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Editorial

CHICAGO

THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY

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Life's Unconquerable Aspirations

There are forces in human life which tend constantly to pull it down. There are passions, deep and powerful, which, like an awful undertow, suck men beneath the surface and choke out their lives in black and bitter depths. So mighty are these passions, so instinctive and elemental, it is no wonder men have shaped their perceptions of them in doctrines of total depravity, and the universal ruin of human nature. It is not surprising that they have tortured the penitential outbursts of the psalms into metaphysical axioms, and based their formulated systems of theology on this fearful negation of the primitive and hopeless badness of humanity, and have held that, apart from the regenerating and sustaining grace of God, life would be hopeless. There is a fallacy in the assumption that life is, or can be, a thing apart from the grace of God; that God has abandoned, or can abandon, what He has made, to a condition of despair, with no divine effort for its restoration. But even so, there is a sufficiently somber side to the picture to make us pause now and then when we remember how wicked, how mean, how weak, men and women are.

Happily these are not the only forces in human life. There are others, not less significant. Among them is that wonderful quality of spiritual discontent which prompts men to seek for something better than they have known or experienced. There is a tendency in human life to flow downward into the gulf of bestial sensuality; there is another tendency due to an equally significant law of spiritual hydrostatics, which forces the level of responsive life upward toward that of its divine fountain.

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In Henley's startling little poem there is yet a ring of fine nobility: "I thank whatever gods may be for my unconquerable soul." One can find a good deal of sympathy with such an expression of gratitude. An unconquerable soul is a thing to be thankful for. But a soul unconquerable by God himself, and yet vulnerable to passion and despair, as was that of the poet, is occasion for gratitude of a very qualified and subdued sort if any. And he who possesses such a soul need not have overmuch pride in his mere spiritual obstinacy; he ought rather to be asking whether in his satisfaction over his unconquerability he has not already surrendered to evil. But there is an unconquerable element in the soul of man, if we will have it so; it is that upward aspiring tendency which is none other than the Spirit of God within the human heart upreaching

after better things. The body of man is composed of the same elements which shine in the stars; the soul of man is of the same stuff which was in the beginning with God. Science tells us of a reversion to type; there is such a thing as aspiration to type. God is the norm of the universe. Godward grows normal life as the free plant grows sunward. This is the real unconquered element of life. Evil can be conquered, and evil will be eternally eradicated from the universe of God. The one unconquerable element in human life is the element of goodness.

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Our regret of the past is half hypocrisy and the other half mostly self-deception. You would do better if you had the past to live over again? Try with all your might never to regret anything. Did you do your best, and did it turn out badly? Thank God for your good intention, and save the regret. You know better now than you did before your failure? Thank God for the knowledge, and save the regret. You have done badly, and you cannot help regretting it: no, you cannot. But just here is your danger: you are in danger of making a virtue of your regret, and failing to do better. Try not to regret, even when you know that you have done wrong. Do better, and let the regret alone. Regret is a hypocrite; his twin brother Aspiration is often slain by him before the very altar of sacrifice. Do not regret; aspire. Do not pretend that you would do better if you had the past back again. Do better in the present.

But, some one will ask, Can we have aspiration without regret? Perhaps not. Yet we can certainly vary the proportion. The ratio is not constant; it is often inverse. Alas for the man who is so full of regret that he makes no effort at improvement. Let us admit that we have not done our best; do better. This perpetual slandering of the past is like libel upon our friends. And this pretense of a better use of the past is mostly sham.

* * *

And yet no one of us can pretend to be satisfied with the past. And no one of us who is honest and sincere can desire not to do better in the future. One thing is perfectly certain, we shall not do better without effort. And we shall not do better without the help of God. Let us be thankful that the past has been so good. And then, not as though it had been good enough, or we had been worthy of its goodness, let us press forward. Yesterday is past. A new day has dawned. Let us wake and greet it.



The famous storyteller, Shi, and W. Remfry Hunt preaching to the military camps outside Chu Chow during the Revolution. Two of the men on the front row are Christian chaplains and members of the "Dare to Die" corps in active service.

of the influence which the missionaries are having upon the city, apart from the work within the chapel, schools and hospital. They have given many public lectures on sanitation, garbage disposition, public decency, industrial competence, and good government, and these addresses are listened to by attentive crowds. To be sure, the progress is slow where the hold of the dead hand of

the past is so firm. But custom and ideas slowly change. And as we walked along the wall we were shown many signs of the cleaning up process, both in physical and moral estate.

From the wall we also saw another interesting phase of China's improvement under missionary direction. For centuries the public lands have been unimproved, except as they were rented by

the rich for private gain. Doctor Macklin of Nanking and some of his friends among the progressive Chinese have conceived the idea of allowing the poor people of the cities to cultivate this unused land. In Chu Chow Doctor Osgood has taken up the same idea, and a considerable portion of the land immediately outside the walls is now being used for that good purpose.

It is such men as these missionaries who are "Breaking Down Chinese Walls," to use the expressive title of Doctor Osgood's most interesting book. They know what it is to enter a totally non-Christian city, and build up from the very foundations a community of carefully trained industrious and efficient workmen, who at the same time are becoming Christian men and women. They have the confidence and the good will of their fellow citizens. When the Revolution came on them three years ago, they organized a Red Cross Society and were the means of caring for many of the soldiers both in body and soul.

In Mr. Hunt's book, "Heathenism Under the Searchlight," he quotes an advertisement in a prominent native paper, in which a girl of sixteen, whose parents had recently died, offers herself for sale in order to raise funds to provide for their burial. The depths of heathenism are not easily sounded. Something of its vileness may be seen by the most casual observer. But the missionary alone knows the abysses, and has at the same time the sympathy to abide in the darkness till he can bring in the "Light that lighteth every man."

When we left Chu Chow Mr. Hunt came with us to Nanking, and we had a chance to talk over with him many phases of Chinese life and mission work which the journey helped to illustrate.

The Tangle of Life

A Bit of Philosophy for Every-day Living.

BY CLELAND B. McAFEE.

THERE is a famous verse in Ecclesiastes which says, "The king himself is served by the field." It means that the very ends of the social order depend on each other. The king riding by in state may feel very superior to the farmer who stops in awe to see him go by, but the farmer could really get on far better without the king than the king could without the farmer. The king might strike work and go out of the country, and the farmer would be sure to suffer for it after a while; but if the farmer and all his kind should strike work, the king would know it before the week was out. "The king himself is served by the field." Of course, it bears testimony to the current faith that the real producer must work in the ground, and that all real and new wealth comes out of the earth in some form. I remember the scorn with which a mining man met the suggestion that he leave that sort of thing and settle down to something that would really be productive. "Productive!" he exclaimed; "the only two men who are really productive are the farmer and the miner; all the rest are manipulators!" There is some ground for that judgment, and this verse helps out the contention.

But the chief thing which this verse suggests to some of us is the great and interesting tangle of life. Kings and farmers seem far apart, but they are ac-

tually intertwined. You can touch no part of the social order without jarring it far and wide. Sometimes we speak of the necessity for disciplining railroad owners and managers by drastic legislation, and we set out to do so. Then we discover that the discipline cuts off the incomes of hundreds whom we had not in mind at all. The papers told us the other day of the dividend payment of a certain great railroad system, when checks were sent to 85,310 shareholders. Nearly half of them were women, who had no more to do with the running of that railroad apparently than with the shining of the moon. Yet whatever affected it was sure to affect them. The influences which make corrective legislation difficult are not necessarily sinister; some of them issue from the tangle of life. Innocent interests are involved, and an apparently simple process becomes at once much complicated. You want to get at the farmer, and he looks like an easy mark, but you would best go slowly, for the king is involved. Life is all intertwined, all tangled, and you can not treat one strand of it as though it were alone.

LIVES ARE INTERTWINED.

Now, there are two inferences which follow from that fact. One is, that one can never know how far a deed will go. There is no knowing just what strand of the web of life is being touched or

pulled when one's hand reaches out. Ministers have much occasion to realize that. They find that chance sentences have stuck in some man's memory, and come floating back from the most unexpected places. A stranger is in the church one Sunday; he is never there again, but the next Sunday is out in some village, where he repeats the word he heard to a minister in that church, and he passes it on to other people, and the story grows until only God knows where the end of it is to be. Or else for that one day the minister was a bit careless in his message, and a life which needed him at his best must go away disappointed; then other lives which would have been helped have to go without it in turn, and so it goes on down a long line of failure.

But in the nature of the case that is as true for other people as for ministers. When we meet people in strange places who know our intimate friends in some far-away place, we say: "How small the world is, after all!" But that is not the explanation. How intertwined life is; how tangled the webs of life are!—that is the important fact. And what a silly thing it is to chafe over narrow opportunities when one can never tell that they are really narrow at all! We thought we were only hard-working farmers, but the king is on his throne because we are

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The Book World

A Page of Reviews and Literary Notes.

BY ARTHUR GORDON.

THE HAPPY WARRIOR. By A. S. M. Hutchinson. A London evening paper reported that young Lord Burdon had been killed in a skirmish on the Indian frontier. That news was the death blow to his girl wife, Audrey Oxford, whom he had married in secret, but whose boy survived to become the "Happy Warrior." It brought an immense elation of spirit to Mrs. Lethem whose husband, a distant relative of Lord Burdon's, became his successor to the title. The cruel treatment of the young wife by the new Lady Burdon aroused her sister, Maggie Oxford, with the dire resolution to train the boy for his career, and one day confront the usurpers at the Manor with the truth and the rightful heir. The book is the fascinating story of the boy's experiences as a companion of the young Rollo, the supposed inheritor of the estate, as the fighting prize winner of the traveling street fair, and at last as the lover of Dora, who was the prospective bride of Rollo. The story holds the interest without a break, and quite apart from the weak and unconvincing ending, which is perhaps the least real of a half dozen that might have been devised. The book is sure to reward hearers of strong, purposeful writing. (Little, Brown & Co., \$1.35, net.)

THE IMMIGRANT. By Frederick J. Haskin. Human immigration has been the order of the time since Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees for Canaan. Westward the course of empire has taken its way, and westward the immigrant has carried his small possessions. Europe has the most crowded population of any portion of the world, and when the open gates of America appeared in the vision of the poor and yet hopeful peoples of Germany, Italy, and the eastern states of Europe, they began to come by thousands. Very wonderful has been the story of the immigrant. Formerly western and northern Europe contributed the largest proportion of the newcomers. These people represented a high type of civilization at home, and they came to bring their convictions and industry into the new land and to accept its ideals of citizenship. More recently, however, the tide of immigration has come from southern and eastern Europe, where the level of civilization is much lower and where the chief hope is not that of permanent citizenship in the United States, but of a return to the homeland with the spoils of the struggle, to enjoy an older age of respect and competence at home. This change in the type of immigration has produced many social problems in the treatment of the arriving immigrant. These Hungarians, Italians, Greeks, and Slovaks are not interested in American citizenship, for they do not propose to remain in this land. They do not bring their women to any great extent, but live in groups of hard-working, half starved laborers, toiling in mines or factories or upon railroad construction, with only the simple thought of accumulating enough money to afford the promised return to the homeland. Mr. Haskin has assembled the facts regarding this mighty tide of immigration, the condition from which it comes, the character of the ocean passage with its abnormal and often unspeakable conditions,

physical and moral, and the obligations which rest upon all social minded Americans to meet these fortune seekers in the most helpful spirit. (Revell, \$1.25 net).

HISTORICAL ADVENTURES. By Rupert S. Holland. The story of America in the form of a cluster of the most thrilling incidents in the life of the nation is the sort of book all can read with pleasure and profit. In this volume such episodes as the Saving of Oregon by Marcus Whitman, the landing of the Barbary pirates, the destruction of Lovejoy's printing press, the conspiracy of Aaron Burr, and many other dramatic events are told in a manner to make one wish to know more of the men who made the nation. (Geo. W. Jacobs.)

YOUNG ALASKANS IN THE ROCKIES, by Emerson Hough. One who has read any of Mr. Hough's semi-historical novels, dealing with the early story of America, does not need to be told that he knows his facts and writes with a practical hand. In this book is told the story of a little group of boys who went on an expedition in the big Northwest. The story is full of rough trails, forest fastnesses, mountain climbing, bear and caribou hunting, and perilous adventures on the great Columbia. It combines information, and adventure. (Harper's \$1.25, net).

HER DAUGHTER JEAN, by Marion Ames Taggart. Miss Taggart's "Six Girls" books are familiar to readers of the literature that appeals most to girls. Jean, the heroine of this book is an attractive, loyal, womanly girl; whose devotion to her mother and family leads her to heroic sacrifices. It is the sort of book that holds interest, and at the same time makes its impress on character. (W. A. Wilde & Co., \$1.20, net).

SOME LITTLE COOKS AND WHAT THEY DID, by Elizabeth Hoyt, one of the Happy Hour Series. The stories are short, and both interesting and suggestive of what children can do to make themselves useful. Attractive in pictures and cover.

LITERARY NOTES.

Just as two books by Rabindranath Tagore are announced for publication by the Macmillan's comes word that to Mr. Tagore has been given the Nobel Prize for Literature for 1913. The published work by Tagore includes "Gitanjali," song offerings or religious poems, and "The Gardener," lyrics of love and life. The new titles are "The Crescent Moon," a volume of child poems with illustrations in color by a Hindu artist, and "Sadhana, The Realization of Life," a number of essays, some of which were delivered as lectures before the University of Oxford in England and before Harvard University in this country.

The day may be not far distant when Bostonians will be treated to the sight of the Governor of Massachusetts sallying out from the State House, with his market basket on his arm. At the same time the Mayor of the City of Boston might fall in line and go to market likewise. For Dr. Francis E. Clark, author of "Old Homes of New Americans," (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.) thinks that if Boston had a general market, and these

two high officials would visit it each day in person, as did Daniel Webster and Henry Clay in their day in Washington, it might become a well established institution and aid materially in reducing the high cost of living.

Mr. Winston Churchill, in his article on "The Modern Quest for a Religion" which appears in the December Century, says that "it will be strange indeed if we do not arrive at the conviction that the world has still in Jesus Christ something to grow into instead of out of, and that when we shall have reached the boundaries He has set it will be time enough to think of a new prophet and of a new religion."

"Opium (laudanum, morphia, etc.) is not the tragedy of the underworld nor of the lap-dog world, but the working world, of doctors, writers, lecturers, scientists, teachers, students, both men and women." This is the allegation made by Miss Jeannette Marks, whose new novel, "Leviathan," just published by George H. Doran Company, is the story of one man's triumph over the drug habit.

THE TANGLE OF LIFE.

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on the farm. When we strengthen our life cord, who knows if his life is not stronger for it? Who knows how near his life line may run to ours? Nothing but a narrow village life? There is no such thing. Out from all villages there run lines around the world.

The other inference from this familiar fact is that no one can ever know all of those to whom he owes a life debt. As unrealized lines run out from one's life, so a multitude of such lines run into it. The half-conscious arrogance which marks some lives is always ignorant. Yonder goes that dusty, grimy workman—how rude he seems, how unlike you! Yes, but he is the man on whom you depend. You could not be you if he were not he. Everybody has to do with everybody else. Scholars seem remote from daily life, yet many of the gravest problems of life are solved in hidden laboratories, by men whose names are not known, and who would not be recognized if they appeared in the most public places. What some obscure inventor may be doing just now, we have no idea; but we shall all be reaping the benefit of it before long.

That is part of the point of a popular story of this past summer called "V.V.'s Eyes." The heroine of the book has always known in a general way that her living came from "the factory," but she had no idea where nor what the factory was. She did not think of herself in connection with the girls and women who might be working there. So she grew to be selfish and self-centered. Then there came events which led her to see how utterly dependent she was on those who were toiling in dirt and grime. As she realized it she came to her finer womanhood, both humbled and ennobled. We all stand hopelessly indebted to multitudes of men whom we never saw, nor shall see. The only fair thing to do is to send out our own lives so strongly in service that multitudes of men who will never see us shall be hopelessly indebted to us.