'Our differences, my dear Archbishop, are indeed profound. We refer

them, I suppose, in humble silence to a Higher Power ... You assured me

once of your prayers at all and at the most solemn time. I received that

assurance with gratitude, and still cherish it. As and when they move

upwards, there is a meeting-point for those whom a chasm separates

below. I remain always, affectionately yours,

'W. E. GLADSTONE.'

Speaking of this correspondence in after years, Cardinal Manning said:

'From the way in which Mr. Gladstone alluded to the overcasting of our

friendship, people might have thought that I had picked his pocket.'

VIII

IN 1875, Manning's labours received their final reward: he was made a

Cardinal. His long and strange career, with its high hopes, its bitter

disappointments, its struggles, its renunciations, had come at last to

fruition in a Princedom of the Church.

'Ask in faith and in perfect confidence,' he himself once wrote, and God

will give us what we ask. You may say, "But do you mean that He will

give us the very thing?" That, God has not said. God has said that He

will give you whatsoever you ask; but the form in which it will come,

and the time in which He will give it, He keeps in His own power.

Sometimes our prayers are answered in the very things which we put from

us; sometimes it may be a chastisement, or a loss, or a visitation

against which our hearts rise, and we seem to see that God has not only

forgotten us, but has begun to deal with us in severity. Those very

things are the answers to our prayers. He knows what we desire, and He

gives us the things for which we ask; but in the form which His own

Divine Wisdom sees to be best.'

There was one to whom Manning's elevation would no doubt have given a

peculiar satisfaction--his old friend Monsignor Talbot. But this was not

to be. That industrious worker in the cause of Rome had been removed

some years previously to a sequestered home at Passy, whose padded walls

were impervious to the rumours of the outer world. Pius IX had been much

afflicted by this unfortunate event; he had not been able to resign

himself to the loss of his secretary, and he had given orders that

Monsignor Talbot's apartment in the Vatican should be preserved

precisely as he had left it, in case of his return. But Monsignor Talbot

never returned. Manning's feelings upon the subject appear to have been

less tender than the Pope's. In all his letters, in all his papers, in

all his biographical memoranda, not a word of allusion is to be found to

the misfortune, nor to the death, of the most loyal of his adherents.

Monsignor Talbot's name disappears suddenly and for ever--like a stone

cast into the waters.

Manning was now an old man, and his outward form had assumed that

appearance of austere asceticism which is, perhaps, the one thing

immediately suggested by his name to the ordinary Englishman. The spare

and stately form, the head--massive, emaciated, terrible--with the great

nose, the glittering eyes, and the mouth drawn back and compressed into

the grim rigidities of age, self-mortification, and authority--such is

the vision that still lingers in the public mind--the vision which,

actual and palpable like some embodied memory of the Middle Ages, used

to pass and repass, less than a generation since, through the streets of

London. For the activities of this extraordinary figure were great and

varied. He ruled his diocese with the despotic zeal of a born

administrator. He threw himself into social work of every kind; he

organised charities, he lectured on temperance; he delivered innumerable

sermons; he produced an unending series of devotional books. And he

brooked no brother near the throne: Newman languished in Birmingham; and

even the Jesuits trembled and obeyed.

Nor was it only among his own community that his energy and his

experience found scope. He gradually came to play an important part in

public affairs, upon questions of labour, poverty, and education. He sat

on Royal Commissions and corresponded with Cabinet Ministers. At last,

no philanthropic meeting at the Guildhall was considered complete

without the presence of Cardinal Manning. A special degree of precedence

was accorded to him. Though the rank of a Cardinal-Archbishop is

officially unknown in England, his name appeared in public documents--as

a token, it must be supposed, of personal consideration--above the names

of peers and bishops, and immediately below that of the Prince of Wales.

In his private life he was secluded. The ambiguities of his social

position, and his desire to maintain intact the peculiar eminence of his

office, combined to hold him aloof from the ordinary gatherings of

society, though on the rare occasions of his appearance among

fashionable and exalted persons, he carried all before him. His

favourite haunt was the Athenaeum Club, where he sat scanning the

newspapers, or conversing with the old friends of former days. He was a

member, too, of that distinguished body, the Metaphysical Society, which

met once a month during the palmy years of the seventies to discuss, in

strict privacy, the fundamental problems of the destiny of man.

After a comfortable dinner at the Grosvenor Hotel, the Society, which

included Professor Huxley and Professor Tyndall, Mr. John Morley and Sir

James Stephen, the Duke of Argyll, Lord Tennyson, and Dean Church, would

gather around to hear and discuss a paper read by one of the members

upon such questions as: 'What is death?' 'Is God unknowable?' or 'The

nature of the Moral Principle'. Sometimes, however, the speculations of

the Society ranged in other directions.

'I think the paper that interested me most of all that were ever read at

our meetings,' says Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant-Duff, 'was one on

"Wherein consists the special beauty of imperfection and decay?" in

which were propounded the questions "Are not ruins recognised and felt

to be more beautiful than perfect structures? Why are they so? Ought

they to be so?'

'Unfortunately, however, the answers given to these questions by the

Metaphysical Society have not been recorded for the instruction of

mankind.

Manning read several papers, and Professor Huxley and Mr. John Morley

listened with attention while he expressed his views upon 'The Soul

before and after Death', or explained why it is 'That legitimate

Authority is an Evidence of Truth'. Yet, somehow or other, his Eminence

never felt quite at ease in these assemblies; he was more at home with

audiences of a different kind; and we must look in other directions for

the free and full manifestation of his speculative gifts.

In a series of lectures, for instance, delivered in 1861--it was the

first year of the unification of Italy--upon 'The Present Crisis of the

Holy See, tested by prophecy', we catch some glimpses of the kind of

problems which were truly congenial to his mind.

'In the following pages,' he said, 'I have endeavoured, but for so great

a subject most insufficiently, to show that what is passing in our times

is the prelude of the antichristian period of the final dethronement of

Christendom, and of the restoration of society without God in the

world.' 'My intention is,' he continued, 'to examine the present

relation of the Church to the civil powers of the world by the light of

a prophecy recorded by St Paul.'

This prophecy (2 Thess. ii 3 to 11) is concerned with the coming of the

Antichrist, and the greater part of the lectures is devoted to a minute

examination of this subject. There is no passage in Scripture, Manning

pointed out, relating to the coming of Christ more explicit and express

than those foretelling Antichrist; it therefore behoved the faithful to

consider the matter more fully than they are wont to do. In the first

place, Antichrist is a person. 'To deny the personality of Antichrist is

to deny the plain testimony of Holy Scripture.' And we must remember

that 'it is a law of Holy Scripture that when persons are prophesied of,

persons appear'.

Again, there was every reason to believe that Antichrist, when he did

appear, would turn out to be a Jew.

'Such was the opinion of St. Irenaeus, St. Jerome, and of the author of

the work De Consummatione Mundi, ascribed to St. Hippolytus, and of a

writer of a Commentary on the Epistle to the Thessalonians, ascribed to

St. Ambrose, of many others, who said that he will be of the tribe of

Dan: as, for instance, St. Gregory the Great, Theodoret, Aretas of

Caesarea, and many more. Such also is the opinion of Bellarmine, who

calls it certain. Lessius affirms that the Fathers, with unanimous

consent, teach as undoubted that Antichrist will be a Jew. Ribera

repeats the same opinion, and adds that Aretas, St. Bede, Haymo, St.

Anselm, and Rupert affirm that for this reason the tribe of Dan is not

numbered among those who are sealed in the Apocalypse ... Now, I think

no one can consider the dispersion and providential preservation of the

Jews among all the nations of the world and the indestructible vitality

of their race without believing that they are reserved for some future

action of His judgment and Grace. And this is foretold again and again

in the New Testament.'

'Our Lord,' continued Manning, widening the sweep of his speculations,

'has said of these latter times: "There shall arise false Christs and

false prophets, insomuch as to deceive even the elect"; that is, they

shall not be deceived; but those who have lost faith in the Incarnation,

such as humanitarians, rationalists, and pantheists, may well be

deceived by any person of great political power and success, who should

restore the Jews to their own land, and people Jerusalem once more with

the sons of the Patriarchs. And, there is nothing in the political

aspect of the world which renders such a combination impossible; indeed,

the state of Syria, and the tide of European diplomacy, which 'is

continually moving eastward, render such an event within a reasonable

probability.'

Then Manning threw out a bold suggestion. 'A successful medium,' he

said, 'might well pass himself off by his preternatural endowments as

the promised Messiahs.'

Manning went on to discuss the course of events which would lead to the

final catastrophe. But this subject, he confessed,

'deals with agencies so transcendent and mysterious, that all I shall

venture to do will be to sketch in outline what the broad and luminous

prophecies, especially of the Book of Daniel and the Apocalypse, set

forth without attempting to enter into minute details, which can only be

interpreted by the event'.

While applauding his modesty, we need follow Manning no further in his

commentary upon those broad and luminous works; except to observe that

'the apostasy of the City of Rome from the Vicar of Christ and its

destruction by the Antichrist' was, in his opinion, certain. Nor was he

without authority for this belief. For it was held by 'Malvenda, who

writes expressly on the subject', and who, besides, 'states as the

opinion of Ribera, Gaspar Melus, Viegas, Suarez, Bellarmine, and Bosius

that Rome shall apostatise from the faith'.

IX

THE death of Pius IX brought to Manning a last flattering testimony of

the confidence with which he was regarded at the Court of Rome. In one

of the private consultations preceding the Conclave, a Cardinal

suggested that Manning should succeed to the Papacy. He replied that he

was unfit for the position, because it was essential for the interests

of the Holy See that the next Pope should be an Italian. The suggestion

was pressed, but Manning held firm. Thus it happened that the Triple

Tiara seemed to come, for a moment, within the grasp of the late

Archdeacon of Chichester; and the cautious hand refrained.

Leo XIII was elected, and there was a great change in the policy of the

Vatican. Liberalism became the order of the day. And now at last the

opportunity seemed ripe for an act which, in the opinion of the majority

of English Catholics, had long been due--the bestowal of some mark of

recognition from the Holy See upon the labours and the sanctity of

Father Newman. It was felt that a Cardinal's hat was the one fitting

reward for such a life, and accordingly the Duke of Norfolk,

representing the Catholic laity of England, visited Manning, and

suggested that he should forward the proposal to the Vatican. Manning

agreed, and then there followed a curious series of incidents--the last

encounter in the jarring lives of those two men. A letter was drawn up

by Manning for the eye of the Pope, embodying the Duke of Norfolk's

proposal; but there was an unaccountable delay in the transmission of

this letter; months passed, and it had not reached the Holy Father. The

whole matter would, perhaps, have dropped out of sight and been

forgotten, in a way which had become customary when honours for Newman

were concerned, had not the Duke of Norfolk himself, when he was next in

Rome, ventured to recommend to Leo XIII that Dr. Newman should be made a

Cardinal. His Holiness welcomed the proposal; but, he said, he could do

nothing until he knew the views of Cardinal Manning. Thereupon, the Duke

of Norfolk wrote to Manning, explaining what had occurred; shortly

afterwards, Manning's letter of recommendation, after a delay of six

months, reached the Pope, and the offer of a Cardinalate was immediately

dispatched to Newman.

But the affair was not yet over. The offer had been made; would it be

accepted? There was one difficulty in the way. Newman was now an infirm

old man of seventy-eight; and it is a rule that all Cardinals who are

not also diocesan Bishops or Archbishops reside, as a matter of course,

at Rome. The change would have been impossible for one of his years--for

one, too, whose whole life was now bound up with the Oratory at

Birmingham. But, of course, there was nothing to prevent His Holiness

from making an exception in Newman's case, and allowing him to end his

days in England. Yet how was Newman himself to suggest this? The offer

of the Hat had come to him as an almost miraculous token of renewed

confidence, of ultimate reconciliation. The old, long, bitter

estrangement was ended at last. 'The cloud is lifted from me for ever!'

he exclaimed when the news reached him. It would be melancholy indeed if

the cup were now to be once more dashed from his lips and he was obliged

to refuse the signal honour. In his perplexity he went to the Bishop of

Birmingham and explained the whole situation. The Bishop assured him

that all would be well; that he himself would communicate with the

authorities, and put the facts of the case before them. Accordingly,

while Newman wrote formally refusing the Hat, on the ground of his

unwillingness to leave the Oratory, the Bishop wrote two letters to

Manning, one official and one private, in which the following passages

occurred:

'Dr. Newman has far too humble and delicate a mind to dream of thinking

or saying anything which would look like hinting at any kind of terms

with the Sovereign Pontiff.... I think, however, that I ought to express

my own sense of what Dr. Newman's dispositions are, and that it will be

expected of me ... I am thoroughly confident that nothing stands in the

way of his most grateful acceptance, except what he tells me greatly

distresses him--namely, the having to leave the Oratory at a critical

period of its existence, and the impossibility of his beginning a new

life at his advanced age.'

And in his private letter the Bishop said:

'Dr. Newman is very much aged, and softened with age and the trials he

has had, especially the loss of his two brethren, St. John and Caswall;

he can never refer to these losses without weeping and becoming

speechless for a time. He is very much affected by the Pope's kindness

and would, I know, like to receive the great honour offered him, but

feels the whole difficulty at his age of changing his life or having to

leave the Oratory--which I am sure he could not do. If the Holy Father

thinks well to confer on him the dignity, leaving him where he is, I

know how immensely he would be gratified, and you will know how

generally the conferring on him the Cardinalate will be applauded.'

These two letters, together with Newman's refusal, reached Manning as he

was on the point of starting for Rome. After he had left England, the

following statement appeared in "The Times":

'Pope Leo XIII has intimated his desire to raise Dr. Newman to the rank

of Cardinal, but with expressions of deep respect for the Holy See, Dr.

Newman has excused himself from accepting the Purple.'

When Newman's eyes fell upon the announcement, he realised at once that

a secret and powerful force was working against him. He trembled, as he

had so often trembled before; and certainly the danger was not

imaginary. In the ordinary course of things, how could such a paragraph

have been inserted without his authority? And consequently, did it not

convey to the world, not only an absolute refusal which he had never

intended, but a wish on his part to emphasise publicly his rejection of

the proffered honour? Did it not imply that he had lightly declined a

proposal for which in reality he was deeply thankful? And when the fatal

paragraph was read in Rome, might it not actually lead to the offer of

the Cardinalate being finally withheld?

In great agitation, Newman appealed to the Duke of Norfolk.

'As to the statement,' he wrote, 'of my refusing a Cardinal's Hat, which

is in the papers, you must not believe it, for this reason:

'Of course, it implies that an offer has been made me, and I have sent

an answer to it. Now I have ever understood that it is a point of

propriety and honour to consider such communications sacred. This

statement, therefore, cannot come from me. Nor could it come from Rome,

for it was made public before my answer got to Rome.

'It could only come, then, from someone who not only read my letter,

but, instead of leaving to the Pope to interpret it, took upon himself

to put an interpretation upon it, and published that interpretation to

the world.

'A private letter, addressed to Roman Authorities, is interpreted on its

way and published in the English papers. How is it possible that anyone

can have done this?'

The crushing indictment pointed straight at Manning. And it was true.

Manning had done the impossible deed. Knowing what he did, with the

Bishop of Birmingham's two letters in his pocket, he had put it about

that Newman had refused the Hat. But a change had come over the spirit

of the Holy See. Things were not as they had once been: Monsignor Talbot

was at Passy, and Pio Nono was--where? The Duke of Norfolk intervened

once again; Manning was profuse in his apologies for having

misunderstood Newman's intentions, and hurried to the Pope to rectify

the error. Without hesitation, the Sovereign Pontiff relaxed the rule of

Roman residence, and Newman became a Cardinal.

He lived to enjoy his glory for more than ten years. Since he rarely

left the Oratory, and since Manning never visited Birmingham, the two

Cardinals met only once or twice. After one of these occasions, on

returning to the Oratory, Cardinal Newman said, 'What do you think

Cardinal Manning did to me? He kissed me!'

On Newman's death, Manning delivered a funeral oration, which opened

thus:

'We have lost our greatest witness for the Faith, and we are all poorer

and lower by the loss.

'When these tidings came to me, my first thought was this, in what way

can I, once more, show my love and veneration for my brother and friend

of more than sixty years?'

In private, however, the surviving Cardinal's tone was apt to be more

... direct. 'Poor Newman!' he once exclaimed in a moment of genial

expansion. 'Poor Newman! He was a great hater!'

X

IN that gaunt and gloomy building--more like a barracks than an

Episcopal palace--Archbishop's House, Westminster, Manning's existence

stretched itself out into an extreme old age. As his years increased,

his activities, if that were possible, increased too. Meetings,

missions, lectures, sermons, articles, interviews, letters--such things

came upon him in redoubled multitudes, and were dispatched with an

unrelenting zeal. But this was not all; with age, he seemed to acquire

what was almost a new fervour, an unaccustomed, unexpected, freeing of

the spirit, filling him with preoccupations which he had hardly felt

before. 'They say I am ambitious,' he noted in his Diary, 'but do I rest

in my ambition?'

No, assuredly he did not rest; but he worked now with no arriere pensee

for the greater glory of God. A kind of frenzy fell upon him. Poverty,

drunkenness, vice, all the horrors and terrors of our civilisation

seized upon his mind, and urged him forward to new fields of action and

new fields of thought. The temper of his soul assumed almost a

revolutionary cast. 'I am a Mosaic Radical,' he exclaimed; and, indeed,

in the exaltation of his energies, the incoherence of his conceptions,

the democratic urgency of his desires, combined with his awe-inspiring

aspect and his venerable age, it was easy enough to trace the mingled

qualities of the patriarch, the prophet, and the demagogue. As, in his

soiled and shabby garments, the old man harangued the crowds of

Bermondsey or Peckham upon the virtues of Temperance, assuring them,

with all the passion of conviction, as a final argument, that the

majority of the Apostles were total abstainers, this Prince of the

Church might have passed as a leader of the Salvation Army. His

popularity was immense, reaching its height during the great Dock

Strikes of 1889, when, after the victory of the men was assured, Manning

was able, by his persuasive eloquence and the weight of his character,

to prevent its being carried to excess. After other conciliators--among

whom was the Bishop of London--had given up the task in disgust, the

octogenarian Cardinal worked on with indefatigable resolution. At last,

late at night, in the schools in Kirby Street, Bermondsey, he rose to

address the strikers. An enthusiastic eye-witness has described the

scene:

'Unaccustomed tears glistened in the eyes of his rough and work-stained

hearers as the Cardinal raised his hand and solemnly urged them not to

prolong one moment more than they could help the perilous uncertainty

and the sufferings of their wives and children. Just above his uplifted

hand was a figure of the Madonna and Child; and some among the men tell

how a sudden light seemed to swim around it as the speaker pleaded for

the women and children. When he sat down all in the room knew that he

had won the day, and that, so far as the Strike Committee was concerned,

the matter was at an end.'

In those days, there were strange visitors at the Archbishop's House.

Careful priests and conscientious secretaries wondered what the world

was coming to when they saw labour leaders like Mr. John Burns and Mr.

Ben Tillett, and land-reformers like Mr. Henry George, being ushered

into the presence of his Eminence. Even the notorious Mr. Stead

appeared, and his scandalous paper with its unspeakable revelations lay

upon the Cardinal's table. This proved too much for one of the faithful

tonsured dependents of the place, and he ventured to expostulate with

his master. But he never did so again.

When the guests were gone, and the great room was empty, the old man

would draw himself nearer to the enormous fire, and review once more,

for the thousandth time, the long adventure of his life. He would bring

out his diaries and his memoranda, he would rearrange his notes, he

would turn over again the yellow leaves of faded correspondences;

seizing his pen, he would pour out his comments and reflections, and

fill, with an extraordinary solicitude, page after page with

elucidations, explanations, justifications, of the vanished incidents of

a remote past. He would snip with scissors the pages of ancient

journals, and with delicate ecclesiastical fingers, drop unknown

mysteries into the flames.

Sometimes he would turn to the four red folio scrapbooks with their

collection of newspaper cuttings, concerning himself, over a period of

thirty years. Then the pale cheeks would flush and the close-drawn lips

would grow even more menacing than before. 'Stupid, mulish malice,' he

would note. 'Pure lying--conscious, deliberate and designed.'

'Suggestive lying. Personal animosity is at the bottom of this.'

And then he would suddenly begin to doubt. After all, where was he? What

had he accomplished? Had any of it been worthwhile? Had he not been out

of the world all his life! Out of the world!

'Croker's "Life and Letters", and Hayward's "Letters",' he notes, 'are

so full of politics, literature, action, events, collision of mind with

mind, and that with such a multitude of men in every state of life, that

when I look back, it seems as if I had been simply useless.'

And again, 'The complete isolation and exclusion from the official life

of England in which I have lived, makes me feel as if I had done

nothing'. He struggled to console himself with the reflexion that all

this was only 'the natural order'. 'If the natural order is moved by the

supernatural order, then I may not have done nothing. Fifty years of

witness for God and His Truth, I hope, has not been in vain.' But the

same thoughts recurred. 'In reading Macaulay's life I had a haunting

feeling that his had been a life of public utility and mine a vita

umbratilis, a life in the shade.' Ah! it was God's will. 'Mine has been

a life of fifty years out of the world as Gladstone's has been in it.

The work of his life in this world is manifest. I hope mine may be in

the next. I suppose our Lord called me out of the world because He saw

that I should lose my soul in it.' Clearly, that was the explanation.

And yet he remained sufficiently in the world to discharge with absolute

efficiency the complex government of his diocese almost up to the last

moment of his existence. Though his bodily strength gradually ebbed, the

vigour of his mind was undismayed. At last, supported by cushions, he

continued, by means of a dictated correspondence, to exert his

accustomed rule. Only occasionally would he lay aside his work to plunge

into the yet more necessary duties of devotion. Never again would he

preach; never again would he put into practice those three salutary

rules of his in choosing a subject for a sermon: '(1) asking God to

guide the choice; (2) applying the matter to myself; (3) making the sign

of the cross on my head and heart and lips in honour of the Sacred

Mouth;' but he could still pray; he could turn especially to the Holy

Ghost.

'A very simple but devout person,' he wrote in one of his latest

memoranda, 'asked me why in my first volume of sermons I said so little

about the Holy Ghost. I was not aware of it; but I found it to be true.

I at once resolved that I would make a reparation every day of my life

to the Holy Ghost. This I have never failed to do to this day. To this I

owe the light and faith which brought me into the truefold. I bought all

the books I could about the Holy Ghost. I worked out the truths about

His personality, His presence, and His office. This made me understand

the last paragraph in the Apostles' Creed, and made me a Catholic

Christian.'

So, though Death came slowly, struggling step by step with that bold and

tenacious spirit, when he did come at last the Cardinal was ready. Robed

in his archiepiscopal vestments, his rochet, his girdle, and his

mozzetta, with the scarlet biretta on his head, and the pectoral cross

upon his breast, he made his solemn Profession of Faith in the Holy

Roman Church. A crowd of lesser dignitaries, each in the garments of his

office, attended the ceremonial. The Bishop of Salford held up the

Pontificale and the Bishop of Amycla bore the wax taper. The provost of

Westminster, on his knees, read aloud the Profession of Faith,

surrounded by the Canons of the Diocese. Towards those who gathered

about him, the dying man was still able to show some signs of

recognition, and even, perhaps, of affection; yet it seemed that his

chief preoccupation, up to the very end, was with his obedience to the

rules prescribed by the Divine Authority. 'I am glad to have been able

to do everything in due order', were among his last words. 'Si fort

qu'on soit,' says one of the profoundest of the observers of the human

heart, 'on peut eprouver le besoin de s'incliner devant quelqu'un ou

quelque chose. S'incliner devant Dieu, c'est toujours le moins

humiliant.'

Manning died on January 14th, 1892, in the eighty-fifth year of his age.

A few days later Mr. Gladstone took occasion, in a letter to a friend,

to refer to his relations with the late Cardinal. Manning's conversion

was, he said,

'altogether the severest blow that ever befell me. In a late letter the

Cardinal termed it a quarrel, but in my reply I told him it was not a

quarrel, but a death; and that was the truth. Since then there have been

vicissitudes. But I am quite certain that to the last his personal

feelings never changed; and I believe also that he kept a promise made

in 1851, to remember me before God at the most solemn moments; a promise

which I greatly valued. The whole subject is to me at once of extreme

interest and of considerable restraint.'

'His reluctance to die,' concluded Mr. Gladstone, 'may be explained by

an intense anxiety to complete unfulfilled service.'

The funeral was the occasion of a popular demonstration such as has

rarely been witnessed in the streets of London. The route of the

procession was lined by vast crowds of working people, whose

imaginations, in some instinctive manner, had been touched. Many who had

hardly seen him declared that in Cardinal Manning they had lost their

best friend. Was it the magnetic vigour of the dead man's spirit that

moved them? Or was it his valiant disregard of common custom and those

conventional reserves and poor punctilios which are wont to hem about

the great? Or was it something untameable in his glances and in his

gestures? Or was it, perhaps, the mysterious glamour lingering about

him, of the antique organisation of Rome? For whatever cause, the mind

of the people had been impressed; and yet, after all, the impression was

more acute than lasting. The Cardinal's memory is a dim thing today. And

he who descends into the crypt of that Cathedral which Manning never

lived to see, will observe, in the quiet niche with the sepulchral

monument, that the dust lies thick on the strange, the incongruous, the

almost impossible object which, with its elaborations of dependent

tassels, hangs down from the dim vault like some forlorn and forgotten

trophy--the Hat.

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Florence Nightingale

EVERY one knows the popular conception of Florence Nightingale. The

saintly, self-sacrificing woman, the delicate maiden of high degree who

threw aside the pleasures of a life of ease to succour the afflicted;

the Lady with the Lamp, gliding through the horrors of the hospital at

Scutari, and consecrating with the radiance of her goodness the dying

soldier's couch. The vision is familiar to all--but the truth was

different. The Miss Nightingale of fact was not as facile as fancy

painted her. She worked in another fashion and towards another end; she

moved under the stress of an impetus which finds no place in the popular

imagination. A Demon possessed her. Now demons, whatever else they may

be, are full of interest. And so it happens that in the real Miss

Nightingale there was more that was interesting than in the legendary

one; there was also less that was agreeable.

Her family was extremely well-to-do, and connected by marriage with a

spreading circle of other well-to-do families. There was a large country

house in Derbyshire; there was another in the New Forest; there were

Mayfair rooms for the London season and all its finest parties; there

were tours on the Continent with even more than the usual number of

Italian operas and of glimpses at the celebrities of Paris. Brought up

among such advantages, it was only natural to suppose that Florence

would show a proper appreciation of them by doing her duty in that state

of life unto which it had pleased God to call her--in other words, by

marrying, after a fitting number of dances and dinner-parties, an

eligible gentleman, and living happily ever afterwards. Her sister, her

cousins, all the young ladies of her acquaintance, were either getting

ready to do this or had already done it.

It was inconceivable that Florence should dream of anything else; yet

dream she did. Ah! To do her duty in that state of life unto which it

had pleased God to call her! Assuredly, she would not be behindhand in

doing her duty; but unto what state of life HAD it pleased God to call

her? That was the question. God's calls are many, and they are strange.

Unto what state of life had it pleased Him to call Charlotte Corday, or

Elizabeth of Hungary? What was that secret voice in her ear, if it was

not a call? Why had she felt, from her earliest years, those mysterious

promptings towards ... she hardly knew what, but certainly towards

something very different from anything around her? Why, as a child in

the nursery, when her sister had shown a healthy pleasure in tearing her

dolls to pieces, had SHE shown an almost morbid one in sewing them up

again? Why was she driven now to minister to the poor in their cottages,

to watch by sick-beds, to put her dog's wounded paw into elaborate

splints as if it was a human being? Why was her head filled with queer

imaginations of the country house at Embley turned, by some enchantment,

into a hospital, with herself as matron moving about among the beds? Why

was even her vision of heaven itself filled with suffering patients to

whom she was being useful? So she dreamed and wondered, and, taking out

her diary, she poured into it the agitations of her soul. And then the

bell rang, and it was time to go and dress for dinner.

As the years passed, a restlessness began to grow upon her. She was

unhappy, and at last she knew it. Mrs. Nightingale, too, began to notice

that there was something wrong. It was very odd--what could be the

matter with dear Flo? Mr. Nightingale suggested that a husband might be

advisable; but the curious thing was that she seemed to take no interest

in husbands. And with her attractions, and her accomplishments, too!

There was nothing in the world to prevent her making a really brilliant

match. But no! She would think of nothing but how to satisfy that

singular craving of hers to be DOING something. As if there was not

plenty to do in any case, in the ordinary way, at home. There was the

china to look after, and there was her father to be read to after

dinner. Mrs. Nightingale could not understand it; and then one day her

perplexity was changed to consternation and alarm. Florence announced an

extreme desire to go to Salisbury Hospital for several months as a

nurse; and she confessed to some visionary plan of eventually setting up

in a house of her own in a neighbouring village, and there founding

'something like a Protestant Sisterhood, without vows, for women of

educated feelings'. The whole scheme was summarily brushed aside as

preposterous; and Mrs. Nightingale, after the first shock of terror, was

able to settle down again more or less comfortably to her embroidery.

But Florence, who was now twenty-five and felt that the dream of her

life had been shattered, came near to desperation.

And, indeed, the difficulties in her path were great. For not only was

it an almost unimaginable thing in those days for a woman of means to

make her own way in the world and to live in independence, but the

particular profession for which Florence was clearly marked out both by

her instincts and her capacities was at that time a peculiarly

disreputable one. A 'nurse' meant then a coarse old woman, always

ignorant, usually dirty, often brutal, a Mrs. Gamp, in bunched-up sordid

garments, tippling at the brandy bottle or indulging in worse

irregularities. The nurses in the hospitals were especially notorious

for immoral conduct; sobriety was almost unknown among them; and they

could hardly be trusted to carry out the simplest medical duties.

Certainly, things HAVE changed since those days; and that they have

changed is due, far more than to any other human being, to Miss

Nightingale herself. It is not to be wondered at that her parents should

have shuddered at the notion of their daughter devoting her life to such

an occupation. 'It was as if,' she herself said afterwards, 'I had

wanted to be a kitchen-maid.' Yet the want, absurd and impracticable as

it was, not only remained fixed immovably in her heart, but grew in

intensity day by day. Her wretchedness deepened into a morbid

melancholy. Everything about her was vile, and she herself, it was

clear, to have deserved such misery, was even viler than her

surroundings. Yes, she had sinned--'standing before God's judgment

seat'. 'No one,' she declared, 'has so grieved the Holy Spirit'; of that

she was quite certain. It was in vain that she prayed to be delivered

from vanity and hypocrisy, and she could not bear to smile or to be gay,

'because she hated God to hear her laugh, as if she had not repented of

her sin'.

A weaker spirit would have been overwhelmed by the load of such

distresses--would have yielded or snapped. But this extraordinary young

woman held firm, and fought her way to victory. With an amazing

persistency, during the eight years that followed her rebuff over

Salisbury Hospital, she struggled and worked and planned. While

superficially she was carrying on the life of a brilliant girl in high

society, while internally she was a prey to the tortures of regret and

of remorse, she yet possessed the energy to collect the knowledge and to

undergo the experience which alone could enable her to do what she had

determined she would do in the end. In secret she devoured the reports

of medical commissions, the pamphlets of sanitary authorities, the

histories of hospitals and homes. She spent the intervals of the London

season in ragged schools and workhouses. When she went abroad with her

family, she used her spare time so well that there was hardly a great

hospital in Europe with which she was not acquainted; hardly a great

city whose slums she had not passed through. She managed to spend some

days in a convent school in Rome, and some weeks as a 'Soeur de Charite'

in Paris. Then, while her mother and sister were taking the waters at

Carlsbad, she succeeded in slipping off to a nursing institution at

Kaiserswerth, where she remained for more than three months. This was

the critical event of her life. The experience which she gained as a

nurse at Kaiserswerth formed the foundation of all her future action and

finally fixed her in her career.

But one other trial awaited her. The allurements of the world she had

brushed aside with disdain and loathing; she had resisted the subtler

temptation which, in her weariness, had sometimes come upon her, of

devoting her baffled energies to art or literature; the last ordeal

appeared in the shape of a desirable young man. Hitherto, her lovers had

been nothing to her but an added burden and a mockery; but now--for a

moment--she wavered. A new feeling swept over her--a feeling which she

had never known before--which she was never to know again. The most

powerful and the profoundest of all the instincts of humanity laid claim

upon her. But it rose before her, that instinct, arrayed--how could it

be otherwise?--in the inevitable habiliments of a Victorian marriage;

and she had the strength to stamp it underfoot.

'I have an intellectual nature which requires satisfaction,' she noted,

'and that would find it in him. I have a passionate nature which

requires satisfaction, and that would find it in him. I have a moral, an

active nature which requires satisfaction, and that would not find it in

his life. Sometimes I think that I will satisfy my passionate nature at

all events....'

But no, she knew in her heart that it could not be. 'To be nailed to a

continuation and exaggeration of my present life ... to put it out of my

power ever to be able to seize the chance of forming for myself a true

and rich life'--that would be a suicide. She made her choice, and

refused what was at least a certain happiness for a visionary good which

might never come to her at all. And so she returned to her old life of

waiting and bitterness.

'The thoughts and feelings that I have now,' she wrote, 'I can remember

since I was six years old. A profession, a trade, a necessary

occupation, something to fill and employ all my faculties, I have always

felt essential to me, I have always longed for. The first thought I can

remember, and the last, was nursing work; and in the absence of this,

education work, but more the education of the bad than of the young ...

Everything has been tried--foreign travel, kind friends, everything. My

God! What is to become of me?'

A desirable young man? Dust and ashes! What was there desirable in such

a thing as that? 'In my thirty-first year,' she noted in her diary, 'I

see nothing desirable but death.'

Three more years passed, and then at last the pressure of time told; her

family seemed to realise that she was old enough and strong enough to

have her way; and she became the superintendent of a charitable nursing

home in Harley Street. She had gained her independence, though it was in

a meagre sphere enough; and her mother was still not quite resigned:

surely Florence might at least spend the summer in the country. At

times, indeed, among her intimates, Mrs. Nightingale almost wept. 'We

are ducks,' she said with tears in her eyes, 'who have hatched a wild

swan.' But the poor lady was wrong; it was not a swan that they had

hatched, it was an eagle.

II

Miss NIGHTINGALE had been a year in her nursing-home in Harley Street,

when Fate knocked at the door. The Crimean War broke out; the battle of

the Alma was fought; and the terrible condition of our military

hospitals at Scutari began to be known in England. It sometimes happens

that the plans of Providence are a little difficult to follow, but on

this occasion all was plain; there was a perfect coordination of events.

For years Miss Nightingale had been getting ready; at last she was

prepared--experienced, free, mature, yet still young (she was

thirty-four)--desirous to serve, accustomed to command: at that precise

moment the desperate need of a great nation came, and she was there to

satisfy it. If the war had fallen a few years earlier, she would have

lacked the knowledge, perhaps even the power, for such a work; a few

years later and she would, no doubt, have been fixed in the routine of

some absorbing task, and moreover, she would have been growing old.

Nor was it only the coincidence of time that was remarkable. It so fell

out that Sidney Herbert was at the War Office and in the Cabinet; and

Sidney Herbert was an intimate friend of Miss Nightingale's, convinced,

from personal experience in charitable work, of her supreme capacity.

After such premises, it seems hardly more than a matter of course that

her letter, in which she offered her services for the East, and Sidney

Herbert's letter, in which he asked for them, should actually have

crossed in the post. Thus it all happened, without a hitch. The

appointment was made and even Mrs. Nightingale, overawed by the

magnitude of the venture, could only approve. A pair of faithful friends

offered themselves as personal attendants; thirty-eight nurses were

collected; and within a week of the crossing of the letters Miss

Nightingale, amid a great burst of popular enthusiasm, left for

Constantinople.

Among the numerous letters which she received on her departure was one

from Dr. Manning, who at that time was working in comparative obscurity

as a Catholic priest in Bayswater. 'God will keep you,' he wrote, 'and

my prayer for you will be that your one object of worship, Pattern of

Imitation, and source of consolation and strength, may be the Sacred

Heart of our Divine Lord.'

To what extent Dr. Manning's prayer was answered must remain a matter of

doubt; but this much is certain: that if ever a prayer was needed, it

was needed then for Florence Nightingale. For dark as had been the

picture of the state of affairs at Scutari, revealed to the English

public in the dispatches of "The Times Correspondent", and in a

multitude of private letters, yet the reality turned out to be darker

still. What had occurred was, in brief, the complete breakdown of our

medical arrangements at the seat of war. The origins of this awful

failure were complex and manifold; they stretched back through long

years of peace and carelessness in England; they could be traced through

endless ramifications of administrative incapacity--from the inherent

faults of confused systems, to the petty bunglings of minor officials,

from the inevitable ignorance of Cabinet Ministers, to the fatal

exactitudes of narrow routine.

In the inquiries which followed, it was clearly shown that the evil was

in reality that worst of all evils--one which has been caused by nothing

in particular and for which no one in particular is to blame. The whole

organisation of the war machine was incompetent and out of date. The old

Duke had sat for a generation at the Horse Guards repressing innovations

with an iron hand. There was an extraordinary overlapping of authorities

and an almost incredible shifting of responsibilities to and fro. As for

such a notion as the creation and the maintenance of a really adequate

medical service for the army--in that atmosphere of aged chaos, how

could it have entered anybody's head? Before the war, the easygoing

officials at Westminster were naturally persuaded that all was well--or

at least as well as could be expected; when someone, for instance,

actually had the temerity to suggest the formation of a corps of Army

nurses, he was at once laughed out of court. When the war had begun, the

gallant British officers in control of affairs had other things to think

about than the petty details of medical organisation. Who had bothered

with such trifles in the Peninsula? And surely, on that occasion, we had

done pretty well. Thus, the most obvious precautions were neglected, and

the most necessary preparations were put off from day to day. The

principal medical officer of the Army, Dr. Hall, was summoned from India

at a moment's notice, and was unable to visit England before taking up

his duties at the front. And it was not until after the battle of the

Alma, when we had been at war for many months, that we acquired hospital

accommodations at Scutari for more than a thousand men. Errors, follies,

and vices on the part of individuals there doubtless were; but, in the

general reckoning, they were of small account--insignificant symptoms of

the deep disease of the body politic--to the enormous calamity of

administrative collapse.

Miss Nightingale arrived at Scutari--a suburb of Constantinople, on the

Asiatic side of the Bosphorus--on November 4th, 1854; it was ten days

after the battle of Balaclava, and the day before the battle of

Inkerman. The organisation of the hospitals, which had already given way

under the stress of the battle of the Alma, was now to be subjected to

the further pressure which these two desperate and bloody engagements

implied. Great detachments of wounded were already beginning to pour in.

The men, after receiving such summary treatment as could be given them

at the smaller hospitals in the Crimea itself, were forthwith shipped in

batches of 200 across the Black Sea to Scutari. This voyage was in

normal times one of four days and a half; but the times were no longer

normal, and now the transit often lasted for a fortnight or three weeks.

It received, not without reason, the name of the 'middle passage'.

Between, and sometimes on the decks, the wounded, the sick, and the

dying were crowded--men who had just undergone the amputation of limbs,

men in the clutches of fever or of frostbite, men in the last stages of

dysentry and cholera--without beds, sometimes without blankets, often

hardly clothed. The one or two surgeons on board did what they could;

but medical stores were lacking, and the only form of nursing available

was that provided by a handful of invalid soldiers who were usually

themselves prostrate by the end of the voyage. There was no other food

beside the ordinary salt rations of ship diet; and even the water was

sometimes so stored that it was out of reach of the weak. For many

months, the average of deaths during these voyages was seventy-four in

1,000; the corpses were shot out into the waters; and who shall say that

they were the most unfortunate? At Scutari, the landing-stage,

constructed with all the perverseness of Oriental ingenuity, could only

be approached with great difficulty, and, in rough weather, not at all.

When it was reached, what remained of the men in the ships had first to

be disembarked, and then conveyed up a steep slope of a quarter of a

mile to the nearest of the hospitals. The most serious cases might be

put upon stretchers--for there were far too few for all; the rest were

carried or dragged up the hill by such convalescent soldiers as could be

got together, who were not too obviously infirm for the work. At last

the journey was accomplished; slowly, one by one, living or dying, the

wounded were carried up into the hospital. And in the hospital what did

they find?

Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate: the delusive doors bore no such

inscription; and yet behind them Hell yawned. Want, neglect, confusion,

misery--in every shape and in every degree of intensity--filled the

endless corridors and the vast apartments of the gigantic barrack-house,

which, without forethought or preparation, had been hurriedly set aside

as the chief shelter for the victims of the war. The very building

itself was radically defective. Huge sewers underlay it, and cesspools

loaded with filth wafted their poison into the upper rooms. The floors

were in so rotten a condition that many of them could not be scrubbed;

the walls were thick with dirt; incredible multitudes of vermin swarmed

everywhere. And, enormous as the building was, it was yet too small. It

contained four miles of beds, crushed together so close that there was

but just room to pass between them. Under such conditions, the most

elaborate system of ventilation might well have been at fault; but here

there was no ventilation. The stench was indescribable. 'I have been

well acquainted,' said Miss Nightingale, 'with the dwellings of the

worst parts of most of the great cities in Europe, but have never been

in any atmosphere which I could compare with that of the Barrack

Hospital at night.' The structural defects were equalled by the

deficiencies in the commonest objects of hospital use. There were not

enough bedsteads; the sheets were of canvas, and so coarse that the

wounded men recoiled from them, begging to be left in their blankets;

there was no bedroom furniture of any kind, and empty beer bottles were

used for candlesticks. There were no basins, no towels, no soap, no

brooms, no mops, no trays, no plates; there were neither slippers nor

scissors, neither shoe-brushes nor blacking; there were no knives or

forks or spoons. The supply of fuel was constantly deficient. The

cooking arrangements were preposterously inadequate, and the laundry was

a farce. As for purely medical materials, the tale was no better.

Stretchers, splints, bandages--all were lacking; and so were the most

ordinary drugs.

To replace such wants, to struggle against such difficulties, there was

a handful of men overburdened by the strain of ceaseless work, bound

down by the traditions of official routine, and enfeebled either by old

age or inexperience or sheer incompetence. They had proved utterly

unequal to their task. The principal doctor was lost in the imbecilities

of a senile optimism. The wretched official whose business it was to

provide for the wants of the hospital was tied fast hand and foot by red

tape. A few of the younger doctors struggled valiantly, but what could

they do? Unprepared, disorganised, with such help only as they could

find among the miserable band of convalescent soldiers drafted off to

tend their sick comrades, they were faced with disease, mutilation, and

death in all their most appalling forms, crowded multitudinously about

them in an ever-increasing mass. They were like men in a shipwreck,

fighting, not for safety, but for the next moment's bare existence--to

gain, by yet another frenzied effort, some brief respite from the waters

of destruction.

In these surroundings, those who had been long inured to scenes of human

suffering--surgeons with a world-wide knowledge of agonies, soldiers

familiar with fields of carnage, missionaries with remembrances of

famine and of plague--yet found a depth of horror which they had never

known before. There were moments, there were places, in the Barrack

Hospital at Scutari, where the strongest hand was struck with trembling,

and the boldest eye would turn away its gaze.

Miss Nightingale came, and she, at any rate, in that inferno, did not

abandon hope. For one thing, she brought material succour. Before she

left London she had consulted Dr. Andrew Smith, the head of the Army

Medical Board, as to whether it would be useful to take out stores of

any kind to Scutari; and Dr. Andrew Smith had told her that 'nothing was

needed'. Even Sidney Herbert had given her similar assurances; possibly,

owing to an oversight, there might have been some delay in the delivery

of the medical stores, which, he said, had been sent out from England

'in profusion', but 'four days would have remedied this'. She preferred

to trust her own instincts, and at Marseilles purchased a large quantity

of miscellaneous provisions, which were of the utmost use at Scutari.

She came, too, amply provided with money--in all, during her stay in the

East, about L7,000 reached her from private sources; and, in addition,

she was able to avail herself of another valuable means of help. At the

same time as herself, Mr. Macdonald, of The Times, had arrived at

Scutari, charged with the duty of administering the large sums of money

collected through the agency of that newspaper in aid of the sick and

wounded; and Mr. Macdonald had the sense to see that the best use he

could make of The Times Fund was to put it at the disposal of Miss

Nightingale.

'I cannot conceive,' wrote an eye-witness, 'as I now calmly look back on

the first three weeks after the arrival of the wounded from Inkerman,

how it could have been possible to have avoided a state of things too

disastrous to contemplate, had not Miss Nightingale been there, with the

means placed at her disposal by Mr. Macdonald.'

But the official view was different. What! Was the public service to

admit, by accepting outside charity, that it was unable to discharge its

own duties without the assistance of private and irregular benevolence?

Never! And accordingly when Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, our ambassador

at Constantinople, was asked by Mr. Macdonald to indicate how The Times

Fund could best be employed, he answered that there was indeed one

object to which it might very well be devoted--the building of an

English Protestant Church at Pera.

Mr. Macdonald did not waste further time with Lord Stratford, and

immediately joined forces with Miss Nightingale. But, with such a frame

of mind in the highest quarters, it is easy to imagine the kind of

disgust and alarm with which the sudden intrusion of a band of amateurs

and females must have filled the minds of the ordinary officer and the

ordinary military surgeon. They could not understand it--what had women

to do with war? Honest Colonels relieved their spleen by the cracking of

heavy jokes about 'the Bird'; while poor Dr. Hall, a rough terrier of a

man, who had worried his way to the top of his profession, was struck

speechless with astonishment, and at last observed that Miss

Nightingale's appointment was extremely droll.

Her position was, indeed, an official one, but it was hardly the easier

for that. In the hospitals it was her duty to provide the services of

herself and her nurses when they were asked for by the doctors, and not

until then. At first some of the surgeons would have nothing to say to

her, and, though she was welcomed by others, the majority were hostile

and suspicious. But gradually she gained ground. Her good will could not

be denied, and her capacity could not be disregarded. With consummate

tact, with all the gentleness of supreme strength, she managed at last

to impose her personality upon the susceptible, overwrought,

discouraged, and helpless group of men in authority who surrounded her.

She stood firm; she was a rock in the angry ocean; with her alone was

safety, comfort, life. And so it was that hope dawned at Scutari. The

reign of chaos and old night began to dwindle; order came upon the

scene, and common sense, and forethought, and decision, radiating out

from the little room off the great gallery in the Barrack Hospital

where, day and night, the Lady Superintendent was at her task. Progress

might be slow, but it was sure.

The first sign of a great change came with the appearance of some of

those necessary objects with which the hospitals had been unprovided for

months. The sick men began to enjoy the use of towels and soap, knives

and forks, combs and tooth-brushes. Dr. Hall might snort when he heard

of it, asking, with a growl, what a soldier wanted with a tooth-brush;

but the good work went on. Eventually the whole business of purveying to

the hospitals was, in effect, carried out by Miss Nightingale. She

alone, it seemed, whatever the contingency, knew where to lay her hands

on what was wanted; she alone could dispense her stores with readiness;

above all, she alone possessed the art of circumventing the pernicious

influences of official etiquette. This was her greatest enemy, and

sometimes even she was baffled by it. On one occasion 27,000 shirts,

sent out at her instance by the Home Government, arrived, were landed,

and were only waiting to be unpacked. But the official 'Purveyor'

intervened; 'he could not unpack them,' he said, 'with out a Board.'

Miss Nightingale pleaded in vain; the sick and wounded lay half-naked

shivering for want of clothing; and three weeks elapsed before the Board

released the shirts. A little later, however, on a similar occasion,

Miss Nightingale felt that she could assert her own authority. She

ordered a Government consignment to be forcibly opened while the

miserable 'Purveyor' stood by, wringing his hands in departmental agony.

Vast quantities of valuable stores sent from England lay, she found,

engulfed in the bottomless abyss of the Turkish Customs House. Other

ship-loads, buried beneath munitions of war destined for Balaclava,

passed Scutari without a sign, and thus hospital materials were

sometimes carried to and fro three times over the Black Sea, before they

reached their destination. The whole system was clearly at fault, and

Miss Nightingale suggested to the home authorities that a Government

Store House should be instituted at Scutari for the reception and

distribution of the consignments. Six months after her arrival this was

done.

In the meantime, she had reorganised the kitchens and the laundries in

the hospitals. The ill-cooked hunks of meat, vilely served at irregular

intervals, which had hitherto been the only diet for the sick men, were

replaced by punctual meals, well-prepared and appetising, while

strengthening extra foods--soups and wines and jellies ('preposterous

luxuries', snarled Dr. Hall)--were distributed to those who needed them.

One thing, however, she could not effect. The separation of the bones

from the meat was no part of official cookery: the rule was that the

food must be divided into equal portions, and if some of the portions

were all bone--well, every man must take his chance. The rule, perhaps,

was not a very good one; but there it was. 'It would require a new

Regulation of the Service,' she was told, 'to bone the meat.' As for the

washing arrangements, they were revolutionised. Up to the time of Miss

Nightingale's arrival, the number of shirts the authorities had

succeeded in washing was seven. The hospital bedding, she found, was

'washed' in cold water. She took a Turkish house, had boilers installed,

and employed soldiers' wives to do the laundry work. The expenses were

defrayed from her own funds and that of The Times; and henceforward, the

sick and wounded had the comfort of clean linen.

Then she turned her attention to their clothing. Owing to military

exigencies, the greater number of the men had abandoned their kit; their

knapsacks were lost forever; they possessed nothing but what was on

their persons, and that was usually only fit for speedy destruction. The

'Purveyor', of course, pointed out that, according to the regulations,

all soldiers should bring with them into hospital an adequate supply of

clothing, and he declared that it was no business of his to make good

their deficiencies. Apparently, it was the business of Miss Nightingale.

She procured socks, boots, and shirts in enormous quantities; she had

trousers made, she rigged up dressing-gowns. 'The fact is,' she told

Sidney Herbert, I am now clothing the British Army.'

All at once, word came from the Crimea that a great new contingent of

sick and wounded might shortly be expected. Where were they to go? Every

available inch in the wards was occupied; the affair was serious and

pressing, and the authorities stood aghast. There were some dilapidated

rooms in the Barrack Hospital, unfit for human habitation, but Miss

Nightingale believed that if measures were promptly taken they might be

made capable of accommodating several hundred beds. One of the doctors

agreed with her; the rest of the officials were irresolute--it would be

a very expensive job, they said; it would involve building; and who

could take the responsibility? The proper course was that a

representation should be made to the Director-General of the Army

Medical Department in London; then the Director-General would apply to

the Horse Guards, the Horse Guards would move the Ordnance, the Ordnance

would lay the matter before the Treasury, and, if the Treasury gave its

consent, the work might be correctly carried through, several months

after the necessity for it had disappeared. Miss Nightingale, however,

had made up her mind, and she persuaded Lord Stratford--or thought she

had persuaded him--to give his sanction to the required expenditure. One

hundred and twenty-five workmen were immediately engaged, and the work

was begun. The workmen struck; whereupon Lord Stratford washed his hands

of the whole business. Miss Nightingale engaged 200 other workmen on her

own authority, and paid the bill out of her own resources. The wards

were ready by the required date; 500 sick men were received in them; and

all the utensils, including knives, forks, spoons, cans and towels, were

supplied by Miss Nightingale.

This remarkable woman was in truth performing the function of an

administrative chief. How had this come about? Was she not in reality

merely a nurse? Was it not her duty simply to tend the sick? And indeed,

was it not as a ministering angel, a gentle 'lady with a lamp', that she

actually impressed the minds of her contemporaries? No doubt that was

so; and yet it is no less certain that, as she herself said, the

specific business of nursing was 'the least important of the functions

into which she had been forced'. It was clear that in the state of

disorganisation into which the hospitals at Scutari had fallen, the most

pressing, the really vital, need was for something more than nursing; it

was for the necessary elements of civilised life--the commonest material

objects, the most ordinary cleanliness, the rudimentary habits of order

and authority. 'Oh, dear Miss Nightingale,' said one of her party as

they were approaching Constantinople, 'when we land, let there be no

delays, let us get straight to nursing the poor fellows!' 'The strongest

will be wanted at the wash-tub,' was Miss Nightingale's answer. And it

was upon the wash-tub, and all that the wash-tub stood for, that she

expended her greatest energies. Yet to say that, is perhaps to say too

much. For to those who watched her at work among the sick, moving day

and night from bed to bed, with that unflinching courage, with that

indefatigable vigilance, it seemed as if the concentrated force of an

undivided and unparalleled devotion could hardly suffice for that

portion of her task alone.

Wherever, in those vast wards, suffering was at its worst and the need

for help was greatest, there, as if by magic, was Miss Nightingale. Her

superhuman equanimity would, at the moment of some ghastly operation,

nerve the victim to endure, and almost to hope. Her sympathy would

assuage the pangs of dying and bring back to those still living

something of the forgotten charm of life. Over and over again her

untiring efforts rescued those whom the surgeons had abandoned as beyond

the possibility of cure. Her mere presence brought with it a strange

influence. A passionate idolatry spread among the men--they kissed her

shadow as it passed. They did more. 'Before she came,' said a soldier,

'there was cussin' and swearin' but after that it was as 'oly as a

church.' The most cherished privilege of the fighting man was abandoned

for the sake of Miss Nightingale. In those 'lowest sinks of human

misery', as she herself put it, she never heard the use of one

expression 'which could distress a gentlewoman'.

She was heroic; and these were the humble tributes paid by those of

grosser mould to that high quality. Certainly, she was heroic. Yet her

heroism was not of that simple sort so dear to the readers of novels and

the compilers of hagiologies--the romantic sentimental heroism with

which mankind loves to invest its chosen darlings: it was made of

sterner stuff. To the wounded soldier on his couch of agony, she might

well appear in the guise of a gracious angel of mercy; but the military

surgeons, and the orderlies, and her own nurses, and the 'Purveyor', and

Dr. Hall, and, even Lord Stratford himself, could tell a different

story. It was not by gentle sweetness and womanly self-abnegation that

she had brought order out of chaos in the Scutari hospitals, that, from

her own resources, she had clothed the British Army, that she had spread

her dominion over the serried and reluctant powers of the official

world; it was by strict method, by stern discipline, by rigid attention

to detail, by ceaseless labour, and by the fixed determination of an

indomitable will.

Beneath her cool and calm demeanour lurked fierce and passionate fires.

As she passed through the wards in her plain dress, so quiet, so

unassuming, she struck the casual observer simply as the pattern of a

perfect lady; but the keener eye perceived something more than that--the

serenity of high deliberation in the scope of the capacious brow, the

sign of power in the dominating curve of the thin nose, and the traces

of a harsh and dangerous temper--something peevish, something mocking,

and yet something precise--in the small and delicate mouth. There was

humour in the face; but the curious watcher might wonder whether it was

humour of a very pleasant kind; might ask himself, even as he heard the

laughter and marked the jokes with which she cheered the spirits of her

patients, what sort of sardonic merriment this same lady might not give

vent to, in the privacy of her chamber. As for her voice, it was true of

it, even more than of her countenance, that it 'had that in it one must

fain call master'. Those clear tones were in no need of emphasis: 'I

never heard her raise her voice', said one of her companions. 'Only when

she had spoken, it seemed as if nothing could follow but obedience.'

Once, when she had given some direction, a doctor ventured to remark

that the thing could not be done. 'But it must be done,' said Miss

Nightingale. A chance bystander, who heard the words, never forgot

through all his life the irresistible authority of them. And they were

spoken quietly--very quietly indeed.

Late at night, when the long miles of beds lay wrapped in darkness, Miss

Nightingale would sit at work in her little room, over her

correspondence. It was one of the most formidable of all her duties.

There were hundreds of letters to be written to the friends and

relations of soldiers; there was the enormous mass of official documents

to be dealt with; there were her own private letters to be answered;

and, most important of all, there was the composition of her long and

confidential reports to Sidney Herbert. These were by no means official

communications. Her soul, pent up all day in the restraint and reserve

of a vast responsibility, now at last poured itself out in these letters

with all its natural vehemence, like a swollen torrent through an open

sluice. Here, at least, she did not mince matters. Here she painted in

her darkest colours the hideous scenes which surrounded her; here she

tore away remorselessly the last veils still shrouding the abominable

truth. Then she would fill pages with recommendations and suggestions,

with criticisms of the minutest details of organisation, with elaborate

calculations of contingencies, with exhaustive analyses and statistical

statements piled up in breathless eagerness one on the top of the other.

And then her pen, in the virulence of its volubility, would rush on to

the discussion of individuals, to the denunciation of an incompetent

surgeon or the ridicule of a self-sufficient nurse. Her sarcasm searched

the ranks of the officials with the deadly and unsparing precision of a

machine-gun. Her nicknames were terrible. She respected no one: Lord

Stratford, Lord Raglan, Lady Stratford, Dr. Andrew Smith, Dr. Hall, the

Commissary-General, the Purveyor--she fulminated against them all. The

intolerable futility of mankind obsessed her like a nightmare, and she

gnashed her teeth against it. 'I do well to be angry,' was the burden of

her cry. 'How many just men were there at Scutari? How many who cared at

all for the sick, or had done anything for their relief? Were there ten?

Were there five? Was there even one?' She could not be sure.

At one time, during several weeks, her vituperations descended upon the

head of Sidney Herbert himself. He had misinterpreted her wishes, he had

traversed her positive instructions, and it was not until he had

admitted his error and apologised in abject terms that he was allowed

again into favour. While this misunderstanding was at its height, an

aristocratic young gentleman arrived at Scutari with a recommendation

from the Minister. He had come out from England filled with a romantic

desire to render homage to the angelic heroine of his dreams. He had, he

said, cast aside his life of ease and luxury; he would devote his days

and nights to the service of that gentle lady; he would perform the most

menial offices, he would 'fag' for her, he would be her footman--and

feel requited by a single smile. A single smile, indeed, he had, but it

was of an unexpected kind. Miss Nightingale at first refused to see him,

and then, when she consented, believing that he was an emissary sent by

Sidney Herbert to put her in the wrong over their dispute, she took

notes of her conversation with him, and insisted on his signing them at

the end of it. The young gentleman returned to England by the next ship.

This quarrel with Sidney Herbert was, however, an exceptional incident.

Alike by him, and by Lord Panmure, his successor at the War Office, she

was firmly supported; and the fact that during the whole of her stay at

Scutari she had the Home Government at her back, was her trump card in

her dealings with the hospital authorities. Nor was it only the

Government that was behind her: public opinion in England early

recognised the high importance of her mission, and its enthusiastic

appreciation of her work soon reached an extraordinary height. The Queen

herself was deeply moved. She made repeated inquiries as to the welfare

of Miss Nightingale; she asked to see her accounts of the wounded, and

made her the intermediary between the throne and the troops.

'Let Mrs. Herbert know,' she wrote to the War Minister, 'that I wish

Miss Nightingale and the ladies would tell these poor noble, wounded,

and sick men that NO ONE takes a warmer interest or feels MORE for their

sufferings or admires their courage and heroism MORE than their Queen.

Day and night she thinks of her beloved troops. So does the Prince. Beg

Mrs. Herbert to communicate these my words to those ladies, as I know

that our sympathy is much valued by these noble fellows.'

The letter was read aloud in the wards by the Chaplain. 'It is a very

feeling letter,' said the men.

And so the months passed, and that fell winter which had begun with

Inkerman and had dragged itself out through the long agony of the

investment of Sebastopol, at last was over. In May, 1855, after six

months of labour, Miss Nightingale could look with something like

satisfaction at the condition of the Scutari hospitals. Had they done

nothing more than survive the terrible strain which had been put upon

them, it would have been a matter for congratulation; but they had done

much more than that--they had marvellously improved. The confusion and

the pressure in the wards had come to an end; order reigned in them, and

cleanliness; the supplies were bountiful and prompt; important sanitary

works had been carried out. One simple comparison of figures was enough

to reveal the extraordinary change: the rate of mortality among the

cases treated had fallen from forty-two percent to twenty-two per 1,000.

But still, the indefatigable lady was not satisfied. The main problem

had been solved--the physical needs of the men had been provided for;

their mental and spiritual needs remained. She set up and furnished

reading-rooms and recreation rooms. She started classes and lectures.

Officers were amazed to see her treating their men as if they were human

beings, and assured her that she would only end by 'spoiling the

brutes'. But that was not Miss Nightingale's opinion, and she was

justified. The private soldier began to drink less and even--though that

seemed impossible--to save his pay. Miss Nightingale became a banker for

the Army, receiving and sending home large sums of money every month. At

last, reluctantly, the Government followed suit, and established

machinery of its own for the remission of money. Lord Panmure, however,

remained sceptical; 'it will do no good,' he pronounced; 'the British

soldier is not a remitting animal.' But, in fact during the next six

months L71,000 was sent home.

Amid all these activities, Miss Nightingale took up the further task of

inspecting the hospitals in the Crimea itself. The labour was extreme,

and the conditions of life were almost intolerable. She spent whole days

in the saddle, or was driven over those bleak and rocky heights in a

baggage cart. Sometimes she stood for hours in the heavily failing snow,

and would only reach her hut at dead of night after walking for miles

through perilous ravines. Her powers of resistance seemed incredible,

but at last they were exhausted. She was attacked by fever, and for a

moment came very near to death. Yet she worked on; if she could not

move, she could at least write, and write she did until her mind had

left her; and after it had left her, in what seemed the delirious trance

of death itself, she still wrote. When, after many weeks, she was strong

enough to travel, she was implored to return to England, but she utterly

refused. She would not go back, she said, before the last of the

soldiers had left Scutari.

This happy moment had almost arrived, when suddenly the smouldering

hostilities of the medical authorities burst out into a flame. Dr.

Hall's labours had been rewarded by a K.C.B--letters which, as Miss

Nightingale told Sidney Herbert, she could only suppose to mean 'Knight

of the Crimean Burial-Grounds'--and the honour had turned his head. He

was Sir John, and he would be thwarted no longer. Disputes had lately

arisen between Miss Nightingale and some of the nurses in the Crimean

hospitals. The situation had been embittered by rumours of religious

dissensions, while the Crimean nurses were Roman Catholics, many of

those at Scutari were suspected of a regrettable propensity towards the

tenets of Dr. Pusey. Miss Nightingale was by no means disturbed by these

sectarian differences, but any suggestion that her supreme authority

over all the nurses with the Army was, no doubt, enough to rouse her to

fury; and it appeared that Mrs. Bridgeman, the Reverend Mother in the

Crimea, had ventured to call that authority in question. Sir John Hall

thought that his opportunity had come, and strongly supported Mrs.

Bridgeman--or, as Miss Nightingale preferred to call her, the 'Reverend

Brickbat'.

There was a violent struggle; Miss Nightingale's rage was terrible. Dr.

Hall, she declared, was doing his best to 'root her out of the Crimea'.

She would bear it no longer; the War Office was playing her false; there

was only one thing to be done--Sidney Herbert must move for the

production of papers in the House of Commons, so that the public might

be able to judge between her and her enemies. Sidney Herbert, with great

difficulty, calmed her down. Orders were immediately dispatched putting

her supremacy beyond doubt, and the Reverend Brickbat withdrew from the

scene. Sir John, however, was more tenacious. A few weeks later, Miss

Nightingale and her nurses visited the Crimea for the last time, and the

brilliant idea occurred to him that he could crush her by a very simple

expedient--he would starve her into submission; and he actually ordered

that no rations of any kind should be supplied to her. He had already

tried this plan with great effect upon an unfortunate medical man whose

presence in the Crimea he had considered an intrusion; but he was now to

learn that such tricks were thrown away upon Miss Nightingale. With

extraordinary foresight, she had brought with her a great supply of

food; she succeeded in obtaining more at her own expense and by her own

exertions; and thus for ten days, in that inhospitable country, she was

able to feed herself and twenty-four nurses. Eventually, the military

authorities intervened in her favour, and Sir John had to confess that

he was beaten.

It was not until July, 1856--four months after the Declaration of

Peace--that Miss Nightingale left Scutari for England. Her reputation

was now enormous, and the enthusiasm of the public was unbounded. The

royal approbation was expressed by the gift of a brooch, accompanied by

a private letter.

'You are, I know, well aware,' wrote Her Majesty, 'of the high sense I

entertain of the Christian devotion which you have displayed during this

great and bloody war, and I need hardly repeat to you how warm my

admiration is for your services, which are fully equal to those of my

dear and brave soldiers, whose sufferings you have had the privilege of

alleviating in so merciful a manner. I am, however, anxious of marking

my feelings in a manner which I trust will be agreeable to you, and

therefore, send you with this letter a brooch, the form and emblems of

which commemorate your great and blessed work, and which I hope you will

wear as a mark of the high approbation of your Sovereign!

'It will be a very great satisfaction to me,' Her Majesty added, 'to

make the acquaintance of one who has set so bright an example to our

sex.'

The brooch, which was designed by the Prince Consort, bore a St.

George's cross in red enamel, and the Royal cipher surmounted by

diamonds. The whole was encircled by the inscription 'Blessed are the

Merciful'.

III

THE name of Florence Nightingale lives in the memory of the world by

virtue of the lurid and heroic adventure of the Crimea. Had she died--as

she nearly did--upon her return to England, her reputation would hardly

have been different; her legend would have come down to us almost as we

know it today--that gentle vision of female virtue which first took

shape before the adoring eyes of the sick soldiers at Scutari. Yet, as a

matter of fact, she lived for more than half a century after the Crimean

War; and during the greater part of that long period, all the energy and

all the devotion of her extraordinary nature were working at their

highest pitch. What she accomplished in those years of unknown labour

could, indeed, hardly have been more glorious than her Crimean triumphs,

but it was certainly more important. The true history was far stranger

even than the myth. In Miss Nightingale's own eyes the adventure of the

Crimea was a mere incident--scarcely more than a useful stepping-stone

in her career. It was the fulcrum with which she hoped to move the

world; but it was only the fulcrum. For more than a generation she was

to sit in secret, working her lever: and her real "life" began at the

very moment when, in the popular imagination, it had ended.

She arrived in England in a shattered state of health. The hardships and

the ceaseless effort of the last two years had undermined her nervous

system; her heart was pronounced to be affected; she suffered constantly

from fainting-fits and terrible attacks of utter physical prostration.

The doctors declared that one thing alone would save her--a complete and

prolonged rest. But that was also the one thing with which she would

have nothing to do. She had never been in the habit of resting; why

should she begin now? Now, when her opportunity had come at last; now,

when the iron was hot, and it was time to strike? No; she had work to

do; and, come what might, she would do it. The doctors protested in

vain; in vain her family lamented and entreated; in vain her friends

pointed out to her the madness of such a course. Madness?

Mad--possessed--perhaps she was. A demoniac frenzy had seized upon her.

As she lay upon her sofa, gasping, she devoured blue-books, dictated

letters, and, in the intervals of her palpitations, cracked her febrile

jokes. For months at a stretch she never left her bed. For years she was

in daily expectation of death. But she would not rest. At this rate, the

doctors assured her, even if she did not die, she would, become an

invalid for life. She could not help that; there was the work to be

done; and, as for rest, very likely she might rest ... when she had done

it.

Wherever she went, in London or in the country, in the hills of

Derbyshire, or among the rhododendrons at Embley, she was haunted by a

ghost. It was the spectre of Scutari--the hideous vision of the

organisation of a military hospital. She would lay that phantom, or she

would perish. The whole system of the Army Medical Department, the

education of the Medical Officer, the regulations of hospital procedure

... REST? How could she rest while these things were as they were,

while, if the like necessity were to arise again, the like results would

follow? And, even in peace and at home, what was the sanitary condition

of the Army? The mortality in the barracks was, she found, nearly double

the mortality in civil life. 'You might as well take 1,100 men every

year out upon Salisbury Plain and shoot them,' she said. After

inspecting the hospitals at Chatham, she smiled grimly. 'Yes, this is

one more symptom of the system which, in the Crimea, put to death 16,000

men.' Scutari had given her knowledge; and it had given her power too:

her enormous reputation was at her back--an incalculable force. Other

work, other duties, might lie before her; but the most urgent, the most

obvious of all, was to look to the health of the Army.

One of her very first steps was to take advantage of the invitation

which Queen Victoria had sent her to the Crimea, together with the

commemorative brooch. Within a few weeks of her return she visited

Balmoral, and had several interviews with both the Queen and the Prince,

Consort. 'She put before us,' wrote the Prince in his diary, 'all the

defects of our present military hospital system, and the reforms that

are needed.' She related 'the whole story' of her experiences in the

East; and, in addition, she managed to have some long and confidential

talks with His Royal Highness on metaphysics and religion. The

impression which she created was excellent. 'Sie gefallt uns sehr,'

noted the Prince, 'ist sehr bescheiden.' Her Majesty's comment was

different--'Such a HEAD! I wish we had her at the War Office.'

But Miss Nightingale was not at the War Office, and for a very simple

reason: she was a woman. Lord Panmure, however, was (though indeed the

reason for that was not quite so simple); and it was upon Lord Panmure

that the issue of Miss Nightingale's efforts for reform must primarily

depend. That burly Scottish nobleman had not, in spite of his most

earnest endeavours, had a very easy time of it as Secretary of State for

War. He had come into office in the middle of the Sebastopol Campaign,

and had felt himself very well fitted for the position, since he had

acquired in former days an inside knowledge of the Army--as a Captain of

Hussars. It was this inside knowledge which had enabled him to inform

Miss Nightingale with such authority that 'the British soldier is not a

remitting animal'. And perhaps it was this same consciousness of a

command of his subject which had impelled him to write a dispatch to

Lord Raglan, blandly informing the Commander-in-Chief in the Field just

how he was neglecting his duties, and pointing out to him that if he

would only try he really might do a little better next time.

Lord Raglan's reply, calculated as it was to make its recipient sink

into the earth, did not quite have that effect upon Lord Panmure, who,

whatever might have been his faults, had never been accused of being

supersensitive. However, he allowed the matter to drop; and a little

later Lord Raglan died--worn out, some people said, by work and anxiety.

He was succeeded by an excellent red-nosed old gentleman, General

Simpson, whom nobody has ever heard of, and who took Sebastopol. But

Lord Panmure's relations with him were hardly more satisfactory than his

relations with Lord Raglan; for, while Lord Raglan had been too

independent, poor General Simpson erred in the opposite direction,

perpetually asked advice, suffered from lumbago, doubted (his nose

growingredder and redder daily) whether he was fit for his post, and, by

alternate mails, sent in and withdrew his resignation. Then, too, both

the General and the Minister suffered acutely from that distressingly

useful new invention, the electric telegraph. On one occasion General

Simpson felt obliged actually to expostulate. 'I think, my Lord,' he

wrote, 'that some telegraphic messages reach us that cannot be sent

under due authority, and are perhaps unknown to you, although under the

protection of your Lordship's name.

For instance, I was called up last night, a dragoon having come express

with a telegraphic message in these words, "Lord Panmure to General

Simpson--Captain Jarvis has been bitten by a centipede. How is he now?"'

General Simpson might have put up with this, though to be sure it did

seem 'rather too trifling an affair to call for a dragoon to ride a

couple of miles in the dark that he may knock up the Commander of the

Army out of the very small allowance of sleep permitted; but what was

really more than he could bear was to find 'upon sending in the morning

another mounted dragoon to inquire after Captain Jarvis, four miles off,

that he never has been bitten at all, but has had a boil, from which he

is fast recovering'. But Lord Panmure had troubles of his own. His

favourite nephew, Captain Dowbiggin, was at the front, and to one of his

telegrams to the Commander-in-Chief the Minister had taken occasion to

append the following carefully qualified sentence--'I recommend

Dowbiggin to your notice, should you have a vacancy, and if he is fit'.

Unfortunately, in those early days, it was left to the discretion of the

telegraphist to compress the messages which passed through his hands; so

that the result was that Lord Panmure's delicate appeal reached its

destination in the laconic form of 'Look after Dowb'. The Headquarters

Staff were at first extremely puzzled; they were at last extremely

amused. The story spread; and 'Look after Dowb' remained for many years

the familiar formula for describing official hints in favour of

deserving nephews.

And now that all this was over, now that Sebastopol had been, somehow or

another, taken; now that peace was, somehow or another, made; now that

the troubles of office might surely be expected to be at an end at

last--here was Miss Nightingale breaking in upon the scene with her talk

about the state of the hospitals and the necessity for sanitary reform.

It was most irksome; and Lord Panmure almost began to wish that he was

engaged upon some more congenial occupation--discussing, perhaps, the

constitution of the Free Church of Scotland--a question in which he was

profoundly interested. But no; duty was paramount; and he set himself,

with a sigh of resignation, to the task of doing as little of it as he

possibly could.

'The Bison' his friends called him; and the name fitted both his

physical demeanour and his habit of mind. That large low head seemed to

have been created for butting rather than for anything else. There he

stood, four-square and menacing in the doorway of reform; and it

remained to be seen whether, the bulky mass, upon whose solid hide even

the barbed arrows of Lord Raglan's scorn had made no mark, would prove

amenable to the pressure of Miss Nightingale. Nor was he alone in the

doorway. There loomed behind him the whole phalanx of professional

conservatism, the stubborn supporters of the out-of-date, the

worshippers and the victims of War Office routine. Among these it was

only natural that Dr. Andrew Smith, the head of the Army Medical

Department, should have been pre-eminent--Dr. Andrew Smith, who had

assured Miss Nightingale before she left England that 'nothing was

wanted at Scutari'. Such were her opponents; but she too was not without

allies. She had gained the ear of Royalty--which was something; at any

moment that she pleased she could gain the ear of the public--which was

a great deal. She had a host of admirers and friends; and--to say

nothing of her personal qualities--her knowledge, her tenacity, her

tact--she possessed, too, one advantage which then, far more even than

now, carried an immense weight--she belonged to the highest circle of

society. She moved naturally among Peers and Cabinet Ministers--she was

one of their own set; and in those days their set was a very narrow one.

What kind of attention would such persons have paid to some middle-class

woman with whom they were not acquainted, who possessed great experience

of Army nursing and had decided views upon hospital reform? They would

have politely ignored her; but it was impossible to ignore Flo

Nightingale. When she spoke, they were obliged to listen; and, when they

had once begun to do that--what might not follow? She knew her power,

and she used it. She supported her weightiest minutes with familiar

witty little notes. The Bison began to look grave. It might be

difficult--it might be damned difficult--to put down one's head against

the white hand of a lady ...

Of Miss Nightingale's friends, the most important was Sidney Herbert. He

was a man upon whom the good fairies seemed to have showered, as he lay

in his cradle, all their most enviable goods. Well born, handsome, rich,

the master of Wilton--one of those great country-houses, clothed with

the glamour of a historic past, which are the peculiar glory of

England--he possessed--besides all these advantages: so charming, so

lively, so gentle a disposition that no one who had once come near him

could ever be his enemy.

He was, in fact, a man of whom it was difficult not to say that he was a

perfect English gentleman. For his virtues were equal even to his good

fortune. He was religious, deeply religious. 'I am more and more

convinced every day,' he wrote, when he had been for some years a

Cabinet Minister, 'that in politics, as in everything else, nothing can

be right which is not in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel.' No

one was more unselfish; he was charitable and benevolent to a remarkable

degree; and he devoted the whole of his life, with an unwavering

conscientiousness, to the public service. With such a character, with

such opportunities, what high hopes must have danced before him, what

radiant visions of accomplished duties, of ever-increasing usefulness,

of beneficent power, of the consciousness of disinterested success! Some

of those hopes and visions were, indeed, realised; but, in the end, the

career of Sidney Herbert seemed to show that, with all their generosity,

there was some gift or other--what was it?--some essential gift--which

the good fairies had withheld, and that even the qualities of a perfect

English gentleman may be no safeguard against anguish, humiliation, and

defeat.

That career would certainly have been very different if he had never

known Miss Nightingale. The alliance between them which had begun with

her appointment to Scutari, which had grown closer and closer while the

war lasted, developed, after her return, into one of the most

extraordinary friendships. It was the friendship of a man and a woman

intimately bound together by their devotion to a public cause; mutual

affection, of course, played a part in it, but it was an incidental

part; the whole soul of the relationship was a community of work.

Perhaps out of England such an intimacy could hardly have existed--an

intimacy so utterly untinctured not only by passion itself but by the

suspicion of it. For years Sidney Herbert saw Miss Nightingale almost

daily, for long hours together, corresponding with her incessantly when

they were apart; and the tongue of scandal was silent; and one of the

most devoted of her admirers was his wife. But what made the connection

still more remarkable was the way in which the parts that were played in

it were divided between the two. The man who acts, decides, and

achieves; the woman who encourages, applauds, and--from a

distance--inspires: the combination is common enough; but Miss

Nightingale was neither an Aspasia nor an Egeria. In her case it is

almost true to say that the roles were reversed; the qualities of

pliancy and sympathy fell to the man, those of command and initiative to

the woman.

There was one thing only which Miss Nightingale lacked in her equipment

for public life; she had not--she never could have--the public power and

authority which belonged to the successful politician. That power and

authority Sidney Herbert possessed; that fact was obvious, and the

conclusions no less so: it was through the man that the woman must work

her will. She took hold of him, taught him, shaped him, absorbed him,

dominated him through and through. He did not resist--he did not wish to

resist; his natural inclination lay along the same path as hers; only

that terrific personality swept him forward at her own fierce pace and

with her own relentless stride. Swept him--where to? Ah! Why had he ever

known Miss Nightingale? If Lord Panmure was a bison, Sidney Herbert, no

doubt, was a stag--a comely, gallant creature springing through the

forest; but the forest is a dangerous place. One has the image of those

wide eyes fascinated suddenly by something feline, something strong;

there is a pause; and then the tigress has her claws in the quivering

haunches; and then--!

Besides Sidney Herbert, she had other friends who, in a more restricted

sphere, were hardly less essential to her. If, in her condition of

bodily collapse, she were to accomplish what she was determined that she

should accomplish, the attentions and the services of others would be

absolutely indispensable. Helpers and servers she must have; and

accordingly there was soon formed about her a little group of devoted

disciples upon whose affections and energies she could implicitly rely.

Devoted, indeed, these disciples were, in no ordinary sense of the term;

for certainly she was no light taskmistress, and he who set out to be of

use to Miss Nightingale was apt to find, before he had gone very far,

that he was in truth being made use of in good earnest to the very limit

of his endurance and his capacity. Perhaps, even beyond those limits;

why not? Was she asking of others more than she was giving herself? Let

them look at her lying there pale and breathless on the couch; could it

be said that she spared herself? Why, then, should she spare others? And

it was not for her own sake that she made these claims. For her own

sake, indeed! No! They all knew it! it was for the sake of the work. And

so the little band, bound body and soul in that strange servitude,

laboured on ungrudgingly.

Among the most faithful was her 'Aunt Mai', her father's sister, who

from the earliest days had stood beside her, who had helped her to

escape from the thraldom of family life, who had been with her at

Scutari, and who now acted almost the part of a mother to her, watching

over her with infinite care in all the movements and uncertainties which

her state of health involved. Another constant attendant was her

brother-in-law, Sir Harry Verney, whom she found particularly valuable

in parliamentary affairs. Arthur Clough, the poet, also a connection by

marriage, she used in other ways. Ever since he had lost his faith at

the time of the Oxford Movement, Clough had passed his life in a

condition of considerable uneasiness, which was increased rather than

diminished by the practice of poetry. Unable to decide upon the purpose

of an existence whose savour had fled together with his belief in the

Resurrection, his spirits lowered still further by ill-health, and his

income not all that it should be, he had determined to seek the solution

of his difficulties in the United States of America. But, even there,

the solution was not forthcoming; and, when, a little later, he was

offered a post in a government department at home, he accepted it, came

to live in London, and immediately fell under the influence of Miss

Nightingale. Though the purpose of existence might be still uncertain

and its nature still unsavoury, here, at any rate, under the eye of this

inspired woman, was something real, something earnest: his only doubt

was--could he be of any use? Certainly he could. There were a great

number of miscellaneous little jobs which there was nobody handy to do.

For instance, when Miss Nightingale was travelling, there were the

railway-tickets to be taken; and there were proof-sheets to be

corrected; and then there were parcels to be done up in brown paper, and

carried to the post. Certainly he could be useful. And so, upon such

occupations as these, Arthur Clough was set to work. 'This that I see,

is not all,' he comforted himself by reflecting, 'and this that I do is

but little; nevertheless it is good, though there is better than it.' As

time went on, her 'Cabinet', as she called it, grew larger. Officials

with whom her work brought her into touch and who sympathised with her

objects, were pressed into her service; and old friends of the Crimean

days gathered around her when they returned to England. Among these the

most indefatigable was Dr. Sutherland, a sanitary expert, who for more

than thirty years acted as her confidential private secretary, and

surrendered to her purposes literally the whole of his life. Thus

sustained and assisted, thus slaved for and adored, she prepared to

beard the Bison.

Two facts soon emerged, and all that followed turned upon them. It

became clear, in the first place, that that imposing mass was not

immovable, and, in the second, that its movement, when it did move,

would be exceeding slow. The Bison was no match for the Lady. It was in

vain that he put down his head and planted his feet in the earth; he

could not withstand her; the white hand forced him back. But the process

was an extraordinarily gradual one. Dr. Andrew Smith and all his War

Office phalanx stood behind, blocking the way; the poor Bison groaned

inwardly, and cast a wistful eye towards the happy pastures of the Free

Church of Scotland; then slowly, with infinite reluctance, step by step,

he retreated, disputing every inch of the ground.

The first great measure, which, supported as it was by the Queen, the

Cabinet, and the united opinion of the country, it was impossible to

resist, was the appointment of a Royal Commission to report upon the

health of the Army. The question of the composition of the Commission

then immediately arose; and it was over this matter that the first

hand-to-hand encounter between Lord Panmure and Miss Nightingale took

place. They met, and Miss Nightingale was victorious; Sidney Herbert was

appointed Chairman; and, in the end, the only member of the Commission

opposed to her views was Dr. Andrew Smith. During the interview, Miss

Nightingale made an important discovery: she found that 'the Bison was

bullyable'--the hide was the hide of a Mexican buffalo, but the spirit

was the spirit of an Alderney calf. And there was one thing above all

others which the huge creature dreaded--an appeal to public opinion. The

faintest hint of such a terrible eventuality made his heart dissolve

within him; he would agree to anything he would cut short his

grouse-shooting--he would make a speech in the House of Lords, he would

even overrule Dr. Andrew Smith--rather than that. Miss Nightingale held

the fearful threat in reserve--she would speak out what she knew; she

would publish the truth to the whole world, and let the whole world

judge between them. With supreme skill, she kept this sword of Damocles

poised above the Bison's head, and more than once she was actually on

the point of really dropping it--for his recalcitrancy grew and grew.

The personnel of the Commission once determined upon, there was a

struggle, which lasted for six months, over the nature of its powers.

Was it to be an efficient body, armed with the right of full inquiry and

wide examination, or was it to be a polite official contrivance for

exonerating Dr. Andrew Smith? The War Office phalanx closed its ranks,

and fought tooth and nail; but it was defeated: the Bison was bullyable.

'Three months from this day,' Miss Nightingale had written at last, 'I

publish my experience of the Crimean Campaign, and my suggestions for

improvement, unless there has been a fair and tangible pledge by that

time for reform.'

Who could face that?

And, if the need came, she meant to be as good as her word. For she had

now determined, whatever might be the fate of the Commission, to draw up

her own report upon the questions at issue. The labour involved was

enormous; her health was almost desperate; but she did not flinch, and

after six months of incredible industry she had put together and written

with her own hand her Notes affecting the Health, Efficiency, and

Hospital Administration of the British Army. This extraordinary

composition, filling more than 800 closely printed pages, laying down

vast principles of far-reaching reform, discussing the minutest details

of a multitude of controversial subjects, containing an enormous mass of

information of the most varied kinds--military, statistical, sanitary,

architectural--was never given to the public, for the need never came;

but it formed the basis of the Report of the Royal Commission; and it

remains to this day the leading authority on the medical administration

of armies.

Before it had been completed, the struggle over the powers of the

Commission had been brought to a victorious close. Lord Panmure had

given way once more; he had immediately hurried to the Queen to obtain

her consent; and only then, when Her Majesty's initials had been

irrevocably affixed to the fatal document, did he dare to tell Dr.

Andrew Smith what he had done. The Commission met, and another immense

load fell upon Miss Nightingale's shoulders. Today she would, of course,

have been one of the Commission herself; but at that time the idea of a

woman appearing in such a capacity was unheard of; and no one even

suggested the possibility of Miss Nightingale's doing so. The result was

that she was obliged to remain behind the scenes throughout, to coach

Sidney Herbert in private at every important juncture, and to convey to

him and to her other friends upon the Commission the vast funds of her

expert knowledge--so essential in the examination of witnesses--by means

of innumerable consultations, letters, and memoranda. It was even

doubtful whether the proprieties would admit of her giving evidence; and

at last, as a compromise, her modesty only allowed her to do so in the

form of written answers to written questions. At length, the grand

affair was finished. The Commission's Report, embodying almost word for

word the suggestions of Miss Nightingale, was drawn up by Sidney

Herbert. Only one question remained to be answered--would anything,

after all, be done? Or would the Royal Commission, like so many other

Royal Commissions before and since, turn out to have achieved nothing

but the concoction of a very fat bluebook on a very high shelf?

And so the last and the deadliest struggle with the Bison began. Six

months had been spent in coercing him into granting the Commission

effective powers; six more months were occupied by the work of the

Commission; and now yet another six were to pass in extorting from him

the means whereby the recommendations of the Commission might be

actually carried out. But, in the end, the thing was done. Miss

Nightingale seemed, indeed, during these months, to be upon the very

brink of death. Accompanied by the faithful Aunt Mai, she moved from

place to place--to Hampstead, to Highgate, to Derbyshire, to Malvern--in

what appeared to be a last desperate effort to find health somewhere;

but she carried that with her which made health impossible. Her desire

for work could now scarcely be distinguished from mania. At one moment

she was writing a 'last letter' to Sidney Herbert; at the next she was

offering to go out to India to nurse the sufferers in the Mutiny. When

Dr. Sutherland wrote, imploring her to take a holiday, she raved.

Rest!--

'I am lying without my head, without my claws, and you all peck at me.

It is de rigueur, d'obligation, like the saying something to one's hat,

when one goes into church, to say to me all that has been said to me 110

times a day during the last three months. It is the obbligato on the

violin, and the twelve violins all practise it together, like the clocks

striking twelve o'clock at night all over London, till I say like Xavier

de Maistre, Assez, je sais, je ne le sais que trop. I am not a penitent;

but you are like the R.C. confessor, who says what is de rigueur....'

Her wits began to turn, and there was no holding her. She worked like a

slave in a mine. She began to believe, as she had begun to believe at

Scutari, that none of her fellow-workers had their hearts in the

business; if they had, why did they not work as she did? She could only

see slackness and stupidity around her. Dr. Sutherland, of course, was

grotesquely muddle-headed; and Arthur Clough incurably lazy. Even Sidney

Herbert ... oh yes, he had simplicity and candour and quickness of

perception, no doubt; but he was an eclectic; and what could one hope

for from a man who went away to fish in Ireland just when the Bison most

needed bullying? As for the Bison himself, he had fled to Scotland where

he remained buried for many months. The fate of the vital recommendation

in the Commission's Report--the appointment of four Sub-Commissions

charged with the duty of determining upon the details of the proposed

reforms and of putting them into execution--still hung in the balance.

The Bison consented to everything; and then, on a flying visit to

London, withdrew his consent and hastily returned to Scotland. Then for

many weeks all business was suspended; he had gout--gout in the

hands--so that he could not write. 'His gout was always handy,' remarked

Miss Nightingale. But eventually it was clear even to the Bison that the

game was up, and the inevitable surrender came.

There was, however, one point in which he triumphed over Miss

Nightingale: the building of Netley Hospital had been begun under his

orders, before her return to England. Soon after her arrival she

examined the plans, and found that they reproduced all the worst faults

of an out-of-date and mischievous system of hospital construction. She

therefore urged that the matter should be reconsidered, and in the

meantime the building stopped. But the Bison was obdurate; it would be

very expensive, and in any case it was too late. Unable to make any

impression on him, and convinced of the extreme importance of the

question, she determined to appeal to a higher authority. Lord

Palmerston was Prime Minister; she had known him from her childhood; he

was a near neighbour of her father's in the New Forest. She went down to

the New Forest, armed with the plan of the proposed hospital and all the

relevant information, stayed the night at Lord Palmerston's house, and

convinced him of the necessity of rebuilding Netley.

'It seems to me,' Lord Palmerston wrote to Lord Panmure, 'that at Netley

all consideration of what would best tend to the comfort and recovery of

the patients has been sacrificed to the vanity of the architect, whose

sole object has been to make a building which should cut a dash when

looked at from the Southampton river ... Pray, therefore, stop all

further progress in the work until the matter can be duly considered.'

But the Bison was not to be moved by one peremptory letter, even if it

was from the Prime Minister. He put forth all his powers of

procrastination, Lord Palmerston lost interest in the subject, and so

the chief military hospital in England was triumphantly completed on

insanitary principles, with unventilated rooms, and with all the

patients' windows facing northeast.

But now the time had come when the Bison was to trouble and to be

troubled no more. A vote in the House of Commons brought about the fall

of Lord Palmerston's Government, and, Lord Panmure found himself at

liberty to devote the rest of his life to the Free Church of Scotland.

After a brief interval, Sidney Herbert became Secretary of State for

War. Great was the jubilation in the Nightingale Cabinet: the day of

achievement had dawned at last. The next two and a half years (1859-61)

saw the introduction of the whole system of reforms for which Miss

Nightingale had been struggling so fiercely--reforms which make Sidney

Herbert's tenure of power at the War Office an important epoch in the

history of the British Army. The four Sub-Commissions, firmly

established under the immediate control of the Minister, and urged

forward by the relentless perseverance of Miss Nightingale, set to work

with a will. The barracks and the hospitals were remodelled; they were

properly ventilated and warmed and lighted for the first time; they were

given a water supply which actually supplied water, and kitchens where,

strange to say, it was possible to cook. Then the great question of the

Purveyor--that portentous functionary whose powers and whose lack of

powers had weighed like a nightmare upon Scutari--was taken in hand, and

new regulations were laid down, accurately defining his responsibilities

and his duties. One Sub-Commission reorganised the medical statistics of

the Army; another established in spite of the last convulsive efforts of

the Department an Army Medical School. Finally, the Army Medical

Department itself was completely reorganised; an administrative code was

drawn up; and the great and novel principle was established that it was

as much a part of the duty of the authorities to look after the

soldier's health as to look after his sickness. Besides this, it was at

last officially admitted that he had a moral and intellectual side.

Coffee-rooms and reading-rooms, gymnasiums and workshops were

instituted. A new era did in truth appear to have begun. Already by 1861

the mortality in the Army had decreased by one-half since the days of

the Crimea. It was no wonder that even vaster possibilities began now to

open out before Miss Nightingale. One thing was still needed to complete

and to assure her triumphs. The Army Medical Department was indeed

reorganised; but the great central machine was still untouched. The War

Office itself--! If she could remould that nearer to her heart's

desire--there indeed would be a victory! And until that final act was

accomplished, how could she be certain that all the rest of her

achievements might not, by some capricious turn of Fortune's wheel--a

change of Ministry, perhaps, replacing Sidney Herbert by some puppet of

the permanent official gang--be swept to limbo in a moment?

Meanwhile, still ravenous for yet more and more work, her activities had

branched out into new directions. The Army in India claimed her

attention. A Sanitary Commission, appointed at her suggestion, and

working under her auspices, did for our troops there what the four

Sub-Commissions were doing for those at home. At the same time, these

very years which saw her laying the foundations of the whole modern

system of medical work in the Army, saw her also beginning to bring her

knowledge, her influence, and her activity into the service of the

country at large. Her "Notes on Hospitals" (1859) revolutionised the

theory of hospital construction and hospital management. She was

immediately recognised as the leading expert upon all the questions

involved; her advice flowed unceasingly and in all directions, so that

there is no great hospital today which does not bear upon it the impress

of her mind. Nor was this all. With the opening of the Nightingale

Training School for Nurses at St. Thomas's Hospital (1860), she became

the founder of modern nursing.

But a terrible crisis was now fast approaching. Sidney Herbert had

consented to undertake the root and branch reform of the War Office. He

had sallied forth into that tropical jungle of festooned

obstructiveness, of intertwisted irresponsibilities, of crouching

prejudices, of abuses grown stiff and rigid with antiquity, which for so

many years to come was destined to lure reforming Ministers to their

doom.

'The War Office,' said Miss Nightingale, 'is a very slow office, an

enormously expensive office, and one in which the Minister's intentions

can be entirely negated by all his sub-departments, and those of each of

the sub-departments by every other.'

It was true; and of course, at the, first rumour of a change, the old

phalanx of reaction was bristling with its accustomed spears. At its

head stood no longer Dr. Andrew Smith, who, some time since, had

followed the Bison into outer darkness, but a yet more formidable

figure, the Permanent Under-Secretary himself, Sir Benjamin Hawes--Ben

Hawes the Nightingale Cabinet irreverently dubbed him 'a man remarkable

even among civil servants for adroitness in baffling inconvenient

inquiries, resource in raising false issues, and, in, short, a

consummate command of all the arts of officially sticking in the mud'.

'Our scheme will probably result in Ben Hawes's resignation,' Miss

Nightingale said; 'and that is another of its advantages.' Ben Hawes

himself, however, did not quite see it in that light. He set himself to

resist the wishes of the Minister by every means in his power. The

struggle was long, and desperate; and, as it proceeded, it gradually

became evident to Miss Nightingale that something was the matter with

Sidney Herbert. What was it? His health, never very strong, was, he

said, in danger of collapsing under the strain of his work. But, after

all, what is illness, when there is a War Office to be reorganised? Then

he began to talk of retiring altogether from public life. The doctors

were consulted, and declared that, above all things, what was necessary

was rest. Rest! She grew seriously alarmed. Was it possible that, at the

last moment, the crowning wreath of victory was to be snatched from her

grasp? She was not to be put aside by doctors; they were talking

nonsense; the necessary thing was not rest, but the reform of the War

Office; and, besides, she knew very well from her own case what one

could do even when one was on the point of death.

She expostulated vehemently, passionately; the goal was so near, so very

near; he could not turn back now! At any rate, he could not resist Miss

Nightingale. A compromise was arranged. Very reluctantly, he exchanged

the turmoil of the House of Commons for the dignity of the House of

Lords, and he remained at the War Office. She was delighted. 'One fight

more, the best and the last,' she said.

For several more months the fight did indeed go on. But the strain upon

him was greater even than she perhaps could realise. Besides the

intestine war in his office, he had to face a constant battle in the

Cabinet with Mr. Gladstone--a more redoubtable antagonist even than Ben

Hawes--over the estimates. His health grew worse and worse. He was

attacked by fainting-fits; and there were some days when he could only

just keep himself going by gulps of brandy. Miss Nightingale spurred him

forward with her encouragements and her admonitions, her zeal and her

example. But at last his spirit began to sink as well as his body. He

could no longer hope; he could no longer desire; it was useless, all

useless; it was utterly impossible. He had failed. The dreadful moment

came when the truth was forced upon him: he would never be able to

reform the War Office. But a yet more dreadful moment lay behind; he

must go to Miss Nightingale and tell her that he was a failure, a beaten

man.

'Blessed are the merciful!' What strange ironic prescience had led

Prince Albert, in the simplicity of his heart, to choose that motto for

the Crimean brooch? The words hold a double lesson; and, alas! when she

brought herself to realise at length what was indeed the fact and what

there was no helping, it was not in mercy that she turned upon her old

friend.

'Beaten!' she exclaimed. 'Can't you see that you've simply thrown away

the game? And with all the winning cards in your hands! And so noble a

game! Sidney Herbert beaten! And beaten by Ben Hawes! It is a worse

disgrace ...' her full rage burst out at last, '... a worse disgrace

than the hospitals at Scutari.'

He dragged himself away from her, dragged himself to Spa, hoping vainly

for a return to health, and then, despairing, back again to England, to

Wilton, to the majestic house standing there resplendent in the summer

sunshine, among the great cedars which had lent their shade to Sir

Philip Sidney, and all those familiar, darling haunts of beauty which he

loved, each one of them, 'as if they were persons'; and at, Wilton he

died. After having received the Eucharist, he had become perfectly calm;

then, almost unconscious, his lips were seen to be moving. Those about

him bent down. 'Poor Florence! Poor Florence!' they just caught.' ...

Our joint work ... unfinished ... tried to do ...' and they could hear

no more.

When the onward rush of a powerful spirit sweeps a weaker one to its

destruction, the commonplaces of the moral judgment are better left

unmade. If Miss Nightingale had been less ruthless, Sidney Herbert would

not have perished; but then, she would not have been Miss Nightingale.

The force that created was the force that destroyed. It was her Demon

that was responsible. When the fatal news reached her, she was overcome

by agony. In the revulsion of her feelings, she made a worship of the

dead man's memory; and the facile instrument which had broken in her

hand she spoke of forever after as her 'Master'. Then, almost at the

same moment, another blow fell on her. Arthur Clough, worn out by

labours very different from those of Sidney Herbert, died too: never

more would he tie up her parcels. And yet a third disaster followed. The

faithful Aunt Mai did not, to be sure, die; no, she did something almost

worse: she left Miss Nightingale. She was growing old, and she felt that

she had closer and more imperative duties with her own family. Her niece

could hardly forgive her. She poured out, in one of her enormous

letters, a passionate diatribe upon the faithlessness, the lack of

sympathy, the stupidity, the ineptitude of women. Her doctrines had

taken no hold among them; she had never known one who had appris a

apprendre; she could not even get a woman secretary; 'they don't know

the names of the Cabinet Ministers--they don't know which of the

Churches has Bishops and which not'. As for the spirit of

self-sacrifice, well--Sidney Herbert and Arthur Clough were men, and

they indeed had shown their devotion; but women--! She would mount three

widow's caps 'for a sign'. The first two would be for Clough and for her

Master; but the third--'the biggest widow's cap of all'--would be for

Aunt Mai. She did well to be angry; she was deserted in her hour of

need; and after all, could she be sure that even the male sex was so

impeccable? There was Dr. Sutherland, bungling as usual. Perhaps even he

intended to go off one of these days, too? She gave him a look, and he

shivered in his shoes. No!--she grinned sardonically; she would always

have Dr. Sutherland. And then she reflected that there was one thing

more that she would always have--her work.

IV

SIDNEY HERBERT'S death finally put an end to Miss Nightingale's dream of

a reformed War Office. For a moment, indeed, in the first agony of her

disappointment, she had wildly clutched at a straw; she had written to

M. Gladstone to beg him to take up the burden of Sidney Herbert's work.

And Mr. Gladstone had replied with a sympathetic account of the funeral.

Succeeding Secretaries of State managed between them to undo a good deal

of what had been accomplished, but they could not undo it all; and for

ten years more (1862-72) Miss Nightingale remained a potent influence at

the War Office. After that, her direct connection with the Army came to

an end, and her energies began to turn more and more completely towards

more general objects. Her work upon hospital reform assumed enormous

proportions; she was able to improve the conditions in infirmaries and

workhouses; and one of her most remarkable papers forestalls the

recommendations of the Poor Law Commission of 1909. Her training, school

for nurses, with all that it involved in initiative, control,

responsibillity, and combat, would have been enough in itself to have

absorbed the whole efforts of at least two lives of ordinary vigour. And

at the same time her work in connection with India, which had begun with

the Sanitary Commission on the Indian Army, spread and ramified in a

multitude of directions. Her tentacles reached the India Office and

succeeded in establishing a hold even upon those slippery high places.

For many years it was de rigueur for the newly appointed Viceroy, before

he left England, to pay a visit to Miss Nightingale.

After much hesitation, she had settled down in a small house in South

Street, where she remained for the rest of her life. That life was a

very long one; the dying woman reached her ninety-first year. Her ill

health gradually diminished; the crises of extreme danger became less

frequent, and at last altogether ceased; she remained an invalid, but an

invalid of a curious character--an invalid who was too weak to walk

downstairs and who worked far harder than most Cabinet Ministers. Her

illness, whatever it may have been, was certainly not inconvenient. It

involved seclusion; and an extraordinary, an unparalleled seclusion was,

it might almost have been said, the mainspring of Miss Nightingale's

life. Lying on her sofa in the little upper room in South Street, she

combined the intense vitality of a dominating woman of the world with

the mysterious and romantic quality of a myth. She was a legend in her

lifetime, and she knew it. She tasted the joys of power, like those

Eastern Emperors whose autocratic rule was based upon invisibility, with

the mingled satisfactions of obscurity and fame.

And she found the machinery of illness hardly less effective as a

barrier against the eyes of men than the ceremonial of a palace. Great

statesmen and renowned generals were obliged to beg for audiences;

admiring princesses from foreign countries found that they must see her

at her own time, or not at all; and the ordinary mortal had no hope of

ever getting beyond the downstairs sitting-room and Dr. Sutherland. For

that indefatigable disciple did, indeed, never desert her. He might be

impatient, he might be restless, but he remained. His 'incurable

looseness of thought', for so she termed it, continued at her service to

the end. Once, it is true, he had actually ventured to take a holiday;

but he was recalled, and he did not repeat the experiment. He was wanted

downstairs. There he sat, transacting business answering correspondence,

interviewing callers, and exchanging innumerable notes with the unseen

power above. Sometimes word came down that Miss Nightingale was just

well enough to see one of her visitors. The fortunate man was led up,

was ushered, trembling, into the shaded chamber, and, of course, could

never afterwards forget the interview. Very rarely, indeed, once or

twice a year, perhaps, but nobody could be quite certain, in deadly

secrecy, Miss Nightingale went out for a drive in the Park.

Unrecognised, the living legend flitted for a moment before the common

gaze. And the precaution was necessary; for there were times when, at

some public function, the rumour of her presence was spread abroad; and

ladies, mistaken by the crowd for Miss Nightingale, were followed,

pressed upon, vehemently supplicated 'Let me touch your shawl'; 'Let me

stroke your arm'; such was the strange adoration in the hearts of the

people. That vast reserve of force lay there behind her; she could use

it, if she could. But she preferred never to use it. On occasions, she

might hint or threaten, she might balance the sword of Damocles over the

head of the Bison; she might, by a word, by a glance, remind some

refractory Minister, some unpersuadable Viceroy, sitting in audience

with her in the little upper room, that she was something more than a

mere sick woman, that she had only, so to speak, to go to the window and

wave her handkerchief, for ... dreadful things to follow. But that was

enough; they understood; the myth was there--obvious, portentous,

impalpable; and so it remained to the last.

With statesmen and governors at her beck and call, with her hands on a

hundred strings, with mighty provinces at her feet, with foreign

governments agog for her counsel, building hospitals, training

nurses--she still felt that she had not enough to do. She sighed for

more worlds to conquer--more, and yet more.

She looked about her--what was left? Of course! Philosophy! After the

world of action, the world of thought. Having set right the health of

the British Army, she would now do the same good service for the

religious convictions of mankind. She had long noticed--with regret--the

growing tendency towards free-thinking among artisans. With regret, but

not altogether with surprise, the current teaching of Christianity was

sadly to seek; nay, Christianity itself was not without its defects. She

would rectify these errors. She would correct the mistakes of the

Churches; she would point out just where Christianity was wrong; and she

would explain to the artisans what the facts of the case really were.

Before her departure for the Crimea, she had begun this work; and now,

in the intervals of her other labours, she completed it. Her

'Suggestions for Thought to the Searchers After Truth Among the Artisans

of England' (1860), unravels, in the course of three portly volumes, the

difficulties hitherto, curiously enough, unsolved--connected with such

matters as Belief in God, the Plan of Creation, the Origin of Evil, the

Future Life, Necessity and Free Will, Law, and the Nature of Morality.

The Origin of Evil, in particular, held no perplexities for Miss

Nightingale. 'We cannot conceive,' she remarks, 'that Omnipotent

Righteousness would find satisfaction in solitary existence.' This

being, so, the only question remaining to be asked is: 'What beings

should we then conceive that God would create?' Now, He cannot create

perfect beings, 'since, essentially, perfection is one'; if He did so,

He would only be adding to Himself. Thus the conclusion is obvious: He

must create imperfect ones. Omnipotent Righteousness, faced by the

intolerable impasse of a solitary existence, finds itself bound by the

very nature of the cause, to create the hospitals at Scutari. Whether

this argument would have satisfied the artisans was never discovered,

for only a very few copies of the book were printed for private

circulation. One copy was sent to Mr. Mill, who acknowledged it in an

extremely polite letter. He felt himself obliged, however, to confess

that he had not been altogether convinced by Miss Nightingale's proof of

the existence of God. Miss Nightingale was surprised and mortified; she

had thought better of Mr. Mill; for surely her proof of the existence of

God could hardly be improved upon. 'A law,' she had pointed out,

'implies a law-giver.' Now the Universe is full of laws--the law of

gravitation, the law of the excluded middle, and many others; hence it

follows that the Universe has a law-giver--and what would Mr. Mill be

satisfied with, if he was not satisfied with that?

Perhaps Mr. Mill might have asked why the argument had not been pushed

to its logical conclusion. Clearly, if we are to trust the analogy of

human institutions, we must remember that laws are, as a matter of fact,

not dispensed by lawgivers, but passed by Act of Parliament. Miss

Nightingale, however, with all her experience of public life, never

stopped to consider the question whether God might not be a Limited

Monarchy. Yet her conception of God was certainly not orthodox. She felt

towards Him as she might have felt towards a glorified sanitary

engineer; and in some of her speculations she seems hardly to

distinguish between the Deity and the Drains. As one turns over these

singular pages, one has the impression that Miss Nightingale has got the

Almighty too into her clutches, and that, if He is not careful, she will

kill Him with overwork.

Then, suddenly, in the very midst of the ramifying generalities of her

metaphysical disquisitions, there is an unexpected turn and the reader

is plunged all at once into something particular, something personal,

something impregnated with intense experience--a virulent invective upon

the position of women in the upper ranks of society. Forgetful alike of

her high argument and of the artisans, the bitter creature rails through

a hundred pages of close print at the falsities of family life, the

ineptitudes of marriage, the emptinesses of convention, in the spirit of

an Ibsen or a Samuel Butler. Her fierce pen, shaking with intimate

anger, depicts in biting sentences the fearful fate of an unmarried girl

in a wealthy household. It is a cri du coeur; and then, as suddenly, she

returns once more to instruct the artisans upon the nature of Omnipotent

Righteousness.

Her mind was, indeed, better qualified to dissect the concrete and

distasteful fruits of actual life than to construct a coherent system of

abstract philosophy. In spite of her respect for Law, she was never at

home with a generalisation. Thus, though the great achievement of her

life lay in the immense impetus which she gave to the scientific

treatment of sickness, a true comprehension of the scientific method

itself was alien to her spirit. Like most great men of action--perhaps

like all--she was simply an empiricist. She believed in what she saw,

and she acted accordingly; beyond that she would not go. She had found

in Scutari that fresh air and light played an effective part in the

prevention of the maladies with which she had to deal; and that was

enough for her; she would not inquire further; what were the general

principles underlying that fact--or even whether there were any--she

refused to consider. Years after the discoveries of Pasteur and Lister,

she laughed at what she called the 'germ-fetish'. There was no such

thing as 'infection'; she had never seen it, therefore it did not exist.

But she had seen the good effects of fresh air; therefore, there could

be no doubt about them; and therefore, it was essential that the

bedrooms of patients should be well ventilated. Such was her doctrine;

and in those days of hermetically scaled windows it was a very valuable

one. But it was a purely empirical doctrine, and thus it led to some

unfortunate results. When, for instance, her influence in India was at

its height, she issued orders that all hospital windows should be

invariably kept open. The authorities, who knew what an open window in

the hot weather meant, protested, but in vain; Miss Nightingale was

incredulous. She knew nothing of the hot weather, but she did know the

value of fresh air--from personal experience; the authorities were

talking nonsense; and the windows must be kept open all the year round.

There was a great outcry from all the doctors in India, but she was

firm; and for a moment it seemed possible that her terrible commands

would have to be put into execution. Lord Lawrence, however, was

Viceroy, and he was able to intimate to Miss Nightingale, with

sufficient authority, that himself had decided upon the question, and

that his decision must stand, even against her own. Upon that she gave

way, but reluctantly and quite unconvinced; she was only puzzled by the

unexpected weakness of Lord Lawrence. No doubt, if she had lived today,

and if her experience had lain, not among cholera cases at Scutari, but

among yellow-fever cases in Panama, she would have declared fresh air a

fetish, and would have maintained to her dying day that the only really

effective way of dealing with disease was by the destruction of

mosquitoes.

Yet her mind, so positive, so realistic, so ultra-practical, had its

singular revulsions, its mysterious moods of mysticism and of doubt. At

times, lying sleepless in the early hours, she fell into long, strange,

agonised meditations, and then, seizing a pencil, she would commit to

paper the confessions of her soul. The morbid longings of her

pre-Crimean days came over her once more; she filled page after page

with self-examination, self-criticism, self-surrender. 'Oh Father,' she

wrote, 'I submit, I resign myself, I accept with all my heart, this

stretching out of Thy hand to save me.... Oh how vain it is, the vanity

of vanities, to live in men's thoughts instead of God's!'

She was lonely, she was miserable. 'Thou knowest that through all these

horrible twenty years, I have been supported by the belief that I was

working with Thee who would bring everyone, even our poor nurses, to

perfection'--and yet, after all, what was the result? Had not even she

been an unprofitable servant? One night, waking suddenly, she saw, in

the dim light of the night-lamp, tenebrous shapes upon the wall. The

past rushed back upon her. 'Am I she who once stood on that Crimean

height?' she wildly asked--'The Lady with a lamp shall stand.... The lamp

shows me only my utter shipwreck.'

She sought consolation in the writings of the Mystics and in a

correspondence with Mr. Jowett. For many years the Master of Balliol

acted as her spiritual adviser. He discussed with her in a series of

enormous letters the problems of religion and philosophy; he criticised

her writings on those subjects with the tactful sympathy of a cleric who

was also a man of the world; and he even ventured to attempt at times to

instil into her rebellious nature some of his own peculiar suavity. 'I

sometimes think,' he told her, 'that you ought seriously to consider how

your work may be carried on, not with less energy, but in a calmer

spirit. I am not blaming the past ... But I want the peace of God to

settle on the future.' He recommended her to spend her time no longer in

'conflicts with Government offices', and to take up some literary work.

He urged her to 'work out her notion of Divine Perfection', in a series

of essays for Frazer's Magazine. She did so; and the result was

submitted to Mr. Froude, who pronounced the second essay to be 'even

more pregnant than the first. I cannot tell,' he said, 'how sanitary,

with disordered intellects, the effects of such papers will be.'

Mr. Carlyle, indeed, used different language, and some remarks of his

about a lost lamb bleating on the mountains, having been unfortunately

repeated to Miss Nightingale, required all Mr. Jowett's suavity to keep

the peace. In a letter of fourteen sheets, he turned her attention from

this painful topic towards a discussion of Quietism. 'I don't see why,'

said the Master of Balliol, 'active life might not become a sort of

passive life too.' And then, he added, 'I sometimes fancy there are

possibilities of human character much greater than have been realised.'

She found such sentiments helpful, underlining them in blue pencil; and,

in return, she assisted her friend with a long series of elaborate

comments upon the Dialogues of Plato, most of which he embodied in the

second edition of his translation. Gradually her interest became more

personal; she told him never to work again after midnight, and he obeyed

her. Then she helped him to draw up a special form of daily service for

the College Chapel, with selections from the Psalms under the heads of

'God the Lord, God the judge, God the Father, and God the

Friend'--though, indeed, this project was never realised; for the Bishop

of Oxford disallowed the alterations, exercising his legal powers, on

the advice of Sir Travers Twiss.

Their relations became intimate. 'The spirit of the Twenty-third Psalm

and the spirit of the Nineteenth Psalm should be united in our lives,'

Mr. Jowett said. Eventually, she asked him to do her a singular favour.

Would he, knowing what he did of her religious views, come to London and

administer to her the Holy Sacrament? He did not hesitate, and

afterwards declared that he would always regard the occasion as a solemn

event in his life. He was devoted to her--though the precise nature of

his feelings towards her never quite transpired. Her feelings towards

him were more mixed. At first, he was 'that great and good man'--'that

true saint, Mr. Jowett'; but, as time went on, some gall was mingled

with the balm; the acrimony of her nature asserted itself. She felt that

she gave more sympathy than she received; she was exhausted, and she was

annoyed by his conversation. Her tongue, one day, could not refrain from

shooting out at him: 'He comes to me, and he talks to me,' she said, 'as

if I were someone else.'

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AT one time she had almost decided to end her life in retirement as a

patient at St. Thomas's Hospital. But partly owing to the persuasions of

Mr. Jowett, she changed her mind; for forty-five years she remained in

South Street; and in South Street she died. As old age approached,

though her influence with the official world gradually diminished, her

activities seemed to remain as intense and widespread as before. When

hospitals were to be built, when schemes of sanitary reform were in

agitation, when wars broke out, she was still the adviser of all Europe.

Still, with a characteristic self-assurance, she watched from her

Mayfair bedroom over the welfare of India. Still, with an indefatigable

enthusiasm, she pushed forward the work, which, perhaps, was nearer to

her heart, more completely her own, than all the rest--the training of

nurses. In her moments of deepest depression, when her greatest

achievements seemed to lose their lustre, she thought of her nurses, and

was comforted. The ways of God, she found, were strange indeed. 'How

inefficient I was in the Crimea,' she noted. 'Yet He has raised up from

it trained nursing.'

At other times, she was better satisfied. Looking back, she was amazed

by the enormous change which, since her early days, had come over the

whole treatment of illness, the whole conception of public and domestic

health--a change in which, she knew, she had played her part. One of her

Indian admirers, the Aga Khan, came to visit her. She expatiated on the

marvellous advances she had lived to see in the management of

hospitals--in drainage, in ventilation, in sanitary work of every kind.

There was a pause; and then, 'Do you think you are improving?' asked the

Aga Khan. She was a little taken aback, and said, 'What do you mean by

"improving"?' He replied, 'Believing more in God.' She saw that he had a

view of God which was different from hers. 'A most interesting man,' she

noted after the interview; 'but you could never teach him sanitation.'

When old age actually came, something curious happened. Destiny, having

waited very patiently, played a queer trick on Miss Nightingale. The

benevolence and public spirit of that long life had only been equalled

by its acerbity. Her virtue had dwelt in hardness, and she had poured

forth her unstinted usefulness with a bitter smile upon her lips. And

now the sarcastic years brought the proud woman her punishment. She was

not to die as she had lived. The sting was to be taken out of her; she

was to be made soft; she was to be reduced to compliance and

complacency. The change came gradually, but at last it was unmistakable.

The terrible commander who had driven Sidney Herbert to his death, to

whom Mr. Jowett had applied the words of Homer, amoton memaniia--raging

insatiably--now accepted small compliments with gratitude, and indulged

in sentimental friendships with young girls. The author of "Notes on

Nursing"--that classical compendium of the besetting sins of the

sisterhood, drawn up with the detailed acrimony, the vindictive relish,

of a Swift--now spent long hours in composing sympathetic Addresses to

Probationers, whom she petted and wept over in turn. And, at the same

time, there appeared a corresponding alteration in her physical mood.

The thin, angular woman, with her haughty eye and her acrid mouth, had

vanished; and in her place was the rounded, bulky form of a fat old

lady, smiling all day long. Then something else became visible. The

brain which had been steeled at Scutari was indeed, literally, growing

soft. Senility--an ever more and more amiable senility--descended.

Towards the end, consciousness itself grew lost in a roseate haze, and

melted into nothingness.

It was just then, three years before her death, when she was

eighty-seven years old (1907), that those in authority bethought them

that the opportune moment had come for bestowing a public honour on

Florence Nightingale. She was offered the Order of Merit. That Order,

whose roll contains, among other distinguished names, those of Sir

Lawrence Alma Tadema and Sir Edward Elgar, is remarkable chiefly for the

fact that, as its title indicates, it is bestowed because its recipient

deserves it, and for no other reason. Miss Nightingale's representatives

accepted the honour, and her name, after a lapse of many years, once

more appeared in the Press. Congratulations from all sides came pouring

in. There was a universal burst of enthusiasm--a final revivification of

the ancient myth. Among her other admirers, the German Emperor took this

opportunity of expressing his feelings towards her. 'His Majesty,' wrote

the German Ambassador, 'having just brought to a close a most enjoyable

stay in the beautiful neighbourhood of your old home near Romsey, has

commanded me to present you with some flowers as a token of his esteem.'

Then, by Royal command, the Order of Merit was brought to South Street,

and there was a little ceremony of presentation. Sir Douglas Dawson,

after a short speech, stepped forward, and handed the insignia of the

Order to Miss Nightingale. Propped up by pillows, she dimly recognised

that some compliment was being paid her. 'Too kind--too kind,' she

murmured; and she was not ironical.

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Dr. Arnold

IN 1827 the headmastership of Rugby School fell vacant, and it became

necessary for the twelve trustees, noblemen and gentlemen of

Warwickshire, to appoint a successor to the post. Reform was in the

air--political, social, religious; there was even a feeling abroad that

our great public schools were not quite all that they should be, and

that some change or other--no one precisely knew what--but some change

in the system of their management, was highly desirable. Thus it was

natural that when the twelve noblemen and gentlemen, who had determined

to be guided entirely by the merits of the candidates, found among the

testimonials pouring in upon them a letter from Dr. Hawkins, the Provost

of Oriel, predicting that if they elected Mr. Thomas Arnold he would

'change the face of education all through the public schools of

England', they hesitated no longer; obviously, Mr. Thomas Arnold was

their man. He was elected therefore; received, as was fitting, priest's

orders; became, as was no less fitting, a Doctor of Divinity; and in

August, 1828, took up the duties of his office.

All that was known of the previous life of Dr. Arnold seemed to justify

the prediction of the Provost of Oriel, and the choice of the Trustees.

The son of a respectable Collector of Customs, he had been educated at

Winchester and at Oxford, where his industry and piety had given him a

conspicuous place among his fellow students. It is true that, as a

schoolboy, a certain pompousness in the style of his letters home

suggested to the more clear-sighted among his relatives the possibility

that young Thomas might grow up into a prig; but, after all, what else

could be expected from a child who, at the age of three, had been

presented by his father, as a reward for proficiency in his studies,

with the twenty-four volumes of Smollett's History of England?

His career at Oxford had been a distinguished one, winding up with an

Oriel fellowship. It was at about this time that the smooth and

satisfactory progress of his life was for a moment interrupted: he began

to be troubled by religious doubts. These doubts, as we learn from one

of his contemporaries, who afterwards became Mr. Justice Coleridge,

'were not low nor rationalistic in their tendency, according to the bad

sense of that term; there was no indisposition in him to believe merely

because the article transcended his reason, he doubted the proof and the

interpretation of the textual authority'.

In his perturbation, Arnold consulted Keble, who was at that time one of

his closest friends, and a Fellow of the same College.

'The subject of these distressing thoughts,' Keble wrote to Coleridge,

'is that most awful one, on which all very inquisitive reasoning minds

are, I believe, most liable to such temptations--I mean, the doctrine of

the blessed Trinity. Do not start, my dear Coleridge; I do not believe

that Arnold has any serious scruples of the UNDERSTANDING about it, but

it is a defect of his mind that he cannot get rid of a certain feeling

of objections.' What was to be done? Keble's advice was peremptory.

Arnold was 'bid to pause in his inquiries, to pray earnestly for help

and light from above, and turn himself more strongly than ever to the

practical duties of a holy life'. He did so, and the result was all that

could be wished. He soon found himself blessed with perfect peace of

mind, and a settled conviction.

One other difficulty, and one only, we hear of at this point in his

life. His dislike of early rising amounted, we are told, 'almost to a

constitutional infirmity'. This weakness too he overcame, yet not quite

so successfully as his doubts upon the doctrine of the Trinity. For in

afterlife, the Doctor would often declare 'that early rising continued

to be a daily effort to him and that in this instance he never found the

truth of the usual rule that all things are made easy by custom.

He married young and settled down in the country as a private tutor for

youths preparing for the Universities. There he remained for ten

years--happy, busy, and sufficiently prosperous. Occupied chiefly with

his pupils, he nevertheless devoted much of his energy to wider

interests. He delivered a series of sermons in the parish church; and he

began to write a History of Rome, in the hope, as he said, that its tone

might be such 'that the strictest of what is called the Evangelical

party would not object to putting it into the hands of their children'.

His views on the religious and political condition of the country began

to crystallise. He was alarmed by the 'want of Christian principle in

the literature of the day', looking forward anxiously to 'the approach

of a greater struggle between good and evil than the world has yet

seen'; and, after a serious conversation with Dr. Whately, began to

conceive the necessity of considerable alterations in the Church

Establishment.

All who knew him during these years were profoundly impressed by the

earnestness of his religious convictions and feelings, which, as one

observer said, 'were ever bursting forth'. It was impossible to

disregard his 'deep consciousness of the invisible world' and 'the

peculiar feeling of love and adoration which he entertained towards our

Lord Jesus Christ'. 'His manner of awful reverence when speaking of God

or of the Scriptures' was particularly striking. 'No one could know him

even a little,' said another friend, 'and not be struck by his absolute

wrestling with evil, so that like St. Paul, he seemed to be battling

with the wicked one, and yet with a feeling of God's help on his side.'

Such was the man who, at the age of thirty-three, became headmaster of

Rugby. His outward appearance was the index of his inward character;

everything about him denoted energy, earnestness, and the best

intentions. His legs, perhaps, were shorter than they should have been;

but the sturdy athletic frame, especially when it was swathed (as it

usually was) in the flowing robes of a Doctor of Divinity, was full of

an imposing vigour; and his head, set decisively upon the collar, stock,

and bands of ecclesiastical tradition, clearly belonged to a person of

eminence. The thick, dark clusters of his hair, his bushy eyebrows and

curling whiskers, his straight nose and bulky chin, his firm and

upward-curving lower lip--all these revealed a temperament of ardour and

determination. His eyes were bright and large; they were also obviously

honest. And yet--why was it? Was it in the lines of the mouth or the

frown on the forehead?--it was hard to say, but it was

unmistakable--there was a slightly puzzled look upon the face of Dr.

Arnold.

And certainly, if he was to fulfil the prophecy of the Provost of Oriel,

the task before him was sufficiently perplexing. The public schools of

those days were still virgin forests, untouched by the hand of reform.

Keate was still reigning at Eton; and we possess, in the records of his

pupils, a picture of the public school education of the early nineteenth

century, in its most characteristic state. It was a system of anarchy

tempered by despotism. Hundreds of boys, herded together in

miscellaneous boarding-houses, or in that grim 'Long Chamber' at whose

name in after years aged statesmen and warriors would turn pale, lived,

badgered and overawed by the furious incursions of an irascible little

old man carrying a bundle of birch-twigs, a life in which licensed

barbarism was mingled with the daily and hourly study of the niceties of

Ovidian verse. It was a life of freedom and terror, of prosody and

rebellion, of interminable floggings and appalling practical jokes.

Keate ruled, unaided--for the undermasters were few and of no

account--by sheer force of character. But there were times when even

that indomitable will was overwhelmed by the flood of lawlessness. Every

Sunday afternoon he attempted to read sermons to the whole school

assembled; and every Sunday afternoon the whole school assembled shouted

him down. The scenes in Chapel were far from edifying; while some

antique Fellow doddered in the pulpit, rats would be let loose to scurry

among the legs of the exploding boys. But next morning the hand of

discipline would reassert itself; and the savage ritual of the

whipping-block would remind a batch of whimpering children that, though

sins against man and God might be forgiven them, a false quantity could

only be expiated in tears and blood.

From two sides this system of education was beginning to be assailed by

the awakening public opinion of the upper middle classes. On the one

hand, there was a desire for a more liberal curriculum; on the other,

there was a demand for a higher moral tone. The growing utilitarianism

of the age viewed with impatience a course of instruction which excluded

every branch of knowledge except classical philology; while its growing

respectability was shocked by such a spectacle of disorder and brutality

as was afforded by the Eton of Keate. 'The public schools,' said the

Rev. Mr. Bowdler, 'are the very seats and nurseries of vice.'

Dr. Arnold agreed. He was convinced of the necessity for reform. But it

was only natural that to one of his temperament and education it should

have been the moral rather than the intellectual side of the question

which impressed itself upon his mind. Doubtless it was important to

teach boys something more than the bleak rigidities of the ancient

tongues; but how much more important to instil into them the elements of

character and the principles of conduct! His great object, throughout

his career at Rugby, was, as he repeatedly said, to 'make the school a

place of really Christian education'. To introduce 'a religious

principle into education', was his 'most earnest wish', he wrote to a

friend when he first became headmaster; 'but to do this would be to

succeed beyond all my hopes; it would be a happiness so great, that, I

think, the world would yield me nothing comparable to it'. And he was

constantly impressing these sentiments upon his pupils. 'What I have

often said before,' he told them, 'I repeat now: what we must look for

here is, first, religious and moral principle; secondly, gentlemanly

conduct; and thirdly, intellectual ability.'

There can be no doubt that Dr. Arnold's point of view was shared by the

great mass of English parents. They cared very little for classical

scholarship; no doubt they would be pleased to find that their sons were

being instructed in history or in French; but their real hopes, their

real wishes, were of a very different kind. 'Shall I tell him to mind

his work, and say he's sent to school to make himself a good scholar?'

meditated old Squire Brown when he was sending off Tom for the first

time to Rugby.

'Well, but he isn't sent to school for that--at any rate, not for that

mainly. I don't care a straw for Greek particles, or the digamma; no

more does his mother. What is he sent to school for?... If he'll only

turn out a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman, and a Christian,

that's all I want.'

That was all; and it was that that Dr. Arnold set himself to accomplish.

But how was he to achieve his end? Was he to improve the character of

his pupils by gradually spreading around them an atmosphere of

cultivation and intelligence? By bringing them into close and friendly

contact with civilised men, and even, perhaps, with civilised women? By

introducing into the life of his school all that he could of the humane,

enlightened, and progressive elements in the life of the community? On

the whole, he thought not. Such considerations left him cold, and he

preferred to be guided by the general laws of Providence. It only

remained to discover what those general laws were. He consulted the Old

Testament, and could doubt no longer. He would apply to his scholars, as

he himself explained to them in one of his sermons, 'the principle which

seemed to him to have been adopted in the training of the childhood of

the human race itself'. He would treat the boys at Rugby as Jehovah had

treated the Chosen People: he would found a theocracy; and there should

be judges in Israel.

For this purpose, the system, prevalent in most of the public schools of

the day, by which the elder boys were deputed to keep order in the

class-rooms, lay ready to Dr. Arnold's hand. He found the Praepostor a

mere disciplinary convenience, and he converted him into an organ of

government. Every boy in the Sixth Form became ipso facto a Praepostor,

with powers extending over every department of school life; and the

Sixth Form as a body was erected into an authority responsible to the

headmaster, and to the headmaster alone, for the internal management of

the school.

This was the means by which Dr. Arnold hoped to turn Rugby into 'a place

of really Christian education'. The boys were to work out their own

salvation, like the human race. He himself, involved in awful grandeur,

ruled remotely, through his chosen instruments, from an inaccessible

heaven. Remotely--and yet with an omnipresent force. As the Israelite of

old knew that his almighty Lawgiver might at any moment thunder to him

from the whirlwind, or appear before his very eyes, the visible

embodiment of power or wrath, so the Rugby schoolboy walked in a holy

dread of some sudden manifestation of the sweeping gown, the majestic

tone, the piercing glance, of Dr. Arnold. Among the lower forms of the

school his appearances were rare and transitory, and upon these young

children 'the chief impression', we are told, 'was of extreme fear'. The

older boys saw more of him, but they did not see much. Outside the Sixth

Form, no part of the school came into close intercourse with him; and it

would often happen that a boy would leave Rugby without having had any

personal communication with him at all.

Yet the effect which he produced upon the great mass of his pupils was

remarkable. The prestige of his presence and the elevation of his

sentiments were things which it was impossible to forget. In class,

every line of his countenance, every shade of his manner imprinted

themselves indelibly on the minds of the boys who sat under him. One of

these, writing long afterwards, has described, in phrases still

impregnated with awestruck reverence, the familiar details of the scene:

'the glance with which he looked round in the few moments of silence

before the lesson began, and which seemed to speak his sense of his own

position'--'the attitude in which he stood, turning over the pages of

Facciolati's Lexicon, or Pole's synopsis, with his eye fixed upon the

boy who was pausing to give an answer'--'the pleased look and the

cheerful "thank you", which followed upon a successful translation'--'the

fall of his countenance with its deepening severity, the stern elevation

of the eyebrows, the sudden "sit down" which followed upon the

reverse'--and 'the startling earnestness with which he would check in a

moment the slightest approach to levity'.

To be rebuked, however mildly, by Dr. Arnold was a Potable experience.

One boy could never forget how he drew a distinction between 'mere

amusement' and 'such as encroached on the next day's duties', nor the

tone of voice with which the Doctor added 'and then it immediately

becomes what St. Paul calls REVELLING'. Another remembered to his dying

day his reproof of some boys who had behaved badly during prayers.

'Nowhere,' said Dr. Arnold, 'nowhere is Satan's work more evidently

manifest than in turning holy things to ridicule.' On such occasions, as

another of his pupils described it, it was impossible to avoid 'a

consciousness almost amounting to solemnity' that, 'when his eye was

upon you, he looked into your inmost heart'.

With the boys in the Sixth Form, and with them alone, the severe

formality of his demeanour was to some degree relaxed. It was his wish,

in his relations with the Praepostors, to allow the Master to be

occasionally merged in the Friend. From time to time, he chatted with

them in a familiar manner; once a term he asked them to dinner; and

during the summer holidays he invited them, in rotation, to stay with

him in Westmorland.

It was obvious that the primitive methods of discipline which had

reached their apogee under the dominion of Keate were altogether

incompatible with Dr. Arnold's view of the functions of a headmaster and

the proper governance of a public school. Clearly, it was not for such

as he to demean himself by bellowing and cuffing, by losing his temper

once an hour, and by wreaking his vengeance with indiscriminate

flagellations. Order must be kept in other ways. The worst boys were

publicly expelled; many were silently removed; and, when Dr. Arnold

considered that a flogging was necessary, he administered it with

gravity. For he had no theoretical objection to corporal punishment. On

the contrary, he supported it, as was his wont, by an appeal to general

principles. 'There is,' he said, 'an essential inferiority in a boy as

compared with a man'; and hence 'where there is no equality the exercise

of superiority implied in personal chastisement' inevitably followed.

He was particularly disgusted by the view that 'personal correction', as

he phrased it, was an insult or a degradation to the boy upon whom it

was inflicted; and to accustom young boys to think so appeared to him to

be 'positively mischievous'.

'At an age,' he wrote, 'when it is almost impossible to find a true,

manly sense of the degradation of guilt or faults, where is the wisdom

of encouraging a fantastic sense of the degradation of personal

correction? What can be more false, or more adverse to the simplicity,

sobriety, and humbleness of mind which are the best ornaments of youth,

and offer the best promise of a noble manhood?'

One had not to look far, he added, for 'the fruits of such a system'. In

Paris, during the Revolution of 1830, an officer observed a boy of

twelve insulting the soldiers, and

'though the action was then raging, merely struck him with the flat part

of his sword, as the fit chastisement for boyish impertinence. But the

boy had been taught to consider his person sacred, and that a blow was a

deadly insult; he therefore followed the officer, and having watched his

opportunity, took deliberate aim at him with a pistol and murdered him.'

Such were the alarming results of insufficient whipping.

Dr. Arnold did not apply this doctrine to the Praepostors, but the boys

in the lower parts of the school felt its benefits, with a double force.

The Sixth Form was not only excused from chastisement; it was given the

right to chastise. The younger children, scourged both by Dr Arnold and

by the elder children, were given every opportunity of acquiring the

simplicity, sobriety, and humbleness of mind, which are the best

ornaments of youth.

In the actual sphere of teaching, Dr. Arnold's reforms were tentative

and few. He introduced modern history, modern languages, and mathematics

into the school curriculum; but the results were not encouraging. He

devoted to the teaching of history one hour a week; yet, though he took

care to inculcate in these lessons a wholesome hatred of moral evil, and

to point out from time to time the indications of the providential

government of the world, his pupils never seemed to make much progress

in the subject. Could it have been that the time allotted to it was

insufficient? Dr. Arnold had some suspicions that this might be the

case. With modern languages there was the same difficulty. Here his

hopes were certainly not excessive. 'I assume it,' he wrote, 'as the

foundation of all my view of the case, that boys at a public school

never will learn to speak or pronounce French well, under any

circumstances.' It would be enough if they could 'learn it grammatically

as a dead language. But even this they very seldom managed to do.

'I know too well, [he was obliged to confess,] that most of the boys

would pass a very poor examination even in French grammar. But so it is

with their mathematics; and so it will be with any branch of knowledge

that is taught but seldom, and is felt to be quite subordinate to the

boys' main study.'

The boys' main study remained the dead languages of Greece and Rome.

That the classics should form the basis of all teaching was an axiom

with Dr. Arnold. 'The study of language,' he said, 'seems to me as if it

was given for the very purpose of forming the human mind in youth; and

the Greek and Latin languages seem the very instruments by which this is

to be effected.' Certainly, there was something providential about

it--from the point of view of the teacher as well as of the taught. If

Greek and Latin had not been 'given' in that convenient manner, Dr.

Arnold, who had spent his life in acquiring those languages, might have

discovered that he had acquired them in vain. As it was, he could set

the noses of his pupils to the grindstone of syntax and prosody with a

clear conscience. Latin verses and Greek prepositions divided between

them the labours of the week.

As time went on he became, he declared, 'increasingly convinced that it

is not knowledge, but the means of gaining knowledge which I have to

teach'. The reading of the school was devoted almost entirely to

selected passages from the prose writers of antiquity. 'Boys,' he

remarked, 'do not like poetry.' Perhaps his own poetical taste was a

little dubious; at any rate, it is certain that he considered the Greek

Tragedians greatly overrated, and that he ranked Propertius as 'an

indifferent poet'. As for Aristophanes, owing to his strong moral

disapprobation, he could not bring himself to read him until he was

forty, when, it is true, he was much struck by the 'Clouds'. But

Juvenal, the Doctor could never bring himself to read at all.

Physical science was not taught at Rugby. Since, in Dr. Arnold's

opinion, it was too great a subject to be studied en parergo, obviously

only two alternatives were possible: it must either take the chief place

in the school curriculum, or it must be left out altogether. Before such

a choice, Dr. Arnold did not hesitate for a moment.

'Rather than have physical science the principal thing in my son's

mind,' he exclaimed in a letter to a friend, I would gladly have him

think that the sun went around the earth, and that the stars were so

many spangles set in the bright blue firmament. Surely the one thing

needful for a Christian and an English man to study is Christian, moral,

and political philosophy.'

A Christian and an Englishman! After all, it was not in the classroom,

nor in the boarding-house, that the essential elements of instruction

could be imparted which should qualify the youthful neophyte to deserve

those names. The final, the fundamental lesson could only be taught in

the school chapel; in the school chapel the centre of Dr. Arnold's

system of education was inevitably fixed. There, too, the Doctor himself

appeared in the plenitude of his dignity and his enthusiasm. There, with

the morning sun shining on the freshly scrubbed faces of his 300 pupils,

or, in the dusk of evening, through a glimmer of candles, his stately

form, rapt in devotion or vibrant with exhortation, would dominate the

scene. Every phase of the Church service seemed to receive its supreme

expression in his voice, his attitude, his look. During the Te Deum, his

whole countenance would light up; and he read the Psalms with such

conviction that boys would often declare, after hearing him, that they

understood them now for the first time.

It was his opinion that the creeds in public worship ought to be used as

triumphant hymns of thanksgiving, and, in accordance with this view,

although unfortunately he possessed no natural gift for music, he

regularly joined in the chanting of the Nicene Creed with a visible

animation and a peculiar fervour, which it was impossible to forget. The

Communion service he regarded as a direct and special counterpoise to

that false communion and false companionship, which, as he often

observed, was a great source of mischief in the school; and he bent

himself down with glistening eyes, and trembling voice, and looks of

paternal solicitude, in the administration of the elements. Nor was it

only the different sections of the liturgy, but the very divisions of

the ecclesiastical year that reflected themselves in his demeanour; the

most careless observer, we are told, 'could not fail to be struck by the

triumphant exultation of his whole manner on Easter Sunday'; though it

needed a more familiar eye to discern the subtleties in his bearing

which were produced by the approach or Advent, and the solemn thoughts

which it awakened of the advance of human life, the progress of the

human race, and the condition of the Church of England.

At the end of the evening service, the culminating moment of the week

had come: the Doctor delivered his sermon. It was not until then, as all

who had known him agreed, it was not until one had heard and seen him in

the pulpit, that one could fully realise what it was to be face to face

with Dr. Arnold. The whole character of the man--so we are

assured--stood at last revealed. His congregation sat in fixed attention

(with the exception of the younger boys, whose thoughts occasionally

wandered), while he propounded the general principles both of his own

conduct and that of the Almighty, or indicated the bearing of the

incidents of Jewish history in the sixth century B.C. upon the conduct

of English schoolboys in 1830. Then, more than ever, his deep

consciousness of the invisible world became evident; then, more than

ever, he seemed to be battling with the wicked one. For his sermons ran

on the eternal themes of the darkness of evil, the craft of the tempter,

the punishment of obliquity, and he justified the persistence with which

he dwelt upon these painful subjects by an appeal to a general

principle: 'The spirit of Elijah,' he said, 'must ever precede the

spirit of Christ.'

The impression produced upon the boys was remarkable. It was noticed

that even the most careless would sometimes, during the course of the

week, refer almost involuntarily to the sermon of the past Sunday, as a

condemnation of what they were doing. Others were heard to wonder how it

was that the Doctor's preaching, to which they had attended at the time

so assiduously, seemed, after all, to have such a small effect upon what

they did. An old gentleman, recalling those vanished hours, tried to

recapture in words his state of mind as he sat in the darkened chapel,

while Dr. Arnold's sermons, with their high-toned exhortations, their

grave and sombre messages of incalculable import, clothed, like Dr.

Arnold's body in its gown and bands, in the traditional stiffness of a

formal phraseology, reverberated through his adolescent ears. 'I used,'

he said, 'to listen to those sermons from first to last with a kind of

awe.'

His success was not limited to his pupils and immediate auditors. The

sermons were collected into five large volumes; they were the first of

their kind; and they were received with admiration by a wide circle of

pious readers. Queen Victoria herself possessed a copy in which several

passages were marked in pencil, by the Royal hand.

Dr. Arnold's energies were by no means exhausted by his duties at Rugby.

He became known not merely as a headmaster, but as a public man. He held

decided opinions upon a large number of topics; and he enunciated

them--based as they were almost invariably upon general principles--in

pamphlets, in prefaces, and in magazine articles, with an impressive

self-confidence. He was, as he constantly declared, a Liberal. In his

opinion, by the very constitution of human nature, the principles of

progress and reform had been those of wisdom and justice in every age of

the world--except one: that which had preceded the fall of man from

Paradise. Had he lived then, Dr. Arnold would have been a Conservative.

As it was, his Liberalism was tempered by an 'abhorrence of the spirit

of 1789, of the American War, of the French Economistes, and of the

English Whigs of the latter part of the seventeenth century'; and he

always entertained a profound respect for the hereditary peerage. It

might almost be said, in fact, that he was an orthodox Liberal. He

believed in toleration too, within limits; that is to say, in the

toleration of those with whom he agreed. 'I would give James Mill as

much opportunity for advocating his opinion,' he said, 'as is consistent

with a voyage to Botany Bay.'

He had become convinced of the duty of sympathising with the lower

orders ever since he had made a serious study of the Epistle of St.

James; but he perceived clearly that the lower orders fell into two

classes, and that it was necessary to distinguish between them. There

were the 'good poor'--and there were the others. 'I am glad that you

have made acquaintance with some of the good poor,' he wrote to a

Cambridge undergraduate. 'I quite agree with you that it is most

instructive to visit them.' Dr. Arnold himself occasionally visited

them, in Rugby; and the condescension with which he shook hands with old

men and women of the working classes was long remembered in the

neighbourhood. As for the others, he regarded them with horror and

alarm. 'The disorders in our social state,' he wrote to the Chevalier

Bunsen in 1834, 'appear to me to continue unabated. You have heard, I

doubt not, of the Trades Unions; a fearful engine of mischief, ready to

not or to assassinate; and I see no counteracting power.'

On the whole, his view of the condition of England was a gloomy one. He

recommended a correspondent to read

'Isaiah iii, v, xxii; Jeremiah v, xxii, xxx; Amos iv; and Habakkuk ii',

adding, 'you will be struck, I think, with the close resemblance of our

own state with that of the Jews before the second destruction of

Jerusalem'.

When he was told that the gift of tongues had descended on the

Irvingites at Glasgow, he was not surprised. 'I should take it,' he

said, 'merely as a sign of the coming of the day of the Lord.' And he

was convinced that the day of the Lord was coming--'the termination of

one of the great [Greek: aiones] of the human race'. Of that he had no

doubt whatever; wherever he looked he saw 'calamities, wars, tumults,

pestilences, earthquakes, etc., all marking the time of one of God's

peculiar seasons of visitation'. His only uncertainty was whether this

termination of an [Greek: aion] would turn out to be the absolutely

final one; but that he believed 'no created being knows or can know'. In

any case, he had 'not the slightest expectation of what is commonly

meant by the Millennium'. And his only consolation was that he preferred

the present Ministry, inefficient as it was, to the Tories.

He had planned a great work on Church and State, in which he intended to

lay bare the causes and to point out the remedies of the evils which

afflicted society. Its theme was to be, not the alliance or union, but

the absolute identity of the Church and the State; and he felt sure that

if only this fundamental truth were fully realised by the public, a

general reformation would follow. Unfortunately, however, as time went

on, the public seemed to realise it less and less. In spite of his

protests, not only were Jews admitted to Parliament, but a Jew was

actually appointed a governor of Christ's Hospital; and Scripture was

not made an obligatory subject at the London University.

There was one point in his theory which was not quite plain to Dr.

Arnold. If Church and State were absolutely identical, it became

important to decide precisely which classes of persons were to be

excluded, owing to their beliefs, from the community. Jews, for

instance, were decidedly outside the pale; while Dissenters--so Dr.

Arnold argued--were as decidedly within it. But what was the position of

the Unitarians? Were they, or were they not, members of the Church of

Christ? This was one of those puzzling questions which deepened the

frown upon the Doctor's forehead and intensified the pursing of his

lips. He thought long and earnestly upon the subject; he wrote elaborate

letters on it to various correspondents; but his conclusions remained

indefinite. 'My great objection to Unitarianism,' he wrote, 'in its

present form in England, is that it makes Christ virtually dead.' Yet he

expressed 'a fervent hope that if we could get rid of the Athanasian

Creed many good Unitarians would join their fellow Christians in bowing

the knee to Him who is Lord both of the dead and the living'. Amid these

perplexities, it was disquieting to learn that 'Unitarianism is becoming

very prevalent in Boston'. He inquired anxiously as to its 'complexion'

there; but received no very illuminating answer. The whole matter

continued to be wrapped in a painful obscurity, There were, he believed,

Unitarians and Unitarians; and he could say no more.

In the meantime, pending the completion of his great work, he occupied

himself with putting forward various suggestions of a practical kind. He

advocated the restoration of the Order of Deacons, which, he observed,

had long been 'quoad the reality, dead; for he believed that 'some plan

of this sort might be the small end of the wedge, by which Antichrist

might hereafter be burst asunder like the Dragon of Bel's temple'. But

the Order of Deacons was never restored, and Dr. Arnold turned his

attention elsewhere, urging in a weighty pamphlet the desirabitity of

authorising military officers, in congregations where it was impossible

to procure the presence of clergy, to administer the Eucharist, as well

as Baptism. It was with the object of laying such views as these before

the public--'to tell them plainly', as he said, 'the evils that exist,

and lead them, if I can, to their causes and remedies'--that he started,

in 1831, a weekly newspaper, "The Englishman's Register". The paper was

not a success, in spite of the fact that it set out to improve its

readers morally and, that it preserved, in every article, an avowedly

Christian tone. After a few weeks, and after he had spent upon it more

than L200, it came to an end.

Altogether, the prospect was decidedly discouraging. After all his

efforts, the absolute identity of Church and State remained as

unrecognised as ever.

'So deep', he was at last obliged to confess, 'is the distinction

between the Church and the State seated in our laws, our language, and

our very notions, that nothing less than a miraculous interposition of

God's Providence seems capable of eradicating it.'

Dr. Arnold waited in vain.

But, he did not wait in idleness. He attacked the same question from

another side: he explored the writings of the Christian Fathers, and

began to compose a commentary on the New Testament. In his view, the

Scriptures were as fit a subject as any other book for free inquiry and

the exercise of the individual judgment, and it was in this spirit that

he set about the interpretation of them. He was not afraid of facing

apparent difficulties, of admitting inconsistencies, or even errors, in

the sacred text. Thus he observed that 'in Chronicles xi, 20 and xiii,

2, there is a decided difference in the parentage of Abijah's

mother;'--'which', he added, 'is curious on any supposition'. And at one

time he had serious doubts as to the authorship of the Epistle to the

Hebrews. But he was able, on various problematical points, to suggest

interesting solutions.

At first, for instance, he could not but be startled by the cessation of

miracles in the early Church; but upon consideration, he came to the

conclusion that this phenomenon might be 'truly accounted for by the

supposition that none but the Apostles ever conferred miraculous powers,

and that therefore they ceased of course, after one generation'. Nor did

he fail to base his exegesis, whenever possible, upon an appeal to

general principles. One of his admirers points out how Dr. Arnold

'vindicated God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son and to the

Jews to exterminate the nations of Canaan', by explaining the principles

on which these commands were given, and their reference to the moral

state of those to whom they were addressed--thereby educing light out of

darkness, unravelling the thread of God's religious education of the

human race, and holding up God's marvellous counsels to the devout

wonder and meditation of the thoughtful believer'.

There was one of his friends, however, who did not share this admiration

for the Doctor's methods of Scriptural interpretation. W. G. Ward, while

still a young man at Oxford, had come under his influence, and had been

for some time one of his most enthusiastic disciples. But the star of

Newman was rising at the University; Ward soon felt the attraction of

that magnetic power; and his belief in his old teacher began to waver.

It was, in particular, Dr. Arnold's treatment of the Scriptures which

filled Ward's argumentative mind, at first with distrust, and at last

with positive antagonism. To subject the Bible to free inquiry, to

exercise upon it the criticism of the individual judgment--where might

not such methods lead? Who could say that they would not end in

Socinianism?--nay, in Atheism itself? If the text of Scripture was to be

submitted to the searchings of human reason, how could the question of

its inspiration escape the same tribunal? And the proofs of revelation,

and even of the existence of God? What human faculty was capable of

deciding upon such enormous questions? And would not the logical result

be a condition of universal doubt?

'On a very moderate computation, Ward argued, 'five times the amount of

a man's natural life might qualify a person endowed with extraordinary

genius to have some faint notion (though even this we doubt) on which

side truth lies.' It was not that he had the slightest doubt of Dr.

Arnold's orthodoxy--Dr. Arnold, whose piety was universally

recognised--Dr. Arnold, who had held up to scorn and execration

Strauss's Leben Jesu without reading it. What Ward complained of was the

Doctor's lack of logic, not his lack of faith. Could he not see that if

he really carried out his own principles to a logical conclusion he

would eventually find himself, precisely, in the arms of Strauss? The

young man, whose personal friendship remained unshaken, determined upon

an interview, and went down to Rugby primed with first principles,

syllogisms, and dilemmas. Finding that the headmaster was busy in

school, he spent the afternoon reading novels on the sofa in the

drawing-room. When at last, late in the evening, the Doctor returned,

tired out with his day's work, Ward fell upon him with all his vigour.

The contest was long and furious; it was also entirely inconclusive.

When it was over, Ward, with none of his brilliant arguments disposed

of, and none of his probing questions satisfactorily answered, returned

to the University to plunge headlong into the vortex of the Oxford

Movement; and Dr. Arnold, worried, perplexed, and exhausted, went to

bed, where he remained for the next thirty-six hours.

The Commentary on the New Testament was never finished, and the great

work on Church and State itself remained a fragment. Dr. Arnold's active

mind was diverted from political and theological speculations to the

study of philology, and to historical composition. His Roman History,

which he regarded as 'the chief monument of his historical fame', was

based partly upon the researches of Niebuhr, and partly upon an aversion

to Gibbon.

'My highest ambition,' he wrote, 'is to make my history the very reverse

of Gibbon in this respect, that whereas the whole spirit of his work,

from its low morality, is hostile to religion, without speaking directly

against it, so my greatest desire would be, in my History, by its high

morals and its general tone, to be of use to the cause without actually

bringing it forward.'

These efforts were rewarded, in 1841, by the Professorship of Modern

History at Oxford. Meanwhile, he was engaged in the study of the

Sanskrit and Slavonic languages, bringing out an elaborate edition of

Thucydides, and carrying on a voluminous correspondence upon a multitude

of topics with a large circle of men of learning. At his death, his

published works, composed during such intervals as he could spare from

the management of a great public school, filled, besides a large number

of pamphlets and articles, no less than seventeen volumes. It was no

wonder that Carlyle, after a visit to Rugby, should have characterised

Dr. Arnold as a man of 'unhasting, unresting diligence'.

Mrs. Arnold, too, no doubt agreed with Carlyle. During the first eight

years of their married life, she bore him six children; and four more

were to follow. In this large and growing domestic circle his hours of

relaxation were spent. There those who had only known him in his

professional capacity were surprised to find him displaying the

tenderness and jocosity of a parent. The dignified and stern headmaster

was actually seen to dandle infants and to caracole upon the hearthrug

on all fours. Yet, we are told, 'the sense of his authority as a father

was never lost in his playfulness as a companion'. On more serious

occasions, the voice of the spiritual teacher sometimes made itself

heard. An intimate friend described how 'on a comparison having been

made in his family circle, which seemed to place St. Paul above St.

John,' the tears rushed to the Doctor's eyes and how, repeating one of

the verses from St. John, he begged that the comparison might never

again be made. The longer holidays were spent in Westmorland, where,

rambling with his offspring among the mountains, gathering wild flowers,

and pointing out the beauties of Nature, Dr. Arnold enjoyed, as he

himself would often say, 'an almost awful happiness'. Music he did not

appreciate, though he occasionally desired his eldest boy, Matthew, to

sing him the Confirmation Hymn of Dr. Hinds, to which he had become

endeared, owing to its use in Rugby Chapel. But his lack of ear was, he

considered, amply recompensed by his love of flowers: 'they are my

music,' he declared. Yet, in such a matter, he was careful to refrain

from an excess of feeling, such as, in his opinion, marked the famous

lines of Wordsworth:

'To me the meanest flower that blows can give

Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.'

He found the sentiment morbid. 'Life,' he said, 'is not long enough to

take such intense interest in objects in themselves so little.' As for

the animal world, his feelings towards it were of a very different cast.

'The whole subject,' he said, 'of the brute creation is to me one of

such painful mystery, that I dare not approach it.' The Unitarians

themselves were a less distressing thought.

Once or twice he found time to visit the Continent, and the letters and

journals recording in minute detail his reflections and impressions in

France or Italy show us that Dr. Arnold preserved, in spite of the

distractions of foreign scenes and foreign manners, his accustomed

habits of mind. Taking very little interest in works of art, he was

occasionally moved by the beauty of natural objects; but his principal

preoccupation remained with the moral aspects of things. From this point

of view, he found much to reprehend in the conduct of his own

countrymen. 'I fear,' he wrote, 'that our countrymen who live abroad are

not in the best possible moral state, however much they may do in

science or literature.' And this was unfortunate, because 'a thorough

English gentleman--Christian, manly, and enlightened--is more, I

believe, than Guizot or Sismondi could comprehend; it is a finer

specimen of human nature than any other country, I believe, could

furnish'. Nevertheless, our travellers would imitate foreign customs

without discrimination, 'as in the absurd habit of not eating fish with

a knife, borrowed from the French, who do it because they have no knives

fit for use'. Places, no less than people, aroused similar reflections.

By Pompeii, Dr. Arnold was not particularly impressed.

'There is only,' he observed, 'the same sort of interest with which one

would see the ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah, but indeed there is less. One

is not authorised to ascribe so solemn a character to the destruction of

Pompeii.'

The lake of Como moved him more profoundly. As he gazed upon the

overwhelming beauty around him, he thought of 'moral evil', and was

appalled by the contrast. 'May the sense of moral evil', he prayed, 'be

as strong in me as my delight in external beauty, for in a deep sense of

moral evil, more perhaps than in anything else, abides a saving

knowledge of God!'

His prayer was answered: Dr. Arnold was never in any danger of losing

his sense of moral evil. If the landscapes of Italy only served to

remind him of it, how could he forget it among the boys at Rugby School?

The daily sight of so many young creatures in the hands of the Evil One

filled him with agitated grief.

'When the spring and activity of youth,' he wrote, 'is altogether

unsanctified by anything pure and elevated in its desires, it becomes a

spectacle that is as dizzying and almost more morally distressing than

the shouts and gambols of a set of lunatics.'

One thing struck him as particularly strange: 'It is very startling,' he

said, 'to see so much of sin combined with so little of sorrow.' The

naughtiest boys positively seemed to enjoy themselves most. There were

moments when he almost lost faith in his whole system of education, when

he began to doubt whether some far more radical reforms than any he had

attempted might not be necessary, before the multitude of children under

his charge--shouting and gambolling, and yet plunged all the while deep

in moral evil--could ever be transformed into a set of Christian

gentlemen. But then he remembered his general principles, the conduct of

Jehovah with the Chosen People, and the childhood of the human race. No,

it was for him to make himself, as one of his pupils afterwards

described him, in the words of Bacon, 'kin to God in spirit'; he would

rule the school majestically from on high. He would deliver a series of

sermons analysing 'the six vices' by which 'great schools were

corrupted, and changed from the likeness of God's temple to that of a

den of thieves'. He would exhort, he would denounce, he would sweep

through the corridors, he would turn the pages of Facciolati's Lexicon

more imposingly than ever; and the rest he would leave to the

Praepostors in the Sixth Form.

Upon the boys in the Sixth Form, indeed, a strange burden would seem to

have fallen. Dr. Arnold himself was very well aware of this. 'I cannot

deny,' he told them in a sermon, 'that you have an anxious duty--a duty

which some might suppose was too heavy for your years'; and every term

he pointed out to them, in a short address, the responsibilities of

their position, and impressed upon them 'the enormous influence' they

possessed 'for good or for evil'. Nevertheless most youths of seventeen,

in spite of the warnings of their elders, have a singular trick of

carrying moral burdens lightly. The Doctor might preach and look grave;

but young Brooke was ready enough to preside at a fight behind the

Chapel, though he was in the Sixth, and knew that fighting was against

the rules. At their best, it may be supposed that the Praepostors

administered a kind of barbaric justice; but they were not always at

their best, and the pages of "Tom Brown's Schooldays" show us what was

no doubt the normal condition of affairs under Dr. Arnold, when the boys

in the Sixth Form were weak or brutal, and the blackguard Flashman, in

the intervals of swigging brandy-punch with his boon companions, amused

himself by toasting fags before the fire.

But there was an exceptional kind of boy, upon whom the high-pitched

exhortations of Dr. Arnold produced a very different effect. A minority

of susceptible and serious youths fell completely under his sway,

responded like wax to the pressure of his influence, and moulded their

whole lives with passionate reverence upon the teaching of their adored

master. Conspicuous among these was Arthur Clough. Having been sent to

Rugby at the age of ten, he quickly entered into every phase of school

life, though, we are told, 'a weakness in his ankles prevented him from

taking a prominent part in the games of the place'. At the age of

sixteen, he was in the Sixth Form, and not merely a Praepostor, but head

of the School House. Never did Dr. Arnold have an apter pupil. This

earnest adolescent, with the weak ankles and the solemn face, lived

entirely with the highest ends in view. He thought of nothing but moral

good, moral evil, moral influence, and moral responsibility. Some of his

early letters have been preserved, and they reveal both the intensity

with which he felt the importance of his own position, and the strange

stress of spirit under which he laboured. 'I have been in one continued

state of excitement for at least the last three years,' he wrote when he

was not yet seventeen, 'and now comes the time of exhaustion.' But he

did not allow himself to rest, and a few months later he was writing to

a schoolfellow as follows:

'I verily believe my whole being is soaked through with the wishing and

hoping and striving to do the school good, or rather to keep it up and

hinder it from falling in this, I do think, very critical time, so that

my cares and affections and conversations, thoughts, words, and deeds

look to that in voluntarily. I am afraid you will be inclined to think

this "cant" and I am conscious that even one's truest feelings, if very

frequently put out in the light, do make a bad and disagreeable

appearance; but this, however, is true, and even if I am carrying it too

far, I do not think it has made me really forgetful of my personal

friends, such as, in particular, Gell and Burbidge and Walrond, and

yourself, my dear Simpkinson.'

Perhaps it was not surprising that a young man brought up in such an

atmosphere, should have fallen a prey at Oxford, to the frenzies of

religious controversy; that he should have been driven almost out of his

wits by the ratiocinations of W. G. Ward; that he should have lost his

faith; that he should have spent the rest of his existence lamenting

that loss, both in prose and verse; and that he should have eventually

succumbed, conscientiously doing up brown paper parcels for Florence

Nightingale.

In the earlier years of his headmastership Dr. Arnold had to face a good

deal of opposition. His advanced religious views were disliked, and

there were many parents to whom his system of school government did not

commend itself. But in time this hostility melted away. Succeeding

generations of favourite pupils began to spread his fame through the

Universities. At Oxford especially, men were profoundly impressed by the

pious aims of the boys from Rugby. It was a new thing to see

undergraduates going to Chapel more often than they were obliged, and

visiting the good poor. Their reverent admiration for Dr. Arnold was no

less remarkable. Whenever two of his old pupils met, they joined in his

praises; and the sight of his picture had been known to call forth, from

one who had not even reached the Sixth, exclamations of rapture lasting

for ten minutes and filling with astonishment the young men from other

schools who happened to be present.

He became a celebrity; he became at last a great man. Rugby prospered;

its numbers rose higher than ever before; and, after thirteen years as

headmaster, Dr. Arnold began to feel that his work there was

accomplished, and that he might look forward either to other labours or,

perhaps, to a dignified retirement. But it was not to be.

His father had died suddenly at the age of fifty-three from angina

pectoris; and he himself was haunted by forebodings of an early death.

To be snatched away without a warning, to come in a moment from the

seductions of this World to the presence of Eternity--his most ordinary

actions, the most casual remarks, served to keep him in remembrance of

that dreadful possibility. When one of his little boys clapped his hands

at the thought of the approaching holidays, the Doctor gently checked

him, and repeated the story of his own early childhood; how his own

father had made him read aloud a sermon on the text 'Boast not thyself

of tomorrow"; and how, within the week, his father was dead. On the

title page of his MS. volume of sermons, he was always careful to write

the date of its commencement, leaving a blank for that of its

completion. One of his children asked him the meaning of this. 'It is

one of the most solemn things I do,' he replied, 'to write the beginning

of that sentence, and think that I may perhaps not live to finish it.'

It was noticed that in the spring of 1842 such thoughts seemed to be

even more frequently in his mind than usual. He was only in his

forty-seventh year, but he dwelt darkly on the fragility of human

existence. Towards the end of May, he began to keep a diary--a private

memorandum of his intimate communings with the Almighty. Here, evening

after evening, in the traditional language of religious devotion, he

humbled himself before God, prayed for strength and purity, and threw

himself upon the mercy of the Most High.

'Another day and another month succeed', he wrote on May 31st. 'May God

keep my mind and heart fixed on Him, and cleanse me from all sin. I

would wish to keep a watch over my tongue, as to vehement speaking and

censuring of others ...I would desire to remember my latter end to which

I am approaching ... May God keep me in the hour of death, through Jesus

Christ; and preserve me from every fear, as well as from presumption.'

On June 2nd he wrote, 'Again the day is over and I am going to rest. Oh

Lord, preserve me this night, and strengthen me to bear whatever Thou

shalt see fit to lay on me, whether pain, sickness, danger, or

distress.' On Sunday, June 5th, the reading of the newspaper aroused

'painful and solemn' reflections ... 'So much of sin and so much of

suffering in the world, as are there displayed, and no one seems able to

remedy either. And then the thought of my own private life, so full of

comforts, is very startling.' He was puzzled; but he concluded with a

prayer: 'May I be kept humble and zealous, and may God give me grace to

labour in my generation for the good of my brethren and for His Glory!'

The end of the term was approaching, and to all appearance the Doctor

was in excellent spirits. On June 11th, after a hard day's work, he

spent the evening with a friend in the discussion of various topics upon

which he often touched in his conversation the comparison of the art of

medicine in barbarous and civilised ages, the philological importance of

provincial vocabularies, and the threatening prospect of the moral

condition of the United States. Left alone, he turned to his diary.

'The day after tomorrow,' he wrote, 'is my birthday, if I am permitted

to live to see it--my forty-seventh birthday since my birth. How large a

portion of my life on earth is already passed! And then--what is to

follow this life? How visibly my outward work seems contracting and

softening away into the gentler employments of old age. In one sense how

nearly can I now say, "Vivi". And I thank God that, as far as ambition

is concerned, it is, I trust, fully mortified; I have no desire other

than to step back from my present place in the world, and not to rise to

a higher. Still there are works which, with God's permission, I would do

before the night cometh.'

Dr. Arnold was thinking of his great work on Church and State.

Early next morning he awoke with a sharp pain in his chest. The pain

increasing, a physician was sent for; and in the meantime Mrs. Arnold

read aloud to her husband the Fifty-first Psalm. Upon one of their boys

coming into the room,

'My son, thank God for me,' said Dr. Arnold; and as the boy did not at

once catch his meaning, he added, 'Thank God, Tom, for giving me this

pain; I have suffered so little pain in my life that I feel it is very

good for me. Now God has given it to me, and I do so thank Him for it.'

Then Mrs. Arnold read from the Prayer-book the 'Visitation of the Sick',

her husband listening with deep attention, and assenting with an

emphatic 'Yes' at the end of many of the sentences. When the physician

arrived, he perceived at once the gravity of the case: it was an attack

of angina pectoris. He began to prepare some laudanum, while Mrs. Arnold

went out to fetch the children. All at once, as the medical man was

bending over his glasses, there was a rattle from the bed; a convulsive

struggle followed; and, when the unhappy woman, with the children, and

all the servants, rushed into the room, Dr. Arnold had passed from his

perplexities forever.

There can be little doubt that what he had achieved justified the

prediction of the Provost of Oriel that he would 'change the face of

education all through the public schools of England'. It is true that,

so far as the actual machinery of education was concerned, Dr. Arnold

not only failed to effect a change, but deliberately adhered to the old

system. The monastic and literary conceptions of education, which had

their roots in the Middle Ages, and had been accepted and strengthened

at the revival of Learning, he adopted almost without hesitation. Under

him, the public school remained, in essentials, a conventional

establishment, devoted to the teaching of Greek and Latin grammar. Had

he set on foot reforms in these directions, it seems probable that he

might have succeeded in carrying the parents of England with him. The

moment was ripe; there was a general desire for educational changes; and

Dr. Arnold's great reputation could hardly have been resisted. As it

was, he threw the whole weight of his influence into the opposite scale,

and the ancient system became more firmly established than ever.

The changes which he did effect were of a very different nature. By

introducing morals and religion into his scheme of education, he altered

the whole atmosphere of public-school life. Henceforward the old

rough-and-tumble, which was typified by the regime of Keate at Eton,

became impossible. After Dr. Arnold, no public school could venture to

ignore the virtues of respectability. Again, by his introduction of the

prefectorial system, Dr. Arnold produced far-reaching effects--effects

which he himself, perhaps, would have found perplexing. In his day, when

the school hours were over, the boys were free to enjoy themselves as

they liked; to bathe, to fish, to ramble for long afternoons in the

country, collecting eggs or gathering flowers. 'The taste of the boys at

this period,' writes an old Rugbaean who had been under Arnold, 'leaned

strongly towards flowers'. The words have an odd look today. 'The modern

reader of "Tom Brown's Schooldays" searches in vain for any reference to

compulsory games, house colours, or cricket averages. In those days,

when boys played games they played them for pleasure; but in those days

the prefectorial system--the system which hands over the life of a

school to an oligarchy of a dozen youths of seventeen--was still in its

infancy, and had not yet borne its fruit.

Teachers and prophets have strange after-histories; and that of Dr.

Arnold has been no exception. The earnest enthusiast who strove to make

his pupils Christian gentlemen and who governed his school according to

the principles of the Old Testament, has proved to be the founder of the

worship of athletics and the worship of good form. Upon those two poles

our public schools have turned for so long that we have almost come to

believe that such is their essential nature, and that an English public

schoolboy who wears the wrong clothes and takes no interest in football,

is a contradiction in terms. Yet it was not so before Dr. Arnold; will

it always be so after him? We shall see.

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The End of General Gordon

DURING the year 1883 a solitary English gentleman was to be seen,

wandering, with a thick book under his arm, in the neighbourhood of

Jerusalem. His unassuming figure, short and slight, with its

half-gliding, half-tripping motion, gave him a boyish aspect, which

contrasted, oddly, but not unpleasantly, with the touch of grey on his

hair and whiskers. There was the same contrast--enigmatic and

attractive--between the sunburnt brick-red complexion--the hue of the

seasoned traveller--and the large blue eyes, with their look of almost

childish sincerity. To the friendly inquirer, he would explain, in a

row, soft, and very distinct voice, that he was engaged in elucidating

four questions--the site of the Crucifixion, the line of division

between the tribes of Benjamin and Judah, the identification of Gideon,

and the position of the Garden of Eden. He was also, he would add, most

anxious to discover the spot where the Ark first touched ground, after

the subsidence of the Flood: he believed, indeed, that he had solved

that problem, as a reference to some passages in the book which he was

carrying would show.

This singular person was General Gordon, and his book was the Holy

Bible.

In such complete retirement from the world and the ways of men, it might

have seemed that a life of inordinate activity had found at last a

longed-for, final peacefulness. For month after month, for an entire

year, the General lingered by the banks of the Jordan. But then the

enchantment was suddenly broken. Once more adventure claimed him; he

plunged into the whirl of high affairs; his fate was mingled with the

frenzies of Empire and the doom of peoples. And it was not in peace and

rest, but in ruin and horror, that he reached his end.

The circumstances of that tragic history, so famous, so bitterly

debated, so often and so controversially described, remain full of

suggestion for the curious examiner of the past. There emerges from

those obscure, unhappy records an interest, not merely political and

historical, but human and dramatic. One catches a vision of strange

characters, moved by mysterious impulses, interacting in queer

complication, and hurrying at last--so it almost seems--like creatures

in a puppet show to a predestined catastrophe. The characters, too, have

a charm of their own: they are curiously English. What other nation on

the face of the earth could have produced Mr. Gladstone and Sir Evelyn

Baring and Lord Hartington and General Gordon? Alike in their emphasis

and their lack of emphasis, in their eccentricity and their

conventionality, in their matter-of-factness and their romance, these

four figures seem to embody the mingling contradictions of the English

spirit. As for the mise-en-scene, it is perfectly appropriate. But

first, let us glance at the earlier adventures of the hero of the piece.

Charles George Gordon was born in 1833. His father, of Highland and

military descent, was himself a Lieutenant-General; his mother came of a

family of merchants, distinguished for their sea voyages into remote

regions of the Globe. As a boy, Charlie was remarkable for his high

spirits, pluck, and love of mischief. Destined for the Artillery, he was

sent to the Academy at Woolwich, where some other characteristics made

their appearance. On one occasion, when the cadets had been forbidden to

leave the dining-room and the senior corporal stood with outstretched

arms in the doorway to prevent their exit, Charlie Gordon put his head

down, and, butting the officer in the pit of the stomach, projected him

down a flight of stairs and through a glass door at the bottom. For this

act of insubordination he was nearly dismissed--while the captain of his

company predicted that he would never make an officer. A little later,

when he was eighteen, it came to the knowledge of the authorities that

bullying was rife at the Academy. The new-comers were questioned, and

one of them said that Charlie Gordon had hit him over the head with a

clothes-brush. He had worked well, and his record was on the whole a

good one; but the authorities took a serious view of the case, and held

back his commission for six months. It was owing to this delay that he

went into the Royal Engineers, instead of the Royal Artillery.

He was sent to Pembroke, to work at the erection of fortifications; and

at Pembroke those religious convictions, which never afterwards left

him, first gained a hold upon his mind. Under the influence of his

sister Augusta and of a 'very religious captain of the name of Drew', he

began to reflect upon his sins, look up texts, and hope for salvation.

Though he had never been confirmed--he never was confirmed--he took the

sacrament every Sunday; and he eagerly perused the Priceless Diamond,

Scott's Commentaries, and The Remains of the Rev. R. McCheyne. 'No

novels or worldly books,' he wrote to his sister, 'come up to the

Commentaries of Scott.... I, remember well when you used to get them in

numbers, and I used to laugh at them; but, thank God, it is different

with me now. I feel much happier and more contented than I used to do. I

did not like Pembroke, but now I would not wish for any prettier place.

I have got a horse and gig, and Drew and myself drive all about the

country. I hope my dear father and mother think of eternal things ...

Dearest Augusta, pray for me, I beg of you.'

He was twenty-one; the Crimean War broke out; and before the year was

over, he had managed to get himself transferred to Balaclava. During the

siege of Sebastopol he behaved with conspicuous gallantry. Upon the

declaration of peace, he was sent to Bessarabia to assist in determining

the frontier between Russia and Turkey, in accordance with the Treaty of

Paris; and upon this duty he was occupied for nearly two years. Not long

after his return home, in 1860, war was declared upon China. Captain

Gordon was dispatched to the scene of operations, but the fighting was

over before he arrived. Nevertheless, he was to remain for the next four

years in China, where he was to lay the foundations of extraordinary

renown.

Though he was too late to take part in the capture of the Taku Forts, he

was in time to witness the destruction of the Summer Palace at

Peking--the act by which Lord Elgin, in the name of European

civilisation, took vengeance upon the barbarism of the East.

The war was over; but the British Army remained in the country, until

the payment of an indemnity by the Chinese Government was completed. A

camp was formed at Tientsin, and Gordon was occupied in setting up huts

for the troops. While he was thus engaged, he had a slight attack of

smallpox. 'I am glad to say,' he told his sister, 'that this disease has

brought me back to my Saviour, and I trust in future to be a better

Christian than I have been hitherto.'

Curiously enough a similar circumstance had, more than twenty years

earlier, brought about a singular succession of events which were now

upon the point of opening the way to Gordon's first great adventure. In

1837, a village schoolmaster near Canton had been attacked by illness;

and, as in the case of Gordon, illness had been followed by a religious

revulsion. Hong-Siu-Tsuen--for such was his name--saw visions, went into

ecstasies, and entered into relations with the Deity. Shortly

afterwards, he fell in with a Methodist missionary from America, who

instructed him in the Christian religion. The new doctrine, working upon

the mystical ferment already in Hong's mind, produced a remarkable

result. He was, he declared, the prophet of God; he was more--he was the

Son of God; he was Tien Wang, the Celestial King; he was the younger

brother of Jesus. The times were propitious, and proselytes soon

gathered around him. Having conceived a grudge against the Government,

owing to his failure in an examination, Hong gave a political turn to

his teaching, which soon developed into a propaganda of rebellion

against the rule of the Manchus and the Mandarins. The authorities took

fright, attempted to suppress Hong by force, and failed. The movement

spread. By 1850 the rebels were overrunning the populous and flourishing

delta of the Yangtse Kiang, and had become a formidable force. In 1853

they captured Nankin, which was henceforth their capital. The Tien Wang,

established himself in a splendid palace, and proclaimed his new

evangel. His theogony included the wife of God, or the celestial Mother,

the wife of Jesus, or the celestial daughter-in-law, and a sister of

Jesus, whom he married to one of his lieutenants, who thus became the

celestial son-in-law; the Holy Ghost, however, was eliminated.

His mission was to root out Demons and Manchus from the face of the

earth, and to establish Taiping, the reign of eternal peace. In the

meantime, retiring into the depths of his palace, he left the further

conduct of earthly operations to his lieutenants, upon whom he bestowed

the title of 'Wangs' (kings), while he himself, surrounded by thirty

wives and one hundred concubines, devoted his energies to the spiritual

side of his mission. The Taiping Rebellion, as it came to be called, had

now reached its furthest extent. The rebels were even able to occupy,

for more than a year, the semi-European city of Shanghai. But then the

tide turned. The latent forces of the Empire gradually asserted

themselves. The rebels lost ground, their armies were defeated, and in

1859 Nankin itself was besieged, and the Celestial King trembled in his

palace. The end seemed to be at hand, when there was a sudden twist of

Fortune's wheel. The war of 1860, the invasion of China by European

armies, their march into the interior, and their occupation of Peking,

not only saved the rebels from destruction, but allowed them to recover

the greater part of what they had lost. Once more they seized upon the

provinces of the delta, once more they menaced Shanghai. It was clear

that the Imperial army was incompetent, and the Shanghai merchants

determined to provide for their own safety as best they could. They

accordingly got together a body of troops, partly Chinese and partly

European, and under European officers, to which they entrusted the

defence of the town. This small force, which, after a few preliminary

successes, received from the Chinese Government the title of the 'Ever

Victorious Army', was able to hold the rebels at bay, but it could do no

more. For two years Shanghai was in constant danger. The Taipings,

steadily growing in power, were spreading destruction far and wide. The

Ever Victorious Army was the only force capable of opposing them, and

the Ever Victorious Army was defeated more often than not. Its first

European leader had been killed; his successor quarrelled with the

Chinese Governor, Li Hung Chang, and was dismissed. At last it was

determined to ask the General at the head of the British Army of

Occupation for the loan of an officer to command the force. The English,

who had been at first inclined to favour the Taipings, on religious

grounds, were now convinced, on practical grounds, of the necessity of

suppressing them. It was in these circumstances that, early in 1863, the

command of the Ever Victorious Army was offered to Gordon. He accepted

it, received the title of General from the Chinese authorities, and

entered forthwith upon his new task. He was just thirty.

In eighteen months, he told Li Hung Chang, the business would be

finished; and he was as good as his word. The difficulties before him

were very great. A vast tract of country was in the possession of the

rebels--an area, at the lowest estimate, of 14,000 square miles with a

population of 20,000,000. For centuries this low-lying plain of the

Yangtse delta, rich in silk and tea, fertilised by elaborate irrigation,

and covered with great walled cities, had been one of the most

flourishing districts in China. Though it was now being rapidly ruined

by the depredations of the Taipings, its strategic strength was

obviously enormous. Gordon, however, with the eye of a born general,

perceived that he could convert the very feature of the country which,

on the face of it, most favoured an army on the defence--its complicated

geographical system of interlacing roads and waterways, canals, lakes

and rivers--into a means of offensive warfare. The force at his disposal

was small, but it was mobile. He had a passion for map-making, and had

already, in his leisure hours, made a careful survey of the country

round Shanghai; he was thus able to execute a series of manoeuvres which

proved fatal to the enemy. By swift marches and counter-marches, by

sudden attacks and surprises, above all by the dispatch of armed

steamboats up the circuitous waterways into positions from which they

could fall upon the enemy in reverse, he was able gradually to force

back the rebels, to cut them off piecemeal in the field, and to seize

upon their cities. But, brilliant as these operations were, Gordon's

military genius showed itself no less unmistakably in other directions.

The Ever Victorious Army, recruited from the riff-raff of Shanghai, was

an ill-disciplined, ill-organised body of about three thousand men,

constantly on the verge of mutiny, supporting itself on plunder, and, at

the slightest provocation, melting into thin air. Gordon, by sheer force

of character, established over this incoherent mass of ruffians an

extraordinary ascendancy. He drilled them with rigid severity; he put

them into a uniform, armed them systematically, substituted pay for

loot, and was even able, at last, to introduce regulations of a sanitary

kind. There were some terrible scenes, in which the General, alone,

faced the whole furious army, and quelled it: scenes of rage, desperation,

towering courage, and summary execution. Eventually he attained an

almost magical prestige. Walking at the head of his troops with nothing

but a light cane in his hand, he seemed to pass through every danger

with the scatheless equanimity of a demi-god. The Taipings themselves

were awed into a strange reverence. More than once their leaders, in a

frenzy of fear and admiration, ordered the sharp-shooters not to take

aim at the advancing figure of the faintly smiling Englishman.

It is significant that Gordon found it easier to win battles and to

crush mutineers than to keep on good terms with the Chinese authorities.

He had to act in cooperation with a large native force; and it was only

natural that the general at the head of it should grow more and more

jealous and angry as the Englishman's successes revealed more and more

clearly his own incompetence. At first, indeed, Gordon could rely upon

the support of the Governor. Li Flung Chang's experience of Europeans

had been hitherto limited to low-class adventurers, and Gordon came as a

revelation.

'It is a direct blessing from Heaven,' he noted in his diary, 'the

coming of this British Gordon.... He is superior in manner and bearing

to any of the foreigners whom I have come into contact with, and does

not show outwardly that conceit which makes most of them repugnant in my

sight.'

A few months later, after he had accompanied Gordon on a victorious

expedition, the Mandarin's enthusiasm burst forth.

'What a sight for tired eyes,' he wrote, 'what an elixir for a heavy

heart--to see this splendid Englishman fight!... If there is anything

that I admire nearly as much as the superb scholarship of Tseng Kuofan,

it is the military qualities of this fine officer. He is a glorious

fellow!' In his emotion, Li Hung Chang addressed Gordon as his brother,

declaring that he 'considered him worthy to fill the place of the

brother who is departed. Could I have said more in all the words of the

world?' Then something happened which impressed and mystified the

sensitive Chinaman.

'The Englishman's face was first filled with a deep pleasure, and then

he seemed to be thinking of something depressing and sad; for the

smile went from his mouth and there were tears in his eyes when he

thanked me for what I had said. Can it be that he has, or has had, some

great trouble in his life, and that he fights recklessly to forget it,

or that Death has no terrors for him?'

But, as time went on, Li Hung Chang's attitude began to change. 'General

Gordon,' he notes in July, 'must control his tongue, even if he lets his

mind run loose.' The Englishman had accused him of intriguing with the

Chinese general, and of withholding money due to the Ever Victorious

Army. 'Why does he not accord me the honours that are due to me, as head

of the military and civil authority in these parts?' By September, the

Governor's earlier transports have been replaced by a more judicial

frame of mind.

'With his many faults, his pride, his temper, and his never-ending

demand for money, (for one is a noble man, and in spite of all I have

said to him or about him) I will ever think most highly of him.... He is

an honest man, but difficult to get on with.'

Disagreements of this kind might perhaps have been tided over until the

end of the campaign; but an unfortunate incident suddenly led to a more

serious quarrel. Gordon's advance had been fiercely contested, but it

had been constant; he had captured several important towns; and in

October he laid siege to the city of Soo-chow, once one of the most

famous and splendid in China. In December, its fall being obviously

imminent, the Taiping leaders agreed to surrender it on condition that

their lives were spared. Gordon was a party to the agreement, and laid

special stress upon his presence with the Imperial forces as a pledge of

its fulfilment. No sooner, however, was the city surrendered than the

rebel 'Wangs' were assassinated. In his fury, it is said that Gordon

searched everywhere for Li Hung Chang with a loaded pistol in his hand.

He was convinced of the complicity of the Governor, who, on his side,

denied that he was responsible for what had happened.

'I asked him why I should plot, and go around a mountain, when a mere

order, written with five strokes of the quill, would have accomplished

the same thing. He did not answer, but he insulted me, and said he would

report my treachery, as he called it, to Shanghai and England. Let him

do so; he cannot bring the crazy Wangs back.'

The agitated Mandarin hoped to placate Gordon by a large gratuity and an

Imperial medal; but the plan was not successful.

'General Gordon,' he writes, 'called upon me in his angriest mood. He

repeated his former speeches about the Wangs. I did not attempt to argue

with him ... He refused the 10,000 taels, which I had ready for him,

and, with an oath, said that he did not want the Throne's medal. This is

showing the greatest disrespect.'

Gordon resigned his command; and it was only with the utmost reluctance

that he agreed at last to resume it. An arduous and terrible series of

operations followed; but they were successful, and by June, 1864, the

Ever Victorious Army, having accomplished its task, was disbanded. The

Imperial forces now closed round Nankin; the last hopes of the Tien Wang

had vanished. In the recesses of his seraglio, the Celestial King,

judging that the time had come for the conclusion of his mission,

swallowed gold leaf until he ascended to Heaven. In July, Nankin was

taken, the remaining chiefs were executed, and the rebellion was at an

end. The Chinese Government gave Gordon the highest rank in its military

hierarchy, and invested him with the yellow jacket and the peacock's

feather. He rejected an enormous offer of money; but he could not refuse

a great gold medal, specially struck in his honour by order of the

Emperor. At the end of the year he returned to England, where the

conqueror of the Taipings was made a Companion of the Bath.

That the English authorities should have seen fit to recognise Gordon's

services by the reward usually reserved for industrious clerks was

typical of their attitude towards him until the very end of his career.

Perhaps if he had been ready to make the most of the wave of popularity

which greeted him on his return--if he had advertised his fame and, amid

high circles, played the part of Chinese Gordon in a becoming

manner--the results would have been different. But he was by nature

farouche; his soul revolted against dinner parties and stiff shirts; and

the presence of ladies--especially of fashionable ladies--filled him

with uneasiness. He had, besides, a deeper dread of the world's

contaminations. And so, when he was appointed to Gravesend to supervise

the erection of a system of forts at the mouth of the Thames, he

remained there quietly for six years, and at last was almost forgotten.

The forts, which were extremely expensive and quite useless, occupied

his working hours; his leisure he devoted to acts of charity and to

religious contemplation. The neighbourhood was a poverty-stricken one,

and the kind Colonel, with his tripping step and simple manner, was soon

a familiar figure in it, chatting with the seamen, taking provisions to

starving families, or visiting some bedridden old woman to light her

fire. He was particularly fond of boys. Ragged street arabs and rough

sailor-lads crowded about him. They were made free of his house and

garden; they visited him in the evenings for lessons and advice; he

helped them, found them employment, corresponded with them when they

went out into the world. They were, he said, his Wangs. It was only by a

singular austerity of living that he was able to afford such a variety

of charitable expenses. The easy luxuries of his class and station were

unknown to him: his clothes verged upon the shabby; and his frugal meals

were eaten at a table with a drawer, into which the loaf and plate were

quickly swept at the approach of his poor visitors. Special occasions

demanded special sacrifices. When, during the Lancashire famine, a

public subscription was opened, finding that he had no ready money, he

remembered his Chinese medal, and, after effacing the inscription,

dispatched it as an anonymous gift.

Except for his boys and his paupers, he lived alone. In his solitude, he

ruminated upon the mysteries of the universe; and those religious

tendencies, which had already shown themselves, now became a fixed and

dominating factor in his life. His reading was confined almost entirely

to the Bible; but the Bible he read and re-read with an untiring,

unending assiduity. There, he was convinced, all truth was to be found;

and he was equally convinced that he could find it. The doubts of

philosophers, the investigations of commentators, the smiles of men of

the world, the dogmas of Churches--such things meant nothing to the

Colonel. Two facts alone were evident: there was the Bible, and there

was himself; and all that remained to be done was for him to discover

what were the Bible's instructions, and to act accordingly. In order to

make this discovery it was only necessary for him to read the Bible over

and over again; and therefore, for the rest of his life, he did so.

The faith that he evolved was mystical and fatalistic; it was also

highly unconventional. His creed, based upon the narrow foundations of

Jewish Scripture, eked out occasionally by some English evangelical

manual, was yet wide enough to ignore every doctrinal difference, and

even, at moments, to transcend the bounds of Christianity itself. The

just man was he who submitted to the Will of God, and the Will of God,

inscrutable and absolute, could be served aright only by those who

turned away from earthly desires and temporal temptations, to rest

themselves whole-heartedly upon the in-dwelling Spirit. Human beings

were the transitory embodiments of souls who had existed through an

infinite past, and would continue to exist through an infinite future.

The world was vanity; the flesh was dust and ashes.

'A man,' Gordon wrote to his sister, 'who knows not the secret, who has

not the in-dwelling of God revealed to him, is like this--[picture of a

circle with Body and Soul written within it]. He takes the promises and

curses as addressed to him as one man, and will not hear of there being

any birth before his natural birth, in any existence except with the

body he is in. The man to whom the secret (the indwelling of God) is

revealed is like this: [picture of a circle with soul and body enclosed

in two separate circles].

He applies the promises to one and the curses to the other, if

disobedient, which he must be, except the soul is enabled by God to

rule. He then sees he is not of this world; for when he speaks of

himself he quite disregards the body his soul lives in, which is

earthly.'

Such conceptions are familiar enough in the history of religious

thought: they are those of the hermit and the fakir; and it might have

been expected that, when once they had taken hold upon his mind, Gordon

would have been content to lay aside the activities of his profession,

and would have relapsed at last into the complete retirement of holy

meditation. But there were other elements in his nature which urged him

towards a very different course. He was no simple quietist. He was an

English gentleman, an officer, a man of energy and action, a lover of

danger and the audacities that defeat danger; a passionate creature,

flowing over with the self-assertiveness of independent judgment and the

arbitrary temper of command.

Whatever he might find in his pocket-Bible, it was not for such as he to

dream out his days in devout obscurity. But, conveniently enough, he

found nothing in his pocket-Bible indicating that he should. What he did

find was that the Will of God was inscrutable and absolute; that it was

man's duty to follow where God's hand led; and, if God's hand led

towards violent excitements and extraordinary vicissitudes, that it was

not only futile, it was impious to turn another way. Fatalism is always

apt to be a double-edged philosophy; for while, on the one hand, it

reveals the minutest occurrences as the immutable result of a rigid

chain of infinitely predestined causes, on the other, it invests the

wildest incoherences of conduct or of circumstance with the sanctity of

eternal law. And Gordon's fatalism was no exception. The same doctrine

that led him to dally with omens, to search for prophetic texts, and to

append, in brackets, the apotropaic initials D.V. after every statement

in his letters implying futurity, led him also to envisage his moods and

his desires, his passing reckless whims and his deep unconscious

instincts, as the mysterious manifestations of the indwelling God. That

there was danger lurking in such a creed he was very well aware. The

grosser temptations of the world--money and the vulgar attributes of

power--had, indeed, no charms for him; but there were subtler and more

insinuating allurements which it was not so easy to resist. More than

one observer declared that ambition was, in reality, the essential

motive in his life: ambition, neither for wealth nor titles, but for

fame and influence, for the swaying of multitudes, and for that kind of

enlarged and intensified existence 'where breath breathes most even in

the mouths of men'. Was it so? In the depths of Gordon's soul there were

intertwining contradictions--intricate recesses where egoism and

renunciation melted into one another, where the flesh lost itself in the

spirit, and the spirit in the flesh. What was the Will of God? The

question, which first became insistent during his retirement at

Gravesend, never afterwards left him; it might almost be said that he

spent the remainder of his life in searching for the answer to it. In

all his Odysseys, in all his strange and agitated adventures, a day

never passed on which he neglected the voice of eternal wisdom as it

spoke through the words of Paul or Solomon, of Jonah or Habakkuk. He

opened his Bible, he read, and then he noted down his reflections upon

scraps of paper, which, periodically pinned together, he dispatched to

one or other of his religious friends, and particularly his sister

Augusta. The published extracts from these voluminous outpourings lay

bare the inner history of Gordon's spirit, and reveal the pious

visionary of Gravesend in the restless hero of three continents.

His seclusion came to an end in a distinctly providential manner. In

accordance with a stipulation in the Treaty of Paris, an international

commission had been appointed to improve the navigation of the Danube;

and Gordon, who had acted on a similar body fifteen years earlier, was

sent out to represent Great Britain. At Constantinople, he chanced to

meet the Egyptian minister, Nubar Pasha. The Governorship of the

Equatorial Provinces of the Sudan was about to fall vacant; and Nubar

offered the post to Gordon, who accepted it.

'For some wise design,' he wrote to his sister, 'God turns events one

way or another, whether man likes it or not, as a man driving a horse

turns it to right or left without consideration as to whether the horse

likes that way or not. To be happy, a man must be like a well-broken,

willing horse, ready for anything. Events will go as God likes.'

And then followed six years of extraordinary, desperate, unceasing, and

ungrateful labour. The unexplored and pestilential region of Equatoria,

stretching southwards to the Great Lakes and the sources of the Nile,

had been annexed to Egypt by the Khedive Ismail, who, while he

squandered his millions on Parisian ballet-dancers, dreamt strange

dreams of glory and empire. Those dim tracts of swamp and forest in

Central Africa were--so he declared--to be 'opened up'; they were to

receive the blessings of civilisation, they were to become a source of

eternal honour to himself and Egypt. The slave-trade, which flourished

there, was to be put down; the savage inhabitants were to become

acquainted with freedom, justice, and prosperity. Incidentally, a

government monopoly in ivory was to be established, and the place was to

be made a paying concern. Ismail, hopelessly in debt to a horde of

European creditors, looked to Europe to support him in his schemes.

Europe, and, in particular, England, with her passion for extraneous

philanthropy, was not averse. Sir Samuel Baker became the first Governor

of Equatoria, and now Gordon was to carry on the good work. In such

circumstances it was only natural that Gordon should consider himself a

special instrument in God's band. To put his disinterestedness beyond

doubt, he reduced his salary, which had been fixed at L10,000, to

L2,000. He took over his new duties early in 1874, and it was not long

before he had a first hint of disillusionment. On his way up the Nile,

he was received in state at Khartoum by the Egyptian Governor-General of

the Sudan, his immediate official superior.

The function ended in a prolonged banquet, followed by a mixed ballet of

soldiers and completely naked young women, who danced in a circle, beat

time with their feet, and accompanied their gestures with a curious

sound of clucking. At last the Austrian Consul, overcome by the

exhilaration of the scene, flung himself in a frenzy among the dancers;

the Governor-General, shouting with delight, seemed about to follow

suit, when Gordon abruptly left the room, and the party broke up in

confusion.

When, 1,500 miles to the southward, Gordon reached the seat of his

government, and the desolation of the Tropics closed over him, the

agonising nature of his task stood fully revealed. For the next three

years he struggled with enormous difficulties--with the confused and

horrible country, the appalling climate, the maddening insects and the

loathsome diseases, the indifference of subordinates and superiors, the

savagery of the slave-traders, and the hatred of the inhabitants. One by

one the small company of his European staff succumbed. With a few

hundred Egyptian soldiers he had to suppress insurrections, make roads,

establish fortified posts, and enforce the government monopoly of ivory.

All this he accomplished; he even succeeded in sending enough money to

Cairo to pay for the expenses of the expedition. But a deep gloom had

fallen upon his spirit. When, after a series of incredible obstacles had

been overcome, a steamer was launched upon the unexplored Albert Nyanza,

he turned his back upon the lake, leaving the glory of its navigation to

his Italian lieutenant, Gessi. 'I wish,' he wrote, 'to give a practical

proof of what I think regarding the inordinate praise which is given to

an explorer.' Among his distresses and self-mortifications, he loathed

the thought of all such honours, and remembered the attentions of

English society with a snarl.

'When, D.V., I get home, I do not dine out. My reminiscences of these

lands will not be more pleasant to me than the China ones. What I shall

have done, will be what I have done. Men think giving dinners is

conferring a favour on you ... Why not give dinners to those who need

them?'

No! His heart was set upon a very different object.

'To each is allotted a distinct work, to each a destined goal; to some

the seat at the right hand or left hand of the Saviour. (It was not His

to give; it was already given--Matthew xx, 23. Again, Judas went to "HIS

OWN PLACE"--Acts i, 25.) It is difficult for the flesh to accept: "Ye

are dead, ye have naught to do with the world". How difficult for anyone

to be circumcised from the world, to be as indifferent to its pleasures,

its sorrows, and its comforts as a corpse is! That is to know the

resurrection.'

But the Holy Bible was not his only solace. For now, under the parching

African sun, we catch glimpses, for the first time, of Gordon's hand

stretching out towards stimulants of a more material quality. For months

together, we are told, he would drink nothing but pure water; and then

... water that was not so pure. In his fits of melancholy, he would shut

himself up in his tent for days at a time, with a hatchet and a flag

placed at the door to indicate that he was not to be disturbed for any

reason whatever; until at last the cloud would lift, the signals would

be removed, and the Governor would reappear, brisk and cheerful.

During, one of these retirements, there was grave danger of a native

attack upon the camp. Colonel Long, the Chief of Staff, ventured, after

some hesitation, to ignore the flag and hatchet, and to enter the

forbidden tent. He found Gordon seated at a table, upon which were an

open Bible and an open bottle of brandy. Long explained the

circumstances, but could obtain no answer beyond the abrupt words--'You

are commander of the camp'--and was obliged to retire, nonplussed, to

deal with the situation as best he could. On the following morning,

Gordon, cleanly shaven, and in the full-dress uniform of the Royal

Engineers, entered Long's hut with his usual tripping step, exclaiming

'Old fellow, now don't be angry with me. I was very low last night.

Let's have a good breakfast--a little b. and s. Do you feel up to it?'

And, with these veering moods and dangerous restoratives, there came an

intensification of the queer and violent elements in the temper of the

man.

His eccentricities grew upon him. He found it more and more

uncomfortable to follow the ordinary course. Official routine was an

agony to him. His caustic and satirical humour expressed itself in a

style that astounded government departments. While he jibed at his

superiors, his subordinates learned to dread the explosions of his

wrath. There were moments when his passion became utterly ungovernable;

and the gentle soldier of God, who had spent the day in quoting texts

for the edification of his sister, would slap the face of his Arab

aide-de-camp in a sudden access of fury, or set upon his Alsatian

servant and kick him until he screamed.

At the end of three years, Gordon resigned his post in Equatoria, and

prepared to return home. But again Providence intervened: the Khedive

offered him, as an inducement to remain in the Egyptian service, a

position of still higher consequence--the Governor-Generalship of the

whole Sudan; and Gordon once more took up his task. Another three years

were passed in grappling with vast revolting provinces, with the

ineradicable iniquities of the slave-trade, and with all the

complications of weakness and corruption incident to an oriental

administration extending over almost boundless tracts of savage

territory which had never been effectively subdued. His headquarters

were fixed in the palace at Khartoum; but there were various interludes

in his government. Once, when the Khedive's finances had become

peculiarly embroiled, he summoned Gordon to Cairo to preside over a

commission which should set matters to rights. Gordon accepted the post,

but soon found that his situation was untenable. He was between the

devil and the deep sea--between the unscrupulous cunning of the Egyptian

Pashas, and the immeasurable immensity of the Khedive's debts to his

European creditors. The Pashas were anxious to use him as a respectable

mask for their own nefarious dealings; and the representatives of the

European creditors, who looked upon him as an irresponsible intruder,

were anxious simply to get rid of him as soon as they could. One of

these representatives was Sir Evelyn Baring, whom Gordon now met for the

first time. An immediate antagonism flashed out between the two men. But

their hostility had no time to mature; for Gordon, baffled on all sides,

and deserted even by the Khedive, precipitately returned to his

Governor-Generalship. Whatever else Providence might have decreed, it

had certainly not decided that he should be a financier.

His tastes and his talents were indeed of a very different kind. In his

absence, a rebellion had broken out in Darfur--one of the vast outlying

provinces of his government--where a native chieftain, Zobeir, had

erected, on a basis of slave-traffic, a dangerous military power. Zobeir

himself had been lured to Cairo, where he was detained in a state of

semi-captivity; but his son, Suleiman, ruled in his stead, and was now

defying the Governor-General. Gordon determined upon a hazardous stroke.

He mounted a camel, and rode, alone, in the blazing heat, across

eighty-five miles of desert, to Suleiman's camp. His sudden apparition

dumbfounded the rebels; his imperious bearing overawed them; he

signified to them that in two days they must disarm and disperse; and

the whole host obeyed. Gordon returned to Khartoum in triumph. But he

had not heard the last of Suleiman. Flying southwards from Darfur to the

neighbouring province of Bahr-el-Ghazal, the young man was soon once

more at the head of a formidable force. A prolonged campaign of extreme

difficulty and danger followed. Eventually, Gordon, summoned again to

Cairo, was obliged to leave to Gessi the task of finally crushing the

revolt. After a brilliant campaign, Gessi forced Suleiman to surrender,

and then shot him as a rebel. The deed was to exercise a curious

influence upon Gordon's fate. Though Suleiman had been killed and his

power broken, the slave-trade still flourished in the Sudan. Gordon's

efforts to suppress it resembled the palliatives of an empiric treating

the superficial symptoms of some profound constitutional disease. The

root of the malady lay in the slave-markets of Cairo and Constantinople:

the supply followed the demand. Gordon, after years of labour, might

here and there stop up a spring or divert a tributary, but, somehow or

other the waters would reach the river-bed. In the end, he himself came

to recognise this. 'When you have got the ink that has soaked into

blotting-paper out of it,' he said, 'then slavery will cease in these

lands.' And yet he struggled desperately on; it was not for him to

murmur. 'I feel my own weakness, and look to Him who is Almighty, and I

leave the issue without inordinate care to Him.'

Relief came at last. The Khedive Ismail was deposed; and Gordon felt at

liberty to send in his resignation. Before he left Egypt, however, he

was to experience yet one more remarkable adventure. At his own request,

he set out on a diplomatic mission to the Negus of Abyssinia. The

mission was a complete failure. The Negus was intractable, and, when his

bribes were refused, furious. Gordon was ignominiously dismissed; every

insult was heaped on him; he was arrested, and obliged to traverse the

Abyssinian Mountains in the depth of winter under the escort of a savage

troop of horse. When, after great hardships and dangers, he reached

Cairo, he found the whole official world up in arms against him. The

Pashas had determined at last that they had no further use for this

honest and peculiar Englishman. It was arranged that one of his

confidential dispatches should be published in the newspapers;

naturally, it contained indiscretions; there was a universal outcry--the

man was insubordinate, and mad. He departed under a storm of obloquy. It

seemed impossible that he should ever return to Egypt. On his way home

he stopped in Paris, saw the English Ambassador, Lord Lyons, and

speedily came into conflict with him over Egyptian affairs. There ensued

a heated correspondence, which was finally closed by a letter from

Gordon, ending as follows:

'I have some comfort in thinking that in ten or fifteen years' time it

will matter little to either of us. A black box, six feet six by three

feet wide, will then contain all that is left of Ambassador, or Cabinet

Minister, or of your humble and obedient servant.'

He arrived in England early in 1880 ill and exhausted; and it might have

been supposed that after the terrible activities of his African exile he

would have been ready to rest. But the very opposite was the case; the

next three years were the most momentous of his life. He hurried from

post to post, from enterprise to enterprise, from continent to

continent, with a vertiginous rapidity. He accepted the Private

Secretaryship to Lord Ripon, the new Viceroy of India, and, three days

after his arrival at Bombay, he resigned. He had suddenly realised that

he was not cut out for a Private Secretary, when, on an address being

sent in from some deputation, he was asked to say that the Viceroy had

read it with interest. 'You know perfectly,' he said to Lord William

Beresford, 'that Lord Ripon has never read it, and I can't say that sort

of thing; so I will resign, and you take in my resignation.' He

confessed to Lord William that the world was not big enough for him,

that there was 'no king or country big enough'; and then he added,

hitting him on the shoulder, 'Yes, that is flesh, that is what I hate,

and what makes me wish to die.'

Two days later, he was off for Pekin. 'Every one will say I am mad,'

were his last words to Lord William Beresford; 'but you say I am not.'

The position in China was critical; war with Russia appeared to be

imminent; and Gordon had been appealed to in order to use his influence

on the side of peace. He was welcomed by many old friends of former

days, among them Li Hung Chang, whose diplomatic views coincided with

his own. Li's diplomatic language, however, was less unconventional. In

an interview with the Ministers, Gordon's expressions were such that the

interpreter shook with terror, upset a cup of tea, and finally refused

to translate the dreadful words; upon which Gordon snatched up a

dictionary, and, with his finger on the word 'idiocy', showed it to the

startled Mandarins. A few weeks later, Li Hung Chang was in power, and

peace was assured. Gordon had spent two and a half days in Pekin, and

was whirling through China, when a telegram arrived from the home

authorities, who viewed his movements with uneasiness, ordering him to

return at once to England. 'It did not produce a twitter in me,' he

wrote to his sister; 'I died long ago, and it will not make any

difference to me; I am prepared to follow the unrolling of the scroll.'

The world, perhaps, was not big enough for him; and yet how clearly he

recognised that he was 'a poor insect!' 'My heart tells me that, and I

am glad of it.'

On his return to England, he telegraphed to the Government of the Cape

of Good Hope, which had become involved in a war with the Basutos,

offering his services; but his telegram received no reply. Just then,

Sir Howard Elphinstone was appointed to the command of the Royal

Engineers in Mauritius. It was a thankless and insignificant post; and,

rather than accept it, Elphinstone was prepared to retire from the

Army--unless some other officer could be induced, in return for L800, to

act as his substitute. Gordon, who was an old friend, agreed to

undertake the work upon one condition: that he should receive nothing

from Elphinstone; and accordingly, he spent the next year in that remote

and unhealthy island, looking after the barrack repairs and testing the

drains.

While he was thus engaged, the Cape Government, whose difficulties had

been increasing, changed its mind, and early in 1882, begged for

Gordon's help. Once more he was involved in great affairs: a new field

of action opened before him; and then, in a moment, there was another

shift of the kaleidoscope, and again he was thrown upon the world.

Within a few weeks, after a violent quarrel with the Cape authorities,

his mission had come to an end. What should he do next? To what remote

corner or what enormous stage, to what self-sacrificing drudgeries or

what resounding exploits, would the hand of God lead him now? He waited,

in an odd hesitation. He opened the Bible, but neither the prophecies of

Hosea nor the epistles to Timothy gave him any advice. The King of the

Belgians asked if he would be willing to go to the Congo. He was

perfectly willing; he would go whenever the King of the Belgians sent

for him; his services, however, were not required yet. It was at this

juncture that he betook himself to Palestine. His studies there were

embodied in a correspondence with the Rev. Mr. Barnes, filling over

2,000 pages of manuscript--a correspondence which was only put an end to

when, at last, the summons from the King of the Belgians came. He

hurried back to England; but it was not to the Congo that he was being

led by the hand of God.

Gordon's last great adventure, like his first, was occasioned by a

religious revolt. At the very moment when, apparently forever, he was

shaking the dust of Egypt from his feet, Mahommed Ahmed was starting

upon his extraordinary career in the Sudan. The time was propitious for

revolutions. The effete Egyptian Empire was hovering upon the verge of

collapse. The enormous territories of the Sudan were seething with

discontent. Gordon's administration had, by its very vigour, only helped

to precipitate the inevitable disaster. His attacks upon the

slave-trade, his establishment of a government monopoly in ivory, his

hostility to the Egyptian officials, had been so many shocks, shaking to

its foundations the whole rickety machine. The result of all his efforts

had been, on the one hand, to fill the most powerful classes in the

community--the dealers in slaves and, ivory--with a hatred of the

government, and on the other to awaken among the mass of the inhabitants

a new perception of the dishonesty and incompetence of their Egyptian

masters. When, after Gordon's removal, the rule of the Pashas once more

asserted itself over the Sudan, a general combustion became inevitable:

the first spark would set off the blaze. Just then it happened that

Mahommed Ahmed, the son of an insignificant priest in Dongola, having

quarrelled with the Sheikh from whom he was receiving religious

instruction, set up as an independent preacher, with his headquarters at

Abba Island, on the Nile, 150 miles above Khartoum. Like Hong-siu-tsuen,

he began as a religious reformer, and ended as a rebel king. It was his

mission, he declared, to purge the true Faith of its worldliness and

corruptions, to lead the followers of the prophet into the paths of

chastity, simplicity, and holiness; with the puritanical zeal of a

Calvin, be denounced junketings and merrymakings, songs and dances, lewd

living and all the delights of the flesh. He fell into trances, he saw

visions, he saw the prophet and Jesus, and the Angel Izrail accompanying

him and watching over him forever. He prophesied and performed miracles,

and his fame spread through the land.

There is an ancient tradition in the Mohammedan world, telling of a

mysterious being, the last in succession of the twelve holy Imams, who,

untouched by death and withdrawn into the recesses of a mountain, was

destined, at the appointted hour, to come forth again among men. His

title was the Mahdi, the guide; some believed that he would be the

forerunner of the Messiah; others believed that he would be Christ

himself. Already various Mahdis had made their appearance; several had

been highly successful, and two, in medieval times, had founded

dynasties in Egypt. But who could tell whether all these were not

impostors? Might not the twelfth Imam be still waiting, in mystical

concealment, ready to emerge, at any moment, at the bidding of God?

There were signs by which the true Mahdi might be recognised--unmistakable

signs, if one could but read them aright. He must be of the family of

the prophet; he must possess miraculous powers of no common kind; and

his person must be overflowing with a peculiar sanctity. The pious

dwellers beside those distant waters, where holy men by dint of a

constant repetition of one of the ninety-nine names of God, secured the

protection of guardian angels, and where groups of devotees, shaking

their heads with a violence which would unseat the reason of less

athletic worshippers, attained to an extraordinary beatitude, heard with

awe of the young preacher whose saintliness was almost more than mortal

and whose miracles brought amazement to the mind. Was he not also of the

family of the prophet? He himself had said so, and who would disbelieve

the holy man? When he appeared in person, every doubt was swept away.

There was a strange splendour in his presence, an overpowering passion

in the torrent of his speech. Great was the wickedness of the people,

and great was their punishment! Surely their miseries were a visible

sign of the wrath of the Lord. They had sinned, and the cruel tax

gatherers had come among them, and the corrupt governors, and all the

oppressions of the Egyptians. Yet these things, 'Too, should have an

end. The Lord would raise up his chosen deliverer; the hearts of the

people would be purified, and their enemies would be laid low. The

accursed Egyptian would be driven from the land. Let the faithful take

heart and make ready. How soon might not the long-predestined hour

strike, when the twelfth Imam, the guide, the Mahdi, would reveal

himself to the world?' In that hour, the righteous 'Would triumph and

the guilty be laid low forever.' Such was the teaching of Mohammed

Ahmed. A band of enthusiastic disciples gathered round him, eagerly

waiting for the revelation which would crown their hopes. At last, the

moment came. One evening, at Abba Island, taking aside the foremost of

his followers, the Master whispered the portentous news. He was the

Mahdi.

The Egyptian Governor-General at Khartoum, hearing that a religious

movement was afoot, grew disquieted, and dispatched an emissary to Abba

Island to summon the impostor to his presence. The emissary was

courteously received. Mohammed Ahmed, he said, must come at once to

Khartoum. 'Must!' exclaimed the Mahdi, starting to his feet, with a

strange look in his eyes. The look was so strange that the emissary

thought it advisable to cut short the interview and to return to

Khartoum empty-handed. Thereupon, the Governor-General sent 200 soldiers

to seize the audacious rebel by force. With his handful of friends, the

Mahdi fell upon the soldiers and cut them to pieces. The news spread

like wild-fire through the country: the Mahdi had arisen, the Egyptians

were destroyed. But it was clear to the little band of enthusiasts at

Abba Island that their position on the river was no longer tenable. The

Mahdi, deciding upon a second Hegira, retreated south-westward, into the

depths of Kordofan.

The retreat was a triumphal progress. The country, groaning under alien

misgovernment and vibrating with religious excitement, suddenly found in

this rebellious prophet a rallying-point, a hero, a deliverer. And now

another element was added to the forces of insurrection. The Baggara

tribes of Kordofan, cattle-owners and slave-traders, the most warlike

and vigorous of the inhabitants of the Sudan, threw in their lot with

the Mahdi. Their powerful Emirs, still smarting from the blows of

Gordon, saw that the opportunity for revenge had come. A holy war was

proclaimed against the Egyptian misbelievers. The followers of the

Mahdi, dressed, in token of a new austerity of living, in the 'jibbeh',

or white smock of coarse cloth, patched with variously shaped and

coloured patches, were rapidly organised into a formidable army. Several

attacks from Khartoum were repulsed; and at last, the Mahdi felt strong

enough to advance against the enemy. While his lieutenants led

detachments into the vast provinces lying to the west and the

south--Darfur and Bahr-el-Ghazal--he himself marched upon El Obeid, the

capital of Kordofan. It was in vain that reinforcements were hurried

from Khartoum to the assistance of the garrison: there was some severe

fighting; the town was completely cut off; and, after a six months'

siege, it surrendered. A great quantity of guns and ammunition and

L100,000 in spices fell into the hands of the Mahdi. He was master of

Kordofan: he was at the head of a great army; he was rich; he was

worshipped. A dazzling future opened before him. No possibility seemed

too remote, no fortune too magnificent. A vision of universal empire

hovered before his eyes. Allah, whose servant he was, who had led him

thus far, would lead him onward still, to the glorious end.

For some months he remained at El Obeid, consolidating his dominion. In

a series of circular letters, he described his colloquies with the

Almighty and laid down the rule of living which his followers were to

pursue. The faithful, under pain of severe punishment, were to return to

the ascetic simplicity of ancient times. A criminal code was drawn up,

meting out executions, mutilations, and floggings with a barbaric zeal.

The blasphemer was to be instantly hanged, the adulterer was to be

scourged with whips of rhinoceros hide, the thief was to have his right

hand and his left foot hacked off in the marketplace. No more were

marriages to be celebrated with pomp and feasting, no more was the

youthful warrior to swagger with flowing hair; henceforth, the believer

must banquet on dates and milk, and his head must be kept shaved. Minor

transgressions were punished by confiscation of property or by

imprisonment and chains. But the rhinoceros whip was the favourite

instrument of chastisement. Men were flogged for drinking a glass of

wine, they were flogged for smoking; if they swore, they received eighty

lashes for every expletive; and after eighty lashes it was a common

thing to die. Before long, flogging grew to be so everyday an incident

that the young men made a game of it, as a test of their endurance of

pain.

With this Spartan ferocity there was mingled the glamour and the mystery

of the East. The Mahdi himself, his four Khalifas, and the principal

Emirs, masters of sudden riches, surrounded themselves with slaves and

women, with trains of horses and asses, with body guards and glittering

arms. There were rumours of debaucheries in high places--of the Mahdi,

forgetful of his own ordinances, revelling in the recesses of his harem,

and quaffing date syrup mixed with ginger out of the silver cups looted

from the church of the Christians. But that imposing figure had only to

show itself for the tongue of scandal to be stilled. The tall,

broad-shouldered, majestic man, with the dark face and black beard and

great eyes--who could doubt that he was the embodiment of a superhuman

power? Fascination dwelt in every movement, every glance. The eyes,

painted with antimony, flashed extraordinary fires; the exquisite smile

revealed, beneath the vigorous lips, white upper teeth with a V-shaped

space between them--the certain sign of fortune. His turban was folded

with faultless art, his jibbeh, speckless, was perfumed with

sandal-wood, musk, and attar of roses. He was at once all courtesy and

all command. Thousands followed him, thousands prostrated themselves

before him; thousands, when he lifted up his voice in solemn worship,

knew that the heavens were opened and that they had come near to God.

Then all at once the onbeia--the elephant's-tusk trumpet--would give out

its enormous sound. The nahas--the brazen wardrums--would summon, with

their weird rolling, the whole host to arms. The green flag and the red

flag and the black flag would rise over the multitude. The great army

would move forward, coloured, glistening, dark, violent, proud,

beautiful. The drunkenness, the madness of religion would blaze on every

face; and the Mahdi, immovable on his charger, would let the scene grow

under his eyes in silence.

El Obeid fell in January, 1883. Meanwhile, events of the deepest

importance had occurred in Egypt. The rise of Arabi had synchronised

with that of the Mahdi. Both movements were nationalist; both were

directed against alien rulers who had shown themselves unfit to rule.

While the Sudanese were shaking off the yoke of Egypt, the Egyptians

themselves grew impatient of their own masters--the Turkish and

Circassian Pashas who filled with their incompetence all the high

offices of state. The army led by Ahmed Arabi, a Colonel of fellah

origin, mutinied, the Khedive gave way, and it seemed as if a new order

were about to be established. A new order was indeed upon the point of

appearing: but it was of a kind undreamt of in Arabi's philosophy. At

the critical moment, the English Government intervened. An English fleet

bombarded Alexandria, an English army landed under Lord Wolseley, and

defeated Arabi and his supporters at Tel-el-kebir. The rule of the

Pashas was nominally restored; but henceforth, in effect, the English

were masters of Egypt.

Nevertheless, the English themselves were slow to recognise this fact:

their Government had intervened unwillingly; the occupation of the

country was a merely temporary measure; their army was to be withdrawn

as soon as a tolerable administration had been set up. But a tolerable

administration, presided over by the Pashas, seemed long in coming, and

the English army remained. In the meantime, the Mahdi had entered El

Obeid, and his dominion was rapidly spreading over the greater part of

the Sudan.

Then a terrible catastrophe took place. The Pashas, happy once more in

Cairo, pulling the old strings and growing fat over the old flesh-pots,

decided to give the world an unmistakable proof of their renewed vigour.

They would tolerate the insurrection in the Sudan no longer; they would

destroy the Mahdi, reduce his followers to submission, and re-establish

their own beneficent rule over the whole country. To this end they

collected together an army of 10,000 men, and placed it under the

command of Colonel Hicks, a retired English officer. He was ordered to

advance and suppress the rebellion. In these proceedings the English

Government refused to take any part. Unable, or unwilling, to realise

that, so long as there was an English army in Egypt they could not avoid

the responsibilities of supreme power, they declared that the domestic

policy of the Egyptian administration was no concern of theirs. It was a

fatal error--an error which they themselves, before many weeks were

over, were to be forced by the hard logic of events to admit. The

Pashas, left to their own devices, mismanaged the Hicks expedition to

their hearts' content. The miserable troops, swept together from the

relics of Arabi's disbanded army, were dispatched to Khartoum in chains.

After a month's drilling, they were pronounced to be fit to attack the

fanatics of the Sudan. Colonel Hicks was a brave man; urged on by the

authorities in Cairo, he shut his eyes to the danger ahead of him, and

marched out from Khartoum in the direction of El Obeid at the beginning

of September, 1883. Abandoning his communications, he was soon deep in

the desolate wastes of Kordofan. As he advanced, his difficulties

increased; the guides were treacherous, the troops grew exhausted, the

supply of water gave out. He pressed on, and at last, on November 5th,

not far from El Obeid, the harassed, fainting, almost desperate army

plunged into a vast forest of gumtrees and mimosa scrub. There was a

sudden, appalling yell; the Mahdi, with 40,000 of his finest men, sprang

from their ambush. The Egyptians were surrounded, and immediately

overpowered. It was not a defeat, but an annihilation. Hicks and his

European staff were slaughtered; the whole army was slaughtered; 300

wounded wretches crept away into the forest.

The consequences of this event were felt in every part of the Sudan. To

the westward, in Darfur, the Governor, Slatin Pasha, after a prolonged

and valiant resistance, was forced to surrender, and the whole province

fell into the hands of the rebels. Southwards, in the Bahr-el-Ghazal,

Lupton Bey was shut up in a remote stronghold, while the country was

overrun. The Mahdi's triumphs were beginning to penetrate even into the

tropical regions of Equatoria; the tribes were rising, and Emir Pasha

was preparing to retreat towards the Great Lakes. On the East, Osman

Digna pushed the insurrection right up to the shores of the Red Sea and

laid siege to Suakin. Before the year was over, with the exception of a

few isolated and surrounded garrisons, the Mahdi was absolute lord of a

territory equal to the combined area of Spain, France, and Germany; and

his victorious armies were rapidly closing round Khartoum.

When the news of the Hicks disaster reached Cairo, the Pashas calmly

announced that they would collect another army of 10,000 men, and again

attack the Mahdi; but the English Government understood at last the

gravity of the case. They saw that a crisis was upon them, and that they

could no longer escape the implications of their position in Egypt. What

were they to do? Were they to allow the Egyptians to become more and

more deeply involved in a ruinous, perhaps ultimately a fatal, war with

the Mahdi? And, if not, what steps were they to take?

A small minority of the party then in power in England--the Liberal

Party--were anxious to withdraw from Egypt altogether and at once. On

the other hand, another and a more influential minority, with

representatives in the Cabinet, were in favour of a more active

intervention in Egyptian affairs--of the deliberate use of the power of

England to give to Egypt internal stability and external security; they

were ready, if necessary, to take the field against the Mahdi with

English troops. But the great bulk of the party, and the Cabinet, with

Mr. Gladstone at their head, preferred a middle course. Realising the

impracticality of an immediate withdrawal, they were nevertheless

determined to remain in Egypt not a moment longer than was necessary,

and, in the meantime, to interfere as little as possible in Egyptian

affairs.

From a campaign in the Sudan conducted by an English army they were

altogether averse. If, therefore, the English army was not to be used,

and the Egyptian army was not fit to be used against the Mahdi, it

followed that any attempt to reconquer the Sudan must be abandoned; the

remaining Egyptian troops must be withdrawn, and in future military

operations must be limited to those of a strictly defensive kind. Such

was the decision of the English Government. Their determination was

strengthened by two considerations: in the first place, they saw that

the Mahdi's rebellion was largely a nationalist movement, directed

against an alien power, and, in the second place, the policy of

withdrawal from the Sudan was the policy of their own representative in

Egypt, Sir Evelyn Baring, who had lately been appointed Consul-General

at Cairo. There was only one serious obstacle in the way--the attitude

of the Pashas at the head of the Egyptian Government. The infatuated old

men were convinced that they would have better luck next time, that

another army and another Hicks would certainly destroy the Mahdi, and

that, even if the Mahdi were again victorious, yet another army and yet

another Hicks would no doubt be forthcoming, and that THEY would do the

trick, or, failing that ... but they refused to consider eventualities

any further. In the face of such opposition, the English Government,

unwilling as they were to interfere, saw that there was no choice open

to them but to exercise pressure. They therefore instructed Sir Evelyn

Baring, in the event of the Egyptian Government refusing to withdraw

from the Sudan, to insist upon the Khedive's appointing other Ministers

who would be willing to do so.

Meanwhile, not only the Government, but the public in England were

beginning to realise the alarming nature of the Egyptian situation. It

was some time before the details of the Hicks expedition were fully

known, but when they were, and when the appalling character of the

disaster was understood, a thrill of horror ran through the country. The

newspapers became full of articles on the Sudan, of personal

descriptions of the Mahdi, of agitated letters from colonels and

clergymen demanding vengeance, and of serious discussions of future

policy in Egypt. Then, at the beginning of the new year, alarming

messages began to arrive from Khartoum. Colonel Coetlogon, who was in

command of the Egyptian troops, reported a menacing concentration of the

enemy. Day by day, hour by hour, affairs grew worse. The Egyptians were

obviously outnumbered: they could not maintain themselves in the field;

Khartoum was in danger; at any moment, its investment might be complete.

And, with Khartoum once cut off from communication with Egypt, what

might not happen? Colonel Coetlogon began to calculate how long the city

would hold out. Perhaps it could not resist the Mahdi for a month,

perhaps for more than a month; but he began to talk of the necessity of

a speedy retreat. It was clear that a climax was approaching, and that

measures must be taken to forestall it at once. Accordingly, Sir Evelyn

Baring, on receipt of final orders from England, presented an ultimatum

to the Egyptian Government: the Ministry must either sanction the

evacuation of the Sudan, or it must resign. The Ministry was obstinate,

and, on January 7th, 1884, it resigned, to be replaced by a more pliable

body of Pashas. On the same day, General Gordon arrived at Southampton.

He was over fifty, and he was still, by the world's measurements, an

unimportant man. In spite of his achievements, in spite of a certain

celebrity--for 'Chinese Gordon' was still occasionally spoken of--he was

unrecognised and almost unemployed.

He had spent a lifetime in the dubious services of foreign governments,

punctuated by futile drudgeries at home; and now, after a long idleness,

he had been sent for--to do what?--to look after the Congo for the King

of the Belgians. At his age, even if he survived the work and the

climate, he could hardly look forward to any subsequent appointment; he

would return from the Congo, old and worn out, to a red-brick villa and

extinction. Such were General Gordon's prospects on January 7th, 1884.

By January 18th, his name was on every tongue, he was the favourite of

the nation, he had been declared to be the one living man capable of

coping with the perils of the hour; he had been chosen, with unanimous

approval, to perform a great task; and he had left England on a mission

which was to bring him not only a boundless popularity, but an immortal

fame. The circumstances which led to a change so sudden and so

remarkable are less easily explained than might have been wished. An

ambiguity hangs over them--an ambiguity which the discretion of eminent

persons has certainly not diminished. But some of the facts are clear

enough.

The decision to withdraw from the Sudan had no sooner been taken than it

had become evident that the operation would be a difficult and hazardous

one, and that it would be necessary to send to Khartoum an emissary

armed with special powers and possessed of special ability, to carry it

out. Towards the end of November, somebody at the War Office--it is not

clear who--had suggested that this emissary should be General Gordon.

Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, had thereupon telegraphed to Sir

Evelyn Baring asking whether, in his opinion, the presence of General

Gordon would be useful in Egypt; Sir Evelyn Baring had replied that the

Egyptian Government was averse to this proposal, and the matter had

dropped.

There was no further reference to Gordon in the official dispatches

until after his return to England. Nor, before that date, was any

allusion made to him as a possible unraveller of the Sudan difficulty,

in the Press. In all the discussions which followed the news of the

Hicks disaster, his name is only to be found in occasional and

incidental references to his work "In the Sudan". The "Pall Mall

Gazette", which, more than any other newspaper, interested itself in

Egyptian affairs, alluded to Gordon once or twice as a geographical

expert; but, in an enumeration of the leading authorities on the Sudan,

left him out of account altogether. Yet it was from the "Pall Mall

Gazette" that the impulsion which projected him into a blaze of

publicity finally came. Mr. Stead, its enterprising editor, went down to

Southampton the day after Gordon's arrival there, and obtained an

interview. Now when he was in the mood--after a little b. and s.,

especially--no one was more capable than Gordon, with his facile speech

and his free-and-easy manners, of furnishing good copy for a journalist;

and Mr. Stead made the most of his opportunity. The interview, copious

and pointed, was published next day in the most prominent part of the

paper, together with a leading article, demanding that the General

should be immediately dispatched to Khartoum with the widest powers. The

rest of the Press, both in London and in the provinces, at once took up

the cry: General Gordon was a capable and energetic officer, he was a

noble and God-fearing man, he was a national asset, he was a statesman

in the highest sense of the word; the occasion was pressing and

perilous; General Gordon had been for years Governor-General of the

Sudan; General Gordon alone had the knowledge, the courage, the virtue,

which would save the situation; General Gordon must go to Khartoum. So,

for a week, the papers sang in chorus. But already those in high places

had taken a step. Mr. Stead's interview appeared on the afternoon of

January 9th, and on the morning of January 10th Lord Granville

telegraphed to Sir Evelyn Baring, proposing, for a second time, that

Gordon's services should be utilised in Egypt. But Sir Evelyn Baring,

for the second time, rejected the proposal.

While these messages were flashing to and fro, Gordon himself was paying

a visit to the Rev. Mr. Barnes at the Vicarage of Heavitree, near

Exeter. The conversation ran chiefly on Biblical and spiritual

matters--on the light thrown by the Old Testament upon the geography of

Palestine, and on the relations between man and his Maker; but, there

were moments when topics of a more worldly interest arose. It happened

that Sir Samuel Baker, Gordon's predecessor in Equatoria, lived in the

neighbourhood. A meeting was arranged, and the two ex-Governors, with

Mr. Barnes in attendance, went for a drive together. In the carriage,

Sir Samuel Baker, taking up the tale of the "Pall Mall Gazette", dilated

upon the necessity of his friend's returning to the Sudan as

Governor-General. Gordon was silent; but Mr. Barnes noticed that his

blue eyes flashed, while an eager expression passed over his face. Late

that night, after the Vicar had retired to bed, he was surprised by the

door suddenly opening, and by the appearance of his guest swiftly

tripping into the room. 'You saw me today?' the low voice abruptly

questioned. 'You mean in the carriage?' replied the startled Mr. Barnes.

'Yes,' came the reply; 'you saw ME--that was MYSELF--the self I want to

get rid of.' There was a sliding movement, the door swung to, and the

Vicar found himself alone again.

It was clear that a disturbing influence had found its way into Gordon's

mind. His thoughts, wandering through Africa, flitted to the Sudan; they

did not linger at the Congo. During the same visit, he took the

opportunity of calling upon Dr. Temple, the Bishop of Exeter, and asking

him, merely as a hypothetical question, whether, in his opinion,

Sudanese converts to Christianity might be permitted to keep three

wives. His Lordship answered that this would be uncanonical.

A few days later, it appeared that the conversation in the carriage at

Heavitree had borne fruit. Gordon wrote a letter to Sir Samuel Baker,

further elaborating the opinions on the Sudan which he had already

expressed in his interview with Mr. Stead; the letter was clearly

intended for publication, and published it was in "The Times" of January

14th. On the same day, Gordon's name began once more to buzz along the

wires in secret questions and answers to and from the highest quarters.

'Might it not be advisable,' telegraphed Lord Granville to Mr.

Gladstone, to put a little pressure on Baring, to induce him to accept

the assistance of General Gordon?' Mr. Gladstone replied, also by a

telegram, in the affirmative; and on the 15th, Lord Wolseley telegraphed

to Gordon begging him to come to London immediately. Lord Wolseley, who

was one of Gordon's oldest friends, was at that time Adjutant-General of

the Forces; there was a long interview; and, though the details of the

conversation have never transpired, it is known that, in the course of

it, Lord Wolseley asked Gordon if he would be willing to go to the

Sudan, to which Gordon replied that there was only one objection--his

prior engagement to the King of the Belgians. Before nightfall, Lord

Granville, by private telegram, had 'put a little pressure on Baring'.

'He had,' he said, 'heard indirectly that Gordon was ready to go at once

to the Sudan on the following rather vague terms: His mission to be to

report to Her Majesty's Government on the military situation, and to

return without any further engagement. He would be under you for

instructions and will send letters through you under flying seal ... He

might be of use,' Lord Granville added, in informing you and us of the

situation. It would be popular at home, but there may be countervailing

objections. Tell me,' such was Lord Granville's concluding injunction,

'your real opinion.' It was the third time of asking, and Sir Evelyn

Baring resisted no longer.

'Gordon,' he telegraphed on the 16th, 'would be the best man if he will

pledge himself to carry out the policy of withdrawing from the Sudan as

quickly as is possible, consistently with saving life. He must also

understand that he must take his instructions from the British

representative in Egypt ... I would rather have him than anyone else,

provided there is a perfectly clear understanding with him as to what

his position is to be and what line of policy he is to carry out.

Otherwise, not ... Whoever goes should be distinctly warned that he will

undertake a service of great difficulty and danger.'

In the meantime, Gordon, with the Sudan upon his lips, with the Sudan in

his imagination, had hurried to Brussels, to obtain from the King of the

Belgians a reluctant consent to the postponement of his Congo mission.

On the 17th he was recalled to London by a telegram from Lord Wolseley.

On the 18th the final decision was made. 'At noon,' Gordon told the Rev.

Mr. Barnes, Wolseley came to me and took me to the Ministers. He went in

and talked to the Ministers, and came back and said: "Her Majesty's

Government wants you to undertake this. Government is determined to

evacuate the Sudan, for they will not guarantee future government. Will

you go and do it?" I said: "Yes." He said: "Go in." I went in and saw

them. They said: "Did Wolseley tell you your orders?" I said: "Yes." I

said: "You will not guarantee future government of the Sudan, and you

wish me to go up and evacuate now." They said: "Yes", and it was over.'

Such was the sequence of events which ended in General Gordon's last

appointment. The precise motives of those responsible for these

transactions are less easy to discern. It is difficult to understand

what the reasons could have been which induced the Government, not only

to override the hesitations of Sir Evelyn Baring, but to overlook the

grave and obvious dangers involved in sending such a man as Gordon to

the Sudan. The whole history of his life, the whole bent of his

character, seemed to disqualify him for the task for which he had been

chosen. He was before all things a fighter, an enthusiast, a bold

adventurer; and he was now to be entrusted with the conduct of an

inglorious retreat. He was alien to the subtleties of civilised

statesmanship, he was unamenable to official control, he was incapable

of the skilful management of delicate situations; and he was now to be

placed in a position of great complexity, requiring at once a cool

judgment, a clear perception of fact, and a fixed determination to carry

out a line of policy laid down from above. He had, it is true, been

Governor-General of the Sudan; but he was now to return to the scene of

his greatness as the emissary of a defeated and humbled power; he was to

be a fugitive where he had once been a ruler; the very success of his

mission was to consist in establishing the triumph of those forces which

he had spent years in trampling underfoot. All this should have been

clear to those in authority, after a very little reflection. It was

clear enough to Sir Evelyn Baring, though, with characteristic

reticence, he had abstained from giving expression to his thoughts. But,

even if a general acquaintance with Gordon's life and character were not

sufficient to lead to these conclusions, he himself had taken care to

put their validity beyond reasonable doubt. Both in his interview with

Mr. Stead and in his letter to Sir Samuel Baker, he had indicated

unmistakably his own attitude towards the Sudan situation. The policy

which he advocated, the state of feeling in which he showed himself to

be, was diametrically opposed to the declared intentions of the

Government. He was by no means in favour of withdrawing from the Sudan;

he was in favour, as might have been supposed, of vigorous military

action. It might be necessary to abandon, for the time being, the more

remote garrisons in Darfur and Equatoria; but Khartoum must be held at

all costs. To allow the Mahdi to enter Khartoum would not merely mean

the return of the whole of the Sudan to barbarism; it would be a menace

to the safety of Egypt herself. To attempt to protect Egypt against the

Mahdi by fortifying her southern frontier was preposterous. 'You might

as well fortify against a fever.' Arabia, Syria, the whole Mohammedan

world, would be shaken by the Mahdi's advance. 'In self-defence,' Gordon

declared to Mr. Stead, the policy of evacuation cannot possibly be

justified.' The true policy was obvious. A strong man--Sir Samuel Baker,

perhaps--must be sent to Khartoum, with a large contingent of Indian and

Turkish troops and with two millions of money. He would very soon

overpower the Mahdi, whose forces would 'fall to pieces of themselves'.

For in Gordon's opinion it was 'an entire mistake to regard the Mahdi as

in any sense a religious leader'; he would collapse as soon as he was

face to face with an English general. Then the distant regions of Darfur

and Equatoria could once more be occupied; their original Sultans could

be reinstated; the whole country would be placed under civilised rule;

and the slave-trade would be finally abolished. These were the views

which Gordon publicly expressed on January 9th and on January 14th; and

it certainly seems strange that on January 10th and on January 14th,

Lord Granville should have proposed, without a word of consultation with

Gordon himself, to send him on a mission which involved, not the

reconquest, but the abandonment of the Sudan; Gordon, indeed, when he

was actually approached by Lord Wolseley, had apparently agreed to

become the agent of a policy which was exactly the reverse of his own.

No doubt, too, it is possible for a subordinate to suppress his private

convictions and to carry out loyally, in spite of them, the orders of

his superiors. But how rare are the qualities of self-control and wisdom

which such a subordinate must possess! And how little reason there was

to think that General Gordon possessed them!

In fact, the conduct of the Government wears so singular an appearance

that it has seemed necessary to account for it by some ulterior

explanation. It has often been asserted that the true cause of Gordon's

appointment was the clamour in the Press. It is said--among others, by

Sir Evelyn Baring himself, who has given something like an official

sanction to this view of the case--that the Government could not resist

the pressure of the newspapers and the feeling in the country which it

indicated; that Ministers, carried off their feet by a wave of 'Gordon

cultus', were obliged to give way to the inevitable. But this suggestion

is hardly supported by an examination of the facts. Already, early in

December, and many weeks before Gordon's name had begun to figure in the

newspapers, Lord Granville had made his first effort to induce Sir

Evelyn Baring to accept Gordon's services. The first newspaper demand

for a Gordon mission appeared in the "Pall Mall Gazette" on the

afternoon of January 9th; and the very next morning, Lord Granville was

making his second telegraphic attack upon Sir Evelyn Baring. The feeling

in the Press did not become general until the 11th, and on the 14th Lord

Granville, in his telegram to Mr. Gladstone, for the third time proposed

the appointment of Gordon. Clearly, on the part of Lord Granville at any

rate, there was no extreme desire to resist the wishes of the Press. Nor

was the Government as a whole by any means incapable of ignoring public

opinion; a few months were to show that, plainly enough. It is difficult

to avoid the conclusion that if Ministers had been opposed to the

appointment of Gordon, he would never have been appointed. As it was,

the newspapers were in fact forestalled, rather than followed, by the

Government.

How, then, are we to explain the Government's action? Are we to suppose

that its members, like the members of the public at large, were

themselves carried away by a sudden enthusiasm, a sudden conviction that

they had found their saviour; that General Gordon was the man--they did

not quite know why, but that was of no consequence--the one man to get

them out of the whole Sudan difficulty--they did not quite know how, but

that was of no consequence either if only he were sent to Khartoum?

Doubtless even Cabinet Ministers are liable to such impulses; doubtless

it is possible that the Cabinet of that day allowed itself to drift, out

of mere lack of consideration, and judgment, and foresight, along the

rapid stream of popular feeling towards the inevitable cataract. That

may be so; yet there are indications that a more definite influence was

at work. There was a section of the Government which had never become

quite reconciled to the policy of withdrawing from the Sudan. To this

section--we may call it the imperialist section--which was led, inside

the Cabinet, by Lord Hartington, and outside by Lord Wolseley, the

policy which really commended itself was the very policy which had been

outlined by General Gordon in his interview with Mr. Stead and his

letter to Sir Samuel Baker. They saw that it might be necessary to

abandon some of the outlying parts of the Sudan to the Mahdi; but the

prospect of leaving the whole province in his hands was highly

distasteful to them; above all, they dreaded the loss of Khartoum. Now,

supposing that General Gordon, in response to a popular agitation in the

Press, were sent to Khartoum, what would follow? Was it not at least

possible that, once there, with his views and his character, he would,

for some reason or other, refrain from carrying out a policy of pacific

retreat? Was it not possible that in that case he might so involve the

English Government that it would find itself obliged, almost

imperceptibly perhaps, to substitute for its policy of withdrawal a

policy of advance? Was it not possible that General Gordon might get

into difficulties, that he might be surrounded and cut off from Egypt'?

If that were to happen, how could the English Government avoid the

necessity of sending an expedition to rescue him? And, if an English

expedition went to the Sudan, was it conceivable that it would leave the

Mahdi as it found him? In short, would not the dispatch of General

Gordon to Khartoum involve, almost inevitably, the conquest of the Sudan

by British troops, followed by a British occupation? And, behind all

these questions, a still larger question loomed. The position of the

English in Egypt itself was still ambiguous; the future was obscure; how

long, in reality, would an English army remain in Egypt? Was not one

thing, at least, obvious--that if the English were to conquer and occupy

the Sudan, their evacuation of Egypt would become impossible?

With our present information, it would be rash to affirm that all, or

any, of these considerations were present to the minds of the

imperialist section of the Government. Yet it is difficult to believe

that a man such as Lord Wolseley, for instance, with his knowledge of

affairs and his knowledge of Gordon, could have altogether overlooked

them. Lord Hartington, indeed, may well have failed to realise at once

the implications of General Gordon's appointment--for it took Lord

Hartington some time to realise the implications of anything; but Lord

Hartington was very far from being a fool; and we may well suppose that

he instinctively, perhaps subconsciously, apprehended the elements of a

situation which he never formulated to himself. However that may be,

certain circumstances are significant. It is significant that the

go-between who acted as the Government's agent in its negotiations with

Gordon was an imperialist--Lord Wolseley. It is significant that the

'Ministers' whom Gordon finally interviewed, and who actually determined

his appointment were by no means the whole of the Cabinet, but a small

section of it, presided over by Lord Hartington. It is significant, too,

that Gordon's mission was represented both to Sir Evelyn Baring, who was

opposed to his appointment, and to Mr. Gladstone, who was opposed to an

active policy in the Sudan, as a mission merely 'to report'; while, no

sooner was the mission actually decided upon, than it began to assume a

very different complexion. In his final interview with the 'Ministers',

Gordon we know (though he said nothing about it to the Rev. Mr Barnes)

threw out the suggestion that it might be as well to make him the

Governor-General of the Sudan. The suggestion, for the moment, was not

taken up; but it is obvious that a man does not propose to become a

Governor-General in order to make a report.

We are in the region of speculations; one other presents itself. Was the

movement in the Press during that second week of January a genuine

movement, expressing a spontaneous wave of popular feeling? Or was it a

cause of that feeling, rather than an effect? The engineering of a

newspaper agitation may not have been an impossibility--even so long ago

as 1884. One would like to know more than one is ever likely to know of

the relations of the imperialist section of the Government with Mr.

Stead.

But it is time to return to the solidity of fact. Within a few hours of

his interview with the Ministers, Gordon had left England forever. At

eight o'clock in the evening, there was a little gathering of elderly

gentlemen at Victoria Station. Gordon, accompanied by Colonel Stewart,

who was to act as his second-in-command, tripped on to the platform.

Lord Granville bought the necessary tickets; the Duke of Cambridge

opened the railway-carriage door. The General jumped into the train; and

then Lord Wolseley appeared, carrying a leather bag, in which was L200

in gold, collected from friends at the last moment for the contingencies

of the journey. The bag was handed through the window. The train

started. As it did so, Gordon leaned out and addressed a last whispered

question to Lord Wolseley. Yes, it had been done. Lord Wolseley had seen

to it himself; next morning, every member of the Cabinet would receive a

copy of Dr. Samuel Clarke's Scripture Promises. That was all. The train

rolled out of the station.

Before the travellers reached Cairo, steps had been taken which finally

put an end to the theory--if it had ever been seriously held--that the

purpose of the mission was simply the making of a report. On the very

day of Gordon's departure, Lord Granville telegraphed to Sir Evelyn

Baring as follows: 'Gordon suggests that it may be announced in Egypt

that he is on his way to Khartoum to arrange for the future settlement

of the Sudan for the best advantage of the people.' Nothing was said of

reporting. A few days later, Gordon himself telegraphed to Lord

Granville suggesting that he should be made Governor-General of the

Sudan, in order to 'accomplish the evacuation', and to 'restore to the

various Sultans of the Sudan their independence'. Lord Granville at once

authorised Sir Evelyn Baring to issue, if he thought fit, a proclamation

to this effect in the name of the Khedive. Thus the mission 'to report'

had already swollen into a Governor-Generalship, with the object, not

merely of effecting the evacuation of the Sudan, but also of setting up

'various Sultans' to take the place of the Egyptian Government.

In Cairo, in spite of the hostilities of the past, Gordon was received

with every politeness. He was at once proclaimed Governor-General of the

Sudan, with the widest powers. He was on the point of starting off again

on his journey southwards, when a singular and important incident

occurred. Zobeir, the rebel chieftain of Darfur, against whose forces

Gordon had struggled for years, and whose son, Suleiman, had been

captured and executed by Gessi, Gordon's lieutenant, was still detained

at Cairo. It so fell out that he went to pay a visit to one of the

Ministers at the same time as the new Governor-General. The two men met

face to face, and, as he looked into the savage countenance of his old

enemy, an extraordinary shock of inspiration ran through Gordon's brain.

He was seized, as he explained in a State paper, which he drew up

immediately after the meeting, with a 'mystic feeling' that he could

trust Zobeir. It was true that Zobeir was 'the greatest slave-hunter who

ever existed'; it was true that he had a personal hatred of Gordon,

owing to the execution of Suleiman--'and one cannot wonder at it, if one

is a father'; it was true that, only a few days previously, on his way

to Egypt, Gordon himself had been so convinced of the dangerous

character of Zobeir that he had recommended by telegram his removal to

Cyprus. But such considerations were utterly obliterated by that one

moment of electric impact of personal vision; henceforward, there was a

rooted conviction in Gordon's mind that Zobeir was to be trusted, that

Zobeir must join him at Khartoum, that Zobeir's presence would paralyse

the Mahdi, that Zobeir must succeed him in the government of the country

after the evacuation. Did not Sir Evelyn Baring, too, have the mystic

feeling? Sir Evelyn Baring confessed that he had not. He distrusted

mystic feelings. Zobeir, no doubt, might possibly be useful; but, before

deciding upon so important a matter, it was necessary to reflect and to

consult.

In the meantime, failing Zobeir, something might perhaps be done with

the Emir Abdul Shakur, the heir of the Darfur Sultans. The Emir, who had

been living in domestic retirement in Cairo, was with some difficulty

discovered, given L2,000, an embroidered uniform, together with the

largest decoration that could be found, and informed that he was to

start at once with General Gordon for the Sudan, where it would be his

duty to occupy the province of Darfur, after driving out the forces of

the Mahdi. The poor man begged for a little delay; but no delay could be

granted. He hurried to the railway station in his frockcoat and fez, and

rather the worse for liquor. Several extra carriages for his

twenty-three wives and a large quantity of luggage had then to be

hitched on to the Governor-General's train; and at the last moment some

commotion was caused by the unaccountable disappearance of his

embroidered uniform. It was found, but his troubles were not over. On

the steamer, General Gordon was very rude to him, and he drowned his

chagrin in hot rum and water. At Assuan he disembarked, declaring that

he would go no farther. Eventually, however, he got as far as Dongola,

whence, after a stay of a few months, he returned with his family to

Cairo.

In spite of this little contretemps, Gordon was in the highest spirits.

At last his capacities had been recognised by his countrymen; at last he

had been entrusted with a task great enough to satisfy even his desires.

He was already famous; he would soon be glorious. Looking out once more

over the familiar desert, he felt the searchings of his conscience

stilled by the manifest certainty that it was for this that Providence

had been reserving him through all these years of labour and of sorrow

for this! What was the Mahdi to stand up against him! A thousand

schemes, a thousand possibilities sprang to life in his pullulating

brain. A new intoxication carried him away. 'Il faut etre toujours ivre.

Tout est la: c'est l'unique question.' Little though he knew it, Gordon

was a disciple of Baudelaire. 'Pour ne pas sentir l'horrible fardeau du

Temps qui brise vos epaules et vous penche vers la terre, il faut vous

enivrer sans treve.' Yes--but how feeble were those gross resources of

the miserable Abdul-Shakur! Rum? Brandy? Oh, he knew all about them;

they were nothing. He tossed off a glass. They were nothing at all. The

true drunkenness lay elsewhere. He seized a paper and pencil, and dashed

down a telegram to Sir Evelyn Baring. Another thought struck him, and

another telegram followed. And another, and yet another. He had made up

his mind; he would visit the Mahdi in person, and alone. He might do

that; or he might retire to the Equator. He would decidedly retire to

the Equator, and hand over the Bahr-el-Ghazal province to the King of

the Belgians. A whole flock of telegrams flew to Cairo from every

stopping-place. Sir Evelyn Baring was patient and discrete; he could be

trusted with such confidences; but unfortunately Gordon's strange

exhilaration found other outlets. At Berber, in the course of a speech

to the assembled chiefs, he revealed the intention of the Egyptian

Government to withdraw from the Sudan. The news was everywhere in a

moment, and the results were disastrous. The tribesmen, whom fear and

interest had still kept loyal, perceived that they need look no more for

help or punishment from Egypt, and began to turn their eyes towards the

rising sun.

Nevertheless, for the moment, the prospect wore a favourable appearance.

The Governor-General was welcomed at every stage of his journey, and on

February 18th he made a triumphal entry into Khartoum. The feeble

garrison, the panic-stricken inhabitants, hailed him as a deliverer.

Surely they need fear no more, now that the great English Pasha had come

among them. His first acts seemed to show that a new and happy era had

begun. Taxes were remitted, the bonds of the usurers were destroyed, the

victims of Egyptian injustice were set free from the prisons; the

immemorial instruments of torture--the stocks and the whips and the

branding-irons were broken to pieces in the public square. A bolder

measure had been already taken. A proclamation had been issued

sanctioning slavery in the Sudan. Gordon, arguing that he was powerless

to do away with the odious institution, which, as soon as the withdrawal

was carried out, would inevitably become universal, had decided to reap

what benefit he could from the public abandonment of an unpopular

policy. At Khartoum the announcement was received with enthusiasm, but

it caused considerable perturbation in England. The Christian hero, who

had spent so many years of his life in suppressing slavery, was now

suddenly found to be using his high powers to set it up again. The

Anti-Slavery Society made a menacing movement, but the Government showed

a bold front, and the popular belief in Gordon's infallibility carried

the day.

He himself was still radiant. Nor, amid the jubilation and the devotion

which surrounded him, did he forget higher things. In all this turmoil,

he told his sister, he was 'supported'. He gave injunctions that his

Egyptian troops should have regular morning and evening prayers; 'they

worship one God,' he said, 'Jehovah.' And he ordered an Arabic text,

'God rules the hearts of all men', to be put up over the chair of state

in his audience chamber. As the days went by, he began to feel at home

again in the huge palace which he knew so well. The glare and the heat

of that southern atmosphere, the movement of the crowded city, the

dark-faced populace, the soldiers and the suppliants, the reawakened

consciousness of power, the glamour and the mystery of the whole strange

scene--these things seized upon him, engulfed him, and worked a new

transformation on his intoxicated heart. England, with its complications

and its policies, became an empty vision to him; Sir Evelyn Baring, with

his cautions and sagacities, hardly more than a tiresome name. He was

Gordon Pasha, he was the Governor-General, he was the ruler of the

Sudan. He was among his people--his own people, and it was to them only

that he was responsible--to them, and to God. Was he to let them fall

without a blow into the clutches of a sanguinary impostor? Never! He was

there to prevent that. The distant governments might mutter something

about 'evacuation'; his thoughts were elsewhere. He poured them into his

telegrams, and Sir Evelyn Baring sat aghast. The man who had left London

a month before, with instructions to 'report upon the best means of

effecting the evacuation of the Sudan', was now openly talking of

'smashing up the Mahdi' with the aid of British and Indian troops. Sir

Evelyn Baring counted upon his fingers the various stages of this

extraordinary development in General Gordon's opinions. But he might

have saved himself the trouble, for, in fact, it was less a development

than a reversion. Under the stress of the excitements and the realities

of his situation at Khartoum, the policy which Gordon was now proposing

to carry out had come to tally, in every particular, with the policy

which he had originally advocated with such vigorous conviction in the

pages of the Pall Mall Gazette.

Nor was the adoption of that policy by the English Government by any

means out of the question. For, in the meantime, events had been taking

place in the Eastern Sudan, in the neighbourhood of the Red Sea port of

Suakin, which were to have a decisive effect upon the prospects of

Khartoum. General Baker, the brother of Sir Samuel Baker, attempting to

relieve the beleaguered garrisons of Sinkat and Tokar, had rashly

attacked the forces of Osman Digna, had been defeated, and obliged to

retire. Sinkat and Tokar had then fallen into the hands of the Mahdi's

general. There was a great outcry in England, and a wave of warlike

feeling passed over the country. Lord Wolseley at once drew up a

memorandum advocating the annexation of the Sudan. In the House of

Commons even Liberals began to demand vengeance and military action,

whereupon the Government dispatched Sir Gerald Graham with a

considerable British force to Suakin. Sir Gerald Graham advanced, and in

the battles of El Teb and Tamai inflicted two bloody defeats upon the

Mahdi's forces. It almost seemed as if the Government was now committed

to a policy of interference and conquest; as if the imperialist section

of the Cabinet were at last to have their way. The dispatch of Sir

Gerald Graham coincided with Gordon's sudden demand for British and

Indian troops with which to 'smash up the Mahdi'. The business, he

assured Sir Evelyn Baring, in a stream of telegrams, could very easily

be done. It made him sick, he said, to see himself held in check and the

people of the Sudan tyrannised over by 'a feeble lot of stinking

Dervishes'. Let Zobeir at once be sent down to him, and all would be

well.

The original Sultans of the country had unfortunately proved

disappointing. Their place should be taken by Zobeir. After the Mahdi

had been smashed up, Zobeir should rule the Sudan as a subsidised vassal

of England, on a similar footing to that of the Amir of Afghanistan. The

plan was perhaps feasible; but it was clearly incompatible with the

policy of evacuation, as it had been hitherto laid down by the English

Government. Should they reverse that policy? Should they appoint Zobeir,

reinforce Sir Gerald Graham, and smash up the Mahdi? They could not make

up their minds. So far as Zobeir was concerned, there were two

counterbalancing considerations; on the one hand, Evelyn Baring now

declared that he was in favour of the appointment; but, on the other

hand, would English public opinion consent to a man, described by Gordon

himself as 'the greatest slave-hunter who ever existed', being given an

English subsidy and the control of the Sudan? While the Cabinet was

wavering, Gordon took a fatal step. The delay was intolerable, and one

evening, in a rage, he revealed his desire for Zobeir--which had

hitherto been kept a profound official secret--to Mr Power, the English

Consul at Khartoum, and the special correspondent of "The Times."

Perhaps he calculated that the public announcement of his wishes would

oblige the Government to yield to them; if so, he was completely

mistaken, for the result was the very reverse. The country, already

startled by the proclamation in favour of slavery, could not swallow

Zobeir. The Anti-Slavery Society set on foot a violent agitation,

opinion in the House of Commons suddenly stiffened, and the Cabinet, by

a substantial majority, decided that Zobeir should remain in Cairo. The

imperialist wave had risen high, but it had not risen high enough; and

now it was rapidly subsiding. The Government's next action was decisive.

Sir Gerald Graham and his British Army were withdrawn from the Sudan.

The critical fortnight during which these events took place was the

first fortnight of March. By the close of it, Gordon's position had

undergone a rapid and terrible change. Not only did he find himself

deprived, by the decision of the Government, both of the hope of

Zobeir's assistance and of the prospect of smashing up the Mahdi with

the aid of British troops; the military movements in the Eastern Sudan

produced, at the very same moment, a yet more fatal consequence. The

adherents of the Mahdi had been maddened, they had not been crushed, by

Sir Gerald Graham's victories. When, immediately afterwards, the English

withdrew to Suakin, from which they never again emerged, the inference

seemed obvious; they had been defeated, and their power was at an end.

The warlike tribes to the north and the northeast of Khartoum had long

been wavering. They now hesitated no longer, and joined the Mahdi. From

that moment--it was less than a month from Gordon's arrival at

Khartoum--the situation of the town was desperate. The line of

communications was cut. Though it still might be possible for occasional

native messengers, or for a few individuals on an armed steamer, to win

their way down the river into Egypt, the removal of a large number of

persons--the loyal inhabitants or the Egyptian garrison--was

henceforward an impossibility. The whole scheme of the Gordon mission

had irremediably collapsed; worse still, Gordon himself, so far from

having effected the evacuation of the Sudan, was surrounded by the

enemy. 'The question now is,' Sir Evelyn Baring told Lord Granville, on

March 24th, 'how to get General Gordon and Colonel Stewart away from

Khartoum.'

The actual condition of the town, however, was not, from a military

point of view, so serious as Colonel Coetlogon, in the first moments of

panic after the Hicks disaster, had supposed. Gordon was of opinion that

it was capable of sustaining a siege of many months. With his usual

vigour, he had already begun to prepare an elaborate system of

earthworks, mines, and wire entanglements. There was a five or six

months' supply of food, there was a great quantity of ammunition, the

garrison numbered about 8,000 men. There were, besides, nine small

paddle-wheel steamers, hitherto used for purposes of communication along

the Nile, which, fitted with guns and protected by metal plates, were of

considerable military value. 'We are all right,' Gordon told his sister

on March 15th. 'We shall, D. V., go on for months.' So far, at any rate,

there was no cause for despair. But the effervescent happiness of three

weeks since had vanished. Gloom, doubt, disillusionment,

self-questioning, had swooped down again upon their victim.

'Either I must believe He does all things in mercy and love, or else I

disbelieve His existence; there is no half way in the matter. What holes

do I not put myself into! And for what? So mixed are my ideas. I believe

ambition put me here in this ruin.'

Was not that the explanation of it all? 'Our Lord's promise is not for

the fulfilment of earthly wishes; therefore, if things come to ruin here

He is still faithful, and is carrying out His great work of divine

wisdom.' How could he have forgotten that? But he would not transgress

again. 'I owe all to God, and nothing to myself, for, humanly speaking,

I have done very foolish things. However, if I am humbled, the better

for me.'

News of the changed circumstances at Khartoum was not slow in reaching

England, and a feeling of anxiety began to spread. Among the first to

realise the gravity of the situation was Queen Victoria. 'It is

alarming,' she telegraphed to Lord Hartington on March 25th. 'General

Gordon is in danger; you are bound to try to save him ... You have

incurred a fearful responsibility.' With an unerring instinct, Her

Majesty forestalled and expressed the popular sentiment. During April,

when it had become clear that the wire between Khartoum and Cairo had

been severed; when, as time passed, no word came northward, save vague

rumours of disaster; when at last a curtain of impenetrable mystery

closed over Khartoum, the growing uneasiness manifested itself in

letters to the newspapers, in leading articles, and in a flood of

subscriptions towards a relief fund. At the beginning of May, the public

alarm reached a climax. It now appeared to be certain, not only that

General Gordon was in imminent danger, but that no steps had yet been

taken by the Government to save him.

On the 5th, there was a meeting of protest and indignation at St.

James's Hall; on the 9th there was a mass meeting in Hyde Park; on the

11th there was a meeting at Manchester. The Baroness Burdett-Coutts

wrote an agitated letter to "The Times" begging for further

subscriptions. Somebody else proposed that a special fund should be

started with which 'to bribe the tribes to secure the General's personal

safety'. A country vicar made another suggestion. Why should not public

prayers be offered up for General Gordon in every church in the kingdom?

He himself had adopted that course last Sunday. 'Is not this,' he

concluded, 'what the godly man, the true hero, himself would wish to be

done?' It was all of no avail. General Gordon remained in peril; the

Government remained inactive. Finally, a vote of censure was moved in

the House of Commons; but that too proved useless. It was strange; the

same executive which, two months before, had trimmed its sails so

eagerly to the shifting gusts of popular opinion, now, in spite of a

rising hurricane, held on its course. A new spirit, it was clear--a

determined, an intractable spirit--had taken control of the Sudan

situation. What was it? The explanation was simple, and it was ominous.

Mr. Gladstone had intervened.

The old statesman was now entering upon the penultimate period of his

enormous career. He who had once been the rising hope of the stern and

unbending Tories, had at length emerged, after a lifetime of

transmutations, as the champion of militant democracy. He was at the

apex of his power. His great rival was dead; he stood pre-eminent in the

eye of the nation; he enjoyed the applause, the confidence, the

admiration, the adoration, even, of multitudes. Yet--such was the

peculiar character of the man, and such was the intensity of the

feelings which he called forth--at this very moment, at the height of

his popularity, he was distrusted and loathed; already an unparalleled

animosity was gathering its forces against him. For, indeed, there was

something in his nature which invited--which demanded--the clashing

reactions of passionate extremes. It was easy to worship Mr. Gladstone;

to see in him the perfect model of the upright man--the man of virtue

and of religion--the man whose whole life had been devoted to the

application of high principles to affairs of State; the man, too, whose

sense of right and justice was invigorated and ennobled by an

enthusiastic heart. It was also easy to detest him as a hypocrite, to

despise him as a demagogue, and to dread him as a crafty manipulator of

men and things for the purposes of his own ambition.

It might have been supposed that one or other of these conflicting

judgments must have been palpably absurd, that nothing short of gross

prejudice or wilful blindness, on one side or the other, could reconcile

such contradictory conceptions of a single human being. But it was not

so; 'the elements' were 'so mixed' in Mr. Gladstone that his bitterest

enemies (and his enemies were never mild) and his warmest friends (and

his friends were never tepid) could justify, with equal plausibility,

their denunciations or their praises. What, then, was the truth? In the

physical universe there are no chimeras. But man is more various than

nature; was Mr. Gladstone, perhaps, a chimera of the spirit? Did his

very essence lie in the confusion of incompatibles? His very essence? It

eludes the hand that seems to grasp it. One is baffled, as his political

opponents were baffled fifty years ago. The soft serpent coils harden

into quick strength that has vanished, leaving only emptiness and

perplexity behind. Speech was the fibre of his being; and, when he

spoke, the ambiguity of ambiguity was revealed. The long, winding,

intricate sentences, with their vast burden of subtle and complicated

qualifications, befogged the mind like clouds, and like clouds, too,

dropped thunder bolts. Could it not then at least be said of him with

certainty that his was a complex character? But here also there was a

contradiction.

In spite of the involutions of his intellect and the contortions of his

spirit, it is impossible not to perceive a strain of naivete in Mr.

Gladstone. He adhered to some of his principles that of the value of

representative institutions, for instance with a faith which was

singularly literal; his views upon religion were uncritical to

crudeness; he had no sense of humour. Compared with Disraeli's, his

attitude towards life strikes one as that of an ingenuous child. His

very egoism was simple-minded; through all the labyrinth of his passions

there ran a single thread. But the centre of the labyrinth? Ah! the

thread might lead there, through those wandering mazes, at last. Only,

with the last corner turned, the last step taken, the explorer might

find that he was looking down into the gulf of a crater. The flame shot

out on every side, scorching and brilliant; but in the midst, there was

a darkness.

That Mr. Gladstone's motives and ambitions were not merely those of a

hunter after popularity was never shown more clearly than in that part

of his career which, more than any other, has been emphasised by his

enemies--his conduct towards General Gordon. He had been originally

opposed to Gordon's appointment, but he had consented to it partly,

perhaps, owing to the persuasion that its purpose did not extend beyond

the making of a 'report'. Gordon once gone, events had taken their own

course; the policy of the Government began to slide, automatically, down

a slope at the bottom of which lay the conquest of the Sudan and the

annexation of Egypt. Sir Gerald Graham's bloody victories awoke Mr.

Gladstone to the true condition of affairs; he recognised the road he

was on and its destination; but there was still time to turn back.

It was he who had insisted upon the withdrawal of the English army from

the Eastern Sudan. The imperialists were sadly disappointed. They had

supposed that the old lion had gone to sleep, and suddenly he had come

out of his lair, and was roaring. All their hopes now centred upon

Khartoum. General Gordon was cut off; he was surrounded, he was in

danger; he must be relieved. A British force must be sent to save him.

But Mr. Gladstone was not to be caught napping a second time. When the

agitation rose, when popular sentiment was deeply stirred, when the

country, the Press, the Sovereign herself, declared that the national

honour was involved with the fate of General Gordon, Mr. Gladstone

remained immovable. Others might picture the triumphant rescue of a

Christian hero from the clutches of heathen savages; before HIS eyes was

the vision of battle, murder, and sudden death, the horrors of defeat

and victory, the slaughter and the anguish of thousands, the violence of

military domination, the enslavement of a people.

The invasion of the Sudan, he had flashed out in the House of Commons,

would be a war of conquest against a people struggling to be free. 'Yes,

those people are struggling to be free, and they are rightly struggling

to be free.' Mr. Gladstone--it was one of his old-fashioned

simplicities--believed in liberty. If, indeed, it should turn out to be

the fact that General Gordon was in serious danger, then, no doubt, it

would be necessary to send a relief expedition to Khartoum. But, he

could see no sufficient reason to believe that it was the fact.

Communications, it was true, had been interrupted between Khartoum and

Cairo, but no news was not necessarily bad news, and the little

information that had come through from General Gordon seemed to indicate

that he could hold out for months. So his agile mind worked, spinning

its familiar web of possibilities and contingencies and fine

distinctions. General Gordon, he was convinced, might be hemmed in, but

he was not surrounded. Surely, it was the duty of the Government to take

no rash step, but to consider and to inquire, and, when it acted, to act

upon reasonable conviction. And then, there was another question. If it

was true--and he believed it was true--that General Gordon's line of

retreat was open, why did not General Gordon use it?

Perhaps he might be unable to withdraw the Egyptian garrison, but it was

not for the sake of the Egyptian garrison that the relief expedition was

proposed; it was simply and solely to secure the personal safety of

General Gordon. And General Gordon had it in his power to secure his

personal safety himself; and he refused to do so; he lingered on in

Khartoum, deliberately, wilfully, in defiance of the obvious wishes of

his superiors. Oh! it was perfectly clear what General Gordon was doing:

he was trying to force the hand of the English Government. He was hoping

that if he only remained long enough at Khartoum, he would oblige the

English Government to send an army into the Sudan which should smash up

the Mahdi. That, then, was General Gordon's calculation! Well, General

Gordon would learn that he had made a mistake. Who was he that he should

dare to imagine that he could impose his will upon Mr. Gladstone? The

old man's eyes glared. If it came to a struggle between them--well, they

should see! As the weeks passed, the strange situation grew tenser. It

was like some silent deadly game of bluff. And who knows what was

passing in the obscure depths of that terrifying spirit? What mysterious

mixture of remorse, rage, and jealousy? Who was it that was ultimately

responsible for sending General Gordon to Khartoum? But then, what did

that matter? Why did not the man come back? He was a Christian hero,

wasn't he? Were there no other Christian heroes in the world? A

Christian hero! Let him wait until the Mahdi's ring was really round

him, until the Mahdi's spear was really about to fall! That would be the

test of heroism! If he slipped back then, with his tail between his

legs--! The world would judge.

One of the last telegrams sent by Gordon before the wire was cut seemed

to support exactly Mr. Gladstone's diagnosis of the case. He told Sir

Evelyn Baring that, since the Government refused to send either an

expedition or Zobeir, he would 'consider himself free to act according

to circumstances.' 'Eventually,' he said, 'you will be forced to smash

up the Mahdi', and he declared that if the Government persisted in its

present line of conduct, it would be branded with an 'indelible

disgrace'. The message was made public, and it happened that Mr.

Gladstone saw it for the first time in a newspaper, during a country

visit. Another of the guests, who was in the room at the moment, thus

describes the scene: 'He took up the paper, his eye instantly fell on

the telegram, and he read it through. As he read, his face hardened and

whitened, the eyes burned as I have seen them once or twice in the House

of Commons when he was angered--burned with a deep fire, as if they

would have consumed the sheet on which Gordon's message was printed, or

as if Gordon's words had burned into his soul, which was looking out in

wrath and flame. He said not a word. For perhaps two or three minutes he

sat still, his face all the while like the face you may read of in

Milton--like none other I ever saw. Then he rose, still without a word,

and was seen no more that morning.'

It is curious that Gordon himself never understood the part that Mr.

Gladstone was playing in his destiny. His Khartoum journals put this

beyond a doubt. Except for one or two slight and jocular references to

Mr. Gladstone's minor idiosyncrasies--the shape of his collars, and his

passion for felling trees, Gordon leaves him unnoticed while he lavishes

his sardonic humour upon Lord Granville. But in truth Lord Granville was

a nonentity. The error shows how dim the realities of England had grown

to the watcher in Khartoum. When he looked towards home, the figure that

loomed largest upon his vision was--it was only natural that it should

have been so the nearest--it was upon Sir Evelyn Baring that he fixed

his gaze. For him, Sir Evelyn Baring was the embodiment of England--or

rather the embodiment of the English official classes, of English

diplomacy, of the English Government with its hesitations, its

insincerities, its double-faced schemes. Sir Evelyn Baring, he almost

came to think at moments, was the prime mover, the sole contriver, of

the whole Sudan imbroglio.

In this he was wrong; for Sir Evelyn Baring, of course, was an

intermediary, without final responsibility or final power; but Gordon's

profound antipathy, his instinctive distrust, were not without their

justification. He could never forget that first meeting in Cairo, six

years earlier, when the fundamental hostility between the two men had

leapt to the surface. 'When oil mixes with water,' he said, 'we will mix

together.' Sir Evelyn Baring thought so too; but he did not say so; it

was not his way. When he spoke, he felt no temptation to express

everything that was in his mind. In all he did, he was cautious,

measured, unimpeachably correct. It would be difficult to think of a man

more completely the antithesis of Gordon. His temperament, all in

monochrome, touched in with cold blues and indecisive greys, was

eminently unromantic. He had a steely colourlessness, and a steely

pliability, and a steely strength. Endowed beyond most men with the

capacity of foresight, he was endowed as very few men have ever been

with that staying-power which makes the fruit of foresight attainable.

His views were long, and his patience was even longer. He progressed

imperceptibly; he constantly withdrew; the art of giving way he

practised with the refinement of a virtuoso. But, though the steel

recoiled and recoiled, in the end it would spring forward. His life's

work had in it an element of paradox. It was passed entirely in the

East; and the East meant very little to him; he took no interest in it.

It was something to be looked after. It was also a convenient field for

the talents of Sir Evelyn Baring. Yet it must not be supposed that he

was cynical; perhaps he was not quite great enough for that. He looked

forward to a pleasant retirement--a country place--some literary

recreations. He had been careful to keep up his classics. His ambition

can be stated in a single phrase--it was to become an institution; and

he achieved it. No doubt, too, he deserved it. The greatest of poets, in

a bitter mood, has described the characteristics of a certain class of

persons, whom he did not like. 'They,' he says,

'that have power to hurt and will do none,

That do not do the things they most do show,

Who, moving others, are themselves as stone,

Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow,

They rightly do inherit heaven's graces,

And husband nature's riches from expense;

They are the lords and owners of their faces ...'

The words might have been written for Sir Evelyn Baring.

Though, as a rule, he found it easy to despise those with whom he came

into contact, he could not altogether despise General Gordon. If he

could have, he would have disliked him less. He had gone as far as his

caution had allowed him in trying to prevent the fatal appointment; and

then, when it had become clear that the Government was insistent, he had

yielded with a good grace. For a moment, he had imagined that all might

yet be well; that he could impose himself, by the weight of his position

and the force of his sagacity, upon his self-willed subordinate; that he

could hold him in a leash at the end of the telegraph wire to Khartoum.

Very soon he perceived that this was a miscalculation. To his disgust,

he found that the telegraph wire, far from being an instrument of

official discipline, had been converted by the agile strategist at the

other end of it into a means of extending his own personality into the

deliberations at Cairo. Every morning Sir Evelyn Baring would find upon

his table a great pile of telegrams from Khartoum--twenty or thirty at

least; and as the day went on, the pile would grow. When a sufficient

number had accumulated he would read them all through, with the greatest

care. There upon the table, the whole soul of Gordon lay before him--in

its incoherence, its eccentricity, its impulsiveness, its romance; the

jokes, the slang, the appeals to the prophet Isaiah, the whirl of

contradictory policies--Sir Evelyn Baring did not know which exasperated

him most. He would not consider whether, or to what degree, the man was

a maniac; no, he would not. A subacid smile was the only comment he

allowed himself. His position, indeed, was an extremely difficult one,

and all his dexterity would be needed if he was to emerge from it with

credit.

On one side of him was a veering and vacillating Government; on the

other, a frenzied enthusiast. It was his business to interpret to the

first the wishes, or rather the inspirations, of the second, and to

convey to the second the decisions, or rather the indecisions, of the

first. A weaker man would have floated helplessly on the ebb and flow of

the Cabinet's wavering policies; a rasher man would have plunged

headlong into Gordon's schemes. He did neither; with a singular courage

and a singular caution he progressed along a razor-edge. He devoted all

his energies to the double task of evolving a reasonable policy out of

Gordon's intoxicated telegrams, and of inducing the divided Ministers at

home to give their sanction to what he had evolved. He might have

succeeded, if he had not had to reckon with yet another irreconcilable;

Time was a vital element in the situation, and Time was against him.

When the tribes round Khartoum rose, the last hope of a satisfactory

solution vanished. He was the first to perceive the altered condition of

affairs; long before the Government, long before Gordon himself, he

understood that the only remaining question was that of the extrication

of the Englishmen from Khartoum. He proposed that a small force should

be dispatched at once across the desert from Suakin to Barber, the point

on the Nile nearest to the Red Sea, and thence up the river to Gordon;

but, after considerable hesitation, the military authorities decided

that this was not a practicable plan. Upon that, he foresaw, with

perfect lucidity, the inevitable development of events. Sooner or later,

it would be absolutely necessary to send a relief expedition to

Khartoum; and, from that premise, it followed, without a possibility of

doubt, that it was the duty of the Government to do so at once. This he

saw quite clearly; but he also saw that the position in the Cabinet had

now altered, that Mr. Gladstone had taken the reins into his own hands.

And Mr. Gladstone did not wish to send a relief expedition. What was Sir

Evelyn Baring to do? Was he to pit his strength against Mr. Gladstone's?

To threaten resignation? To stake his whole future upon General Gordon's

fate? For a moment he wavered; he seemed to hint that unless the

Government sent a message to Khartoum promising a relief expedition

before the end of the year, he would be unable to be a party to their

acts. The Government refused to send any such message; and he perceived,

as he tells us, that 'it was evidently useless to continue the

correspondence any further'. After all, what could he do? He was still

only a secondary figure; his resignation would be accepted; he would be

given a colonial governorship and Gordon would be no nearer safety. But

then, could he sit by and witness a horrible catastrophe, without

lifting a hand? Of all the odious dilemmas which that man had put him

into this, he reflected, was the most odious. He slightly shrugged his

shoulders. No; he might have 'power to hurt', but he would 'do none'. He

wrote a dispatch--a long, balanced, guarded, grey dispatch, informing

the Government that he 'ventured to think' that it was 'a question

worthy of consideration whether the naval and military authorities

should not take some preliminary steps in the way of preparing boats,

etc., so as to be able to move, should the necessity arise'. Then,

within a week, before the receipt of the Government's answer, he left

Egypt. From the end of April until the beginning of September--during

the most momentous period of the whole crisis, he was engaged in London

upon a financial conference, while his place was taken in Cairo by a

substitute. With a characteristically convenient unobtrusiveness, Sir

Evelyn Baring had vanished from the scene.

Meanwhile, far to the southward, over the wide-spreading lands watered

by the Upper Nile and its tributaries, the power and the glory of him

who had once been Mohammed Ahmed were growing still. In the

Bahr-el-Ghazal, the last embers of resistance were stamped out with the

capture of Lupton Bey, and through the whole of that vast province three

times the size of England--every trace of the Egyptian Government was

obliterated. Still farther south the same fate was rapidly overtaking

Equatoria, where Emir Pasha, withdrawing into the unexplored depths of

Central Africa, carried with him the last vestiges of the old order. The

Mahdi himself still lingered in his headquarters at El Obeid; but, on

the rising of the tribes round Khartoum, he had decided that the time

for an offensive movement had come, and had dispatched an arm of 30,000

men to lay siege to the city. At the same time, in a long and elaborate

proclamation, in which he asserted, with all the elegance of oriental

rhetoric, both the sanctity of his mission and the invincibility of his

troops, he called upon the inhabitants to surrender. Gordon read aloud

the summons to the assembled townspeople; with one voice they declared

that they were ready to resist. This was a false Mahdi, they said; God

would defend the right; they put their trust in the Governor-General.

The most learned Sheikh in the town drew up a theological reply,

pointing out that the Mahdi did not fulfil the requirements of the

ancient prophets. At his appearance, had the Euphrates dried up and

revealed a hill of gold? Had contradiction and difference ceased upon

the earth? And, moreover, did not the faithful know that the true Mahdi

was born in the year of the Prophet 255, from which it surely followed

that he must be now 1,046 years old? And was it not clear to all men

that this pretender was not a tenth of that age?

These arguments were certainly forcible; but the Mahdi's army was more

forcible still. The besieged sallied out to the attack; they were

defeated; and the rout that followed was so disgraceful that two of the

commanding officers were, by Gordon's orders, executed as traitors. From

that moment the regular investment of Khartoum began. The Arab generals

decided to starve the town into submission. When, after a few weeks of

doubt, it became certain that no British force was on its way from

Suakin to smash up the Mahdi, and when, at the end of May, Berber, the

last connecting link between Khartoum and the outside world, fell into

the hands of the enemy, Gordon set his teeth, and sat down to wait and

to hope, as best he might. With unceasing energy he devoted himself to

the strengthening of his defences and the organisation of his

resources--to the digging of earthworks, the manufacture of ammunition,

the collection and the distribution of food. Every day there were

sallies and skirmishes; every day his little armoured steamboats paddled

up and down the river, scattering death and terror as they went.

Whatever the emergency, he was ready with devices and expedients. When

the earthworks were still uncompleted he procured hundreds of yards of

cotton, which he dyed the colour of earth, and spread out in long,

sloping lines, so as to deceive the Arabs, while the real works were

being prepared farther back. When a lack of money began to make itself

felt, he printed and circulated a paper coinage of his own. To combat

the growing discontent and disaffection of the townspeople, he

instituted a system of orders and medals; the women were not forgotten;

and his popularity redoubled. There was terror in the thought that harm

might come to the Governor-General. Awe and reverence followed him;

wherever he went he was surrounded by a vigilant and jealous guard, like

some precious idol, some mascot of victory. How could he go away? How

could he desert his people? It was impossible. It would be, as he

himself exclaimed in one of his latest telegrams to Sir Evelyn Baring,

'the climax of meanness', even to contemplate such an act. Sir Evelyn

Baring thought differently. In his opinion it was General Gordon's plain

duty to have come away from Khartoum. To stay involved inevitably a

relief expedition--a great expense of treasure and the loss of valuable

lives; to come away would merely mean that the inhabitants of Khartoum

would be 'taken prisoner by the Mahdi'. So Sir Evelyn Baring put it; but

the case was not quite so simple as that. When Berber fell, there had

been a massacre lasting for days--an appalling orgy of loot and lust and

slaughter; when Khartoum itself was captured, what followed was still

more terrible. Decidedly, it was no child's play to be 'taken prisoner

by the Mahdi'. And Gordon was actually there, among those people, in

closest intercourse with them, responsible, beloved. Yes; no doubt. But

was that in truth, his only motive? Did he not wish in reality, by

lingering in Khartoum, to force the hand of the Government? To oblige

them, whether they would or no, to send an army to smash up the Mahdi?

And was that fair? Was THAT his duty? He might protest, with his last

breath, that he had 'tried to do his duty'; Sir Evelyn Baring, at any

rate, would not agree.

But Sir Evelyn Baring was inaudible, and Gordon now cared very little

for his opinions. Is it possible that, if only for a moment, in his

extraordinary predicament, he may have listened to another and a very

different voice--a voice of singular quality, a voice which--for so one

would fain imagine--may well have wakened some familiar echoes in his

heart? One day, he received a private letter from the Mahdi. The letter

was accompanied by a small bundle of clothes.

'In the name of God!' wrote the Mahdi, 'herewith a suit of clothes,

consisting of a coat (jibbeh), an overcoat, a turban, a cap, a girdle,

and beads. This is the clothing of those who have given up this world

and its vanities, and who look for the world to come, for everlasting

happiness in Paradise. If you truly desire to come to God and seek to

live a godly life, you must at once wear this suit, and come out to

accept your everlasting good fortune.'

Did the words bear no meaning to the mystic of Gravesend? But he was an

English gentleman, an English officer. He flung the clothes to the

ground, and trampled on them in the sight of all. Then, alone, he went

up to the roof of his high palace, and turned the telescope once more,

almost mechanically, towards the north.

But nothing broke the immovability of that hard horizon; and, indeed,

how was it possible that help should come to him now? He seemed to be

utterly abandoned. Sir Evelyn Baring had disappeared into his financial

conference. In England, Mr. Gladstone had held firm, had outfaced the

House of Commons, had ignored the Press. He appeared to have triumphed.

Though it was clear that no preparations of any kind were being made for

the relief of Gordon, the anxiety and agitation of the public, which had

risen so suddenly to such a height of vehemence, had died down. The

dangerous beast had been quelled by the stern eye of its master. Other

questions became more interesting--the Reform Bill, the Russians, the

House of Lords. Gordon, silent in Khartoum, had almost dropped out of

remembrance. And yet, help did come after all. And it came from an

unexpected quarter. Lord Hartington had been for some time convinced

that he was responsible for Gordon's appointment; and his conscience was

beginning to grow uncomfortable.

Lord Hartington's conscience was of a piece with the rest of him. It was

not, like Mr. Gladstone's, a salamander-conscience--an intangible,

dangerous creature, that loved to live in the fire; nor was it, like

Gordon's, a restless conscience; nor, like Sir Evelyn Baring's, a

diplomatic conscience; it was a commonplace affair. Lord Hartington

himself would have been disgusted by any mention of it. If he had been

obliged, he would have alluded to it distantly; he would have muttered

that it was a bore not to do the proper thing. He was usually bored--for

one reason or another; but this particular form of boredom he found more

intense than all the rest. He would take endless pains to avoid it. Of

course, the whole thing was a nuisance--an obvious nuisance; and

everyone else must feel just as he did about it. And yet people seemed

to have got it into their heads that he had some kind of special faculty

in such matters--that there was some peculiar value in his judgment on a

question of right and wrong. He could not understand why it was; but

whenever there was a dispute about cards in a club, it was brought to

him to settle. It was most odd. But it was trite. In public affairs, no

less than in private, Lord Hartington's decisions carried an

extraordinary weight. The feeling of his idle friends in high society

was shared by the great mass of the English people; here was a man they

could trust. For indeed he was built upon a pattern which was very dear

to his countrymen. It was not simply that he was honest: it was that his

honesty was an English honesty--an honest which naturally belonged to

one who, so it seemed to them, was the living image of what an

Englishman should be.

In Lord Hartington they saw, embodied and glorified, the very qualities

which were nearest to their hearts--impartiality, solidity, common

sense--the qualities by which they themselves longed to be

distinguished, and by which, in their happier moments, they believed

they were. If ever they began to have misgivings, there, at any rate,

was the example of Lord Hartington to encourage them and guide

them--Lord Hartington who was never self-seeking, who was never excited,

and who had no imagination at all. Everything they knew about him fitted

into the picture, adding to their admiration and respect. His fondness

for field sports gave them a feeling of security; and certainly there

could be no nonsense about a man who confessed to two ambitions--to

become Prime Minister and to win the Derby--and who put the second above

the first. They loved him for his casualness--for his inexactness--for

refusing to make life a cut-and-dried business--for ramming an official

dispatch of high importance into his coat-pocket, and finding it there,

still unopened, at Newmarket, several days later. They loved him for his

hatred of fine sentiments; they were delighted when they heard that at

some function, on a florid speaker's avowing that 'this was the proudest

moment of his life', Lord Hartington had growled in an undertone 'the

proudest moment of my life was when MY pig won the prize at Skipton

Fair'. Above all, they loved him for being dull. It was the greatest

comfort--with Lord Hartington they could always be absolutely certain

that he would never, in any circumstances, be either brilliant, or

subtle, or surprising, or impassioned, or profound. As they sat,

listening to his speeches, in which considerations of stolid plainness

succeeded one another with complete flatness, they felt, involved and

supported by the colossal tedium, that their confidence was finally

assured. They looked up, and took their fill of the sturdy, obvious

presence. The inheritor of a splendid dukedom might almost have passed

for a farm hand. Almost, but not quite. For an air that was difficult to

explain, of preponderating authority, lurked in the solid figure; and

the lordly breeding of the House of Cavendish was visible in the large,

long, bearded, unimpressionable face.

One other characteristic--the necessary consequence, or, indeed, it

might almost be said, the essential expression, of all the

rest--completes the portrait: Lord Hartington was slow. He was slow in

movement, slow in apprehension, slow in thought and the communication of

thought, slow to decide, and slow to act. More than once this

disposition exercised a profound effect upon his career. A private

individual may, perhaps, be slow with impunity; but a statesman who is

slow--whatever the force of his character and the strength of his

judgment--can hardly escape unhurt from the hurrying of Time's winged

chariot, can hardly hope to avoid some grave disaster or some

irretrievable mistake. The fate of General Gordon, so intricately

interwoven with such a mass of complicated circumstance with the

policies of England and of Egypt, with the fanaticism of the Mahdi, with

the irreproachability of Sir Evelyn Baring, with Mr. Gladstone's

mysterious passions--was finally determined by the fact that Lord

Hartington was slow. If he had been even a very little quicker--if he

had been quicker by two days ... but it could not be. The ponderous

machinery took so long to set itself in motion; the great wheels and

levers, once started, revolved with such a laborious, such a painful

deliberation, that at last their work was accomplished--surely, firmly,

completely, in the best English manner, and too late.

Seven stages may be discerned in the history of Lord Hartington's

influence upon the fate of General Gordon. At the end of the first

stage, he had become convinced that he was responsible for Gordon's

appointment to Khartoum. At the end of the second, he had perceived that

his conscience would not allow him to remain inactive in the face of

Gordon's danger. At the end of the third, he had made an attempt to

induce the Cabinet to send an expedition to Gordon's relief. At the end

of the fourth, he had realised that the Cabinet had decided to postpone

the relief of Gordon indefinitely. At the end of the fifth, he had come

to the conclusion that he must put pressure upon Mr. Gladstone. At the

end of the sixth, he had attempted to put pressure upon Mr. Gladstone,

and had not succeeded. At the end of the seventh, he had succeeded in

putting pressure upon Mr. Gladstone; the relief expedition had been

ordered; he could do no more.

The turning-point in this long and extraordinary process occurred

towards the end of April, when the Cabinet, after the receipt of Sir

Evelyn Baring's final dispatch, decided to take no immediate measures

for Gordon's relief. From that moment it was clear that there was only

one course open to Lord Hartington--to tell Mr. Gladstone that he would

resign unless a relief expedition was sent. But it took him more than

three months to come to this conclusion. He always found the proceedings

at Cabinet meetings particularly hard to follow. The interchange of

question and answer, of proposal and counterproposal, the crowded

counsellors, Mr. Gladstone's subtleties, the abrupt and complicated

resolutions--these things invariably left him confused and perplexed.

After the crucial Cabinet at the end of April, he came away in a state

of uncertainty as to what had occurred; he had to write to Lord

Granville to find out; and by that time, of course, the Government's

decision had been telegraphed to Egypt. Three weeks later, in the middle

of May, he had grown so uneasy that he felt himself obliged to address a

circular letter to the Cabinet proposing that preparations for a relief

expedition should be set on foot at once. And then he began to

understand that nothing would ever be done until Mr. Gladstone, by some

means or other, had been forced to give his consent. A singular combat

followed. The slippery old man perpetually eluded the cumbrous grasp of

his antagonist. He delayed, he postponed, he raised interminable

difficulties, he prevaricated, he was silent, he disappeared. Lord

Hartington was dauntless. Gradually, inch by inch, he drove the Prime

Minister into a corner. But in the meantime many weeks had passed. On

July 1st, Lord Hartington was still remarking that he 'really did not

feel that he knew the mind or intention of the Government in respect of

the relief of General Gordon'. The month was spent in a succession of

stubborn efforts to wring from Mr. Gladstone some definite statement

upon the question. It was useless. On July 31st, Lord Hartington did the

deed. He stated that, unless an expedition was sent, he would resign. It

was, he said, 'a question of personal honour and good faith, and I don't

see how I can yield upon it'. His conscience had worked itself to rest

at last.

When Mr. Gladstone read the words, he realised that the game was over.

Lord Hartington's position in the Liberal Party was second only to his

own; he was the leader of the rich and powerful Whig aristocracy; his

influence with the country was immense. Nor was he the man to make idle

threats of resignation; he had said he would resign, and resign he

would: the collapse of the Government would be the inevitable result. On

August 5th, therefore, Parliament was asked to make a grant of L300,000,

in order 'to enable Her Majesty's Government to undertake operations for

the relief of General Gordon, should they become necessary'. The money

was voted; and even then, at that last hour, Mr. Gladstone made another,

final, desperate twist. Trying to save himself by the proviso which he

had inserted into the resolution, he declared that he was still

unconvinced of the necessity of any operations at all. 'I nearly,' he

wrote to Lord Hartington, 'but not quite, adopt words received today

from Granville. "It is clear, I think, that Gordon has our messages, and

does not choose to answer them."' Nearly, but not quite! The

qualification was masterly; but it was of no avail. This time, the

sinuous creature was held by too firm a grasp. On August 26th, Lord

Wolseley was appointed to command the relief expedition; and on

September 9th, he arrived in Egypt.

The relief expedition had begun, and at the same moment a new phase

opened at Khartoum. The annual rising of the Nile was now sufficiently

advanced to enable one of Gordon's small steamers to pass over the

cataracts down to Egypt in safety. He determined to seize the

opportunity of laying before the authorities in Cairo and London, and

the English public at large, an exact account of his position. A cargo

of documents, including Colonel Stewart's Diary of the siege and a

personal appeal for assistance addressed by Gordon to all the European

powers, was placed on board the Abbas; four other steamers were to

accompany her until she was out of danger from attacks by the Mahdi's

troops; after which, she was to proceed alone into Egypt. On the evening

of September 9th, just as she was about to start, the English and French

Consuls asked for permission to go with her--a permission which Gordon,

who had long been anxious to provide for their safety, readily granted.

Then Colonel Stewart made the same request; and Gordon consented with

the same alacrity.

Colonel Stewart was the second-in-command at Khartoum; and it seems

strange that he should have made a proposal which would leave Gordon in

a position of the gravest anxiety without a single European subordinate.

But his motives were to be veiled forever in a tragic obscurity. The

Abbas and her convoy set out. Henceforward the Governor-General was

alone. He had now, definitely and finally, made his decision. Colonel

Stewart and his companions had gone, with every prospect of returning

unharmed to civilisation. Mr. Gladstone's belief was justified; so far

as Gordon's personal safety was concerned, he might still, at this late

hour, have secured it. But he had chosen--he stayed at Khartoum.

No sooner were the steamers out of sight than he sat down at his

writing-table and began that daily record of his circumstances, his

reflections, and his feelings, which reveals to us, with such an

authentic exactitude, the final period of his extraordinary destiny. His

Journals, sent down the river in batches to await the coming of the

relief expedition, and addressed, first to Colonel Stewart, and later to

the 'Chief of Staff, Sudan Expeditionary Force', were official

documents, intended for publication, though, as Gordon himself was

careful to note on the outer covers, they would 'want pruning out'

before they were printed. He also wrote, on the envelope of the first

section, 'No secrets as far as I am concerned'. A more singular set of

state papers was never compiled. Sitting there, in the solitude of his

palace, with ruin closing round him, with anxieties on every hand, with

doom hanging above his head, he let his pen rush on for hour after hour

in an ecstasy of communication, a tireless unburdening of the spirit,

where the most trivial incidents of the passing day were mingled

pell-mell with philosophical disquisitions; where jests and anger, hopes

and terrors, elaborate justifications and cynical confessions, jostled

one another in reckless confusion. The impulsive, demonstrative man had

nobody to talk to any more, and so he talked instead to the pile of

telegraph forms, which, useless now for perplexing Sir Evelyn Baring,

served very well--for they were large and blank--as the repositories of

his conversation. His tone was not the intimate and religious tone which

he would have used with the Rev. Mr. Barnes or his sister Augusta; it

was such as must have been habitual with him in his intercourse with old

friends or fellow-officers, whose religious views were of a more

ordinary caste than his own, but with whom he was on confidential terms.

He was anxious to put his case to a select and sympathetic audience--to

convince such a man as Lord Wolseley that he was justified in what he

had done; and he was sparing in his allusions to the hand of Providence,

while those mysterious doubts and piercing introspections, which must

have filled him, he almost entirely concealed. He expressed himself, of

course, with eccentric ABANDON--it would have been impossible for him to

do otherwise; but he was content to indicate his deepest feelings with a

fleer. Yet sometimes--as one can imagine happening with him in actual

conversation--his utterance took the form of a half-soliloquy, a copious

outpouring addressed to himself more than to anyone else, for his own

satisfaction. There are passages in the Khartoum Journals which call up

in a flash the light, gliding figure, and the blue eyes with the candour

of childhood still shining in them; one can almost hear the low voice,

the singularly distinct articulation, the persuasive--the

self-persuasive--sentences, following each other so unassumingly between

the puffs of a cigarette.

As he wrote, two preoccupations principally filled his mind. His

reflections revolved around the immediate past and the impending future.

With an unerring persistency he examined, he excused, he explained, his

share in the complicated events which had led to his present situation.

He rebutted the charges of imaginary enemies; he laid bare the

ineptitude and the faithlessness of the English Government. He poured

out his satire upon officials and diplomatists. He drew caricatures, in

the margin, of Sir Evelyn Baring, with sentences of shocked pomposity

coming out of his mouth. In some passages, which the editor of the

Journals preferred to suppress, he covered Lord Granville with his

raillery, picturing the Foreign Secretary, lounging away his morning at

Walmer Castle, opening The Times and suddenly discovering, to his

horror, that Khartoum was still holding out. 'Why, HE SAID DISTINCTLY he

could ONLY hold out SIX MONTHS, and that was in March (counts the

months). August! why, he ought to have given in! What is to be done?

They'll be howling for an expedition.... It is no laughing matter; THAT

ABOMINABLE MAHDI! Why on earth does he not guard his roads better? WHAT

IS to be done?' Several times in his bitterness he repeats the

suggestion that the authorities at home were secretly hoping that the

fall of Khartoum would relieve them of their difficulties.

'What that Mahdi is about, Lord Granville is made to exclaim in another

deleted paragraph, 'I cannot make out. Why does he not put all his guns

on the river and stop the route? Eh what? "We will have to go to

Khartoum!" Why, it will cost millions, what a wretched business! What!

Send Zobeir? Our conscience recoils from THAT; it is elastic, but not

equal to that; it is a pact with the Devil.... Do you not think there is

any way of getting hold of H I M, in a quiet way?'

If a boy at Eton or Harrow, he declared, had acted as the Government had

acted, 'I THINK he would be kicked, and I AM SURE he would deserve it'.

He was the victim of hypocrites and humbugs. There was 'no sort of

parallel to all this in history--except David with Uriah the Hittite';

but then 'there was an Eve in the case', and he was not aware that the

Government had even that excuse.

From the past, he turned to the future, and surveyed, with a disturbed

and piercing vision, the possibilities before him. Supposing that the

relief expedition arrived, what would be his position? Upon one thing he

was determined: whatever happened, he would not play the part of 'the

rescued lamb'. He vehemently asserted that the purpose of the expedition

could only be the relief of the Sudan garrisons; it was monstrous to

imagine that it had been undertaken merely to ensure his personal

safety. He refused to believe it. In any case,

'I declare POSITIVELY,' he wrote, with passionate underlinings. 'AND

ONCE FOR ALL, THAT I WILL NOT LEAVE THE SUDAN UNTIL EVERY ONE WHO WANTS

TO GO DOWN IS GIVEN THE CHANCE TO DO SO, UNLESS a government is

established which relieves me of the charge; therefore, if any emissary

or letter comes up here ordering me to comedown, I WILL NOT OBEY IT, BUT

WILL STAY HERE AND FALL WITH THE TOWN, AND RUN ALL RISKS'.

This was sheer insubordination, no doubt; but he could not help that; it

was not in his nature to be obedient. 'I know if I was chief, I would

never employ myself, for I am incorrigible.' Decidedly, he was not

afraid to be 'what club men call insubordinate, though, of all

insubordinates, the club men are the worst'.

As for the government which was to replace him, there were several

alternatives: an Egyptian Pasha might succeed him as Governor-General,

or Zobeir might be appointed after all, or the whole country might be

handed over to the Sultan. His fertile imagination evolved scheme after

scheme; and his visions of his own future were equally various. He would

withdraw to the Equator; he would be delighted to spend Christmas in

Brussels; he would ... at any rate he would never go back to England.

That was certain.

'I dwell on the joy of never seeing Great Britain again, with its

horrid, wearisome dinner-parties and miseries. How we can put up with

those things, passes my imagination! It is a perfect bondage ... I would

sooner live 'like a Dervish with the Mahdi, than go out to dinner every

night in London. I hope, if any English general comes to Khartoum, he

will not ask me to dinner. Why men cannot be friends without bringing

the wretched stomachs in, is astounding.'

But would an English general ever have the opportunity of asking him to

dinner in Khartoum? There were moments when terrible misgivings assailed

him. He pieced together his scraps of intelligence with feverish

exactitude; he calculated times, distances, marches. 'If,' he wrote on

October 24th, they do not come before 30th November, the game is up, and

Rule Britannia.' Curious premonitions came into his mind. When he heard

that the Mahdi was approaching in person, it seemed to be the fulfilment

of a destiny, for he had 'always felt we were doomed to come face to

face'. What would be the end of it all? 'It is, of course, on the

cards,' he noted, 'that Khartoum is taken under the nose of the

Expeditionary Force, which will be JUST TOO LATE.' The splendid hawks

that swooped about the palace reminded him of a text in the Bible: 'The

eye that mocketh at his father and despiseth to obey his mother, the

ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat

it.' 'I often wonder,' he wrote, 'whether they are destined to pick my

eyes, for I fear I was not the best of sons.'

So, sitting late into the night, he filled the empty telegraph forms

with the agitations of his spirit, overflowing ever more hurriedly, more

furiously, with lines of emphasis, and capitals, and exclamation-marks

more and more thickly interspersed, so that the signs of his living

passion are still visible to the inquirer of today on those thin sheets

of mediocre paper and in the torrent of the ink. But he was a man of

elastic temperament; he could not remain forever upon the stretch; he

sought, and he found, relaxation in extraneous matters--in metaphysical

digressions, or in satirical outbursts, or in the small details of his

daily life. It amused him to have the Sudanese soldiers brought in and

shown their 'black pug faces' in the palace looking-glasses. He watched

with a cynical sympathy the impertinence of a turkey-cock that walked in

his courtyard. He made friends with a mouse who, 'judging from her

swelled-out appearance', was a lady, and came and ate out of his plate.

The cranes that flew over Khartoum in their thousands, and with their

curious cry, put him in mind of the poems of Schiller, which few ever

read, but which he admired highly, though he only knew them in Bulwer's

translation. He wrote little disquisitions on Plutarch and purgatory, on

the fear of death and on the sixteenth chapter of the Koran. Then the

turkey-cock, strutting with 'every feather on end, and all the colours

of the rainbow on his neck', attracted him once more, and he filled

several pages with his opinions upon the immortality of animals,

drifting on to a discussion of man's position in the universe, and the

infinite knowledge of God. It was all clear to him. And yet--'what a

contradiction, is life! I hate Her Majesty's Government for their

leaving the Sudan after having caused all its troubles, yet I believe

our Lord rules heaven and earth, so I ought to hate Him, which I

(sincerely) do not.'

One painful thought obsessed him. He believed that the two Egyptian

officers, who had been put to death after the defeat in March, had been

unjustly executed. He had given way to 'outside influences'; the two

Pashas had been 'judicially murdered'. Again and again he referred to

the incident with a haunting remorse. "The Times", perhaps, would

consider that he had been justified; but what did that matter? 'If The

Times saw this in print, it would say, "Why, then, did you act as you

did?" to which I fear I have no answer.' He determined to make what

reparation he could, and to send the families of the unfortunate Pashas

L1,000 each.

On a similar, but a less serious, occasion, he put the same principle

into action. He boxed the ears of a careless telegraph clerk--'and then,

as my conscience pricked me, I gave him $5. He said he did not mind if I

killed him--I was his father (a chocolate-coloured youth of twenty).'

His temper, indeed, was growing more and more uncertain, as he himself

was well aware. He observed with horror that men trembled when they came

into his presence--that their hands shook so that they could not hold a

match to a cigarette.

He trusted no one. Looking into the faces of those who surrounded him,

he saw only the ill-dissimulated signs of treachery and dislike. Of the

40,000 inhabitants of Khartoum he calculated that two-thirds were

willing--were perhaps anxious--to become the subjects of the Mahdi.

'These people are not worth any great sacrifice,' he bitterly observed.

The Egyptian officials were utterly incompetent; the soldiers were

cowards. All his admiration was reserved for his enemies. The meanest of

the Mahdi's followers was, he realised, 'a determined warrior, who could

undergo thirst and privation, who no more cared for pain or death than

if he were stone'. Those were the men whom, if the choice had lain with

him, he would have wished to command. And yet, strangely enough, he

persistently underrated the strength of the forces against him. A

handful of Englishmen--a handful of Turks would, he believed, be enough

to defeat the Mahdi's hosts and destroy his dominion. He knew very

little Arabic, and he depended for his information upon a few ignorant

English-speaking subordinates. The Mahdi himself he viewed with

ambiguous feelings. He jibed at him as a vulgar impostor; but it is easy

to perceive, under his scornful jocularities, the traces of an uneasy

respect.

He spent long hours upon the palace roof, gazing northwards; but the

veil of mystery and silence was unbroken. In spite of the efforts of

Major Kitchener, the officer in command of the Egyptian Intelligence

Service, hardly any messengers ever reached Khartoum; and when they did,

the information they brought was tormentingly scanty. Major Kitchener

did not escape the attentions of Gordon's pen. When news came at last,

it was terrible: Colonel Stewart and his companions had been killed. The

Abbas, after having passed uninjured through the part of the river

commanded by the Mahdi's troops, had struck upon a rock; Colonel Stewart

had disembarked in safety; and, while he was waiting for camels to

convey the detachment across the desert into Egypt, had accepted the

hospitality of a local Sheikh. Hardly had the Europeans entered the

Sheikh's hut when they were set upon and murdered; their native

followers shared their fate. The treacherous Sheikh was an adherent of

the Mahdi, and to the Mahdi all Colonel Stewart's papers, filled with

information as to the condition of Khartoum, were immediately sent. When

the first rumours of the disaster reached Gordon, he pictured, in a

flash of intuition, the actual details of the catastrophe. 'I feel

somehow convinced,' he wrote, they were captured by treachery ...

Stewart was not a bit suspicious (I am made up of it). I can see in

imagination the whole scene, the Sheikh inviting them to land ... then a

rush of wild Arabs, and all is over!' 'It is very sad,' he added, 'but

being ordained, we must not murmur.' And yet he believed that the true

responsibility lay with him; it was the punishment of his own sins. 'I

look on it,' was his unexpected conclusion, 'as being a Nemesis on the

death of the two Pashas.'

The workings of his conscience did indeed take on surprising shapes. Of

the three ex-governors of Darfur, Bahr-el-Ghazal, and Equatoria, Emin

Pasha had disappeared, Lupton Bey had died, and Slatin Pasha was held in

captivity by the Mahdi. By birth an Austrian and a Catholic, Slatin, in

the last desperate stages of his resistance, had adopted the expedient

of announcing his conversion to Mohammedanism, in order to win the

confidence of his native troops. On his capture, the fact of his

conversion procured him some degree of consideration; and, though he

occasionally suffered from the caprices of his masters, he had so far

escaped the terrible punishment which had been meted out to some other

of the Mahdi's European prisoners--that of close confinement in the

common gaol. He was now kept prisoner in one of the camps in the

neighbourhood of Khartoum. He managed to smuggle through a letter to

Gordon, asking for assistance, in case he could make his escape. To this

letter Gordon did not reply. Slatin wrote again and again; his piteous

appeals, couched in no less piteous French, made no effect upon the

heart of the Governor-General.

'Excellence!' he wrote, 'J'ai envoye deux lettres, sans avoir recu une

reponse de votre excellence.... Excellence! j'ai me battu 27 FOIS pour

le gouvernement contre l'ennemi--on m'a feri deux fois, et j'ai rien

fait contre l'honneur--rien de chose qui doit empeche votre excellence

de m'ecrir une reponse que je sais quoi faire. JE VOUS PRIE, Excellence,

de m'honore avec une reponse. P.S. Si votre Excellence ont peutetre

entendu que j'ai fait quelque chose contre l'honneur d'un officier et

cela vous empeche de m'ecrir, je vous prie de me donner l'occasion de me

defendre, et jugez apres la verite.'

The unfortunate Slatin understood well enough the cause of Gordon's

silence. It was in vain that he explained the motives of his conversion,

in vain that he pointed out that it had been made easier for him since

he had, 'PERHAPS UNHAPPILY, not received a strict religious education at

home'. Gordon was adamant. Slatin had 'denied his Lord', and that was

enough. His communications with Khartoum were discovered and he was put

in chains. When Gordon heard of it, he noted the fact grimly in his

diary, without a comment.

A more ghastly fate awaited another European who had fallen into the

hands of the Mahdi. Clavier Pain, a French adventurer, who had taken

part in the Commune, and who was now wandering, for reasons which have

never been discovered, in the wastes of the Sudan, was seized by the

Arabs, made prisoner, and hurried from camp to camp. He was attacked by

fever; but mercy was not among the virtues of the savage soldiers who

held him in their power. Hoisted upon the back of a camel, he was being

carried across the desert, when, overcome by weakness, he lost his hold,

and fell to the ground. Time or trouble were not to be wasted upon an

infidel. Orders were given that he should be immediately buried; the

orders were carried out; and in a few moments the cavalcade had left the

little hillock far behind. But some of those who were present believed

that Olivier Pain had been still breathing when his body was covered

with the sand.

Gordon, on hearing that a Frenchman had been captured by the Mahdi,

became extremely interested. The idea occurred to him that this

mysterious individual was none other than Ernest Renan, 'who,' he wrote,

in his last publication 'takes leave of the world, and is said to have

gone into Africa, not to reappear again'. He had met Renan at the rooms

of the Royal Geographical Society, had noticed that he looked bored--the

result, no doubt, of too much admiration--and had felt an instinct that

he would meet him again. The instinct now seemed to be justified. There

could hardly be any doubt that it WAS Renan; who else could it be? 'If

he comes to the lines,' he decided, 'and it is Renan, I shall go and see

him, for whatever one may think of his unbelief in our Lord, he

certainly dared to say what he thought, and he has not changed his creed

to save his life.' That the mellifluous author of the Vie de Jesus

should have determined to end his days in the depths of Africa, and have

come, in accordance with an intuition, to renew his acquaintance with

General Gordon in the lines of Khartoum, would indeed have been a

strange occurrence; but who shall limit the strangeness of the

possibilities that lie in wait for the sons of men? At that very moment,

in the south-eastern corner of the Sudan, another Frenchman, of a

peculiar eminence, was fulfilling a destiny more extraordinary than the

wildest romance. In the town of Harrar, near the Red Sea, Arthur Rimbaud

surveyed with splenetic impatience the tragedy of Khartoum.

'C'est justement les Anglais,' he wrote, 'avec leur absurde politique,

qui minent desormais le commerce de toutes ces cotes. Ils ont voulu tout

remanier et ils sont arrives a faire pire que les Egyptiens et les

Turcs, ruines par eux. Leur Gordon est un idiot, leur Wolseley un ane,

et toutes leurs entreprises une suite insensee d'absurdites et de

depredations.'

So wrote the amazing poet of the Saison d'Enfer amid those futile

turmoils of petty commerce, in which, with an inexplicable deliberation,

he had forgotten the enchantments of an unparalleled adolescence,

forgotten the fogs of London and the streets of Brussels, forgotten

Paris, forgotten the subtleties and the frenzies of inspiration,

forgotten the agonised embraces of Verlaine.

When the contents of Colonel Stewart's papers had been interpreted to

the Mahdi, he realised the serious condition of Khartoum, and decided

that the time had come to press the siege to a final conclusion. At the

end of October, he himself, at the head of a fresh army, appeared

outside the town. From that moment, the investment assumed a more and

more menacing character. The lack of provisions now for the first time

began to make itself felt. November 30th--the date fixed by Gordon as

the last possible moment of his resistance--came and went; the

Expeditionary Force had made no sign. The fortunate discovery of a large

store of grain, concealed by some merchants for purposes of speculation,

once more postponed the catastrophe. But the attacking army grew daily

more active; the skirmishes around the lines and on the river more

damaging to the besieged; and the Mahdi's guns began an intermittent

bombardment of the palace. By December 10th it was calculated that there

was not fifteen days' food in the town; 'truly I am worn to a shadow

with the food question', Gordon wrote; 'it is one continuous demand'. At

the same time he received the ominous news that five of his soldiers had

deserted to the Mahdi. His predicament was terrible; but he calculated,

from a few dubious messages that had reached him, that the relieving

force could not be very far away. Accordingly, on the 14th, he decided

to send down one of his four remaining steamers, the Bordeen, to meet it

at Metemmah, in order to deliver to the officer in command the latest

information as to the condition of the town. The Bordeen carried down

the last portion of the Journals, and Gordon's final messages to his

friends. Owing to a misunderstanding, he believed that Sir Evelyn Baring

was accompanying the expedition from Egypt, and some of his latest and

most successful satirical fancies played around the vision of the

distressed Consul-General perched for days upon the painful eminence of

a camel's hump. 'There was a slight laugh when Khartoum heard Baring was

bumping his way up here--a regular Nemesis.' But, when Sir Evelyn Baring

actually arrived--in whatever condition--what would happen? Gordon lost

himself in the multitude of his speculations. His own object, he

declared, was, 'of course, to make tracks'. Then in one of his strange

premonitory rhapsodies, he threw out, half in jest and half in earnest,

that the best solution of all the difficulties of the future would be

the appointment of Major Kitchener as Governor-General of the Sudan. The

Journal ended upon a note of menace and disdain:

'Now MARK THIS, if the Expeditionary Force, and I ask for no more than

200 men, does not come in ten days, the town may fall; and I have done

my best for the honour of our country. Good-bye.--C. G. GORDON.

'You send me no information, though you have lots of money. C. G. G.'

To his sister Augusta he was more explicit.

'I decline to agree,' he told her, 'that the expedition comes for my

relief; it comes for the relief of the garrisons, which I failed to

accomplish. I expect Her Majesty's Government are in a precious rage

with me for holding out and forcing their hand.'

The admission is significant. And then came the final adieux.

'This may be the last letter you will receive from me, for we are on our

last legs, owing to the delay of the expedition. However, God rules all,

and, as He will rule to His glory and our welfare, His will be done. I

fear, owing to circumstances, that my affairs are pecuniarily not over

bright ... your affectionate brother, C. G. GORDON.

'P.S. I am quite happy, thank God, and, like Lawrence, I have TRIED to

do my duty.'

The delay of the expedition was even more serious than Gordon had

supposed. Lord Wolseley had made the most elaborate preparations. He had

collected together a picked army of 10,000 of the finest British troops;

he had arranged a system of river transports with infinite care. For it

was his intention to take no risks; he would advance in force up the

Nile; he had determined that the fate of Gordon should not depend upon

the dangerous hazards of a small and hasty exploit. There is no

doubt--in view of the opposition which the relieving force actually met

with--that his decision was a wise one; but unfortunately, he had

miscalculated some of the essential elements in the situation. When his

preparations were at last complete, it was found that the Nile had sunk

so low that the flotillas, over which so much care had been lavished,

and upon which depended the whole success of the campaign, would be

unable to surmount the cataracts. At the same time--it was by then the

middle of November--a message arrived from Gordon indicating that

Khartoum was in serious straits. It was clear that an immediate advance

was necessary; the river route was out of the question; a swift dash

across the desert was the only possible expedient after all. But no

preparations for land transport had been made; weeks elapsed before a

sufficient number of camels could be collected; and more weeks before

those collected were trained for military march. It was not until

December 30th--more than a fortnight after the last entry in Gordon's

Journal--that Sir Herbert Stewart, at the head of 1,100 British troops,

was able to leave Korti on his march towards Metemmah, 170 miles across

the desert. His advance was slow, and it was tenaciously disputed by,

the Mahdi's forces. There was a desperate engagement on January 17th at

the wells of Abu Klea; the British square was broken; for a moment

victory hung in the balance; but the Arabs were repulsed. On the 19th

there was another furiously contested fight, in which Sir Herbert

Stewart was killed. On the 21st, the force, now diminished by over 250

casualties, reached Metemmah. Three days elapsed in reconnoitering the

country, and strengthening the position of the camp. On the 24th, Sir

Charles Wilson, who had succeeded to the command, embarked on the

Bordeen, and started up the river for Khartoum. On the following

evening, the vessel struck on a rock, causing a further delay of

twenty-four hours. It was not until January 28th that Sir Charles

Wilson, arriving under a heavy fire within sight of Khartoum, saw that

the Egyptian flag was not flying from the roof of the palace. The signs

of ruin and destruction on every hand showed clearly enough that the

town had fallen. The relief expedition was two days late.

The details of what passed within Khartoum during the last weeks of the

siege are unknown to us. In the diary of Bordeini Bey, a Levantine

merchant, we catch a few glimpses of the final stages of the

catastrophe--of the starving populace, the exhausted garrison, the

fluctuations of despair and hope, the dauntless energy of the

Governor-General. Still he worked on, indefatigably, apportioning

provisions, collecting ammunition, consulting with the townspeople,

encouraging the soldiers. His hair had suddenly turned quite white. Late

one evening, Bordeini Bey went to visit him in the palace, which was

being bombarded by the Mahdi's cannon. The high building, brilliantly

lighted up, afforded an excellent mark. As the shot came whistling

around the windows, the merchant suggested that it would be advisable to

stop them up with boxes full of sand. Upon this, Gordon Pasha became

enraged.

'He called up the guard, and gave them orders to shoot me if I moved; he

then brought a very large lantern which would hold twenty-four candles.

He and I then put the candles into the sockets, placed the lantern on

the table in front of the window, lit the candles, and then we sat down

at the table. The Pasha then said, "When God was portioning out fear to

all the people in the world, at last it came to my turn, and there was

no fear left to give me. Go, tell all the people in Khartoum that Gordon

fears nothing, for God has created him without fear."'

On January 5th, Omdurman, a village on the opposite bank of the Nile,

which had hitherto been occupied by the besieged, was taken by the

Arabs. The town was now closely surrounded, and every chance of

obtaining fresh supplies was cut off. The famine became terrible; dogs,

donkeys, skins, gum, palm fibre, were devoured by the desperate

inhabitants. The soldiers stood on the fortifications like pieces of

wood. Hundreds died of hunger daily: their corpses filled the streets;

and the survivors had not the strength to bury the dead. On the 20th,

the news of the battle of Abu Klea reached Khartoum. The English were

coming at last. Hope rose; every morning the Governor-General assured

the townspeople that one day more would see the end of their sufferings;

and night after night his words were proved untrue.

On the 23rd, a rumour spread that a spy had arrived with letters, and

that the English army was at hand. A merchant found a piece of newspaper

lying in the road, in which it was stated that the strength of the

relieving forces was 15,000 men. For a moment, hope flickered up again,

only to relapse once more. The rumour, the letters, the printed paper,

all had been contrivances of Gordon to inspire the garrison with the

courage to hold out. On the 25th, it was obvious that the Arabs were

preparing an attack, and a deputation of the principal inhabitants

waited upon the Governor-General. But he refused to see them; Bordeini

Bey was alone admitted to his presence. He was sitting on a divan, and,

as Bordeini Bey came into the room, he snatched the fez from his head

and flung it from him.

'What more can I say?' he exclaimed, in a voice such as the merchant had

never heard before. 'The people will no longer believe me. I have told

them over and over again that help would be here, but it has never come,

and now they must see I tell them lies. I can do nothing more. Go, and

collect all the people you can on the lines, and make a good stand. Now

leave me to smoke these cigarettes.'

Bordeini Bey knew then, he tells us, that Gordon Pasha was in despair.

He left the room, having looked upon the Governor-General for the last

time.

When the English force reached Metemmah, the Mahdi, who had originally

intended to reduce Khartoum to surrender through starvation, decided to

attempt its capture by assault. The receding Nile had left one portion

of the town's circumference undefended; as the river withdrew, the

rampart had crumbled; a broad expanse of mud was left between the wall

and the water, and the soldiers, overcome by hunger and the lassitude of

hopelessness, had trusted to the morass to protect them, and neglected

to repair the breach. Early on the morning of the 26th, the Arabs

crossed the river at this point. The mud, partially dried up, presented

no obstacle; nor did the ruined fortification, feebly manned by some

half-dying troops. Resistance was futile, and it was scarcely offered:

the Mahdi's army swarmed into Khartoum. Gordon had long debated with

himself what his action should be at the supreme moment. 'I shall never

(D.V.),' he had told Sir Evelyn Baring, 'be taken alive.' He had had

gunpowder put into the cellars of the palace, so that the whole building

might, at a moment's notice, be blown into the air. But then misgivings

had come upon him; was it not his duty 'to maintain the faith, and, if

necessary, to suffer for it'?--to remain a tortured and humiliated

witness of his Lord in the Mahdi's chains? The blowing up of the palace

would have, he thought, 'more or less the taint of suicide', would be,

in a way, taking things out of God's hands'. He remained undecided; and

meanwhile, to be ready for every contingency, he kept one of his little

armoured vessels close at hand on the river, with steam up, day and

night, to transport him, if so he should decide, southward, through the

enemy, to the recesses of Equatoria. The sudden appearance of the Arabs,

the complete collapse of the defence, saved him the necessity of making

up his mind. He had been on the roof, in his dressing-gown, when the

attack began; and he had only time to hurry to his bedroom, to slip on a

white uniform, and to seize up a sword and a revolver, before the

foremost of the assailants were in the palace. The crowd was led by four

of the fiercest of the Mahdi's followers--tall and swarthy Dervishes,

splendid in their many-coloured jibbehs, their great swords drawn from

their scabbards of brass and velvet, their spears flourishing above

their heads. Gordon met them at the top of the staircase. For a moment,

there was a deathly pause, while he stood in silence, surveying his

antagonists. Then it is said that Taha Shahin, the Dongolawi, cried in a

loud voice, 'Mala' oun el yom yomek!' (O cursed one, your time is come),

and plunged his spear into the Englishman's body. His only reply was a

gesture of contempt. Another spear transfixed him; he fell, and the

swords of the three other Dervishes instantly hacked him to death. Thus,

if we are to believe the official chroniclers, in the dignity of

unresisting disdain, General Gordon met his end. But it is only fitting

that the last moments of one whose whole life was passed in

contradiction should be involved in mystery and doubt. Other witnesses

told a very different story. The man whom they saw die was not a saint

but a warrior. With intrepidity, with skill, with desperation, he flew

at his enemies. When his pistol was exhausted, he fought on with his

sword; he forced his way almost to the bottom of the staircase; and,

among, a heap of corpses, only succumbed at length to the sheer weight

of the multitudes against him.

That morning, while Slatin Pasha was sitting in his chains in the camp

at Omdurman, he saw a group of Arabs approaching, one of whom was

carrying something wrapped up in a cloth. As the group passed him, they

stopped for a moment, and railed at him in savage mockery. Then the

cloth was lifted, and he saw before him Gordon's head. The trophy was

taken to the Mahdi: at last the two fanatics had indeed met face to

face. The Mahdi ordered the head to be fixed between the branches of a

tree in the public highway, and all who passed threw stones at it. The

hawks of the desert swept and circled about it--those very hawks which

the blue eyes had so often watched.

The news of the catastrophe reached England, and a great outcry arose.

The public grief vied with the public indignation. The Queen, in a

letter to Miss Gordon, immediately gave vent both to her own sentiments

and those of the nation.

'HOW shall I write to you,' she exclaimed, 'or how shall I attempt to

express WHAT I FEEL! To THINK of your dear, noble, heroic Brother, who

served his Country and his Queen so truly, so heroically, with a

self-sacrifice so edifying to the World, not having been rescued. That

the promises of support were not fulfilled--which I so frequently and

constantly pressed on those who asked him to go--is to me GRIEF

INEXPRESSIBLE! Indeed, it has made me ill ... Would you express to your

other sisters and your elder Brother my true sympathy, and what I do so

keenly feel, the STAIN left upon England, for your dear Brother's cruel,

though heroic, fate!'

In reply, Miss Gordon presented the Queen with her brother's Bible,

which was placed in one of the corridors at Windsor, open, on a white

satin cushion, and enclosed in a crystal case. In the meanwhile, Gordon

was acclaimed in every newspaper as a national martyr; State services

were held in his honour at Westminster and St Paul's; L20,000 was voted

to his family; and a great sum of money was raised by subscription to

endow a charity in his memory. Wrath and execration fell, in particular,

upon the head of Mr. Gladstone. He was little better than a murderer; he

was a traitor; he was a heartless villain, who had been seen at the play

on the very night when Gordon's death was announced. The storm passed;

but Mr. Gladstone had soon to cope with a still more serious agitation.

The cry was raised on every side that the national honour would be

irreparably tarnished if the Mahdi were left in the peaceful possession

of Khartoum, and that the Expeditionary Force should be at once employed

to chastise the false prophet and to conquer the Sudan. But it was in

vain that the imperialists clamoured; in vain that Lord Wolseley wrote

several dispatches, proving over and over again that to leave the Mahdi

unconquered must involve the ruin of Egypt; in vain that Lord Hartington

at last discovered that he had come to the same conclusion. The old man

stood firm. Just then, a crisis with Russia on the Afghan frontier

supervened; and Mr. Gladstone, pointing out that every available soldier

might be wanted at any moment for a European war, withdrew Lord Wolseley

and his army from Egypt. The Russian crisis disappeared. The Mahdi

remained supreme lord of the Sudan.

And yet it was not with the Mahdi that the future lay. Before six months

were out, in the plenitude of his power, he died, and the Khalifa

Abdullahi reigned in his stead. The future lay with Major Kitchener and

his Maxim-Nordenfeldt guns. Thirteen years later the Mahdi's empire was

abolished forever in the gigantic hecatomb of Omdurman; after which it

was thought proper that a religious ceremony in honour of General Gordon

should be held at the palace at Khartoum. The service was conducted by

four chaplains--of the Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist

persuasions--and concluded with a performance of 'Abide with Me'--the

General's favourite hymn--by a select company of Sudanese buglers. Every

one agreed that General Gordon had been avenged at last. Who could doubt

it? General Gordon himself, possibly, fluttering, in some remote

Nirvana, the pages of a phantasmal Bible, might have ventured on a

satirical remark. But General Gordon had always been a contradictious

person--even a little off his head, perhaps, though a hero; and besides,

he was no longer there to contradict ... At any rate, it had all ended

very happily--in a glorious slaughter of 20,000 Arabs, a vast addition

to the British Empire, and a step in the Peerage for Sir Evelyn Baring.

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\* The authenticity of the Diary contained in this book has been

disputed, notably by Mr. J. 0. P. Bland in his Li Hung Chang.

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