

mercy in Christ Jesus. We shall not be there because we are fit to be there when we leave the earth. The greatest saint on earth is not fit. "The spirits of just men made perfect" are the inhabitants of heaven. It is not death that makes us perfect,—it is not the escape from the material body and from this earthly scene which is going to perfect us. There has to be a miracle of completing grace before any one of us can be fit for the society of the angels and for the redeemed in their sinless robes.'

'The overwhelming power of the unhindered grace of God.' What hinders it? Not sin, not sinful habit, not even crime and a career of it. Nothing but unrepentance. The moment that repentance comes, the grace of God is free, and its power is overwhelming. 'Two young men greatly contrasted, ended their lives very soon after Jesus,—the one was the bandit, who was on a neighbouring cross by the side of Christ, the other was Saint Stephen, the first martyr. The assurance Jesus gave the criminal was, "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Had the saint any higher assurance? Was it not the same assurance which made his death-cry, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," before he fell asleep? The difference between Stephen and that crucified ill-doer was far greater than the difference between many a young man, whose name was on no Church roll before he died, and the most devoted Christian.

Jesus did not hesitate to say, "To-day," "with me," "in Paradise."

We do not know the grace of God when we demand a Purgatory of discipline. And we do not know God. We make Him in our own image, after our own likeness. We think He cannot be bothered with us till we are ready to give Him no bother. To pass for a moment from Mr. GILLIE, there is a book on *The Unfolding of Life* which has been written by the Rev. W. T. A. BARBER, D.D., Head Master of the Leys School. It is the Fernley Lecture for the year. In that book there is a story told.

'We remember,' says Dr. BARBER, 'a happy home in which a buzzing swarm of children were always round an adored mother. Sometimes, in humorous despair, she would drive them away: "Oh, children, do go away and give me a little peace." When they came with the usual puzzles of childhood and asked why, if heaven were so lovely, God did not take them to live with Him right away, their mother could only point out how lonely she would be; but the answer obviously did not satisfy. One day the youngest boy came with face all radiant; he had solved the riddle: "I know why God doesn't take us all at once to heaven. *He wants a little peace first.*" Quite naturally and rightly he had made a God in the image of his mother.'

'If God be for us.'

By PROFESSOR THE REV. A. G. HOGG, M.A., MADRAS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE, INDIA.

'If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'—Rom. 8^{31, 32}.

How satisfyingly inclusive is the catalogue of dangers which, in the chapter from which the text is taken, the Apostle sums up and tosses contemptuously aside! 'I am certain,' he says, that 'neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities,

neither the present nor the future, no powers of the Height or of the Depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to part us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Dr. Moffatt's version). In the commonplace days of peace, which now seem so far-away a memory, we might have been content with St. Paul's first antithesis, 'neither death nor life.' But in these present days when the name of a certain political power

has become for so many of us emblematic of principles of moral evil which in incipient and subtler guise have been penetrating all parts of our civilization and threatening its total collapse, we have regained a vivid sense that our warfare is superhuman, and so we welcome the comfort of the Apostle's triumphant disdain not for death and life alone, but for angels and principalities and powers of the Height or of the Depth. Not only nameable terrors but every daunting fiction which even the most diseased imagination can conjure up are gathered together and flung contemptuously aside by the challenging question: 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' Is not such a challenge fitted to stir the weariest courage to a new rally? Does not its simple logic destroy even the most deeply seated grounds for despair?

It is out of a life rich in memories of victory that the Apostle speaks his challenge. And we know the source whence he derived that conquering courage and trust. It was Christ's creation—our Lord's gift to an age which was worldly wise and therefore world-weary and hastening towards its fall. So, if we would learn to share the Apostle's confidence and to pass on to others his heartening challenge, we should turn back to the pages of our Lord's own wonderful life.

Of its vivid pictures perhaps none is more impressive as a lesson in faith than the story of our Lord's astonishment on the lake of Gennesaret. That story is commonly called 'The Stilling of the Tempest,' but this is quite a misnomer. If the sole interest of the narrators had indeed been fixed on the cessation of the storm, we might well have hesitated to credit their account. It is not the marvellousness of the achievement that awakens suspicion, for our Lord did much that was even more marvellous. What might provoke doubt is the easiness with which a tale of mere prodigy might grow up in a miracle-loving age. But, while to invent the prodigy might have been easy, to invent our Lord's astonishment—to invent a way of treating the disciples' terror that has about it such a distinguished originality—this is an achievement beyond ordinary myth-making powers. One feels that even if the storm and its stilling were legend, Christ's way of stultifying the disciples' fears nevertheless must be a transcript from life. Shall we study for the moment the sequence of event and action?

The elements raged; the disciples trembled;

our Lord slept. They wakened Him with their weak but most humanly natural appeal: 'Master, carest thou not that we perish?' Now what, under these conditions, was the obvious course for our Lord to follow? What was the course which, in virtue of its obviousness, would naturally have been attributed to Him if the story had been legend? In the judgment of our own age the obvious action for a religious teacher under such circumstances would have been to preach a sermon on the duty of trusting God in time of danger. To a prodigy-loving age, on the other hand, the obvious action might have seemed to be the Master's stilling of the tempest. But to no age would that sequence of emotion and deed seem obvious which, we are told, marked our Lord's behaviour. That which, to His own spiritual vision, shone out so luminously—the Heavenly Father holding in the hollow of His mighty hand the little lake, the dangerous little tempest, the tiny boat with its specks of human creatures—this He flashed upon the disciples' natural vision by asking that Father's hand to close upon the little tempest and crush it into stillness. And then, with never a second thought for the deed that He had done, He turned to the disciples and asked in grieved surprise: 'Why are ye fearful? Have ye not yet faith?' It is as though He said: 'If God be for you, can a mere tempest be against you?' The logic is the same as that which St. Paul uses, but in the deed which went before the reasoning there shines out that utterness of belief in the Heavenly Father's willingness and liberty to 'be *for* us' which was Christ's new, unique contribution to the religious life of the world.

Let us dwell a little longer on the distinguished originality of our Lord's way of feeling and acting, as here narrated. What, let us ask, was the novel and striking feature in His attitude?

What was new was not the idea that God would interpose to rescue men from danger, for that was an idea familiar to every reader of the O.T. narratives. Moreover, Jesus did not believe in the danger; in His eyes the disciples were as safe in the storm as in a calm.

Again, what was new was not the idea that God would grant a sign to strengthen hard-pressed faith. For the O.T. chronicles many examples of that idea also; and although it was certainly one of the conceptions which underlay Christ's conduct

on this occasion, it is not itself the feature that captures our attention.

What stirs our wonder is not so much any particular idea implied in our Lord's action here as His attitude to the deed He had done—His evident lack of any feeling that what had occurred was out of the common. He did not hesitate before His own audacity in expecting of the Father so unwonted an interposition; nor is there, after the deed, any pause to recover His breath, as it were, after an exceptional venturesomeness of faith. Just as if the whole incident had been the most commonplace thing in the world, He turns to the disciples with nothing else-interesting His mind than His perplexed astonishment at their lack of faith. It is in this feature above all that the narrative reveals its essential authenticity. It is dominated by the originality of thought and deed of One for whom it was indeed one of the commonplaces of everyday life that the Father controls, the mightiest forces of nature in the interests of human faith—in the interests even of the humblest lessons which that faith needs to learn. It is simple fact that the Father is always controlling the forces of nature in the interests of faith, and so the stilling of the tempest was indeed something commonplace—a mere making visible of what He is doing all the time. It is this attitude of Christ toward His own deed, this His conception of the event as a mere commonplace, that has guarded the prodigy from bearing the evil fruit which is so apt to spring from prodigies. And it is this feature of the story that enables it to teach so precious a lesson. Death is not commonplace, but life is. Things to come are not commonplace, but things present are. Yet equally a matter of everyday commonplace fact is God's control of the world for the ends of faith. And so neither death nor life, neither things to come nor things present, can separate us from the love of God. If God be for us, what can be against us? If God be for us, no tottering of our life's structure need make us despair—not shadowed homes, nor holocausts on the stricken field, nor the enfeebling of the Church's testimony, nor the threatened collapse of our civilization.

Does this one picture-lesson from the great life of our Lord suffice us? Or do we perhaps complain that in the face of merely external danger—in presence, say, of a physical tempest—trust is easy? Do we want an object-lesson from a case

of spiritual extremity? If we do, let us turn another page in the life of our Lord.

There came a critical stage in His great enterprise of winning for the world the Kingdom of God, of winning it, if possible, for His own beloved nation too. The crowds had been stirred, but their attitude was undecided. It seemed that a little more might win them, but just as possible that this little more might repel them. And then Jesus was led to work the miracle of feeding the thousands, that miracle which they ought to have felt so eloquent of the kind of Heavenly Father in whom Christ sought to awaken their real trust. Yet upon very few did it have this effect. In the majority it aroused instead a lust for worldly well-being and provoked a scheme to force Jesus to take the lead in a politico-social revolution. Such a revelation of human blindness of soul seems to have brought home to our Lord the certainty that His ideal could not be won in the way in which He had longed that it might come to pass. He quieted the crowd and caused it to disperse. He hurried the disciples away by themselves in a boat. He Himself retired to the hills that He might be alone, and might in the solitude of prayer wrestle with that which He now saw so plainly before Him.

But in the loneliness of that night there was no stillness. As if to give material substance to the spiritual tempest that threatened to engulf His Messianic mission, the winds rose and howled about His place of retreat. With the whirlwind of men's vain excitement, resting on no solid basis of insight, from which He had just escaped and to which He must presently return, there linked themselves in His mind the eddying gusts of the storm, as they sprang up seemingly from nowhere and whirled so madly around. The cold blast which struck across His face seemed alive with the venom of human hate. The scurrying clouds that raced across the face of heaven appeared one with the follies which, chasing each other across the field of man's vision, continually obscure from Him the true countenance of God. Out yonder on the lake Jesus could see the disciples' frail craft tossed and threatened by the hungry waves. Was not the fair vessel of His own life-work also at sea in this very tempest, where the spiritual and the material, joined in one unholy alliance, made simultaneous war against all that to Him was dear? Perched high up amid the chaos of the elements, the soul

of our Lord wrestled on in solitude. And then upon His straining faith there fell an inward peace. He saw the tempest, both spiritual and physical, held in the hollow of His Father's hand, its noisiest fury impotent to work more than His Father's will. And Jesus arose and walked—walked down the hillside—walked right, out into the waves.

I do not believe that He thought of working a miracle; I do not think He meant to teach a lesson; I do not find in the narratives anything to suggest such an intention. I do not think He formed any self-conscious resolve at all. Our Lord had the poet's cast of mind, which is quick to find the invisible clothing itself in the visible, and for which the dividing line between material and spiritual is ever very thin. And just as, a little later, the barren fig-tree blended in the poet-mind of Jesus with the barrenness of Israel, so here at this high-strung moment the physical storm had become for Him indistinguishably one with the spiritual conflict that threatened to shipwreck His God-given mission. Thus it came to pass that the act of gazing calmly into the heart of that *human* tempest whose fierce threatenings absorbed His thought worked itself out naturally, unself-consciously, possibly at first without His own express notice, into the act of breasting the *physical* storm, walking out into the very sea, and treading down its waves which He saw tossing themselves so impotently in the grasp of His Father's hand.

Is this too venturesome a reading of this strange story in the life of our Lord? It may be so. But at any rate a spiritual crisis did drive our Lord that evening to seek solitude on the mountain-side, and to stay there through hours of storm. At any rate He did conquer. And beyond all question the secret of His victorious serenity, as he walked upon the waters with apparently no desire to reach the boat (Mk 6⁴⁹), was not different from this: 'If the Heavenly Father be for us, what can be against us?' In this story, therefore, we have what we asked for—an object-lesson which teaches trust in face of *spiritual* extremity. Will it not be strange if we are not satisfied? What more can our faith need to stir it to new life than St. Paul's challenging logic, and these object-lessons in proof of its validity? And yet, strange though it may seem, we do want more.

We want more because there is one dishearten-

ingly obvious answer to St. Paul's logic. 'It is true,' we sadly murmur, 'that if God be for us, no one can be against us—no one but ourselves. Yet we ourselves are our own worst enemies, and God will not force our human wills.' Have we not made this answer often, and does it not render listless the ears on which the Apostle's challenge falls?

Too often has it been so with us. Yet have we not done with St. Paul's logic so quickly. We must follow his argument to its close. 'He that spared not his own Son'—that is how the reasoning proceeds, and it reaches to the uttermost of our need. The Apostle's challenge passes on to us our Lord's message, but besides His message there was His mission.

Our Lord's message—the central thought which was the inspiration of all His deeds of human faith and words of wondrous power—was this: that God is so absolutely *for* us as to leave no reason in the world why we should not obtain from Him what will satisfy our every need—no reason but this, that we will not, or do not, go to Him in a spirit that permits Him to do as He would wish and grant our every desire. Now, besides this message of the Lord, our Brother, there is the mission of the Lord, our Redeemer.

Have we dared to imagine, perhaps, that God does not know us as well as we know ourselves? Do we fancy that our deplorable depravity, our inability to come to Him in the spirit that will enable Him to answer our cry, is a discovery of our own, a discovery which has escaped the eye of the great Searcher of hearts? Nay, the Father knows our depravity, and out of this knowledge comes our Lord's mission. The Father knows our impotence to approach Him as we should, and therefore it was that He 'spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,' so that, this our impotence having been abolished through the work of His Son, He might be able with Him freely to give us all things.

How does the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, do the work that charms away our impotence? None can fully answer such a question. Many of us have found Him beginning to do His work, and perhaps we fancy that we understand a little of His magic. But the whole we do not, nor do we need to, understand. It is enough for us that He does it. It is enough for us that all the Godhead of God is at stake in His ability to do this—enough

for us that God would not be God if He could not save a soul so long as it even feebly desired to be saved.

Why do we find it so difficult to believe that even all the resources of the Godhead can conquer human depravity in our own personal case, can transform our individual impotence into an ability to be blessed? We feel so just because, and we feel so only when, this impossibility *has* begun to be accomplished. Our self-despair is the first part of Christ's transforming work in us. We do not

know that we are so stubborn until He has begun to soften us. Let us thank Him, then, for the hopelessness with which He sometimes oppresses us; and when those times are at their worst, let us cower down into His arms, repeating to ourselves that it is God's responsibility—if one may dare to put it so, God's business—and not ours to accomplish our salvation, that it is His age-long purpose through Christ to make us—somehow, somewhen—allow Him freely to give us all things.

Literature.

TOM KETTLE.

'WHEN the war broke out he was engaged in Belgium buying rifles for the Volunteers. In August and September 1914 he was war correspondent for the *Daily News* in Belgium. I shall quote just one passage which briefly sums up his attitude. "When this great war fell on Europe, those who knew even a little of current ethical and political ideals felt that the hour of Destiny had sounded. Europe had once more been threatened by Barbarism, Odin had thrown down his last challenge to Christ. To you, these may or may not seem mere phrases: to anyone whose duty has imposed on him some knowledge of Prussia, they are realities as true as the foul of Hell. When the most fully guaranteed and most sacred treaty in Europe—that which protected Belgium—was violated by Germany, when the frontier was crossed and the guns opened on Liège, without hesitation we declared that the lot of Ireland was on the side of the Allies. As the wave of infamy swept further and further over the plains of Belgium and France, we felt it was the duty of those who could do so to pass from words to deeds."

To Odin's challenge, we cried Amen!
We stayed the plough and laid by the pen,
And we shouldered our guns like gentlemen
That the wiser weak might hold.

'In November 1914 he joined, as he called it, the "Army of Freedom." His oratorical gifts and prestige as a Nationalist made him a great asset to

the recruiting committee. It is said he made over two hundred speeches throughout Ireland. "He spent himself tirelessly on the task," writes a contributor to a Unionist paper. "His brilliant speeches were the admiration of all who heard them. To him, they were a heavy duty. 'The absentee Irishman to-day,' he said in a fine epigram, 'is the man who stays at home.' All the time he was on these spell-binding missions, he was chafing to be at the front. His happy and fighting nature delighted in the rough-and-tumble of platform work, and in the interruption of the 'voice' and hot thrust of retort. I remember him telling me of an Australian minor poet who was too proud to fight. The poet was arguing that men of letters should stay at home and cultivate the muses and hand on the torch of culture to the future. 'I would rather be a tenth-rate minor poet,' he said, 'than a great soldier.' Kettle's retort on this occasion was deadly. 'Well,' he said, 'aren't you?'"

'He went to the front with a burdened heart. The murder of his brother-in-law, Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, cast a deep gloom on his spirit. As he wrote to his friend Mr. Lynd shortly before his death, it "oppressed him with horror." I do not think it out of place to recall here a brief obituary notice he wrote of Mr. Sheehy-Skeffington, whom he loved, as Mr. Lynd so truly says, for the "uncompromising and radically gentle idealist he was"—

"It would be difficult at any time to convey in the deadness of language an adequate sense of the courage, vitality, superabundant faith, and self-