THEODORE PARKER AS RELIGIOUS REFORMER.

THE sun of Theodore Parker's life was his assured and triumphant belief in God. There is one light of the sun and another of the moon, and his was solar belief, no weak lunar ray. "What a happy man he must have been!" said lately a thoughtful woman, to whom one of his sermons upon his dearest theme had been read. Temperament had doubtless its part in the unconquerable cheerfulness of his belief; but, with all due allowance for its effect, just appreciation must still say that a faith in God more spontaneous, spacious, entire, and controlling than his, or healthier, manlier, freer from emotional flatulence or fatty bloat of pietism, has scarcely been seen in our century. And his, if any man's, was belief in the sense which implies, not intellectual opinion or assent only, but loyal devotedness, unconditioned duty, and that obedience whose joy and honor it is to obey.

Believing with his whole soul, he also believed entirely in a whole God. The countenance that seemed to shine down from heights above all height upon his heart was not divided,—a brightness to dazzle on the one side, and a blackness to appall on the other,—but was an entire and unblemished luminance of justice glorified in benignity. Kant and his own heart had taught him to derive the idea of God from the ethical consciousness in man, that is, from the human sense of righteousness; and, so deriving, we do not find the being of the deity first, and his moral perfection afterward, but it is the sense of a sovereign righteousness which implicates and evidences divine being. He did not follow Kant strictly, nor, though endowed with rare power to grasp and render generally apprehensible the chief ethical results of philosophy, was he a strict philosophical thinker

in the sense of the schools; but he was so far a Kantian as with philosophic certitude to say: We are authorized and engaged by our own moral being to affirm a perfect moral government of the universe.

There he was immovable; nothing could shake him. If tradition came with a black-spotted picture of the divine, and cried, "Bow down!" he answered, "I worship upward, not downward." If facts of our natural experience seemed scarce consonant with his belief, he admitted, though reluctantly and sparingly, the apparent discrepancy, but did so only to house himself more wholly in the high native faith of his spirit. The outward facts of life do not agree with the idea of a perfect God? "Then," said the stout man, "I must go forth and do my part, by hard work in the world, to *make* them agree." And that, if not philosophy, was a mode of the want of it, of which, perhaps, more could be endured!

Believing in an All-powerful who is perfect justice, he held, with Plato and with Jesus, that only perfect goodness is perfect justice. He meant no flabby goody-goodness, but a sovereign rule that only and ever for benign ends orders disciplines and uses chastisements. Consistently with that faith, he could not think of God as an eternal destroyer. He was unable to conceive of the universe as divinely well and whole, and at the same time sick with an eternal running sore, to be eternally cauterized with fire, but run still. Wisely the world is so designed that moral evil is possible; but the design, to be wise, must include the overcoming of it, and the evocation of moral power thereby. "I came," said one, "to seek and save that which is lost." In that utterance Parker heard a veritable voice from heaven. So, he said, the Eternal Providence seeks and saves; and the universe has no pit so dark that its eye cannot see, or so deep that its care cannot reach, to the bottom.

If, now, with such a faith, he had thought that God works by supernatural irruption into his universe, he might have taken occasion to fold the hands in idle rest and wait, or to fold the hands and pray God to use diligence. Such was not his thought. He believed that the design of Heaven lies in the ethical spirit of man, thence working out to its realization. Hence the great plan of Divine Providence was to him, in the measure of

his powers, committed; and all his loyalty of religion, all his conscience of duty, all his heart's longing for a supremacy of righteousness and justice on earth, and all his deep, sacred love of his kind, joined in one, and moved him as one in his labor. By so much, therefore, as he was sure God intended the overcoming of evil, by so much he was bound in duty, and by religion inspired, to help God do it. Look at his faith from the supernaturalistic point of view, and you may imagine it a soft optimism, lulled in lazy security. Apprehend it in its proper interior connection, and you will see there, on the contrary, the plan of a righteous Providence, self-kindled to a flame of consecrate and achieving duty in a human soul.

This it was that drove him to and through his great work. The eloquent Monday lecturer[1] says he was a statue, partly of bronze and partly of clay: the enduring bronze his anti-slavery labor; the crumbling clay his religion. To me the matter presents itself in a different aspect. His religion bound him to wrestle down unrighteousness, instead of folding the hands in a prayer-meeting; his anti-slavery labor *was* the wrestling-down, religiously as heroically done. How clay should beget bronze I have yet to learn. It will not do; the man was of one piece, no patchwork. He did better than many others, because, with heart and will as well as intellect, he believed better. Just his religion it was that, like the engine of a steamship in a storm, drove him ploughing a way over or through the rage-crested waves of national iniquity.

Because himself so moved, he was led to estimate highly the power and worth of religious motive. By true religion, he meant living righteousness in man, that feels itself working under, and sustained by, the design of an Infinite Righteousness. Morals alone are the bird running upon its feet; ethical religion is the same bird soaring on the wing; religion without ethics is a paper kite. There is much kiting religion in the world, and it may fly high: but the string of self-interest binds it always to the earth, while the thing itself, be as solemn about it as men may, is but a toy. But by religion Parker meant rectitude winged with worship. And could this religion have its own free and

[1] Rev. Joseph Cook.

glorious course, what might it, what must it, not do for the world! What horrors of war and foulnesses of peace would it not banish; to what heights of character and equities of action must it not lead the way!

But he looked around, and saw with pain that religion was, to a sad extent, a wasted power. Much of it there was, but what was it doing? Hercules clad in a gown and twirling a distaff! It would not even try to purge the foulness from politics, and to breathe a moral soul under the ribs of trade; but had retired to the meeting-house, there to "save souls." What it was doing to make the souls worth saving might be inquired. Or was it at all the human soul, the ethical spirit of man, which it would save? Was it not rather aiming to provide safety after death for resurrected bodies? At any rate, it was doing less than enough. With all its ostensible labor to soften hard hearts, there were in those days but too many tokens that hearts were becoming hard, and only heads getting softened! Let us not needlessly drag past shames to light; but this must be said: there was a time when "soul-saving" religion in America was expressly and conspicuously put to the test; and dull indeed were the ears that then heard no incontrovertible voice saying of it, "weighed in the balances and found wanting."

Why, Theodore Parker asked, is religion thus weakened or falsified in effect? He found two deep-lying causes. First, its living spirit was clogged with a dead body, a traditional *corpus* or corpse of creed, of which one must say, as Martha at the grave, "By this time it stinketh." Secondly, it was put in theory upon a narrow and dubious basis of supernaturalism, becoming of necessity more dubious every day, rather than upon the universal spiritual basis proper to it. By effect of the former cause, it was morally deteriorated; by effect of the latter, was wasting its force in an unnatural war with human reason and knowledge, instead of adding all the strength of reason to its own, to employ both in fruitful labor.

Such was his diagnosis of the case. It required of him two chief labors, which he dutifully undertook; one of critical elimination and rejection, and the other of fresh construction. At these we will glance in due order.

A ship sails upon a long voyage, touching and taking in cargo at various ports. Midway in the voyage, and yet far from home, it is already overladen, and in danger to be swamped, while a stormy season is coming on. Meantime, the cargo, while comprising inestimable treasures, consists also, and in too considerable part, either of stuff that never was valuable,—oyster shells as well as pearls,—or of perishable stuff, worth something when taken in, but decayed, and become not only worthless, but pestilent. What should be done? Prudent counsel would say: Open the hatches without delay, and set the crew at work to separate the trash from the treasure, and get it safely overboard. Parker found himself upon such a ship, and the name of it was Christianity. A goodly ship, and freighted with treasure richer than gems and gold, but dangerously encumbered also, and at the opening of a stormy season for religion, with worthless weight. He perceived the situation, others did not. Discernment has its duties; he lifted up his voice and cried, "Lighten the ship! Save the precious treasure it bears, and make room for more, by casting away what is of no value!"

The title of his first notable sermon, "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity," indicates his spirit and aim in all his labor of criticism. He enlarged his purpose indeed, and sought to distinguish between transient and permanent in historical religion generally; but his object ever was to rescue the vital, immortal essence of religion from its imprisonment in defunct forms of thought, or its oppression by accidental accretions.

Was it not, now, antecedently probable that such a work would be required? For religion, like every vital and perennial principle in history, has always its immortal soul and its mortal body. The one is ever the same, but expands and ascends from lesser to greater, and from lower to higher historical expressions and embodiments; the other lives its day, then becomes a dead body, in which the spirit, though it cannot die, languishes imprisoned and oppressed. But the dogmatic body of Christian religion is already fifteen centuries old, and was shapen in a time which could give little promise of ability to think adequately for ours. Nor is the lapse of centuries

a sufficient measure of the mental distance. For a line has been crossed, another epoch in the history of the human mind has come; and with it, not only new knowledge, but other morals of mental action have arrived. The precept of the old epoch was, "Hear and believe;" the precept of the new is, "Look and learn." Before this eye that looks and learns, not only have the old heavens rolled themselves together as a scroll and disappeared, leaving to view the infinite spaces, sun-peopled, with their mystery only of open depth; not only has the flat patch of earth become a globe resting in everlasting motion and poised in pure law; and not only has the earth's surface, before unmeaning, become all one great letter-press, wherein its own ancient and wondrous history is told,—but in the sphere of human history discoveries have been made, of themselves sufficient to effect a mental revolution. The traditional outsides of history have been pierced, seen through, and found to be only outsides. At first it was with Voltairean mockery, as if tradition were no more than a hollow shell; but the sciolistic eye is soon replaced by a deeper insight: the shallow jest dies away, the grin disappears. For beneath the old outsides is found somewhat still older, and yet new as this day's morning; namely, the undying powers and principles of the human spirit, identical in endless change, and unfolding by processes that, while differing much with place, time, and temper of a people, have yet their order and law. And this fact is put now out of question: only vital, productive principles are immortal; their historical forms never. All grows old in history, except that which makes it. Symbol, ceremonial, institution, creed, are the shell which the human spirit builds, and from which it must soon or late migrate, to build anew. The ethical ideal that one age wholesomely worships becomes the idol that some other age, to worship wholesomely, must cast down. And, through all, principles are continuous, and the unity of history not broken.

It was, therefore, with the laws of history at his back, and wholly in the interest of religion itself, that Theodore Parker, following upon Channing and others, turned a clear, intrepid eye upon that body of religious belief which the tradition of centuries has brought to us. He saw there an ideal of the divine,

once the best that men could arrive at, now not best nor good, but still forced upon shrinking conscience by means of a book reputed infallible. This, once the temple of the religious spirit, has become the prison from which it must be delivered. And he addressed himself in brave earnest to that labor of liberation.

A Calvinistic mother had read of a morning to her little daughter that chapter of the New Testament, in which mention is made of a sin that shall never be forgiven. After the reading, the child sat silent a minute; then said, "Mamma, won't God forgive them ever, ever?" "No, my child." "But why not, mamma?" The embarrassed mother answered as best she could, that is, with the common-places about God's constraining justice. The little girl seemed to accept the explanation, and was again silent; but presently cried out, "Well, mamma, God isn't a Christian, then, is he?"

Theodore Parker was a childlike man, who said: The God the Father of the Christian trinity is any thing but a Christian. It was a human conception, religiously conceived, suited to the ages that begot it, and such as they, with many ages following, could look up to with reverence and adoration unfeigned; but to us it is as little a representation of perfect goodness or justice as the three-headed god of Hindoo sculpture is an Apollo. And because it no longer represents that which the human soul, with open eye and sincere vision, can recognize as goodness or justice, he could only see in the worship of it,—I hesitate to say it, for it is a sad thing, but the plain words must come,—he could only see a worship of unrighteousness. That it was such without intention and without consciousness of the fact, he more than willingly acknowledged, but such to him it was, even such,—among the saddest of all sights that this world of ours ever offers to the afflicted eye: religion beguiled, deluded, and worshipping downward!

But how is this possible, an unintended and unconscious worship of unrighteousness? The possibility is too easily explained. In a society of ministers in this State, one spoke thus: "The principal of our high school," said he, "who has lately lost a daughter, and is thinking seriously about religion, came to me the other day with this question: 'How can it be right for God, of free will, to create an immortal soul, knowing beforehand that he will have to damn it in hell eternally?' Of course," continued the minister, "I maintained it was right, but really I do not see my way, and would like more light if you can give it me." There was a space of silence; then a brother took heart to say: "I wonder if God is obliged to do what seems right to us?" Other response there was none. Begin, now, imputing to God character that cannot seem just, and action that cannot seem right to us; then call it just and right because it has been so imputed,—and the way lies broad open for an unconscious worship of unrighteousness. Parker said that the worshippers of Moloch doubtless praised their god as just and good. Why not? They had but to say, "Moloch is not obliged to do what seems right to us," and room was made to any required extent for that spurious ascription.

With the traditional object of worship Parker did not deal by a process of ratiocination, his appeal was made to conscience chiefly. He stated the conception in plain, graphic terms; then said, "Look; look and see what it really is; look and say if honest conscience will suffer you to accept *that* as the portrait of Infinite Righteousness."

We will not only look at it, but also into it, if that be possible.

It is a curious question: Where did the God the Father of the Christian trinity come from? The intense contrast of the conception to the Father whom Jesus loved is obvious at a glance. I am apt to think that the conception arose by a composition between the Hebrew Jehovah and the Greek Fate. Fate—to attend to one only of its two chief characters—was the ideal of legal or penal justice, executing judgment by its ministers, the Erinnyes or Furies. In the first person of the trinity, legal justice was imagined as set on the throne of heaven, and there made one with the infinite holiness ascribed to Jehovah.

Legal justice cannot forgive. Moreover, it demands perfection, no less, within its province. Perfection: the citizen must keep the whole law, to the uttermost syllable and letter. It is true that legal justice, as known here on earth, does not require moral perfection; for it does not enter at all into the interior of life, but is limited to its extreme outside, and, as penal justice, prohibits and punishes those actions only which no man, however imperfect, need be guilty of, and which, if permitted,

would break the bones of civilization. But so far as this mode of justice goes, it necessarily demands a perfect obedience, a perfect conduct. Therefore it has but a limited application. Should it quit its proper outside place, and strike inward into the realm of spontaneous personal morals, where there is a finer law of obligation and a very different economy, it would become itself the transgressor. Hence the Latin adage, *Summum jus summa injuria,*—"the highest justice is the greatest wrong." The English, however, cannot have the precision of the original: for our word "justice" has a moral as well as a legal signification, while the Latin *jus*, like the German *Recht*, signified legal right only. The extreme or excess of this, its intrusion into the sphere of the finer equities is the utmost injury and wrong.

Now, in the first person of the trinity legal justice was made infinite, and one and the same with infinite holiness. What law, now, has this justice to execute? Why, the law of absolute holiness, ideal perfection. Its code does not correspond to the imperfect moral ability of man, but to the infinite holiness of God. This standard it must apply to mortals; must find them criminals, felons, in so far as they do not perfectly obey it; and must assume the black cap to denounce sentence of infinite condemnation against all human beings accordingly.

For before such a justice, executing such a law, what flesh shall stand? Its code necessarily exceeds all measure of human possibility. So tried, we are felons, one and all, and can be no less. Best and worst are alike criminals, and under infinite condemnation. Vain is all human endeavor; vainly the good look up to the ideal of perfect right, and, not for reward, but as drawn in love to that high goal, seek it with step stoutly climbing; all in vain the noble do and dare, forgetting self: they are not perfect, and "he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all." Nor would any mere human virtue, though indeed perfect, at all suffice. Human righteousness is but "filthy rags." A transcendental holiness is required, far above all measure of mere human well-doing. The want of this is called "sin;" and accordingly one shall confess himself the "vilest of sinners," without intending at all to intimate that he is, in the human sense, a bad

man,—feeling, very likely, that he rather shows how good a man he is than confesses himself a bad one.[1]

If, now, there is to be any condescension to man's imperfection, any kindness toward it, the name of it must be mercy, not justice. But how is mercy to come in? Infinite legal justice excludes it. What a situation for the human race! Here it is, hemmed in, destruction impending over it, and no way, no power, to fly. "Escape!" it cries; but escape there is none. Mercy would come to it, but legal justice bars the way. But, in this desperate strait, suddenly a "door of escape" is opened. There is to be, there is, a strange thing, quite unknown to any human code; namely, an expiation by proxy: the infinite legal justice is compounded with in that else unheard-of way, and "mercy" may come in. Such was the ethical conception that for a series of centuries was to prevail in history. That it has had its function there is not to be doubted. For a time, for ages, it was a prodigious sharpener of hard consciences. But, if a dull axe be held upon the keen grindstone day out and day in, the steel will at length be quite cut away, and only the soft iron left. Have there been no indications among us of soft conscience, conscience that could well divide between Saturday and Sunday, but whose edge was quickly turned when applied to a hard material, as some great wrong, with which many pecuniary interests were bound up, and for which avarice pleaded? The grindstone has its use, but there is a limit to its uses.

And now let us look at an aspect of human life to which a very different mode of justice is suited. Here is an apprentice. He enters the workshop to learn a trade. Quite ignorant he enters; compared with a perfect workman, he might be called totally depraved. Of course, he will blunder and bungle. Charity itself could not make up a mouth to call him a good workman. Nevertheless, he may be a good apprentice; that is, a good sort of imperfect creature. And, if he is attentive, diligent, and docile, the master will say of him, "He is a good lad, he does well." And, in saying so, the master will be simply

[1] I happened of late to hear this scrap of conversation in the cars. "His talk," says one, "was nothing but confession of sin; you would have thought him the worst man in the world." "Ah!" said the other admiringly, "he is a fine man, he is a *very* fine man."

just: the approval is not mercy, it is justice only. Here, then, —and let the fact be well noted,—is a sort of justice that not only can, but, to be indeed justice, must *approve and applaud imperfection.* And the opposite of this would, in that place, be not only injustice, but injustice of a cruel and brutal kind.

For example, suppose that master to set up a standard of workmanship taken from his own practiced skill, to apply that standard to the boy, and to undertake the execution of all its demands upon him in the spirit of strict legal justice. Now he will say to the poor lad: "The law of this shop is that every one is to be a perfect workman. You cannot at once be such, it is true; but that is the law, and justice constrains me to execute it upon you. If, therefore, you are a perfect mechanic, you will stand acquitted; if you are less, I shall see that you hate me, since you do not obey my law, and as my enemy, and the enemy of all good workmanship as well, I shall treat you." Beautiful justice were that!

Theodore Parker would say that men are God's apprentices. It is a moral apprenticeship, too; they are learning to will rightly no less than to do well what has been rightly willed. This figure indicates his thought, not perfectly, but sufficiently for the immediate purpose. Apprentices: does not the term signify the reality of human life in one great aspect of it? To this reality a mode of divine justice corresponds. The name of it is not mercy, but justice. And it is a sort of divine justice, which, to be just, not only acquits, but positively approves moral imperfection striving to do well.

Meantime, Parker did not, in Mr. Cook's phrase, "set the universe upon rockers;" he merely did not fix it upon a grindstone. Legal justice has its proper outside place in a divine system. It is executed in the outward order of the world by the natural law of consequence. For example, a drunkard has reformed, and is confirmed in sobriety. Every good man accepts him for what he actually is, a man of sober habits. That is forgiveness, to accept one for what he has really become. At the same time, humane justice demands it, and I trust that divine justice is not unequal to the act. But the man's former habits have injured his constitution, and the burden of that injury he

will have to bear while he lives. That is legal justice, executed in its proper outside and subordinate place.

That law, now, of moral consequence is one which Parker, so far from ignoring, affirmed rigorously. He held that this law will go with every man out of this world, and never leave him. It was not he who preached a means to set it aside in behalf of "the elect." It was not he who cried, "Come to Jesus, and have all your sins in a moment washed away." He would not push legal justice to inhuman extremes, and try to push the finer justice of Heaven out of the universe in doing so: but neither was he a party to any plan for buying it off.

The conception of an infinite legal justice, excluding, not only all divine charity, but all the finer fatherly equities of divine justice as well, until itself be compounded with by a supernatural expiation, is one which no patchwork mercies can amend. There is a radical and ineradicable vice in the conception itself. But when the infinite legal justice is represented as creating its own helpless victims; when, Adam and Eve having fallen, it chooses that they shall nevertheless be the progenitors of the whole human race, and that their posterity shall inherit from them a nature totally depraved, but be felons and under capital condemnation by so much as they are even morally imperfect; when the expiator, who is to come with "mercy" to some of these unhappy creatures, delays his coming four thousand years; when, meantime, the infinite legal justice selects for arbitrary favor a small people, of no singular merit, in a corner of western Asia, but leaves all the rest of mankind to roll down to death in the darkness; when, eighteen hundred years after the great event, the very name of the expiator is still unknown to two-thirds of the human race; when the evidence afforded to all subsequent ages that any such supernatural expiation has been accomplished, or was intended, is such that numbers of candid and pious scholars, with all most studious examination of it, can only find that it is not evidence; and when, beyond all, appears in lurid perspective the place where unnumbered myriads of souls, so created, and so entreated on earth, are kept alive for an eternity of torment,—then the question propounds itself, and presses to the lips: Is there a man on this planet who can honestly say that such a representation commends itself to his

natural sentiments of justice? Is there an orthodox Christian who would not reject it with horror, did he not feel compelled to believe that God has actually done so, and that therefore it must be right? I will not credit it of any human being.

Theodore Parker was not born to an inheritance of such belief, as was my lot. He had not wasted years and strength and health in desperately trying to reconcile his heart to it. But he looked at the representation, and with an eye, not merely with an eyeball. And, as he saw, he spoke. It is not God, he said, but a spectre of imagination; and the worship of it is a worship of unrighteousness, though not so intended. Hence, as a religious man, he had no choice but to raise his voice against it. "Infidel" he was called for doing so; infidel he would have been,—false, that is, to his sense of sacred obligation,—had he forborne. Faithless he was not the man to be: therefore, in the name of Divine Justice, by such a representation violently caricatured; in the name of the human soul, by it perverted and oppressed; in the name of whatever is sacred in earth or heaven, —he entered against it his religious protest. The solemn voice, with its Hebrew resonance, rang out, and the cry of a soul that could not be silent was in it, saying, "Thou shalt not think evil of the Highest."

"But it is the God of the Bible," men say. It is not the God of the Bible; but, in nooks and corners of that venerable collection, "texts" may be found to keep it in countenance; and, while the Bible is regarded as a dead level of supernatural communication, there is little hope of its final dismissal. Now, Parker knew that the doctrine of biblical infallibility is exploded; and orthodox scholars knew it with him. Six years before his South Boston sermon, the noble-minded, learned, and pious Dr. Arnold, from the bosom of the English Church, had, in a private letter, put the infallibility of the Bible,—not quite in direct terms, but by indubitable implication,—in the same category with that of the Pope.[1] Even John Calvin had the candor to confess that the divine authority of the book,—divine authority, a pretension one degree lower than that of infallible inspiration,—could not

[1] Stanley's "Life of Arnold," p. 238.

be proved; and modern research has left the old dogma not a leg to stand, not a crutch to lean, upon.

Parker was not extreme in this matter. He loved the Bible, and his voice grew almost lyrical when he spoke its praise. But he would not that it should be made a "fetich." He was justly unwilling that men should set up an unfounded doctrine about the book, and then, having themselves falsified it, use it to their own soul's hurt. As it was a treasure of moral incitement and instruction, he deeply appreciated and earnestly commended it; only when it was to be converted into a handcuff for human conscience, he interposed and said, "No! your doctrine about the book, which would fit it for that use, is one of your own making, and is now fully known to be untrue." And he said it quite aloud.

It may be that, with much good, some harm was done. His act brought down the great vulgar upon intelligences unfitted to contend with such an antagonist, and for a time there was a severe reaction. He had no choice, however; ours is a democratic country, and our only appeal is to the people. And now the reaction is past, while the good effect remains. Some day orthodox divines will be thanking Theodore Parker for forcing them to cast off an encumbrance. Or they may adopt a less handsome course, choosing rather to accuse him of misunderstanding their position and attributing to them a doctrine which, having abandoned it, they would be considered as having never held. For, to that sly way of changing front, theologians and others do sometimes resort, I am sorry to say.

But Parker did not stick fast in a mere *not*. Our century, in wide contrast to the last, has arrived at an understanding of the spontaneous self-annunciation of spiritual principles in man, which makes bibles intelligible as products of natural spirituality. The doctrine which presents itself from this point of view, and which Parker shared with others of his contemporaries at home and abroad, has been put by Emerson into two lines,—

"Out of the heart of Nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old,"—

out of the heart of human nature, the ethical nature in man, in which the great Whole gives itself voice. Men wrote there

the faith and fear and aspiration, the compelling duty and devotion of their souls, building better than they knew. It is spiritual spontaneity before reflection, coming forth simply because it is there and must come. Books so written do not furnish us out with a baggage of infallibly correct notions, but they do vastly better; they attest that spontaneity of belief, and they reveal its interior identity in all times. We touch there the most ancient heart of the race, and it is the thrill of unity, not the shock of dissonance, that arises. And, as that ethical heart of humanity speaks to us, intelligible, from the cradle of the ages, and our own answers back, in other dialect, but the same mother tongue, there springs up from these consonances a voice to tell us of the spirit that once moved upon the face of the waters, and still moves in the soul of man.

Yonder, suppose, in the heavens is a cloud that the eye cannot penetrate; and, while the atmosphere continues in the same state, it will there remain. But now comes a warmer, drier air that drinks it up, holds it in transparent solution, and converts it into blue sky. In the last century the Bible was still a cloud, opaque, to human intelligence impenetrable. Some looked upon it, and said, "Miracle;" and some looked, and said, "Imposture." But other airs of thought have come to solve and render it transparent; and now, though no particle of its significance is lost, it is cloud no longer, but azure sky, through which the tempered sunlight streams. And in cordial, grateful recognition of its offices, as thus contained in the atmosphere of human intelligence, Parker rested. It had become such to him as freely to transmit heaven's light, and to cast no shadow upon his soul.

I now turn, but conscious that brevity is imperative, to his labor of construction. Three questions here present themselves.

What ground did he build upon?

Whence was the material drawn?

What edifice did he erect?

I. His ground was the three great facts of natural spirituality, normal inspiration, and the law of moral development in history.

1. Natural spirituality: man is, by his proper nature as Person, a spiritual being, and, as such, a fountain of religion and morals. Faiths and bibles, sanctities of duty and devotion, flow

naturally from his being. In the greater number the flow is mostly by way of response to the nobler hearts, and may be like the flow of brooks in midsummer drought, when the scanty waters creep, scarce visible, among grasses and rushes; or it may appear hardly otherwise than in the faith that sustains institutions and continues customs; while now and then in some rich soul the tide rises high, and flows as from fountains in heaven. But man is a born worshipper; and Parker regarded all religions, and Christianity with the rest, as issuing from springs of spirituality native to the being of humanity.

2. Therefore issuing from God; for, in these powers of man, he said, God is immanent, and in their proper outcome is expressed or revealed. That immanence of God is inspiration; and it is important to grasp the precise nature and purport of Parker's doctrine, chiefly on account of its intrinsic importance, but also on account of statements recently made. For the people of Boston have been told of late that he failed to distinguish between inspiration and several other things, real or imaginary, as dictation, illumination, supernatural revelation, etc. These statements, to proceed not only from an honest man, but from an honest *mind* as well, have caused me no little wonderment. For Parker said precisely what he meant by inspiration, and, if words can make any thing clear, it is so that he meant none of these things. "But the problem of inspiration," he says in his biographical sketch, "got sooner solved. I believed in the Immanence of God in man; . . . . hence that all men are inspired in proportion to their actual powers and their normal use thereof; that Truth is the test of intellectual inspiration, Justice of moral, and so on." That is, God inspires man with intellectual, moral, and religious powers; with active reason, active conscience, the active principle of religion; and is in these powers and principles as the divine legitimation and authentication of their proper significance and lawful use. Hence divine reason is not one thing, and human reason another of a different sort; divine justice not a something different in kind from humane justice; the difference is of degree, not kind: there is but one reason one right, homogeneous, or with itself consistent, in earth and heaven; and insomuch as any man is indeed a rational and moral being, he has the clew to it. And so what comes nor-

mally from the spiritual being of man, comes not from that alone, but the founts of eternity feed the stream. Such is the purport of Parker's doctrine.

3. The idea of history as a scene of moral as well as intellectual development was with Theodore Parker a fundamental one. Now I do not, for my own part, swear by Herbert Spencer; and think it possible that Mr. Parker held to the doctrine of progress in a somewhat stricter sense than I am able to do. For it is not my opinion,—and perhaps was not his,—that a later age is of necessity superior to an earlier one. The fresh bud or fragrant blossom is a wholesomer object than the rotten apple, though the latter represents a maturer stage; and there are nations, if not ages, that are rotten apples. It is true that in the decayed fruit the seeds may still be alive and healthy; and so in history, seeds of new growth may live long, even amid the wretchedest stagnancy of mind and rot of morals.

But we must confess it: the world moves, and gets on. If we [illegible] in the books of Kings in the Old Testament, and see there [illegible] Jewish life then was, it is impossible not to be sensible that our times, compared with those, show an immense advance, and in morals as in all else. And so, if we look into the Rig Veda, the Zendavesta, the Ramayana, the Iliad, it is again impossible not to see that, even in the ideal life there expressed or portrayed, the mental and moral states are comparatively inchoate and obscure: it is a morning twilight, inspiring in its way, with freshness of dews and roseate flushes of dawn, but twilight still. Athens is a star in history; but we could not endure the manners of Athens. Roman virtue was noble, but under favor of the past tense; set down here in New England, it would be uncouth. And so, call it development, growth, progress, what you will, a process of enlargement and improvement is the great fact of history. Therefore, if there be a divine idea or economy of history, that is it, or an essential part of it.

But progress implies imperfection, and is only possible to an imperfect creature. Thorwaldsen wept upon completing a statue in which he could discover no fault. Because he could find no degree of failure, he could have no hope of farther advance. Moral progress assumes the fact, and requires the sense, of moral imperfection. And so the divine idea of history is grounded on

imperfection; since only the imperfect is improvable. To say that is not to garnish wickedness. Parker had no purpose, as I have none, to pour water of Cologne upon putrescence, and then call it sweet-scented; or to make darlings of rattlesnakes by decking them with fine ribbons. It is as well to be sane. We do not now hang for petty larceny; it does not follow that the moral sense of the community is dulled, nor that those who procured this mitigation of punishment did it in favor of thievery.

But there is no room for dispute about the broad fact: there it is, before every man's eyes. Every thing best in life is connected with the fact of imperfection. It is in the mother's unmeasured love for the babe at her breast; in the father's care; in the mutual attraction of young man and maiden, and mutual service of husband and wife; in all pity, charity, and gratitude; in reverence and sacred awe; in aspiration that seeks an ideal excellence; in the want that hungers and thirsts after righteousness. That is the divine plan.

Moreover, this plan comprehends the uses of *failure*. They say that all production of higher forms of life upon this planet has been connected with changes in the planet itself. Higher terrestrial conditions arrived; the existing organisms were not adjusted to them,—failed to meet them; at the point of that failure, there was a sally of life,—a birth-throe,—out of which issued higher forms of animal being. I think there must be truth in this, for the like is to be observed in national and individual life. Out of a sense of failure, most bitter at the time, this Federal Union was born; and had not the sense of failure been so very bitter, nothing half so good had been reached. Now we are again feeling ourselves behindhand, and there is occasion to feel so; but the cause is, perhaps, not that the nation has really retrograded, but that the honest work formerly done has made conditions that call for higher degrees of political and social virtue. Even the abolition of slavery has brought fresh difficulty upon us. Because the nation has done well, it must do better. And I trust that its consciousness of imperfection, and consequent self-condemnation, has not come for the last time. That would augur ill for its future; for through that very consciousness it is that the divine plan is worked out; and the nations in which it does not arise are in a state of suspended

animation. And so in the individual life. He that has never said to himself, "You are not doing well enough," is scarcely doing well at all. "On steps of our dead selves," as Tennyson sings, we ascend.

Such, substantially, was Parker's theory of history and human life. Who will say that it was not, in the main, a true one? And who does not see how utterly and monstrously unsuited to such a system were that infinite legal justice, measuring all men by the standard of absolute moral perfection, and denouncing infinite woes against that want of it which is signified by the theological term "sin."

II. Whence was Parker's material drawn?

The proper source, he said, of belief is the consciousness of humanity. Now, there are those who make merry over consciousness, considered as a source of belief. The vivacious Lewes, in his Life of Goethe, diverts himself with the fable of a German philosopher constructing a camel out of his interior consciousness. That consciousness is no authority upon camels is certain, and it may be that a philosophic camel would not be the best authority upon consciousness. But is the conscious soul conscious of nothing, or of the first personal pronoun only? Assume the Darwinian hypothesis, and see how that would look. In form after form of life, through myriads of millenniums, experience has been funded and made mental capital: already in the ant and the bee, with their marvellous instincts, already in the wild goose, steering north or south through the high air, with a mariner's compass in its narrow head, much has been laid up; but Nature, upon arriving at her highest terrestrial product, is all at once exhausted, and has only Locke's "piece of white paper" to put inside! That were strange, and to me is quite incredible.

Parker stated as matter of immediate consciousness these three: God, Absolute Right, Immortality. According to Kant, we know by direct moral consciousness only of Justice, or Right, as absolute law; and thence necessarily infer the other two. Parker really followed the same course. In his sermons, he reasoned to God and immortality substantially in the Kantian way. But his formula ran differently; for in him belief was so spontaneous, inevitable, rich, and overrunning, that, while

reasoning to its objects for others, he could scarcely feel that he did so for himself. Light takes time in passing through space, but we, with the sun overhead in the light-flooded noons of summer, cannot feel that it does so; and he, with the sun above his heart, could not feel that there was any interval of reasoning thought between it and his apprehension of it. Meantime, his source was not merely the consciousness of an isolated individual, but that of humanity, as expressed in bibles, worships, high philosophies, psalms, and epic singing, in all words and deeds and growths that attest the significant fulness of man's heart.

III. What building did Parker erect?

His edifice comprises these three ideas; The Perfect God and divine universe; The equality of faculty to function and obligation in man; Absolute religion. For convenience's sake, I glance at these in the reverse order.

1. Absolute religion is but religion itself. There is religion, and also particular forms of it, as there is a human nature, with individual and national expressions of it. The apostle James undertook to say what pure religion is: Parker undertook the like, with a difference of expression. He did not try to put all historical religions in a pot, and stew out of them a broth, to be named absolute religion, but simply inquired what religion essentially is. I suppose it to be essentially something, and think the endeavor to distinguish its essence a very proper and even laudable one

2. Faculty equals function and obligation. It cannot be the duty of a babe at the breast to hold a plow or navigate a ship. Obviously, it were injustice and outrage to punish or condemn one for not doing what he has not the natural power to do. But upon this matter it cannot be necessary here to spend another word; though, as against the traditional speculation of theology,—say that of Jonathan Edwards,—the doctrine has a significance very extensive indeed.

3. The perfect God and Divine Universe: ethical religion can affirm no less. God and his work are perfect; else—no God; for nothing imperfect can receive the name. But in a perfect universe there can be no eternal sore, with an eternal cautery of fire, that, nevertheless, does not cure. There can be

no "absolute evil," Parker said, no evil endlessly persisting, in a world conceived in a perfect thought, made by a perfect hand, and governed by a perfect Providence. Now, it is well known in this community that his doctrine to such effect has of late been challenged, on grounds of ethical science, by a critic of rare brilliancy and power. Parker mistook, it seems; the universe would not be perfect without an eternal hell, nor God without the everlasting woe of many among his creatures. The appeal to ethical science is one not to be refused; if, in that court, judgment has been given against Parker's doctrine, its defeat is indeed final. But has it in fact been overthrown there? The question is one which I propose neither to avoid, nor to answer with any mere shuffle.

Parker's critic, in a masterly piece of moral pathology, shows that when one has looked upon the law of right, and, with full purpose and full understanding of his act, said, "I will not obey it," he then begins to hate it; then to blind himself to it; and so, darkening the ethical eye ever more, and ever more hardening the neck in iniquity, he comes at length to that chronic persistence in evil ways, which is named depravity. Speaking now only for myself, I admit it. One does observe such a process, —a sad sight! Let all men learn from it to beware how, even in the name of God and religion, they tamper with the sacred sense of right and truth.

How far may that process go? The critic seeks to show that it may go to the length of utter moral blindness, utter extinction of goodness in the soul. Suppose that this is indeed the fact. Let it be admitted that one may quite lose his moral soul. For my own part, I do not profess to be *sure* that no one ever does so.

This admitted, what follows? The critic assumes that he who has lost his soul continues, nevertheless, to have a human soul, which will be kept alive to fructify eternally in depravity and devilishness, and to be rewarded with eternal pain.

There I must call a halt. There the doctrine passes into that which no analogy sustains, which is simply impossible, and which would make the universe not only undivine, but horrible, were it possible.

Depravity is corruption, corruption is death. "Dead in tres-

passes and sins" is dead. For what is the human soul? It is, primarily, that ethical being of man which, according to Kant, rises above the merely phenomenal world, and belongs to the sphere of real being. In that, if anywhere, are the springs of immortality, and, that extinct, the springs are dry. Or is it said that absolute depravity is not moral death, but only moral disorder? Is there, then, such a thing as immortal disorder? The conception is unnatural. Disorder is but a transient stage of indetermination between recovery and dissolution, and one way or the other must terminate. In short, the conception of a soul kept in death or deadly disorder alive for ever, that the stench of its foulness may ascend with the smoke of its torment, is one with which no terms can be made; it is simply inadmissible.

And Mr. Cook's chosen analogy serves but to prove it inadmissible. That gentleman opens his case with one of those speaking illustrations of which his mind is so affluent. You find, says he, a fossil hand, with the two first fingers closed upon the palm, and you know that had the third finger been extricated from the stone, it also would have been bent toward the palm. The way thus prepared, he proceeds to show—first in the inorganic, and then in the organic, realms of Nature—that there is a point beyond which the power of self-recovery does not continue. These are the two closed fingers; and thence he argues that, in the moral realm also, there is a point at which that power quite ceases.

So far I open no dispute with him for the present, but will simply pursue his own illustrations to their proper consequence. A ship, says the critic, careens too far and does not recover itself, but goes over. Yes; and that ship sails the seas no more: there's an end of it. A tree, he continues, is cut into beyond the heart, and does not build up the wound with fresh wood, but falls and perishes. True; and that tree is down, is dead, and there's an end of it. There are the two fingers closed in plain death. *If*, now, a soul is ever so self-hurt that it cannot recover, but goes down into sheer depravity, analogy says of it,—Mr. Cook's analogy says,—That soul is fallen, is dead, and ***there's an end of it***. And I am confident that the whole world of Nature will yield no analogy to the contrary. So that those stone fingers, and with them the visible universe entire, are closed against

the monstrous imagination of an endless survival in moral death. But the tree is mortal at best, and, if the soul be designed for immortal life, there is an infinite difference between the two cases. Hence it were rash, were indeed somewhat youthful, to assume that all the limitations of the one are to be found in the other. A larger logic would say that, if for the mortal tree there is a measured *vis medicatrix*, or power of self-repair, there must for a spirit, in which are the seeds of immortality, be a similar power not thus limited, but having the scope of the destinies with which it is associated. The logic of Julius Müller may be formally perfect, only it is too small for the matter. One should not look to find the ocean swell in an ounce vial. To know at all the ways of Providence on the scale of immortality, reason should launch itself with generous courage, dare to lose sight of these mortal shores, and to sail by the unattainable stars. Induction in a closet, from observations made in a point of time, does not, perhaps, serve for the navigation of God in the spaces of eternity.

But the observation is itself uncertain. Who *knows* that the moral life can be quite extinguished? Who knows that any human being has sunk into a depravity helpless, hopeless, absolute? "Theodore Parker's guesses,"—here is a guess that is not Theodore Parker's! And which of those that venture it dares say to a fellow-creature, "Useless for you to try; bad you are, and bad you must be"? I am not so bold, and dare as little fling such words after men from this earth departed as dash them in the face of any here. And, to encourage hope, do we not see examples almost of moral resurrection? Does not the Orthodox church itself, at the death-bed of a wretch the most hardened, still say, "It is not too late"? And how small-minded, how *unbelieving*, at bottom, it is to assume that the mere physical fact, mere accident, it may be, of death, determines all for the moral life,—that scarlet fever, a mad dog, a runaway horse, a falling brick, or rusty nail may hedge up for ever the gracious providence of Heaven and fix a soul's fate for eternity! Such credulity is not spiritual faith, but the want of it. It indicates an eye to which providential purpose and law hinge upon small physical events,—the infinitely greater upon the infinitely less.

The Monday lecturer, if I understand him aright, assumes, and as the basis of his entire argument, that at the moment of death every man is irrevocably determined in character; either he has so chosen the right and good that, through day and darkness and all temptations and tests, his choice would still endure, or, with the determination of pure depravity, has said, "Evil, be thou my good!" But with what inattention to the facts is such a notion entertained! Here is a young man of twenty at work upon a high staging, in which is a defective board. He steps upon that board; it breaks; the poor fellow is precipitated to the earth and killed. What, now, of him? He was not bad, and was not a saint. Like thousands of others, he would probably have done well under good influences, and under evil ones might have been quite led astray. Is any man so absurd a pagan as to say that a weak piece of pine lumber was commissioned to determine his soul's destiny for ever? Or can paganism itself believe that God would take him, morally undetermined as he was, from the arms of death, thrust him down into nether places, and say, "You shall have no second opportunity; I will make an eternal sinner of you, whether you will or no; you *shall* be nothing else"? Horrible to think of! It is almost an offence against good taste so far to entertain the ghastly fancy as to give it words. These are imaginations which, could they become realities, would not only slay souls, but murder Divine Justice itself!

Theodore Parker looked at the facts broadly, and did not deceive himself. He saw—to distinguish roughly—three classes of character. The highest consists of men singularly noble and good; saints, like Channing; figures in which virtue becomes poetic and classic, like Emerson; men of heroic morals, like Sumner. Beneath these, and such as these, appears the great average of human quality, the respectable middle class in morals, comprising men in and out of the churches,—not bad and not heroically good, but good for ordinary occasions, and with better stuff in them, very likely, than they commonly put in use, or are themselves aware of. Lower than these, and quite at the bottom, are men who afflict the eye,—base, sordid, false, unclean, of whom the worst may fairly be called depraved. Concerning these last Parker might have doubted, had he, with "the greatest living theologian," depended upon observation alone; though he

was of a mind quite too healthy to doubt if they would not be preserved alive to rot and burn, and burn and rot, and make the universe foul for ever. But he could not know; for none can learn from observation only that such characters will cast their slough, and recover moral health. At the point, however, of that doubt he threw in his faith in God, and the scale was quickly turned. For here was a man with such a faith in God as should count for something in his thinking; faith in a just God, I say, and not merely in a cast-iron omnipotence of legalism. Therefore, where observation failed to give his soul assurance, and his great humane heart might otherwise have wavered in a sad uncertainty, he put to his eye the speculum of that faith, and with new optics saw a spiritual world where, as was said of old, there is more joy over one fallen man that amends than over ninety and nine upright ones that need no amendment; and saw an infinite Providence with an eternity before him, in which, now by kind severities of punitive discipline and now by influences as of the vernal sun that melts the frozen heart of winter and makes the brown sod green, to reprove, to correct, to subdue, to warm and inspire, and so to bring every wandered soul soon or late in consistency with its own freedom of election to the true light and right way. For he, Theodore Parker, believed in a Divine *can*, not a Divine *can't*, and in a Divine *will*, not a Divine *won't*; therefore in a God who both can and will keep the health of his universe, protecting his own laws in consistency with the ultimate good of his own creatures, and vindicating his own righteousness by making righteousness universal.

One may find himself not qualified for a faith so generous, and still be a sound man, dutifully doing the day's labor by the day's light. But the reader sees what success has attended upon the effort of a man uncommonly able to array ethical science against it. That any effort of another with like intent will prosper better I do not anticipate. And were that grand belief quite confuted, the ghastly alternative presented by Mr. Parker's critic would be no real one, but an imagination at war equally with the truth of Nature and the justice of Heaven.

Here are two pictures of the spiritual universe. In the one, the universe appears as divided into two contrasting halves, two continents or spheres,—an upper one bathed in everlasting light,

a nether one buried in eternal darkness, with some narrow neck or isthmus between them, and each comprising millions numberless of human souls. In the upper realm all the souls are pardoned criminals, but their guilt has been paid for by another; therefore they are regarded as innocent. And their hearts are turned the right way; they love goodness, and seek it with sincere desire: and so, in glory of divine light, in joy without shadow, in gratitude that has no measure, in sweet ease of everlasting leisure and rapture of heavenly thoughts, they praise the Lamb that has bought them with his blood, they praise the spirit that has sanctified them, they praise the infinite legal justice that for a consideration has pardoned them; and, singing praises, sing themselves into new depths and ecstasies of blessedness, and upward into new heights and intensities of perfect sanctity, and so on for ever more. Meantime, all this has in the nether half of this same universe its equal and horrible accompaniment. There like myriads of souls are criminals not pardoned, nor ever to be pardoned, nor ever permitted to amend. All that half of the universe is one immeasurable mass of reeking, festering rottenness, obscene, abominable, abhorrent, as no speech can adequately say or imagination conceive. There depravity rots downward for ever into horror beneath horror of foulness and loathsomeness; the evil man becomes an imp of darkness, the impish becomes devilish, the devil damned, fructified eternally in hatefulness of heart and hideousness of moral feature. That moiety of God's universe reverberates through eternity with one endless roar of curses and execrations, of oaths that surpass all measure of profanity, of blasphemies that blister where they fall, and scald the demon hearts that conceived them. And all in a ghastly darkness, made visible, rather than lit, by lurid flames that lick the ocean of eternal sin, and fill with foul smoke this half of a divine universe. And this half, like the other, is in God, an equal part of his manifested perfection. For in God all is contained, and in him eternal hell lives and moves and has its being, if eternal hell be.

Look at the other picture. Here is a universe with no rotten and eternally rotting nether half; it is healthy and whole, everlastingly well and sound in every part. An infinitely perfect Creator, Father, and Master has brought into being countless

numbers of intelligent and morally capable creatures; not to triumph over them, whether as the unworthy recipients of his "grace" or as the worthy victims of his "justice," but to reproduce in them, through eternal ages, more and more of his own perfection. Of his household, and in his school, they are immortally to learn, and, learning, to make their own the wisdom of his thought, the justice of his ways, the beauty of his manifested being. His truth they learn and appropriate by thought and study, his righteousness by being themselves its subjects, the beauty of his perfect wholeness by harmonizing in themselves the various chords of a manifold being. From smallest beginnings they ascend, and in freedom rise; there is imperfection of the learner, but none of the plan which comprehends and conducts all; justice governs, but corrects without destroying, and subdues to transform surrender itself into moral victory. A perfect moral government and a perfect providence make common cause, and are one and the same. And so in light the whole intelligent and moral creation still ascends toward the light: all that is gross in imperfection disappears; all that is noble in purpose, great in design, or glorious in achievement accumulates with perpetual increase, and shines with brighter ray; while highest and lowest alike look up to that all-transcending ideal, whose reality God himself is, to see there the infinite "parent of good, almighty," and to feel themselves his begotten. Here Heaven's justice triumphs, not over, but in and with its subjects; here the work itself of God is that praise of his perfection which infinite perfection can never need or seek; here all may well learn that it is more blessed to give than to receive, for it is the All-Blessed himself, that, in his own person and providence, gives the lesson. A universe with no black spot; immortality that is everywhere blessing, and not curse; freedom that, without fail, glorifies the wisdom that begot it; the good for ever arriving at the better, and for ever to arrive; justice vindicating itself by creating its law, to be a living spring in every soul; an eternity that is all health, and a whole creation that in eternity blossoms in the beauty of a divine ideal, and ripens in the reality of a divine consummation,—such is the representation.

From whom the former picture, so highly captivating, proceeds it is needless to say: the latter is Theodore Parker's. Which

of the two is that of a perfect universe, or in the better degree reflects the image of a perfect God, it is for the reader to determine.

A word only upon his labor of practical reform, and I shall have done. That labor was the offspring and exemplification of his religion. The tree bore the fruit, and the fruit shows the quality of the tree. He believed in a Divine Righteousness that, from within men's hearts, and by the work of their hands, would make righteousness on earth; and his religion enlisted him to be its soldier. He believed that God intends the overcoming of evil; and he religiously made that intention his own. He believed that the providential design lies for us, first of all, in human conscience; and his religion engaged him to do heroically the work of conscience. The great battle had come. Heaven called him; he left all, and marched; and few can know how much he left to do his duty. Into the imminent deadly breach, foremost among the foremost, he threw himself, and his clarion voice rang out above the din, till at last he fell stricken, and was borne forth from the smoke to die. And I, above his grave, deem it not too bold to say: Brave soldier of God! if thine were not true religion, then it is from religion itself, and not from thy brow, that a laurel falls.

D. A. WASSON.

THE DISCOVERER.

I HAVE a little kinsman
Whose earthly summers are but three,
And yet a voyager is he
Greater than Drake or Frobisher,
Than all their peers together!
He is a brave discoverer,
And, far beyond the tether
Of them who seek the frozen Pole,
Has sailed where the noiseless surges roll.
Ay, he has traveled whither
A winged pilot steered his bark
Through the portals of the dark,
Past hoary Mimir's well and tree,
Across the unknown sea.

Suddenly, in his fair young hour,
Came one who bore a flower
And laid it in his dimpled hand
With this command:
"Henceforth thou art a rover!
Thou must make a voyage far,
Sail beneath the evening star,
And a wondrous land discover."
—With his sweet smile innocent
Our little kinsman went.

Since that time no word
From the absent has been heard.
Who can tell
How he fares, or answer well
What the little one has found