



LIGHT ON LIFE'S DIFFICULTIES

JAMES ALLEN

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**BY
JAMES ALLEN**

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instruments of his own suffering. Hence, the ceaseless interplay of conflicting forces; the unending fires of passion; the turmoil, strife, and woe. Selfishness is misapplied power.

The unselfish man is he who, ceasing from all personal interference, abandons the "I" as the source of judgment. Having recognized his unlimited freedom through the abandonment of all egotism even in thought, he refrains from encroachment upon the boundless freedom of others. He realizes the legitimacy of their choice and their right to the free employment of their power.

However others may choose to act toward such a man, it can never cause him any trouble or suffering, because he is perfectly willing that they should so choose to act, and he harbors no wish that they should act in any other way. He realizes that his sole duty, as well as his entire power, lies in acting rightly toward them, and that he is in no way concerned with their actions toward him that is both their choice and their business. To the unselfish man, therefore, malice, envy, backbiting, jealousy, accusation, condemnation, and persecution have passed away. Having ceased to practice these things, he is not disturbed when they are hurled at him. Thus liberation from sin is liberation from suffering. The selfless man is free; he has made the servitude of sin impossible; he has broken every bond.

14. LIGHT ON THE BLESSING AND DIGNITY OF WORK

THAT "LABOR IS LIFE" is a principle pregnant with truth, and one which cannot be too often repeated or too closely studied and practiced. Labor is so often regarded as an irksome and even degrading means of obtaining ease and pleasure, and not as what it really is—a thing happy and noble in itself. The lesson contained in the maxim needs to be taken to heart and more and more thoroughly learned.

Activity, both mental and physical, is the essence of life. The complete cessation of life is death, and death is immediately followed by corruption. Ease and death are closely related. The more there is of activity, the more abounding is life. The brainworker, the original thinker, the man of unceasing mental activity, is the longest-lived man in a community. The agricultural laborer, the gardener, the man of unceasing physical activity comes next with length in years.

Pure-hearted, healthy-minded people love work, and are happy in their labors. They never complain of being "overworked." It is very difficult, almost impossible, for a man to be overworked if he lives a sound and pure life. It is worry, bad habits, discontent and idleness that kill—especially idleness, for if labor is life, then idleness must be death. Let us get rid of sin before we talk about being overworked.

There are those who are afraid of work, regarding it as an enemy, and who fear a breakdown by doing too much. They have to learn what a health-bestowing friend work is. Others are ashamed of work, looking upon it as a degrading thing to be avoided. The "pure in heart and sound in head" are neither afraid nor ashamed of work, and they dignify whatsoever they undertake. No necessary work can be degrading, but if a man regards his work as such, he is already degraded, not by his task, but by his slavish vanity.

Man hath his daily work of body and mind Appointed, which declares his dignity.

The idle man who is afraid of work, and the vain man who is ashamed of it, are both on the way to poverty, if they are not already there. The industrious man, who loves work, and the man of true dignity, who glorifies work, are both on their way to affluence, if they are not already there. The lazy man is sowing the seeds of poverty and crime; the vain man is sowing the seeds of humiliation and shame. The industrious man is sowing the seeds of affluence and virtue; the dignified worker is sowing the seeds of victory and honor. Deeds are seeds, and the harvest will appear in due season.

There is a common desire to acquire riches with as little effort as possible, which is a kind of theft. To try to obtain the fruits of labor without laboring is to take the fruits of another man's labor; to try to get money without giving its equivalent is to take that which belongs to another and not one's self. What is theft but this frame of mind carried to its logical extreme?

Let us rejoice in our work. Let us rejoice that we have the strength and capacity for work, and let us increase that strength and capacity by unremitting labor.

Whatever our work may be, it is noble, and will be perceived by the world as noble, if we perform it with a noble spirit. The virtuous do not despise any labor which falls on their lot. And he who works and faints not, who is faithful, patient, and uncompromising even in the time of poverty, he will surely at last eat of the sweet fruits of his labor. Yea, even while he labors and seems to fail, happiness will be his constant companion, for, "Blessed is the man that has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness."

15. LIGHT ON GOOD MANNERS AND REFINEMENT

More upward, working out the beast, And let the ape and tiger die.

ALL CULTURE IS GETTING AWAY from the beast. Evolution is a refining process, and the unwritten laws of society are inherent in the evolutionary law.

Education is intellectual culture. The scholar is engaged in purifying and perfecting his intellect; the spiritual devotee is engaged in purifying and perfecting his heart.

When a man aspires to nobler heights of achievement, and sets about the realization of his ideal, he commences to refine his nature; and the more pure a man makes himself within, the more refined, gracious, and gentle will be his outward demeanor.

Good manners have an ethical basis, and cannot be divorced from religion. To be ill mannered is to be imperfect, for what are ill manners but the outward expression of inward defects? What a man does, that he is. If he acts rudely, he is a rude man; if he acts foolishly, he is a foolish man; if he acts gently, he is a gentleman. It is a mistake to suppose that a man can have a gentle and refined mind behind a rough and brutal exterior (though such a man may possess some strong animal virtues), as the outer is an expression of the inner.

One of the steps in the noble Eightfold Path to perfection as expounded by Buddha is— Right Conduct or Good Behavior. It should be plain to all that the man who has not yet learned how to conduct himself toward others in a kindly, gracious, and unselfish spirit has not yet entered the pathway of the holy life.

If a man refines his heart, he will refine his behavior; if he refines his behavior, it will help him to refine his heart.

To be coarse, brutish, and snappish may be natural to the beast, but the man who aspires to be even an endurable member of society (not to mention the higher manhood), will at once purge away any such bestial traits that may possess him.

All these things which aid in man's refinement—such as music, painting, poetry, manners—are servants and messengers of progress. Man degrades himself when he imitates the brute. Let us not mistake barbarism for simplicity or vulgarity for honesty.

Unselfishness, kindness, and consideration for others will always be manifested outwardly as gentleness, graciousness, and refinement. To affect these graces by simulating them may seem to succeed, but it does not. Affectation and hypocrisy are soon divulged; every man's eye, sooner or later, pierces through their flimsiness, and ultimately none but the actors of them are deceived. As Emerson says:

"What is done for effect, is seen to be done for effect; and what is done for love, is felt to be done for love."

Children who are well-bred are taught always to consider the happiness of others before their own: to offer others the most comfortable seat, the choicest fruit, the best tidbit, and so on, and also to do everything, even the most trivial acts, in the right way. And these two things—unselfishness and right action—are at the basis, not only of good manners, but of all ethics, religion, and true living; they represent power and skill. The selfish man is weak and unskillful in his actions. Unselfishness is the right way of thinking; good manners are the right way of acting. As Emerson, again, says:

"There is always a way of doing everything, if it be to boil an egg. Manners are the happy way of doing things right."

It is a frequent error among men to imagine that the Higher Life is an ideal something quite above and apart from the common details of life, and that to neglect these or to perform them in a slovenly manner is an indication that the mind is preoccupied on "higher things." Whereas it is an indication that the mind is becoming inexact, dreamy, and weak, instead of exact, wide awake, and strong. No matter how apparently trivial the thing is which has to be done, there is a right way of doing it, and to do it in the right way saves friction, time, and trouble, conserves power, and develops grace, skill, and happiness.

The artisan has a variety of tools with which to ply his particular craft, and he is taught (and also finds by experience) that each tool must be applied to its special use, and never under any circumstances must one

tool be made to do service for another. By using every tool in its proper place and in the right way, the maximum of dexterity and power is attained. Should a boy learning a trade refuse instruction, and persist in using the tools in his own way, making one tool do service for another, he would never become anything better than a clumsy bungler, and would be a failure in his trade.

It is the same throughout the whole life. If a man opens himself to receive instruction, and studies how to do everything rightly and lawfully, he becomes strong, skillful, and wise, master of himself, his thoughts and actions. But if he persists in following his momentary impulses, in doing everything as he feels prompted, not exercising thoughtfulness, and rejecting instruction, such a man will attain to nothing better than a slovenly and bungling life.

Confucius paid the strictest attention to dress, eating, deportment, passing speech—to all the so-called trivialities of life, as well as to the momentous affairs of state and the lofty moral principles which he expounded. He taught his disciples that it is the sign of a vulgar and foolish mind to regard anything as "trivial" that is necessary to be done, that the wise man pays attention to all his duties, and does everything wisely, thoughtfully, and rightly.

It is not an arbitrary edict of society that the man who persists in eating with his knife be rejected, for a knife is given to cut with, and a fork to eat with, and to put things to wrong and slovenly uses—even in the passing details of life—does not make for progress, but is retrogressive and makes for confusion.

It is not a despotic condition in the law of things that so long as a man persists in thinking and acting unkindly toward others he shall be shut out from Heaven. He shall remain in the outer pain and unrest, for selfishness is disruption and disorder. The universe is sustained by exactness, it rests on order, it demands right doing, and the searcher of wisdom will watch all his ways. He will think purely, speak gently, and act graciously, refining his entire nature, both in the letter and the spirit.

16. LIGHT ON DIVERSITIES OF CREEDS

THOSE WHO DEPART from the common track in matters of faith, and strike out independently in search of the Higher Life, as distinguished from the letter of religious dogma, are apt to sink into a pitfall which awaits them at the first step, namely, the pitfall of pride.

Attacking "creeds" and speaking contemptuously of "the orthodox" (as though orthodoxy were synonymous with evil) are not uncommon practices among those who fondly imagine they are in possession of greater spiritual light. Departure from orthodoxy does not by any means include departure from sin. Indeed, it is frequently accompanied with increased bitterness and contempt. Change of opinion is one thing, change of heart is quite another. To withdraw one's adherence from creeds is easy; to withdraw one's self from sin is more difficult.

Hatred and pride, and not necessarily orthodoxy and conformity, are the things to be avoided. One's own sin, and not another man's creed, is the thing to be despised.

The right-minded man cannot pride himself on being "broader" than others, or assume that he is on a "higher plane" than others, or think with self-righteous contempt of those who still cling to some form of letter worship which he has abandoned.

Applying the words "narrow," "bigoted," and "selfish" to others, is not the indication of an enlightened mind. No person would wish these terms to be applied to himself, and he who is becoming truly religious does not speak of others in words which would wound him were they directed toward himself.

Those who are learning how to exercise humility and compassion are becoming truly enlightened. Thinking lowly of themselves and kindly of others; condemning their own sins with merciless logic, and thinking with tender pity of the sins of others, they develop that insight into the nature and law of things which enables them to see the truth that is in others, and in the religions of others. They do not condemn their neighbor because he holds a different faith, or because he adheres to a

formal creed. Creeds must be, and he who performs faithfully his duty in his own particular creed, not interfering with or condemning his neighbor in the performance of his duty, is bringing the world nearer to perfection and peace.

Amid all the diversities of creeds there is a unifying power of undying and unalterable Love—and he or she who has Love has entered into sympathetic union with all.

He who has acquired the true spirit of Religion, who has attained to pure insight and deep charity of heart, will avoid all strife and condemnation. He will not fall into the delusion of praising his own sect (should he belong to one) and try to prove that it alone is right, or disparage other sects and try to prove that they are false. As the true man does not speak in praise of himself or his own work, so the man of humility, charity, and wisdom does not speak of his own sect as being superior to all others. He does not seek to elevate his own particular religion by picking holes in forms of faith which are held sacred by others.

Nothing more explicit and magnanimous has ever been uttered, in reference to this particular phrase of the practice of charity, than is found in the twelfth Edict of Asoka, the great Indian Ruler and Saint who lived some two or three centuries previous to the Christian era, and whose life, dedicated to the spread of Truth, testified to the beauty of his words. The edict runs thus:

"There should be no praising of one's own sect and decrying of other sects; but, on the contrary, a rendering of honor to other sects for whatever cause honor may be due. By so doing, both one's own sect may be helped forward, and other sects will be benefited; by acting otherwise, one's own sect will be destroyed in injuring others. Whosoever exalts his own sect by decrying others does so doubtless out of love for his own sect, thinking to spread abroad the fame thereof. But, on the contrary, he inflicts the more an injury upon his own sect."

These are wise and holy words; the breath of charity is in them, and they may be well pondered upon by those who are anxious to overthrow, not the religions of other men, but their own shortcomings.

It is a dark and deep-seated delusion that causes a man to think he can best advance the cause of his religion by exposing what he regards as the

"evils" of other religions. The most part of it is, that while such a one rejoices in the thought that by continually belittling other sects he will perhaps at last wipe them out, and win all men to his side, he is all the time engaged in the sad work of bringing into disrepute, and thereby destroying, his own sect.

Just as every time a man slanders another, he inflicts lasting injury upon his own character and prospects, so every time one speaks evil of another sect, he soils and demeans his own. And the man who is prone to attack and condemn other religions is the one who suffers most when his own religion is attacked and condemned.

If a man does not like that his own religion should be denounced as evil and false, he should carefully guard himself that he does not condemn other religions as such. If it pleases him when his own cause is well spoken of and helped, he should speak well of and help other causes which, while differing from his own in method, have the same good view in end. In this way he will escape the errors and miseries of sectarian strife, and will perfect himself in divine charity.

The heart that has embraced gentleness and charity avoids all those blind passions which keep the fires of party strife, violence, persecution, and bitterness burning from age to age. It dwells in thoughts of pity and tenderness, scorning nothing, despising nothing, and not stirring up animosity. For he who acquires gentleness gains that clear insight into the Great Law which cannot be obtained in any other way. He sees that there is good in all sects and religions, and he makes that good his own.

Let the truth-seeker avoid divisions and offending distinctions, and let him strive after charity; for charity does not slander, backbite, or condemn. It does not think of trampling down another's, and elevating its own.

Truth cannot contradict itself. The nature of Truth is exactness, reality, undeviating certitude. Why, then, the ceaseless conflict between the religions and creeds? Is it not because of error? Contradiction and conflict belong to the domain of error, for error, being confusion, is in the nature of self-contradiction. If the Christian says, "My religion is true and Buddhism is false," and if the Buddhist says, "Christianity is false and Buddhism is true," we are confronted with an irreconcilable

contradiction, for these two religions cannot be both true and false. Such a contradiction cannot come from Truth, and must therefore spring from error.

But if both these religious partisans should now say or think, "Yes, truly the contradiction springs from error, but the error is in the other man and his religion, and not me and mine," this does but intensify the contradiction. From where, then, springs the error, and where is Truth? Does not the very attitude of mind which these men adopt toward each other constitute the error? And were they to reverse that attitude, exchanging antagonism for good will, would they not perceive the Truth which does not stand in conflict with itself?

The man who says, "My religion is true, and my neighbor's is false," has not yet discovered the truth in his own religion, for when a man has done that, he will see the Truth in all religions. As behind all the universal phenomena there is but one Truth, so behind all the religions and creeds there is but one religion. For every religion contains the same ethical teaching, and all the Great Teachers taught exactly the same thing.

The precepts of the Sermon on the Mount are to be found in all religions. The life which these precepts demand was lived by all the Great Teachers and many of their disciples, for the Truth is a pure heart and a blameless life, and not a set of dogmas and opinions.

All religions teach purity of heart, holiness of life, compassion, love, and good will. They teach the doing of good deeds and the giving up of selfishness and sin. These things are not dogmas, theologies, and opinions; they are things to be done, to be practiced, to be lived. Men do not differ about these things, for they are the acknowledged verities of every sect. What, then, do they differ about? About their opinions, their speculations, their theologies.

Men differ about that which is unreal, not that which is real; they fight over error, and not over Truth. The very essential of all religion (and religions) is that before a man can know anything of Truth, he must cease from fighting his fellow man, and shall learn to regard him with good will and love. How can a man do this while he is convinced that his neighbor's religion is false, and that it is his duty to do all that he can to

undermine and overthrow it? This is not doing unto others as we would that they should do to us.

That which is true and real is true and real everywhere and always. There is no distinction between the pious Christian and the pious Buddhist. Purity of heart, piety of life, holy aspirations, and the love of Truth are the same in the Buddhist as the Christian. The good deeds of the Buddhist are not different from the good deeds of the Christian. Remorse for sin and sorrow for wrong thoughts and deeds springs in the hearts, not only of Christians, but of men and women of all religions. Great is the need of sympathy. Great is the need of love.

All religions are the same in that they teach the same fundamental truths. But men, instead of practicing these truths, engage opinions and speculations about things which are outside the range of knowledge and experience, and it is in defending and promulgating their own particular speculations that men become divided and engage in conflict with each other.

Condemnation is the beginning of persecution. The thought, "I am right and you are wrong," is a seed prolific of hatred. It was out of this seed that the Spanish Inquisition grew. He who would find the universal Truth must abandon egotism and quench the hateful flames of condemnation. He must remove from his heart the baneful thought, "All others are wrong," and think the illuminating thought, "It is I who am wrong." And having thus thought, he will cease from sin, and will live in love and good will toward all, making no distinctions, engaging in no divisions, a peacemaker and not a partisan. Thus living charitably disposed to all, he will become one with all. He will comprehend the Universal Truth, the Eternal Religion; for while error and selfishness divide, Truth demonstrates Truth and Religion unifies.

17. LIGHT ON LAW AND MIRACLE

THE LOVE OF THE WONDERFUL is an element in human nature which, like passions and desires, requires to be curbed, directed, and finally transmuted; otherwise superstition and the obscuration of reason and insight cannot be avoided. The idea of a miracle must be transcended before the orderly, eternal, and beneficent nature of the law can be perceived. Then peace and certainty, which a knowledge of kw bestows, can be enjoyed.

Just as a child when its eyes are opened to the phenomena of this world becomes involved in wonder, and revels in tales of giants and fairies, so when a man first opens his mental eyes to spiritual things does he become involved in stories of marvels and miracles. As a child at last becomes a man and leaves behind the crudities of childhood, understanding more accurately the relative nature of the phenomena around him, so with a fuller spiritual development and greater familiarity with the inner realities a man at last leaves behind the era of childish wonderment. He comes into touch with the law of things, and governs his life by principles that are fixed and invariable.

Law is universal and eternal, and, although vast areas of knowledge are waiting to be revealed, cause and effect will ever prevail. Every new discovery, every truth revealed, will serve to bring one nearer to a realization of the beauty, stability, and supremacy of the law. And very gladdening it is to know that law is inviolable and eternal throughout every department of nature, For then we know that the same operations of the universe are ever the same, and can therefore be discovered, understood, obeyed. This is a ground of certainty, and therefore of great hope and joy. The idea of miracle is a denial of law and the substitution of an arbitrary and capricious power.

It is true that around the lives of the Great Teachers of humanity stories of miracles have grown, but they have emanated from the undeveloped minds of the people, not from the Teachers themselves.

Lao-Tze expounded the Supreme Law, or Reason, which admits no miracle, yet his religion has today become so corrupted with the

introduction of the marvelous as to be little better than a mass of superstition.

Even Buddhism, whose founder declared that, "Seeing that the Law of Karma (cause and effect) governs all things, the disciple who aims at performing miracles does not understand the doctrine," and that, "The desire to perform miracles arises either from covetousness or vanity," has surrounded, in its corrupted form, the life of its Great Master with a number of miracles.

Even during the lifetime of Ramakrishna, the Hindu teacher who died in 1886, and who is regarded by his disciples as an incarnation of Deity to this age, all sorts of miracles were attributed to him by the people, and are now associated with his name. Yet, according to Max Muller, these miracles are without any foundation of evidence or fact, and Ramakrishna himself ridiculed and repudiated miracle.

As men become more enlightened, miracles and wonder-working will be expunged from religion, and the orderly beauty of Law and the ethical grandeur of obedience to the Law will become revealed and known. No man who desires to perform miracles or astral or psychological wonders, who is curious to see invisible or supernatural beings, or who is ambitious to become a "Master" or an "Adept," can attain a clear perception of Truth and the living of the highest life. Childish wonderment about things must be supplanted by knowledge of things, and vanity is a complete barrier to the entrance of the true path which demands of the disciple lowliness of heart, humility. He is on the true path who is cultivating kindness, forbearance, and a loving heart. The marks of a true Master are not miracles and wonder-working, but infinite patience, boundless compassion, spotless purity, and a heart at peace with all.

18. LIGHT ON WAR AND PEACE

WAR SPRINGS FROM INWARD STRIFE. "War in heaven" precedes war on earth. When the inward spiritual harmony is destroyed by division and conflict, it will manifest itself outwardly in the form of war. Without this inward conflict war could not be, nor can war cease until the inward harmony is restored.

War consists of aggression and resistance, and after the fight has commenced both combatants are like aggressors and resisters. Thus the effort to put an end to war by aggressive means produces war.

"I have set myself stubbornly against the war spirit," said a man a short time ago. He did not know that he was, by that attitude of mind, practicing and fostering the war spirit.

To fight against war is to produce war. It is impossible to fight for peace, because all fighting is the annihilation of peace. To think of putting an end to war by denouncing and fighting it is the same as to try to quench fire by throwing straw upon it.

He, therefore, who is truly a person of peace, does not resist war, but practices peace. He, therefore, who takes sides and practices attack and defense is responsible for war, for he is always at war in his mind. He cannot know the nature of peace, for he has not arrived at peace in his own heart.

The true man of peace is he who has put away from his mind the spirit of quarreling and party strife, who neither attacks others nor defends himself, and whose heart is at peace with all. Such a man has already laid in his heart the foundations of the empire of peace; he is a peacemaker, for he is at peace with the whole world and practices the spirit of peace under all circumstances.

Very beautiful is the spirit of peace, and it says, "Come and rest." Bickerings, quarreling, party divisions—these must be forever abandoned by him who would establish peace.

War will continue so long as men will allow themselves, individually, to be dominated by passion, and only when men have quelled the inward tumult will the outward horror pass away.

Self is the great enemy, the producer of all strife, and the maker of many sorrows. He, therefore, who will bring about peace on earth, let him overcome egotism, let him subdue his passions, let him conquer himself.

19. LIGHT ON THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

THERE IS NO LACK OF WRITING and preaching about "universal brotherhood," and it has been adopted as a leading article of faith by many newly formed societies. But what is so urgently needed to begin with is not universal brotherhood, but particular Brotherhood. That is, the adoption of a magnanimous, charitable, and kindly spirit toward those with whom we come in immediate contact; toward those who contradict, oppose and attack us, as well as toward those who love and agree with us.

I make a very simple statement of truth when I say that until such particular brotherhood is practiced, universal brotherhood will remain a meaningless term. For universal brotherhood is an end, a goal, and the way to it is by particular brotherhood. The one is sublime and far-reaching consummation, the other is the means by which that consummation must be realized.

I remember on one occasion reading a paper devoted largely to the teachings of universal brotherhood, and the leading article—a long and learned one— was an exposition of this subject. But on turning over a few more pages, I found another piece by the same writer in which he accused of misrepresentation, lying, and selfishness, not his enemies, but the brethren of his own Society, who bear, at least as far as such sins are concerned, stainless reputations.

A scriptural writer asked the question, "If a man does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" In the same manner, if a man does not love the brother whom he knows, how can he love people of all creeds and all nations whom he does not know?

To write articles on universal brotherhood is one thing; to live in peace with one's relations and neighbors and to return good for evil is quite another.

To endeavor to propagate universal brotherhood while fostering in our heart some sparks of envy, spite, and resentment, malice, or hatred, is to

be self-deluded; for thus shall we be all the time hindering and denying, by our actions, that which we eulogize by our words. So subtle is such self-delusion, that, until the very heights of love and wisdom are reached, we are all liable at any moment to fall into it.

It is not because our fellow men do not hold our views, or follow our religion, or see as we see that universal brotherhood remains unrealized, but because of the prevalence of ill will. If we hate, avoid, and condemn others because they differ from us, all that we may say or do in the cause of universal brotherhood will be another snare to our feet, a mockery to our aspirations, and a farce to the world at large.

Let us, then, remove all hatred and malice from our hearts. Let us be filled with goodwill toward those who try and test us by their immediate nearness. Let us love them that hate us, and think magnanimously of those who condemn us or our doctrine—in a word, let us take the first step toward universal brotherhood, by practicing brotherhood in the place where it is most needed. And as we succeed in being brotherly in these important particulars, universal brotherhood will be found to be not far distant.

20. LIGHT ON LIFE'S SORROWS

THERE IS GREAT SORROW IN THE WORLD. This is one of the supreme facts of life. Grief and affliction visit every heart, and many that are today reveling in hilarious joy or sinful riot, will tomorrow be smitten low with sorrow. Suddenly, and with swift and silent certainty, comes its poignant arrow, entering the human heart, slaying its joy, laying low its hopes, and shattering all its earthly plans and prospects. Then the humbled, smitten soul reflects, and enters deeply and sympathetically into the hidden meanings of human life.

In the dark times of sorrow, men and women approach very near to Truth. When in one brief hour the built up hopes of many years of toil fall like a toy palace, and all earthly pleasures burst and vanish like petty bubbles in the grasp, then the crushed spirit, bewildered, tempest-tossed, and without a refuge, gropes in dumb anguish for the Eternal, and seeks its abiding peace.

"Blessed are they that mourn," said the Teacher of the West, and the Teacher of the East declared that, "Where there is great suffering there is great bliss." Both of these sayings express the truth that sorrow is a teacher and purifier. Sorrow is not the end of life— though it is, in its consummation, the end of the worldly life—it leads the bewildered spirit into rest and safety; for the end of sorrow is joy and peace.

Strong searcher for Truth! Strenuous fighter against self and passion! Seasons of sorrow must be your portion for a time. While any vestige of self remains, temptations will assail you; the veil of illusion will cloud your spiritual vision, producing sorrow and unrest. When heavy clouds settle down upon your spirit, accept the darkness as your own, and pass through it bravely into the cloudless light beyond. Bear well in mind that nothing can overtake you that does not belong to you and that is not for your eternal good. As the poet has truly sung—

Nor space nor time, nor deep nor high
Can keep my own away from me.

And not alone are the bright things of life yours;
the dark things are yours also.

When difficulties and troubles gather thickly about you; when failures come and friends fall away; when the tongue that has sweetly praised you, bitterly blames; when beloved lips that pressed against your lips, the soft, warm kisses of love, taunt and mock you in the lonely hour of your solitary grief; or when you lay beneath the sod the cold casket of clay that but yesterday held the responsive spirit of your beloved—when these things overtake you, remember that the hour of your Gethsemane has come. The cup of anguish is yours to drink. Drink it silently and murmur not, for in that hour of oppressive darkness and blinding pain no prayer will save you, no cry to heaven will bring you sweet relief. Faith and patience only will give you the strength to endure, and to go through your crucifixion with a meek and gentle spirit, not complaining, blaming no one, but accepting it as your own.

When one has reached the lowest point of sorrow; when, weak and exhausted, and overcome with a sense of powerlessness, he cries to God for help, and there comes no answering comfort and no relief—then, discovering the painfulness of sorrow and the insufficiency of prayer alone, he is ready to enter the path of self-renunciation, ready to purify his heart, ready to practice self-control, ready to become a spiritual athlete, and to develop that divine and invincible strength which is born of self-mastery.

He will find the cause of sorrow in his own heart, and will remove it. He will learn to stand alone; not craving sympathy from any, but giving it to all. Not thoughtlessly sinning and remorsefully repenting, but studying how not to commit sin. Humbled by innumerable defeats, and chastened by many sufferings, he will learn how to act blamelessly toward others, how to be gentle and strong, kind and steadfast, compassionate and wise.

Thus he will gradually rise above sorrow, and at last Truth will dawn upon his mind, and he will understand the meaning of abiding peace. His mental eye will be open to perceive the Cosmic Order. He will be blessed with the Vision of the Law, and will receive the Beatific Bliss.

When the true order of things is perceived, sorrow is transcended. When the contracted personal self, which hugs its own fleeting pleasures and broods over its own petty disappointments and dissatisfactions, is broken up and cast away, then the larger life of Truth enters the mind, bringing bliss and peace; and the Universal Will takes the place of self.

Will he find peace in this Scripture or that? Scripture fills an important place. As a guide it is good, but it cannot be a refuge, for one may know the Scripture by heart, and yet be in sore conflict and unrest. The theories of men are subject to successive changes, and no limit can be set to the variety of textual interpretations. There is no abiding refuge in Scripture.

Will he find rest in this teacher or that? The teacher has his place, and as an instructor he renders good service. But teachers are numerous, and their differences are many. Though one may regard his particular teacher as in possession of the Truth, that teacher will one day be taken from him. There is no abiding refuge in a teacher.

Will he find peace in solitude? Solitude is good and necessary in its place, but he who courts it as a lasting refuge will be like one perishing of thirst in a waterless desert. He will escape men and the turmoil of the city, but he will not escape himself and the unrest of the heart. There is no abiding rest in solitude.

If, then, the seeker can find no refuge in pleasure, in success, in health, in family and friends, in Scripture, in the teacher, or in solitude, whither shall he turn to find that sanctuary which shall afford abiding peace?

Let him take refuge in righteousness. Let him fly to the sanctuary of a purified heart. Let him enter the pathway of a blameless, stainless life, and walk it meekly and patiently until it brings him to the eternal temple of Truth in his own heart.

He who has taken refuge in Truth, even in the habitation of a wise understanding and a loving and steadfast heart, is the same whether in pleasure or pain; wealth or poverty; success or failure; health or sickness; with friends or without; in solitude or noisy haunts; and he is independent of bibles and teachers, for the spirit of Truth instructs him. He perceives without fear or sorrow the change and decay which are in all things. He has found peace; he has entered the abiding sanctuary; he knows the Light that will never go out.
