

HIGHWAYS AND BY-WAYS OF MODERN THOUGHT.

By E.K.

Now it came to pass that as the sons of men gazed upon the face of Science¹ they saw that she was very fair to look upon and that her presence was much to be desired and they besought her to pour forth of her treasures that the world might profit thereby. And, lo, she entered into communication with the sons of men and imposed hard tasks which they joyfully fulfilled; indeed, the more difficult the task the more eagerly men came forward to undertake it—even to the laying down of their lives, for Science was very fair to look upon. And as the sons of men passed into her service and beheld the wonders wrought through her (for men acquired mastery over disease, over the air, in the water, yea, even over the wide spaces of silence itself), they grew intoxicated with the magic of her presence and began to lay at her feet the problems of life. “Tell us, O Science, who knowest all, why such and such things should be?” And Science grew sad, for she foresaw that a time would come when men would call upon her in vain for help she knew not how to give. But the world perceived not her sorrow and pressed upon her daily with urgent and yet more urgent claims, and praised her modesty, her humility, and yet would have none of it.

And presently men began to lay at her feet the whole gamut of men’s powers, beseeching her with her magic touch to set them in ordered sequence, for so, said they, will the greatest profit accrue to mankind. But Science wept and said,—“Alas,
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it is not my work. Leave to Philosophy her realm, to Faith hers, to Revelation hers.[sic]² But men were blind and they took Science by force, ignoring her humility, and acclaimed in loud tones that she was Queen of all.

They took her into the realm of History and forgot that man is more than a product of the ages or a tool of circumstance, and sometimes History lost her touch on life. They took her into the realm of Family Life and sometimes forgot that a Person is more than the result of physical causes, surroundings, or even education, and cannot be scheduled. They took her into the realm of Art and sometimes forgot that form and colour need a Pygmalion prayer—(that dexterity of touch and perception of material and colour do not live unless informed by ideas; and ideas, as Pygmalion found, come to birth only as spirit communes with Spirit). They took her into the realm of Philanthropy and sometimes forgot that organisation has no life-giving powers—(that barrack-like model dwellings fitted with large windows, with gas and water laid on, sound walls and stout roofs, do not altogether compensate the tired working mother for long flights of stone stairs and isolation from the social amenities of the more accessible streets—social life shared by the poor and the rich but not within the ken of the middle classes, who in the kindness of their hearts built the well-planned barracks). They took her into Philosophy, and man became “a stream of tendencies” or “states of consciousness.” They even created Psychology, and man was declared to need only environment and the action on him of a stimulating personality to make him a worthy citizen. They passed over Education, who stood aside troubled at the sight of the children’s minds being fed on air, on open spaces, on games, on mental and moral gymnastics, on the personality of the teacher, with never a thought of bread. But Education perceived that her time had not yet come.

The sons of men went even farther afield and took Science into the realm of Religion, and here she availed them not. In vain she pleaded that men would leave her to her own fair dominion. She knew only too well her limitations, that the realms of philosophy, of art, of friendship, of faith, of love, were not hers, that she could not lay her hand upon the mysteries of life and death, of sin, of pain, of authority, of personality. But the sons of men turned a deaf ear.

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So Science sat enthroned while the problems of life were laid at her feet and sat—silent. And men clamoured for help in vain, and waited, and then fell to pondering,—“If Science does not know, how indeed can these things be?”

And upon a day there arose one, bolder than the rest, who roundly declared,—“Since Science cannot find an answer, these problems do not exist, there are no mysteries. There is no sin, no pain, no death, no matter. All is spirit. These are ‘states of error’ to be ‘spiritually overcome.’³ Let us set forth a Science of mental and, as a consequence, physical health.” And Science wept again. For was not matter her special concern?

Now one of the sons of men took pity on her weeping and tried to move his fellows to a sense of knighthood,—“a scientific faith’s absurd,”⁴ cried he. Leave Science to her own fair realm where men can work and serve her, but the things of the spirit are dealt with by the laws of the spirit; those relating to matter by their own laws. But his fellows drowned him with their clamour,—“Science is supreme.” All the same, their faith in her omniscience (which she had not invited) was shaken, and dire were the means resorted to in order to justify their blind acclamation. Science, said they, shall govern by spiritual laws which shall be made by man’s reason. Science *shall* make for the profit and comfort of men even in this realm. And because men were blinded in their devotion to Science they set to work to consider what befitted the profit and comfort of the race, what should bring that ease of mind, that ease of body which should ensure pride of life for all. And each man began to enquire within himself how this might be. And again that bold prophet declared,—“The laws of spiritual life are made already. Why not use them? Hath it not been written,—‘Ye are the light of the world?’” And men said,—“Now we know why Science was silent. She knew man was greater than herself.” So the sons of men found in themselves the supreme power of life. Said they,—“man is sufficient unto himself”; and looking into the laws of the spiritual life they found their own thought reflected,—“I have said, ‘ye are gods’”; “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you”; “Ye shall never taste of death,” and (to the paralytic, “Go and *sin* no more.” And the sons of men exulted, for had

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they not found that they were gods! They did not perceive that it is the function of Reason to prove to the hilt any idea submitted to her. She has no concern with premiss or result.⁵ So having set in order as it pleased them the realm of Science and found their faith in themselves, the sons of men ordered Revelation to disclose herself in terms of matter, and a spiritual state was educed in terms of bricks and mortar and white robes.⁶

But divine discontent still stirred the sons of men, and some in their haste, having cast Science aside, welcomed a voice repeating an old cry,—‘*Experientia docet,*’ and the man in the street concluded that wisdom was the subject taught, not perceiving that experience only teaches *what* it teaches—that fire burns, that dexterity in pocket picking or tight rope dancing

comes with practice, that power lies in an instructed conscience, an understanding mind.

So experience became the watchword, and man conceived that life is action, and the doctrine of the discovery of truth by experience was promulgated, and the sons of men set forth on the highway of experience.

But the span of man's life is short and the art of life is long, and to gain experience man had to take a narrow foot track upon one side or other of the highway of life. So one limited his steps to physical experience and called it life, another to mystical culture and called it life. But the side walk of Sensation led to the so-called "cultivation of the faculties" and to the bondage of the chains of the flesh, the side walk of mystical culture to a vacuum of the spirit. And the mind of man was left "as a steamer's screw 'racing' in the air."

But the mind of man has vital power. "Intuition shall guide us," cried another. Leave intelligence to Science. But what of mind, unfed, left to the powers of the imagination, of spiritual wickedness in high places, and commanded to make bricks without straw?

But there came a day on which the sons of men in their serene pursuit of the fulness of life had not counted. A day of war and not of peace, a day of hate, of strife, of calumny, disorder and terror—a conflagration which threatened that scientific scheme of life on spiritual lines which men were pursuing, and set at naught the accumulated experience of the sons of men.

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And one looked on another and said,—“This is more than Science or Reason or Experience or Intuition could have reckoned with!”

And as the sons of men daily faced death and pain, disease and sin, they forgot that these were, as some would have it, “states of error” to be “spiritually overcome,” nay they even forgot that they were problems. Face to face with them men found that they did not constitute a barrier to fulness of life, nor did they curb the spirit of man; and again the sons of men began to ponder. And, pondering, they remembered the humility of Science, and again pondering, they found that Life herself shone brightest where questions of ease and profit and pride of life did not enter. And, again, they saw that Life shone brightest where humility left no room for thought of self, even of self-cultivation for the profit of mankind. And, still pondering, they found their thoughts reflected,—“He that saveth his life shall lose it.” “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents.” And, lo, it seemed that the sons of men grew strong as they thought not of their own strength and happy when they thought not of themselves, and a light shone upon their faces as they realised that life under “A Beloved Captain” was the life of service to which men were called; that Obedience is an act of strength and not of weakness.⁷ And as men pondered, Faith in a Divine Captain, a Divine Person, stole amongst the ranks and laid her compelling hand here on a raw recruit, here on a straggling deserter, and a voice from the trenches⁸ began to formulate “The Religion of the Inarticulate.”

And men were drawn to perceive that all life is a mystery in whatever way manifested, that mysteries are of daily occurrence; that the mystery of authority, of leadership, of comradeship, of love, is no less wonderful than the seed corn in the ear, the song of a bird, the opening fingers of the beech, a golden chrysalis, and that these are no less wonderful than the life of our Lord itself.

And what of miracles claimed as a *proof* by Christian Science? Our Lord insisted that

miracles were *signs* only of spirit power—signs that He Himself uses as witnesses of the Fatherhood of God, but signs that He also shews may be “works of iniquity.”⁹

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Again, the mysteries of sacrifice, devotion, love and suffering, are no criteria of the cause in which they are performed, for the noble in man is called forth in an unrighteous as in a righteous cause, and the testing of causes is only possible to an *instructed* conscience.¹⁰

And still Science, in her right place, came forward with healing balm for the physical ills which she did not deny, and she smiled to see that some of the sons of men, now in their right mind, had clothed themselves in a garment of humility. Would they now see that it was the apotheosis of Science that had brought this conflagration upon the world, as another conflagration had been caused by the apotheosis of Reason? And the sons of men came to know even more—that as all life is a mystery, Science could never tread the realms where man’s spirit enters into communication with the Spirit of God, that man, as spirit, could communicate with a Master who had created both matter and spirit.

But the conflagration still burned and men hesitated. What of Intuition on the battlefield[sic] And the sons of men perceived that from commander-in-chief to rank and file knowledge must come first,—knowledge garnered by the intellect on which intuition may be based, and that each man must garner for himself. And the sons of men read¹¹ that knowledge must precede all activities of mind, that knowledge is the food upon which these activities grow, that knowledge is received by the spirit of man in contact with the Spirit of God, and is passed from mind to mind as torch lights torch, that all knowledge is brought to man by the Spirit, the Supreme Teacher,¹² —“He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance”; that there is a Christian Philosophy to be found in the words of the Lord of Life on which if a man *wills* to ponder he shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make him free—a free citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven; that it was in the service of the King of the Kingdom the good life was to be lived, not for any idea of individual profit, nor indeed for self-cultivation (the snare of all esoteric cults), even for the benefit of the race. So men turned to this Christian Philosophy set forth in the Gospels and found, not a series of isolated texts to be used in support of any notions,

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often conflicting, but a definite Philosophy covering the whole claims of man, satisfying his desire for truth, his love of knowledge, of service, and offering him for the problems of life a vantage ground from which, for example, both sides of a Don Quixote shield could be seen. And man began to perceive that his business in life was to know and to understand, and he came to see that, standing in the Light, he *could* be the light of the world; that doing the will of the King he could know of the doctrine; that in losing his life for the Truth’s sake he did save it; that death need be no more than a change-house on the way of life. In fact man realised that there was a state in which Truth could be perceived and where he could see through the trite platitudes of the man in the street, who, like Elihu, says things obviously true and as from the rostrum of God Himself, yet whose condemnation is,—“Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?”

And Education saw that at length her time had come and that a Christian Philosophy indicated the ordering of her realm and, waiting upon her, she found that man was able to enter upon his inheritance of knowledge from his earliest years, and that unless he did it he

could not attain to the well furnished mind, instructed conscience and sound judgment worthy of a citizen of the Kingdom.¹³

And the sons of men rejoiced that a way to good citizenship, the discovery of which had been one of their hardest problems, was at length made plain; and in order that Education might lay her hands in blessing on each one of them they studied the laws of the Christian Philosophy which had been set forth to their unheeding minds, and they found the first law set forth was that each son of man was a Person born with a mind, and with all the powers he would need for exercise of good citizenship, but that he lacked knowledge and experience; that Education must take account of all his powers; must realise that all men were born to knowledge, even as Christian Philosophy asserted that every man was born to the true Light.

And Education emerged from the toils of the net cast by Psychology and entered upon her Renaissance,¹⁴ and she called around her the Lords of the Realm, into which man should enter.¹⁵ "Take ye the child of man," said she to Science, "and show him
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of the marvels you have perceived in the treasure-houses of your kingdom. Let him wonder, and answer his own questions." And Science joyfully bent her steps to her rightful task, and man learned to set his observations in ordered sequence and to call things by their names. "And you, O Nature, cast your spell upon him," said Education, "open his eyes that he may see, his ears that he may hear, so shall he gain present joy, and 'beauty born of murmuring sound shall pass into his face,' and for times of stress and trouble his shall be 'the silence and the calm' ... and his 'the healing and the balm of mute insensate things.'"

And to Art, Education said,— "Throw open your doors and let the child of man hear and gaze his fill, for in this realm,— 'God uses us to help each other so, lending our minds out.'"¹⁶ "Let him," said Education, "also enter the realm of Labour that he may learn the dignity of work; and of Physical Energy that his body be serviceable at command."

And to History and Literature, Education committed the child of man with eager solicitude that he might take counsel of Prophet, Priest and King, of hero, traitor, coward and martyr, of holy and humble men of heart, and—of his God, that he might thereby grow in grace and in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

But first of all Religion received commission to open to the child of man a meeting place,¹⁷—

"Where spirit with Spirit could meet;
Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands or feet,"

that from such communion should arise a passionate desire to enter voluntarily the service of his King and to do His will on earth as it is in Heaven.

And at last the sons of men perceived that Education is a life, the art of relationship with the world of nature, with man and with God; and with her hand in that of Christian Philosophy as Dante's in that of Virgil;—Education *is* justified of her children.

¹ "Ordered knowledge of natural phenomena and the relation between them," *Encyclopedia* [sic] *Britannica*.

² See Westcott's *Gospel of Life*.

³ See any Christian Science publication and the Encyclopedia Britannica under the same heading.

⁴ Browning's *Easter Day*.

⁵ *Ourselves, our Souls and Bodies*.

⁶ *Raymond*.

⁷ *Parents and Children*.

⁸ *A Student in Arms*, by Lieut. Hankey.

⁹ St. Matthew VII., 23.

¹⁰ *Ourselves, our Souls and Bodies*.

¹¹ *The Basis of National Strength*.

¹² *School Education*.

¹³ *Some Studies in the Formation of Character*.

¹⁴ *School Education*.

¹⁵ *Ourselves, our Souls and Bodies*.

¹⁶ Browning's *Fra Lippa Lippi*.

¹⁷ *Home Education*.