

Vol. 2

No 10

THE SCHOLAR

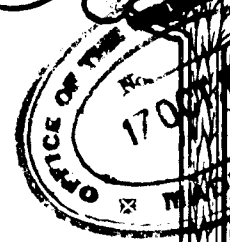
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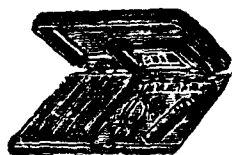
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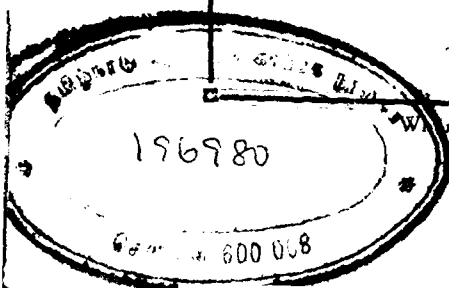
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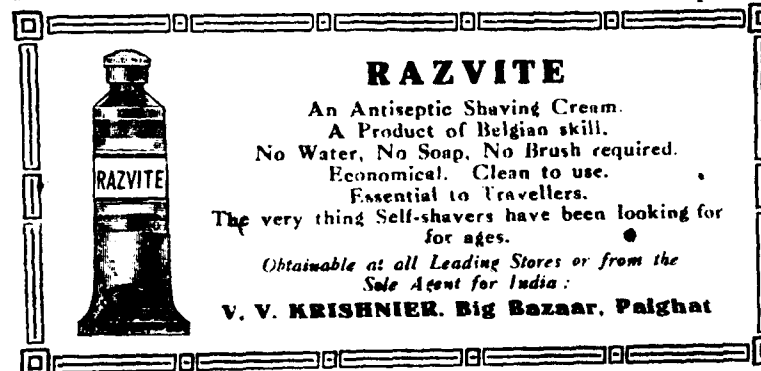
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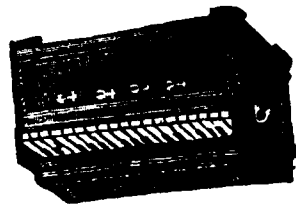
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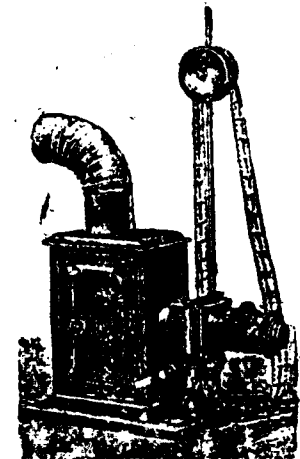
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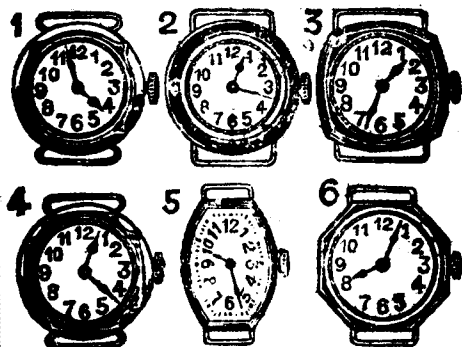
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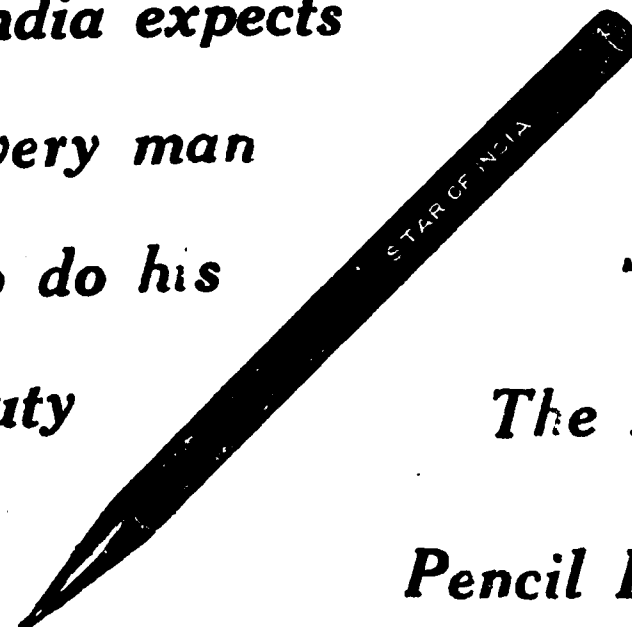
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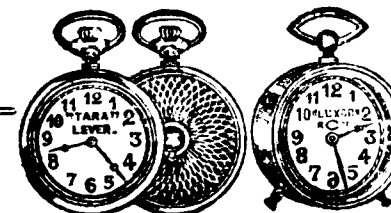
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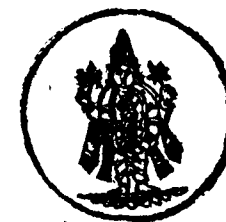
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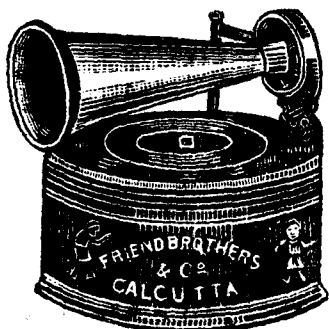
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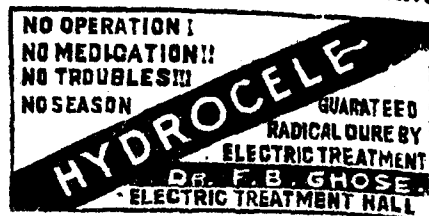
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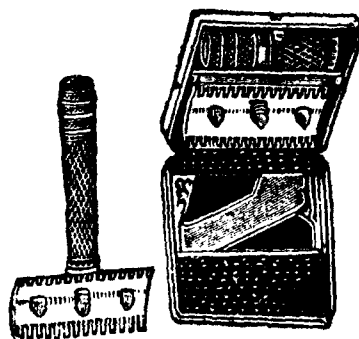
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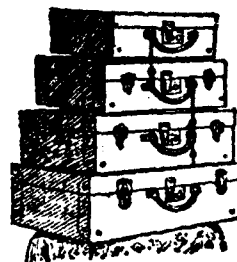
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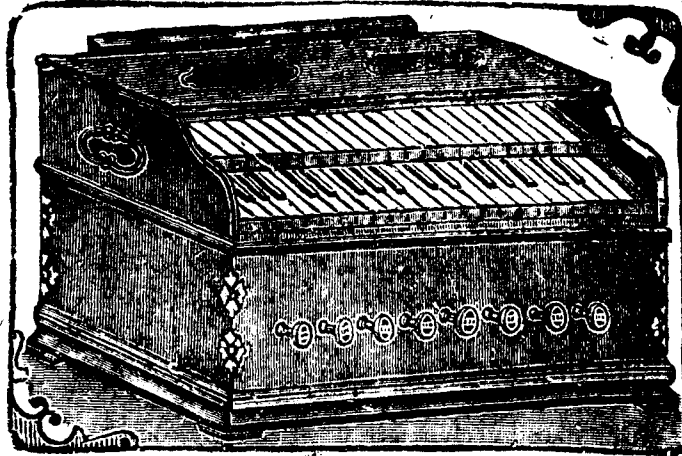
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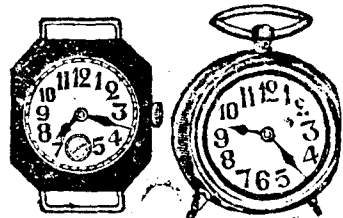
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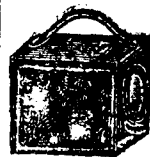


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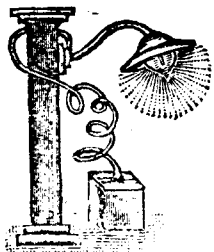
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THE SCHOLAR

VOL. 2

JULY: CONTENTS

No. 10

Page

- 1 Mahatma Gandhi—A Study 477
By L. V. Ramaswamy Iyer, M. A., B. L.
- 2 The Immolation of Shampakavalli 489
By P. V. Aghoram Iyer, B. A., B. L.
- 3 The Poems of Thomas Hardy 493
By N. R. Harihara Iyer, M. A., L. T.
- 4 Awake! 498
By T. L. Vaswani.
- 5 On Tears 502
By Esjay.
- 6 Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven" 504
By V. Setumadhavan.
- 7 Saint Nandanar 508
By S. Rama Iyer, B. A.
- 8 The Nambudiri and the Bird 509
By M. Narasinga Rao, B. A., M. L.
- 9 Barrister Raju 511
By Satya Kantha.
- 10 Cross-word Competition 515



VOL. 2

JULY 1927

No. 10

MAHATMA GANDHI—A STUDY

Translated from the original French of Mlle. J. Veilliere

BY L. V. RAMASWAMI AIYAR M. A., B. L.

(Concluded from the last issue.)

Over a century ago when Warren Hastings was arraigned before the House of Lords, it took so many years for that House to discuss the accusations that, in the sixth year, the members grew weary of it all. While a hundred and sixty members had been present on the date of the opening of the debate, there were only twentyfive present.....on the day of acquittal.

Gandhi could not understand the attitude of the Lords, which was a simple political phenomenon, a little disappointing; he declared that "a scandal of this magnitude could not be tolerated by the nation if it desired to keep its self-respect and become a free partner of the Empire."

At the same time, the fate of Turkey was being decided. Infidel hands were tampering with the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. The storms of revolt began to blow. In an open letter Gandhi appealed to the Viceroy to help the Mussulman cause, to direct the agitation himself so as to mollify it.

A last effort pre-destined to failure.

Gandhi's appeal was regarded as an extravagance, the Rowlatt laws continued to be active, the wounds of the Punjaub were not healed.

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The die was cast.

The hour had come when action was to blend with prayer. On the 1st of August 1920, Gandhi gave the signal for the active operation of his great idea of non-co-operation.

"The most absurd of all foolish absurdities" said the Viceroy.

The most desperate of all efforts towards a fight,—pacific in intention towards all.

"I would co-operate a thousand times with the Government" proclaimed Gandhi, "so as to make it renounce its criminal career but I do not for a moment intend to co-operate in order to encourage it in its error. I serve the British Empire in refusing to share its error."

Here is the programme which he unfolded in four phases:

Surrender of all titles and honorary functions, withdrawal of children from government schools and colleges, shunning of Brittanic courts by pleaders and boycott of foreign goods;

Secondly, refusal to serve the government administration, civil or judicial;

thirdly, refusal to pay taxes;

fourthly, the abandonment of all posts in the police and in the military.

This was indeed a programme of unheard-of hardihood which threatened government machinery with complete paralysis: when 320 million men refuse their money and their co-operation, 100,000 others, these latter are indeed helpless.

But was this programme going to be carried out?

When Gandhi appeared on the horizon, India was not without leaders. The National Congress, an assembly of cultured politicians had already been directing the political destinies of the nation. Was this assembly going to support Gandhi? Were these political leaders prepared if necessary to disappear amidst the multitude for serving it? It is hard to give up hearing the music of adulation sung in our praise. Nevertheless, after some vacillation, all these leaders had nobility to do it.

Unanimity on a political formula always sounds like a miracle. When the intellect alone is addressed, it always responds with an objection, however persuasive the arguments may be.

The miracle in this case was that Gandhi did not address the head but appealed to the heart and to the soul.

"It is necessary," said he, "to interest ourselves religiously in the actions of those who govern. Willingly or unwillingly, the disastrous political gesture of Dyer produced a "moral effect". Beneath all governmental politics, there is governmental morality. If this becomes systematically unjust, the citizen ought to withhold his support from the ruling class. Loyalty is not an unalterable principle but a reciprocal agreement." If the citizen has not always broken his part of the allegiance, it is due to the fact (to quote the words of Tolstoy) "that humanity has often worked under the influence of hypnotism".

This refusal of the citizen to co-operate with the government might provoke the violence of the latter; the citizen should cultivate the tranquil courage to die without killing. It is a rule of suffering which Gandhi preached, suffering accompanied by love. "However hard human nature may be", said he, "it will yield to the fire of love; if it does not, the fire is not sufficiently strong." He declared that he should retire from fight if he detected any hatred against the English.

It was a law of suffering but not of weakness. "Forgiveness is more manly than to punish but abstinence is forgiveness only when there is the power to punish. A mouse can hardly be said to pardon the cat when it allows itself to be torn to pieces"

The strength of India lay according to him, in the power of the soul.

Here indeed is a new force. "Till the day" said its apostle, "when a new energy is captured and directed, the captains of the old forces will treat it as idealistic, theoretical and impracticable. We are sure that the dealer in horses should have pooh-poohed the driver in charge of steam-engine, till the day when he realised that the steam-engine was capable of carrying his horses too."

Non-co-operation with the government in essence does not mean a series of actions, but is a living faith, free from the servility and constraints of political struggles.

Gandhi's followers had none of the intolerance of the syndicalist workers. It would be a shame if the *hartals* were to become the menacing threats of militant men. "People cannot be made pure by force" said he, "the faith of the convinced idealist should inelapse the conscience of the hesitating."

Gandhi abhorred secrecy. He exposed to the light of day his boldest plans and thus lived in peace with the C. I. D. He willingly accepted the friendly services "of these gentlemen" who excused themselves from the duty of shadowing him.

The government also, impressed by such audacious simplicity, replied to the most severe letters of Gandhi, as if indeed, in spite of itself it felt obliged to justify its conduct.

The atmosphere was filled with the faith which disconcerts the most arrogant of men. It rendered the fight not an abstraction but a reality less vulgar,—a reality essentially active. It was not a question of mere non-doing, it was a question of active re-creating. Non-co-operation is not passive resistance, it is an avoidance and a creation. You already know the programme of the former. The latter, the creative work comprised the organisation of private arbitration boards, the development of national production, the formation of national universities and lastly the removal of the shameful evil of untouchability which makes millions of human beings *Pariahs*.

The first two forms of creative activity,—private arbitration and national production—have little to surprise us. They aim directly at displacing governmental authority, the one through its exercise of judicial power and the other through economic means. The latter item is dear to the heart of Gandhi. India to him is a land of 750,000 villages for which the complement industry of the charka is indispensable. The Lancashire factories have thrown millions of Indians into a state of idleness. The non-use of the charka accounts for the chronic famine of India. Every Indian ought to abstain from purchasing imported cloth, and spin at least what he needs till India becomes again the country of marvellous cotton-stuffs. And every day Gandhi himself ceaselessly spins, and hears, across India, the music of the charka which, Kabir, the weaving poet sang, of the charka which Aurangzebe turned.

But what had the two other items of creative activity to do with the fight? Were they not calculated to impede it by rousing a multitude of foes? To uplift the Pariah,—was it not to tinker with the core of Hinduism, with caste which is a religious dogma and not a simple institution? What! can the Mahatma, the great religious soul commit such a sacrilege? And, on the other side, does not the creation of Hindu Universities mean the rejection of Western culture?

Braving all misunderstanding, Gandhi insisted that every non-co-operator should accept his credo to the fullest limits.

Caste which in our eyes is only a mighty wall smothering Hindu society, inasmuch as it excludes from its fold millions of miserable people, is in reality not an instrument of oppression, Hinduism recognises four great theoretical gradations within its pale: the religious thinker, the warrior, the artisan and the farmer. In doing so, Hinduism has not created privileges but only defined the essential vocations of humanity. If in consequence, a gradation of rank came to be observed, it was not as between man and man but only in respect of human activities.

Is it not a marvellous thing to note that in India the premier rank is given to those who do the work of philosophic and religious thinking,—the Brahmins who keep up the sacred fire of sanskrit culture which is the people's treasure? In the West, philosophy is an end in itself. It is not applied to life, but there in India it is the beacon-light leading humanity. All forces are humble in its presence. We see the dream of Plato realised: the thinkers are the masters and guides of society.

This is what Hinduism has really conceived. It has never excluded from social intercourse those who have no aptitude for higher things and who at the actual hour of solemn ceremony, cannot be touched without sin. In the name of Hinduism, Gandhi repudiated this monstrosity which was only a malignant excrescence.

It is again for avoiding the absurd situation of the Devil quoting the scriptures that he desired to liberate the fallen women from their forced yoke of ignominy. Gandhi was far from imitating Buddha who said in reference to women, "Avoid seeing

her; if she should be seen, do not talk to her; if she has to be talked to, have a care over yourself." Gandhi spoke of his wife "she moves me as no other woman can". He holds out his protecting arm to the unfortunate women and does not exclude them when he says, "the feminine sex is not the feeble sex. It is the nobler of the two sexes on account of its power of sacrifice, of silent suffering, of humility and of faith."

This purification, for Gandhi, is an essential factor in the political struggle because it frees India from all inward constraints. He considers the founding of national Universities another essential factor in the political struggle because it frees India from all external obligations.

There is here no question of depreciating or rejecting English culture nor all the other cultures of the world; but it is necessary on pain of civil suicide, to absorb one's own culture and live it. The use of the mother-tongue alone can stimulate thought.

"No country," said he, "can become a nation, which produces only a race of translators."

The exotic culture of these powerless clerks does not reach down to the masses, while the beauty of Hindu culture is precisely its universality amongst the masses. India is the land where the courtier and the peasant speak with the same elegance and with the same courtesy.

The disappearance of indigenous culture has rendered the people strangers to themselves; it is therefore essential that they should rediscover themselves. The teacher should not only impart instruction but should, as in olden days, shape the character of the taught and thus restore to Indians—stunted in body, spirit and soul—a just pride in their own civilisation which has been interpreted to them by strangers as barbarous, superstitious and unsuitable for practical purposes.

Modern civilisation is not xian; it is too much tainted with what Gandhi calls the "Rockefeller—spirit". It is destructive of all that is of the precious in India's heritage its intense spirituality which finds expression in the beautiful harmony of simple living and high thinking.

The Hindus, from the humblest to the most cultured, are steeped in the religious mystery of the Infinite.

"What is really wonder-stirring," said Anatole France, "is not that the field of stars is so vast, but that man has been able to measure it".

To the Hindu, on the other hand, the element of wonder is all in the stars that dot the sky.

For fifteen months, Gandhi buried himself amidst his countrymen, and during all these months he kept them going at constructive work, avoiding the ultimate phases of non-co-operation though arrests by arbitrary authority went on increasing.

But the government itself precipitated events by arresting in 1921, the Ali Brothers.

The Mussulmans leaped up in fury.

Gandhi accomplished the miracle of restraining them but he no more thought of tackling the government; "The Ali Brothers are innocent", he said, "they have never incited to violence, they have simply shown to the Sepoy that the government have not been utilising their services for defending the liberty or honour of the weak, but only for oppression or conquest in Mesopotamia or Egypt. Every man has an absolute right to express his conviction, and to offer or withhold his services to the government when occasion demands it".

These words, clangorous in the extreme, half opened the door of Gandhi's prison house!

In November, formal demonstrations were organised. This time the *hartals* were to transform festive vestments into robes of mourning. And, soon after, the main campaign of non-co-operation was to be launched.

With a remarkable oneness of feeling, the *hartals* cast their phenomenal silence over the land. The European became alarmed.

But in Bombay a handful of irresponsible men created trouble and blood was spilt.

Struck with grief but without any hesitation, Gandhi suspended the movement. If the non-co-operators had no control over

the irresponsible mob, more of patience was yet necessary. Ah! With perfect right indeed he could reply to those who accused him of being a strong politician under the mask of sainthood, that, if he was taking part in politics, it was because today it enveloped us all like the folds of a serpent. Mere politics has never guided even a single one of his decisions. To him can be applied the Chinese proverb: "They alone are worthy of ruling, who would wish rather to be dispensed with this duty!"

Was he a political leader? No! He was rather the chief of the orchestra, who never allows one single false note and implacably arrests the once-given *elan* so as to proceed immediately to a greater stage of perfection.

Nevertheless, the prisons were overflowing. The Viceroy was perplexed: "Why brave the government and force it to arrest you?" Gandhi answered it in a trenchant article entitled, "An enigma and its solution," Violence and public opinion were in close grips, the latter would not submit to the former.

The door of Gandhi's prison—house turned a little more on its hinges.

The National Congress which had by this time been won over completely, endowed Gandhi with absolute powers

No more of political interludes! A single man and a single idea! Civil disobedience would be initiated at Bardoli and thence extended to other parts of India, said Gandhi, if in 8 days—we are in February 1922—the Viceroy did not release the politicals and make amends.

"Then," said the government, "the choice was between anarchy with its disastrous consequences, and the maintenance of order which is the foundation of all civilised governments."

"No," replied Gandhi, "the alternative was between civil disobedience *en masse* with its dangers on the one hand, and the lawless repression of the legitimate activities of the people on the other."

"The people would disobey," declared he definitely.

At this moment, there was enacted in Chauri-Chaura a bloody drama: police officers fired on a procession and the mob in sheer fury pursued them up to the station and set it on fire

Chauri-Chaura was a fatal knell stifled however by the clamorous call of the nation at the supreme moment of sacrifice. Ardent for action, it called for the signal which was going to bring redemption!

Chauri-Chaura—the fatal knell!

The Mahatma heard its resonance in the depths of his conscience. Once more he arrested the flood of the great human tide: Bardoli would not disobey yet.

Unheard-of daring this,—to call back in a spirit of resignant humiliation, at the moment of starting, the soldier who dashed forward pulsating with enthusiasm.

"An enormous political blunder" growled people from all parts. "What do a few lives matter when the nation is to be saved?" asked they, "to retreat now is to let deliverance slip and to make the government more adamant than ever."

And then, before the eyes of the Mahatma, unfolded itself his Mount of Olives.

Slovenly mediocrity then came up with its cheap counsel and cut it short. Anonymous letters called upon him not to oppose violence, some intimated to him that his non-violence was only a clever cloak, some threatened him with the defection of his followers while yet others said that he had sold away the Ali Brothers.

He hesitated. His indomitable faith then drank the cup of disenchantment.

And subtly rose the temptation: had his lofty defiance become, for want of execution, a pompous and ridiculous gesture? Would he drink the cup of humiliation too?

His suffering was infinite but it was for him like a second birth. He came out of it more resolute than ever. His words then came from such a spiritual elevation that they could not express all.

To his country he was implacable: "I have made a Himalayan miscalculation. I can see that your non-violence is only skin-deep and that you are burning with indignation.....If you are not capable of non-violence, adopt violence loyally, but no hypocrisy!"

When the majority of his followers protested their sincerity, he said: "The country will have gained by my humiliation and the confession of my error." And he imposed a fast upon himself.

Turning towards the government he said with courage: "Every time the people commit blunders I shall continue to confess them." But the government had not the desirable mental attitude. Its response to the Mahatma's heroic gesture of retreat was conveyed thus through an official despatch: "If the existence of our Empire were challenged, and demands were made in the very mistaken belief that we contemplated retreat from India, then India would not challenge with success the most determined people in the world, who would once again answer the challenge with all the vigour and determination at its command."

The Brittanic lion had lost its temper. Gandhi flung at its face his famous article entitled "Shaking the Lion's manes:" "Despite the hard fibre and the vigour and determination of the most determined people in the world the rice eating puny millions of India are resolved upon achieving their own destiny without any further tutelage and arms. No Empire intoxicated with red wine of power and of weaker races has yet lived long in the world..... submission to the insolent challenges that are cabled out on due occasions is now an utter impossibility."

Such words are not exchanged for more than once. The air was thick with the inevitable *denouement*.— On the 10th March 1922, Gandhi was arrested,

And as if indeed it was the destiny of this strange soul to provoke mankind to exceptional reactions, the tempest which had nearly upset the country fatally at the time of his arrest subsided soon into a majestic prayerful calm.

History does not record a more wonderstirring trial than that which followed eight days later before the Ahmedabad sessions.

The court of law remained singularly free from the discordant garishness of political trials; on the contrary, it was a shrine where only noble words were heard.

England was magnanimous. She regained, through the greatness of her judicial officers, all that it had lost through the harshness of her administrators.

Of contentions there were none.

The charge was based upon three famous articles. "Tampering with Loyalty", "A Puzzle and its Solution," "Shaking the Manes."

Mahatma Gandhi admitted the facts, with the qualification that his crime was only against the government and not against His Majesty the King. He had always distinguished the two, the government had abused the King's trust, it alone had erred.

The publisher of the articles, Sankaralal Banker similarly pleaded guilty.

When it was Gandhi's turn to speak, after the prosecuting Advocate's address, it was not for disputing the accusations, but only for guiding the multitude who listened to him, to the deepest regions of his soul.

In a kind of confession of faith which was also an *examen de conscience*, he explained how thirty years of devoted attachment to the government had culminated in making him the apostle of non-co-operation.

It was indeed a marvel to hear the accused, from the height of his spiritual elevation, frame charges of accusation against the administrative system. "No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye."

The section on which the prosecution was based, 'the prince of the political sections in the Indian penal code', as he called it is aimed at manufacturing or regulating affection by law. Now, every man is free to express plainly his discontent so long as he does not contemplate or provoke violence..... "Non-violence is the first article of my faith and the last one too." His followers might have become mad, but far from denying the bloody episodes which we abhorred, he had the nobility to assume responsibility for them. He knew he was playing with fire, nevertheless he could not hesitate.

He refused to plead for mercy: "I submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted on me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen."

The judge, a large-souled and large-hearted man, achieved, in such a difficult situation, the marvellous task of safeguarding the dignity of the English judiciary and of expressing his personal sentiments about the unique event.

He proved magnificently that a judge, while having the strictest conception of his duty, could be perfectly human in feeling.

"The law is no respecter of persons"; said he, "nevertheless it will be impossible to ignore the fact that you are in a different category from any person I have tried or am likely to have to try. It would be impossible to ignore the fact that, in the eyes of millions of your countrymen, you are a great patriot and a great leader. Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals and of noble and of even saintly life." "There are probably few people in India", continued he, "who do not sincerely regret that you should have made it impossible for any government to leave you at liberty." And after having scrupulously balanced all considerations, he asked Gandhi to fix the sentence himself.

A question which gives one to think—but an unnecessary one, for Gandhi considered that no punishment could be lighter to him than the suggested period of six years. And then he offered his profound thanks to the incomparable courtesy of the judge and the prosecution.

A wonderful trial was this, where such words were exchanged; and proud could that nation be whose well-organised education produces greatness and impartiality.

At this stage all noise had died down into silence, all excitement had changed into a profound calm.

And even as in times of old when the *Gurus* the sages of India, proclaimed from the depths of their old forests, the call of Truth, we hear the call of the Mahatma, mystic and vital. "The world needs less of the Machine and more of the soul."

THE IMMOLATION OF SHAMPAKA VALLI

BY P. V. AGHORAM IYER, B. A., B. L.

The public have learnt with grief of the pathetic end of this girl from the much-despised community of dancing-girls. The circumstances that led to it, the heroism and resourcefulness which she showed in escaping from the moral perils of her unfortunate home and her deep and unfaltering devotion to the ideals of chastity have all become public property, and they constitute a great episode in the history of her social life. We read that though her home environments and our communal traditions hindered her moral growth, she was silently nurturing her spirit on the Ramayana and cherished from very girlhood the desire to free herself from the stain that her birth had given her, and live a clean pure life. The girl lost her mother in girlhood and it fell to the lot of the grandmother to bring her up. It is pitiful that the aged woman at home desired to dedicate this girl to a life of shame and humiliation, simply because use and wont had made her morally callous and irresponsible to the aspirations of the grand daughter. But I would forgive her for not entering with sympathy into the growing life of the girl, as I do not desire to judge her life by impossible standards. She has not behaved worse than any average woman of her community, and if she has not risen to the occasion and understood the magnitude of the issues involved, it is probably because she could not jump out of her limitations. Whatever it is, it is deeply to be grieved that she could not play a noble part in this affair, and it was her stiffness and her almost irrational persistence that determined the young girl to leave home in quest as it were of the holy grail!

We have no more interest in the man that went out on adventure to her home and besought and obtained the consent of her grandmother for an attack on her. For aught I know, he may have been one of the average, sinning, blundering men of whom this world is alas! too full, who apparently do not feel how much they disgrace themselves by such behaviour. But here I pause to make the reflection that the danger to the purity of woman is not so much her fickleness and inconstancy of which most decadent literature accuses her, but man's own love of wrong-doing and the shameful cruelty with which he victimises

woman. I would in all humility state that the redemption of woman from sin is a great deal the work of man, who ought to burn with a much purer passion for virtue and has to make the cause his own. While I pity very much the poor oppressed girl who had to leave her home to escape from the moral pollution and contagion that surrounded her there, I pity more the oppressor, a member of my sex who became the immediate cause of her romantic and heroic departure from home. I respect and offer my tribute of praise for her heroism and her steadfastness in the pursuit of virtue; but I very much love and admire her genius and resourcefulness too. I was between smiles and tears as I read of the huge joke she played on her man-tormentor, when he entered her chamber at dead of night expecting to lose himself in carnal satisfaction, and violently embraced the pillow mistaking it for the girl! Alas for the blindness that comes on man through the unrestrained love of the senses! She exhibited great resourcefulness and unusual coolness in disguising herself in boy's attire when she wandered from place to place and performed a few pilgrimages.

I do not find from the meagre news-paper record what finally determined her mind to end her life. To my mind all taking away of life by one's own hand has a touch of violence in it. I feel as though it were not the right thing to do and may have been avoided. When Snehalata Devi died on the eve of her marriage by a similar immolation, to prevent the impending pauperism of her parents, I was dumb-founded with admiration for her heroism and thought what a shame and humiliation it was to us who constitute Hindu Society not to have the will to purge away an evil practice which was pauperising many a Hindu home. I nevertheless felt that she may not have ended her life so violently. I indulged in the reverie that she may very well have taken her lesson from the woes of her parents by resolving to make an undaunted stand for virginity, and by doing so, relieve her parents of their poverty and make her life an exemplar to the world. I do not say this in extenuation of the evil in society which lost for us so pure hearted a girl as Snehalata. She died about twelve years ago. But the story of her unfortunate end still thrills the Hindu world and stands forth as the most powerful reminder of an evil which saps the vitals of the race. When I look to her

tender years and remember the circumstance that the impending pauperism of her parents must have been very depressing to her, I get more or less reconciled to the end, and feel that she could not then have better demonstrated the nobleness of her nature; notwithstanding the violence that is involved in such forcible taking away of life, there is real sacrifice and the motive ennobles the act.

I feel in much the same strain about the end of this noble girl—Shampaka Valli. It may have been better for her to resolve to live, but to live so clean and pure that her very conduct might be the inspiration to her sisters in the community. Some great instinct in her may have guided her and emboldened her to feel that so long as she was deeply devoted to a pure good life, none could hurt her and further, that all privations and hardships undergone to keep her life inviolate were really chastening her. But it was not to be! It is the world's misfortune that she should have felt herself driven to such desperation as to offer her life as a holocaust in the cause of the redemption of the women of her community from the stain of accustomed wrong-doing; that she thought not of herself or her woes particularly, but of the sufferings of her sisters and made that earnest appeal to a leading publicist and reformer to lend the full weight of his influence for effectively checking the evil shows she is made of the stuff of heroines, and would have been a great force for the good of her community, had circumstances not precipitated her unhappy end! Her faith in morals and her abhorrence of wrong-doing and sinning are marvellous. Such love of purity and noble living in what is usually regarded as low life must very much disquiet the conventionists who think that good and evil are constant quantities, and that good is the monopoly of some communities and that others have been specially made to nourish evil! The devotion of this heroic girl to the great Hindu ideal of chastity is a pure unwavering flame! It is an impertinence for us to inquire how such love of virtue was implanted in apparently low life. That is an eye-opener to us.

The story of her devotion links her with those immortal personages of religious history who have come from her own poor and despised caste and community, with Ambapali the

courtesan who wept with devotion to Lord Buddha and bowed low in humility and offered thanks to the Lord for his accepting her humble hospitality, and with Mary Magdalene who annointed Christ and washed with her tears the Lord's feet, and with Chintamani who became the spiritual path-finder of Lila-Suka-Yogi. Too long has this Earth been disfigured by the vice of sex! How slow is the birth of virtue! As I think of the history of man on earth and think too of the future, perilous and uncertain, that lies before him, I feel as though the day is very distant indeed when the honour and purity of woman will be safe in the hands of man!

Heaven does not deal with us on a representative principle; souls are not saved in bundles. The question that is asked of Each man is, is it well with thee, individually and personally?

* * *

Like sick men in hospitals carried from one dormitory to another most men go from the nothingness of life to the nothingness of death.

Emerson.

* * *

However mean or vile your life, dont call it names but live it. The fault-finder will find faults in paradise.

Thortean.



THE POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY

BY N. R. HARIHARA IYER, M. A., L. T.

(Continued from the last issue.)

INFLUENCES—EGDON HEATH

MR Hardy was born at Upper Bockhampton near the Edgon Heath. His mother took him for walks along the Roman Road—straight and bare,—*like a pale parting-line in hair*—across the Heath. His mind has been saturated with the early impressions the Heath made. A sense of the vastness of immutable external nature, of the silence of the night, the stars and the sky, and of the moanings and the breathings of the wind sank into the soul of the sensitive child and youth. The Barrows, the pines, the streams in the neighbourhood, with the roar in the hatches, suggestive of tragedy, the trees in the wood with their mutual struggles for mastery, the clouds in the sky, the growth and decay of flowers, leaves and trees in autumn and winter, the songs of birds, their hunger and quest at night-fall in winter, mothy evenings, chill dawns, gray twilights, the sun like a wound, shadows of trees, the ravages of winter, impressive mountains and hill-tops, worms on the ground, the moon looking on the procession of human lives and loves now with a cold, now with a pleasing shine, voices of things, all such aspects of external nature arrest the poet's thoughts not only in themselves but also as bearing on and relating to affairs of men and women. Human life is not independent of nature and her activities. Even the smallest of the poems is a world, in itself, of the impressions. Hardy observes closely. What a wealth of poetic fancy, natural phenomena, and love of spring, of scientific thought and detail and insight into the habits of birds and plants is poured into the following lines which are inspired by mystic wonder and which deserve quotation in full,

How do you know that the pilgrim track
Along the belting zodiac
Swept by the sun in his seeming rounds
Is traced by now to the Fishes' bounds
And into the Ram when weeks of cloud
Have wrapt the sky in a clammy shroud,
And never as yet a tinct of spring
Was shown in the Earth's apparelling;
O vespering bird, how do you know?

How do you know, deep underground,
 Hid in your bed from sight and sound,
 Without a turn in temperature,
 With weather life can scarce endure,
 That light has won a fraction's strength,
 And day put on some moments' length,
 Whereas in merest rote will come,
 Weeks hence, mild airs that do not numb
 O crocus root how do you know,
 How do you know?

S. C.

Consider from 'A Waiting Room', in (M. V.) the lines

On a morning sick as the day of doom
 With the drizzling of gray
 of an English May!

The setting is appropriate to the shadow of the tragedy of separation for the wife from her soldier husband.

In the gruesome story of the Sacrilege (S. C.) for the sake of his love, on her urging, the man robs church-jewellery and is caught to be hanged; he charges his brother to avenge his death if his love married Rival Joe.

Wrestler Joe took her to his shining van

'He made it handsome for her sake
 And Dunkery smiled to Exon Moor
 He made it handsome for her sake
 Painting it out and in.

The revenge scheme grew.

And when the river swelled, her fate
 Came to her pitilessly.

She paled, and went, I close behind
 And Exon frowned to Dunker Tor,

And from the current came a cry,
 A gurgle and no more.'

Nature harmonises with and makes a sad-comment on the human action and feeling.

Take the lines from the Darkling Thrush:

The land's sharp features seemed to be
 The century's corpse outleant,
 His crypt the cloudy canopy,

The wind his death-lament
 The ancient pulse of germ and birth
 Was shrunken hard and dry,
 And every spirit upon Earth
 Seemed fervourless as I.

There was winter in nature, and winter in the poet's heart.
 The thrush seemed to tremble with blessed hope in his air, and it sang.

'In a full-hearted evensong of joy illimited.'

An aged thrush * * * *

* * * *

Had chosen thus to fling his soul upon the growing gloom.

(P. P. P.)

The most poignant feeling in the story of Marty South in Woodlanders, and her joy in being near Giles though her hopes of his response to her love are gone are conveyed in the lines.

I have helped him so many
 So many days,
 But never win any
 Small word of praise!
 Shall I not sigh to him
 That I work on
 Glad to be nigh to him
 Though hope is gone?

Close to nature, Marty's ears are open to the breathings of the pines planted by them, and mark her interpretation.

From the bundle at hand here
 I take each tree,
 And set it to stand, here
 Always to be;
 When in a second as if from fear
 Of Life unreckoned
 Beginning here
 It starts a sighing
 Through day and night,
 Though while there lying
 'T was voiceless quite.

Life sentient is painful.

For a full comprehension of this poetic utterance, the same mood in the prose story may be compared. There are natures terribly afraid of beginning life on their own account.

"How they sigh directly we put 'em upright, though while

they are lying down they don't sigh at all", said Marty.

'Do they?' said Giles, 'I've never noticed it'. She erected one of the young pines into its hole, and held up her finger; the soft musical breathing instantly set in, which was not to cease day or night till the grown tree should be felled, probably long after the two planters had been felled themselves.

'It seems to me', the girl continued, 'as if they sigh because they are very sorry to begin life in earnest—just as we be'.

The touching and fine symbolism of the Ageing House (M. V.) will justify full quotation. The house ages in Time its red walls taking a coat of mouldy green. Life chills youthful zests. Time touches the hair on the fresh fair head. The wind in youth speaks fair to the young tree, and in winter girds fiercely at the aged one. In a short poem life's drama is imaged, with the revenges and ravages of Time, so that the sensitive mind takes in the Hardy hints in the lines. The poem is a vision. The tenderness of his melancholy is felt. The last line may be specially noted for the fierceness of the winds and the ingering pain of the girding are echoed in the words;

The Ageing House
When the walls were red
That now are seen to be overspread
With a mouldy green,
A fresh fair head
Would often lean
From the sunny casement
And scan the scene,
While blithely spoke the wind to the little sycamore tree.
But storms have raged
Those walls about,
And the head has aged
That once looked out;
And zest is suaged
And trust grows doubt,
And slow effacement
Is rife throughout,
While fiercely girds the wind at the long-limbed sycamore tree,

Long-limbed sycamore tree.

This symbolic poem is an advance on the cryptic utterance of an earlier 'I look into my glass' of 12 lines.

I look into my glass,
And view my wasting skin,
And say, "would God it come to pass
My heart had shrunk as thin."
For then, I, undistrest
By hearts grown cold to me,
Could lonely wait my endless rest
With equanimity.
But Time, to make me grieve,
Part steals lets part abide;
And shakes this fragile frame at eve
With throbings of noon-tide.

richer, more poetic and finely imaged. The thought may be set by the side of a reflection in the Mayor of Casterbridge. Ch. 44. "But the ingenious machinery contrived by the Gods for reducing human possibilities of amelioration to a minimum—which arranges that wisdom to do so shall come with the departure of zest for doing—stood in the way of all that." The sadness in the earlier poem is deepened by the nature of the poetic thought in the later. And writing again in 1917 in Moments of Vision, after the death of his wife in 1912, the personal feeling and pain of loss in his old age cuts his heart.

'I' am a skeleton now,
And she's gone, craving warmth. The rime sticks
like a skin to me;
Through me Areturus peers; (Norlights) shoot into me;
Gone is she, turning my bough!

in the tree and the lady.

The symbolism of this poem too would send the reader to the fuller study of the same.



AWAKE!

BY T. L. VASWANI

[Nityanand (nationalist), Bagmal (official), Gopaldas (School master), Nag (scientist), Krishnanand (spiritualist) are friends of College days and are sitting together on the Sindhu bank beneath clear, starlit skies]:—

I

Nityanand—

The Sindhu flows on: it has a home.
The stars run in their courses, they, too, have a home.
But we in India are stagnant.
We are homeless!

Gopaldas—

No salvation without Swaraj!

Bagmal—

But you cannot quicken its speed. Look! how Hindus and Muslims fight! Can you do without the Englishman?

Nityanand—

You forget they make the Hindus and Muslims fight.

Bagmal—

You forget there's something wrong with us. Our character is warped.

Nityanand—

If so, 'tis the result, I say, of alien rule.

Gopaldas—

An alien rule there is, because we are become alien to ourselves. We have turned away from our own Race-spirit.

Krishnanand—

And its symbol is Krishna on the Kurufield.

Bagmal—

But where; O! where, are you Arjunas, the Heroes that would fight? Huge forests, but shrunken men,—such is the sorry state of India.

Gopaldas—

But there are voices! voices! methinks I hear them in the air around us. A new spirit is astir.

AWAKE

499

Nityanand—

Yes, a new Resolve of resistance.

Krishnanand—

Words never save a nation. Ye have slumbered long.

Bagmal—

The trouble is in our stars. India has the Hindu and the Musulman.

Nityanand—

What is there to lament? Differences enrich life; and the Hindu and the Mussulman can form a fruitful duality.

Gopaldas—

They are fruitful today only in being vassals to the stranger, sweeping his house with their brooms!

Krishnanand—

Only the sluggards are vassals;
The people must first *awake*!
And 'tis my prayer that the mother may awaken them.
Alas! 'tis true that they are today but as quadrupeds,
—Dumb, driven cattle,
Sweating beneath the lash—
Not knowing they are of the Ancient Race
Of Arjun, Bhima, Rama.....

II

Nag—

The ancient cannot help;
I am an internationalist.
Look! The nations of the west still advance.
For they are worshippers of Science.

Krishnanand—

Science? Yes! But can Science solve the problem? Look!
This civilisation of science has proved aggressive. In it is the seed of destruction. Has science taught us self-control? Or merely multiplied our wants and given men more power to gather and then to spend life's resources in hate and strife?

Nag—

You greatly err!

Has not science with new inventions made the old world new?

And given relief to millions of the Humankind? What a blessing Pasteur's discovery has proved! What a relief to human suffering is modern surgery!

Krishnanand—

But this very discovery of Pasteur may be applied for the wicked purpose of scattering disease microbes among human beings when one nation goes upon war with another.

Science, it is true, has advanced.

But to advance is not to help and heal.

To advance may only be to crush the weak.

The very conquest of the air by modern science may be used by a power-proud imperialism to enslave weaker races.

We know how much science helped in the last World-War to wreck humanity.

Nag—

But, surely, that's not the fault of science.

Abused, it becomes destructive.

Used well, it is a boon to mankind.

Krishnanand—

So mere science is not enough.

It matters much whether we use it or misuse it.

And the ancient Wisdom of the spirit is needed to discipline and direct modern science in the service of the good, the True, the Beautiful.

III

[From after they hear a song. They draw near. They see a picture of Mother India (Bharata Mata); and all, as though instinctively, bow to the Picture in reverence, with tear-touched eyes. Before the Picture is a little group of the Bharat Ashram; and one of them, a youngman of 22, utters the following prayer.]:—

Mother of the Ages!

Mother of the Sages!

In stupor lie thy Sons

Or with soft phrases self-satisfied;

But be not sad. Mother Immortal!

For we thy younger ones,—

We have vowed our life and limbs to thee!

Do but give us, Ancient Mother!

The treasure of thy blessings

And we shall move from place to place.

And we shall meet the village-folk

And sing to waiting multitudes

The name of Krishna of the Flute and the Kuru-field.

And we shall spread the Creed of Manhood.

And the message of a New, Creative Life

And the mighty word of India's Ancient Faith:—

Ye are not weak!

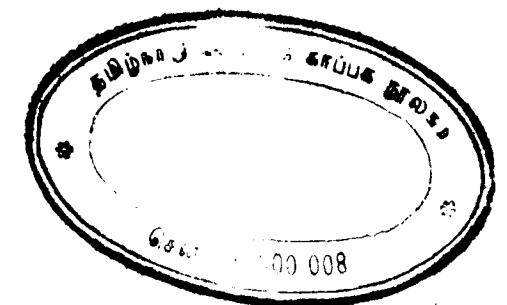
Ye are of the Eternal God!

Awake! Arise!

And your Divinity declare

Through the Deed for which your History waits,

— The Deed of Sacrifice!



ON TEARS.

"BY ESJAY.

MAN enjoys the peculiar gift of being, able to laugh and weep. Laughter and tears are after all not contrary but complementary processes. Excessive laughter ends in tears; unbearable grief turns mad and indulges in cheerless laughter. God created both tears and laughter and both for kind purposes. For, as laughter enables mirth to breathe freely, so tears enable sorrow to vent itself patiently. Tears save sorrow from deepening into despair, while laughter is one of the privileges of Reason.

There are tears and tears. There are genuine tears as there are spurious ones. Beware of base imitations. It is well that the various varieties of eye-flow are distinguished so that the false can be told off from the true. We may first mention the tears of joy. These in their upward course wash out all the little specks of sorrow and make our hearts as clear as a sheep's. Life without them would hardly be worth a trial.

The tears of the weak and the helpless, though they swell from within a palpitating heart betray no trace of their origin. In fact, they are among the most powerful and potent weapons that mankind can claim to possess. Almighty Kings and autocratic despots tremble at the mere threat. The tears of the weak undermine thrones of kings.

When a stony heart yields and suffers the hard hand of remorse to squeeze out of it some gentle drops of deep pity and sincere though belated repentance—these tears are the most beautiful that ever dropped from human eyes. All the vices and the sins of the criminal are carried off in the flood. These tears have the same sweetness and charm as have the waters that lie clear and crystal on some rocky bed. There is about this kind of emotion the power of infusing energy and introducing fine thoughts and fresh hopes. The tears of the penitent are the wine of Angles.

The modest little rivulet gaily rippling over a fine sandy bed, shielded by the cool fragrance of shady trees and shadowy foliage is startled when it first sees the light and feels the heat of day. So too the child's tears. They ooze from out of a tare in his soft heart, caused perhaps by a heedless word or a thoughtless countenance. They are the most effective as are the least forced.

ON TEARS

503

But surpassing these in charm are the tears of compassion. Arising out of the mere sight of misery they are as effective as they are sensitive. The sight of some wounded bird in Life's Wilderness brings to the sympathetic eye a drop or two of the finest emotion, fellow-feeling. These drops do not rush down the cheeks or go back to clog the soul. They waver in the eye and provide a translucent medium which shuts out the dark dreariness of Life and lifts human vision out of the bounds of the world.

Tears are the only weapon in some armouries. In fact, tears are said to be the sole sword and shield of women. Some hold the view that man is made to work and woman's mission is to weep. Woman's tears have camped and dirtied many a famous page in history. But they have also washed off the stains of many an infamous deed. Apart from these specialists, there are those that weep now and then. Crocodile tears are as loathsome as the reptile after whom they are named. Only thick-skinned people, foreign to all genuine emotion, will ever stoop to this base device.

School-boys and girls have their peculiar sorrows and tears. But their sorrows are seasonal and caused by examinations. The excessive water that they drink flows out on the slightest provocation, at the sight of a cane or the sound of a rebuke. No greater harm than damp benches ensues. Quantity has acted adversely on their value.

Artificial pleasures have none of Nature's charm. Tears that are forced out of the eyes by the dust of the streets or the irritation of tobacco can never approach the grace of the spontaneous stream. Medical men might advise a blockade of the nose to produce tears, tears that would clear the eye of alien matter. A resourceful capitalist might compel his labourers to weep and thus take to salt manufacture in these days of heavy taxation. But all water from the eyes is not tears anymore than all minerals are gold.

Tears are the safety-valves of the heart, that act when too much pressure is on. To great many men and women they are as necessary as streams are to lofty mountains. Never be afraid of tears nor ashamed of them. Sorrow is the heritage of the man of the world. Pleasure is but a fleeting fantasy, a masked emotion, a false feeling. Sorrow ever survives. It lies at the bottom of Creation; for is there not pain at the birth of a child or a star, at the making of the world?

FRANCIS THOMPSON'S "THE HOUND OF HEAVEN".

A STUDY.

BY V. SETUMADHAVAN.

FRANCIS Thompson and Shelley are kindred spirits—the mystic exuberance of the one is equalled only by the tempestuous imagination of the other. Criticism is fast recognising that Thompson is one of the great figures in English Literature. His poetry is "the eternal choir" with a flaming insight into cosmic truth. His style is divinely audacious, and a true mirror, as it were, of "the red, ripe heart of the Universe". He belongs to the hierarchy of revealers and his chief is Crashaw. But his genius is only the nearest approach to Crashaw, for, his mysticism is not as crystal, clear-eyed or lively as the latter's. For ivory work of style he is akin to Keats—only Thompson's style is more inspired, deep and throbbing. Though akin to Shelley in many respects, it is difficult to discern the intangible element in his poetry. Even when inspiration carries him to eagle heights, he retains his poise, and lets down a controlled and stately flow of full-conceived and clear-cut imagery. He is the master of song, master of life and master of destiny.

His "Hound Of Heaven" is a screaming revelation of the evolution of *Sin* into *Divinity*. The sinner's soul is besieged by God's mercy, but he runs away, aghast at the prospect of his capture. He rushes out in chaotic despair for shelter or escape from this "tremendous Lover". But God hounds him with the relentless perseverance of mercy. The beat of His footsteps and His baptising voice haunt him and he makes frantic attempts to forget, shelter, or escape from God by losing himself in his thoughts and passions or surrendering his love to man, woman, child and Nature. He shudders at the thought of losing the delight and romance of creation by his surrender to God. But his flight is futile. Nothing shelters him or contents him and he finds that God is at his heels with swifter speed and clearer voice. At last he is struck down helpless and he offers himself to God. He sees that his successive failure is due to God's mercy. Failure is a new light to guide him into Truth. God accepts him saying that his manifold seeking of objects constitutes nothing else than a search after Him and that he can now fulfil his heart's desire by finding his *All* in Himself.

FRANCIS THOMPSON'S "THE HOUND OF HEAVEN" 505

The opening of the poem is both lyrical and dramatic. It is the psychology of the sinner in searchlight. He flies away from God and yearns to forget the Creator by hurling himself into his thoughts and instincts.

I fled Him down the nights, and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter
Up vistaed hopes, I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.

But the awful feet of the lord follow the erratic soul with the Voice.

"All things betray thee who betrayest Me".

Now the sinner makes another desperate bid for shelter. He is conscious of the Lord's chasing mercy, but evades Him lest the higher call forfeit his earthly delights. He knows that to yield a little is to be swept away into sublime surrender. So he summons the supernal aid of the stars and moon. He shrieks prayers to dawn, eve and the wind to hide him from the Lord's sight. But there is no refuge and he is abandoned to his own destiny.

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
By many a hearted casement, cur-tained red,
Trellised with intertwining charmes

Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.

Thus he stands disenchanted but God keeps the rhythm of his chase, surer of his quarry and says

"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me".

Now we come to the next phase in the evolution of his soul. His attempt to *escape* from the Lord has failed. But even now he is reluctant to respond to the call of the Real. He adopts an attitude of non-chalance and endeavours to be *contented* with earthly things. He turns to children and Nature and seeks solace in them. Children are creatures of intriguing divinity, for, they have "won for the earth the kiss of Heaven." But when he is about to be healed, God plucks them away from him, robbing his contentment and leaving his soul in the original tumult.

But still within the little children's eyes
Seems something, something that replies,
They at least are for me, surely for me!
I turned me to them very wistfully;
But just as their young eyes grew sudden fair
With dawning answers there,
Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.

So he now turns to his last resort—Nature. Nature is the arch-healer. He commingles with her and is in tune with her delights and sorrows. A new light falls on creation and before him spreads a grandiose vista of cosmic mysteries. But with all her tenderness Nature gives him not even a placid, pathetic contentment, but leaves him divinely discontent and severely alone. There is not a full communion of soul and soul and for his speech, she responds only with her silence. She is a coy dame and in her he experiences no eternal peace.

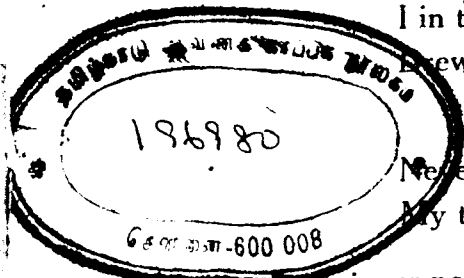
So it was done:

I in their delicate fellowship was one—
I drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.

* * * * *

Never did any milk of hers once bless
My thirsting mouth.

The sinner now enters into the final phase of his life—the pilgrimage from darkness into light. He has failed to evade God and now he is only a handful of wet clay in His hands.



82
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