

## ART. VI.—THE SERVANT OF CHRIST.

## NO. III.—THE DISCIPLINE OF THE IMAGINATION.

IF tears were possible to angels they must sometimes weep when they look at the clumsiness of our efforts after the godly, righteous, and sober life. What an infinite series of mistakes each of us makes! How laboriously and conscientiously we often go the wrong way to work! What a number of powerful and engrossing influences there are which keep us apart from Christ! How pathetic the docility, the patience, the perseverance, the zeal with which we devote ourselves to interests which are not the Lord's, and which will greatly hinder us instead of helping! We may, perhaps, sometimes have seen a person of small intelligence, and little taste or tact, trying to cultivate intimacy with some large, keen, and sagacious mind. We have watched the amused glance or the cold suspicion which has been the only result of these humble plans; and when the unsuccessful candidate for friendship has departed, too stupid not to be well satisfied with the issue of the misplaced and mistaken effort, we have heard the not unfriendly laughter, the not unkind disdain, which cannot help being the reward of uninstructed obtrusiveness. Too often our efforts after goodness are like this failure. We are as blind, as dull, as self-confident, as self-conceited, as mistaken as this complacent fool. The difference is that our Lord, in His infinite pity, does not ridicule or repel, but longs that we should enable Him to heal our blindness, to cover our nakedness, and to give us wisdom for folly.

What are we to do to try to avoid some of these mistakes, to give up spending our money on that which is not bread, and wasting our labour on that which cannot satisfy? What can the servant of Christ do which will enable his Master to admit him to His intimacy, the fellowship of the Father and the Son?

There is a certain class of religious people, not confined to any section of the Church, who will tell us, "Only give yourselves up entirely to the Holy Spirit. Throw yourselves absolutely into His arms. Do not wish for anything, or think of anything, or make any resolutions or plans:—only shut your eyes, and earnestly long that He will come and make you all that you ought to be. Consider yourselves as passive as clay and Him as a skilful potter. Act as if you had no will of your own, and let Him be will and mind and desire for you instead of yourselves. Be helpless, and He will be your help. Be weak, and He will be your strength. He will reveal Himself to you, and fill your soul, and make it almost im-

possible for you to sin, if only you are passive enough, and have enough faith in His Almighty power."

Now this is an exaggeration of a truth, and therefore, like all exaggerations and perversions, mischievous. It is true that we must constantly rely on the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit which comes from the Eternal Throne to all who desire holiness and believe in God. It is most important for us unceasingly to recognise this Divine Person, to crave His guidance and inspiration, and to ask Him to assist our prayers, to warm our hearts, to purify our motives, and to take all hindrances from our way. But God has nowhere promised to supersede our wills. Nowhere has He proposed that by one act of self-surrender we should rid ourselves from all future responsibility. He has never said that He will be our mind, our soul, our desire, our determination. Help He has guaranteed, but not the extinction of our personality. Our whole life, from beginning to end, is a discipline and a trial. For every act of it we are ourselves directly responsible. We are to work out our own salvation. The Almighty has no wish that we should make things easy for ourselves by becoming machines. He has indeed told us that the stay of the Holy Spirit within our hearts, far from being an absolute monarchy, depends on our own choice and conduct. It is possible to grieve Him. And He has told us again that even when the Holy Spirit is within our hearts, not even every religious impulse comes from Him. Some are of the world, some are dangerous. To shut our eyes blindly and say that every pulse of devout enthusiasm that we feel is from God is self-deception and in the teeth of His Word. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.*

Therefore it concerns us most nearly to find out whether we are being thus led aside by some other influence, and not guided by that which is divine; whether that spirit that is for the moment uppermost in our minds may not be rendering them unfit for the indwelling of the heavenly Power which should be there. We must indeed daily ask God to search our hearts; but unless we think about it ourselves, the prayer is meaningless. There is a story of a traveller who formed one of a party in a distant country, where all the arrangements for journeying were undertaken by a contractor. The traveller knew and cared so little about the events of each day that one town was actually mistaken for another. Such an undertaking might as well have been left alone. It could produce no effect on the character. The result would merely be as when the waves close behind the keel of the ship, and no furrow is left in the calm waters. So it would be with us if we tried to persuade ourselves that, without effort on our

part, the Holy Spirit would direct us with absolute force. The very laziness and indifference of such a proceeding would prove our insincerity. If that were our mental attitude towards spiritual things, then all that St. Paul and the Apostles wrote might, as far as we are concerned, have been lost. We need never open a useful book, never go to church, never try to cultivate good habits. A dreamy surrender of all the faculties and functions of our nature would be all that could be required ; and that is a denial of the first principles of the teaching of our Lord. By this refusal to inquire and search for ourselves we should be virtually excluding what we were hoping to obtain. We should be as one beating the air. We might be looking at the racecourse, but we should not have run a single step.

It is clear then that we have to act on our own responsibility, by the help of our Divine Guide. We have to discover our dangers for ourselves, with the co-operation of God's light, by painful thought, self-examination, prayer, and comparison of His word. What are some of these dangers ?

One of the spirits in contemporary life most likely to engross our thoughts, and to alienate us from the reign of the Spirit of God within us, is that prominent tendency of modern worldly ethics, the chief maxim of which is, "Follow your own imagination, and be natural." Follow the lead of your nature, it says ; throw aside all conventionality and custom ; form is the ruin of originality and genius. This naturalism desires that every single individual should be absolute independent. Nature, it says, is the best guide. Every individual is supposed to have some distinctive qualities of value which should be encouraged to develop themselves without interference, like the shoots of a wild vine. If the imagination turns the bias towards art, then let art, pure and simple, have its full unrestricted sway over the whole being ; let art be the principle of life, the absorbing interest ; let everything else give way obsequiously before art ; let art tinge the whole system and manners ; let everything be looked at from the point of view of art, whether it be painting, music, or any other branch ; let no old-fashioned notions, or competing set of principles stand in the way. Or if it be science, then let everything be seen through the glass of science ; let everything be judged by the small, narrow rule of scientific analysis ; let there be no other kingdom recognised but that of science. Or if it be æstheticism, or criticism, or the life of pleasure, or the life of adventure, or whatever else, only pursue it thoroughly, says Naturalism, and you will have gained the object of your existence. You will have arrived at excellence in your own line, and therefore will have contributed to the sum

total of human achievements. If you allow scruple, prejudice, or restraint to stand in your way you will have confused your motives, fettered your imagination, paralysed your efforts, and lost your prize. So speaks Naturalism. Such is the advice which that powerful spirit gives to our age.

It is this tendency which gives so emphatic an illustration on all sides to the truth of our Lord's parable of the heart swept and garnished, and the return of the evil spirit. The impulse of art, the absorption of science, the attractions of mere happiness even when they are wholesome, the interests of culture, or taste, or activity, can at their very best have but a temporary power of driving the evil spirit from the heart. To seek in these or other branches of mere Naturalism for the true life which alone can satisfy is hourly bringing disappointment and despair. Nature may be pure and true in herself, but we are not. We tinge all our pursuits with the idiosyncrasies of our own individuality. We cannot help bending all our studies, aims, and interests to suit our own personal tendencies and dispositions. For there is nothing in these, even in their most favourable condition, to change our hearts, or to trample under feet the worldly, earthly nature. But besides this flaw, these objects for the expansion of natural impulses in the way we human beings pursue them are not even at their best, because they are organized and determined for us by others who have all the imperfections, the corrupt affections, the perverted wills, from which we ourselves suffer. Hence art alone, without religious principle, will be sure to mislead and enervate, instead of elevating and purifying. It will minister to our earthly nature instead of eradicating it. Science, alone, will but intensify selfishness, chill the already cold heart, and make more contemptuous the superciliousness of pride. The pursuit of happiness for its own sake will always be the favourite lair of the lion that walks about seeking whom he may devour. Culture, taste, activity, these untempered, unmodified, uncontrolled by faith, will always be destructive to the higher character, the higher nature, the true life. Even if the evil spirit should for a time be driven out by these branches of naturalism, the house of the soul is only left swept and garnished. The sweeping may be very careful and perfect, the garnishing of the most sumptuous and exquisite kind; but there is no proper tenant. The unsatisfied soul longs for some absorbing influence to concentrate, direct, and guide its energies. So the evil spirit comes back. The house so clear to the outward eye, so beautifully furnished with every apparatus, is inviting. He returns with seven other spirits worse than himself. They take up their abode there. And far worse is the last state of that soul than the first.

It is from this spirit of surrender to natural impulse that those many one-sided natures come of which the nominally Christian world is so obviously full. There may not have been originally any wilful departure from Christ. But this tendency deceived and enthralled them. They did not try the spirits to see whether they were of God. And so they wandered ever farther from the quiet even walks of faith in Jesus by the green pastures and the still waters. They threw themselves into ambition, and they lost their honesty. Imagination taught them the supreme delight of a great fortune; they threw themselves into the pursuit of gain, and their hearts turned to stone. They hurried into religious partizanship; and though they gave all their goods to feed the poor, they lost sight of the Gospel. They gave themselves up with eager delight to mediæval superstition, and they lost meekness, straightforwardness, and charity, and groped and struggled in the dark caverns of idolatry. They plunged into pleasure, and became the victims of a tyrant sensuality. They sold themselves to worldliness and fashion, and they lost their modesty and grew frivolous. Luxury enticed them, and they forgot their responsibility to God. And neither art nor science, music, nor painting, nor sculpture, nor happiness, nor taste, nor culture, nor activity could do anything whatever to help them. These are some of the results of yielding to the spirit of natural impulse.

These mistakes and failures, this lawless tendency to which we are all more or less liable, point the servant of Christ with great distinctness to the old Christian duty of the discipline of the imagination. All our faculties are to be brought into obedience to the law of Christ. Faith is no mere periodic dress for the mind; it is the principle which is to penetrate and actuate every motive, every impulse, every desire, every tendency, every habit, every thought of our whole being. It is not that the business of getting to heaven is a mere department of our minds, to be carefully separated from all other departments, with its own space and ticket, strictly forbidden to trench on other departments, coldly ordered off if it claims to be something more, and for the cultivation of which the Almighty has kindly provided a proper and exclusive day, one in seven. Faith is given us for nobler ends; it is the framework of our lives, the test of our occupations, the keynote of our tastes, the law of our habits. *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.* We cannot proclaim that great truth to ourselves too boldly. If we can realize it, it will save us endless difficulties. Wherever art, science, literature, criticism, pleasure, æsthetics, enterprise ignore faith, or act contrary to its simple fundamental rules, there they become at once those spirits of the

world which are not of God. And as it is the imagination which is the faculty that presents these objects, pursuits, and impulses of the mind as desirable, it is the imagination that is either the root of the evil, or else the source of well-being. It is from the imagination that all our follies and failures arise :

Of its own beauty is the mind diseased,  
And fevers into false creation : where,  
Where are the forms the sculptor's soul hath seized ?  
In him alone. Can nature show so fair ?  
Where are the charms and virtues which we dare  
Conceive in boyhood and pursue as men ?  
The unreach'd paradise of our despair,  
Which o'er-informs the pencil and the pen,  
And overpowers the page where it would bloom again ?  
Who loves, raves ; 'tis youth's frenzy, but the cure  
Is bitterer still, as charm by charm unwinds  
Which robed our idols, and we see too sure  
Nor worth nor beauty dwells from out the mind's  
Ideal shape of such ; yet still it binds  
The fatal spell, and still it draws us on,  
Reaping the whirlwind from the oft-sown winds ;  
The stubborn heart, its alchemy begun,  
Seems ever near the prize—wealthiest when most undone.

In some it is stronger, in others weaker ; some are by birth more steady and less impressionable than others. But each one of us, whether easily moved or not, has objects which are to him more congenial than anything else. These are presented to us by our imagination. They appear attractive ; the mind is inclined to rush after them, unless checked by the sober voice of a reasonable faith. It is not only the lunatic, the lover, and the poet who are moved by that strange gift ; they are only the most obvious specimens of the whole race.

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
More than cool reason ever comprehends.  
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact :  
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold—  
That is the madman : the lover, all as frantic,  
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt ;  
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven ;  
And, as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.  
Such tricks hath strong imagination.

If there be no habit of restraint, or control, or reference to God's will, then the impulse to hurry after the enticements of the imagination grows rapidly. The object of pursuit seems constantly to increase in attractive power. It is thought more

and more desirable. A sort of hallucination envelops it. For the time it excludes other affections and interests, or at any rate makes them seem comparatively tame and dull. So the whole mind becomes inflamed and absorbed by the subtle influence that has been introduced by the imagination; and, whether the process be slow or speedy, everything gives way before such influence; and it becomes the ruling passion. The mind persuades itself that all is right. The conscience is drugged or dulled. So mighty are these influences when unchecked. They are like the false prophets in Jeremiah: "They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto everyone that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you."

And, as the mind is naturally corrupt, it more easily and readily grasps the wrong ideas. When the evil spirit of unrestrained naturalism says to it: "Follow your own inclinations," the pictures presented by the imagination are far more likely to be those that are destructive than such as would be helpful. Hence, if the imagination is left alone, it is nearly sure to store itself with what is prejudicial. Here it is that the servant of Christ needs the disciplining, purifying power of the presence of the Almighty Being Himself in his heart. When every object comes before him, whatever it may be, as a matter of choice, when he has to make up his mind what he will do, what occupations he will adopt, in what habits and tastes he will encourage himself, he must earnestly desire that Divine Presence, unseen though ever near, to strengthen his reason, to clear his faith, to purify his inclinations, to guide his judgment, so as to make the right choice. He must be constantly on the watch to entreat Him never to leave him alone, so that the house of his soul may never be tenantless, and that all the pains that have been taken with it in sweeping and garnishing may not, by His absence, turn out to be only inducements and encouragements to malign spirits to assault it and choose it for their habitation. Whatever it be, art, literature, conversation, science, taste, style, dress, poetry, amusements, daily habits and occupations, the form of religious worship, the decoration of religious buildings, if He is only within, and the servant of Christ awake and sincerely desiring His aid, then the whole mind will be equipped by an orderly discipline; and when tempted by the prevalent and surrounding spirit of naturalism, or by any other spirit, to surrender to the imagination, and give it a loose rein, he will utterly refuse to give up his calm inward peace for any impulse, however plausible and attractive. When duly disciplined, imagination becomes the beautiful and winning handmaid of faith. "The

sound and proper exercise of the imagination may be made to contribute to the cultivation of all that is virtuous and estimable in the human character."<sup>1</sup> "A well-regulated exercise of the imagination tends to elevate and refine the character; it helps to keep us from being too much engrossed with occupation and mere sensual gratifications."<sup>2</sup> "It were much to be wished, for the sake both of our literature and our life, that imagination would again be content to dwell with life: that we had less of poetry, and that of more strength; and that imagination were again to be found, as it used to be, one of the elements of life itself—a strong principle of our nature, living in the midst of our affections and passions, blending with, kindling, invigorating and exalting them all."<sup>3</sup>

"Weak is the will of man, his judgment blind!  
Remembrance persecutes, and hope betrays;  
Heavy is Woe; and Joy for human kind  
A mournful thing, so transient is the blaze!"  
Thus might *he* paint our lot of mortal days  
Who wants the glorious faculty assigned.  
To elevate the more than reasoning mind,  
And colour life's dark cloud with orient rays.  
Imagination is that sacred power,  
Imagination lofty and refined;  
'Tis here to pluck the amaranthine flower  
Of faith, and round the sufferer's temples bind  
Wreaths that endure afflictions heaviest shower,  
And do not shrink from sorrows keenest wind.<sup>4</sup>

When imagination is disciplined, and trained to high and noble service, then each of the surrounding influences may take its proper place, never claiming to tyrannize over us, never venturing to mislead us, never exaggerated by ourselves into that absurd and mischievous importance which makes them blameworthy, never corrupted by any ungodly associations of our own into being poisonous to our spiritual health. Far from that, with the Holy Spirit for his master, and the Word of God for his guide, and firmly fixed religious principles for his support and stay, each of these influences will become to the servant of Christ—as it ought to be—one of God's good gifts, sent for his real well-being and happiness. So he will be ever more and more able to test the spirits that are deceptive, and sure not to grieve the Presence which is the most priceless fact in his life. All other things will sink into insignificance. His conscience will be strong and well-instructed; his will trained to obey it; his imagination chaste, fresh, loyal and true to the best ideals of faith and reason.

<sup>1</sup> Abercrombie.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher North.

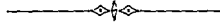
<sup>3</sup> Whately.

<sup>4</sup> Wordsworth.



The attentive mind,  
 By this harmonious action on her powers,  
 Becomes herself harmonious : wont so oft  
 In outward things to meditate the charm  
 Of sacred order, soon she seeks at home  
 To find a kindred order, to exert  
 Within herself this elegance of love,  
 This fair-inspired delight ; her tempered powers  
 Refine at length, and every passion wears  
 A chaster, milder, more attractive mien.

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.



#### ART. VII.—THE HOLY COAT OF TREVES.

I AM familiar with the subject of pilgrimages, relics, and modern miracles, both among Christians of the Greek and Roman persuasions and the non-Christian world of Mahometans and pagans. There was something so startlingly unique about the appearance of the Seamless Coat of our Blessed Lord, shown to the public only after long intervals, that I took the opportunity of a spare day betwixt the Geographical Congress at Berne, in Switzerland, on August 8th, and the Congress of the Romish Church of Belgium at Malines, on September 8th, to make a pilgrimage to Treves, join in one of the numerous processions, and be an eye-witness of the relic. I made two visits on two successive days. According to my practice I bought a copy of the authorized account of the Holy Robe, published under the sanction of the Archbishop of Treves in the French language, and I had the advantage of procuring a copy of the account in English by an English Romish priest, who performed the pilgrimage and communicated his views to the *Month*, a Romish monthly, under the initials of R. F. C., and has since published a separate volume, under the name of Richard F. Clarke, of the Society of Jesus, Farm Street, Berkeley Square.

Pilgrimages are the peculiar weakness of all false religions and the degraded forms of the true religion. Jerome, in his letter to Paulinus, about A.D. 416, denounced the growing weakness of the early Christians. I quote his famous passage:—"Et de Jerosolomis, et de Britannia æqualiter patet aula cœlestis." However the practice grew, we may be thankful that no Protestant Church accepts the idea of pilgrimage. I have watched the great pilgrimages of the Hindu people to the Ganges, or the Mahometan to some local shrine, and of Christians to Jerusalem, and Loretto, and Lourdes, and Saragossa; no doubt they are all survivals of old paganism, and cling to the skirts of even a spiritual religion.