

“THOU SHALT NOT”

BY HENRI VANDERBYLL

COMMANDMENTS beginning with the three little words, “Thou shalt not,” were uttered and written for the first time thousands of years ago. And commandments beginning with the two little words, “Thou shalt,” were first given to the world nineteen centuries ago. The echoes of both, of the sort that forbid, and of the sort that prescribe, a certain conduct, reverberate through the centuries gone by. Although they reach the ears of the present humanity, however, we fear that they do not, in many instances, penetrate into the minds and the hearts of the recipients. We hear the past admonish us not to steal. But we steal almost every day of our life, if not openly then secretly, if not gold then the love, or the friendship, or the health, or the happiness of our fellow creature. Though we plainly hear the warning not to kill, we refrain from killing until special occasions arise when it may be done on a wholesale scale, under the excuse of being patriotic, or of protecting the fatherland from covetous neighbors, or of avenging honor. Nor is there a single one among the “Thou shalt” that we cannot glibly quote. But, in practice, we invariably fail to love our neighbor as ourself, preferring to have intercourse with our fellows in a manner similar to that of a pack of wolves that hungrily jumps at prey of which there is not enough to go around.

The question arises, Why this ability to quote, and this inability to live the quotation? Our answer is, that commandments embody moral *ideals*. They refer to a possible future, not to the present. When it is necessary to tell man that he should not steal, it is clear that stealing is a habit with him. When he is exhorted to love his neighbor as himself, it stands to reason that he does not love his neighbor at present. But it would be an easy matter to lift humanity to a high moral level, if it were possible to make it follow a certain prescribed conduct. Its behavior during the last twenty centuries or so, however, clearly shows that to merely tell human beings to

refrain from doing certain things, or to assume an attitude of unselfishness towards their neighbors, is not sufficient. We have but to glance at the present to realize that the ethics of Christianity as yet merely exist in the printed line, although man is, indeed, inclined to ever carry the printed line upon his lips. If the Man of Sorrows were able to revisit this planet, and view the amiable intercourse which the nations of the earth enjoy at present, should not crucifixion at the hands of the Jews seem less unbearable than the one which he would suffer at the sight of that spectacle? Think of a nation strangling to death its mortally wounded enemy, of other nations plotting in the dark for the purpose of obtaining a coveted prey, of all humanity distrusting, fearing, hating, challenging, and laying the foundations for another human carnage! Think of these things, and then think of "Love thy enemy," or of "Love thy neighbor as thy self"!

One's first impulse is to pronounce men a lot of hypocrites that pray and moralize on Sundays, and that prey and hate and lie and kill during the balance of the week. One's second impulse is to lose patience with the well-meaning but misguided souls that persist in preaching against facts. On deeper reflection, however, one concludes to let the preacher preach, and to let man behave as he does. The fact of the matter is, that the man has not yet been born who can be coaxed, urged, or threatened into a moral behavior which runs counter to his inner nature. For the purpose of living the ideal moral life it is not sufficient to *know* ethics, it is necessary to *be* ethics. The sort of knowledge pertaining to the truth of life that does not reflect the inner being, but merely echoes the statements of others, is not only valueless in a moral sense, but it is repulsive. A more disturbing person than the one who "airs" his store of that sort of knowledge, does not exist. His words, though they may be true in an impersonal sense, sound false for no other reason than the one that *he* utters them. And it is therefore that many things that are being preached and taught in the temples of worship, today, sound untrue, not because they *are* untrue, but because they contradict the facts pertaining to man's moral and ethical behavior. Even among the churches, themselves, there is jealousy and rivalry, and the narrowmindedness of the self-centered soul is being exhibited to an astonishing degree.

Man's loftiest code of ethics is powerless to improve the moral being of the individual. Neither supplications nor threats can make him *live* the teachings in question. He may accept them, willingly

or unwillingly, hesitatingly or unconditionally, but something else is needed besides accepting them before their truth can be expressed in his daily actions. That something else no human being can supply. It is a grave error to imagine ourselves capable of changing the moral man by talking, lecturing, or preaching. Mere words, be they printed or spoken, do not change the general nature of the individual, and neither do they change his actions. A man's actions reveal his soul. They tell you what he is, how far he has traveled on the road of human development, in what sort of universe he lives, how much progress he has made towards solving the mystery of God. The nature of a man's actions changes as his self changes. No sermons or lectures, however, can change the self. The process of moulding and re-moulding the inner being is exclusively owned by the external world, by the universe, by nature, if you wish. Now, it is true that man is sometimes an instrument in the hands of nature, an instrument that successfully remoulds a self. But he is an instrument of action, not one of mere speech. Only in those rare instances, when another man's spoken thoughts express that which the individual inwardly knows to be true as a result of experience, do words and thoughts apparently influence the individual and his actions. They influence him because he is prepared and willing to be influenced, for the reason that, at that particular moment, he is what he is.

Ages before Moses wrote his ten commandments on stone tablets, man had listened to those three little words, "Thou shalt not." Not only had he listened to them, but he had obeyed them. There is no escape, and there never was, from the "Thou shalt not" of nature. Obstacle after obstacle she placed in the road of direction of which was indicated by his natural desire. The result was that the individual either sharpened his wits, or else cured himself of desiring the apparently undesirable. He soon enough discovered that he could not do as he pleased with the life that was given him. He was not absolute master of his soul. The external world of not-self, his surroundings, had a voice in the matter of determining the direction in which he should travel. The nature of his self, in co-operation with that of his surroundings, created a new self. He, himself, did not remould his soul, neither did his surroundings do so. But his self and its surroundings combinedly created. Contact with his surroundings resulted in experience, or, rather, the manner in which his particular self reacted upon the stimuli of an external world. The contact in question was generally of a more or less

violent nature, as it represented the struggle between Me and Not-Me. The Me blindly traveled its own way, and the Not-Me placed its obstacles in its path. Blindly dashing itself against those obstacles, the self suffered, and learned its little lesson. Against those obstacles it never again dashed itself blindly. It had experienced, and the experience gathered was transmitted to offspring and descendant.

The whole question of human experience, when sifted down to fundamentals, amounts to this: the self is gradually being made aware of the existence of a world of not-self. As has been stated in a previous chapter, the single effective method of destroying some of the individual's self-centeredness is the method of taking away. It is, originally, through the stomach and the physical self, and, subsequently, through the self's desires, that nature reaches the inner being of man. The result is an awareness on the part of the individual of the existence of a bigger world in which he lives, a world which eventually becomes a boundless universe of solar and stellar systems, and which becomes, at a still higher stage of development, a world existing for the self within an infinite world of reality. What the external world does to the individual, is this: it leads him, step by step, towards the throne of the supreme and ultimate.

Now, the extent to which nature has made the individual aware of the existence of a world of not-self is revealed, first of all, in his actions. And as individual actions in the modern social life of necessity are linked up with the existence and the actions of other individuals, a man's degree of self-centeredness reveals itself in the manner in which he acts towards his fellow creatures. The individual's moral nature is not built up by mere thought, but it is a necessary expression of what he is as a result of experience. When one individual's interests conflict with those of another, it depends upon what the individuals are, and not altogether upon what they have been taught, whether or not bitterness, hatred, or battle will be the result of the conflicting interests. Should both individuals be to a high degree self-centered, and incapable of taking into consideration the existence of a world of not-self with its individuals, there can be little doubt but the immoral course of battle will be followed. That the nations of the earth, in spite of twenty centuries of Christian teaching, fly at one another's throat, and with zest and inspiration give themselves to the task of bleeding their enemy to death, must be ascribed to the fact that the

nations of the earth have not sufficiently developed to enable them to express that-which-they-are in actions conforming with the commandments of Jesus. It is a question of incapacity rather than one of perverseness and downright wickedness. One does not expect the beast of the jungle to act mercifully towards its prey. Nor may we expect the average man of today to embody the moral ideals of the Christ as far as his behavior towards his fellow beings is concerned. The latter statement may appear to have been put a bit strongly. But it is the plain truth, nevertheless. And the sooner that we realize that truth, the better off we shall be. Let us cease our sanctimonious prattling and our sentimental babbling about espousing the cause of idealism, and look facts squarely in the face. It is by our actions, and not by our speech, that we are correctly judged. Considering man's present general behavior upon this earth, can it be denied that human beings, ignoring individual cases, are little more than intelligent, self-centered animals that blindly pursue their own interests, seek their own gain, and are ignorant of the existence of a world of not-self and of that of a God? It is far better, we believe, to acknowledge our present incapacity in the matter of living the ideals of the Christ than to cover our actions with the subterfuges and the excuses of the hypocrite. Incapacity is forgiveable, but pretense and hypocrisy are lies.

Man's incapability of behaving in a certain manner is due to the fact that his self has not as yet reached that particular degree of development which necessarily expresses itself in the sort of behavior referred to. He cannot be blamed for lacking development. The development of the self is brought about by its surroundings, that is to say, its surroundings develop it in a manner and to an extent which are determined by its particular nature. Its nature, in turn, is for the greater part inherited from a thousand ancestors, and only a very insignificant part is acquired in this life. Now, when we are agreed on the point that the particular nature, or degree of development, which the individual possesses, is not his own original creation, we cannot, logically, condemn his mental and moral incapacities. That we, thus far, *have* condemned, is due to our failure to comprehend the process of individual development. We imagine that man can be taught truth, in particular, moral truth. We fail to see that both the intellect and the so-called moral nature belong to the self as its expressions. Neither intelligence nor a moral nature can be given the self from without. They are produced from within, and they are the self's particular possessions.

The latter fact is hardly in need of illustration. Our daily association with our fellow beings should convince us that people simply cannot think or act differently, for the excellent reason that they are what they are. It is all very well to tell them not to do this, but the other thing, they will act in accordance with the nature of their being, anyhow. That is the one fact that we see, without wishing to see it. Though we know that a man's actions express a certain degree of self-development, and that this degree of development is the result of a natural process, we are not sufficiently broad-minded to admit our knowledge. At the bottom of holding our fellow man responsible for what he is and does, lies selfishness. There is question of his being, thinking, and acting in a manner that does not conform with our own. At our comparatively immature stage of development, it is more or less criminal to think and act differently. We still are, to a considerable degree, self-centered.

To make condemnation possible, we invent that absurdity of absurdities, the freedom of the will. Free will pushes into the background the fact that intelligence and morals are expressions of the self, and the one that the self, at any time, is a product of the past. Man is free to choose good or evil. Then what makes him choose evil? His wickedness. Who or what endowed him with wickedness? What is wickedness? Whence does it come? Does the individual brew it in his own soul? If so, from what? The statement that man is a free moral agent, does not convey any meaning whatsoever. Surely, there is something, there is some influence, there is some cause, that makes him choose the particular thing that he chooses. If there is not, the whole matter is one of blind chance. If there is, we cannot logically speak of freedom. We might say, that man is relatively free to will and to choose, even as the bird enjoys, relatively speaking, great freedom. In the absolute sense, however, the bird is as free as any other member of the universe, that is to say, its activities, movements, and its very life, are subject to the restricting influences of an external world.

But, apart from such considerations, let us bear in mind that definitions of good and evil are completely wanting. The fact is, that good and evil, chameleon-like, change color as the human soul changes its own hues. Undoubtedly, there is evil in the world at present that we fail to perceive, for the reason that we are incapable of perceiving it. If the evil in question be represented by human actions, we do not see anything the matter with those actions, because they truthfully reflect our particular degree of develop-

ment. Our descendants, however, will find in them a source of wonderment, and they will marvel at the barbarity and at the gross immorality which was ours. The statement, therefore, that man is free to choose good or evil without compulsion or necessity, does not tell us a thing. In the first place, man's conception of good and evil changes over night, and, in the second place, freedom is an impossibility, logically. Moreover, to stop at the conception, or the misconception, of free will is merely to touch the surface of things. The supposed free will belongs, we presume, to the self. The logical thing to do, in our opinion, is to survey the hundred million year career of man for the purpose of finding evidences that point at his ownership of free will. We, ourselves, see little difference between the primordial sea animal that, being cast by wind and waves upon the shore, answered the external world by gradually acquiring new organs of respiration, and the individual of today who responds in his particular manner to the surroundings in which he finds himself. In the one case there is question of purely physical reaction, and in the other of mental and moral reaction. Physical evolution has practically ceased, and mental and moral evolution have succeeded the former. The mind and the moral nature have become the successors of the body as the chief expression of the self. But the same method, formerly employed for purposes of body building, is at present employed for purposes of mind- and moral-building. Instead of a shore and the evil air that tended to destroy the creature, life and its conditions act as stimuli upon the individual being. Modern life is the former external world of the purely physical creature. Conditions and circumstances that are new for the individual confront the latter, even as new natural conditions faced the physically evolving creature of a hundred million years ago. And even as the latter reacted upon external stimuli in accordance with the nature of its being, so does man respond to the touch of his surroundings in conformity with what he is. His choice, the nature of which we ascribe to the fact of his possessing free will, is the necessary and inevitable choice of his self. It is a particular self that reacts in a particular manner, corresponding with its own nature, upon certain external stimuli.

The remarks that have here been made eliminate freedom, and apparently make of us children of compulsion. If there be anything that we thoroughly dislike, it certainly is compulsion. We dislike it so thoroughly that we juggle with facts and logic in order to magically supplant it with free will. No matter, however, where

we look in nature, there is always compulsion of some sort to be found. The compulsion in question is not altogether an external one. It is the resultant of external and internal forces. One thing that forcibly guides the individual is his nature, or degree of development. Another is the external world, to the stimuli of which the self is capable of responding. What I am, as a human being, influences my career through life. It shapes my ambitions, it determines my actions, it builds my hopes, it fashions my sorrows, it expresses itself in my good or wicked behavior. But it is the external world that arouses my hopes and ambitions, that calls forth my actions, that awakens my sorrows, and that stimulates me into expressions of good or wicked behavior. In other words, my surroundings stir me into a certain activity, mental, moral, or physical, the nature of which is determined by what I am. If *you* were placed in identical surroundings, you would react upon them in an entirely different manner, because your self differs from mine.

Compulsion underlies all individual activity, because the activity in question is progressive. Were it possible for the individual to choose, in all instances, the supposedly good, individual progress and development would cease. It is not by invariably doing the right thing that we add to our soul and to our intelligence. It is by doing evil, and by suffering the consequences of our choice, that we lose a bit of our former self-centeredness, and that we become a little more universe-conscious. For, no matter what the nature of our evil action may be, it expresses nothing more nor less than the apparent curse of the human race, self-centeredness. Self-centeredness is the one evil in the world, an evil which is the possession of every human being. The individual's degree of self-centeredness determines the nature of his criminal act or that of his immoral behavior. All wickedness and immorality can be traced back to a self that is to a more intense degree aware of its own being than it is of the existence of an external world. The more intensely the individual is wrapped up in self, the more beast-like and brutal his actions are. There is a total lack of consideration for another self, and the desired aim is driven at blindly and ferociously. But the fact that the individual behaves like the beast does not penetrate his consciousness, no more than the beast in the jungle is aware of the fact that it behaves like an animal. A less self-centered individual, however, observing his fellowman's behavior from loftier moral heights, condemns the latter's actions as criminal, and as being to the highest degree immoral. The human race, represent-

ing millions of degrees of self-centeredness, it follows that we are dealing with all sorts of criminal and immoral behavior. Such criminal and immoral acts as fall below the average degrees of intelligence and morality, are repulsive to the whole of humanity, and they are generally punishable by law. The hand of the law is the instrument of a still greater law, the law of cause and effect, which sometimes masquerades under the name, law of compensation.

But the highly universe-conscious persons perceive a great deal of evil and immorality which is beyond the grasp of the man-made law, though it falls, indeed, within the jurisdiction of the law of compensation. They perceive evil which is not perceived by the average person, and which therefore does not exist for the latter. If we were asked to answer the question, What is evil? we should be careful to base our answer on the great fact of individuality. An evil act falls short of fully expressing the degree of development which the individual is on the point of attaining. That which we consider evil at present, was not considered so a thousand years ago, for the simple reason that it reflected the then-existing average degree of development. No one thought very much of quartering criminals, of burning witches, of beheading offenders of the king, of burning so-called heretics at the stake. Such acts became truly evil when progressing humanity outgrew them, and they could no longer be perpetrated without the payment of a severe penalty. At present, there is nothing unnatural, uncommon, or evil in the fact that governments and statesmen scheme to make war. When the average man, however, shall have fully realized that war is immoral, inhuman, and un-Christian, the scheming in question will result in disaster for the schemers.

As far as individual cases are concerned, we should first of all take into consideration what the individual is, that is to say, we should consider what degree of development he has reached, before we exact from him a certain moral behavior. For he will act in accordance with the degree of self-centeredness which is peculiarly his, and which is slowly and gradually being lessened as a result of his very actions. His self, and its expressions, are opposed by his surroundings, as a consequence of which he experiences suffering. That experience, in turn, destroys a little of his original self-centeredness. He becomes to a greater degree world-conscious, and he expresses his newly-acquired world-consciousness in less immoral and ignoble activities. It is clear, therefore, that there are individuals that are incapable of behaving and acting as others do. For

their actions and their behavior do not express other people's degree of development. If all punishment, whether administered through the instrumentality of the law or through that of the law of compensation, were suddenly to cease, humanity and its individuals would continue to behave very much in the same manner in which they are behaving at present. It is impossible for individuals to commit crimes or to perform noble acts that do not express the nature of their particular being. The philosophy which holds that the individual expresses himself in accordance with the nature of his being, may elicit the remark that it is a morally dangerous philosophy, and that it tends to stimulate crime and immorality. But, again, we observe that the individual's moral nature is not moulded by lecture, theory, or sermon. The individual cannot be tempted or taught to be immoral or criminal. If he can, he was potentially an immoral being and a criminal. The self is the sole dictator of a man's activities in life. It is an undeveloped, deeply self-centered being that will and must express itself in more or less criminal and immoral activities. As far as a deeply world-conscious self is concerned, not all the lifted barriers, not all the liberty to act as he pleases, can induce the individual to stoop to crime and immorality.

We have stated that the activity of the individual is progressive, and that, in order to be progressive, it must be of a compulsory nature. Individual progress without compulsion or restriction is hardly thinkable. Either life is aimless and purposeless, and in that case there is no objection to free will, or a definite aim underlies all human activity, and then there cannot be question of free will. Where there is an aim, there are also channels through which the self moves, because it is compelled to move through them. Should it leave the channel for a moment, which it often does when the individual sins and strays from the path of truth in general, the high banks on either side, representing the external world, immediately force it back into the channel. The channels in question lead towards a single, supreme aim. But no one or no thing conspicuously possesses that aim. No external agent *directs* the individual. Although there is question of directivity, the source of the directing influence must be found within existence, itself. Nor was that source at any time created, but it has existed from all eternity because "it is in the nature of things" that it should exist.

Now, the unconscious aim of all human activity is the discovery of the supreme. In that discovery, no possible ambition of the self is realized, but the unutterably divine possibility of the supreme.

becoming conscious of itself becomes a reality. Where there is a supreme, there is also a possibility that the supreme will know that it is. Reality is a sleep, but reality which knows that it is, is a divine dream. Within the very bosom of reality, the dream is eternally born. It is not caused by external agencies, but it is born as a result of the fact that that which is of reality exists within the infinite reality. To that which is of the supreme, an external existence is an inevitable fact, and an illusory world of golden stardust eventually unfurls itself for it. That is the beginning of the dream. In the world of golden stardust, the self—that which is of God—is active, and it experiences. The dream becomes a dream within a dream. The self is gradually emerging from mere existence into conscious existence. Mere existence is far removed from conscious existence, and expresses for the observer an intense degree of self-centeredness. For the creature that represents mere existence, and hardly anything more than mere existence, a very insignificant external world exists. It, itself, exists, but little or nothing exists *for* it. There is hardly question of consciousness of the existence of self, or of consciousness of the existence of anything else. The self is blindly and automatically active, and expresses itself *nolens volens* in accordance with the nature of its being. Conscious existence, however, implies both self-consciousness and consciousness of the existence of an external world. It is as a result of an external world acting as a stimulus upon the self, that the individual becomes self-conscious.

The action of the external world upon the being of man is part of an awakening process. The self gradually ceases to represent mere sleep, mere existence, and commences to dream. It becomes more and more aware of the existence of an external world of not-self, as a result of which the nature of its activities become more and more based on the acknowledgement of the fact that a world of not-self exists. In other words, the awakening self begins to express those things that are generally named, generosity and unselfishness. No person deserves credit for being unselfish. We, average men, instinctively view the unselfish act with awe and admiration, and we are inclined to worship the individual who is thus capable of being unselfish. Being, ourselves, incapable of acting in a like manner, we nevertheless sense the future, the ideal, the higher degree of human development which is to a much greater extent capable of being aware of not-self. The individual, himself, however, cannot help being unselfish. It is a question of necessity.

not one of desire or inclination. He expresses what he is, not what he wants to be. If we could set our minds upon being unselfish, as we set our minds upon making a financial success, credit would be due the individual who, after patient struggle and perseverance, reaches his aim. Unselfishness, however, is spontaneous. It is a particular self's inevitable response to certain stimulating external conditions.

Experience teaches a man to be unselfish, or, rather, it teaches him to be less selfish. History informs us of that fact. Man, viewed in the light of history, is like the seed in the dark soil of barely conscious existence, a seed that pushes its sprout into the light of world-consciousness, and subsequently sends its stem towards heaven and deity. Man's behavior throughout his earthly career reveals his degree of development at the moment. It indicates whether or not God's dream is already maturing. When we say that experience teaches man to be less selfish, we are referring to expressions, not to fundamentals. Experience destroys self-centeredness, and in proportion adds to world-consciousness. And that change in the self expresses itself in less selfish activities. Experience is the suffering resulting from the self's contact with its surroundings. Why suffering? you ask. We answer, because the self blindly travels in the direction indicated by its particular nature. If it were invariably permitted to do so, it would, at the very most, remain the same old self. There would not be any progress or development, and God's dream would be abruptly ended. The external world, however, restricts the movements of the individual. The results are suffering and experience, and the destruction of some of the original self-centeredness. That destruction enables the individual to look into the external world, to ponder over its marvels, and to seek the origin of its being. Self-centeredness and ignorance of the truth are necessarily inevitably associated. God is an unknown and unthought of mystery for the man who is much wrapped up in self.

God's dream is maturing in the individual who is almost completely world-conscious. We do not mean to infer by that statement that the individual is not self-conscious. On the contrary, he is that to the highest possible degree. But he has completely ceased to represent mere existence, an existence that automatically and blindly pushes itself through the universe, unaware of the presence of other creatures and things, and absolutely without a suspicion that a God exists. The mature individual realizes that

the self and deity are one—in essence, of course. That realization cannot but produce a sublime and world-defying inspiration in the individual. The entire universe lies unfolded before him, a golden dream of the self, an instrument that raises the latter to the sublime heights of God Almighty. The activities of busy, seeking, stumbling humanity become pregnant with meaning. Men are seeking, and they know it not, the God of whose divine essence their self is made. The entire unutterably beautiful scheme represents divine being struggling through the darkness of unconsciousness towards the realization that it is. And can we not, even in our present condition of comparative immaturity, for a single moment feel what the mature individual must feel when he contemplates stumbling, sinning and erring humanity? Such a being frowns upon condemnation of one's fellow man. Condemnation of one's fellow expresses the personal and provincial viewpoint, and it reveals the little world-conscious soul. He, the mature man, sees in human beings children that stumble in the half-darkness of dawning understanding. They sin and do evil, each and every one of them. But they pay the penalty for their sins, if not in accordance with the laws of man, then in accordance with those of nature. For each man occasionally pays a penalty for being what he is, pays a price for becoming what he not yet is. Committing evil, or error,—we dislike the word, evil—propels the individual to higher realms of development. Erring is something which each individual of necessity does. There is no question of choice in the matter. When we honestly look into our own soul, and review the things that we have done in a life time, we become convinced that we acted in accordance with law. At present, being a little wiser and better, we may repent of certain actions in the past. Nevertheless, something caused us to act as we did. We were not deliberately wicked, although to our fellow-being such may have seemed to be the case. That "something" was our ignorance, our lack of experience, ultimately, our lack of inner development. In our actions we expressed what we were at the time. Our actions were instrumental in teaching us a lesson, our subsequent suffering added to our soul and to our intelligence. But it was a difficult matter to convince our critics of the fact that we did not deliberately and "willfully miss truth." In vain we appealed to them with the saying of the Master, "He who is without sin, let him cast the first stone." Man, generally speaking, judges not the act, but the actor. He is wrong. An act may be condemned because it falls below the average level of morality, and

in order to prevent the act from recurring, in order to protect society from the stain of crime, the perpetrator of the act should be excluded from society. And a man's actions may not conform with our personal ideas concerning goodness and morality. However, let us condemn the actions, without condemning the actor. For the actor, the heaven-born self, cannot be darkened by act or deed.

Our great failure, in an ethical sense, is our inability to forgive our enemy. The word, enemy, is here used in its widest possible sense. Our enemy is he whose interests oppose our own, and whose thoughts and actions differ widely from ours. Considering, as we generally do, the surface of life, and human expressions, only, being furthermore preponderantly aware of our own notions and interests, we are immediately prepared to condemn and to wage battle as soon as our notions are contradicted, or our interests opposed. The thought of penalty and punishment, the age-old formula of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," are still uppermost in the mind of humanity. It is apparently in vain that Jesus gave this sublime thought to the world: "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do." We do not as yet realize that ignorance lies immediately ahead of each and every individual. Experience which is not yet the possession of the individual, is waiting for him. "The road we are to wander in" is truly "beset with pitfall and with gin." But after climbing out of the pitfall, and after sobering from the effects of the gin, we realize into what sort of trap we fell, and what sort of pleasure we indulged in.