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THE
RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF HEALTH.

A DISCOURSE GIVEN AT

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BY

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THE RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF HEALTH.

IT would be hard to find a truer allegory than the "Vision of Mirza," in which Addison, under a poetic guise, sought to teach the nature and incidents of the journey of life. The long series of arches, three-score-years-and-ten entire, and several broken, in the bridge of life ; the hidden trap-doors that were plentiful at the entrance of life's journey, and that again increased towards life's close ; the busy multitudes thronging life's highway ; the thinning of their ranks as their pilgrimage progressed ; and the disappearance of unit after unit into the dark river below as the journey's stages lengthened, are features of the allegory which form part of childhood's more serious tales. But beneath the clouds of allegory and metaphor, lie the serious facts of human existence. Wrap up these facts as you will, disguise them under what simile you choose, their stern realities will still face us, as we turn from the ideal to survey the fields of human culture that are spread out everywhere around us. There are few of these fields more impressive in the picture they present to view than the special aspects which meet the eye of the physician, the sanitary reformer, the scientific man, the statistician himself. Of all the courses

and phases of human life, none possess for us all such an interest as those which deal with the chances of life, or with the possibilities and probabilities of death. It is a study, this, of the course life has to run, of the best course which can be run, of the highest goal physical development can attain. It is a topic, this of health, which presents for the nation an interest not exceeded by questions of the deepest political importance. You may applaud the statesman who introduces amid, it may be, violent opposition, some measure of political reform. You may admire and reverence the reformer in religion and theology who, with the ardour of a Paul and the eloquence of a Chrysostom, enunciates a new creed, and, having the courage of his opinions, seeks to make that creed a life. You may pause breathless over the work of a general or commander who has redeemed the fortune of a war which seemed hopeless before he brought well-nigh superhuman bravery and promptitude into the field of action. All these varied aims and excellencies are the stepping-stones of humanity's march to better things. But I make bold to say, your interest will be deeper still, when you listen to the recital which deals with the labours of science to prolong life ; which recounts the dangers that surround nations, communities and individuals alike ; and which endeavours to show how, in the newer lights research is throwing on human existence, there is to be found a crown of years and a length of days. Humanity, at least, in its thinking and cultured side, is now contented

and willing to be instructed in the things that constitute our physical salvation. What science has to say concerning the prolongation of human life and of human opportunities through attention to the laws of health, is listened to with increased attention as the years roll on. But there is yet need that the high morality of the subject be recognized. There exists the need that the religious aspects of the health question should be driven home anew to our minds in the light of the freer and fuller atmosphere into which we have passed. There is, above all, an urgent necessity that we should assist those who have not yet attained to a high level of thought, who still linger in theological Egypt with a Canaan before them wherein is safety and peace, to realize how closely, nay, how inseparably bound up with a man's religion and creed, is his doctrine of health and its attainment. It is in order to lay before you this morning a few plain thoughts on its religious aspects, that I have chosen such a subject as "health." And it may tend in some measure to assist us in the work of bodily care and in the enjoyment of life, if we can realize how closely and inseparably health and its concerns merge into any rational creed of life and conduct that man may construct.

It may not be out of place, if, by way of an introduction to our thoughts, you briefly glance with me at a few facts typical of the need that exists for health-knowledge. Begin with the early stages of human life—with the period of the dim awakening of the child to consciousness

of a life and of a world external to itself. Statistics on the truth of which you may rely, prove the verity of that part of the vision of Mirza, wherein the early arches of the bridge were studded with pitfalls innumerable. For, out of every 1,000 children born, no fewer than 149 die ere the first year of life is attained. Before the fifth year of life, 263 will have disappeared from the 1,000, like the fleeting shadows of cloud-land. Let 25 years of age be attained, and no fewer than 366 of the 1,000 units will have disappeared. At 45 years of age, exactly 500 remain; ten years later only 421 are to the fore. But 309 reach 65 years of age: and 75 years sees a remnant of 161. About 38 of the 1,000 may see 85 years of age; only 2 survive till 95 years; and only 1 in every 1,000 born, lives through an entire century. But few foofalls re-echo over the later arches of the bridge of life; and the longest livers have but a solitary journey as life wanes to its close.

There is much food for reflection in such an exact account of the fashion in which human units appear on, and disappear from, the stage of time. How can we estimate the value of the lives that are cut short, often through unforeseen circumstances, but as often through human ignorance and through human inattention to the laws of health. Who shall conceive the possibilities of good, of work, of faith in humanity's highest aims, to which the lost units might have attained? Who shall say anything of the extinction of genius and mind which

we owe every hour to the fate that is as often as not of our own making? What potential Raphaels, or Shakespeares, or Newtons, have disappeared, and are disappearing hour by hour from the world's light through the trap doors in life's bridge that lead to Lethe's dark silent stream below? Even viewed as a simple fact of life, the death of the units as revealed by science causes a strong sense of rebellious melancholy to arise in the mind. For science warns us that a very large proportion of the losses which humanity sustains are *preventible* losses. They are the bad debts for which human life has literally nothing to show. They are the dead losses which weight the profits, of life so heavily for the survivors, and which leave behind it may be, the sorrow and poverty, and the desolation and misery, that know no alleviation while life lasts for the survivors. If that be true which sanitarians tell us, that 120,000 lives are annually sacrificed in our midst by preventible diseases; that these thousands are sent to an early grave by the pestilence that stalks abroad at noonday, when care and attention should have long ago imprisoned and executed it, the morality of the health-question is no longer a debatable theme. But, last and best of all, when we come to know the great and saving truth, worth in its way, the concentrated culture of centuries, that man literally holds in his own hands, the power to work weal to his physical self, it seems high time that our religious teachers should have something to say on the morals of health.

I think I make a perfectly just remark when I say that

to conventional theology, with its absurd and inane theories of the nature and origin of disease, we owe a vast amount of the stolid indifference and ignorance that prevail in matters relating to health. If I am able to show that a foolish and fossilized theology naturally tends to encourage the spread of disease through its ideas of the causation of illness, I may claim to thereby furnish the surest ground for the converse view, namely, that a rational theology should be the first step towards health-reform. Consider, for a single moment, the prevalent conceptions of disease and its origin. The mysticism of the middle ages still invests the minds of the people, by giving to disease a purely supernatural and occult origin. The epileptic fit is the gift of God, equally with the typhoid fever. "The Lord chastens whom he loves," and the fall of a bank which lands you in beggary, and the scarlet fever that strips your hearth of its child-tenants and hushes for ever the prattle that made music in your ear, are equally the means according to theology, whereby you are to be purified through trials. No matter that common-sense may whisper that God's procedure is hard—unjustifiably, cruelly hard on the innocent victims, and that a milder discipline would have been more likely to have won your heart to righteousness. You are not permitted to inquire at all into the "ways of Providence;" you are simply to fold the hands, when every sinew and fibre in your frame feels fit to start out and to hew down the impious lie that you deserved the blow which drew your heart's blood through the death

of the wife or child you loved so well. You are to say, "Thy will be done," when you know the phrase is, under the circumstances, but a devil's shibboleth after all. You are to go on knowing nothing, seeking no light; only believing that somehow or other things will right themselves, when, in your heart, you know that hope is crushed out of you, and that your life henceforth is but a vain dream. And so many a weary soul whose dead is buried, but whose sorrows are just born, awakens to find life for a time—it may be till its end—a dismal blank; and the pulses of humanity, which should throb with hope, but the muffled drums that herald a march to the grave.

I say then, that the popular theology is a dread enemy of health-reform. It is plainly so, because it recognises but one source of disease, and that the capricious fiat of an anthropomorphic deity, who afflicts the children of men to-day in as erratic and varied a fashion as when, with the varied nosology of a celestial college of physicians at command, he rained plagues on Egypt, or afflicted Job in the manner familiar to all interested in patriarchal troubles and perplexities. If you reply that even popular theology recognises the newer dispensation, I will answer "No thanks to the theologians." If the pulpit now adopts less of the tone which bids the pews simply to suffer and recognise the theoretical hand of the avenger, that is because "rationalism is beginning to touch the people's heart and head, through the people's health, and through the plain lessons of disease. Even those advanced theologians,

the "peculiar people," who found their medical practice on the learned dictum of the Apostle James, do not trust to prayer entirely, but utilize oil inunction—itsself a form of respectable medical treatment—in the cure of disease. But even James is far ahead of the popular theology, which in its spirit and in its practice likewise, bids you cultivate the resignation of fatalism. "The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away" is the cant phrase that to honest ears sounds like the cry of a savage to his fetish. When you reflect that the typhoid fever that has cost you a life you ill could spare to be snatched away from you, had its origin in the bad drainage that could so readily be avoided or cured—when you know that this epidemic might have been avoided, or that disease arrested by early care—when you begin to learn that the proper regulation of life means life's prolongation, and that we largely hold our lives in our own hands—then, and only then, can you realise how hollow the mockery, how utterly base and irreligious the words that bid you regard as a gift and sign from heaven, the disease that is of the earth earthy, and that you might through the exercise of knowledge have avoided, or perchance have cured. The stumble that ends in a broken limb, is, not as a rule, regarded even by theology as having originated in the clouds. The material cause of your accident is, of course, as plain to demonstration, as is the origin of the railway disaster that arises from the carelessness of a pointsman or the defect of a signal. And the same reasoning applies to the fever. To glorify the Deity

that afflicts you with typhus fever, and to condemn the pointsman that kills you, or the coachman who maims you by careless driving, are two examples of prevalent inconsistencies, which are as much the product of a primitive theology as is the cant expression of the coroner's jury concerning "the will of God." There is an undercurrent of strong common sense in the lines of Dryden which found their contention on the natural nature of disease and its cure :—

" Better to hunt in fields for health unbought,
 Than fee the doctor for a nauseous draught ;
 The wise for cure on exercise depend,
 God never made his work for man to mend."

IF the dicta and ideas of theology may be credited with having tintured the minds of men with the belief that in the presence of disease they were literally at the mercy of a capricious Deity, we may now profitably turn to the consideration of those newer and higher opinions concerning health which the advance of culture—and of religious culture especially—have evolved.

The growth of national opinions in the matter of health has been perhaps slow, but the advance has been made with the slowness of surety. When we reflect that the laws against witchcraft were exercised little more than a hundred years ago, it will not surprise us to learn that, as recently as 1853, the Presbytery of Edinburgh sustained a severe

mental shock by the reply of Lord Palmerston (the then Home Secretary) in answer to a request that he would appoint a day of national humiliation and prayer as a means of averting a threatened visitation of cholera. The Presbytery of the Scottish metropolis possessed at that time but one idea of the nature of disease, and that was evidently the idea of its being sent from heaven. The relations of cholera to the Deity were clear enough to the minds of Lord Palmerston's petitioners, if that relationship might be scarcely apparent to other people. The knowledge that cholera—which, as I speak, is killing off Mahommedan pilgrims at the rate of five hundred a day at Mecca—is the offspring of bad drainage and an infected water-supply, was an old story in 1853 to sanitary reformers, but it appeared to be knowledge unattainable by the theological mind. The facts that, firstly, cholera, like every other epidemic, depends for diffusion on certain insanitary conditions, and that, secondly, by improving these conditions we may stamp out the disease, did not seem to lie within the knowledge of the Edinburgh theologians in 1853, as, unfortunately, it seems to be unknown information to multitudes around us to-day. Steeped in sanitary and scientific ignorance, can we wonder then, that theology should collectively ask the Home Secretary to appoint a day for the express and practical purpose of asking the Deity to perform a veritable miracle. By prayer and "humiliation"—I confess, even as a Scotchman, to be entirely ignorant of the presence or working

of this latter tendency on "fast days" or at any other periods—the Deity was to be asked to suspend the laws which regulate the production of the fever-poison and spread of the cholera-virus. For the sake of "much speaking," and in the face of filth, bad drainage, and other conditions then rampant over the face of the land, the angel of death was actually expected, as in another Egypt, to spare the chosen from the scourge. But the sound common-sense of Lord Palmerston gave the death-blow to the impiety of the wish. "It did not appear," said his lordship, "that a national fast would be suitable to the circumstances of the present moment." And then, in a few scathing sentences, the Presbytery of Edinburgh was "hoist with its own petard." "The Maker of the Universe," said Lord Palmerston's letter, "has established certain laws of nature for the planet in which we live, and the weal or woe of mankind depends upon the observance or neglect of these laws. One of those laws connects health with the absence of those gaseous exhalations which proceed from overcrowded human beings, or from decomposing substances, whether animal or vegetable; and those same laws render sickness the almost inevitable consequence of exposure to those noxious influences. But it has, at the same time, pleased Providence to place it within the power of man to make such arrangements as will prevent or will disperse such exhalations as to render them harmless, and it is the duty of man to attend to those laws of nature, and to exert the facilities

which Providence has thus given to man for his own welfare."

In words like these which deserve to be "writ large" in every school, Lord Palmerston rebuked the folly of his petitioners. He further told them that the cholera visitation for which the Presbytery proposed the remedy of prayer, was simply "an awful warning given to the people of this realm that they had too much neglected their duty in this respect, and that those persons with whom it rested to purify towns and cities, and to prevent or remove the causes of disease, had not been sufficiently active in regard to such matters." He added that if the causes of contagion were "allowed to remain," they would "infallibly breed pestilence and be fruitful in death, in spite of all the prayers and fastings of a united but inactive nation."

It is indeed cheering for rational minds to read words like these, not merely because they breathe the spirit of the soundest scientific policy of health, but because they are impregnated with what I take to be the spirit of true religion, which ever enforces the precept that man is the minister of his own salvation, and which render more true the poet's words—

"There's life alone in duty done,
And rest alone in striving."

THE standpoint of the rational mind in regard to health is simply this—that its preservation is the

highest duty of mankind. This much and nothing less, will satisfy the mind that contemplates the phases of modern life and that longs for a better world through the improvement of the environments of human life in the present one. Look abroad for a moment on the seething tides of humanity that ebb and flow with ceaseless activity in your great city. Contemplate, as casually as you will, the course of life to the men and women we know, and from them extend your thoughts to the toilers and moilers whose health is, at once, their only possession and their best stock-in-trade. Observe how, on every hand, you see the results of wasted existences and broken lives. There, it is the ruin of a home which might have resounded with the laughter of children, or have been blest with the love of wife or husband, bereft of its sunshine, through, it may be, the gross carelessness of the builder, or the combined ignorance and dishonesty of the artisan who fabricated its drainage-works. Tell the mind, however orthodox, that all is well with it, when it has just been taught the bitter lesson that the deadly poison that crept into its home and blighted a life, was, like the escaped felon, an intruder which demanded continual confinement through ordinary precautions, and do not wonder if such a mind throws back your consolation in your teeth, as but the vainest mockery that ever sprung on a lie. There, again, is an individual constitution which, born into the world weakly and undermined, carries to an early grave the legacy of disease it

inherited from parents who should never have been allowed to bear that holy name. Here, it is another, who, starting life in the full flush of vigour, undermines health by excess. Knowing no laws of conduct save those which made the enjoyment of the hour the *raison d'être* of life, the powers of that life have been sapped and undermined by the vicious and insensible folly of half-a-dozen years. Or, again, you witness women and men bowing before the Moloch of Fashion, and prostrating themselves beneath the wheels of a fate that will crush them as surely as the car of Juggernaut demolishes the votaries who willingly bestrew its path. Is there any need to emphasize from this pulpit what every pulpit should denounce, namely, the wholesale bartering of health for fashion ; the seeking of living bread amongst the stones and the dust ; the expecting to gather the pure fruit of a healthy life from the foul weeds and thistles that fringe the waysides of modern life ? Is there any requirement that I should tell you what you know as well as I do, that for vanity of figure, the human race will distort its spine and flatten its chest ; will convert the glorious symmetry of the human body into a living museum of pathological specimens ; and will cramp its feet until the extremes of Chinese barbarity and western civilization meet in amicable proximity ? There is no need to continue the list of social and personal enormities which as a nation we daily perpetrate. There might be added to the indictment, crimes against health in the shape of luxurious

living that is certain to bring a not over-hardy reward in a shortened life ; and I could emphasize, if need be, the still greater crime of sins of wilful neglect and omission in that we have failed to know the great laws of health, and knowing these laws, to follow and obey them. But the facts of ill-health are every day facts : they meet us in our homes ; they teach us often in the persons of our dearest and nearest ones, the baneful effects of carelessness, and the often irreparable result of a wanton trifling with health. Nay, still worse, the facts of unsound bodies and of careless living, face you, and face me as to-day we meet here to renew the forces of our mental and religious life. The wasted opportunity of discharging life's duty ; the failure of our duty to our neighbour, to our kinsman, and to ourselves ; the taxation of others for our helplessness ; the falling short of every ideal, the hopes of attaining which made life's start so bright—in a word the moral and religious wreck of thousands of lives, is a matter at first of simple health, and indeed may be throughout all, the consequence of the first shipwreck on the quicksands of easily avoided disease. My friends, if there be a personal Deity, who, with a pitying mind, or with some emotion akin to that which forces the tear of sympathy to the human eye, looks down from His mercy seat on the wrecked lives of His children, there can be no pain, no emotion, no feeling, half so strong in all the range of the divine compassion, as that which the sight of the human misery, of ill-health must invoke. Fighting here, and struggling there,

with the conditions of disease, how ghastly must the contest seem. How true and how applicable to such a phase of life as related to a knowledge of health laws, are the words of the Nazarene, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

THE duties of the rational mind and of true religion in the matter of health may be summed up in the one great contention that a knowledge of the laws of the universe should be in the possession of every man or woman with a life to live, and who boasts of the heaven-born desire to live that life well. This is not the first time that from this pulpit I have urged the duty of acquainting ourselves with at least as much scientific knowledge as will enable us to understand the constitution of things under which we live, and of which we ourselves are part. The duty moral, and the duty religious, exactly parallel in this case the duty political. You esteem it a bounden duty that for the furtherance of individual and national interests you should take a side in politics. And you adopt a side; but you do not choose it without weighing the *pros* and *cons* of the matter; without comparing one policy with another; without taking a historical review of how or why things political have come to exhibit their existing phases. Now what you do in politics as a duty to yourselves, to your children, and to the State, I imagine becomes a far more

important matter when the subject is one of health. The mistakes of a political leader are, as a rule, remediable. The genius of his opponent may make that a success, which otherwise would have proved a disaster. But you cannot so remedy the mistakes, which, as a nation or as individuals, we may commit in our health-science. The grave, like the sea, holds its dead; there is no erasing from the statute-book of health the ghastly records of this crime of indolence that brought the cholera, or of that crime of ignorance that sent typhoid fever broadcast. One duty, and one duty alone, lie before us. To it we are called by the clarion-voice of truth itself, and that duty is the task of learning the laws of health; of knowing that truth which, when we follow it, so surely shall make us, in the veriest sense, free.

How powerfully does Mr. Spencer put the case in those admirable words of his on "Education." Listen to his scathing denunciation of the fashionable know-nothingness that everywhere abounds. "Seriously," asks Mr. Spencer, "is it not an astonishing fact that though on the treatment of offspring depend their lives or deaths, and their moral welfare or ruin, yet not one word of instruction on the treatment of offspring is ever given to those who will bye-and-bye be parents? Is it not monstrous," he adds, "that the fate of a new generation should be left to the chances of unreasoning custom, impulse, fancy, joined with the suggestions of ignorant nurses and the prejudiced counsel of grandmothers?" Again, Mr. Spencer

says most forcibly : " When sons and daughters grow up sickly and feeble, parents commonly regard the event as a misfortune ; as a visitation of Providence. Thinking after the prevalent chaotic fashion, they assume that these evils come without causes, or that the causes are supernatural. Nothing of the kind. In some cases the causes are doubtless inherited, but in most cases foolish regulations are the causes. Very generally parents themselves are responsible for all this pain, this debility, this depression, this misery." And when comparing the inestimable value of a knowledge of the laws of health over all other knowledge, his words tell most truly : " When a mother is mourning over a first-born that has sunk under the sequelæ of scarlet fever (when perhaps, a candid medical man has confirmed her suspicion that her child would have recovered had not its system been enfeebled by over study), when she is prostrate under the pangs of combined grief and remorse ; it is but small consolation that she can read Dante in the original." Is there a mother's heart which does not appeal to her head on hearing these words ? or is it needful to attempt to add to their suggestive force ? The duty of each one of us, then, seems clear enough as this first head, namely, that if the conservation of life, the perfect discharge of life's duties, the happiness of ourselves, of those we love, and of our neighbours, be aims which make " life worth living," then, you cannot, with this admission, escape from the inevitable conclusion that it is a crime against the best

morality and the purest religion, to remain ignorant of the laws of health, and of physical salvation.

But let me add, that the duty of knowing and doing these things, is above all, an *individual* duty. It is the part of the individual, which gives to the work of health-reform its character and its strength. Without individual intelligence and appreciation of health-laws and of health's value, there can be no true health-reform at all. Nay, more, the sacred duty we owe to our neighbour, in virtue of which duty we expect and demand the mutual consideration that makes life pleasant and society a possibility, is perhaps better illustrated by the question of health-science than by any other phase of social existence. Suppose that I live up to every law and rule of health which science lays down for the guidance of the race ; grant that in my dwelling I observe, along with my household, every requirement of sanitation ; imagine that I and mine live the truly healthy life, of what avail, let me ask, will all this care be, if my neighbour is a sloven in health matters ? Of what advantage is my care ; when his carelessness floods me with sewer-gas, when his fever spreads, through his ignorance of health-laws, to me ? It is clear that in the complex warf and woop of civilization, I must, perforce, even were I less willing than morality makes me, consider my neighbours interests as my own. I must, if I am to live safely, see that other individuals acquire a like culture to mine. Every health-reformer, then,

in addition to acquiring knowledge of the laws of health, must see that his neighbour acquires knowledge of a similar character. In the matter of health, society must stand or fall as a whole. There can be no education of one set of its units, leaving another set in the ignorance which may, through its dire results, kill educated and uneducated alike. Thus a second aspect of our religious and moral duty in reference to health becomes clear. It is the question of the lawyer put to the Nazarene, "Who is my neighbour?" only put with infinite force in the light of nineteenth century life and exigency. And the parable of the Samaritan with his kindly aid can never be better illustrated to-day, than when we ourselves, having found the true way of life, guide the footsteps of others into the paths that lead to where the shadows linger lovingly and long at the close of life's short day.

To accomplish all this reformation requires time, requires strength, requires industry and energy, and, above all, a strong belief in the holiness of the work. But these things are added unto them who believe in the physical salvation, as the means come to the earnest worker in the direction of moral culture or of a truly religious life of any kind. Once let us believe in the righteousness of living well, and we shall live well; let us but convince ourselves that as we live now, we too often live wrongly and badly, and we shall soon strive after the ideal that science is prepared to set before them, who look to the possibilities of human

life becoming a happier thing for all than it is now, even for the best amongst us. Is there, let us ask, any higher aim which you who worship here, or which those whose spirits are attuned to yours can set before their waiting eyes than the bettering of the race through the work of health-reform? Here is a something to live for and to hope for—a perfectly possible Utopia to dream of lovingly, and to assist practically by every means in our power. For us, to whom the concerns of life are destitute of the mawkish sentimentalism that environs a well-nigh obsolete theology, there seems something solid, something attainable in their idea of a well-nigh perfect state. To-day, Euthanasia is only purchaseable by death; only the "dim beyond" is the abode of painless existence, extinction, or what you will. But think of a living, moving world, with a minimum of pain and wretchedness, and then turn to the prospects which health-science and its successful pursuit hold out of realising your dream. Do not imagine I am simply indulging in a romance. I do not mean you to infer that I regard the health-future of the race as a thing easily attainable. Human nature is proverbially weak; it is actually lazy; it is difficult to rouse to energy, let alone enthusiasm; it likes to fold the hands to rest and to still the eyes to sleep, provided to-day is undisturbed, even if to-morrow's prospect be stormy. But humanity, here and there, has its ideals and the strength of will to work towards them. And I can discern in the signs of the times the evidences that the

health-ideal is assuming a well-defined shape ; that its outlines are not so misty as many suppose ; and that earnest minds are already shaping the course of their thoughts to the attainable end of a long, a healthy, and a happy life. Look around you and see what may be done, what has been accomplished within your own experience. We have left the valley of the grim shadow and are already on the mountain-slope, when we have for ever discarded the notion that disease is sent by a Deity to afflict and to chasten. We are already half-way up the mountain, and we are coming to the blue azure itself, when we learn that disease is, as often as not, the off-spring of an ignorance of the conditions that make it and produce it. Everywhere around you science is up and doing. There are active minds hard at work wresting the secrets of infection from the silent tissues, or poring over the microscope to watch how the disease-germ buds forth into full vigour, and where, when, and how that germ may be seized and destroyed, or at least purged of its noxious properties and powers. Already the out-look is cheering ; by-and-by, with fuller knowledge we shall attain a standard compared with which the possibilities of to-day seem but a vain show. Think of one solid fact alone in the saving of human life, which comes to you from a great northern city, but which finds a parallel elsewhere. "When Glasgow," says Professor Corfield, "was supplied with impure water from the river

Clyde, the number of deaths in cholera years varied from over 2,800 in 1832, to nearly 3,900 in 1854. After a supply of pure water had been obtained for the city from Loch Katrine, the number of cholera deaths in 1866, the next cholera year, was only 68." If ever the old declaration that the people perish, and that human happiness is blotted out for lack of knowledge, received a practical application, it surely finds such application in such a statement as that first made. If even the adage that "knowledge is power" requires an illustration, you may find such illustration best and clearest in the saving of human life by the culture of the laws of health.

TAKE a mental retrospect of health-matters, and you will discern that the world has not been speeding "down the ringing groves of change" for nought during the last two hundred years or so. If, as orthodox theology tells us, this orb of ours has an existence and development, simply as a prelude to a symphony of flames and torrents, that prelude and the development of human culture have together produced a choice subject for the holocaust. Two hundred years ago ague was rife, bred and fostered by the damp and malaria which were developed in the swamps that environed London itself, and that were broadcast over the land. Jail fever more recently decimated the miserable populations of our prisons, until the benevolence of a Howard struck the keynote of reform. Disease and death,

being esteemed supernatural things were regarded beyond man's reach in the way of bettering or avoidance. The life of the past periods was coarse ; the morality was universally low ; and we wonder to-day that the purer spirits which even the worst of epochs behold, found any circumstances which at all favoured the development of the higher life. To-day how changed the prospect ! Ague has vanished ; fevers are known to be preventible ; men are being taught wisdom over the graves of their grandparents ; morality is at least to-day something more than a name ; and the fears of the night of grim terrorism of the supernatural are fast vanishing beneath the increasing radiance of the sun of truth.

What future awaits us, who can tell ? But one thing is clear, that there are possibilities looming before us, which even the careless cannot afford to neglect. The religion of the future will very largely, I think, be a religion of health. It will be a religion wherein the causes of pauperism and crime will be known and discussed, and alleviated or banished. Its higher development will have

“ —————lent
The pulse of hope to discontent.”

It will aim at making rational minds through well-nourished and healthy bodies. It will leave the “sanctity of dirt” as a watchword for those who think more of their souls than their bodies, and it will elevate the race through the development of health with a power comparab

to that of an Archimedean lever, that literally can move a world. Best of all, this religion, which finds itself on an appreciation of the physical wants and requirements of man's nature, will serve as the most efficient corrective to the false ideals upon which men to-day lavish the service of a life. It will teach mankind that this earth is their best and purest heaven ; that in healthy frames, in pure affections, and in the enjoyment of a rational existence, there are pleasures beyond those dreamt of by ancient seer or religious devotee. It will make this earth the happy home of a contented race, a fit heaven for the life that ought to be all happiness and health. It will make the world a scene which, at the close of a well-spent life, man may leave without a pang of remorse, surrendering his days to the unknown and unknowable, in the fearless knowledge of a wisely used existence without so much as the shadow of a tear.

