

it does so far accord with it that man is placed as the climax of evolution.

2. And he is so because, by the gift of self-conscious reason, he was made an adumbration of God's own Personality.
3. And this made it possible for God's Personality—His Fulness—His entire Nature and Being—to be completely revealed in Man.
4. It is revealed actually in the Representative God-Man, and potentially in all who are spiritually united to Him.

With this mass of deep truth shining in the Creation story, is it not what St. Paul would call a return to 'the beggarly elements' to attempt to reconcile the details with science? It is, to use the language of our schoolboy days, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning—that is, a parable.

And may I say that, if we are convinced of this in our own minds, it is wrong, absolutely wrong, to teach the story to others in such a way as to make it appear as though we thought it historically true.

The question naturally arises, What is to be done in teaching it to children or to ignorant adults? The answer is, I think, threefold:

1. If we feel drawn to teach it, we must teach it with a tender spiritual tact and wisdom; and if any man lacks such wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally.

2. If we are still afraid of teaching it, and feel pretty certain that we cannot do so without doing more harm than good, then I am quite sure that it is our sacred duty to refrain from teaching it altogether.

3. I believe that if put quite simply and naturally it can be taught to children. It is sometimes said that children, when hearing a story, will not appreciate it unless they know it to be a 'true story.' But few, if any, of those who have had a large experience in teaching children, have found that to be the case.

They will take it in and enjoy it if it is presented to them as a beautiful parable, just as they do any of our Lord's parables. It is of the first importance that a young man or woman should never have to unlearn anything that they have been taught as children. And if they are taught that the first chapter of Genesis is historically and scientifically accurate, they will inevitably unlearn it in the course of a few years; and the great trial to their faith, which will probably ensue, will lie at the door of those who taught them in their childhood things that they themselves knew to be wrong.

In teaching the spiritual meaning of the Creation story, or of any other part of the Bible—all of which was written by the hands of weak human beings, we can take our stand with St. Paul as 'ministers of a new covenant; *not of the letter*, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.'

The Pilgrim's Progress.

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The Slough of Despond.

ONE of the greatest dangers to life, and especially to travel, in the England of old days, arose from those deep and treacherous morasses which it has taken centuries to drain. As early as the days of the Arthurian legend, chivalry at its best had felt this, among other duties of the knight, incumbent on it—a fact to which Tennyson refers finely in his 'Arthur.' In every county of England there were many 'sloughs' in those days, and tradition has fixed upon one near Bedford for the suggestion

of this picture. A modern annotator quotes the striking lines—

Where hardly a human foot could pass
Or a human heart would dare;
On the quaking turf of the green morass,
His all he had trusted there.

What does this slough mean in the allegory? Christian's own explanation gives the clue; his fall here is the work of fear. It is the despondency of reaction which, if it become permanent, may deepen into religious monomania. It is to

some extent physical, the result of overstrained nerves, so that the *change of weather* mentioned may be taken quite literally. A clear air and a sunny day are great aids to faith. Thus it is not only sharp conviction of sin that we have here, but a state of hopelessness and weariness of spirit whose causes are very composite. All the evil side of life flows into it. Every immoral memory and unbelieving thought increases it. Bunyan's reticence adds to his power here as elsewhere, for by not defining it more particularly he leaves each reader with a general symbol which he can fill in with the details of his own experience.

Dr. Whyte reminds us that Christians are partly responsible for this slough. The Christian life is sometimes described in such a way as to make one think that there is no use trying; and there are many, like Widow Pascoe in *Dan'l Quorm*, who express a melancholy resignation in such phrases as 'trusting Him where they cannot trace Him.' These are the chronic folk of the slough, who dwell so near its banks as to be spiritually bronchitic with its exhalations. This is bad enough, but when despondency comes to be regarded as a virtue, and happy faith in God as presumption, then the slough has become a place of sin as well as of misery. Humility, doubtless, is derived from *humus*; but as the quality of a living soul it must mean *on* the ground, not *in* it. Nor does it mean grovelling either, but standing on the ground. The voice Ezekiel heard still calls to all men, 'Son of man, stand upon thy feet.'

The mending of it is a perpetual attempt, for human nature is permanent, and to a large extent generation after generation has to perform the same task. How many words of cheer have been spoken to the despondent, even from the time of Marcus Aurelius down to Robert Browning? But the old *Welt-schmerz* engulfs all such words, and Hawthorne's *Celestial Railroad* crosses the old slough over, a very rickety bridge built upon such foundations. And yet the work of two hundred years done by the King's labourers since Charles the First's time has not been all in vain. The kindlier views of God and the less harsh thoughts of life have done something to lessen the swamp for modern men.

Bunyan's stepping stones are Scripture Promises. There are other stepping stones. Tennyson speaks of making 'stepping stones of our dead selves to higher things,' and many a man learning

self-respect through failure has blessed God for these. Again, there are yet other stepping stones. There is a certain valley in the North where a rude path, hardly distinguishable at the best of times, leads through dangerous moss-hags right across the centre of a morass. In rainy weather the track would be wholly obliterated but for the little footprints of a band of children who go to school that way. Many a traveller has found his path safely through the Slough of Despond by following in the children's footsteps. But after all there are no such stepping stones as God's promises. A white boulder is a poor enough object until you see it shining in a morass; then it means life and safety. So the promises of God that have often seemed but wayside facts of no particular interest shine suddenly with the very light of salvation when we see them from the Slough of Despond. Only the slime of the Slough has made the foothold upon some of them slippery. Misquotations and misunderstandings have rendered them useless to some pilgrims' feet. How many texts of Scripture, *e.g.*, have been hidden from discouraged souls by the slime of that misquoted text, 'The prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.' A walk through any cemetery will show how inaccurately the letter of Scripture is generally known, and such inaccuracies spoil the stepping stones.

It is hardly necessary to remind the reader that the whole of *Grace Abounding* is one long scramble through the Slough of Despond. 'I found myself as in a miry bog, that shook if I did but stir,' says Bunyan; and the whole book moves forward floundering from promise to promise.

This slough is bad enough for Christian, but it is the undoing of Pliable, and so becomes the ordeal for testing pilgrims. 'Almost all men,' says Cheever, 'are at some time or other inclined to set out on pilgrimage,' and there would be crowds of Christians if it were quite easy to be one. But this great over-grown baby, Pliable, is the type of that large number who cannot stand discomfort. 'Where are you now?' he cries; and this is the worst of depending upon day-dreams, or impulses, or authority without having thought out the situation for oneself. These may at any time vanish, and where are you then?

The tragic difference between the two pilgrims is that one of them gets out of the slough on the side nearest Destruction, and the other on the side

nearest Heaven. Despondency is a temporary experience, and there is not much importance in merely getting out of it. The question is, When you are on the bank, are you farther away from your old sins or farther away from your new purposes than when you were in the midst? The one thing that remains possible, even in the deepest discouragement, is an unflinching determination for progress which despises the recollection that the old way of life is so near and possible and pleasant.

Not enjoyment and not sorrow
Is our destined end and way,
But to act that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.

On the farther side another figure is introduced—that of Help. This lightly-touched incident reveals a breezy creation as light-hearted as he is strong of hand. The immersion is not taken very seriously; and indeed one can almost catch a suspicion of humour in the first question. A man in Christian's condition can hardly look dignified, and there is a distinctly ludicrous side to his plight which must appeal to the sense of humour which is invariably found in Help. In fact, this is part of his helpfulness. If you can get a man to see the unreasonableness of his gloom you have won half your battle. There is, of course, also a more solemn meaning in the question. What did he there? Help is but repeating the lesson which Elijah learned in the desert—that there is no necessity for the loss of hope.

Help, in clerical garments or in the garb of a layman, is one of those perennially blessed people in whom men instinctively trust. There is a healthy sense of efficiency about them and a broad human nature. David Scott is happy in his picture of

Help the Athlete. He is the natural successor to the Herakles of Euripides whom Browning transcribes so wonderfully in 'Balaustion's Adventure.' He is the kind of man that Charles Kingsley was, whose 'nearest work' is that of helping 'lame dogs over stiles.' He is the type that Jerome describes for modern days in his chapter on 'Evergreens' in *Idle Thoughts*, and Mrs. Browning in her poem 'My Kate.' For Help is often a woman, and among all the new ideals of to-day there is none that will ever fulfil her nature so perfectly as the oldest of all—the helpmeet. This is an office which conventional piety may sometimes count secular. Yet what is called spirituality is to a certain extent a matter of temperament, and those who have a special aptitude for this need ask for no higher office. Paul has included 'helps' among the great functions of Christian ministry, and the beautiful legend of Christoferus has proclaimed the essential Christianity of such service. Ruskin has said finely: 'There is no true potency, remember, but that of help, nor true ambition but the ambition to save.'

Two notes regarding Christian may end our consideration of this incident. (1) His confession that *fear had followed him so hard*. It was a frank avowal, and characteristic of the Puritan conscience. It reminds one of the 'black care' sitting behind Horace's horseman, or of the sound of invisible horses' feet which many an Australian rider has heard chasing him through the silent and solitary bush. (2) Christian himself has to do half the work of his deliverance. The hand of Help is only a lever whereby the man may swing himself up to firm ground. No man can escape from despondency except by action. This is Carlyle's law of the Everlasting YEA.

Recent Foreign Theology.

A Popular Guide to Syriac.¹

THAT such a series of popular introductions to Oriental languages should be so well patronised

¹ *Syrische Grammatik mit Paradigmen, Literatur, Chrestomathie, und Glossar*. Von Carl Brockelmann. *Porta Linguarum Orientalium*, Pars V. Berlin: Reuther & Reichard; London: Williams & Norgate, 1905. 2nd edition. Price Mk.8, in paper; Mk.8.80, in cloth.

in Germany that several of them have reached a second edition is a fact that may well put us in this country to shame. In this compendious book Dr. Brockelmann gives a short grammar, a bibliography, a chrestomathy with selections from Syriac literature in Jacobite, Estrangéla, and Nestorian script, partly vocalized and partly unpunctuated, and a brief glossary. The last two parts are the most important, and the printing is most excellent, as