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THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF ROBERT COLLYER

VOLUME I

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF ROBERT COLLYER

VOLUME I

BOOKS BY

JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

THE REVOLUTIONARY FUNCTION OF THE MODERN CHURCH

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

IS DEATH THE END?

NEW WARS FOR OLD

RELIGION FOR TO-DAY

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF ROBERT COLLYER (2 volumes)

Robert Collyer
1880

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF ROBERT COLLYER

1823-1912

BY

JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

ILLUSTRATED

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I

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TO

ROBERT STAPLES COLLYER

A Beloved Son

"Robin has been my staff and stay"

R. C., in letter (June 14, 1901)

PREFACE

In 1914, I compiled and published a collection of Robert Collyer's lectures, addresses and poems, under the title of "Clear Grit." In the Introduction to this volume, I spoke of "certain lectures of a largely autobiographical character which have been reserved for publication in a later volume."

This statement was the "little acorn" from which grew the "great oak" of this two-volume biography. Dr. Collyer's children had cherished the hope, even before their father's death, that the story of his life might some day be adequately told. The romance of his long career, the greatness of his fame in the days of active service, the benignancy of his presence in old age, the loveliness of his character and influence, all conspired to the creation of such a hope in the hearts of those who knew and loved him most nearly. I shared this hope in the months following his death. It was not until I had read his autobiographical lectures, however, and arranged them for possible publication, that I began to understand how desirable, indeed necessary, was the

fulfilment of this hope. I saw that the proper use for these documents was that of sources for biography; and I laid them one side, with the recommendation that they be reserved for such a purpose. Very shortly after the appearance of "Clear Grit," I was invited by Mr. and Mrs. Robert S. Collyer to undertake the writing of a "Life and Letters," and immediately thereafter entered upon my task.

The materials which I have used in the preparation of this work, may be classified as follows:

(1) Robert Collyer's published autobiography, "Some Memories." This I have used not so much as a source, as a guide through the wilderness of other sources. It has also been invaluable as providing a kind of atmosphere in which to study and write. With the exception of my chapter headings, I have made few quotations from this book. The fact that Dr. Collyer used whole pages of certain of his lectures in the writing of his memories, gives in some places the appearance of quotation. In all such cases, however, I have used the unpublished manuscripts and not the printed volume.

(2) Dr. Collyer's books. A complete list of these is given in the Appendix, Volume II, page 385.

(3) Dr. Collyer's autobiographical lectures,

above referred to. These were prepared for delivery at Sunday evening services in his church, and on the Lyceum platform. The most important for my purposes were "From the Anvil to the Pulpit," "My Mother," "Our Dale," "Charlotte Brontë," "In Autobiography," "Among the Mountains," and "The Fathers of the Church of the Messiah."

(4) Dr. Collyer's letters. Of these by all odds the most valuable were those written through a period of over forty years to the Rev. Flesher Bland, the clergyman under whose immediate influence he was converted to Methodism and began his lay-preaching. Lovely was the friendship between these two men. After Collyer's change from Methodism to Unitarianism, their doctrinal beliefs were far apart, but this mattered not at all. They had found something more precious than theology. From the beginning of the correspondence, as though moved by some intuition of the future, Mr. Bland kept his friend's letters, and they were passed over to me numbered, labelled and beautifully arranged by his own hand.—Another interesting and carefully preserved correspondence is that with Jasper Douthit, of Shelbyville, Illinois. One series of letters, which would have enriched this work beyond all calculation, are those which went

through nearly a half-century to Dr. William Henry Furness, of Philadelphia. Diligent but fruitless search on the part of the Furness family demonstrated that this correspondence had been either destroyed or lost.

(5) Three large scrap-books of newspaper and magazine clippings—one kept through all the years of his own life by Flesher Bland; one kept by Dr. Collyer, or his family, after his arrival in New York; one prepared by a clipping-bureau after his death, composed of the articles and editorials occasioned by this event.

(6) Pamphlets, programmes, leaflets, etc. Of these I would make particular mention of an "Historical Sketch of Unity Church, Chicago," by Samuel S. Greeley; and "Papers Read in the Church of the Messiah," by Robert Collyer and Gilman H. Tucker.

(7) Church records, more especially those of the Church of the Messiah, New York.

(8) Newspapers, magazines, etc., covering periods of Dr. Collyer's life career, and containing articles from his pen.

In using these materials, I have sought to tell a full and well-rounded story. I have made no attempt, however, and spent no time in the endeavour, to hunt down and scrupulously record every smallest detail of Dr. Collyer's life. I feel

reasonably sure that nothing of real importance or interest is omitted from these pages. But my purpose from the beginning has been not to produce a chronicle of events, but to reproduce the personality of a man. I have set in order the narrative as it has revealed itself in the documents placed abundantly and easily at my disposal, but never for its own sake. This I have done rather for the sake of providing a proper framework or background for a personal portrait. The character and not the plot has been the great thing. It is this which has dictated the very liberal use which I have made of Dr. Collyer's autobiographical lectures in the first part of the work, and his letters in the last part. Such use is eminently wise in any biography, but pre-eminently so in a biography of a man like Dr. Collyer, whose every word was pregnant with personality. He could not thank a person for a gift, or state the condition of the weather, without producing a document which was redolent of his spirit, and therefore uniquely and beautifully his own. If any thanks are due to me for the writing of this book, I know that it will be because I have availed myself of every opportunity for letting Robert Collyer speak for himself and thus reveal the fibre of his soul.

For assistance in this work, my thanks are due

to many persons. First of all, of course, are those who have placed their precious Collyer letters in my hands, and patiently allowed them to remain there for a somewhat prolonged period of time; and others who have sent me clippings, documents, reminiscences, statements of personal fact, etc. I should like nothing better than to name here these good friends who have thus co-operated with me in my task, but an entire page of this text would not suffice to name them all, nor the most conscientious care, I fear, to make the list complete. These must find such reward as they can in the book itself. Certain persons, however, must be named—Dr. Jenkin Lloyd Jones and Rev. Frederick V. Hawley, of Chicago, and Charles W. Wendte, of Boston, for assistance in finding indispensable documents; Salem Bland, for free use of the priceless material collected by his father; Samuel Collyer, for a highly useful collection of newspaper clippings, and an important personal statement; Mrs. John E. Roberts, for long and arduous labour in classifying and annotating letters for my use; Miss Mary C. Baker, my secretary, for unceasing watchfulness in the care, disposal and arrangement of all material; and Mr. and Mrs. Robert S. Collyer, for inviting me to undertake this work, for reading and criticising every page as

it has been written, for giving me invaluable suggestion, advice and information, and for sustaining me throughout what has inevitably been a trying task with their affection and their trust. Lastly, I would mention one other to whom I am peculiarly indebted—a friend beloved and honoured, who for a period of weeks placed at my disposal the resources of her home, in the quiet seclusion of which a large portion of my work was done.

The writing of this book has been a labour of love. For five years and a half, it was my privilege to know Robert Collyer as his associate in the ministry of the Church of the Messiah. In the intimate personal relationship of this office, he was my colleague, my friend, my brother, my father in the spirit. In my perplexities he counselled me, in my sorrows comforted me, in my weaknesses strengthened me, in moments of peril saved me, and beyond all my poor deserts blessed me with his confidence and love. I know full well how impossible it is for me to repay the debt I owe to him. But the preparation of this book has made it possible for me to make some return, and such as it is, I have given it with joy. It is my one regret that I have been able to bring so little to so noble a task. If devotion and high resolve were enough, they have not been lacking.

But along with these should go other qualities, needless to mention, which I have no right to claim. Especially have I been poor in the important matter of time. For three full years this book has been upon my desk, and to it I would gladly have given every moment of these years. But the crowded conditions of my profession have allowed but stray and fragmentary hours. Nothing that I have had, however, of ability and time, as well as of love, has been kept back; and no worshipper ever laid offerings upon an altar with greater joy, than I have here bestowed these petty gifts of mine.

If I have brought little to this book, however, it has brought much to me. It has disciplined me to the doing of arduous work. It has lifted me to the dignity of noble purpose. It has restored to me the sweet companionship of a rare and radiant spirit. It has given me friends whom I would not otherwise have known. And amid the agony and terror of an age of war, it has offered a quiet shrine where I have held converse with things good and beautiful, and thus restored my soul. No one knows so well as I, how this book has enriched my life. But I feel poor as I write this final word and lay down my pen.

J. H. H.

August 1, 1917.

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INTRODUCTION

THE life of Robert Collyer spanned the period of ninety years (1823-1912), from the third decade of the nineteenth century to the second decade of the twentieth. It witnessed the industrial transformation of our civilisation, the tidal flow of foreign immigration into the United States, the battle against southern slavery, the scientific and philosophical upheaval consequent upon the work of Darwin, Spencer and their evolutionary confrères, the literary awakening of the Victorian epoch in England and the Transcendental epoch in America, the building of transcontinental railroads and the winning of the West, the appearance of socialism and the world-wide movement for social change, and the marshalling of political and military forces for the great war now raging in all quarters of the globe. Neither in thought nor in action did Collyer influence in more than slight degree the determining forces of his time; only in the Civil War was he a part of great events, and only on the occasion of the Chicago fire did he win universal fame. His career, however, caught with peculiar

clearness and beauty the reflection of many of these stupendous phenomena, and thus was a supremely characteristic product, of his age. To know Robert Collyer is to know much that is most inspiring and lovely in the English-speaking world of the last century.

Collyer's life was set in two countries, England and America. Four scenes constitute the background of his activities. First (1823-1850) Yorkshire in the English midlands, with its moors and dales, ugly manufacturing villages, wholesome peasantry, its poverty, struggle and romance. Next (1850-1859) Pennsylvania, with its pleasant farm lands, fragrant orchards, early industrial ambitions, and Philadelphia on the near horizon. Then (1859-1879) Chicago, in the years of its marvellous growth from a sprawling frontier settlement to the second city and first railroad centre of the land. And lastly (1879-1912) New York, where a serene old age contrasted strangely with the strenuous and heartless vigour of a vast metropolis. From the beginning to the end of his days, Robert Collyer's magic charm of personality was a potent factor in his career; the popular apprentice in Ilkley was true father to the loved and venerated preacher in Manhattan. But it was only in Chicago that he entered upon the work which brought him happiness and

power, and there that he attained the zenith of his fame.

The more intimate settings of Collyer's life are as numerous as they are varied. The little stone cottage in Washburndale; the Blubberhouses factory, with its clanging bell and huddled horde of child labourers; the smithy in Ilkley, by the Wharfe; Denton Moor, with its mists and sunshine, and autumn waves of purple heather; the Methodist chapel in Addingham; the emigrant ship on the broad and stormy expanse of the Atlantic; the forge at Shoemakertown, the churches on the district circuit, and the library at Hatboro; Chicago, with its teeming industry and swelling tides of population; the camps and battle-fields and prison-pens of the Civil War; Unity Church, the glory of Christian liberalism in the Middle West; and as at first a pinnacle of achievement and then a haven of rest, the Church of the Messiah in New York—these are the places to which the romance of his career conducts us one by one. To those who know this romance, successive pictures arise in inward vision—the eager youngster romping over the moors in search of birds' nests and flowers, or listening to the chimes of Haworth church, or reading the tattered pages of "Dick Whittington"; the fettered boy, toiling before the spinning frames till the back bent and

the heart was well-nigh broken; the lusty blacksmith, smiting the hot iron on the ringing anvil; the lay preacher, pouring out to Yorkshire yeomen or Pennsylvania artisans the gospel of his spirit's life; the emigrant, coming alone and fearful to an unknown land; the tender nurse at Donelson and Pittsburg Landing; the famous preacher and lyceum lecturer, sought and loved of thousands throughout the land; the hero of the great fire, proclaiming the word of hope from the smoking ruins of his church; the beautiful old man, with locks of snow and smile of sunshine, reaping the rich harvest of his sowing. What a panorama of virtue and achievement it is! A life of such colour, warmth, fragrance, struggle, joy, disaster, victory, rich accomplishment and rich reward, as few men in this or any time have ever lived!

The characters that play with Robert Collyer the drama of his days are of almost uniform attractiveness and worth. The silent, honest, tough-sinewed father; the mother, rare specimen of strong and tender womanhood; Will Hardy, stern teacher of rebellious youth and merry fiddler withal for a night's dancing at the inn; John Dobson, wool-comber, lover of books and men, and feeder of one poor famished soul; Harriett Watson, the first love, a dim but infinitely lovely

vision appearing for a moment on the scene, and then gone; Ann Armitage, staunch companion of forty years, faithful alike in vicissitude and triumph; children five, and then in due season troops of grandchildren; Flesher Bland, circuit preacher, winner of souls, and friend to Collyer, as Jonathan to David, through more than a half-century of time; the associates of fame—Emerson, Longfellow, Thoreau, Mrs. Gaskell, Peter Cooper; the thronging parishioners of Unity and the Messiah; and that group of homely Yorkshire folk, to whom Collyer returned again and again through the mounting years, and who gathered him each time to their bosoms with fresh affection and ever waxing pride. A noble company—worthy of a romance even more heroic, if not more lovely, than this of one great son of Yorkshire. They rise as figures of a novel, become as friends to our own hearts, and pass as those who are mourned and not forgotten.

And in all, through all, over all—Robert Collyer! His stalwart and handsome person—his courage, simplicity, and tender grace—his words of cheer and faith—his enthusiasm and frank good humour—his love of flowers and birds and little children—his devotion to men and noble causes—his atmosphere of open spaces, running waters and sunny skies—his poetry and song—

his fondness for books, and sympathy with all sorts and conditions of men—his crushing sorrows and benign old age—the whole romance of his pilgrimage from boyhood's poverty to manhood's fame—above all, his own natural and simple human self! This is the man, whom all loved when he was present; and now that he is gone, would hear his tale, that they may take from it both profit and example. Many are the men who were more richly endowed in native faculty than Robert Collyer; numberless are those who were blessed with favours of worldly training and advantage which he never knew. But there are few who have lived as beautifully as he, taught truth and right as winsomely, and lived and served the race with as cheerful a courage and as sublime a faith. The story of this long life is a narrative of events, for Collyer's days were full of drama and romance; but more and better than this, it is a revelation of personality. Robert Collyer was at various times a "doffer," a blacksmith, a preacher, a lecturer, an author, a public leader, but always was he a radiant spirit, full of grace and truth, touched with the potency of love. Therefore does his tale escape the narrow confines of time and place. It takes on a universal quality and suggests eternal things. It becomes as a legend which lives in men's hearts

forever, not as a story but as a symbol. God was in him, and his life therefore of God.

"Draw, if thou canst, the mystic line,
Severing rightly his from thine,
Which is human, which divine."

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF ROBERT COLLYER

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF ROBERT COLLYER

CHAPTER I

WELL-BORN

1823

"We have no family tree to speak of, only this low bush." R. C. in "Some Memories," page 2.

"THERE are three things we must count on as of the finest worth in our life—I, That we shall be well born, II, That we shall be well raised, and III, That we shall do our best in the work we have to do in this world. And shall I not add this fourth to crown the three; that we shall seek help from God, but for which help our life and work may be after all a crop of sand."

Thus does Robert Collyer speak in an opening paragraph of his autobiographical lecture, "From the Anvil to the Pulpit." That he could "fairly claim" to be "well born," and thus to fulfil "one great condition of success in life," was

his reiterated and proud assertion. This claim was based first of all on the fact that he was an Englishman. "There has never been a moment in the twenty-one years that I have been absent from this land," was his declaration in London, in 1871, at the forty-sixth anniversary of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, "when it has not been one of the fondest recollections and convictions that I came of this grand old English stock." More particularly, however, did this claim refer to the quality of the stock from which he sprang. He could not claim this pride of birth "in the way some fine old families claim it in the old world and the new," for he counted no ancestors of princely blood, and cherished no monuments of by-gone dignity and prowess. He could not even claim the kind of noble heritage which René Vallery-Radot had in mind when he declared, in his "The Life of Pasteur," that "the origin of the humblest families can be traced back by persevering search through the ancient parochial registers."[1] This fact of lineage may be true in France, where peasant life has preserved a unique type of indigenous individuality, but it is certainly not true in England in our own, or in an elder, day. "We can only go back," said Dr. Collyer, "to our grand-

[1] Volume I, page 1.

fathers on both sides of the house." And what was true of this family must have been true of many another, as for example that of Sydney Smith, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

If the history of the Collyer clan can be said to have any definite beginning, it is in the industrial revolution which marks with a glory, only surpassed by its indescribable shame, the era immediately following the downfall of the first Napoleon. It was at this time, when England's hands were free from foreign wars for activity in domestic undertakings, that the uses of power machinery were developed on a vast scale, and factories built on every available site throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles. This resulted in an imperative demand for men, women, and even children, to operate the wonderful new machines in the mills; and nowhere, in the Ridings of Yorkshire or elsewhere, did the local supply of labour begin to satisfy the needs of the situation. Therefore the owners of the factories, with the permission if not the actual encouragement of the government, went scouring through the country-sides, the slums of the cities, and especially the workhouses of the kingdom, for boys and girls; and these they were allowed to take and hold as ap-

prentices—the boys until they were twenty-one, and the girls until they were eighteen, years of age, on condition that they provided their wards with food and shelter, instructed them in the three R's, and taught the boys a trade by which they could support themselves after their release from servitude.

It was under the impulse of this industrial revival that Messrs. Colbeck and Wilks built a factory at Blubberhouses, a small village, or series of villages, on a stream called the Washburn, in the parish of Fewston, some ten miles across the moors from the Yorkshire town of Ilkley. Searching the workhouses of the great cities for children to yoke to the spinning frames, these manufacturers found Samuel Collyer in London, and Harriett Norman in "the ancient city of Norwich," and brought them north. Both were young, the boy ten, and the girl nine years of age. The former, however, had already made himself so useful in the workhouse, that the officers were loath to let him depart; and so surely did he display his cleverness and adaptability in the cotton mill at Blubberhouses, that he soon became known as "the chap" to handle whatever chance job needed to be done. In accordance with the regulations of the time, he was set to learn the trade of blacksmith. John Birch, who

had his forge inside the factory, and was tenderly remembered in after years as a kind-hearted fellow who always had a scrap of food in his can at noon-tide for "Little Sam," was his master; and under his skilful direction, the lad's progress was rapid.

In such a place and under such influences, the boy, Samuel, and the girl, Harriett, grew up side by side. And "it came to pass," says the Doctor, "that in due time they fell in love with each other"; "in due time" also, in January, 1823, they were married.[2] Two miles they trudged together to Fewston church, when the snow was so heavy upon the ground that in places they had to walk on the top of the stone walls; and two miles they trudged back after the parish priest had made them one. Under these circumstances, and in view of the fact that young Samuel dearly loved a drop of beer and his pipe, it is not to be wondered at that the "lad and lassie" stopped at the Hopper Lane Hotel on their return to Blubberhouses, and took a "drop o' summat warm." A few days later, in consequence of a dispute as to wages, the newly-wedded pair removed to Keighley, where Collyer had

[2] Harriett's second marriage. Her first husband, named Wells, had been a close friend of Samuel Collyer. The three had grown up from childhood together.

found work in Hattersley's machine shop at an advance in salary. And it was in this town, on December 8th, 1823, that Robert, the first child of Samuel and Harriett, was born.

It was as the offspring of these two orphaned factory-hands that Robert Collyer proclaimed himself "well born." "What I mean by being well born is this," he said, "that my father was one of the most healthful men I have ever known, and my mother was one of the most healthful women." "This they had in common, they were as free from contagion and infections as the stars. The most woful fevers would break out in the cottages all about us, and our neighbours and their children would die of them, but my folks were always on hand to help them, going and coming as the sunshine goes and comes, and taking no special precautions to guard themselves against the peril, yet they never caught a fever, nor did any of their children, or felt, so far as I remember, the slightest fear. So this is how I come at the guess that we were well born, my father and my mother were both so healthy." . . . "In taking good care of themselves before I was born," said the Doctor once, "they are taking good care of me still, and have been through all these years."

Samuel Collyer, the father, born on the 27th

of March, 1797, the same day and the same year as the Emperor William of Prussia, was the son of one Robert, a sailor in Lord Nelson's fleet. "My father would tell me," writes the grandson, "how he sat on his shoulder to see the procession when the dust of the great Admiral was brought up the Thames for burial in St. Paul's. But not long after this my grandsire, going to sea again, went overboard one wild night in a great storm." "My grandmother died soon after, leaving a family of, I think, five children, who were taken to an asylum in the City of London for shelter and nurture."

"My father's eyes were brown," continues the Doctor, in one of his autobiographical fragments, "and were full of a steadfast strength." He was an active, able, strangely silent man—a blacksmith by trade, as we have seen, and "as good a blacksmith," says the son, "as I ever knew, a man who would forge no lie in iron or steel. But he had no other especial faculty I can remember now, except that of striking the tune in the old meeting house on the hill, and even then you were not quite sure what the tune would prove to be until he got to the end of the first line." He had very little education, but he could write, as is attested by his signature in the parish register in the Fewston church, and he could read

well enough to read the Bible not too haltingly to a Sunday-school class of which he was teacher. He was a strong, tough-sinewed man, and yet gentle withal in a day when roughness and even brutality were common enough. "The kindest heart that ever beat was my father's," said Dr. Collyer in after years. "He never thrashed me but once, and that was for striking my sister, and then he cried, begged my pardon, gave me a sixpence and took me to a grand 'tuck out' at a club dinner, which was so good that I would have taken another thrashing for the like." Another memory was of his father's fondness for taking long walks with the children over the moorlands on Sunday afternoons. A hard-working man all his days, he died suddenly while he was toiling at his anvil on a blazing July day in 1844.

Robert Collyer's mother, like his father, was also the child of a sailor. This grandsire's name was Thomas Norman, "so we may, perhaps, date from the Conquest too!" "His ship went down in a storm with all on board"; and his children, like those of the elder Collyer, found their way in due season to the workhouse.

The daughter, Harriett, according to all accounts, was a remarkable woman.[3] Certainly

[3] Dr. Henry W. Bellows, for many years minister of All Souls Church in New York, met Dr. Collyer on the street just after his

"My Mother"—R. C.
From a Photograph of Harriett Collyer taken shortly before her death in 1874

her eldest son sang her praises early and late in words which did no less honour to his filial piety than to her maternal glory. "My mother," he wrote, "was a woman of such a splendid make and quality, that I still wonder whether she had ever failed in anything she set out to do. I believe if she had been ordered to take charge of a 70-gun ship and carry it through a battle, she would have done it. While in her good heart were wells of humour blended of laughter and tears, so that when the spirit moved (her) the tears would stream down her face—and a deep abiding tenderness, like that of the saints."

While the father "was of a dark complexion," the mother "was a blonde." "My mother's eyes were blue, blended of grey, and could snap fire when they must do so and make things boom, while the family nose jutted out well and strong." In a charming lecture entitled "My Mother," Dr. Collyer draws a picture of his mother as he recalled her from his early childhood days in the Yorkshire home. "A woman with flaxen hair and blue eyes; tall to the child's sight and full-chested, with a damask rose bloom mantling her face; a step like a deer for lightness and strength, so that in middle age she could walk her twenty

return from a visit to England. "Ah, Robert," he said, "now I know where you get your outfit. I saw your mother in Leeds."

miles in a day over the hills to the great town of Leeds; a laugh which is still like music to me, with a contagion of laughter in it which would start the whole household—the glance of a poet into the heart of the house beautiful all about her, and within all a deep abiding tenderness ready to spring forth as her crown and glory. . . . And she had also such a genius for doing well what she must take in hand that I think still if it had fallen to her lot and her training to govern a kingdom she would have made a noble queen and governed it well, while what she did govern well was the house full of eager and outbreaking children with a good deal of the Berseker blood in them as I have reason to suspect—keeping us all well in hand and clearing the way for us into the world's great life when the time came to go forth; seeing to it that we were well housed, well fed and well clad for weekday and Sunday, while the school wage was paid for us, so long as we could be spared to go there, out of the 18 shillings a week my father earned in those days at the anvil."

A masterful woman in all things practical! "But she had in her, also, wells of poesy," and the deeper and truer sensibilities of religion. "I can remember," says Dr. Collyer, "a dispute I held once with a small maiden who lived next

door, over the rank and station of our families, when she said, 'But we are religious,' and I took a back seat, for her father was a deacon, and we were not religious in that way. But no profane word was ever spoken in the house or learnt out of doors. Mother's training in this, as in much beside, was so perfect that I think it was not until I became a minister that I could freely use the most sacred name, while I still balk at such words as hell, the devil, the infernal. And two things especially Mother held sacred among many. The day comes back to me when her face grew stern and her voice deep with rebuke. It was when one of us had thrown a stray leaf from some old Bible into the fire; and another day when in some petulant moment I threw a hard crust of bread into the fire. The Bible and bread were among her most sacred things, and I think salt was one also; we must never waste salt.

"And the day came in my mother's long widowhood," continues the Doctor, "when the dear old heart found rest in the Baptist fold in which she died. But when I went over the first time (on a visit from America) I was a minister in a denomination far from her own. I must also preach at our great church at Leeds where her home was. So she must needs go and hear what I had to say. And after the service, as she

walked home leaning on my arm, she said softly, 'My lad, I didn't quite understand thy sermon, and I think I could not believe thy way if I had understood it. But then,' giving my arm a warm, close pressure, she concluded, 'I want thee to feel sure, my lad, that I believe in thee.'

"Well, this was the secret of Mother's influence toward these higher things. She believed in her children, and gave her life for them all radiant with her love, held the small house sacred for us, and filled it with such good cheer as she could compass, for the heart as for all the rest."

A final picture of this adored parent is given by the Doctor in an account of his first visit to England from America, referred to above. "I went over after an absence of fifteen years," he says, "to see my mother. She was sitting in the old rocking chair where she had nursed all her children, but could not rise at once, because the sudden shock of her joy held her there some moments, and the years had wrought such a change in me that she looked up with a touch of wonder; but when I said 'Mother,' she held out her arms and cried, 'My lad, I didn't know thy face, but I know thy voice.'" This was in 1865. They met once again on a later visit to the old country —in 1871. She died in July, 1874.

Such was Robert Collyer's mother—a woman

at once strong and tender, like the son whom she brought forth. She was unquestionably the dominant element in the union of husband and wife, and therefore the determining influence in the life of her offspring—"the better half," certainly, "in those finer powers on which the children have to draw for their chance in life." Lack of education—her "mark" in the parish register at Fewston would seem to indicate that she could not write, at least in her early days—seems never to have hampered her; character in her walk of life and field of action was an all-sufficient substitute for learning. "When my father wanted a wife," says the Doctor, summing up the relationship with rare humour and understanding, "he didn't want a wax doll. He wanted a woman who would take care of him and make him toe the mark, which he did like a good fellow to the end of his life, and never suspected he was not at the head of that concern; and so I feel very much obliged to him for giving me my mother, though I suspect he would have had no great choice if she had first made up her mind to marry him, and I am not sure that this was not the way the thing was done.

"When these two were made one all those years ago, their life was clear from what we call now the curse of heredity. So here I was in the world, *well born.*"

CHAPTER II

WELL-RAISED
1823-1831

> "When I ask how it has come to pass that I have 'wagged my jaw in a poopit' in some sort these fifty-five years—my good home training, I say."—R. C. in "Some Memories," page 8.

Samuel and Harriett Collyer did not long remain in Keighley. Within a month after the birth of Robert, the dispute as to wages had been settled, the love of "the old place" had reasserted itself, and the young father and mother, with their first-born warmly clad against the wintry blasts, were trudging back over the moors to Blubberhouses. Here in the Fewston parish church, on January 29, 1824, the new baby was christened by the vicar, Mr. Ramshaw, at a baptismal font which is still standing and doing service; and here in Westhouse, in "a cottage of two rooms and an attic, looking right into the eye of the sun, and away to the westward over the great purple moors," he lived and was "well raised" during the next fourteen years.

The Yorkshire district in which Robert Collyer was born and reared, and "every mile" of which became in time "familiar" to him, was a land of unusual natural features, and "sown thick with interest" of an historical and literary character. On the piles of crags which dot the landscape here and there, may be seen "the curious figures of the cup and ring you find in the rocks in Central America, in the heart of Africa, in India, and in old Scandinavia, the symbols of a religion . . . the most primitive of the human race." On these same rocks are signs which indicate that "they were the high places of the Druids whom Cæsar found when he came to conquer Britain." Records of this invasion are not lacking. "They dig up Roman grave stones and altars," writes the Doctor, "with inscriptions to the local deities and the half-deified emperors"; and he adds that "the foundations of (Roman) dwellings in my own town were visible within a century." "The Saxons followed the Romans"; and in 626 came a Christian missionary, Paulinus, of whom the three curiously carved crosses, now standing in the Ilkley church-yard, are a permanent memorial.

From these early times, the currents of English history ebbed and flowed through this ancient district, leaving ineffaceable traces of their passage.

Here are venerable homesteads, "the same sort of place, with the exception perhaps of a chimney, that they had in the days of King Alfred," and inhabited by people "who live on the lands where their fathers lived probably before the Conquest and who can be traced by the records through 700 years." Here are the tracks of the Percys and Cliffords, who came and went on forays or in the chase. Here is Townton field, where was fought on Palm Sunday, 1461, "the last great struggle between the white rose of York and the red rose of Lancaster," and "no noise of battle was heard in the little church of Saxton, three or four miles on one side of the fatal field." And here, in a later and no less tragic age, battled the Cavaliers and Puritans, with one old mansion at least still showing the secret chambers where were hidden away the priests who fled the Roundheads of Cromwell.

Two episodes of local history bind this district to America. "The Town (of Ilkley)," writes Dr. Collyer, "lies very sweetly in the lap of the dale, close to the river, with a wild confusion of rocks to the south, and to the north the grand old woods. And who think you should nestle in there time out of mind but our own Longfellows. They are there in crabbed Latin when the oldest register was started in 1580, I think; and before

this, John Longfellow, a labouring man, in 1523 gives two days' wages to the king to prosecute the war with France, and his two days' wages are four pence, or eight cents, which reckoned in the money of our time would not be quite a dollar. Some paid the subsidy and some did not—it was rather a matter of option. But not with John Longfellow, who no doubt had the old Saxon peasant's ever smouldering wrath in him against the French. . . . They linger long in the town, but there is none there now; the branch, or root rather, that was transplated to the new world, left early and stayed in a little town hard by perhaps 100 years, and then came over here to give us our great poet.

"Then our dale throws out another strand which winds about a life of the deepest interest to us, the life of Washington. This strand is spun by the Fairfax family, who for many hundred years lived only a mile away from the humble nest of the Longfellows, in a grand old place across the river. . . . I know no other house to set beside it anywhere; all the ways are thronged with men on errands of life and death. . . . Black Tom Fairfax (was) the great rose diamond in the crown of their glory, the best fighter and most potent general after Cromwell in the strife between the people and the crown. . . .

He starved the Cavaliers out of their holdings, and cleared the north and held it with the yeomen and clothiers at his back, until Cromwell began to lead and govern." Nor should Edward Fairfax, "who translated Tasso (the best ever made)," be forgotten.

"And so who shall say," exclaims the Doctor, "that our quiet dale, hidden among the moors for so many ages, does not catch a fine lustre at last, and take its place in the history of the grand old mother land!" And who shall say that the story of this loyal son of the dale, who tells these tales of other days with such delight, does not add to their "fine lustre," and bind with still another strand the Yorkshire country to America!

More important, however, for our purposes, than historical associations, are the natural features of this district in which Robert Collyer spent his early years. These have been made more or less familiar to readers of English literature by the life and writings of Charlotte Brontë. "The land which was so familiar to her," says the Doctor, "was familiar to me. The bells in our churches rang over the wild moors together, through the same summer sunshine and winter storm. We saw the same bracken brighten in the glens that were so glorious in her eyes, and the same starry flowers spangle the

pastures. But her father never came to our church to preach in my time, nor was the family known among us, and the little town of Haworth lay so far away, near as it was, and was withal so desolate in those days and hard to live in, that I remember it only through seeing it there on the cold shoulder of the hill, and hearing the sweet jangle of the bells smiting through the still sunshine, as I sat reading or musing among the heather. All you had to do was to climb the hill above my home and then the music so sweet when you hear it through the far distances would melt and blend where you stood, while you could easily see the square black tower of the church of which her father was vicar standing up against the moors and the sky.

"A dale is a low place between hills, Dr. Johnson says; but you would say, if you saw one, it is a sort of civilised and humanised canyon, civilised by nature, for the dales are not so savage as canyons, and humanised because those who have lived in them time out of mind, have managed to sow them thick with the lights and shadows of our human life.

"And they are to be found under this name only in the north of England, where a great deal of the land is taken up by wild moors that lift themselves from 1,000 to 3,000 feet above the sea,

sweeping away into the blue distance like rough rolling prairies. These moors are covered with heather, a sort of low brush touched with green in the spring, and in the summer all purple with blossom, so that the moors seem to reflect the blueness of the sky; while here and there you come to masses of grey crag that look in the far distance like the ruins of old fortresses piled against the heavens in the days when there were giants on the earth. . . . The grouse live on (these moors), . . . a small breed of sheep very good to eat when they are young, and bees which gather honey of an exquisite flavour from the heather.

"Running through the moors from the high lands in the west eastward, you find these dales, deep grooves cut by the action of the water through a time of which we can form no conception. They are quite narrow where the rivers rise, and entirely true to Wordsworth's lines about them—

> 'Yorkshire dales
> Among the rocks and winding scaurs
> Where deep and low the hamlets lie
> Each with their little patch of sky
> And little lot of stars.'

But they open out wide and fair to the sun as they sweep eastward, and then, as it seems to me,

nothing can be more lovely. The snow-drops appear in the warm nooks sooner than they do here in the sunny corners on the Hudson. On the slopes stand great woods, with oaks in them that may have seen the Crusaders, and these woods all summer long are as full of singing birds as they can hold. The black bird will whistle to you from the thorn, and the throstle from the crab tree, and the sky lark will rain down melody on you from the white clouds as if it was a bird singing in paradise, so wonderfully do his showers of music fall from the tiny speck between your eyes and the infinite deep blue, while the swallow will chirp from the thatch of the cottage, and the jackdaw squawk from the old castle wall, and about this time the cuckoo will hide in the coverts and sound his curious note.

"To me, you may be sure, it is a lovely land. And yet about as wild as you would wish to see, and as desolate. . . . Tourists go there only in the summer and see the landscape touched with the lively greys and decked in purple and gold; but there is another sight they never see and that is the long dreary fall and winter. About the end of September the skies grow heavy with fogs and mists that linger until January, and through the most of these weeks this fog and mist lies on the land like a vast sombre blanket which pre-

vents the smoke from rising above the forges and factories, until it lies so thick sometimes that my mother used to say you could cut it with a knife. You can always make sure of about three months of this weather, and then three months of winter, with but very little of the clear and deep splendour which makes the winters so welcome to the strong and warm-blooded over here. . . . And then after the winter comes the spring when through March and April the east wind sweeps in from Russia in a way which would make those who live in Boston think their east wind was hardly more than a summer zephyr. The poor folks who have to face this wind have a rhyme about it—

> 'When the wind is in the east,
> It's neither good for man nor beast.'

It is such a wind as the prophet must have had in his mind, one thinks, when he said, 'the Lord stayeth his strong wind in the day of his east wind,' as if he thought that even the divinest grace a man can attain to would be lost out of him if he had to stand such a wind when it blew up a hurricane. . . .

"Then there is the rain! For, catching the vapours alike from the German Ocean and the Irish Sea, these hills and moors distil the rains

so as to make you feel it will never stop raining, and so far you are seldom at fault in your judgment. The long days of clear sunshine we have over here, when the atmosphere quivers with the sun's splendour, are very seldom seen in my dale. The most bitter trials of my boyhood were the wet days. The good mother would say, You can make such a visit if it is a fine day, but it seems to me now it never was a fine day by any accident. Talk about the laws of rain and sunshine! There are no such laws in the dales, only of rain, rain driving over the hills, rain sweeping down the valleys, a bit of sunshine now and then, and then more rain. But then when you do get a day or a week of clear sunshine, you know how to value it. You feel as though you were looking right into heaven, the air dances and quivers on the moors like a vast translucent sea, the green mosses at your feet are softer than all tapestry, the meadows and pastures are a wonder of the loveliest greenery, the hedge rows foam with wild blossoms, and in the barest reaches the gorse blooms into a golden glory. . . .

"And that is my dale! River and meadows, grand old woods and pastures, old stone bridges which in my day it would almost break the heart of a horse to cross with a load, so steep they were up to the centre, old halls and castles and church

towers and cottages that reach back to the times of the Saxons, all threaded through and through with stretches of road the Romans made."

Not less interesting than the land were the people on the land. The peasant's cottage was "a place usually of four rooms, but often also of two, built of grey stone that defies all weathers, and covered with thatch instead of shingles. . . . The floors are not boarded, but covered with great flags, and these with fine sand for a carpet. The walls are white-washed once a year by the women, never by the men. A rude picture or two is on the walls, a great rack for the pewter dishes and willow ware . . . a settee of black oak and a chair to match of a fearful discomfort with rude carvings and a date which may be of the time of Elizabeth or James, an open fire always, for stoves are not known, a great rack above you for oaten bread, and the meats for steady use are hung from the beams.

"Let us go in," continues Dr. Collyer, "and see an old friend of mine, who is now in his 90th year! His dress you will notice is the Saxon peasant's dress with but little alteration. Hear the old gentleman talk and they would probably understand him better in Denmark than you will. . . . When (he) dies, he will give commandment concerning his bones, and have everything done

after the old fashion. . . . He will leave orders for plenty of spiced bread to be made, and cut in great wedges from the loaf, and plenty of spiced ale to be served round in the old silver tankards, and everybody will be expected to enjoy himself, and this they will do who are not very near of kin to him, for this is the last long lingering echo and refrain from the funeral feasts of the pagans a thousand years ago. If it is winter, there will be no flowers, only sprigs of evergreen, but if it is summer, they will deck his shroud as they did in Shakespeare's day with rosemary and pansies, violets and sweet thyme, and rue and columbines and daisies. And as they bear him away to the burial, the old neighbours and friends will sing old funeral chants as they go through the lanes that Job might have written and Jeremiah set to music, they are so doleful.

"This is the daleman of the old sturdy breed who still lingers in the more secluded nooks, and clings to the ancient ways. He mows his grain with the scythe, and reaps his grain with the sickle, and all modern inventions are an abomination. . . . He never saw a steamboat, and he hates the French though he could not tell you why. . . . He is as honest as the day, but he has steadily killed the game when he got his chance, because that was what the Norman took

from him, and he will have it back. He brews his own beer and makes his own mead. He covers the little mirror when one of his family dies, and whispers the tidings to the bees in the garden. He saves a bit of the old yule log to kindle the new at Christmas, and will let no fire go out of his dwelling between old Christmas day and twelfth night, eats boiled wheat and honey on Christmas eve, and has the singers round on Christmas morning to sing the old carols. . . . He believes in witches and ghosts, thinks if he pays the parson his tithes promptly, then the parson will see that he comes to no harm hereafter, goes when it suits him to what he calls 't' church,' and says his prayers, and that is his religion. Only this is to be understood, that he will not fight for any creed man ever made. No ghost of a martyr haunts our dale.

"So he has lived, and so he will die, and so his fathers lived before him." Changes have come —came even in Dr. Collyer's day. But "these things," he says, "are all on the surface. The main bulk (of the people) keep to the old ways, and raise generations of blue-eyed, sunny-haired and deep-chested men and women, sending the overplus to people new lands."

It was in such a country, and amid such people, that Robert Collyer passed his years of boy-

hood and youth. The particular neighbourhood in which he lived until his fourteenth year, inelegantly dubbed Blubberhouses, consisted of a series of factory towns, or hamlets, running along the banks of the Washburn, in the Washburndale, one of the deepest and fairest of the valleys of the famous Yorkshire moors. The people in these towns, nearly all of them workers in the wool, cotton and linen mills established here in the early days of the industrial epoch because of the abundant water-power, numbered several thousand souls, all told. West End, a village on the road from Pateley to Bolton Bridge, alone had a population of two thousand. The towns, located close to one another along the flowing stream, were practically identical in appearance —a group of ugly factory buildings on the river's edge, and back of them and around them, on a succession of terraces, long rows of cottages in which lived the workers. These cottages were invariably of the stone-wall, thatched-roof type described above. Here and there among them, however, usually at the end of a row of dwellings, appeared structures of a more commodious and impressive type. Dr. Collyer, in later years, described one of these, the home of a foreman, Thomas Scotson, as "a house of some dignity, thick clad with ivy, where the spar-

rows nested in great numbers and made a cheerful racket on summer mornings"; and another, the home of Michael Robinson, a manager of one of the factories, located "at the western end of the terrace," as a house which "had a low window framed in roses," and which "seemed to our young eyes a very grand place indeed." Other more conspicuous structures were the workhouse, "a very commodious building considering the size of the hamlets," the chapel by the bridge at West End, a large gasmetre at no great distance from Blubberhouses bridge, "which supplied the mill and a large number of cottages with light," and a hostel, called the Gate Inn, centre of village celebrations and festivals, in front of which on the big arm of a giant sycamore swung a sign bearing the symbol of a miniature five-barred gate, with the legend,

> "This gate hangs well and hinders none,
> Refresh and pay, and travel on."

Back of all, on either side of the river, were the long slopes to the uplands, where on summer days the birds sang and the heather bloomed, and by night, when the noise of the factory wheels was stilled, came the wondrous silence of the stars. This was a busy dale, in Robert Collyer's boyhood days. Before he had left England for

America, however, the blight of competition had ruined the thriving industries and scattered the people; and by the time he had reached the full tide of manhood, the hamlets had become as "the deserted village" of Goldsmith. The mills were silent and unoccupied, the chapel a mouldy and rotting wreck, and the sturdy stone cottages untenanted save by the birds which perched on roofs and chimney-tops and alone recalled the animation of former days. In the '70s the Leeds Corporation bought the property for the safeguarding of the water supply of the great city —and the history of Blubberhouses was definitely closed!

It was in the hey-day of the material prosperity of these hamlets in the Washburndale, that Robert Collyer was born and reared. The cottage which Samuel Collyer took for his home, after his return from the temporary flight to Keighley, was a two-room stone structure, as we have seen, with a low attic, or loft, overhead. "There was a bit of greensward" in front, with "a clump of roses set about with wall-flowers, pinks and sweet Williams. There was a plum-tree, also, branching about the windows.

"Within doors there was a bright open fire, and the walls of the living room were white as driven snow. A floor of flags so clean that you

could eat your dinner on it most times and only hurt the floor, and a bureau and chairs so bright that they shone like dim mirrors. A tall clock which was always too fast at bed time and in the mornings, and always too slow at meal time. A lot of the old willow pattern pottery ware on a rack against the wall for the holidays; and pictures which must have cost half a dollar each, pictures Rubens could not have painted to save him. These was Moses looking like old King George III, and drawn with a pair of legs no man could walk on without crutches, and Peter with a green beard."

The tasks of housekeeping in this little home were performed with a Puritan conscience and a cheery heart. "I still mind," says the Doctor, "how twice in the year (my mother) would make the walls in the living rooms white, as I still see them, with quick lime, the dire enemy of the fever which would invade other homes but never ours, while in all things else her feast of purification belted the whole year, but never at the cost of comfort or cosiness in the small place, tight and trim as a ship's cabin. . . . There was fair white linen and calico, first to wear and then to sleep in. And until we could see to it ourselves, once a week there was the tub where we had a good sound scrubbing with yellow soap that got

into your eyes, and a stout 'harden' towel to dry off withal, so that now when I think of our 'cotter's Saturday night,' the words of the wise man are apt to come back to me, 'Who hath red eyes, who hath contention, who hath strife?' Well, I answer, we had once a week, when we turned into that tub with my mother to work it, while there was but scant comfort in the words she would say as a sort of benediction, 'There now, children, cleanliness is next to godliness.' But in that tub, in the fair sweet linen, in the snow-white purity of fresh lime, and in the everlasting scrubbing of the things we had about us, lies one fair reason to my own mind, . . . why in all these years I have not been one day sick in my bed."

Life within this home was as plain and simple as it was clean. The income was small, a scant 18 shillings ($4.50) per week, and a family of six [1] "in the earlier years, to make good the old rhyme Mother would croon over us now and then—

> 'Four is good company, five is a charge,
> Six is a family, seven's too large.'

But I think she would have refitted the rhyme to the reason if there had been more. . . . We

[1] Four boys, William (a half-brother by Mrs. Collyer's first marriage), Robert, Thomas and John; and two girls, Martha and Maria. There was a seventh and last child still-born at about the time when Maria was four years old.

came along with the most lovely regularity, about two years apart. . . . But my mother made that income stand good for plenty to eat and drink, two suits of clothes, one for week-days and one for Sundays, house rent and fire." And "how did we fare, the six hearty children? There was oatmeal, and what we call mush who know no better, and skim-milk in plenty, with oatcake, as Mother would say, to fill in with; also wheaten bread for more careful use, and sometimes a trace of butter. Not much meat, for meat was dear, but soup with dumplings, and what the old Yorkshire folk used to call 'sike-like,' a word with a wide meaning. And the tradition still remains of an early time of innocency when Mother would say, 'Those who eat the most dumpling shall have the most meat.' So we would peg away until we did not want any meat, and then Mother would save it for the next day's dinner. There was fruit also when this was cheap, in the lovely guise of pie, and then more oatmeal and skim-milk for supper. And that was how we fared."

But there was another item the week's wage must cover—that of schooling, for the education of the little ones was not free in those days as it is to-day. "You must pay so much a week or go ignorant." These hard-working parents, however, believed in "book-learning"; and until

young Robert was eight years of age, the charge for schooling was carefully laid aside and paid each week. First, the boy went to school to "Dame Horsman, at the Scaife House, in Blubberhouses, an old lady in spectacles, who had a reel in a bottle, and I do not know yet how it got in." Later he went to a master's school half a mile away. This was soon closed, the master going to other parts; and then Robert was old enough to tramp two miles down the dale to Fewston, where he studied the three R's under (and very much under) Will Hardy, "who found me," says the Doctor, "a sad dunce at figures, which he believed in, but good at things in books which struck my fancy. They didn't strike his fancy, however, so he would give me his knife to go and cut nice hazels along with another scapegrace named Robinson Gill, who taught me how to shave them at the line of their finest impact with one's shoulders, and things of that sort."

Will Hardy was evidently very much of a "character." He was equally noted for his hideously crippled legs, and his imcomparable fiddling. "I well remember his grave, stern-looking face," says the Doctor, "as he sat perched aloft in the large rooms of the inns at Blubberhouses and Fewston, giving the music as the

dance went round." In the treatment of his pupils he was a disciplinarian of the old school. He had a strange gleam in his grey eyes, and was a "great marksman with the ferule. There was no use dodging. If you did, the ferule would find you out, and thump you all the harder." [2]

It is the testimony of his most distinguished student, however, that Mr. Hardy was "a good teacher." Later on, when he opened a night school at Blubberhouses, young Robert, no longer free for day instruction, entered his classes. A final winter at night school, after he had left home, completed his education.

Other influences, however, brought to him their

[2] Years later, Robert Collyer and Robinson Gill, then both living in America, hunted out "old Willie Hardy," in one of their visits to "the old home." They found him, grown very feeble, sitting in a chimney corner.

"Is this Willie Hardy?" they said.

"Yes," he answered.

"And how are you getting on, sir?"

"Middling well for an auld man. But who are ye? I don't knaw your faces."

"It's Robinson Gill and Robert Collyer. We were your scholars lang syne"; and then, with a laugh, they said: "We have come to settle the old account of the lickings you gave us."

The tears sprang to the old eyes, with the gleam in them still, as he said, "Nae lads, ye will not do that. I's an old man now, and time has settled that bill a long while ago."

"But you will play us a tune on the old fiddle?"

"Ay, gladly," he answered. So they had many tunes, and Mr. Gill, who was a rich man, settled the bill in good gold.

The Fewston Parish Church
From Snapshots taken by the author in 1913

training and inspiration. There was the Sunday school, for example, which was "the only divinity school (he) ever had the opportunity to attend." Although his parents were married, and their children baptised, in the Anglican communion, the family went to the parish church only twice in the year, on Easter and Whitsuntide. The distance undoubtedly had much to do with this fact, but it may be true also that old Parson Ramshaw was not much to the liking of Samuel Collyer and his good wife. "He was one of the old rough 'church-among-the-mountains' parsons," says the Doctor. "There were traditions of wild scrapes in his early days, such as a baby born within a few weeks of his marriage to his housekeeper, a very handsome woman, daughter of a neighbouring farmer; and of his shooting a donkey's ears off once when he was in his cups, mistaking them for a pair of moor birds as they were cropping up over a level wall. But in my time, '30-'38, he was an old man, with a lot of wild sons, very handsome, and a daughter in the churchyard, to whose grave-stone a boy took me one day between school hours, and told me in a whisper, 'she deed heart-broken for young Jen Hardisty' (a peasant lad who was then about there). That was my earliest romance," continues the Doctor. "Ramshaw was no preacher. He gave out his

text and just yelled through a lot of words of which I could make neither head nor tail. He never came to our house, or did much of anything but shoot."

It was pleasanter on the whole to attend Sunday services at "the little dissenting chapel on the hill," and here the Collyer family went regularly. "My mother," writes the Doctor, "always made a pretty curtsey before she went into our pew, and my father a bow towards the east window, but didn't know why, except that it was 'manners'; while I fear that I spent most of my time wondering over a white dove with a very pink beak that was perched on the high-point of the sounding board over the pulpit, trying also to verify the unicorn in the king's arms, and waiting to hear the old clerk say, Amen." Sunday school twice every Sunday "with no rewards and no picnics" was the programme for the little ones. With modern folk in our own country, for reasons never quite clear, such routine is usually fatal to religious development. But with the Collyer clan in rural Yorkshire, it seems to have been different. "I really know of nothing outside my good home," is the testimony of the Robert of later years, "which can compare in pure worth to my steady training through about ten years in that good old orthodox Sunday school."

More precious, however, than day school, or night school, or Sunday school, was the every-day school in the home itself. Here the hard-working, taciturn father was a steadying influence in the direction of obedience, patience and self-control, while the mother served as the unfailing source of stimulus and inspiration. She it was who taught the children their simple prayers, and listened as they spoke them night and morning. She it was who placed "the old Bible on the bureau," and "let the youngsters browse in it to (their) hearts' content." She it was also who "loved to go over the sweet stories, with some word out of her own heart." "My dear mother," says the Doctor, "was one of the best story tellers I have ever known, and I still sow daisies and violets on her grave and kiss the sod for this among the many gifts she had, that when we sat about her knees, by the winter fire, she would only tell us stories that were bright and wholesome and the mother-milk of laughter. And if a neighbour came in with some tale of a ghost or goblin, that would be likely to haunt our imaginations, she would let them go right on; but when they were through, she would tell another story that would make your hair stand on end until she came to the end of it, and that would fill the whole place with laughter, when it turned out to be a

donkey or something equally absurd. And when they had gone away, she would bid us say our prayers, and say there was nothing to fear if we were good bairns; but she would not send us to bed alone, she would go along with us and tell us some more bright stories to hush our fears, and then she would leave the candle until we fell asleep."

Was it this wise mother, or was it Master Hardy, or was it the "old-fashioned Sunday school" which stirred in the growing lad, even in these early years, that love of reading which remained to his dying day one of the passions of his life? Probably something of one and something of another, together with a generous measure of native instinct which determines likes and dislikes, we know not how nor why. At any rate, Robert Collyer was a lover of books, if there ever was one. The delightful story of the "big George the Third penny" is as familiar in biographical annals as the story of Theodore Parker and the turtle, but it must be told again if only that this narrative may be complete. One happy day, Robert held in his hand a big English penny, and "was looking through the window of our one small store at a jar full of candy (he) dearly loved." Right close to the jar, however, was a tiny book, with the fascinating inscription, "The

History of Whittington and His Cat, William Walker, Printer, Price, One Penny." "I would fain have bought the candy," says the Doctor, "but I did buy the book, . . . and read (it) I guess until it was a mere rag. . . . This was the tiny seed of a library which, when the new century had dawned, had grown to more than three thousand volumes, while the time would fail me to tell how the hunger for books grew by what it fed on."

In the beginning, books were few. The home shelf carried only Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe," Goldsmith's "England," "the old family Bible with lots of pictures, and a few books beside I didn't care for." This was no "five-foot shelf," unfortunately, but it served. "I would read my Bunyan and 'Crusoe' and Goldsmith, and the stories in the old Bible," so writes the Doctor, and they "were as wells of pure water. It must have been by such reading that I got a lifelong love for simple Saxon words, and have been able to get along with but little Latin and less Greek." Occasionally also, a borrowed book came into the home through the father, who observed and rightly valued his son's love of reading, and memorable were the days when in this way the poems of Burns and the plays of Shakespeare first came into his hands.

Such was the raising of this Yorkshire "laddie." Life varied little from day to day. Now and then, to be sure, there came unusual days. One such was the festival in observance of the dedication-day of the parish church, "when all the homes in the parish were burnished bright in honour of the day, and, so far as our means would allow, we feasted to our heart's content, very much as you do at Thanksgiving, while the kinsfolk and friends, who had not moved too far away, would come to our feast, and when their festival came 'round we would go to theirs.

"Another joyous season was that of Christmastide. More than once the approach of this festal day was accompanied by anxious forebodings, for the household was poor, and the wherewithal for the celebration was scarcer than usual. But the pennies were somewhere, somehow found. Then would come a bit of malt from the malster, a piece of beef for the roast, and a cheese, always a whole one, however small. The good mother would bake the yule-cakes and the loaf. Then on Christmas morn, before the light of day, would come the singers and players on divers instruments from Thurscross, with their carols, 'While shepherds watched their flocks by night' and 'God bless the master of this house.' For they were musical up there close to the moors,

and had once 'performed' in an oratorio. This was the signal for the turning of the yule-log, the lighting of the candles, the tapping of the barrel, and the setting out of yule-loaf and cheese. Always 'largess' was given to the singers, oftentimes wet and cold from the drifting snow, with good wishes and proffered blessings all around. Then we went forth in our turn, . . . lads all, and no lassies, for no one of that sex must enter any door first on that or on any New Year's morning. And we would pipe up some little note, through our red noses for the frost was keen. And a little welcome would be given the children, theirs at our house, ours at theirs—some penny for the gold they gave in the old time, and a bit of cake no frankincense could match, or myrrh, the good man of the house waiting for us with his bounty and with a bit of clear fire to warm us. And no king of the East, or West, so happy as we were, surely, on the Christmas morn. . . . We were all neighbours' children, and must miss no house, for that would bring pain.—Then they would come in, the old neighbours, at eventide, to sit by the open fire and tell stories of Christmastides far away, when the great snows fell, or when the maid heard her lover call her from the moor, where he was lost, and how she raised the little hamlet, and they

went forth and found him not dead;[3] how the man was lost and could not be found, and when spring came and the snow melted, he was standing stark in a drift close to the farm gate in the ghyll; stories of great storms and of other things that shook little hearts, but nothing could harm you, or be seen even, while the holy tide lasted; and how the oxen always bowed their knees on the stroke of twelve Christmas eve, and who had verily seen them; and what peril there was taking fire from one house to another during the holy time, as was proven by many instances of disaster or death within the year.—Then the poor creatures came along we all knew—God's poor. I have heard brave music and singing in all these years, but I think I never heard anything so wonderful. It was a gift of God to his poor, and was saved for Christmas. It was seldom they would sing at other times; but then it seemed as if they had heard the angels. They knew nothing of music; but the charm was on them and in them, and they sang. Very old carols they only seemed to know; and never, as I hear them so far away, rising above some lovely minor key; none of the rollicking and radiant things they brought from Thurscross, but just—melody. And so

[3] See Dr. Collyer's famous ballad, "Under the Snow," in "Clear Grit," page 317.

once in the year, if never again, they did eat and were satisfied. I am not sure the folk did not like old Sally and old Willy the best of all, for I can still see tears stream down furrowed cheeks as they are singing, and then hear low strains of laughter that sound as if they had got tangled up with sobs."

These were notable events—but notable only because they marked variation from the monotony of constant and rather bare routine. Life in Blubberhouses was simple, in some ways hard and poor. Indeed it was probably harder and poorer than is at all indicated by Robert Collyer. The poet in the man inevitably came to the fore, as years passed by, and glorified the simplicity of these early days. But they had much of dignity and even beauty, and not a little joy, in the home of Samuel and Harriett Collyer at least. At any rate, the son Robert, in after years, in a country thousands of miles away, looked back upon it with gratitude and deep thanksgiving. In imagination he would return to the old familiar scenes —"drink at a well he loved where the beryl brown water came from a spring hidden in the moors, wander over the pastures and through the lanes where he found the birds' nests the home canon would not allow him to molest, or make the mother bird afraid." And then he would con-

jure up through the mists of the years the figure of his own boyhood, and softly say, "Dear little fellow, you had a hard time then, but it was a good time also, wasn't it? Have any flowers in the world beside ever seemed so sweet to you as the snow-drop, the primrose and the cowslip you knew so well where to find and bring home to Mother, or have any singing birds ever matched your memory of the skylark and the throstle, or were there ever such Christmastides as those she made for us when her children and the world were all young together?"

CHAPTER III

DOING HIS BEST

1831-1848

". . . Hard at work for all I was worth."—R. C. in "Some Memories," page 37.

For eight years the even flow of this austere but happy period of childhood was uninterrupted. Day after day, young Robert raced and romped over the wide-stretching moors; listened to the birds, to the ripple of the Washburn, or the far music of the Haworth church-bells; ate his simple fare of skim-milk, oatcake, potatoes and salt, with a sip of cambric tea and perhaps a touch of marmalade on the Sunday; read and reread the few precious books within the home; went to day school and Sunday school; lent a hand in the work of the busy mother; had his sound sleep in the loft overhead through the silences of the long, long winter nights. Gladly would his parents have left the boy to the full enjoyment and profit of this healthy way of life. The memory of their own early years of bondage

to the spinning frames was too fresh and too vivid, we may well believe, to permit them to surrender lightly their little ones to the fell clutch of the factory. It was the desire to escape the possibility of this fate, undoubtedly, which had persuaded Samuel and Harriett, at the time of their marriage, to emigrate to the United States. But the panic of 1823-24 blasted their hopes for the time being. Then the babies began to arrive one after another in the home. And now, says the eldest, "I was eight years old . . . and must go to the factory and help to earn my own living."

The next six years mark the one wholly sad and painful period of Robert Collyer's life. During all of this time he worked in the linen mills at Blubberhouses, under those dreadful conditions of child-labour in industry which constitute one of the darkest pages in the history of modern England. He was one of those millions of helpless little "doffers," as they were called, who changed the life of Robert Owen, stirred the reforming zeal of Lord Shaftsbury, prompted the heroic cry of Mrs. Browning, and finally inscribed upon the statute-books of the kingdom the so-called Factory Acts. Dr. Collyer's description of what he endured in these years is pitiful in the extreme, especially when it is remembered

that this is a picture of the fate not of a single child, but of the multitudes of children who swarmed in the factory towns and cities of the British Isles.

The working hours at Blubberhouses were thirteen a day, five days in the week, and eleven hours on Saturday; the wages were two shillings per week! At half-past five in the morning, the factory-bell sent its hideous call clanging through the valley, and at six o'clock the children were busily tending the whirring spindles. Here they stood till noon-time, with never a moment for rest or recreation. They were not even allowed to sit down at their work, and if they were caught by the overseer easing their weary limbs for a moment on some stray box or barrel, they were brought instantly to their feet by the stinging lash of a heavy leathern strap across their shoulders. Like prisoners in a pen, these poor toilers at the machines invented a code of signals, by which they warned one another of the approach of the foreman. But such devices, easily discovered or circumvented, availed them little, as did the scant hour at noon for luncheon. Each day brought its burden of exhaustion to even the strongest among the children, so that when the work stopped at eight o'clock in the evening, or on Saturday at six, they were tired "beyond all

telling." The crippling of the children in their arms and backs, and especially in their legs, from much standing, was inevitable. The memory of the crooked limbs of his work-mates remained with Dr. Collyer to the end of his days, and cast a sinister light, as he used to put it, on the Scripture phrase, "The Lord regardeth not the legs of a man." Death also reaped a rich harvest. When examining the parish register, on the occasion of my visit to the Fewston church in the summer of 1913, I was struck by the large number of "deaths" recorded at ages from nine or ten to eighteen or twenty years. It seemed as though, in these early days in the dale, a wholly disproportionate number of persons died in their youth. The vicar, who was showing me his church and neighbourhood, suggested tuberculosis; I suggested child-labour; and we finally compromised on a combination of the two, with the latter ill an aggravating if not determining cause of the former.

As to how Dr. Collyer stood the trial of these days, he has left us in no doubt. His legs became bowed and twisted, like those of his comrades; and it was his belief that only his later work as a blacksmith, which required a firm grip of a horse's hoof between his knees, ever straightened them out again. Sometimes, by the miracle

of childhood, he would leave the factory not tired at all—and then there was a gay romp home to some treasured book if it was winter, or to some favourite nook on the moor or by the river if it was summer. More often, however, he was so tired as scarcely to be able to drag one aching limb after the other—and he was not a frail boy either, but big and strong for his years! On these days it would seem as though the hour of release would never come; and when at last the spindles ceased their turning and the doors flew open to the clear night air, nothing was wanted but "home and to bed." The darkness of this period of his life was never lifted from Dr. Collyer's heart, buoyant and cheery as it was. The harsh clangour of the factory bell, for instance, rang in his ears for years as the most dreadful sound in all the world, and was not wholly silenced until the iron-tongued monster had been torn from its place, transported to America, and relieved of its curse by re-baptism into the grateful service of Cornell University.[1] When,

[1] The later story of this bell is one of the romances of Dr. Collyer's life, and is told in the following statement by President Adams, of Cornell, published on January 31, 1889.

"When the Rev. Robert Collyer was here last Spring he said to me incidentally, as we were walking about the university grounds, 'I wish to make you a present.' I replied that we were always ready to receive presents worth having, and I was sure that he

on a certain day in his old age, I chanced to ask him if he would like to live his life all over again,

would not offer us any other. He then proceeded to relate to me the following story:

"'Some years ago the village in which I used to work as a blacksmith was swept away in order that the site might be used as a reservoir for the city of Leeds. In this general destruction the shop in which I worked as a boy perished. Against the old bell that used to wake me up very early in the morning I had a special grudge. At the same time I had so much interest in it that I asked a friend in the Town Council at Leeds to see that when the bell was broken up for old metal a piece of it should be sent to me as a paper weight. The result was that the Town Council voted to send me the whole bell. I have ever since been waiting for some appropriate place where it could be put, and if you can make any use of it I shall be glad to give it to you.'

"I replied that of course we should cheerfully accept it, and would find an appropriate place for it. I asked him about its size and tone, but he would only say that he knew nothing about that, except that when he was a boy it made altogether too much noise. I promised to see that the bell was put in some appropriate place. When I wrote to Dr. Collyer about coming to the Sage Chapel pulpit this spring, in reply he said: 'I have not forgotten that bell, though as yet it has not been quite convenient to send it.' Recently, however, I received from him the following very interesting and characteristic letter:

"'New York, Jan. 21, 1889.

"'*Dear President Adams:*

"'That old bell will be sent up the road on Saturday, by my brother, in whose shop it lies.

"'It was the factory bell which rang me out of bed between 1831 and 1838 and set me to work at 6 o'clock in the morning and then rang me out again at 8 P.M., allowing us an hour at noon to breathe and get our dinner and that was all. . . . I hated that bell then a great deal worse than—well, you know the comparison.

"'This was in Fewston, in the Forest of Knaresborough in Yorkshire. Fewston catches the eye in history as the home of Edward

and he gave me his prompt and joyous answer that he would, his face suddenly grew stern and hard for a passing moment, and he burst out, "but not the years in the mill. I wouldn't live

Fairfax, who made the best translation of Tasso we have, and dedicated it in 1600 to Queen Bess. He also wrote a curious account of the cantrips of certain witches touching his daughter Helen and some others in Fewston, which was edited by Lord Houghton for the Philobiblion series, and has since been printed in a cheaper edition and better, by an old friend of mine, of which I must have sent a copy to the library at Cornell.

"'Well, the old factory broke down long after I left, and served it right! Was purchased by the town of Leeds, 18 miles away, for the sake of the river, which is a fine soft stream tumbling down from the moors to supply the town withal. Then the factory was pulled down; vast reservoirs made to store the water of Washburn they drink in Leeds with great content, though the majority, I think, prefer beer. And when I heard of all this I wrote to a friend in the Town Council, saying, "When they break up that wicked old bell (you know there is a total depravity sometimes in inanimate things) secure me a piece and send it over," being moved as Quilp was when he would batter that old figurehead.

"'Well, the first I knew after that about the thing was its appearing at my door here as you see it, all charges paid, the gift I presume of the corporation and council. Then I began to relent, and said: "I will put you to some finer use, old fellow (it's a he), than to ring up children at unearthly hours to go to work in a factory," and I finally struck the right idea. I do not know its tone now; I only know it used to be the most infernal clang in all the world to me, and I have no choice as to its special use. It will be pleasant to think of it as born again, converted and regenerate, now while the ages of Cornell endure, calling people to nobler occupations, and so much more welcome—a sweet bell, I hope, not jangled out of tune and harsh. Indeed yours,

"Robert Collyer.'"

those over again, not for all the blessings that might be given me in compensation."

For a brief interval during this period, the child's burden was lightened a bit, not by the charity of the mill-owners, but, as is usually the case in such matters unfortunately, by grace and authority of the law of the land. In 1833 was passed one of that long series of Factory Acts which constitute one of the most important chapters in the history of modern English legislation, and which laid the foundation in law and custom of that great structure of social reform which is so conspicuous and beneficent a feature of our time. This particular Act, which had been preceded by other acts in 1802, 1819, 1825, and an amending act in 1831, provided that night work (between 8:30 P.M. and 5:30 A.M.) for persons under eighteen in cotton, wool, worsted, hemp, flax, tow and linen spinneries and weaving mills, should be prohibited; that children from nine to thirteen should work not more than 48 hours a week; and that young persons from thirteen to eighteen should be restricted to 68 hours a week. Provision was also made for school attendance, and for the appointment of factory inspectors to watch over the working of the law.

Judged by our modern standards of child-labour legislation, this Act seems moderate enough,

indeed hardly decent. To the tiny toilers of that period, however, it was a veritable boon, as witness the case of Robert Collyer. Ten years old at the time of its enactment, his hours in the factory were immediately reduced from 76 to 48 a week; and when three years later he passed his thirteenth year, were raised to not more than 68. This was a priceless gain of freedom. The little back was not now so bent, or the twisted limbs so tired, at the end of the day. There were welcome hours of sleep in the early morning, and equally welcome hours for play or reading out on the moors before the darkness fell. And how must it have cheered the mother's heart to see the yoke lifted ever so little from her dear one's shoulders! In the cottage at Westhouse, as in thousands of similar dwellings throughout the land, this Factory Act was as a very gift of heaven.

It was not until 1837, however, that any real change in the boy's life was effected. Then came the transfer of labour from the spinning-frame to the anvil, and of residence from the remote village of Blubberhouses to the thriving provincial town of Ilkley.

"There was (an) article in our home creed," writes the Doctor, "about which both my father and mother were always of one mind—the boys

must learn a trade. It would cost money, and if we stayed in the factory we could earn instead of spending, but this made no matter, we should lose our rank in life. My brave and steadfast father was a mechanic, it was a step above the factory, so we boys must be mechanics too, and then though we might never rise in the world, when they were through, we should not fall. Well, there was an old blacksmith six (*sic*) miles away over the moors, who had taught my father, and he was willing to teach me; I was rising fourteen then, and it was time to begin. . . . And (this) was how I came to the anvil, the utmost limit in those days of my ambition."

The master smith to whom he was apprenticed was indeed none other than John Birch, "ow'd Jacky Birch" as he was called, who had taught Robert Collyer's father his trade years before at the old factory forge. He was now the owner of a prosperous smithy in Ilkley, had always some two or three lads taking instruction at his anvil, and was glad enough, we may be sure, to receive into his keeping and guidance the son of his former pupil at Blubberhouses. Young Collyer was bound to him for a period of seven years, or until he was twenty-one, giving his labour, and receiving in return house room and food, week-day shirts and leathern aprons, and the teaching

of an ancient master at his trade. It was a fair bargain, and to his parents, as to the boy himself, it must have seemed a settling of the problem of life-work as happy as it was final.

On a certain morning, therefore, of August, 1837, a sturdy lad of fourteen years of age might have been seen taking leave of the Collyer home in Washburndale, and starting on his walk across Denton Moor to Ilkley town. Down the village street, with many a smile and benediction from the housewives in the cottage row—over the river which had sung songs to his listening ears ever since he was a babe in arms—up the long slope of the hill to the great moors heaving to the sky—this would be the way he would go; and when he reached the summit, we may well believe that he would pause for a moment to say good-bye to his little world. He tells us in his "Some Memories" that he was "homesick for a time" after leaving Westhouse, and it is pretty certain that the ailment would begin right here on the edge of the moors. It was not the factory that he regretted, as he looked down that brilliant summer day upon the black cloud of smoke hanging low over the scattered hamlet; he could only feel abounding joy that his days of slavery to the spinning-frames were over. No, it was the thought of the home-nest that choked the little lad. The

familiar white-washed walls, the friendly nook in the loft overhead, the rose-bush in the yard, the thrush that perched and sang in the old plum-tree by the door, the long hours of reading in the summer fields, the stories by the winter fireside, the Christmas cheer, the quiet father whose companionship he was just beginning to know, above all the full-breasted, big-hearted mother whose love was to him as the shelter of God's hand—these were the visions that held his gaze as he looked down through the clouds of smoke upon the stone cottage with its rough thatched roof. They were happy pictures, every one, and fading now forever from his sight.

But he must not linger. As brave in heart as he was stalwart in body, the lad would turn away and set his face steadfastly toward his new home. In this same month of August, just seventy-six years later, it was my happy lot to travel on this same ancient road which had felt the trudging of young Robert's feet. I also climbed the slopes, took my last look at the lovely vale of Washburndale, and then turned westwards to the moors. Overhead a cloudless expanse of sky, blazing with the glory of midsummer! On every side, as far as the eye could see, the waves of purple heather rolling like ocean billows to the horizon! Not a house, not a tree, not a living thing, save

here and there a rustling grouse fleeing the approach of man! It was beautiful beyond all expression—and yet lonely as the loneliness of the sea. We went on mile after mile, as though we were the only persons living on the planet. And then there came the crest of another long slope—this time downward into Wharfedale. Here at our feet were rich meadows, pleasant pastures, a cheerful sparkling river, luxuriant foliage in wooded dells, a range of hills with huge masses of craggy rocks, the long highway winding through the fields dotted with old stone cottages, and breaking into charming little lanes and by-paths, and, in the midst, the crowded buildings and streets of Ilkley, and the black streak of the railroad running off to Leeds. On such a day, through such a scene, and to such a goal, journeyed the Yorkshire apprentice lad. To him, as to me, the rolling moors must have seemed at once beautiful and lonely. In spite of the heather and the grouse, homesickness must still have lingered with him. But when he came at last to the slopes of Wharfedale, and looked down upon Ilkley parish, his heart must have leaped at the sheer loveliness of this new world. Here was his home—here was his life-work—here was the world that he was to make his own! Regrets would now yield to anticipations, the homesick-

ness of the boy to the ambition of the man. With light step and shining eyes, he would stride down the winding road, and welcome with eager breast the advent of his new day.

The change from the old to the new was great. Ilkley was a thriving provincial centre, mainly composed of busy tradesmen in the town proper, and busy farmers and dairymen in the surrounding dale-country. As contrasted with Blubberhouses, it had no factories, with their tall chimneys, whirring wheels and clouds of smoke, and no factory workers, with their poverty and disease. In 1831, it had a population of 691 persons; in 1834, a population of 940; and in 1861, a population of 1407. Its chief distinctions, and largest source of business activity, were a remarkable spring, "arising from the side of a mountain near to the town," and a location in Wharfedale unrivalled for scenic beauty. In early days, the spring was reputed to have curative properties, especially in cases of scrofula and kindred diseases. Later and perhaps more honest chroniclers express doubts as to "whether there (were) any virtues in the water, more than its purity, and the tenuity of its component parts for internal use." However this may have been, Ilkley was then, as it is now, a well-known and much-frequented summer resort. "The worth of

the waters," writes the Doctor in his "Ilkley: Ancient and Modern," "the lovely landscape, the free-blowing winds on the moors, the sunshine rippling like a vast translucent sea, as you stand knee-deep in the sweet blossoming heather, the breath of kine, the homely fare, and the quietness which lay on all things like Bunyan's dream of Beulah, touched the heart and imagination of the forlorn, far and wide, and drew them to the pretty rural hollow, that had been waiting to help and bless them time out of mind." In a small guide-book to Ilkley, published in 1829, there are named no less than six boarding-houses, twenty-nine lodging-houses, and three inns, the Rose and Crown, the Wheat Sheaf, and Lister's Arms. On the list of boarding-houses, it is interesting to note that of "John Birch, blacksmith, Eastgate." The shop-keepers included six grocers, five shoe-makers, three confectioners, two butchers, two drapers, two blacksmiths, two carriers, two wheelwrights and carpenters, one tailor, one miller, and one "Richard Brown, top of Kirkgate, joiner, portrait, animal and landscape painter." It was not a city to which young Robert had come; but it was a thriving village, with a variety of people and interests unknown in Blubberhouses.

If the change in Robert's physical environ-

ment was great, so also were the changes in the more intimate associations of his personal life. Some of these were unfortunate, as, for example, the sudden withdrawal of home safeguards and sanctities. "In my father's time," writes the Doctor, "(Birch) was a fine sober fellow and a superb workman, but the years had made havoc of him, and boy as I was, I found very soon I had gone to live in the home of a drunkard. Still this was not so bad to me, as it would be to you. The proverb says a fox smells nothing amiss in his own den, and while our home was what I have told you of, we thought of beer very much as we thought of bread, while I was about as familiar with beer as I was with bread and beef, and thought no more of its hurting me, than you think of hot soda biscuits and solid chunks of mince pie, and pickles and doughnuts hurting you. Then I found again that the men were drinking a great deal more in my new place than we had ever thought of drinking in the old. Each had about a quart a day, and then the farmers who came to the forge were forever sending for beer, and so the thing went on from bad to worse, until one day . . . the old man went on a fearful drunk, and said 'ise verra badly, lad,' next day, and 'ise boon to dee,' and sure enough, that was the last of the drinking bouts."

Here were depressing conditions—and dangerous, too, had it not been for the "good home training which had long since led him into clean and honourable ways," the power and purity of the boy's native manhood, as well as the presence of certain other more favourable circumstances. Thus the change from the spinning-frame to the anvil was all to the good. The hours, for one thing, were not so long, being limited to ten, except in very busy times. Then the work itself, for another thing, was conducive to health and vigour. Much of it was in the open air—all of it involved quick motion, vigorous exercise, and constant interest. No wonder that the twisted legs and the bent back became straight, the chest full, and the arms "like iron bands"! Furthermore, Master Birch kept a good table, in spite of the beer. The food was simple and rough, but it was wholesome, plentiful and had some variety. "We got plenty of porridge and haver-cake," writes the Doctor in after days, "and he kept a good fat pig. Jack Toffin, one of the journeymen, used to say, however, that Mrs. Birch could make two giblet pies out of a 'goois neck.'" It was at this time, undoubtedly, that Robert Collyer put on that abounding health, and developed that superb, almost giant-like stature, which remained so supremely the characteristics

of his later physical manhood. In his autobiography, he relates how in these days a certain old man, coming into the forge to warm his hands, would turn to him and say, "How thou dost grow to be sewer: if thaa doesn't stop soin, we sall hev to put a stithy on thee heead." And along with growth, came the unbridled, exultant buoyancy of youth. "I was not a model boy," writes the Doctor. Indeed, it is remembered by a contemporary in Ilkley that, standing with his aunt one day as young Collyer went striding by, he heard the good lady exclaim, "There goes that Collyer lad; he's a taastril." [2] Another tale has to tell of a certain night, when the "doings" con-

[2] This may have been said of him at a somewhat earlier period. In a letter written in 1889 to a little girl who had seen this word "taastril" in an informal account of Dr. Collyer's life, and wanted to know what it meant, he explained as follows:

"Dear Little Sister:

"Taastril, when you mean a boy, as old Lady Holmes did, is a little chap as full of mischief as he can hold, and the word which belongs to Yorkshire, as you say, takes on worse meanings when you grow up and grow worse. I was a little chap then when she said it, and didn't know she said it at all. But three years ago, when I was in England and had to speak in the Unitarian church in Halifax, an old gentleman came to see me, just about my own age. He was a little fellow, too, and was staying with the old lady, who was his aunt. He heard her say what I told, because I had run after her ducks and scared them dreadfully just before; and then, I should think it was fifty-five years after, this old gentleman turned up and told me what she said.

"So, if you were a boy, I should tell you not to get into mischief

"The Iron Gates," *see page 74*
From a Snapshot taken by the author in 1913

The Ilkley "Smithy"
From an old Photograph

tinued until two o'clock in the morning. A miller's young wife, who had been waiting her truant husband something after the manner of Tam o' Shanter's dame, greeted him as follows: "Why, David, man, thaa be out too late." "Noa, noa, woman," he replied, "Bob Collyer's yet behind me." "What!—Boab," she exclaimed, "then thaa be home full airly!"

If there are no sins or follies to record in these years, it is not because of any lack of vitality, but rather because of healthy activities which absorbed this vitality and assimilated it to good uses. The ordinary routine of the young man's life in this period is not hard to trace. Six days in the week, he was up early in the morning, and hard at work until eventide "by the anvil, considering the unwrought iron." Horse-shoes, nails, bolts and bars, iron gates, the usual products of the smithy, made up the work of his hands. In the afternoon, not too late, the hammer was laid on the anvil, the forge fire banked for the night, and the young apprentice left to his own devices. If it were the winter-time, he was at his books in a

if you could help it, because you never know when you are safe. It may be fifty-five years, and then the old gentleman may come along and open the book, and there you are on the old yellow page, with the date in it of 1829 or '30, set down as a taastril.

"Indeed,

"Robert Collyer."

trice, and all the long evening through was reading. If it were summer, and the lingering sun gave promise of bright hours on the moor, he was off to the uplands, to read in some fragrant nook or mayhap to gaze on the beauties of the dale, and dream. On the Sundays he was accustomed to spend the morning at the parish church; [3] and in the afternoon, when the weather

[3] His recollections of the preachers were delightfully told in after years, in a letter to the *Observer,* under date of December 18, 1884:

"The first of these that I remember was a right racy divine, handsome as May, and a very useful man indeed in many ways, but the people who loved him had to apologise for him, and say 'it's parson's way,' and that is not a fortunate position for the parson. Still they would do anything for him except lend him 'brass,' and seemed just as well pleased as if he had gone through the whole service on a piping hot Sunday afternoon, when he said with great simplicity, after saying the prayers, 'I have no sermon to-day, and so will dismiss you with the benediction. Now to, etc.,' and the madcaps under age rather looked for some such rare fortune again but did not get it. He had also a curious trick of crying when he preached, for no reason that we could make out from the discourse, and no doubt a remark made by old Jacky Birch, as he wended home one Sunday, was often made, 'Aa wonder what t'parson wer roarin' at ta day.'

"The next that I remember was a mere drill-sergeant and was bound to make us all learn the step and march to church but—we didn't.

"The next had nothing to say and said it in the highest key he could reach, without the slightest modulation or emphasis. I think we should not have minded if he made the thing musical, but it was good news when we heard he was to leave us and when old Joe Smith, the parish clerk, gave notice that on the next Sunday Mr. B. would preach his *funeral* sermon. Poor old Joe was turned

was fair, sometimes with companions, more often alone, always with a book, he climbed the long slopes to the moors. These great stretches of heather-strewn prairie were his unfailing delight, a veritable refuge of the spirit. Whenever opportunity offered, wrote the Doctor in after days, "I would walk over the moors, with my book, or

eighty and would now and then give out the evening hymn in the morning.

"The next who stays in my memory was very 'high' and very dry, sincere as the day, and full of devotion to his work. But he was fresh from Oxford, full of the new wine which was fermenting there then, and did not know the people he had to deal with from a cord of wood. So instead of being all things to us as Paul directs by inference, he wanted us to be all things to him, and especially to attend no end of services on week days and to fast in Lent. Now Ilkley never did believe in fasting when she could get anything to eat, while very much of her living lay in providing in those times for 'company,' so while the good man wore himself to skin and bone in the weeks before Easter, we quietly voted the whole thing a nuisance, and *he* left.

"Then a man came of a very lovely spirit and with beautiful gifts as a preacher. Mr. Carrick won us all to hear and love him who went to the church, but his health gave out and he had to move away. Then the old vicar died presently, and a deputation went to Hull to see if the well-loved curate would not accept the living, for if he would we would petition the patron to give it to him as the one man we wanted, and even 'ware brass' some said, to make things smooth. He could not come; his health was too delicate, and we were feeling bad enough about it when we heard the living had gone to a Mr. Snowdon. So when this rare man came, as the tide was rising, it was also making against him you see. We noticed at once also that Mr. Snowdon had not Mr. Carrick's rare gifts as a preacher—very few men have. But he was simple, sincere, and in real earnest."

sit down on a great grey crag, and watch the sunshine ripple over the heather, while the music of the bells in the old tower at Haworth . . . came floating on the summer winds and mingled with that of our own old church, where the Longfellows worshipped many hundred years."

Companions were not many at this time. Some, like two drunken apprentices, whom he mentions in the shop, were distasteful to the finer instincts of self-respect and decent rectitude which had been so diligently cultivated in his home, and were naturally and easily avoided. Others, of a different character, were gladly welcomed to his heart. Thus there was Edward Dobson, a fellow apprentice at Birch's anvil, and a close friend so long as Collyer remained in Ilkley. Another well remembered associate was Edward Stephenson, with whom he roomed for a time in the home of his brother, Thomas Stephenson. Christopher Hudson made friends with Robert through his kindred literary interests, as did Thomas Smith, a farmer's lad, and together the young men joined a library club which was being organised in the village. Down the dale, at Low Anstly, dwelt Robert Metcalfe, another farm boy, who would bring his master's horses to the smithy to be shod. And across the way from the open forge lived Mary Ann Smith, whose mother was

an old friend of Harriett Collyer. More casual acquaintances were John Hardisty and his brother William.

Young Collyer's real companions at this time, however, as indeed throughout his life, were books. The fire kindled in his soul on the day when he bought "Whittington and His Cat," instead of the candy, with his penny, had never gone out. On the contrary, it had burned ever brighter and warmer with succeeding years. Even as an eight or ten year old mill-hand, with no library but the few volumes on the home-shelf, the boy dreamed dreams at his work in the factory about what he would like to do when he was a man, "and this was not to be a sailor or to drive a stage-coach, but to go into a book-shop." By the time he came to Ilkley, the fire had grown into a conflagration and was the one consuming interest of his life. His work at the anvil, to which he was faithful and in which he soon excelled, was still, in the perspective of his innermost soul, but an interruption or a postponement of what he regarded as his real vocation. "From the time when I used to read Bunyan and 'Crusoe,' " writes the Doctor, "there had grown up in me a steady hunger to read all the books I could lay my hands on." He read at all times and under all conditions. "I could read and walk

four miles an hour," he tells us. "I read when I was blowing the bellows in the forge, and in the evening when there was no candle I poked my head down toward the open fire, and never ate a meal if I could help it without a book close to my hand. I did worse than this, for when I went a-courting my wife, I read all the books in her father's house instead of—well what's the use telling what I ought to have done, only this I may say, that if she had not been the best lassie in all the world to me, as well as the bonniest, she would have given me the mitten, and served me right."

This passion for literature gathered about him young friends of a like turn of mind, as we have seen. Three of these, John Hobson, the schoolmaster, Ben Whitley, and John Dobson, formed with Robert a private circle for reading and study. They were wont to sit together and read at nights as long as their tallow candle would hold out. They read good books, too; and generally the best English reviews. They read aloud, and in turns. Any holiday they had was passed in the fields reading, and the parson got only the dismal Sundays, the bright ones being passed in a larger temple. "I can hear now one of us saying, 'Now, Bob, thee take a turn,' " was the Doctor's memory of these happy days.

Of these three cronies, the nearest and dearest was John Dobson, whose name never came from Dr. Collyer's lips in later years without being caressed with lingering affection. The influence and service of this man were the most beneficent that came into his life at this time, or perhaps at any other. Dobson was a wool-comber by trade, but a man who, like the young blacksmith whom he befriended, had a passionate interest in and love for books. He was incomparably the best read man among the native townsmen of Ilkley. His chief interest was in metaphysics, and he devoured eagerly all volumes which "held arguments with you deep and vital" about the problems of God, the destiny of man, and the spiritual nature of the universe. The essays of John Foster and of Isaac Taylor were favourites of his, as well as stories of the old Scotch Covenanters, and of all heroes who had fought and died valiantly to vindicate the inward witness of their souls. But he had a poetic side as well; for Dr. Collyer relates of him that, on a journey on foot to Scotland, to see the battlefield of Drumclog, he took pains to pass through Westmoreland, to catch a glimpse of the great poet, Wordsworth, and was rewarded by seeing him sitting on a chair in the sun by the door-way of Dove Cottage.

It is not surprising that this serious and sober

man was drawn to Robert Collyer, whose heart burned even as his own with the love of books. But it is at least unusual that he should have so dedicated himself to the service of this young man, who was no less than ten years his junior, and almost wholly uneducated. He must have seen in him not merely the kindred passion for the printed word, but some suggestion of those great qualities of mind and heart which were destined later to make the rough apprentice a leader of his generation. However this may be, John Dobson set himself devotedly to the task of supplying young Collyer with the books he wanted. He had a scant wage, but he was a bachelor and thus had no family cares; and what money was his was Collyer's also, for the reading. Volume after volume, he brought to him with shining eyes; together they read and discussed the precious pages; together they lived and moved and had their being in this other and greater world of thought. What wonder that the book-hungry apprentice loved this man, and in later years, when fame and influence were his, acknowledged a debt to him which could never be discharged!

The books which Robert Collyer read in these years are not known to us to any very great extent. We have the record that on a certain Christmas day, when for some forgotten reason

he could not go home, he found solace in a borrowed copy of Washington Irving's "Sketch Book." A reference to "The Vicar of Wakefield" reveals the fact that this was the first novel he had ever read. A chance reminiscence brings us the word that "on a day I can still recall, a still November day, when the mist lay on the halmes and the yellow sunshine touched the crags on the moor, Cooper came to me with 'The Last of the Mohicans,' and almost persuaded me to be an Indian." Still again he recalls the early day when he was led to read Scott's Waverly novels by a religious book which denounced them as immoral, "and gave quotations to prove it." Macaulay's "Essay on Bacon" was encountered at this time and deeply admired. Very curious is his statement in a letter read at the fiftieth anniversary celebration of Dr. William Henry Furness, of Philadelphia, "Some years before I emigrated to America, my soul clove to him as I sat one day in a little thatched cottage in the heart of Yorkshire, and read 'The Journal of a Poor Vicar.' "

These memories are probably a not inaccurate indication of the kind of literary material that he most eagerly devoured. It is doubtful if he travelled very far with John Dobson on his journeys of intellectual exploration into the wilderness of

Scotch metaphysics. Philosophical and theological treatises were read, of course, just as everything that was a book was read. But his early passion for Burns and Shakespeare, his later love for Scott and Lamb, Dickens, Thackeray and Macaulay, and his unfailing delight in biography, history and folk-lore, show clearly in which direction he inclined. In these early years, as in later years, he read not in any deliberate or systematic way, but almost wholly for the mere joy of reading. And it is certain that it was not until many years later, when the process of evaluation was not wholly an unnatural one, that he came to appreciate the significance of what he was doing in this early time. "There was really no idea," he wrote, "of the good which might come out of it; the good lay in the books into which I must plunge my soul headlong, impassioned by the beauty and salt of truth. I had no more idea of being a minister, than that I should be here to tell this story. But now give a young man passion like this for anything, for books, business, painting, teaching, farming, mechanics, or music, I care not what, and you give him a lever to lift his world, and a patent of nobility, if the thing he does is noble. So shall I not call this my college course,—a very poor college and a very poor course, and in all these years there

has been no time when I have not felt a little sad that there should have been no chance for me at a good education and training; but such a chance as there was, lay in that everlasting hunger to read books." And a chance, may we not add, not merely for mental but for moral training as well. These years, as we have seen, had their perils, which the wholesome tradition of the old home might not have overcome, had it not been for other and co-operating influences. And of these, by all odds the most potent was the companionship of books. "They were of worth to me then," said the Doctor in a moment of confession, "to help me along a bit in the right direction; for they were good books which fell into my hands, and all the seed did not fall in thorny ground."

And so the years passed—with hard work, long rambles on the moors, occasional visits home, congenial friends, beloved books! It was largely a wholesome life, with little to challenge in any serious way the young blacksmith's native worth. In 1844, on his twenty-first birthday, he was released from his apprenticeship, but continued, without interruption, his labour at Birch's anvil. It is interesting to note that, in later years, Dr. Collyer was inclined to assert that he was never much of a workman—certainly no such master artisan as his father—for his heart, as he said,

was far more in his books than in his hammer. But there is nevertheless good evidence that he must have been something more than an ordinary artisan. The chief item on this count must ever be the famous iron gates which he made for the parish church-yard at Ilkley. These were "as homely as a barn door," according to his testimony—so homely that the thought of them haunted the Doctor in after-time, and made him resolve that, if he could ever find the money, he would some day replace them by a new pair made by an artist. A full half-century after the gates had left his forge, however, the Doctor, on a return visit to Ilkley, took occasion to examine them, and to his immense satisfaction discovered that not a rivet had sprung "in the clanging back and forth through all the years." More than a dozen years later still, it was my privilege to see these gates, and my equal joy to discover that they were still in first class condition. Nor did I find them so "homely" as the Doctor had always pictured them!

Further evidence of Collyer's solid work as a smith is found in the fact that when John Birch died in 1846, he thought highly enough of his twenty-three year old assistant to leave him the forge in his will. The Lord of the Manor, to whom the property belonged, however, would not

have it so, as he felt that Collyer was too young to manage the business. So the shop was let to a master smith, Sampson Speight by name, of Middleton; and Robert was hired at 18 shillings a week to take charge of the work. This was a fortunate chance, as it happened, for it left him free to venture elsewhere, when Ilkley was no longer home to him. Had the forge become his own at this critical moment, it is at least possible that the whole course of his after life might have been changed.

Although not technically a master, Robert was now to all intents and purposes his own man. Business prospered, and within a short time he was earning the highest wage for a smith of a pound a week. This looks small to us to-day, but it was enough in the England of the '40s to maintain a home and keep a fire burning on the hearth, and thus to make inevitable a wife, as Ben Franklin pointed out long years ago. It was in June, 1846, that Collyer married Harriett Watson, an Ilkley girl, twenty-one years of age. Of the courtship we know little, save that it was conducted under some difficulties, as she was a working girl as he was a working lad, and their time was scant. Nor was this available time always the most propitious. "I lost my heart in May," he writes, "and spent the summer trying to se-

cure another to fill the vacancy. We were both busy week-days, and so we took Sunday evenings. I counted thirteen Sundays in succession on which it rained, and we had to court under an umbrella."

All this was forgotten when the banns were said, the union joined, and the lad and his wife safely ensconced in a house on the north side of Church street. Here they passed the first radiant days of married life; here in due season, on July 5, 1847, was born a son, Samuel; and here for many a happy day still were cherished the confident and eager hopes of youth. Robert Collyer had travelled a toilsome if not unwholesome road since the hour when, as a youngster of eight, he had begun his labours in the mill at Blubberhouses. Now seventeen years later, a sturdy artisan of twenty-five, he had found his work, established his home, and was rearing his family. It is probable that, had anybody asked him at this time, he would have said that his life was plotted out for him to the very end. And yet, as a matter of fact, it had not even begun!

CHAPTER IV

CRISIS AND CHANGE
1848-1850

—"Then the memory comes of a change through a great sorrow which befell me, when my life was dark in the shadow of death."—R. C. in "Some Memories," page 28.

In 1842 there befell the first of a series of like-events which shook the heart of our young man, at first as a slight tremor moves the ground, and then rent it as an earthquake, till all things were as "chaos and black night."

On May 29 of this year, his half-brother, William Wells, the son of Mrs. Collyer by her first marriage, died at the age of twenty-three. The oldest of the family of children in the home, William had been a close companion of Robert through all the years of childhood and early youth. The two had played together on the moors, worked together in the factory, and slept together in the loft of the old stone cottage. In his early manhood, William was stricken with

tuberculosis, contracted as a boy in the cotton-mill, and had for some time been peculiarly dependent for strength and comfort upon his younger brother. His passing, while in many ways a relief, was yet the snapping of a link which had been close-bound from the very first days of life.

Two years later, in July, 1844, there came the word that Robert's father had dropped dead at his anvil. In 1839, something over a year after the boy's departure for Ilkley, the family had removed from Blubberhouses to Leeds, where Samuel had obtained favourable employment at the machine works of Mr. Peter Fairbairn. It was here that he died. He had never been sick a day in his life, but for some time before this had now and again felt a peculiar dizziness, which had served as a slight warning to his family of what was coming. Young Robert, however, had heard nothing of this in Ilkley, and received the news of his father's death, therefore, as a lightning stroke from a clear sky.

Another interval of two years brought the death of his master, "Jacky" Birch, to which reference has already been made. The circumstances attending this event, rather than the event itself, seem to have made an altogether remarkable impression upon Robert Collyer's mind.

For three months after Birch's collapse from drink, writes the Doctor, "I attended to him; and then one morning as I was lifting him, great gouts of blood came jetting out of his chest, and in a few moments he was dead, while I made a pledge to the Most High that, by his help I would not be buried also in such a grave; and the result, as I think of it, had something to do with the way I must go from the anvil to the pulpit."

Then finally, as a last stroke beside which these other losses were as nothing, came the death of his wife. On February 1, 1849, only a little over two years and a half from the wedding-day, the beloved "lassie" perished in child-birth, and was buried in the village grave-yard with her babe, Jane, who had died three days later, on February 4, laid tenderly in her arms. The home on Church street was straightway closed, and the forlorn father, with his first child Samuel a year and a half old, took refuge in the home of Thomas Stephenson and his wife, which was located next door to the blacksmith shop.

Of this event, Dr. Collyer was strangely reticent throughout his life. It constituted a crisis of such moment in his career that he could never pass it by without some mention. But he would refer to it, in writing and in speech, only as "a vast and an awful sorrow," and say no more.

This was a silence which seems to have begun, as by a kind of necessity, at the first moment of his loss. For he tells us that he consulted not "with flesh and blood," not even with his dearest friend and "good helper," John Dobson. It was as though there were feelings here too deep for words, as well as for tears. From the first black hour of his grief to the last sunny moment of his active years, he kept this experience as a place of holiness which only he might enter. A man, "the windows of (whose) heart" were always wide "open to the day," he yet had deep and at times unexpected reserves; and this memory, as precious as it was pitiful, was the deepest of them all.

The effect of the tragedy upon the young husband and father was immediate and overwhelming. It marked, indeed, the supreme crisis of his career. For the first time in his experience, the beauty seemed to go out of the world and the joy of living to vanish from his heart. For the first time the hammer rang dull and lifeless on the anvil. For the first time his beloved books failed to hold his mind and stir the deep places of his soul. Friends, even the dearest, were shut out completely from his life. "The secret lay between God and my own soul" is the final word in his autobiography.

Such a grief, however, though sacred beyond all expression, must have an end, and this ended in "the only refuge there is for us when life grows dark in the shadows of death." Robert Collyer found himself thinking, in his loneliness and sorrow, of the Sunday school on the hill where he had gone as a lad, of the hymns that his father had sung, of the prayers that his mother had heard, of the Bible on the book-shelf in the old stone cottage. In accordance with early habit, he had always attended the Ilkley parish church, but had never been as a young man what is commonly called "religious." Now, however, his tender and deeply wounded heart was ready for a real experience, and it was the blaze of Wesleyanism which was still burning hotly over the northern moors, which "caught" him. Little by little, just how he never explained, he found himself going to the meetings of the Methodists, his "neighbours and friends" all of them, in a little chapel on the outskirts of the town. Gradually he was moved to tell them "in not many words how it was with (him)," and "they gave (him) a warm welcome." Then, on a famous Sabbath night, he heard a local preacher, Flesher Bland, preach a sermon, "which took a wondrous hold" on him, and "at last the light came." "By heaven's grace," he underwent "a good old-fashioned con-

version." The Methodists took him "on probation," put him in "owd Jim Delves's" class for proper instruction; and in a few weeks received the ardent and regenerated young man into the full communion of the church.

Later events have tended somewhat to obscure, if not to hide, the central importance of this occasion in the life of Robert Collyer. In two respects at least, however, and both of them vital, this conversion to Methodism constituted without doubt a critical moment in his career.

On the one hand, it introduced him for the first time to the world of genuine spiritual experience. All through his early days, as we have seen, he lived in an atmosphere of religion, which acted as a determining influence upon his character. The chapel at Blubberhouses, and the parish churches at Fewston and Ilkley, were familiar places, and the home on the moors as a veritable altar. But the great deeps of the inward spirit had not been uncovered, until the death of the young wife and mother had left him "desolate and afraid"; and even then the living waters there confined were left untouched until there came this great crisis of the soul. Impressive evidence of what Dr. Collyer himself thought of the significance of this moment in his life, is given in a pas-

sage in his essay on William Ellery Channing.[1] Speaking of a similar experience in the early career of the great Unitarian leader, he says, "It is the habit of our liberal faith to make light of what our orthodox brethren call a change of heart, conversion, and the new birth; but I say that, once truly apprehended, this change of heart, or conversion, is the most essential human experience of which I have any knowledge, and of all men in the world it is most essential to the man who is called to be an apostle separated unto the gospel of God. It is that point in the history of human souls at which we pass from the first man of the earth earthy, to the second man which is the Lord from heaven. . . . It lifted Wesley out of his posturing and pondering into the front rank among apostles, made a new man of Thomas Chalmers, and taught Thomas Guthrie to teach ragged schools. And so, sweet as he was, and pure, and true, Channing had to go through the travail of the new birth before he could begin to live his life and do his work; he had to give himself utterly to God—to count moral attainment secondary, and supreme love to the Supreme Love, the end of all striving. . . . This is Methodism, you say! Well, it will be a long time before I deride this element in

[1] See "Clear Grit," pages 177-178.

Methodism, fairly and truly understood. I believe in it with all my heart."

A second result of this conversion was the great and epoch-making discovery that he was dowered with the divine gift of speech. Long since, during earlier years, in his frequent wanderings over the moors, he had found himself orating to the landscape as though prompted by some eager spirit within his soul. "Something would set me thinking and talking back, as we say, with no audience but the moor sheep that were all about me, and would look up in wonder as to what it all meant, and then say, Baa." But in the Methodist chapel he had a more appreciative audience, and the spirit within him had a better chance. Going night after night to the prayer-meetings, he became accustomed to standing on his feet and bearing witness to his experience of religion. Little by little he discovered that his good neighbours heard him gladly, and were deeply moved by the fervent words that came pouring forth out of his heart. Nor was he the only one that made this discovery. For the people themselves were soon aware that they were listening to a prophet and were resolved to use him. One day old Master Delves was absent from his class, and Tom Smith, a member, speaking up from across the room, urged young Collyer to lead that night,

He was frightened, and protested. But Smith was persistent. "Nah, lad," was his word, "tha mun lead t'class to-neet; tha can do't if tha tries." The decision to try was a momentous one, for it was in reality the casting of the die for a life-time. But taking hold, he led with complete success, as had been anticipated, and shortly thereafter he was himself made leader of a class.

"Then, some weeks later, the preacher in charge of the churches in our dale came to see me and tell me this story—how the brethren in the local conference had risen up one by one and said it had been borne in on them that I had a call to preach. They were rustical men who made their own living as artisans or small farmers, and preached on Sunday and 'find yourself' for the love of God and of human souls. Now what do you think of it, the preacher said? And I answered, I thought they were right—I was ready when he was ready to give me a chance. Are you sure? he said. Yes, I answered, and went to work when I got home to think out a sermon."

From this time on, he was a lay-preacher. Every Sunday, when the fires were banked in the forge and the leathern apron laid aside, the stalwart young blacksmith went trudging across the moors or over the hills, to meet some little group of Methodists and speak to them of the

deep things of the spirit. Sometimes he talked in little chapels; more often in kitchens or taprooms or workshops; once in a while, like the great John Wesley himself, out under the open skies, by some cross-roads or in some harvest field. Then on the Monday the fires were blazing again in the smithy, and the hammer ringing with a right good-will upon the anvil. Gradually, under the influences of these new experiences, the young man found beauty creeping back into the world, and peace and joy taking their wonted places in his heart. His work began to hold him as before. His books were again the solace and inspiration of every moment that he could call his own. His friends were gathered again into his embrace, and beloved John Dobson was received once more into the sacred and secret places of his soul. Sorrow had endured for a night, but joy had come with the morning!

The experiences of the young preacher in his apostolic ventures were varied, and furnished vast amusement as well as tender thought in the recollections of after years. The first appointment was three miles up the river, at "a gaunt place" called Addingham, "and, as I found, to a handful of hearers. The sermon was all ready. It was divided into three parts. The firstly and lastly were my own; the secondly I stole" from

the sermon of a good Scotch divine, McCheyne by name, published in the "Christian Treasury." Now "this was what came of my first sermon. You must use no notes, this was the order, so I had none, but stumbled along somehow to the end. . . . After all was over, as I wended home, suddenly as if a voice had cried Halt, I halted, for it came to me in a flash that I had forgotten that brave and wonderful secondly, far away the best word I had to say; while a dear friend and brother preacher met me not long after and told me how he had stood behind a screen to listen and thought fairly well of the sermon as a first effort, but there was one curious thing about it I must bear in mind. There seemed to be a wide gap between the firstly part and the lastly! And twenty-five years after, when we met in Canada, I told him what was the matter with that first effort, and how by good rights my text should have been, 'Thou shalt not steal.' While in all honesty I may say that from then until now I have stood true to Paul's exhortation, Let him that stole, steal no more.

"I make a clean breast of this," continues the Doctor, "for two reasons. First, my sin found me out. Now if there are degrees in sin, it might be thought that a man who steals one-third of a sermon, is only one-third as bad, shall we say, as

the man who steals a whole sermon; still I was in for it all the same, because St. James says truly, or did to me, 'Whosoever shall offend in one point, he is guilty of all.' So I was cast back on myself, while there was cold comfort in the thought that I had meant to do a mean thing, and had failed to do it. This is the first reason why I have felt free to tell the story, and the second is that this offence opened the way to my ordination as a Methodist local preacher.

"I had no special eagerness to try again," continues the Doctor, "and thought they would not want me, but they did not know my secret and said I must try again. So the good old man in charge sent me to a farmhouse one Sunday on the lift of the moor, where they only had preaching now and then, and where I suppose he thought poor provender might pass where the feasts were few and far between.

"It was in June. I can see the place still, and am aware of the fragrance of the wild uplands stealing through the open lattice in bars of sunshine to mingle with the pungent snap of the peat fire on the hearthstone, which gives forth the essence of the moorlands for a thousand years. And I mind still how heavy my heart was that afternoon. . . . Still I must try, and mind my good mother's words, who would say to us, No

matter how poor you are, children, don't look poor and don't tell. They were simple-hearted folk up there of the old Methodist brand, eager and hungry for the bread of life, and very ready to come in with the grand Amen. The big farm kitchen was full of them, and they were just the hearers to help a poor fellow over the sand bar on the lift of their full hearts. So they sang with a will—and in all the world where will you hear such singing with a will as in old Yorkshire and Lancashire! Then I must pray with them. . . . Then the time for the sermon came after another hymn, when some stammering words came to my lips and then some more, while gleams of light began to play about my parable. And their eyes began to shine who listened, while now and then the Amens came in for a chorus from the chests of men who had talked to each other in the teeth of the winds up there from the times of the Saxons and the Danes. And now after all these years I still feel sure it was given me that afternoon what I should say and given them to answer, while I might say by grace I was saved through faith, but then you see this would still leave me tilting with a borrowed plume, because the faith would be mine, and I had none worth the name of my own.

"So the service ended and then the good man

of the house came and laid his hands on me and said very tenderly, 'My lad, the Lord has called thee to preach His gospel. The Lord bless thee and make thee faithful in His work,' and all the people said Amen. . . . When I think of that afternoon on the moor side, I feel I would not like to exchange this simple ordination of mine from the heart and hands of the old farmer for that of any holiness or eminence on earth. And again this is a story with a purpose, or else I would not tell it. That invasion from on high helped greatly to put me in heart, and deepen the intuition, shall I call it, that I had a call to preach, and need not filch from Scot or lot for what I must say, as one to whom a full and clear spring has been revealed need not care for the cistern."

Another wonderful memory of these early days of prophesying was that of the Sunday when he first preached in the home chapel at Ilkley. Rumours of the ordination sermon far away on the moors must have been carried back promptly to the town, for it was on the very next Sunday evening that he was invited to preach to his own folks. Dr. Collyer records that he was proud of this appointment, as well he might be; and the text was chosen and the sermon prepared for the occasion with especial care. It was plainly what is known as an "effort," but later years retained

only the recollection of the thorn planted in the flesh by a certain shoemaker, "a thoughtful man," who failed lamentably in his task of being properly impressed!

The question as to what kind of preaching was done by the ardent young blacksmith in these first days of apostolic pioneering is not difficult to answer in the light of the evidence available. Dr. Collyer himself never cherished any fond illusions. Recalling the fact that he was invited by the Methodist elder to preach "for nothing a Sunday and find myself," he comments sagely that this was "mighty poor pay, but then it was mighty poor preaching." The criticisms passed by certain of his friends and neighbours would seem to bear out the accuracy of this judgment. The shoemaker's thorn above referred to on the occasion of the Ilkley discourse, was none other than the following harsh verdict on the evening's work. "Ah want to speak to tha, lad," said the honest listener on the next morning, as Robert Collyer "proud of (his) effort," passed the door of the cobbling shop on his way to the forge. "Ah went to hear tha preach last night." "Did tha?" was the eager inquiry. "Does tha wants to knaw what ah thought of it," continued the imperturbable shoemaker. "Well, if tha wants to knaw, ah want to tell tha. Tha'll never mak a

preacher while tha lives!" Then, seeing how his harsh criticism had pained and depressed the budding preacher, and being a kind-hearted fellow, he quickly added, "Don't mistake what ah mean. Tha won't make a preacher for us in t' Methodist church. Tha may do somewhere else, but tha won't do for us. When tha preaches a sermon tha must say, 'Thus saith the Lord,' and not lose thi way reasoning about it. Ah fear tha'll want to reason ower much, an' if tha does tha'll have to git away."

Somewhat more comforting, and certainly much fuller of understanding, was the comment of another neighbour on the same sermon in the Ilkley chapel. "I met the miller," said Dr. Collyer, telling the tale in after years, "and he said, 'Ah heard tha preach last night.' I said, 'Did you, sir?' He said, 'Ah'll tell tha what they're going to do wi' thee. They're going to make a spare rail of thee—they'll put thee into every gap there is. Now thee look out.' "

That the preaching of Robert Collyer in these days of apostleship to the Yorkshire Methodists was crude, rough, unformed in the extreme, may be not unsafely conjectured. It is impossible to conceive, even in the light of later extraordinary achievements, that this young and untrained artisan developed at this time anything other than

the most elemental qualities of utterance. And yet, from the beginning, there must have been a full supply of that pithy wisdom and homely wit which never failed him to the end, much of that vigour, originality and native charm which were so supremely his characteristics in his best days as a preacher, and something even of that poetic beauty, sweet human tenderness and profound understanding of the common heart of man, which remained forever the real secret of his power. Certainly there was spontaneity if nothing more—that spontaneity of thought and speech which is as refreshing as the full tide of a summer stream, and to the shrewd, sharp-witted, but all too often tongue-tied denizens of the countryside, as glad a miracle as "the over-plus of blossom" in the spring. The canny elder of the home district knew what he was doing when he asked this whole-souled young blacksmith to preach at Addingham. The full-voiced dalesmen in the farm kitchen were not deceived when they chanted their chorus of Amens in answer to the lad's appeals. The devout old farmer was moved by a real prompting of the Holy Ghost when he laid his hands upon the preacher's head and pledged him solemnly to God's service. Even the observations of the shoemaker and the miller show the impression of rude but genuine power

which their townsman's word had made upon them. There were times, of course, when strength seemed to fail him; but more frequent I must believe was such an experience as that "on the lift of the moor" when "it was given (him)," he knew not how nor why, "what (he) should say." The true spring of living water was in him, and it needed only the deep-cut channel to give it easy and abundant flow.

"There was many a Sunday," he says, "when it was like dropping buckets into empty wells. There was no preparation possible for me like that so priceless through the books and masters. I must come at my purpose in some other way. But now and then as I would be hard at work, some thought would grow luminous for earth and heaven, and be as the seed that groweth secretly, and then there would be no trouble when the right time came for the reaping. Or one would elude me, do what I would. Yet there would be a day of redemption when the truth I could not capture would lift me on its wings and turn the croak I had felt I must make into a new song. One of these Sundays I well remember. I had walked twelve miles to preach, with my heart like a lump of lead, for there seemed to be no accent of the Holy Ghost in the word I must say. But it was rare listening and good answer in a

small chapel I found in an old farm kitchen, and I spoke two hours and wist not of the time, nor as it seemed did they."

There was something over a year of this preaching up and down the dale. Six days in the week, it was hard work at the anvil; and then, on the seventh day, it was the glad release to preach the gospel near or far. Into this new and glorious activity, Robert Collyer seemed to be thrusting firm and strong the new roots of a new life. But as time went on, it became more and more evident that the roots were not holding. The earthquake of sudden sorrow had broken up the soil too widely and deeply for him really to catch hold again and flourish. The new planting must have new soil. Therefore did he ponder emigration—at first to Australia, whither he had offers of help for the journey, but finally and at last definitely to America.

The idea of this venture to strange lands across the seas was in the beginning an echo of the hopes which his parents had early cherished, as we have seen. "Before I was born," he says, "my father and mother wanted to emigrate to this new world, but they could not raise the money to bring them over, and all through my childhood I can still hear them speaking of their regret that they would never be able to cross the sea to these

states. And so I grew up with the longing to come here, I think, in the very marrow of my bones."

As time went on, the economic motive began to play a prominent part in his speculations. Life in England in those days was a hard and often wearying struggle for bare subsistence. The big loaf had not yet come into the English labourer's home as it did after the repeal of the Corn Laws. "Fifty cents," writes the Doctor, "was all you got for shoeing a horse all round, and as your Yorkshire horse has big feet, this left me a very small margin." Better living than this was wanted, "because I always believed that good living, if you take care of yourself, has something to do with a good life." He had no extravagant financial ambitions. "My ideal future," he writes, "was not a great one. My whole ambition was to make my way as a blacksmith. But I wanted a place where I could have a little home of my own, with books to read, and the chance to educate my children. I mind that I pictured to myself a quiet little cottage in a Pennsylvania village, where I should live with my wife and my children yet to come. In my picture I painted a pretty library, and plenty of books, and a garden. I told my desires to my friends. They all tried to dissuade me from them.

They offered me letters to get work anywhere save in America. But at last I started, and, as I expected, when I got here, I found every one ready to help me along. At our first Christmas dinner we had a turkey smoking on the table—a bird which in England I had no more thought we should ever eat of than I did of eating the American eagle."

Other motives also had their determining influence on this adventure. Thus Dr. Collyer writes in one place that he wanted "not to be a cipher in a monarchy, but a citizen in a republic. I had no vote; I wanted one, and also to learn how to use it honestly and well. I had to bow and cringe before men who had rank and title. I hated to do it, as they say one I must not name hates holy water."

But no one of these motives, nor all of them together, perhaps, might have availed, had it not been for the crisis and change recorded in this chapter. The death of his young wife, with the conversion to Methodism which followed, constituted the profoundest experience he had ever known. The old familiar world was suddenly lost, and a new world found. Life, which had hitherto been a simple round of working, playing, reading, living, now took on something of the stern aspects of duty and sacrifice. Religion,

which had always been a sober reality, now became transfigured into an enthusiasm, a conviction, a consuming passion. In his sorrow, he had wandered blind and stumbling into waste places, and been lost. As a result of his conversion, he had recovered his sight and found his way into quiet paths of peace. Under the influence of Methodist teaching and habit, he had laid hold at last on those well-springs of spiritual insight, those living fountains of human sympathy, those great deeps of faith in the power and the love of God, upon which he drew so abundantly and unfailingly in his later years as pastor and preacher. In the most literal sense of the word, he had undergone a "new birth," entered upon a new life, become a new man. What, therefore, more natural, nay inevitable, than that he should begin to dream of other lands, and at last, in due season, like another Abraham, go out, "not knowing whither he went"! He had started all over again in the things of the spirit—why should he not similarly start all over again in the things of the flesh? A new world without, as a reflection or rather expression of the new world within—this had become a necessity!

As early, therefore, as the closing months of 1849, Robert Collyer had made his decision to emigrate to the United States. It was not easy

to make the change all at once, so that many weeks passed away before he laid down his hammer on "Jacky" Birch's old anvil and closed the smithy door for the last time. By the spring-tide, however, everything was ready, and, as a fitting symbol of the close of the old life in England and the beginning of the new life in America, he pledged hand and heart, on April 9, 1850, to Ann Armitage, daughter of a cloth-maker in the town, twenty-eight years of age, "the woman who was to be by far my better half through more than forty years." He had not thought to marry again. The vials of his love would seem to have been empty. But his besetting loneliness, the sight of his motherless child, the need of a wife and home-maker in the new land, above all the tenderness and fidelity of one sweet Ilkley lass, did their perfect work, and in this relation as in others, he resolved to enter upon a new life. Long after this companion of his years had passed away, Dr. Collyer loved to recall the "memories of a time, when," as he put it in his inimitable speech, "I saw her sitting in the sunshine on a hill-side, and wondered whether this might not be the woman in all the world that God had placed here for me, who would make good my broken life, which had been stricken with great sorrow. And of a day, not very long after, when the word

of the Lord came to me, as I most surely believe, saying, 'Get thee out from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee'; and how it seemed so hard, when we had plighted our troth, to ask this maiden, whose life had lain in fairer lines than mine, to go with me into this unknown world, that I begged that I might come first and find work and start a home. . . . But I can still see the clear shining in her eyes and hear the very tones of her voice as she answered me from the holy book, 'Whither thou goest, I will go, and whither thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. The Lord do so to me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.' And then I knew something of the gift that had come to me in the great and loyal heart."

And so, on a Tuesday, April 9, 1850, these two were wed.[2] On Wednesday they started for Liverpool, leaving the baby, Samuel, in the safe care of Mother Collyer in Leeds, until the home across the seas could be established. On Saturday, April 13, they "set sail in an old ship called

[2] "If we had taken stock in omens, there was one at the wedding, for the very ancient minister who married us, began with the burial service in solemn accents, and the clerk who must say the Amens, rushed on him, took the book from his hand, and set him right."—R. C. in "Lecture on Dr. Furness."

the *Roscius*, and in the steerage, to seek (their) fortunes in this new world."

That this departure was easy is not for a moment to be believed. Behind, to be sure, were struggle, weariness, sorrow, and a blind alley; before were opportunity, promise, and an open road. But behind also were all the precious treasures of Robert Collyer's heart. The mother in Leeds, who carried in her face the beauty of those early years in Washburndale; the friends in Ilkley town, who had grown to know and love this stalwart smith with the tongue of flame; the pleasant moors aglow with heather and ringing with the songs of birds; the long winter nights close by the fire with open book to enlighten and beguile; the quiet grave by the church where had ended his first love and his first life—these were some of the things that he was leaving. And before him also was not merely promise, but that "hazard of new fortunes" which is quite as often disaster as it is victory. We may well believe, therefore, that the moment of leave-taking wrenched the heart. There was comfort in the Bible and its accompanying commentary which first among his few books he had stowed away in his pack; there was joy in the brave young woman who had put her hand in his, and resolved to lodge where he lodged, and die where he died;

there were challenge and inspiration in the adventurous path in which together these two had set their feet. But when he turned away for the last time, it must have been his farewell to his mother, his last moment in the quiet after-glow of evening by the unmarked grave, and the blank uncertainty of the future which were uppermost in his thoughts. What did it all mean? Where was he going? When should he return? What was to befall? "I remember," he says, "how I stood at a sharp turn of the road to take a last look at the old place, it might be forever, and how I said to myself—I wonder if I shall ever meet my old comrades again, and if I do, will they be glad to see me, or will they pity me and say, Poor fellow, he made a great mistake. It really was an adventure, which might have touched a steadier nerve than mine. I had never been forty miles from the spot in which I was born, never seen a ship or the sea, and didn't know a living soul on this continent I could go to for advice, or for a grasp of the hand."

It was a moment as sad as it was brave. But could he have looked forward as later he was able to look back, he would have been relieved of future fears if not of past regrets. In after days he saw with clearness that his very decision to go and begin anew was itself the warrant of his suc-

cess. For this was no idle whim or despairing venture. It was a resolve made of that fibre of creative manhood, which the world can never wholly overcome. "I think I may say," the Doctor wrote years afterwards, of this turning-point in his career, "I had my father's and mother's gift in a certain power to hold my own, and to see a thing through when I had once made up my mind." He might, therefore, have been of good cheer, for the future, though hidden, was secure, even as the past.

CHAPTER V

AMERICA!

1850-1858

"The light . . . on these States."—R. C. in "Some Memories," page 42.

THE voyage to America was anything but agreeable. Steamers were crossing the Atlantic, but the Ilkley blacksmith and his bride had no money to spend for time or comfort, and therefore took passage in a sailing vessel. This craft was styled "the good ship *Roscius*" in the posters; but our emigrant pair were not many days "out of" Liverpool, before they "concluded that she should have been named the Atrocious, so full she was of evil smells—and the bilge-water in our poor cabin, while the food for which we had paid good money of the realm was so bad that I can imagine no workhouse now in England, or prison, where it would not create a riot." It was an unhappy bridal trip, but it had its ending in just "one month to a day," when on May 11, 1850, the travellers reached New York.

As they looked upon the city, they realised with a fresh poignancy, their utter loneliness in this new land which was to be their home. Not a soul was here who knew them, or could give them greeting. "I remember," writes the Doctor, "how we said when we saw the land, How good it would be if there was one man or woman in all that strange new world who would meet us with a welcome, and say, 'Come and tarry with us for a day.'" What wonder that Dr. Collyer confesses that they were "lonesome," and that his "own heart was very heavy"!

Furthermore, there was not only lonesomeness, but anxiety, to trouble them. For, strange as it may now seem, the question as to what kind of treatment they would receive at the hands of the people in America had been a matter for speculation, and even for some little fear, throughout the voyage. Dr. Collyer tells us that he "had read all the books that he could lay (his) hands on" about America, but wanting to know more than books could give, he "had gone before his leave-taking to see a sort of kinsman who had been three times to the States, to seek his fortune, and said to him, Is there a good chance for a man over there in America? Are the people kind to a stranger? No, he said, there ain't a good chance, and you can do a great deal better here.

'Whaa them Yankees,' he said in his broad Yorkshire, 'is saa keen and cunning, they'll tak the verra teeth ott o' yer heead, if ye dooant keep yer moath shut.' As he had lost some half-dozen," continues the Doctor, "I didn't like to ask him if 'them Yankees' had got those, but the prospect was a little blue."

All fears, however, proved groundless. Before he had set foot on American soil, while he was yet waiting on the ship's deck to land, Collyer heard from the pier a hearty voice in the broad Yorkshire dialect. It was like a breath of heather from the moors, or the song of an upland thrush. He found the speaker to be a tavern-keeper, who had come to the dock in search of guests. Without more ado, the young emigrant placed himself and his wife in the charge of this man. "I felt we should be safe," says the Doctor, "as I knew all the Yorkshire ways, and I could form some sort of judgment perhaps of these men who were bound to have my teeth."

His host proved all that could be desired—and so did the second inhabitant of this new land whom he chanced to encounter. On the night of their arrival Mrs. Collyer was taken ill and needed medicine. "I went to a drug store on Broadway," says the Doctor, "to learn my first lesson and see how it was done. I found the man

was civil and indeed friendly. He asked me if I had just landed, and what I meant to do. It would have been very pleasant to hear so kind a man in England, but here I was on my guard, and so I said to myself, I shall know what you mean when I see what you charge. How much, I said, when the package was pushed over. O, you are very welcome, the good fellow answered, keep your money. You will need it. And then he held out his hand and said, Come in again, I shall be glad to see you. And so I went back to the tavern with my first lesson, and something like a mist in my eyes, thinking of the way in which the very first American man I had met had pulled my teeth."

Here was a heartening start of his life in the new country. It goes far toward explaining his confession of later years, "I fell in love with America the day I landed and have never changed my mind." Further experience only tended to confirm the favourable first impression, as we shall see.

The thought uppermost in Robert Collyer's mind, of course, from the moment of his landing, was that of finding immediate employment. "About twenty dollars was all we had to start us in this new world," says the Doctor, so that time was short for the idle enjoyment of sight-seeing

or native hospitality. Two days after their arrival in New York, therefore, Robert and his wife started for Philadelphia, which had been the original destination in their minds on leaving England. There was no particular reason for this choice, so far as we know. "When I had made up my mind to come to this new world," says the Doctor, ". . . and the question came, 'Where shall I alight in that land?' the answer could not be mistaken, 'In Philadelphia.' Why there of all places I could not have told you, but may say in passing that I was a staunch Methodist then and believed, as I do still, in answers to prayer when these touch some momentous turning point in our human life. 'To Philadelphia,' the answer came." [1]—And therefore, when he touched these shores, it was to Philadelphia he went.

The joy of the journey, by way of South Amboy and the Delaware, "the cheapest route," lingered in the hearts of the two travellers for many a long year. It was a perfect May day, with orchards in full bloom, new sown farmlands smiling in the sun, and all the air alive with prophecies of summer. The lovely land-

[1] In his old age, he wrote to Mrs. James T. Fields, "I decided that Philadelphia should be the place, for I knew no one anywhere, and I loved the meaning of that word 'Philadelphia.'"

scape seemed to hold out its arms in welcome, and to repeat the friendly greeting of the Yorkshire tavern-keeper and the Broadway druggist. It was therefore with hearts overflowing with life and cheer that they entered the City of Brotherly Love, and made their way to an inn, kept also by a Yorkshireman, which had been recommended to them by their New York host.

A search of the pages of the Philadelphia *Ledger* the next morning revealed the following advertisement: "Wanted, a blacksmith. Apply to No. 5 Commerce Street." Here was manna in the wilderness! Without a moment's delay, Robert hastened to the address given, applied for the job, and got it. The forge was located in Hammond's hammer factory, at a little place called Shoemakertown,[2] seven miles north of Philadelphia, on the Tacony Creek. The work of making claw hammers was new, but the young Yorkshire blacksmith had years of practical experience behind him, and was unafraid.

The journey to his new home and place of employment brought fresh evidence of the friendliness of America. He was to report at the forge the next morning. Bright and early, therefore, he was plodding along the Old York highroad

[2] Now Ogontz, Pa.

to Shoemakertown, in what was already a torrid sun. "I was tired," says the Doctor, "and a little sad, when a gentleman passed in a carriage, looked at me a moment, halted and said, Get in and have a ride. Now I had plodded along the roads in the mother-land when the humour took me, ever since I could remember, and a great many gentlemen had passed me in carriages, but in all my life not one of them had ever said, Get in and have a ride; and so this was something of a wonder. I got into the carriage and we fell into a kindly talk, and my friend got to know almost as much about my life, as I knew myself, in an hour, held out his hand when our ways parted, after saying all sorts of cheerful things about America—and I went on my way thinking of what I had heard about Americans."

This was Robert Collyer's "second lesson," as he called it. "The third lesson was no great matter, but it still lies in my heart with the sweetness of a June rose. I had turned down a lane near the end of my journey that day, when all at once I came to a little garden foaming over with lilacs, the blossom I loved best. I could not resist gathering a whole lot of them into my arms and burying my face in them as I stood by the fence and just sobbing perhaps over another garden, thousands of miles away, when I heard a

step, and saw a woman coming out of the cottage. There, I said to myself, I shall hear the rough side of that woman's tongue; she will want to know what I am 'a-doin' at them air lilacs.' What she did was to say, in the cheeriest way imaginable, Would you like some lilacs? And when I answered, If you will give me one, please, I shall be ever so glad, she made up a bunch as big as a broom, and handed it over the fence, with a pleasant word and a smile, while I said as I went down the lane, Nether millstones are nothing to the hardness of this American heart, and how they do draw one's teeth, to be sure!"

One other experience Dr. Collyer always liked to link with these three, and this "the noblest and the best."

"When I got work, (my wife) said she would get work too, and then we should the sooner get a home together. So she took to sewing by the day for a lady near by, but was taken almost at once with a fever she had caught, no doubt, on the ship,—and it was a question of life and death. Well, now, the proper thing, you will say, was to take my wife to the hospital." The woman for whom she was working, however—a Mrs. Thomason, wife of a Presbyterian clergyman, and a mother with four children—would

not hear of such a thing. On the contrary, she took Mrs. Collyer into her home, and nursed her as if she had been her very own, until she was well. "Then we said," continued the Doctor, "we can never pay you for this loving kindness. But you have been at expense also; please let us know how much, and we will make it good just as soon as we can earn the money. But they would not hear of it. They sent us forth with blessing and benediction."

"We were very poor," says Dr. Collyer, "when they poured on our young lives that lovely benediction."—Work was secured, however, and the young blacksmith "went at it with a will. I worked until my wife had to wring out my clothes at noon, for another stint at the hammers." Hammer-making was a new craft, as we have seen; but he was on "piece work," which put him on his mettle, and soon he was making twice as much money from 7 A.M. to 4 P.M. each day as he had made in England from 6 A.M. to 7 P.M. Before he left the anvil for good and all, he was making twelve dozen claw-hammers a day, which was a record for the country-side.

As soon as the wife had recovered from the fever, a modest home was found in Shoemakertown. This was exchanged a year later for "one

much better, in a lovely green lane, away from the forge." Here they remained until the great change nine years later, in 1859. Here "the children came, as I thought they would," says the Doctor; "as welcome as the flowers of May, for I felt that in all human probability I should always be able to feed them and clothe them and keep them warm, and give them the education befitting the children of a poor man." Emma[3] was the first to arrive, on February 11, 1851. The second child, Agnes Sheldmerdine, born in 1853, died in infancy. Then came twins, Amy and Alice, who "were only a day old when they were taken." For the second time Mrs. Collyer was seriously ill, and sorrow was heavy upon the home. New courage and hope, however, came with the birth of Harriet Norman[4] on June 14, 1857. It was after the removal to Chicago in 1859, that the last two children were born—Annie Kennicutt[5] on May 12, 1860, and Robert Staples on January 10, 1862. Meanwhile in 1854, Samuel, the son by the first marriage, was brought over from his grandmother in England to his father in America, by a shopmate in the Shoemakertown factory, a Mr. Gallagher by

[3] Now Mrs. Hosmer, of Chicago.
[4] Later Mrs. Joseph Eastman, died September 23, 1903.
[5] Died February 10, 1886.

name, who crossed the seas in this year to get his family. It is interesting to note that Samuel's voyage was on the S. S. *City of Glasgow,* which disappeared, without leaving a trace behind, on the return trip.

The country in which the new home was established, was one to win the heart. It is true that Philadelphia, the second city in the land, was only seven miles distant; and Shoemakertown itself a not too lovely industrial settlement. It is true also that the moors, the dales, the craggy hills of Yorkshire were all unknown. But the flat Pennsylvania countryside had wonders all its own, and soon appeared to the new settlers as "the most beautiful land (they) had ever laid eyes on." Walking out from the ugly factories and squatty homes of the village, they were lost in no time in the green lanes, bordered by lilac hedges and orchard blooms, which threaded the pleasant farm-lands in every direction. Stretches of meadow and pasture, watered by pleasant streams, and broken by occasional clumps of trees, interspersed the wide spaces of cultivated ground. In the spring, the air was heavy with the smell of wild flowers, or of the sodden, upturned soil, and later with the sweetness of the new-mown hay; while autumn brought the fragrance of gathered harvests and

dropping fruit. Herds of cows fed quietly in the summer heat; heavy teams of horses or yokes of oxen raised clouds of dust along the highways; and workers toiled in the fields, or rested in the shade of spacious and prosperous-looking farm-buildings. Winter, with its frozen ground, shivering stacks of withered corn-stalks, and drifting snows, was less cheerful. But the cutting east winds of the Yorkshire moors were unknown, and long periods of rain and mist a rarity. It is doubtful if Robert Collyer's eyes ever rested on anything in this new country which seemed as lovely to him as the purple heather, or his ear heard music to compare with the song of the Washburn throstle, or his feet trod earth as welcome as the long slopes to the Wharfedale uplands. His references through many years to these familiar features of the homeland, show with what fondness his heart clung to what it had first known and loved. But there was a warmth, an abundance, a serenity about this smiling countryside which, in spite of ugly villages here and there like Shoemakertown, had a peculiarly ingratiating charm, while a certain virgin freshness, suggestive of unspoiled resources, brought constant reminder to the settler from over-seas that he had indeed passed from an old to a new world.

Such a land brought compensation to the Collyers for what they had left behind; and glad relief as well from the rather sordid and ugly surroundings of Shoemakertown. What was missing was not so much the beauty of the old country, as the companionship of the old friends. It is this which explains, in all probability, the early homesickness of which Dr. Collyer made confession in after years. But this lack was soon supplied, not so much perhaps through the essential friendliness of the people, though this was most certainly present, as through that innate quality of personal attraction with which Robert Collyer was endowed from the very beginning of his days. There was a winsomeness about him which was irresistible. One had but to look upon his open, good-natured countenance, hear the vibrant ring of his voice as it reverberated from his massive chest, feel the warm clasp of his tremendous hand, to love him. Honesty clothed him as a garment; goodwill radiated from his face as a glowing light. Wherever he walked the ways of men, they leaped to meet him, and meeting, took him to their hearts. "The only way to have a friend," says Emerson in his essay on Friendship, "is to be one." This it is which explains the seeming miracle of the drug clerk in New York, the driver on the Old

York road, and the woman of the lilacs in Shoemakertown. And this it is which explains also the warm hearts which promptly opened all about them in their new home. "We sought no friends," says the Doctor naïvely, in his "Some Memories;" "they came to us of their own free will." Of course they did—as naturally as the flower turns to the sun or the bee to the blossom. The warmth and sweetness of his soul, reflected in a face of noble beauty, drew all men unto him, even in these days when he was a mere immigrant, unknown to acquaintanceship, much less to fame. Nor should we forget the wife who was a woman of infinite charm and large capacity of affection. To her no less than to him must be rendered accounting for the doors and hearts which opened to them so promptly. They were a fascinating couple, to know whom was to love and serve.

On the very first day in the new home, the good woman next door came in with a dish of stewed tomatoes. On the same day, an old Quaker lady, "well up among the nineties," came hobbling across the road on her crutch, to give them greeting. Another neighbour, Old Michael, a representative of the German stock which was thickly planted in this particular district, early became a fast friend of the new blacksmith.

Albert Engle, the store-keeper, and Charles Bosler, the miller, trusted and loved him. And so, little by little, the niches left vacant by absent friends were filled, and the lonely hearts made happy. When the two young voyagers landed in New York, there was no friend to give them welcome; no familiar spot to which they could turn for refuge; no opening, so far as they knew, for employment and the establishment of a home. Within a month, all these were supplied. America had become to them as their own dear land across the seas.

It was in mid-May, 1850, that Robert Collyer went to work at the forge in Hammond's factory. All went well until July, when "we had to stop, to put in a new boiler. I could not afford to lay off," says the Doctor, "I must have a job of some sort." So for two weeks he tossed hay in a neighbour's meadow. Then, when the crop was ingathered, he sought out his employer, Mr. Hammond, and asked for a job on the new boiler. There was no opening, save that of carrying a hod for the brick-layers; but this was eagerly accepted. "So I carried a hod," boasted the Doctor, "for a dollar a day, to make ends meet; and in doing this I had to go through the nastiest hole in the wall with my load of bricks you ever saw, full of jagged ends, and the result

was that on Saturday night I had more perfectly new and original bumps on that poor head of mine than your phrenologists ever dreamed of." There was balm, however, for the sensitive soul, as well as the bruised head, when at the end the "dear helpmeet" took the tired hod-carrier to her heart, and blessed him with her "Well done."

The lay-off, fortunately, was of short duration, and Collyer was soon back at the anvil. Then followed a period of seven years, when work was steady and wages good. At one time, the young blacksmith was earning as much as fifty dollars a month, but such an income was possible only during the cool months.

Then, like a bolt out of the blue, came "the fearful panic of 1857, when everything came to a deadlock." From October to the following March, the fires were out and the anvil silent. The situation in the little home, as in hundreds of thousands of similar homes throughout the land, was desperate. Here was the mother, not any too well; three children clinging to her knee; and savings sadly depleted by two lay-offs, one "with a broken arm, and again with a splint of steel in my eye," and by the recurring illness "for weeks together" of Mrs. Collyer. In such a plight any odd job, however humble, was welcome. "I took to whatever I could get to do,"

is the Doctor's word. "I did not care, you see, what the job was, so it was honest work, because a dollar a day meant independence, while to fold your hands meant beggary."

For awhile he worked at digging a well for a neighbour. Then he laboured "for a spell" on the turnpike. A gentleman long years after told him that he had seen him at this time breaking stones; but it is the Doctor's testimony that this, if true, passed from his memory. Such ventures helped to keep the home together, and the children fed and clothed; but they would have failed in the end, had not good friends who knew the worth of the sturdy Yorkshireman, as we have seen, come gallantly to the rescue. "Don't worry, Collyer," was the word of Albert Engle, "come to my store for anything that is needed in the family; it will be all right by-and-by." [6] "Come to my mill for all the flour and meal you

[6] "Two weeks ago this very morning, Albert Engle died. His son wrote me at once that 'Father died this morning very suddenly, and Mother wants to know if you won't come down and take the funeral service.'

"I went to the old town, my home so many years ago, and then and there I told the large gathering present the story of my acquaintance and intimacy for forty-six years with the departed one, and spoke of him as the good husband, the good father, the good citizen, the good friend, and the good merchant, and said to them that I would pledge my confidence that Albert Engle did not possess one unclean dollar when he died."—R. C., in an interview, October 12, 1896.

need," said Charles Bosler, "I can trust you." And George Heller, landlord, asked no rent during the distressful period. "I must record their names in my book of life," wrote Dr. Collyer in his autobiography; so I know that he would have me also record them here as those who made good the ancient promise, "Before you ask, I will answer."

Thus, by hard labour of his own, and by the helping hands of friends, Collyer "pulled through, none the worse for the panic." By early summer the fires were lighted again; for two more years, his hammer rang blithely on the anvil; and the home prospered in its humble way as never before.

Life during these nine years at the forge in Shoemakertown was very similar, in all outward aspects at least, to what it had been in Ilkley. The hours of labour were shorter, the wages larger, and the general standard of living, therefore, higher in normal times than had ever been dreamed of in the old country. But the drama of experience was much the same. At the centre, of course, was the day's work. Morning and evening brought the companionship of wife and children, friendly intercourse with neighbours, occasional political or religious discussion in the stores or at the cross-roads. "My neighbours,"

he says, "wanted me to take out papers of citizenship, but I told them I would wait awhile. They had been used to the country all their lives —I wanted to study it for a time." Often on Sundays and holidays, especially in summer, there were strolls down the green lanes, and over the meadows. Everything outside of the routine of the anvil, however, was tempered on this side of the Atlantic, as it had been on the other, by Robert Collyer's twin passions of reading and preaching.

The love of books was burning as hotly in his heart as ever—perhaps more hotly, to the extent at least that the increased income made it possible for a time to add fuel to the flames. "From the first," writes the Doctor, "I bought books, and denied myself beer, because I could not afford both. I liked beer, but I liked books better." Before many months had passed, however, the purchase of even an occasional volume became an extravagance which the good wife, with a cautious eye to the future, refused to tolerate. The expense of the new home, the arrival of little children with mouths to feed and bodies to clothe, the support of the mother[7] in Leeds which Robert shared now and for many years to

[7] "Father had no business to succeed to, and no property. Left Mother and five of us. . . . Dear old lady living yet. We all

come with his brother, the need of saving against an evil day, all these conditions made necessary the use of every penny earned by the hard labour at the anvil. When illness of the mother, or accident to the father, came along, the fiscal situation became serious. And when there came unemployment, as in 1850 and 1857, there was positive disaster. The purchase of books, even second-hand ones, under such circumstances, became impossible. Now and again the young blacksmith, tempted by books as a toper by beer, yielded to the weaknesses of the flesh; and then desperate were the endeavours to conceal his offence from the watchful mother at home. He tells of one delightful occasion when he was guilty of expending almost a whole dollar for a thick volume of Littel, which had proved absolutely irresistible. He "durst not" bring it home; so he hid it carefully away under a currant bush in the yard, with the idea of rising early the next morning and smuggling the damning object into the house. His wiles were successful; and it was some days before the wife discovered the volume in his hand. "My dear," was the instant query, "where did you get that book?"

take care of her and hope she will live to be a hundred."—R. C. in letter (undated) written early in his Chicago days to Miss Alice Baker.

"Oh," replied the husband softly, and with a fine nonchalance, "I have had this book some time!"

By such desperate ventures as this was a home library slowly but surely built up. In addition to the Bible and commentary referred to above, Robert Collyer had brought some sixteen or eighteen other books with him across the sea. In the nine years at Shoemakertown, from 1850 to 1859, he reckons that he spent in all for books not more than ten dollars. Still, books were cheap—this was the age of pirated editions; and what with judicious purchases of second-hand copies, and occasional gifts, the volumes on the shelves slowly but surely grew in number. By 1859, he can write in a personal letter, "I have gathered a good library in this land of cheap coarse books—essayists, poets, history, and the Encyclopædia Britannica (new edition), with plenty others."

Not to such limited resources, however, could he be confined. Such a thirst for reading as beset this man, must find other springs of water; and, fortunately for him, they were at hand. "I presently heard," he writes, "of a library in the small town of Hatboro, six or seven miles away, six one way and seven the other. A fine old farmer had found, a long while ago, that this was

the noblest use he could make of a good deal of his money—to build up a library away among the rich green lands; and so there it was waiting for me, with its treasure of good books. I see them again, as they stand on the shelves, and think I could walk right in and lay my hands on those that won me most potently, and cast their spell again over my heart—I may mention Hawthorne among them all as the author I found there for the first time who won my heart for good and all, as we may say, and holds it still. Then I found a great treasure in no long time in Philadelphia, that I could no more exhaust than you can exhaust the spring we have been glancing at by drinking, which dips down toward the deepness of the world. I was still bound fast by the anvil, for this was our living, but there was my life, so far as good books could make it, rich for me and noble, in the great library again seven miles away. So what matters about the hard day's work at the anvil, while there was some new volume to read when the day's work was done, or old one to read with an ever new delight? My new book or old one, with the sweet, green lane in the summer time where I could walk while the birds sang their native song, and the fragrance of the green things growing floated on the soft summer air,

and the friends in winter, with the good wife busy about the room and the little ones sleeping in their cribs—I look back to those times still, and wonder whether they were not the best I ever knew. I was reading some lines the other day, in an old English ballad written three hundred years ago, and they told the story of those times—

'O for a booke and a shadie nook, eyther in doore or out,
With the green leaves whisp'ring overhede, or the street cries all about,
Where I maie reade, all to my ease, both of the New and Olde,
For a right good Booke, whereon to looke, was better to me than Golde.' "

Was there ever a more insatiable reader? Night and morning, by the fireside in winter and in the open fields in summer, at the anvil and in the preaching, it was always a book which was the intimate companion and comforter. "In my life," says the Doctor in another place, "from fourteen to the day (a certain friend) met me in Germantown, there was no spare moment I did not read. I read while the iron was heating in the fire, while I ate my meals, from quitting work to bed-time, and in the early morning. My

poor wife often said, 'I cannot get you to talk as other husbands do. Look up and let me hear your voice.' I fear I was a dumb dog; but it is a comfort to remember I was never a mean dog. But this was the substance of my life from 30 to about 56." His oldest son, Samuel, in an autobiographical statement, says, "One of my duties in those days (in Shoemakertown) was to carry his luncheon to him at the shop, and I have a distinct recollection of seeing him many times reading a book while blowing the bellows." A Quaker woman of the neighbourhood, who saw much of him these days, in reminiscing in later years, testified that he was a tireless reader. "I can see him now," she said, "with his somewhat shabby coat, carrying a book in his pocket. He was always reading. He kept a book by him constantly while about his work; and when he went anywhere after his work, he always carried a book. That was how he obtained his knowledge."

As to what this knowledge was, or what books he read at this time, we have information as scant, strangely enough, as that pertaining to the former days in Yorkshire. Mention of the earlier favourites of his youthful years—Bunyan, Goldsmith, Burns and Shakespeare—recurs more than once. He now adds Hawthorne to

the list, as we have seen. Charlotte Brontë was first discovered at this time. Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was read with enthusiasm as soon as it appeared. The amusing story about Littel indicates that literature of a more serious character had as strong an appeal as pure literature. The fact of the matter is, in all probability, that anything that was a book was grist to his mill, with his inclination running strongly in the direction of the great masters of England and America who knew the human heart, and revealed its valour, pity and endless mystery. Lacking a competent guide, and himself untrained and therefore devoid of standards, he undoubtedly wandered often in strange by-paths, and more than once lost his way. But his instinct was sound, he knew and clung to his own, and in the course of years built up a knowledge of biography, fiction, history and folk-lore which, while all his own and thus to a remarkable degree unique, would yet have put to shame the knowledge of many a proud student of universities. One wonders, with a feeling akin to pity, what Robert Collyer would have been, had the life-long hunger of his heart for trained study been satisfied. One cannot believe that this experience would have altered those native qualities of understanding, charm and hu-

man sympathy, which were the sources of his power all his days, while giving back nothing commensurate, intellectually and spiritually, in return. And yet just enough men have been spoiled—shall we say despoiled?—in this way, to make it possible for us to rest well content with what actually took place. In the case of Robert Collyer, at any rate, we may have confidence that all things worked together for good.

The second passion which found dominating expression in these years was preaching. "I came here," says Dr. Collyer, in an autobiographical fragment, "resolved to do two things—to work at the anvil week-days, and to preach on Sundays."

In preparation for this latter function, he brought with him across the seas a letter of commendation from the Methodist brethren in England. Soon after his arrival in Philadelphia, he discovered in a certain book-seller, Thomas Stokes by name, a Methodist lay-preacher, and to him he immediately presented his letter. He was warmly received, and taken to a neighbouring church on the next Sunday, when he was formally presented to, and received by, the minister. Later on, when he had established his home in Shoemakertown, Collyer and his wife joined the Methodist church near at hand in Milestown, and

here again were given cordial welcome. It was only a matter of time when he was introduced to the clergyman in charge of the Montgomery County circuit, and regularly admitted to the band of local preachers.

All endeavours, however, to get started in the actual work of preaching, met with failure, for a reason which was as appalling as it was unexpected. At the very first service which he had attended in Philadelphia under the escort of the good book-seller, there had been a prayer meeting after the sermon; and Robert Collyer, in token of the goodwill of his new friends, was asked to "make a prayer." Nothing loath to try his powers of divine petition in this new land, he rose to his feet and poured forth his soul in familiar Yorkshire fashion. Then followed what he described in after years as "the scare of a lifetime"; for he was informed on his way home, by honest Thomas Stokes, that the meeting had not understood "the half of what (he) said.—I suppose you spoke in the Yorkshire dialect," continued Stokes. "You will have to speak as we do here in America, if you are a local preacher."

Here was a "panic" indeed, for Collyer had set his heart, as we have seen, upon preaching among the brethren in America exactly as he had done in England. Nor was the case remedied

any when he went to be received by Mr. Taft, "the chief of the board of stewards or church guardians" in the local district. "He could not understand me, apparently," writes Dr. Collyer in an account of the incident, "for I then spoke the broadest Yorkshire dialect, which is about as distant from the English language, in its sound at least, as the Highland dialect. 'You want to preach, do you?' said he after awhile. 'Well, I guess we may some day give you an opportunity.' But I saw that Taft did not like me. He thought it was suspicious that any man should speak such a foreign language, and yet claim that it was English. I saw by his eye that I should not get to preach, unless I took him unaware. So after waiting for a long time for an opening and not getting any, and having my mind full of something to say all the while, I finally thought one Sunday afternoon, when the weather was pretty hot, that I would go over to a little school-house kind of church called Harmer Hill, where Taft was to hold forth himself. It occurred to me that he might want to be relieved on that hot day. There was a little congregation gathered, looking resigned, as they had to, because they were going to hear Taft. I stepped up toward the altar and he looked at me an instant, and said: 'Would you like to preach here now?' 'Yes,' said I, 'I would,

very much.' 'Go right on,' said Taft. So I started in, and the desire being long pent up within me, it came forth voluminously. When I sat down covered with perspiration, Taft said, 'Well, you can preach whenever you like now.' "

The way was open; and from this time on he was as busy a preacher in Pennsylvania as he had been in Yorkshire. "I preached in those green lands where we lived, nine years almost, unlearning the old tongue and learning the new." Every Sunday he was off bright and early to some one of the four village churches which constituted the particular circuit to which he was assigned, and occasionally he journeyed to some more distant appointment in a neighbouring circuit. Over the dusty, or frozen, roads he trudged, with his Bible under his arm and the word of God in his heart—preached his sermon to the little group of farmers, tradesmen and artisans which greeted him—and then trudged home again in the late afternoon or evening to his well-earned rest. He was not paid even so much as to enable him to make good the wear and tear on his shoe leather. In later years he estimated that he received in all, for his nine years' preaching service, one almanac, several pecks of apples, a heterogeneous assortment of household necessaries, "no end of teas and suppers," and ten dollars in money which

was paid to him for three sermons to the Baptists of the neighbourhood. But there were rewards which came to him far more precious than silver and gold. Everywhere he went he found good friends; now and then, as on the occasion of his visit to Hatboro,[8] six miles away on another circuit, he discovered a library which was to him as "a spring of living water"; best of all, he won the inestimable privilege of pouring out his heart on all the deep things of the spirit. These were sunny days; and it is not to be wondered at that he looked back upon them through his later years with exceeding joy.

Of the growing effectiveness of his preaching in this period, there can be no question. His natural gift of speech, the training of continued and earnest practice, his increasing fund of experience, above all his ripening qualities of human understanding and sympathy, were conspiring together mightily at this time to make him a highly successful preacher of the word. "He was a wonderful speaker," testifies a contemporary, "so earnest, and demonstrative in his manner. He said things which made you feel like going out and doing them the next day." There was a charm of personality, a contagion of good spirits, an earnestness of conviction, an unerring instinct of

[8] See above, page 124.

common sense, a homely interest in the tasks of daily living, a pure and high vision of the reality of things spiritual, which tended rapidly and surely to overcome the disadvantages inevitably inherent in his utter lack of education for his task. For many months, if not years, his Yorkshire dialect was the most serious obstacle in his way. One old man confessed to him in his later years in Shoemakertown, that he (the hearer) did not understand him for a long time. Persistent endeavour, however, helped out by "a pliant and sensitive ear," enabled him in course of time to catch the new tongue, although there remained in his speech certain curious pronunciations and inflections[9] and a kind of all-pervading although very slight "burr," which marked him to the end of his days as a Yorkshireman. But he did not have to await the consummation of this achievement to gain his hearing. Even when his speech was least understandable, he was a welcome visitor to the village churches. The very man who confessed to not understanding any of Robert Collyer's utterance in the beginning, followed up this confession by the heartsome comment, "But I felt good, so I always came to hear you." The people, I

[9] For example, "wuld" for "world," "windah" for "window," "Sunda'" for "Sunday," and a frequent clipping of the final "g" in words ending in "ing."

have no doubt, liked to look upon his handsome face, hear his full, rich voice, share his passion of inward conviction, meet his spirit reaching forth to meet and conquer theirs. After all, there is "a gift of tongues" which defies all barriers of dialect. There is a spiritual language which transcends all need of exact translation. "Spirit with spirit can meet" even in the silences, and how much more when the full heart, in language known or unknown, pours itself forth! The farmers of the Pennsylvania country-side, like the yeomen of the Yorkshire moorlands, loved this man of the full speech and ardent heart. The old man was right—it "felt good" just to hear him, whether they understood his every word or not—and therefore they "heard him gladly."

A delightful picture of the blacksmith preacher of these days has been left us by a contemporary observer. "I was about thirteen years old at this time," his account begins, "and my father, who was a Methodist minister, frequently mounted me on an old white horse to ride over to the factory and get Brother Collyer to preach on the following Sunday. I would probably have supposed Collyer to be of the usual run of what are called local or secular preachers but for the fact that a manufacturer's son of the neighbourhood, who had just come out of Dickinson

College, told me confidentially that Collyer was a remarkable man, and the only man he cared to hear preach in the Methodist pulpit. I recollect that the last day I went over to get Mr. Collyer I arrived on the ancient white horse at the dinner hour, when he was lying down on the grass with thirty or forty other workmen, all with their dinner-kettles underneath them, and he had a big stake down in the grass from which he read while he took his meal. His strong English face, with a smile upon it, welcomed me, and he always accepted the preaching invitations, perhaps as an opportunity to keep his hand in. In his preaching he did not shout, nor roar, nor hold the people over red-hot stoves, and tell them that in seven minutes by the watch, unless they experienced a change of heart, they would be no better than so much roast pork. . . . He preached with feeling, but traced human nature along through its pains and daily troubles, and the stopping places of relief and inward exultation as doubt after doubt disappeared and man became reconciled to life and grief. The boys liked this preaching, without exactly understanding it. It appeared to be nearly as good as reading some of the Sunday school books, which referred to the ordinary lives of boys and their errors and faults, and how

they surmounted them and felt a little inward nobility on account of it."

Thus did Robert Collyer pass these first years of his American life—at the anvil making claw-hammers, in the pulpit bringing souls to God, in the home reading books, caring for his children, and helping the good wife. It was a happy period for him, as we have seen. On occasion times were hard, and his pride and patience were tested to the breaking-point. Now and then there was sorrow in the loss of children, and anxiety in the illness of the mother. Sometimes there came the call from the old home across the seas, and his heart in an instant was desolation. The merest chance would shake him to the very depths of his being, so sensitive he was, and fond. Thus he tells us in one place how he saw a copy of Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre" "on a book-stall and bought it for twenty-five cents." This was comparatively soon after his arrival in this country. "I began at once to read it," he says, "and when I got fairly into it, I felt as if I was borne away on invisible wings right into the old nest. I saw the hills and moors again, standing out against the northern skies, heard the old tongue again, and was folded back into the old life, could hear the bells ringing in the steeples and the voices singing in the churches, and

watch the light play on the faces at the old fireside. I knew every spot when I came to them one by one, as I knew the cottage where my mother was sitting thinking about her boy who had wandered away and was lost to her loving old heart and eyes in this strange new world over the sea." What wonder that, "a stranger in a strange land," he became "lonely and a little homesick"—that he "wanted to see the hills again and the moors, and to be folded back in the old life as a mother folds her child."

It was a complete uprooting which had taken place. Not all at once could the plant take hold of the strange new soil, or all periods of drooping be avoided. But the plant was hardy, and the soil good; so that the roots soon held even against the blasts of storm and the leaves flourished even in the hours of drought. In present reality and future prospect, in material prosperity and spiritual contentment, in what he was finding for himself and preparing for his children, the migration over seas had justified itself. Not once did he have reason for regret. "My wife and I," he says, "never saw the day when we rued our setting out on our great adventure. No matter what hard times we had to face and fight for a good nine years before we could feel sure we had the ball at our foot, it all came true, the

good dream about the children, the plenty, and all the rest of it." The realisation of the dream was not easy. They had to "win not bread alone, but character and standing." But they put "a stout heart to the stey brae," and did it!

CHAPTER VI

FROM THE ANVIL TO THE PULPIT

1858-1859

> "One memory is still clear, of the time when I quite made up my mind to leave the old fellowship and find a home, if I could, in some other church, if there was one where I could be free to speak the truth as it should be given me to speak, without fear."—R. C. in "Some Memories," page 75.

Robert Collyer's life was marked by two great spiritual crises, each one of which induced momentous change in the character and direction of his activities. The first, as we have seen, was his conversion to Methodism; this was sudden, almost cataclysmic, in its nature, was the result of profound emotional shock, and led in due season to the initial discovery and use of his genius as a preacher. The second, his conversion to Unitarianism, which we are now about to consider, was a result of slow development, fostered step by step by study, thought and moral quickening, and was the immediate occasion of his removal for good and all from the anvil to the pulpit. As witnessed at the time, each crisis was an

isolated phenomenon, independent of everything save the outward happenings and inward experiences which accompanied it. As surveyed from the far perspective of later years, each crisis is seen to be the accurate expression of a single soul in process of self-discovery; and both together, successive and related stages in the fulfilment of a destiny forecasted in possibility, if not determined in actual certainty, from the beginning. What was "the blade" in the Ilkley smithy lad, became "the ear" in the ardent Wesleyan preacher who tramped the Yorkshire moors and the Pennsylvania farm-lands, and then at last "the full corn in the ear" in the liberal missionary who in 1859 laid down his hammer and rolled up his leathern apron for the last time, and, departing in true apostolic fashion for the West, entered at last upon the full tide of his career.

A contemporary account of this all-important experience in his life is left us by Dr. Collyer in a long letter, written from Chicago, on July 22, 1859, to Flesher Bland, the Methodist preacher whose sermon on a certain night worked the miracle of conversion in his soul.[1] This letter,[2] in its opening portions, is as follows:

[1] See above, page 81.

[2] The second, in an intimate correspondence which lasted without interruption for over forty years.

"*Dear Brother Bland:*

"Your welcome letter reached me to-day. How glad it made me to hear your voice breaking through the silence of almost ten years, and to hear that it still retained its old cheerful tones. God has surely guided you by his counsel. I thought many a time as I listened to the poor things miscalled sermons our preachers used to inflict upon us in Pennsylvania, what a pity you were not here, what a power you might be. It is a simple question of time when you shall take any pulpit in the Canada Conference. You are surely in the way of the divine providence, if you have followed and preached the best and ultimate result of your thought and of the Holy Spirit in you.

"Now I shall make you sorrow over me even while I rejoice over you, because you are not prepared to hear that I am not a Methodist any longer, but as near as may be 'Unitarian.' The change was very long coming. I never sought it, never feared it. Rather it was the necessary result of my thought of God and man than any book or man that helped me to it.

"I settled about seven miles from Philadelphia within six weeks of the time I last saw you and went to work at my anvil—Mr. Murray I remember gave me a good certificate, so I began to preach at once. Men said, and say yet (what has never spoiled me) that I was a remarkable preacher. I took about the same place on the circuit you took at Addingham. It pleased me to see how the men of highest culture were my fastest friends.

"I soon began to see that I was in a new world where a totally new religion was being evolved—a religion which must uphold a system of caste as marked as that of Hindustan. No coloured man was ever allowed at the sacrament until all else were served. No child, coloured ever so little, ever sat on the same seat in Sunday school, nor grown person in church. Silence in the pulpit for six years. No prayer ever uttered on behalf of the slave. A general plea that they were better enslaved, and a very marked coldness to all on the side of human freedom. I took the other side at once, but made little progress. At last, I resigned Nov., 1856. No, said the brethren, you must preach, we give you full freedom. After that I preached anti-slavery, lectured, discussed, took all times to help the great cause. I looked for some who were on the Lord's side and the slaves. There was Dr. Furness, 33 years Pastor of the Unitarian church in Philadelphia, an author, scholar, and noble man. He had the only real anti-slavery pulpit in the city. I was proud when he invited me yet a Methodist to preach for him. There was Lucretia Mott, a grand-hearted Quaker preacher. I held meetings with her. E. M. Davis, a Philadelphia merchant, outlawed for his devotion to the slave—I was proud to be his dearest friend, to be worthy of him. All these I met, heard their thought, above all saw their beautiful lives, so full of Christlikeness to me. They never tried to make me other than I was—constantly said that to be a good Methodist was so long as it was possible the best thing I could be.

"How I got out I cannot tell you. I think my first real puzzle was Eternal Punishment. Then Total Depravity, Original Sin and the rest all went. I believe I rather tried to hang on to some of them, but they went at last. But before I was sure of that, I was summoned before Conference to answer the charge of being in the company of infidels, preaching for them and lecturing with them. I said boldly that I thought now at last the church was rather infidel and they Christian —that as to the heart of practical religion, it seemed in their keeping. I also told them I could no longer preach Eternal Hell, or Total Depravity, or anything that did not meet and satisfy my sense of God and his truth. So at last in much sorrow we parted, for I had many warm friends, and there was much weeping. But I had heard the voice saying, 'Arise, depart, for this is not your rest,' and I must go." . . .

This letter embodies in outline a complete statement of all that took place in this second great period of crisis and change. In order that it may be understood, however, in its many outward and inward phases, it must be supplemented by a somewhat detailed narrative of events, and an attempt at some kind of interpretation.

Robert Collyer's conversion to Methodism in 1848 marked the beginning, as we have seen, of his personal religious experience. What this came to mean to him in memory at least, is clearly

indicated in a passage in the brief and otherwise unimportant letter, written from Chicago under date of July 8, 1859, which opens the Flesher Band correspondence. "I have never forgotten you," he writes, "and never shall. You were the means under our Father of helping me to the spiritual life."

The impulse which moved him at this critical moment in his career was predominantly emotional. It had its springs in those deep wells of sentiment which flowed so fully and so purely through all his days; it found its occasion in the harrowing grief which followed upon the sudden death of his young wife; and it sought its expression in the fervent preaching which touched so magically the hearts of the Yorkshire yeomen. So far as we can see, this momentous transformation of his inward life was accompanied by no intellectual changes of any kind, save as theological issues assumed a reflected importance from the fresh reality of his spiritual experience. It is doubtful, indeed, if he had ever given attention, or attached importance, to the dogmas expounded in the Independent chapel at Blubberhouses or in the parish churches at Fewston and Ilkley. His interest lay as little in this direction in his youth as in his later years of full religious activity; and he probably accepted the creeds,

as he did the habit of church-going, without thought. That he cared enough, or knew enough, about theological distinctions to be swayed in his conversion by the differences between the characteristic tenets of Anglicanism and Methodism, or even to compare and note these differences after his conversion was consummated, is altogether out of the question. His experience in the little Methodist chapel had its beginning not in the dubitations of an inquiring mind, but in the despair of a broken heart. It found its end not in the solution of intellectual problems, but in the satisfaction of spiritual needs. This experience was a discovery of God and of his own soul. It was first and last a great emotional upheaval, ending in the creation of a new world and the opening of a new life. If this rebirth were necessarily accompanied by the acceptance of certain dogmas of the faith, well and good! They must be true, as the theological expression of an experience found to be so real! The record seems to show that Robert Collyer was a dutiful pupil in Master Delves's class—which undoubtedly means that he accepted without questions the doctrinal lessons which were taught him.

At this very moment, however, when emotion was playing so predominant a part in the moulding of his life, there was present another force,

undeveloped as yet because of lack of opportunity and training, but potent none the less. Robert Collyer's nature was not all sentiment by any means. Almost as strong within him were the faculties of reason. The springs whence flowed the abundant streams of poesy and love, were planted amid the granite-rocks of intellect and will. His was a brain, in other words, which matched in eagerness and strength, the grace, tenderness and compassion of his heart. And just as the latter moved him to instinctive response to the beauty of nature and the goodness of humankind, so the former prompted his thirst for knowledge, and later, an independent and courageous quest for truth. His entrance into Methodism was the beginning for this man not only of the spiritual but of the rational life. One observer was "canny" enough to note this fact, even when it was hidden from the eyes of the convert himself. This was the shoemaker who heard the "grand effort" at the Ilkley church, and commented the next morning that Collyer would never make a preacher, for the Methodists at least, since he wanted to reason things out overmuch.[3] "I might recite all the reasons why the old mother turned me adrift," wrote the Doctor in a late autobiographical fragment, "but it is a

[3] See above, page 91.

long story for a man to tell who has grown garrulous with the years—and one little incident (that of the shoemaker) touches the marrow of the matter."

This touches the marrow, indeed! From the beginning of his experience of religion, Robert Collyer had his reason, as well as his heart, at work. "Bishop Butler," he writes in an autobiographical lecture, "says that reason is the only faculty we have to judge concerning anything even of revelation itself, and John Locke, 'He that takes away reason to make way for revelation puts out the light of both.' (In this spirit) I must give a reason for the hope that was in me." Such was the nature of this new-born Methodist. The work of preaching, taken up so soon after his conversion, must have been a mighty stimulus to speculation. And his reading, which took him without warning or regard into every field of literature, theological and philosophical among the rest, must have offered many a challenge and raised up many a question. During the short period of his preaching in England, there was not a suspicion of trouble, so far as we know, outside the foreboding word of the shrewd old shoemaker. But he could not have been long in America before the problem of his faith became insistent.

The "first real puzzle," as Dr. Collyer tells us in his letter to Flesher Bland, was the question of eternal punishment. That his heresies should begin at this point is only natural, as this doctrine of damnation touches our moral sensibilities quite as nearly as it does our intellect. His heart was again anticipating his brain. Furthermore, it was just here that his early religious training, so far as it made any impression at all, had touched him. "I began early," he says, "to feel the oversoul of the other life. I do not remember when I did not realise dimly the sorrow and pain of the great mystery, but nothing early of its joy. I would brood over death when a young companion was taken, so that I think I must now and then have been nearly insane. And there was no help for me in the meetings. All the help I had was in the sweet unconscious heaven of the home, where my father took no stock in hell. The Methodists then were among us, and they gave us hell hot and lurid. We attended an Independent meeting-house, but they gave it us cold and literal. And so between them I saw a great deal of the nether and very little of the upper mystery."

With this scar upon his soul, it was inevitable that his faith should first become sensitive at this point, especially in view of the extreme emphasis

laid by the Methodists of the time upon this particular doctrine. The trouble once begun, however, could not stop here. The question of eternal punishment carried him straight back to the question of God—His wisdom, His power, His love. It involved as well fundamental questions regarding man—his origin, his fall, his title to forgiveness. The Scriptures next came up for scrutiny, for did not the Bible clearly teach the damnation of the wicked, and if so, must not this doctrine, however ugly, be accepted? Thus were a hundred questions raised up by the one. Once started, there was no stopping the contagion of his doubts. In spite of the most conscientious endeavour to retain at least some remnant of the ancient and much-loved faith to clothe his nakedness, it "all went at last," as he has said.

So far as we can make out, this great change was almost exclusively an inward process. "It was my thought of God and man," says Dr. Collyer, "(rather) than any book or man that helped me to it." This is rather a remarkable fact, in view of the theological radicalism which was acting at the very time of his arrival in America as the leaven of the new intellectual life of the country, and his own exceptional openness to literary influences of this kind. William Ellery Channing had done his great work for

liberalism, and died, a full eight years before Robert Collyer set foot on the Battery in New York. Ralph Waldo Emerson had delivered his Divinity School Address twelve years before this date, and was just now mounting to his serene position as the teacher and exemplar through many years of those who would live in the spirit. Theodore Parker, doughty champion of free religion, had delivered his epoch-making South Boston Sermon as early as 1841, fought his good fight with the Boston Association in 1844, and now, in the '50s, was in the floodtide of his great ministry in the Boston Music Hall. Transcendentalism was become a full-fledged movement for intellectual emancipation, moral quickening, and social reform. Universalism was proving a mighty force under the inspired leadership of Hosea Ballou. Unitarianism had weathered the first rough storms of outward attack and inward dissension, and was now sailing full and free upon a far-flung course of spiritual adventure. And as if all this were not enough, a seed of English Unitarianism had been cast into the soil of this very region where Robert Collyer was now living, in the person of Joseph Priestley, who founded his Northumberland church in 1794 and his Philadelphia church in 1796, as evidences of his own free

faith and as anticipations of the native American revolt against Christian Orthodoxy.

Such were some of the potent influences of the time. But so far as we can see, they met the Yorkshire Methodist not at all, or, if so, left little or no impression. One searches vainly in contemporary records or later reminiscences for mention of Channing, Parker, Emerson, or their confrères. The soil was perhaps unpropitious for the growing of their seed. In the neighbourhood of Shoemakertown was a mingling of sceptical Quakerism with the various old orthodoxies, of which the Baptist and the Methodist were the chief, which gave little opportunity for the rooting and spreading of the Transcendental gospel. And yet this very gospel had long since been firmly planted in Philadelphia, only a few miles away; and its books and pamphlets were everywhere. No—the secret here was the sanctity of Collyer's own inner life. He was thinking his own thoughts, working away at his own problems, testing his standards for himself. The harvest at the end was of his own sowing and his own reaping.

And yet it was impossible to shut out external influences altogether. Now and again he would hear some word or read some book which would startle him, like a lightning flash, and shake him

with the threat of storm and earthquake. Thus he tells us in "Some Memories" of the shock which came to him when he heard for the first time of the evolution heresies about the origin of species and the descent of man. It was at a meeting of the local lyceum, which had been organised by the mechanics and the farmers of the neighbourhood for the discussion of political, social and literary subjects, that this experience took place. One evening "a gentleman from the city" submitted and himself debated the evolution hypothesis; and, as he was a thoroughgoing radical, this man denounced and rejected in his speech the doctrines of "the creation of this world in six days, the story of the making of man, and the woman from his rib, and the fall and what followed." He declared that these things were myths, poems, legends—that, as a matter of scientific fact, man had not fallen, but had steadily risen from lower and much less perfect forms of life. This episode took place of course some years before the publication of Darwin's epoch-making book; and yet must have occurred some years after Collyer's arrival in this country, and thus comparatively late in the period of the growing disintegration of his faith. It may have followed some little time after the appearance of Herbert Spencer's famous essay on "The Development

Hypothesis," published in 1852; or more likely of Spencer's "Principles of Psychology," published in 1855. It is still more probable that it was a reflection of the popular discussion of the general question which had been started by the publication of "The Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation," in 1844. In any case it presented a gospel which was new to Robert Collyer as to his associates in the lyceum; and he confesses that he "was amazed," and "tried to frame an answer." The doctrine was altogether the most frightful heresy that he had ever heard. To this extent at least was he still firm in the faith once delivered to the saints! But in spite of his instinctive rejection of the new idea, we may be sure that it was not forgotten, and had its part, however small, in the final result.

Another episode, which must have occurred considerably later, is similarly impressive. An extended revival was going on at a certain time in the home church. Although not in sympathy with the movement, Collyer attended some of the meetings, as a matter of old habit, perhaps, as much as anything else. On one of the nights when he was present, the preacher launched out on the doctrine of eternal punishment in hell. "If you could hold your hand," he said, "in the flame of this lamp but a few moments, can you

imagine the agony of such a burning? But this is no more than a faint and poor intimation of the eternal burning in the fires of hell which awaits you if you do not repent—the burning not for a few moments, but forevermore—and some sinner now in this church may be there before to-morrow morning." All the doubts that Robert Collyer had ever felt about this atrocious doctrine now came rushing over his heart in one great tide of revulsion. His whole soul cried out against it. And yet, "the old minister uttered a loud Amen, and the brethren seemed to be pleased with the discourse. I left the church almost instantly," says the Doctor. "It was the sharp turning-point in my way as it seems to me now."

Such were some of the happenings which stirred and shook him. These were really unimportant, however, as compared with two fresh and pure streams of personal influence which now came from the outer world to water the inward garden of his planting, and to bring to him the tides of contemporary religious liberalism in its best estate. Neither of these two influences, as we have seen, either started or determined the change within him; but both of them served to quicken and at last direct it. To the one, Lucretia Mott, Robert Collyer owed the discovery of the meaning of his heresies, and strength and

comfort in the hour of great loneliness. To the other, Dr. William Henry Furness, he owed guidance when he was lost, a new home when the old was gone, and the fatherly counsel of a half-century of friendship. To both, he paid the unstinted love of a loyal and grateful heart, and to the end of his days found the debt still undischarged.

Lucretia Mott, Hicksite Quaker, Garrisonian Abolitionist, Transcendentalist, prophetess, seer, saint, was born "on the third day of the new year, 1793," on the island of Nantucket, "of the cleanest tribe I know of in our human family," says Dr. Collyer, "the Society of Friends." When she was twelve years of age, her family removed to Boston, where she began in the public schools an education which was finished in a private boarding school in New York. She "grew out of her childhood a wise and helpful little maid"; and, while still very young, found an ideal mate for her life journey in James Mott.

"When I first knew them," writes Dr. Collyer, "they had lived together more than forty years, and I thought then, as I think now, that it was about the most perfect wedded life to be found on the earth. They were both of a most beautiful presence, both of the sunniest spirit, both free to take their own way as such fine souls always are,

and yet their life was so perfectly one that neither of them led or followed the other, so far as you could observe, by the breadth of a line. He could speak well in a slow wise way when the spirit moved him, and his words were all the choicer because they were so few. But his greatness, for he was great, lay still in the fine silent manhood which would only break into fluent speech as you sat with him by the bright wood-fire in winter, while the good wife went on with her eternal knitting, . . . or as we sat by the pear tree in summer in the gloaming between light and dark. Then James Mott would open his heart to those he loved, and touch you with wonder at the depth and beauty of his thought."

For the first dozen years or so of her married life, "while her children needed her perpetual care," Lucretia Mott "gave her life almost wholly to her home and family." But the gift of prophecy was as strong within as the instinct of motherhood, and as years went on she became known as one of the great social and spiritual forces of the age. "It was not possible," writes Dr. Collyer again, "that Lucretia Mott should keep silence in the churches, no matter what Paul might say to the contrary, because that grand brain was created to think and the noble heart to beat through moving and moulding speech, and

those fine grey eyes to see what the prophets see. And so, had she not been raised among those who have always held the woman to be a minister of God as truly as the man, I cannot imagine her among the silent sisters who so often have a word to say, but dare not say it to save not their souls but the souls of those about them.

"An old friend in Lancaster County," continues the Doctor, "told me once of his first hearing her in the early days when as yet she was almost unknown. It had been a dreary time among 'Friends' up there, and being a man who did not care overmuch for the traditions of first day and fourth day, he was getting tired of it all, when one first day he went to his meeting expecting nothing as usual and pretty sure he should not be disappointed. Nor was he, for a time. . . . Then a woman stood up he had not seen before, whose presence touched him with a strange new expectation. She looked, he said, as one who had no great hold on life, and began to speak in low level tones, with just a touch of hesitation, as of one who is feeling after her thought, and there was a tremor as if she felt the burden of the spirit on her heart. But she found her way out of all this; and then, he said, 'I began to hold my breath, I had heard no such speaking in all my life. It was so born of all conviction, so surely

out of the inner heart of the truth, and so radiant with the inward light for which I had been waiting, that I went home feeling as I suppose they must have felt in the old time who thought they had seen an angel.

"I heard one such grand outpouring too," says Dr. Collyer, in his reminiscences. "It was at a woods meeting up among the hills where quite a number of us had our say, and then my friend's turn came. She was well on in years then, but the old fire still burnt clear, and God's breath touched her out of heaven, and she prophesied. I suppose she spoke for two hours, but after the first moments, she never faltered or failed to hold the multitude spell-bound and waiting on her word. Yet there was no least hint of pre-meditation, while there was boundless wealth of meditation in her deep and pregnant thoughts. I said she prophesied—no other term would answer to her speech. It was as when Isaiah cried, Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain. *Her* 'eyes had seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,' and she 'testified of that she had seen.' And this was all the more wonderful to me because it was the habit of her mind in her later life to reason—from premise to conclusion, and let

this suffice. But she had seen a vision, sitting there in the August splendour, with the voice whispering to her of God's presence in the trees, and the vision had set the heart high above the brain. They were care-worn and work-worn folk she saw before her with knotted hands resting on the staff or folded quietly on the lap. They had nearly done the good day's work, and now the preacher and prophet was needed to tell them what the day's work meant where they keep the books for us. . . . There were youths and maidens also about her who had yet to bear the world's burdens and fight its battles. They were glancing over toward each other as they have done time out of mind. She made the good time coming glorious for them. It was not to be a dreary world and life, but a world and life affluent with what was best from all aspiration and all striving, since what she loved to call the moral sense came forth to fight for the good against the evil. She sang of the sacredness of what was in their hearts of the home and the children, and that the good is immortal and eternal, as God's life and heaven may be right here on the earth. I think I should not quite have known my friend, but for that woods meeting, as we should not quite have known the Christ but for the Sermon on the Mount."

It was this woman, in her quiet home and in company with her benign husband, who became, in this critical period, the most potent influence in Robert Collyer's life. He met her for the first time in 1855, under circumstances and with results that were ever memorable.

"I was living," he writes, "about a mile from a place (the Motts) had bought in the suburbs of Philadelphia. We had started a lyceum the previous winter in the school-house, and were hammering away at a great rate as to which is most beautiful, the works of art or the works of nature, and whether the Negro or the Indian had received the worst usage at the hands of the white man, a matter we could not settle for the life of us, when Mr. Edward Davis, a son-in-law of James and Lucretia, came in and before we knew what was coming, plunged us headlong into the surging and angry tides of Abolitionism." Now it chanced that, owing to Mr. Davis's fondness for Scripture and his genius for misquotation, the debate turned not upon the question of emancipation *per se,* but upon the question of Biblical authority for slavery and freedom. Mr. Davis "quoted the prophets but got them all wrong," says Dr. Collyer, "and then those of us who could handle them saw the crevice in his armour and gave him some swift cuts not on the right and

wrong of the question at issue, mark you, but on his ignorance of the right prophets." Then one night, when the debate was being continued, Lucretia Mott came in and spoke. "There is no time to tell this story," says the Doctor, in the fullest account which he has left us of the episode, "but the essence of her argument lay here—You must not try to prove your truth by the Bible, but your Bible by the truth!"

The statement of this great principle, formulated in the familiar quotation from Mrs. Mott as "Truth for authority, not authority for truth," was in all probability the greatest single influence from the outer world that ever came to bear on the intellectual life of Robert Collyer. For years, his mind had been jambed with a tangle of conflicting dogmas, like a Maine forest-stream a-jamb with logs. The momentum of his thought, like the current of the river, only seemed to tighten the jamb. New ideas, like fresh logs, only piled up the confusion and made the situation more hopeless. The future life, the nature of man, the love of God, the atonement, the resurrection—here they were; and at the heart of them all the baffling question of the validity of the Scriptures. And now came a single divine word, like the single push of the skilled timberman of the forests against the crucial log in the tangle—

and lo! immediate and complete release! For the first time, Robert Collyer comprehended the nature of his difficulty—that he had no standard of judgment, no "seat of authority." Now was revealed to him, by a prophet, the sanctity of the reason—that he must judge for himself what is true and right—that his own soul must be the arbiter of his faith. It was the truth proclaimed by Emerson in his "Self-Reliance," by Parker in his conception of the intuitions of the reason, by Channing in his epoch-making declaration "that our ultimate reliance is, and must be, on the reason. Faith in this power lies at the foundation of all other faith. . . . I am surer that my rational nature is from God than that any book is an expression of his will." This is not new to us, and it was not new to the leading spirits of the '50s. But it was new to Robert Collyer. He had discovered afresh for himself, what the age had already discovered, that he could think for himself, pass rational and moral judgments upon theological dogmas without fear of the Bible, nay, judge the Bible itself, and accept or reject it, in whole or in part, on the basis of reason. At once, he was free. His own creed, his own Bible, his own God, he would forthwith find, or make; and woe betide Methodism, or any other kind of 'ism, which attempted to block his pathway.

From this fateful moment on to the time of his departure for Chicago, Lucretia Mott was one of Robert Collyer's closest friends and without exception his most intimate counsellor. "After some weeks," he writes, "James Mott said, 'We want thee to come to our house.' And I went, as I had gone to the house of Mr. Davis in Philadelphia. But I went with that sensitive pride a self-respecting working-man always feels in such a case. I would stand no patronage, no condescension. . . . If I felt this ever in the atmosphere, they should go their way, and I would go mine. But I found it was simply like falling into another and ampler home of my own. And this was not something they were doing carefully and by concert. It was natural to them as their life. They had no room in their fine natures for any other thought.—This was how I came to know these friends, and to be at last almost as one of their own kinsmen."

Robert Collyer was now free inwardly; but he was still a Methodist! Did he want to remain one? If so, could he do so with honesty to himself and his associates? If not, where was he to find the religious home so necessary to his domestic spirit? He had lost the old; but, as these queries show, he had not yet found the new!

It is here that we mark the entrance into Coll-

yer's life of the second personal influence, of which I have spoken.

Dr. William Henry Furness, pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia from 1825 to 1875, graduated from Harvard College in 1821, in the same class with Ralph Waldo Emerson. He was at this time in the full tide of a public ministry which was destined to be as influential as it was prolonged. A man of handsome countenance, noble bearing, fine culture, and singularly persuasive speech, he was already one of the leading figures in the life of the Quaker city. Outside his own immediate circle, and that of his parish, however, he was regarded at this particular moment with no little suspicion and even fear. The reasons for this attitude were, in the first place, that he was an unflinching exponent of Unitarianism in a community which, with the exception of a small group of liberal Friends, was orthodox in doctrine and in temper. Secondly, and far more serious, he was an outspoken and uncompromising Abolitionist in a period and in a neighborhood which were bitterly hostile to the whole anti-slavery propaganda. He ranked with Theodore Parker, Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Samuel J. May, as one of the few clergymen in the North, even of the liberal wing of Protestant Christianity, who "hewed

to the line, let the chips fall where they may," on this burning issue of human rights.

Later years which settled the slavery problem, and rounded off the sharp edges of theological controversy, brought to him a full measure of public confidence and affection, to match the respect which his character and abilities had commanded from the beginning. Gentle and yet fearless—aristocratic in breeding, highly cultured in training, and yet intensely democratic in spirit—a true prophet of the inner light, a tireless seeker after truth, a valiant champion of freedom—Dr. Furness was one of the most attractive and impressive men of his time. His church work was singularly happy and beneficent—his public activities of wide and potent influence—his home life a perfect idyl of wholesome virtue, fruitful culture, and generous hospitality. "It was a household consecrated to truth, humanity, literature and art," writes Moncure D. Conway in his "Autobiography." "No one who enjoyed intimacy in it can wonder that the daughter (Mrs. Wister) attained eminence in literature; that of the sons, William became an accomplished painter, Frank an eminent architect, while Horace is the foremost Shakespeare scholar." [4]

[4] Volume I, page 129.

To Dr. Collyer, "Father" Furness, as he called him, was always "the faithful and true witness for God and the right"; the man who "of all men in the world opened the way for me to the faith and fellowship which have been one long benediction and will be to the end; the infidel Abolitionist who told me he was presented once to the grand jury in this city for the things he said in his pulpit pleading for the slave, and Judge Kane of all men threw out the bill—who told us also how some members of the church wrote or signed a letter begging him to let the question alone and preach religion; and then other members, when they heard of this, also wrote a letter asking him to stand by the banner of freedom, and then he would tell me with a tiny gust of laughter that quite a number who had signed the first letter signed the second. This was the stand he made in the evil days, but as he would tell me the story, he would always speak of others in the noble band rather than himself.—But there is no time to tell of the many years and many things," continues the Doctor in his lecture in reminiscence of Dr. Furness, spoken shortly after the latter's death. "I wanted only to tell you how utterly and forever I am debtor to my dear good Father, who clasped my hand that day so many years ago and never left me. Have I done something whereof

I may boast? By the law of works, nay! But by the law of grace from on high, and then from him of whom I speak."

It was at the very moment when Robert Collyer had found his spiritual freedom, but was wandering, bewildered and not a little dismayed, in unfamiliar places, not knowing whither he went, that he found this "guide, philosopher and friend." [5] It was through Mr. Davis, and thus indirectly through the Motts, that he was first brought in touch with Dr. Furness. "I remember as if it were yesterday," writes Dr. Collyer, "how he greeted me. His soft clean hand clasped mine, hard and horny by my many years' work at the anvil, with no tremor of surprise or hair's-breadth of distance in his eyes or his voice. This I can never forget, for I think if he had given back, so should I; but from that moment, I gave him my heart."

The influence of Dr. Furness, imparted in personal conversations and in public preaching, was very great. More than any one thing, it enabled Robert Collyer to find himself in this period of confusion and lost direction. It was undoubtedly the decisive factor in turning him toward Unitarianism, and bringing him at last into the Uni-

[5] Already found indirectly through his book, "The Journal of a Poor Vicar," see above, page 71.

tarian church. Through a long succession of months, the rough mechanic hunted out the polished scholar in his study for counsel and instruction, borrowed books of all kinds from his overflowing library, and whenever opportunity offered sat in his church, Sunday morning or evening, and listened to his sermons. Dr. Collyer relates one memorable occasion when he went into the city to preach for the coloured people in one of their churches, and to stay overnight with one of their members. "In the evening I said, 'I will go and hear Dr. Furness.' It was a wild, dark night, and there was such a congregation as I have learned long ago to look for in our churches on a wild, dark night—something over a dozen, certainly, not a score.—The sermon touched the story in the Gospel of John, the washing of the feet, and, as he went on, I felt he was just talking to me; so that I saw what he saw as in a vision; heard the voices he most surely heard, and was spell-bound as I sat at his feet. It marked an era in my faith and my life; and when the service was over, and I went up to offer him that same hard hand, he said, 'I saw you, and then I seemed to have only one hearer this evening,' and told me not long after that this was the first time he had spoken in the pulpit without the manuscript."

Such an influence from such an apostle of the spirit was bound to have decisive affect upon the storm-tossed Methodist now seeking for a haven. From this time on, Robert Collyer knew himself and discerned whither he was bound. It was a prospect not easy to contemplate all at once; there must have been not a few moments of fear and even despair. But Dr. Furness was ever beside him in these critical times, and his guidance led him by secure paths to pleasant resting-places. Lovely was the relationship between these two men. No barrier of birth or training, no difference of occupation, culture or manners, could hold them even temporarily asunder. Each saw the worth of the other, and joined by instant and common consent the close-knit bonds of love. At first Dr. Furness was to the younger man as a teacher or "father-confessor"; in later years, the two were colleagues, fellow-labourers in the vineyard; at last, when the day's work was over, they were friends, laden with years, but in spirit as Jonathan, the prince, and David, the shepherd's son. "I spent four days," says Dr. Collyer in his final reminiscence of Dr. Furness, "in the delightful home we remember so well, only one week before he was translated. We talked of the old times, and went to the Park. This was in the winter, and he said, 'You must be sure to come

in the spring.' But in the spring the tree of life had blossomed for him fast by the throne of God, and now it cannot be long before I shall find him again, if I am so worthy, whose life down here was hid with Christ in God."

Through such processes of inward thought and outward influence as these, was Robert Collyer transformed into an out-and-out theological heretic. Inevitably, indications of his unsoundness in the faith began to appear in his preaching, and give rise to whispered suspicions and complaints. Once and again these were taken up by louder voices, as when a certain employer of labour in Shoemakertown rose up to say that the blacksmith, Collyer, was teaching heresy to his employees.[6] Not that he deliberately sought to tear down the accepted doctrines of Methodism! This heartsome preacher did not now care enough about the doctrinal side of religion to introduce theological controversy into his pulpits. "I never cared for what we call dogma," he tells us in his "Some Memories." "I preached much more about the life that now is, because this was what always lay near my heart." But this very fact was itself a cause for alarm, inasmuch as preach-

[6] A shrewd contemporary suggests that "possibly the said man, an employer of blacksmiths and labourers, rather disliked to hear a preacher of the social grade of his workmen, with so much knowledge of books and such command of good English!"

ing on moral and spiritual truths, as distinct from articles of belief, was as unusual and therefore heretical in the orthodox circles of those days as preaching on political and industrial truths is to-day. What the good Methodist brethren wanted was dogma, "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over"; and this was just the very thing for which this great-hearted and broad-minded apostle cared not at all. Hence the people grew restless and discontented, and by and by it began to be rumoured abroad that the Yorkshireman "didn't believe any more in the doctrines so precious and essential." This of course was true, "but not," as he makes haste to remind us, "by flat denial in the pulpit."

That this conversion to liberalism, if I may call it such, would sooner or later have led of itself to a definite break with his Methodist associates, is certain. Collyer would have left the church for the sake of his own intellectual integrity, if for no other reason. The trouble was complicated and the inevitable break hastened, however, by his acceptance of the Abolition programme, and his resulting activity in the more radical form of anti-slavery propaganda.

With this question, as with the question of theology, Robert Collyer's attitude was fundamentally a matter of inward conviction. Love

of freedom was his heritage as a free-born Englishman. Furthermore, on this very problem of emancipation for the Negro, his father blazed a trail in which his feet could not but follow. For this stalwart workingman, although dearly liking a bit of sugar, we are told, had gone without any for years in order that he might give the money thereby saved towards the liberation of the slaves in the West Indies. In this case, however, as in the other, outward influences had their due share in the fashioning of his ideals; and in this case, as in the other also, these influences were the same—namely, James and Lucretia Mott, and Dr. Furness.

Collyer had felt immediate sympathy with the anti-slavery cause, of course, as soon as he arrived in this country. His zeal was somewhat tempered, however, by the feeling which he found everywhere prevailing in Pennsylvania, that no attempt must be made to secure emancipation by drastic measures of abolition; rather must the question be left alone to settle itself, as it surely would in the near or distant future. "The good Methodists," he writes, "had taken the ground in a great majority that you must let slavery alone and it would die out, and the Abolitionists were a curse in the land, and infidels. I took that ground, and held it the best I knew."

The first time that he ever met a genuine Abolitionist, or heard the Abolitionist cause properly presented, was at the lyceum meeting above referred to,[1] when Edward Davis launched debate upon the question, "Are the Garrisonian Abolitionists worthy the confidence and support of the American people?" "I warrant you," writes Dr. Collyer, in report of this meeting, "that in one hour the fat was in the fire." Mr. Davis supported the affirmative with zeal and power, even if with lamentable misquotation of Scripture. Collyer and others advocated the policy of *laissez-faire,* and denounced the Abolitionists. So hot was the discussion, that it was continued at a later meeting. And it was here that Lucretia Mott appeared, and not only imparted to Robert Collyer a new theological revelation, as we have seen, but gave so eloquent a plea for the cause of immediate emancipation, that he was converted on the spot. "She poured out her soul on us," is his word, "and I for one threw up my hands and said, You are right. I fight henceforth under this banner."

And fight he did! Close association with the Motts, and with Dr. Furness, soon confirmed and grounded him in the faith, and everywhere that he had a chance, in season and out of season, he

[1] See page 161.

proclaimed the gospel of emancipation. He preached it in the pulpit, taught it on the platform, talked it at the forge and in the lyceum. He joined the local Abolition society, and spoke at its public meetings whenever he had opportunity. He attached himself in 1856 to the newly-organised Republican Party and took the stump on behalf of its candidate, John C. Fremont. Now and then, he sought out, or was solicited by, the coloured people themselves, and gladly addressed their churches and accepted entertainment in their homes. By this time, he had developed oratorical gifts of unquestioned charm and power; and it may be noted that, in the thrill and challenge of this anti-slavery campaigning, his genius as a public speaker received a training in ease, scope and authority, which would never have been possible had his work been rigidly confined to the pulpit. During the last four years of his life in Shoemakertown, Collyer was known through all the country-side as the most eloquent orator in the community; and constant were the demands upon his time and strength. Especially was he appreciated and loved by his fellow-workers. Moncure D. Conway records in his "Autobiography" an attractive scene in Robert Collyer's life during this period. "Filled with enthusiasm," he writes, "I attended a Fremont meeting at

Morristown, near Philadelphia. The chief speaker was Senator Hale, and there I first heard the voice of Robert Collyer. The great-hearted Yorkshireman was clamoured for by his fellow-workingmen in the meeting, but being unknown to the chairman, it was after some delay that he was brought to the platform. He came up shyly, being still in the iron-works' dress, but no garb could disguise his noble presence, and the enthusiasm excited by his speech was the great event of the evening. I set him down in my memorabilia as a risen and immigrant Ebenezer Elliott." [8]

Needless to say, activity such as this was heresy in Methodist circles! At one time, in November, 1856,—the fall of the great political campaign of that year, be it noted—Collyer was so conscious of opposition to what he was doing, that he resigned his office as a circuit-preacher. But the brethren loved him, and believed in him, and therefore, in spite of their distrust of his doctrine, refused to let him go. It was impossible, however, that such a situation, doubly complicated as it was, could long continue. At last, by a peculiar chance, the twin heresies of which he was guilty united in one single event, and precipitated a crisis. Dr. Collyer tells the story in his lecture on Dr. Furness.

[8] Volume I, page 238.

"My old friend of the many years, Moncure Conway, then our minister in Cincinnati, was to be married, and wanted Dr. Furness to come out and marry him. It was always difficult to leave, but he made up his mind to go if I would take the pulpit in his absence, wrote to ask me, and I had the temerity to say I would. But will you try to realise what this meant, what courage in him, and sheer daring. He had never heard me speak, except I think in Sanson Street Hall, at a meeting of the Garrisonian Abolitionists, and then, whatever the speech might be, it would not be preaching. I was still a local preacher in my mother Methodist church; but, by this time, in not very good standing for speaking on that infidel platform against the great curse. It made no matter to your brave minister. I must come! I remember also I made seventy-two dozen claw-hammers that week by hand, walked in on the Sunday morning with my heart in my mouth and all a-tremble to say my word from the text, 'The Lord God is a sun to them that walk uprightly.' I have not the faintest memory of the sermon, and had no paper; but if you will let me say so, my heart was greatly moved, while long afterward I heard Mr. Conway say that your minister had said if the effort was fairly satisfactory, he would like to stay west over another Sunday. Well,

a letter was sent to say he might stay, and welcome.[9]

"I think these services . . . were the last feather the brethren could bear. One of the elders asked me if I had given up the divinity of Christ, and I said 'No, I had taken up his humanity.' I was never any good on eternal damnation—and was reported to our Presiding Elder—a good-hearted man, fond of fishing—as a man not sound in the faith." The culmination of years of growth on his part, and of long-continued unrest on the part of the brethren, was now come. The break could not longer be postponed. So Collyer went to the quarterly conference in January, 1859, with his mind made up to resign as a local preacher. Before he could take this step, however, he found himself called up by the Presiding Elder on charges, and asked to answer certain questions. "One question put to me was, Why had I spoken on infidel platforms and preached in an infidel

[9] "A notable event was connected with the visit of Dr. Furness," writes Moncure D. Conway in his "Autobiography." "When I offered him payment, he said he would accept nothing for himself, but would give what I offered to a workingman of ability near Philadelphia, who for some time had preached for the Methodists. He had become unorthodox, and would preach in the Unitarian pulpit on the Sunday of Furness's absence. The man was Robert Collyer. . . . It was always a satisfaction to us that the first honorarium ever given Robert Collyer for a sermon was our marriage fee."—Volume I, page 287.

pulpit?" Other questions were about doctrine and dogma—the Trinity, eternal punishment, the fall of man, and the like. The indictment was finally reduced to three articles—first, that he did not believe in eternal hell; secondly, that he rejected the doctrine of total human depravity; thirdly, that he could not agree that a Unitarian was damned because he disbelieved in the Trinity. Having come "to make a clean breast of it," the heretic answered all inquiries freely and frankly, and ended by saying that he had come to the conference prepared to make a statement and present his resignation in any case. The Elder said, "not unkindly, There was no help for it"; and the proffered resignation was accepted.

The next Sunday, at a full meeting in the church, announcement was made of what had come to pass. Robert Collyer was not present, but his wife was; and it was a pathetic report she brought back of how "there were moans and weeping." The good brethren had no relish for their task; Collyer was loved too deeply and esteemed too highly, for his departure to be viewed with anything short of lamentation. His heresy was plain, however, and he had to go! And yet even so, he "was estopped only from the pulpit, but not from the church." By some strange chance, or generous intention, he was never dismissed

from the Methodist body itself. "I was still a member," he writes, "and may be still; and may say sincerely I have never thought of the good old mother as any mere step-mother."

This experience at bottom was a glad relief. It was well to have behind in the past what had so long been threatening in the future. "I seemed to draw a long breath when all was over," is Dr. Collyer's testimony in his "Some Memories." And yet, he immediately follows this with the confession that he "was not glad." How could he be, with so much that had been the best substance of his life deliberately cut away as by a kind of surgery? Then, too, the brethren, grieved and generous as they were, felt bound by their fidelity to the church not to have any dealings with the heretic, and abandoned him forthwith. Of all the men and women with whom he had been so long associated, and every one of whom he had loved so dearly, not one held out his hand or said a word of farewell. "Intimate as we had been in the church and in our homes through all these years," he says, "I went out alone and lonesome."

But he was not left alone! Dear friends who were not in the church, and therefore cared for none of these things called heresy, came to him with cheer and sympathy, and besought him to

hold services in a small hall which they would hire, for they were not content that his voice should be still. He was not ready, however, to begin again in such a way; and therefore, after holding one service on the Sunday following his suspension, he preached no more. This service was "the last in the valley for many a year."

Then there were Dr. Furness, Mr. Davis and the Motts, the presence of each one of whom at this moment was as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." "I love to remember," he writes, "with what a tender pathos (Lucretia Mott) opened her heart to me, when it seemed almost like death to leave my old mother church, of the trouble it was to her when she had to do this in the days of Elias Hicks—to find she must part with old friends for the truth, and have the meeting-houses closed to her in which she had loved to meet them, and to suffer reproach that she might be true to her own soul." Such words were as balm in Gilead. What she had done, he could do, and, God helping him, would do!

And then, best of all, was the helpmeet at home. Mrs. Collyer still clung to Methodism and her heart was well-nigh broken at what had befallen her husband. But as they sat together that evening "when the key had been turned on the pulpits," in the little house in the lane, with the chil-

dren all asleep, and the great silence of the winter night outside, and talked together of what had happened, there came from her "no word or look of blame, . . . but only of good cheer." What wonder that Robert Collyer thought of the day, ten years before, when he had made up his mind to emigrate, and had offered to cross the seas alone and make a home for her before he took her to be his wife, and she had answered him full and strong, "Whither thou goest, I will go, whither thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; whither thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." "The words were not said again that evening," records the Doctor, "because there was no need: it would be a vain repetition."

There were comforts, therefore, for the present; but what about the future? It needed but the passing of a few days, to make this the all-important question. Where was he now to go? What was he now to do? It seemed from the first impossible to remain in Shoemakertown. Furthermore, as he now, for the first time perhaps, began to confess to himself, his heart was not in his work at the anvil, but in his preaching in the pulpit. He was more a preacher than a blacksmith, skilled artisan though he was—and he

knew it! Yet what pulpits were now open to him? Where were the people who would listen to his words and accept his teaching?

The prospect was certainly dark; when suddenly, as though by a very interposition of Divine Providence,[10] the way was opened. "Within a month of my suspension," says the Doctor, "a letter came from Chicago by way of New York, to the dear Father (Furness), asking him about a man of my name, a blacksmith and Methodist local preacher of a liberal mind." It seems that, on a certain Sunday some time before this, when Collyer had trudged in to Philadelphia to hear Dr. Furness preach, he had found a stranger in the pulpit—Dr. Livermore, editor of the New York organ of the Unitarians, *The Christian Inquirer*. After the service, Dr. Furness introduced Robert Collyer to the preacher of the day, and insisted upon taking him home to dinner, where he and Dr. Livermore had ample opportunity for friendly acquaintanceship. The blacksmith very evidently made a profound impression upon the New York clergyman, for when the Chicago church wrote Dr. Livermore asking him if he knew "a man who could be got for the ministry-at-large" in that city, he replied at once that

[10] "The Providence that shapes our ends had sent me here." Robert Collyer to Flesher Bland, in letter from Chicago.

"there was but one man big enough for the job, that was a blacksmith, a Methodist," named Robert Collyer, and stated that he could be reached through Dr. Furness. This was the explanation of the letter to Dr. Furness, which announced that "they wanted a man to take charge of their ministry-at-large, and would he kindly tell them if he thought he (Collyer) would be able to fill the bill." "I saw the letter he wrote in answer," says the Doctor; "I think I shall never be quite the man he said I was in that letter; but the upshot was I laid down the hammer, and went out to take charge of the mission to the poor."

On being asked by Dr. Furness if he would consider the invitation and give his answer "next Sunday," Robert Collyer replied that he needed no time to think the matter over. "We will go," he said. It was as though the voice had spoken to him again; and he must obey. Of Chicago he knew nothing, save what was told him by one man at the forge who had been there, and by his employer, who had lived in Illinois in his younger years. Both disliked the place, and advised him not to go. But Collyer did not waver for an instant. A way had opened in the direction at least of the work he most dearly loved to do, and he must take it without faltering. The only question was the wife; but he remembered again the

night under the stars in Ilkley when she had pledged her faith to him forevermore, and the question was straightway answered and dismissed. Nor was he disappointed. "She did not cast a pebble in the way, but said 'Amen' right heartily."

Immediate plans were made for removal to the western city, forty-four hours' journey away. The Chicago people wanted him to come out at once, but this the family could not do. There was a house to be disposed of, furniture to be sold at auction, books and clothing to be packed, and children to be prepared. There was no need, however, for the father to delay. So on February 22, 1859, Robert Collyer started on a journey only less formidable than the voyage across the Atlantic a decade earlier, and arrived in due season in the city which was destined to be his home, and field of glory, for the next twenty years. In April he was joined by Mrs. Collyer and the children.

It is not difficult to assess the feelings which surged in Robert Collyer's heart, as he entered upon this new and momentous epoch of his life. Fear, or rather timidity, always a genuine emotion with him to the end of his days, must often have been predominant. For who was he, a Yorkshire immigrant, an artisan, a whilom Methodist,

to undertake this great task of Unitarian minister-at-large in this thriving American city? Confidence, however, must have had its place as well. For his marked success and influence as a preacher, his capacity for friendship with his fellows, and above all the affection and respect long since paid to him by such persons as James and Lucretia Mott, and Dr. Furness, must have given him some rightful knowledge of his abilities. And "in all and through and over all" must have been a quiet and yet very intense joy at this opportunity of service which now was his. At last the transition from the anvil to the pulpit, so long foreshadowed, was accomplished! At last his hand was set to the plough for which he had long felt himself so well fitted, and therefore yearned, to drive! At last his real life was begun! That he anticipated, or even hoped for, any such measure of fame and influence as later came to him, is not for a moment to be supposed. But there is good reason to believe that he saw even at the beginning that joy of mind and heart which was destined from now on to be the guerdon of his days. Sorrows, disappointments, one vast calamity, were before him. But he had found, after patient waiting and long striving, his place appointed, and in it that peace of God which the world can neither give nor take away.

CHAPTER VII

CHICAGO

1859-1861

> "(Chicago) was alive to the tips of her fingers and the core of her heart and brain. I had lived in the country all my life, and when I came there was thirty-six years of age. The life in a city was a new life, and I caught something of the strong inspiration."—R. C. in "Some Memories," page 116.

In 1859, the year of Robert Collyer's arrival, Chicago was a city of a little over 125,000 population. Situated on the western shore of Lake Michigan, along the branches of the Chicago River and on the edge of the vast prairie-lands, it was at this time a rather unkempt, sprawling and yet not unlovely town, more of an outgrown, or over-grown, frontier settlement than anything else. Already, however, its location as the gateway to the far northwest, had given promise of its future greatness as a business and shipping centre; and its unparalleled growth from 1850 on—570 per cent in twenty years!—was now well under way. The men who constituted the first

generation of settlers in Chicago were still active in the closing years of the decade of the '50s; most of them were still in the prime of life. "Not above a dozen names in any manner conspicuously identified with the city's origin, or development to something over 100,000 inhabitants, were missing from its directory." [1] Rude houses, roughly constructed streets, as well as lovely gardens and patches of farm-land here and there, betrayed the earlier days of undeveloped village life. But indications of the city's future power in the commercial and political life of the nation were already present.

Gaunt factories and wholesale warehouses, railway terminals and shipping centres, grain elevators, lumber-yards and stock-yards, were everywhere competing with banks, theatres, hotels, retail stores, schools, churches and public buildings. The population was rapidly dividing into those diverse social classes, marked by high-grade residential neighbourhoods at the one extreme and wretched slum districts at the other, which have been the consistent accompaniment of city life from the days of ancient Rome, if not much earlier. Most significant of what was coming, and of the far-sighted determination of the citizens

[1] See "Bygone Days in Chicago," by Frederick Francis Cook, page XIII.

of Chicago to prepare for a certain future, was the gigantic feat undertaken in 1855 of raising the city's level to a safe elevation above the surface of Lake Michigan. Originally only seven feet above this surface, the level was raised by systematic endeavour to a mean height of fourteen feet. At the very time of Robert Collyer's arrival, in February, 1859, streets were being filled in, houses raised, and even the largest buildings elevated by means of jack-screws and placed on new foundations, without being vacated for purposes of residence or business. This achievement was characteristic of a community which later performed the miracle of making the Chicago River run "up-hill," deepened the channel of this petty stream so that the largest vessels might be towed into any of its branches, rebuilt its devastated acres after the great fire of 1871, and dreamed the dream, and made real the dream, of the famed White City of 1893.

Robert Collyer launched forth upon the tide of life in this western municipality at the very time when it was clearing early obstructions, and sweeping full and strong into open courses. And be it noted that this same thing was true of the man as of the city. Each had met and passed the period of self-discovery. Each had grown out of a raw, crude, self-made past, was now living in

an ardent and ambitious present, and was preparing to enter grandly upon a mature and fruitful future. In equipment, experience and prospect, the man met the city, and the city the man, on equal footing. They were matched as twins; and grew together, as though destined by a single fate, to common service and common fame. Had Collyer been free to choose the place and time of his advent, he could have fixed upon no more fitting place than Chicago, and upon no more auspicious period of time in the history of Chicago. The great days of the Civil War, the stupendous civic developments in the half-dozen years following Appomattox, the fiery cataclysm which opened the decade of the '70s, the heroic and Herculean labours which marked recovery from this disaster—these were all ahead, and were to become the substance of his life as well as of the city's. Not more nearly was Savonarola related to Florence, or Parker to Boston, or Beecher to Brooklyn, than the blacksmith preacher to the mid-western metropolis. For a score of years, Collyer and Chicago comprised one tale upon the lips of men.

It was the First Unitarian Church, as we have seen, which called Robert Collyer to its service in Chicago as minister-at-large. This church, located at this time on Washington Street, between

Dearborn and Clark Streets, had been organised under conditions of exceptional interest as early as 1836. In June of that year, there came to the frontier town, on a touring party with Miss Harriet Martineau, a Unitarian, Dr. Charles Follen, later conspicuous in the anti-slavery movement in Massachusetts. "We were unexpectedly detained over the Sunday in Chicago," says Miss Martineau, in her account of the visit, "and Dr. Follen was requested to preach. Though only two hours' notice was given, a respectable congregation was assembled at the large room of the Lake House, a new hotel then building. Our seats were a few chairs and benches and planks laid on trestles. The preacher stood behind a rough pine table, on which a large Bible was placed. I was never present at a more interesting service, and I know that there were others that felt with me."

On the 29th day of this same month, as an immediate result of Dr. Follen's meeting, the few Unitarians who had found their way from Boston and other Massachusetts towns to this far western outpost, gathered themselves together and organised the "First Unitarian Church of Chicago." It was the sixth church to be established in the city, being antedated by Catholic, Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian churches, all of

which had been founded in 1833, and by St. James' Episcopal Church, which was organised in 1834. It was also one of the earliest Unitarian churches to be planted west of the Hudson River. Only Cincinnati (1830), Louisville (1830), Buffalo (1832), and St. Louis (1834), preceded it. For a short time, in the beginning, meetings were irregular and preachers uncertain. The first settled minister was Rev. Joseph Harrington, who began his work in a saloon building. He remained until 1844, and "was chiefly instrumental in securing the erection of the modest church edifice on Washington Street." After him came various ministers, most of whom did only occasional or supply preaching. But the church, while never large or popular during this period, grew steadily in members and in financial strength. By 1859, it was ready to extend its work, and to this end sent out into the east the call which summoned Robert Collyer from his anvil.

The "ministry-at-large," to which Collyer was appointed in Chicago, was the local expression of a significant philanthropic undertaking which had had its origin in Boston as early as 1822. It was on October 2 of that year that Frederick T. Gray, Benjamin H. Greene, Moses Grant, William P. Rice, and several other young men

met together to consider the problem of providing religious instruction for the children of the poor in Boston. On November 27 following, these men organised "The Association of Young Men for their own Mutual Improvement and for the Religious Instruction of the Poor"—a Gargantuan name which was fortunately changed two years later to "The Association for Religious Improvement." One of the first definite enterprises undertaken by this society was the securing of preaching for the poor and those connected with no regular church organisations. In this work, the society had the co-operation of several of the best-known and most influential Unitarian clergymen of the city; but it was not until Dr. Joseph Tuckerman signified his willingness to devote himself utterly to this ministry, that it assumed a dignity commensurate with its importance. Put into the field with the support not merely of "The Association for Religious Improvement," but of the "American Unitarian Association" as well, Dr. Tuckerman entered at once upon a work of preaching, visitation of the poor, organised relief, study of social conditions, that constitutes one of the landmarks in the history of Christian service in America. Alone, and without adequate financial backing, he visited the sick, provided necessaries for the helpless and de-

serving, secured work for the unemployed, and gave special care to the feeding, clothing and schooling of the children; he worked out and tried out methods of social relief which blazed the way for all later organised charitable activity; and, on the basis of personal investigation and experimentation, he established theories of social causes and doctrines of social change which anticipated not a few of the accepted principles of our own time. It is not too much to say that charity organisation work, as we know it to-day, began right here; and here received that impetus and direction which it has maintained to the present moment. By the year 1840, which marked the end of Dr. Tuckerman's epoch-making service, the charity work of Boston was well organised, the "Benevolent Fraternity of Churches" was started upon its way, numerous ministers-at-large were busy in the field in which the pioneer had laboured so long alone, and the movement had spread far and wide to other cities. In December, 1836, for example, a ministry-at-large was established in New York, and filled for a time by William Henry Channing. Others were established in Charlestown, Roxbury, Salem, Portsmouth, Portland, Lowell, New Bedford, Providence, Worcester, and elsewhere in New England. With the aid of the "American Uni-

tarian Association," the work was in due season undertaken in Baltimore, Cincinnati, Louisville and St. Louis. Chicago, of course, must follow suit! Here, therefore, as elsewhere, the ministry-at-large was established; and to its duties Robert Collyer was called in 1859.[2]

What the new-found minister thought of his new home and his new work, is told in the letter to Flesher Bland, dated July 22, 1859, a part of which has already been quoted.[3]

". . . The Ministry-at-large," he writes, "is devoted to the poor—to their help in every possible way. I have a school for poor children on Sundays where I teach them all they can learn and reward them with clothes, shoes, flower seeds, etc. I have a night school in winter, free, and eight teachers; a day school in winter, also. Then I get homes in the country for poor destitute children, where they are taught some useful craft and are well schooled and started in life. I get places for hopeless men and women, and start them in life again after they have fallen down in despair. All the publicans and harlots are members of my parish—when all the churches turn them out and they are lost to society I am here to help them to themselves and to God. I visit prisons and get the deserving, or those that desire to do well, into good places when they come

[2] For the ministry-at-large, see "Unitarianism in America," by George Willis Cooke, pages 247-261.

[3] See above, page 141.

out, or if it is better, get them out. No doubt I am busy—just as I sit down to write this I have been out (9 at night!) to get a poor woman an extension on two pawn tickets—to read and pray with a young man in consumption (preached his funeral sermon since) and to buy meat, bread and sugar for a woman quite sick and destitute, with a drunken husband. I am kept going by the Unitarian Church, a very rich society for which I have been preaching in the lack of a pastor for eight weeks. I need not be other than a Methodist to be their minister-at-large, but I am from conviction on the liberal side. We have started a new church to which I am preaching—I will tell you more about it as it grows. At present they are about to build a new church and expect me to be the pastor. If to be that I have to give up my present grand field among the poor, I shall think twice about it, and not accept afterwards.

"Now I have told you the worst—if I were near you we should spend many hours in grave and earnest discussion on these things; we should both be better for such discussion. I remember how much you were to me in old time; I shall not soon forget that. Do you remember your sermon on the first resurrection, and your other on the Holy Spirit? How much I enjoyed them, surely! As it is, if I were near you I know your preaching would yet be most welcome. I hear very little of that which satisfies me. Last night I went to Methodist meeting but it was no use; I must find in my own heart and in all divine inspiration everywhere that

which I need. You will of course write me, if it be only to tell me a piece of your mind about my great Heresy. I had not thought about your being blessed also with children. When I knew you, you had been married some years without any; it was quite a surprise for you to say they were very well, as a matter of course. If you are as fond of children as I am, I am sure it will bring endless sunshine to you to have them prattling at your knee. In your quiet parsonage how different I think it must be to the hurly-burly of this great western city. I took tea one evening with a lady yet young who remembered when there was but a small settlement near a block-house. Now we have 135,000 inhabitants and no end of building. You are a Wesleyan from conviction, else I would try to tempt you here.

"The pulpit tone is not high; we need good, strong men—a city growing like ours needs the strongest. Chicago stands on a vast prairie, with Lake Michigan on the east side. The Lake is its redeeming feature; there is little wood near, and the ground is quite low—indeed the city is being raised about 9 feet in some places, buildings and all. I have seen very large hotels raised with all their inmates just going on as usual, and all the furniture. There is a good deal of public spirit, a strong Republican bias. Last week three fugitive slaves were enticed away from us. There is much indignation, and if the men who got them away are caught they will be handled severely. A sad place for drinking; about 1200 saloons are in full blast. I see a great deal of the sin from my position—it is at times very

disheartening, but I know I am doing good, so shall 'learn to labour and to wait.' I was never quite satisfied with merely preaching to those who are only theologically bad, but always longed to get at some genuine sinners, some lost sheep. I am in the midst of them now.

"If I could come to your house how much I should ask you about the country you left so long after me. How my friends in Pennsylvania used to be interested in what I could tell them of Charlotte Brontë's country. I think she stands far above all other writers of fiction (female) except Mrs. Stowe in the estimation of all I have met here. I do not like all her pictures, far less Mrs. Gaskell's, in the 'Life.' That I constantly rebuked. Of course I said I knew Addingham better than Mrs. G. The Surgeon, if it was Mr. Duckworth, was as unfair as possible, and the whole tone of the book is unfair to life in Yorkshire. Dear old Yorkshire, grim and smoky, green and lovely, wild moors and rocks and mountains, sweet valleys and dales and uplands, how I see it yet. I read as ever pretty much all that comes in my way.

"My wife has been all I could wish, a faithful, true wife and mother. She also finds Methodism not possible to her. I rather tried to have her stay in the church, but she follows me as I follow Christ.

"Try to sketch a picture of Ilkley Chapel the last time you were there, who sat where, who is living, who gone home to heaven. And of Bradley, too—I heard no good news of Thomas Lister—I think it was in the

Mercury I saw the account. Can you remember a Richard Hannam, and tell me whether he is yet living? What did you call that queer preacher; was it Myers? I think there were two brothers. He had horses and carts, perhaps a farm, certainly a tremendous bump of self-esteem. Is he alive? You see I speak to you as if you had just left. And John Dobson, my old dear friend; I have had letters from him pretty constantly. Does he look much older? 'Becca' Batty, is she still there, and has rum killed George? Mrs. Parrat and Margaret just the same, I suppose, Margaret hardly married yet.

"But I must close. Do not put yourself about, but whenever you write, your letter will be as welcome as sunshine. Speak your whole mind freely, remember; I date my conversion from one of your sermons—and believe me, dear friend,

"Ever yours most sincerely,

"Robert Collyer.

"P. S.—Mother and myself unite heartily in love to Mrs. Bland and the children. Mrs. Bland remembers me, I am sure. I remember her quiet kindness—have many a time thought of her. Is the old man, her father, yet alive, with his never-ceasing flow of fun and wisdom? I think I saw how he was retired at Skipton.—How do you think he will manage to get along in heaven without cracking jokes!—R. C." [4]

[4] In an earlier letter dated July 8, 1859—the first of the Flesher Bland correspondence—he gives us the interesting item of infor-

It is evident, from this very personal account of his life at this early time, that Robert Collyer was "in his element," so to speak, in this service of the poor. "I can remember," writes his eldest son, Samuel, in a personal statement, "how much interest he took in his work as minister-at-large." It appealed irresistibly to those native instincts of sentiment and affection which were always so predominant a part of his being. Whether seated in his office at the First Church on Washington Street, or walking the streets of the poor districts in visitation of his people, or teaching by day or by night in his mission schools, he was always the same radiant and heartsome man. "It was welcome work," not only for him but for the "mother" also. And this was fortunate, for work of this kind was a twenty-four-hours-a-day tasking, and must centre quite as much in the home as in the street or office. In fact, on more than one occasion, Mrs. Collyer was carrying the heavy end of the burden. The men and women brought in for relief were invariably dirty, and frequently diseased; and children, picked up as waifs in the street, were always swarming about. But Mrs. Collyer had abundant sympathy and

mation that he has "a salary of $1200 a year, and perhaps $600 more from other sources, so I am well to do, as also, I believe, useful."

"spunk," and rebelled only when demands became utterly impossible. One story, told almost apologetically in "Some Memories," sheds a flood of light upon what must have been the service of this devoted couple. One day, he says, he was besought to lend a hand to a poor girl who had been left to die in a black corner of the slum. He found her promptly, and discovered, as he had anticipated, that she was "as we say, 'a lost woman.' " Where to put her was a problem, for refuge for a member of this outcast tribe there was none in the city. In his home that evening, the minister-at-large unburdened himself of his worry. "Can you do anything?" he said. And then, after a silence, there came the brave answer, "There is only one thing we can do: we have a spare room, we must take her in." It was not easy—but it was done. For a full month, the unhappy prostitute was nursed by tender and loving hands, and at last was restored to health. And then—unhappy woman, indeed!—she left the friendly home "with no thanks," and returned to her familiar haunts. "She had no tears," says the Doctor, "to shed at the feet of the holy one of God, or box of ointment to break."

Service in such a field as this was welcome, but it was not destined to continue in any such direct and exclusive way as Robert Collyer, and those

who called him to Chicago, had anticipated when he came. For this man, while an ardent lover of his kind, and therefore a happy and successful pastor, was also a preacher; and the preacher in him was not to be denied at the new work in the mission any more than it had been denied at the old work by the forge. Almost immediately on his arrival, he found himself in a pulpit; within a few months, as the July 22nd letter to Flesher Bland has told us, he was preaching with some frequency at the First Church and had in prospect a regular preaching task at a new church just then being organised; and from this time on to the end of his many days, held undisputed his throne of spiritual sovereignty. Nothing, indeed, in all our tale is more impressive than the phenomenal rise of this rude, unlettered, untrained, freshly-converted blacksmith to a position of potent leadership in the liberal pulpit of his adopted country, just as nothing is more interesting than the chain of circumstances which led him step by step, and at last bound him for good and all, to this high office.

The first opportunity to preach came on the second Sunday after Robert Collyer reached Chicago, through a courteous invitation from Rev. George A. Noyes, the pastor of the First Church, and therefore his superior officer. The new min-

ister-at-large had reported to "Brother Noyes—for this he was" at once upon his arrival and was given a hearty welcome to home and parish. The invitation to preach was a part of this greeting—and a noble part, for Collyer was fresh from the anvil, and a minister appointed not for the parishioners but for the poor. The sermon, spoken in fear and trembling of heart, from the text, "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest," was one which had done service on the Methodist circuit in Pennsylvania. The preaching of it in this strange city, and before this cultured and presumably critical audience of Unitarians, was a trying ordeal, of which the Doctor remembered only in later years that "there was no such help from on high as that which came . . . on the moorside and in the small schoolhouse." Always anxious and even timid under such circumstances, Robert Collyer was undoubtedly the victim, on this first appearance in a Chicago pulpit, of extreme embarrassment and self-consciousness, which pretty effectually precluded that joyous freedom of utterance which comes to the true preacher as a veritable impartation of the Holy Ghost. Nothing however could hide the gifts with which this remarkable man was dowered. "He did not know (the Unitarian) ways. He was right from the anvil. His hands

were horny. That burr and brogue was still cleaving to his tongue. The smoke and grime of the forge was on him." But there also were the glorious head, the handsome face, the huge stature, the ringing voice, the winsome smile, the earnestness, the sincerity, the simplicity, the sweet human charm, which were as native to his person as heather to the Yorkshire moors. The members of the congregation were gracious in their reception of the new minister-at-large. Many in after years would tell how they still remembered this first sermon, and thus give best evidence of the sound impression which it had made upon them. And an event, or series of events, which transpired almost immediately thereafter, of large consequence first to Robert Collyer himself and secondly to the whole cause of liberal religion in America, showed how far he had come from anything even remotely resembling failure on this occasion.

Very shortly after Collyer's arrival in Chicago, Dr. Noyes announced his decision to resign the pulpit of the First Church and return to the East. Earnest efforts were made to retain so admirable a preacher and pastor, but they were quite in vain. Dr. Noyes persisted, and the pulpit, therefore, was soon left without an occupant. Arrangements were at once made to secure "sup-

plies" from that base of all Unitarian supplies, Boston; and a succession of ministers, some of them the leaders in the Unitarian ranks of that day, were received and heard. Edmund Hamilton Sears, author of famous Christmas hymns, Horatio Stebbins, successor of Starr King and prophet for many years in his own right in San Francisco, Dr. Charles H. Brigham, James W. Thompson, George W. Briggs, and others only less distinguished, were among those who came, some of them for a month at a time. To listen week after week to the preaching of these able and scholarly men was to the heretic from the Methodist circuit about Shoemakertown, an experience as valuable as it was delightful. It was like the watching of the flight of the mother-bird by the frightened and awkward fledgling in the nest. He had known nothing like it since the days when he had first sat at the feet of Dr. Furness in Philadelphia. These men, as the Doctor himself well described it, "were (his) theological school," so far at least as his training for Unitarianism was concerned; and what he learned from their example in ways of thought and forms of utterance, would be difficult to estimate. No picture in Dr. Collyer's life is more attractive than that of the shy and yet ardent new minister-at-large sitting in the pews of the First Church Sun-

day after Sunday, and drinking in the words of these visiting clergymen as though he had never tasted of living water before—unless it be the companion picture of the old man in later years recording reverently and gratefully the importance of this experience in the making of his life.[5]

But it was not all a matter of listening! The distance from Boston to Chicago, measured in terms of hours and not of miles, was much greater in those days than it is to-day. Not infrequently as a result, the visit of one minister failed to follow directly upon that of his predecessor, and more than once the interval between departure and arrival included a Sunday. All of which might very well have "come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet" in far-away Ilkley! "They're going to make a spare rail of thee. They'll put thee into every gap there is."[6] For, commended to the people by his first sermon of which we have spoken, and named by Dr. Noyes himself in his parting words as the man who could take the services when the pulpit was vacant, Robert Collyer was invariably asked to preach on these occasions when the next distinguished visitor from the East had not arrived. It was a happy

[5] See "Some Memories," pages 101, 102.

[6] See above, page 92.

privilege which fortune thus placed in his way. But it was also a test which few uneducated lay-preachers would have welcomed or could have met. Robert Collyer, however, did not flinch. He entered the pulpit of the First Church in Chicago as determinedly as he had set foot on the Liverpool packet for the voyage to America; and in the former case as in the latter, both ventures into new worlds, he held his own and saw the thing through![7]

How truly this was the case, is indicated by the invitation which now came to him to preach regularly in the pulpit of a second Unitarian church, recently established in another part of the city.

"Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres," writes Julius Cæsar, in the first sentence of his "De Bello Gallico Commentarii." What was true of ancient Gaul is similarly true of modern Chicago. This is a three-sided city—the South Side, the West Side, and the North Side. It was on the South Side which was then, as it is now, the centre of the municipality, that the First Unitarian Church had been planted in 1836, and was now in 1859 happily thriving. The land on which its edifice was reared had been received as a free gift from the city in the '40s; and with it had gone the proviso that if Unitarian societies

[7] See above, page 103.

were organised on the West and North Sides within a certain definite period of time, they should each have a quarter share of the original grant.[8]

In order to take advantage of this condition, as well as to anticipate the already apparent shifting of the residential population from South to North, a second Unitarian society was projected as early as 1857. It was on May 11 of this year, that the first formal meeting for purposes of organisation was held in the office of William M. Larrabee, treasurer of the Galena and Chicago Railroad. Ten persons, in addition to Mr. Larrabee, were present, as follows—Benjamin F. Adams, Eli Bates, Nathan Mears, Gilbert Hubbard, Samuel S. Greeley, William H. Clark, Henry Tucker, George Watson, Augustus H. Burley, and Edward K. Rogers. Good Yankee names these, indicative of the origin and

[8] So Dr. Collyer states in his "Some Memories," page 104. Samuel Greeley, in his "Historical Sketch of Unity Church," gives a somewhat different version, as follows: "Largely through the representations of the late Artemus Carter, the principle was adopted by (the First Church) that the property owned by it was a trust held for the spread of Unitarian Christianity—to be equitably divided between itself and new churches in the North and West divisions, if such should be founded within a reasonable period." In any case, when the project of a church on the North Side was broached, the First Church voted on April 27, 1857, to assign one-quarter of its land to the credit of the new movement.

character of the stock from which the constituency of mid-western Unitarianism in these days was drawn! Adjourned meetings of a slowly-enlarging group were held from time to time; but no definite action was taken until December 23, 1857, when a constitution was adopted, the name Unity Church selected, and the following persons chosen to be trustees—William M. Larrabee, Benjamin F. Adams, Josiah L. James, and Samuel S. Greeley, secretary.

Thus was the history of Unity Church begun. A year and a half were yet to pass, however, before this history was to be anything more than a bare record of organisation. Reluctance to withdraw from the First Church a considerable portion of its people, difficulty in arranging for a suitable meeting-place on the North Side, the practical impossibility of raising funds for any new movement of this kind in the days following the panic of 1857, were some of the reasons for delay. But no one of these was perhaps so baffling as the problem of settling a minister. The little group had made a brave try to secure the services of Thomas Starr King, then in Boston, but had failed; and similar failures had followed upon succeeding endeavours which they ventured to make in other directions. Under such circumstances it is not surprising that at last

they contented themselves with merely effecting an organisation, and waiting, not unlike Mr. Micawber, for "something to turn up."

The "something" materialised, after a not too long interval, in the person of Robert Collyer. Pending the real beginning of their own movement, the residents of the North Side were keeping their membership in, and attending the services of, the First Church. In the period following the retirement of Dr. Noyes, they listened on occasion, as we have seen, to the preaching of the newly-arrived minister-at-large. Little by little, as they came to know him and to enjoy his sermons, the "North-Siders" began to wonder within themselves why this man would not serve them, for a "starter" at least, in the pulpit of Unity Church. No sooner wondered than said —no sooner said than done! A meeting was called, in which it was resolved to hold services of worship without delay. A committee consisting of Edward K. Rogers, Artemus Carter, Jerome Beecher, and Josiah L. James, was appointed to arrange the details of separation from the First Church. A little wooden Baptist church, located at the corner of Dearborn Avenue and Ohio Street, was rented for a meeting place. And Robert Collyer was asked to take charge of the pulpit. It was understood upon

both sides that he was to come merely as a "supply," to see what could be done. If the meetings proved successful, a church edifice would be built and a man, properly endowed and educated, called to the pastorate. Collyer was to be recognised as primarily the minister-at-large of the First Church, and thus simply borrowed for the purposes of this experiment.

There can be no question that every fibre of Robert Collyer's being strained to the acceptance of this invitation, and his assent, therefore, was promptly given. One serious worry, however, tinctured the joy of his experience—that concerning the attitude of Mrs. Collyer. She had accepted his withdrawal from Methodism without complaint, as we have seen. She had followed him to Chicago, and was now happily at work in the activities of the ministry-at-large. At this new turn of affairs, she had consented readily enough to his preaching regularly for the people on the North Side. But she had never abandoned her dear old mother church—certainly had never intimated her conversion to the gospel of Unitarianism. Could she now go with her husband Sunday after Sunday to hear him preach the truth as it came to him full and free, or must he, for the first time in their married life, go his way alone? Tender as always for his

wife's entire happiness and freedom, Collyer absolved her from all necessity of allegiance. "Please do not go with me one step farther," he said, "if you do not feel free to do so, but stay in the old church." She made no answer to this word, for her answer had been given years ago under the stars that shone down upon the Yorkshire bracken. Before the preacher was ready for the first service on the warm spring Sunday afternoon, she was standing in the living-room of the home, "hat on, gloves on," resolved as before, and always, to go whither he should go. It was the last great act of consent in the life of husband and wife. "We went together hand in hand," is the Doctor's joyful record, "through the thirty years which remained"!

This first service was held, and the first sermon[9] preached, on the last Sunday in May, 1859. Like all those which followed it for a period of seven months, it was conducted in the afternoon. "I can see it in my eyes as it was then," recalled Robert Collyer in after years, "the little, pleasant room, a congregation smaller than the room, by far; the faces of the men and women I only knew by sight as yet, and hardly that. A

[9] "Mr. Collyer writes that his text was *Revelation XXII:* 17, and that the sermon was a stupid one."—Samuel Greeley in "Historical Sketch of Unity Church."

ROBERT COLLYER

In 1859 *In 1869*

comical little organ, too small again for the small congregation. The singing of as good intention I am sure as ever was heard; and the preaching only to be mentioned for these reasons, that it was the first fair chance at a free pulpit the preacher had found, that he had sought for it with many tears, that he occupied it with a sore misgiving that there never would be another sermon after this in hand, and that everything was borne by that little flock with the sweetest patience, and adorned out of their hearts with a grace that never was in the thing itself." Robert Collyer did the bulk of the preaching, although not infrequently the visiting minister at the First Church was invited to take an afternoon, or some special preacher from out of town was secured for a Sunday or two. From the beginning, the new movement prospered. The little Baptist church had a seating capacity of only 250, and this was soon well filled. The neighbourhood was growing with great rapidity, and new families therefore constantly being added to the parish list. Within a month, the sponsors of Unity Church had cast aside their doubts and fears. By mid-summer they had decided to erect a church home of their own. On August 20, a lot was purchased at the corner of Chicago Avenue and Dearborn Street. Building operations

were begun immediately, and carried through with promptitude. A modest structure,[10] erected at a cost of only $4000, stood completed by the end of December, and "amidst the furious cold and snow of Christmas eve" was formally dedicated at a special service, at which Dr. George W. Hosmer, of Buffalo, preached the sermon. Great was the rejoicing of the people, and many the felicitations which poured in upon them not only from Unitarians but from other denominations as well.

With this happy and speedy accomplishment well behind him, Robert Collyer prepared to lay down his work with the people of Unity Church. Signs were not now lacking that they were wanting and expecting him to remain as their pastor, but he felt sincerely that his work with them was done. Their society was organised, their building erected, their congregation gathered—everything was now ready for the new and properly trained minister, of whom so much had been said in the beginning. Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that Collyer was still at this time primarily the minister-at-large of the First Church, and anxious therefore to get back to his work among the city's poor. During all of the summer and early winter months, he had tried his

[10] It provided "about 450 sittings."

best to serve the two masters, and although he had done this without any bad results to himself —"so far as I remember," he says, "I was never tired"—he felt that his work in the field, if not in the pulpit, had inevitably suffered. The dual arrangement could not continue indefinitely—and here apparently was the very time "nominated in the bond," so to speak, for him to return to the work which he had come to the city to discharge. Therefore on a certain week-day evening, directly after the dedication of the new building, he asked the trustees of Unity Church to come together, told them that the task which he had undertaken to achieve for them was done, pointed out the pressing nature of his duties as minister-at-large on the South Side, and asked to be relieved of all further responsibility to them. He offered to lend a hand at Unity, as at the First Church, whenever there was need of assistance, but his whole time must henceforth be devoted to his ministry-at-large.

To the end of his days Dr. Collyer recalled, with vast amusement, the unfeigned dismay of the people when they heard his proposal. It is true that they had asked him to preach in the beginning only that the "North-Siders" might make experiment of holding regular services in their neighbourhood; and then, when this experi-

ment seemed to justify itself, had engaged him to occupy the pulpit only until "some well-accredited man" could be found for permanent settlement. But all this had been decisively driven out of mind by the great success which the minister-at-large had achieved as a preacher. "Some of us whose heads now bear the frosts of early winter," says Samuel Greeley in his "Historical Sketch of Unity Church," "but who were then overflowing with youthful enthusiasm for the new enterprise, still remember how our feeling of anxious responsibility for the initial effort of an unknown man gave way, first to relief, then to surprise, and finally to joyful certainty that the 'hour and the man' had come, and that a new moral force had suddenly risen among us; that an unheralded champion had stepped into the lists with level lance, to offer wager of battle for mental and spiritual freedom." To allow this man now to retire, at the very moment when his work was finding permanent foundations, was regarded as preposterous. It was he who had gathered and now held the congregation on the North Side. It was for him and this congregation of his making that the new church building had been reared. It was in him and his promise of fame and influence that the people placed their hopes of future happiness. Unity Church

was his, and he must take the office of its minister. "I was therefore called," he says, "in the regular way."

By this unexpected action on the part of the North Side Unitarians, Collyer was brought face to face with a serious problem. He was of course delighted by such recognition of his worth as a man and minister; and there can be little doubt that he was eager to accept. Combined with the native shyness of his being, which always came to the fore at just such times as this, however, were certain sound reasons for hesitation. First of all was the matter of his obligation to the people of the First Church, who had brought him to Chicago less than a year before to serve as their minister-at-large. Then there were the unescapable questions as to his own fitness for the task. He had only just left behind him the forge and hammer of the smithy. He had had no training for the professional ministry, not even so much as a good common school education. Such preaching as he had done, had been to poor, unlettered folk like himself, and correspondingly very unlike the cultured men and women who occupied the pews of Unity. His very words, as they fell from his uncouth Yorkshire tongue, betrayed him for what he was—a peasant immi-

grant, strangely strayed from proper and accustomed ways of life!

All this—honest man that he was!—Robert Collyer made known to his friends in Unity Church. He kept nothing from them, either of fact or fancy; and when they scoffed at his misgivings, and insisted that they wanted him and not another man, he hesitated still. The question as to his duty to the First Church was quickly and easily settled, for it was arranged that he should continue as minister-at-large, retaining the responsible supervision of the work, and passing over the routine labour to assistants. The question as to his personal qualifications for the work was more bothersome. Finally, after much discussion, it was proposed by the confident and eager congregation that the matter be submitted to any group of clergymen whom Collyer might name for counsel. The hesitant minister consented to this, named Dr. Eliot, of St. Louis, Dr. Hosmer, of Buffalo, Dr. Bellows, of New York, and Dr. James Freeman Clarke, of Boston, and submitted to them his problem. With one consent they answered that he must take the church, and, without further ado, he entered as an obedient servant upon his duties.

It was thus, in January, 1860, that Dr. Collyer began his more than half-century's service

as a Unitarian clergyman. Quite in accord with the traditional indifference of Unitarians to the forms and ceremonies of organised religious life was the failure of the people of Unity Church to ordain and install their new minister. In after years Dr. Collyer amused himself more than once by chiding them for their neglect of the rightful prerogatives of his high office. "I never was installed," he wrote at one time. "Nobody (at Unity) thought of it, and I didn't care to push it." Samuel Greeley, the historian of Unity Church, makes frank confession of sin in this regard, pleading only that the church "must be forgiven if, in its youthful haste to begin its work for humanity, it entirely forgot to perform the ceremony which the Christian world has, time out of mind, held to be the decent and fitting prelude to the union of a pastor with his people." But little damage was done, least of all to Robert Collyer. If formal recognition he must have, it had come to him in abundance and beauty at a meeting of the Western Unitarian Conference at Milwaukee in the spring of 1859. There he had been welcomed by "the brethren" with open arms, and made to submit to ordination. Asked no impertinent questions as to what he believed, given no embarrassing instructions as to what he should preach or practice, he

was simply received into the goodly fellowship of free souls in the sweet old way, familiar through many generations to those reared in the Congregational order. Rev. A. D. Mayo preached the sermon, and Dr. Hosmer, of Buffalo, laid on the hands of blessing. Clear in Collyer's mind at the moment, although he said nothing about it, was the memory of that fateful hour long ago, when he received ordination at the hands of the good old farmer on the Yorkshire moor. This second ordination could not supersede that first great dedication to the Most High. But it was welcome as a kind of fulfilment of what was then so well begun.

Now came weeks and months of toil, excitement and abounding joy. I doubt if Robert Collyer was ever more radiantly happy than in the year 1860. Unity Church was the whole of his life. Nothing else held any attraction for him. Thus, he was hardly well set to his new task, when there came to him from the Western Unitarian Conference an invitation to take charge of an attractive and important missionary field in the West. This was one of a series of such invitations in these early years, which show what native genius he brought to his work as a minister, and how quickly this genius was recognised by his fellows. His reply in this case

was immediate and decisive, as witness a letter under date of August 15, 1860, to M. D. Conway:

"*Dear brother:*

"Your circular letter asking me to take the promising missionary field now open to us, came to hand duly. I had already received one signed by H. W. Bellows, J. F. Clarke, N. A. Staples, and J. W. Mumford, urging me to hold on where I was. Such good letters from friends on both sides are very encouraging. I feel that I am over-rated, but that is not of my seeking, so I do not feel bad at it. But I must repeat what I said to you verbally—at present I must not leave Chicago! It would never do to tear out all the delicate tendrils that have come about me from hearts opening out from the winter of a formal Unitarianism into the spring of a simple godly life. (This is between you and me!) If I saw none of this, I should see nothing to stay for but hard duty, but I see it all around. Hard lawyers and editors let me know in a round-about way how I have touched their hearts. 'I thank you most deeply for what you are doing for my husband,' a lady said to me more than a thousand miles from Chicago. This is all round, and I dare not tear it away. I know the argument some would use, but you won't—'it is trusting in an arm of flesh then'—and I deny it. The words that help them are not mine, but the words of the Father which sent me. If I should ever feel as I did when I left my old Yorkshire home, and again when I left Penn-

sylvania, I will not hesitate, but go out. It would be at my peril that I stayed then. I think Abraham would have mighty soon regretted it, if he had not moved west every time he felt he must. I shall wait for that weight of reason, instinct and inspiration which no wise man ever thinks of resisting any more than the fledgling of this summer thinks of resisting the mysterious impulse that carries him out of the coming winter before the first frost has touched a flower. I trace much of our loss in life to resisting this spirit of truth . . ."

Robert Collyer was plainly as much in love with his people as they were with him. It was of course a day of small things at Unity, certainly as compared with those that came after. It is reported, for example, that "the annual deficit (of the church) of two hundred dollars or so seemed as frightful as the deficit which dragged down France to a bloody revolution and her king to the scaffold." But to the ardent minister, now a settled preacher in his own right for the first time, with pulpit, church and people that he could call his own, all things were great, at least as challenges to his ambition and sources of his joy. There was the exhilaration of the morning services, with their congregations quickly swelling to the capacity of the little $4000 structure. There were the wrestlings

with the problem of the Sunday school, the anxious hunt for children, and the sweet word of assurance dropped casually one day into the ear of her over-hasty pastor by a wise if youthful matron, "Be patient, Mr. Collyer. We are young folks here in Unity. Give us time, and you'll have children enough." Then there was the new organ, presided over by William Watson and George Fergus, the former at the keyboard and the latter at the bellows. The installation of this instrument was a great event, for, in the little rented church on Dearborn Street, and for a time in the new building, the music consisted of congregational singing accompanied only by a flute "tastefully played," we are told, by a young bookseller, Augustus H. Burley by name. Memorable was the struggle over the creed, proposed by those who felt that no church, not even a Unitarian church, was complete without one. The endeavour to write out a simple statement of faith which should be satisfactory to all members, was sincere and prolonged; but it failed, as all such attempts are doomed to fail in the case of those who have heard the call of the free spirit. "Our belief was too inclusive to be imprisoned in words," writes one member, "and we gave it up. The one point on which we all agreed was that all might differ." And

lastly, as no single isolated event, but as a constant experience of the days and weeks, was the preaching! This was the centre of the church's, as it was of the minister's, life. Congregations were crowded because people loved to give ear to Robert Collyer's simple eloquence, and feel the impact of his fresh and unspoiled personality. And Robert Collyer was thus eloquent and magnetic, because the presence of listening throngs kindled his heart and touched his lips as though with fire. He was too much a lover of his kind and of the world's work to begrudge any task of these early days, or to miss gladness in any kind of experience; but the sermon in the pulpit on Sunday morning was before all things else the crowning joy of every week.

Activities such as these in Unity were absorbing, but beyond his parish other duties awaited him these days. Thus as we have seen, he was still minister-at-large for the First Church, and remained so until the spring of 1862. He had a well-trained woman as his assistant in this work, but it was of course inevitable that some of the routine labour, much of the worry, and practically all of the responsible administration, should still be his. As time went on, he found it impossible to continue in this twofold rela-

tionship; but for the present at least he laboured with joy in both vineyards.

Then on occasion there were calls to wider fields of service which his compassionate spirit refused to leave unanswered. In June of 1860, for example, a great cyclone swept the state of Iowa. The Chicago Board of Trade promptly organised a relief committee; money in generous amount was raised; and Collyer was appointed field agent to carry succour to the stricken area, and administer it for the benefit of the sufferers. That Dr. Collyer is right in suggesting that it was his position as minister-at-large in the community which commended him to the committee for this responsible post, is undoubtedly true. But it may not be amiss at this distance to suggest that there were other and higher factors involved in his selection, and that these furnish very tangible evidence indeed of the place which he had won for himself in the public life of Chicago in a period of something less than one year and a half. Straight to the wind-swept sections of Iowa he went, struck the cyclone's path at Camanche, and there, taking wagon, followed the dreadful trail westward to Cedar Rapids. The memories of this adventure—of shattered homes, devastated fields, broken bodies, scattered families, sudden poverty—stayed with him for many

a long year. He told the tale to his congregation on the Sunday following his return; and a half-century later he set down vivid stories of these days and nights in his autobiography.

Two letters to Flesher Bland, dated respectively March 28, 1860, and February 1, 1861, furnish interesting first-hand commentary on these early months in the Unity Church pastorate. It is to be noted that "dear Brother Bland," as he is addressed in these letters, is still disturbed at Collyer's defection from Methodism, and warm with the desire to recover him to the true fold as a kind of "lost sheep." As usual in such cases, the protestations and appeals only call forth reaffirmations of the new faith, gentle in this case always, but none the less stalwart.

"Chicago, March 28/60.

"*Dear Brother Bland:*

"Pray do not think I have forgotten your kind letter any more than you forget mine—I have at least one letter in my desk for you which was half done weeks ago, put by in a hurry and never resumed. Perhaps I shall finish this.

"I wish sometimes I had your fine country quiet and leisure when I should get time to think and write more. I heard from a young man who called on us from you (and we were very glad to see him) that you lived in

a beautiful place, and I remember Mrs. Bland had the way to make the inside of home look well. No one could have done much for the outside of the one you lived in at Addingham. So I suppose you really do get a good deal of beauty and goodness with your daily bread to cheer you. Well, so do I—but it is city life after all, and Ilkley was the biggest town I ever lived in before this Chicago; and I do sometimes long to hear perfect stillness but never do for five minutes together. Yet I am here and you there surely by the Grace of *God*. I remember poor old Jim Delves prayed over me, 'Lord, if thy presence go not with him carry him not up hence,' and I think the prayer has not failed. When Lot turned toward the plain there must have been some remote touch to his soul beside the freedom of the will. May not these unconscious touches that determine us sometimes, we hardly know how, be over all God, blessed forevermore? I remember you quoted the words 'Sir, we know we are free and that settles it,' when I once asked about that puzzle of the free will (you did not tell me it was Johnson, you rogue) and I let it rest there a good while, but I have thought at times that God has other ways than our own choice to keep us in some remote way in the traces of his grand ultimate purpose. I should really be very wicked if I believed he was not King of Kings. Well, so it is and you must think of that whenever you remember what you call my perversion. If I had come out of the Unitarian into your church, what would you have called it then, my

dear fellow? It is a long way through the whole reason for all these things; they rest with him who is our life.

"Since I wrote you I have been jogging along with my work. I sent you our printed report the other day which will tell you one part of my work; the other part is my new church. I was called in regular form over the parish at the New Year and after some hesitation accepted. There was an express condition that I should devote all needful time to the ministry-at-large and give the church one service each Sunday. I wish you could have seen the call and resolutions—there never was anything more handsome. They are a fine people. The church is paid for, I have now a salary of two thousand dollars a year. Of course I am very busy but I am hearty and strong. My old Yorkshire oatmeal constitution is a capital thing. I hope, please God, to do a good spell of work before I die. That will not prevent me from insuring my life, though, and so I shall do so for $5000 this spring. Have you insured yours?

"We are having a fine open spring—to-day it is as warm as early summer, and I have had a long solitary walk by the shore of the Lake up to the cemetery. It did me good as it always does to get near the breast of our great Mother and feel her strong, warm pulses in my own blood. During the present winter I have had some little leisure; I study one sermon a week, steady, and so need some time to read and think up. My church is largely made up of men and women of education; edi-

tors, lawyers, etc., and I should not do them any good if I did not keep ahead. But it is not so hard as I expected. They pay me far more compliments than I have any idea I deserve.

"I get all your papers and I hope you get all mine—I sent you a number of Littell's *Living Age* that contained an article on the West Riding; I hope you got that, because I shall often want to send you a number of that journal when it prints something I know you will like to see. The Christmas papers were for the children, to whom, with Mrs. Bland, give my best love. I hope when you move it will be into a larger sphere; I have no idea of your burying your talent in a La Cheete napkin, if you have made good time these ten years. You are too good a preacher for them. I got your sermon; it had the old ring with it, and did me good because it was yours, more, I am afraid, than because it had *the* truth as it is in Jesus. All you print I will read, though, and never fail to be better for it. When you get a no. of the *New Covenant* there will be some poor thing in it over R. C. from me. I sent Mary Hudson a copy of the report: poor, dear Mary. Bye the bye, did you ever know Alice Bolton, a niece of the Beanlands, and what came of her? I had a most intense May-day attachment for her once, but am afraid she did not do well. (I write this in my study.) The *Cornhill Magazine* comes here and is a capital venture, 128 pages, equal in every way to *Blackwood*, with two good engravings, for a shilling. It will make

a revolution in those things in time. The New York *Independent* that I send sometimes is about to publish some articles on Methodism that will be interesting. I shall send some to you.

"The Methodists have two most magnificent churches here and several plainer ones. There is one right across the street. I went in one night but did not make any real sense of the man, so went no more. John Baker was on the circuit when I left; I perceive he has taken great hold upon you—what an earnest young fellow he was. I have picked him out in papers pretty much ever since and find he is getting up. George Steward went out from you. The plan was interesting; some of the names I remember very well as preachers; some I suppose are dead, among whom that poor consumptive fellow who was such a good 'Leader.' I had a capital class a long time in Penna. and always enjoyed it. Had a most loving letter from an old class mate to-day.

"Will you travel this summer? Have you seen Niagara? I think I shall go there. I would like to come to you but it is so far. Certainly some day I will come to your place if I live. I hope to go home in '62 if all be well. I want to see my poor old mother once more in the flesh, as we call it. How poor is our faith: how is it we cannot feel certain that the transcendent beauty which will clothe us in the spirit will be far more exceeding the beauty of this time in form and spirit. We never feel sure of the future, yet forever it opens out better even than our hopes: 'And we smile

to think God's greatness flows around our incompleteness; round our restlessness, his rest.'

"Dear friend, good-bye,

"Ever truly yours,

"Robert Collyer.

"I have begun Greek!!"

"Chicago, Feb. 1st, 1861.

"*Dear Brother Bland:*

"Reading just now how De Quincey sometimes left his letters unanswered for months reminded me in some way of you, and how I ought at once to answer your good letter of long ago, so no time will be so good as this dull, plashy night when 'I can't get out,' to pay my devoirs to you. We are all well, thank God for that; the baby (Annie) grows hugely, is now near 9 months old, and has got 4 teeth. The other three are well, so am I, so is Mother; our life jogs on quietly. I have plenty to do and plenty of robust health to do it. The winter is my busy time and keeps me full handed. This winter we have 3 schools open and I have done a good deal for the poor—and a good deal for Kansas—and my people tell me I have preached the best sermons they ever heard, so you may well believe I will hardly fail to be spoiled. Sure enough, my church is filling. The income now pays more than the outgo, and what is better, I have round me some of the very best and truest men and women I ever saw in my life. E. C. Larned, who made the great defence of the Ottawa res-

cuers—the men who took a fugitive from the officers and got him away to Canada—he has come in lately. I am so glad to see such men round my pulpit. I feel that I must try to be true to the great cause of freedom with a more perfect truth before such critics.

"Now let us have a chat. Poor Dave Lister has come to that, poor fellow. Well, it is terrible, and must be terrible for his poor wife, for she was a noble woman and well deserved a far better husband than ever Dave was. He was the type of what I understand by the word Atheist; casting back in my memory, I can never remember to have heard him utter one word or do one deed in all the time I knew him that would give the pulse one beat faster in a minute; never knew him care a pin for divine things or give any hint that he ever felt any sense of the ever present *God.* I hope, poor fellow, he is not clean gone. I owe him nothing but one warm shake of the hand just as I came away and what I am sure was a real wish for my welfare, but that is a good thing to remember and made me feel more sorry for his fall. His son Harry must be a young man by this time; his sister Harriet was my first devotion. And poor old Hobson is dead—dead as his verses. Unmarried and alone, no Becca Batty ever made him the happy man he fain would have been. I have not known many men whose inner history was more pathetic than that of poor old Hob.

"Do you know I was at Montreal last summer for about an hour but totally unable to branch off to La Cheete? It was about the middle of July and I was

on my way to Portland on urgent business requiring haste. I enquired which way La Cheete lay and would fain have made a pilgrimage to that place but had no chance. I was so much pleased with the country about there that I have thought I would spend my vacation about Canada East if I am spared until the next summer. I mean to ask Gardner of Montreal to exchange for the whole vacation. I have some of his old members in my parish here and they will be right glad to have him come to see them and to entertain him. Perhaps I may fix it that way; if so it will be real pleasant and give him a good time at Hemingford.

"I got those ponderous paragraphs about Martineau and about Universalism. My dear fellow, these things are an old song. No man can believe more deeply than I do that repentance is the indoor to salvation, that if we are not saved we must perish. But I rejoice also in the belief that he whose mercy endureth forever, who *ruleth*, whatever that may mean, is not going to be circumvented, and lose into perdition the souls he has created. If he *made* them to *lose* them that is another thing. No letter of the Bible can weigh for a moment with the ponderous fact that God is our Father. I regret as much as Martineau that we have as yet not much noble fruit of literature but he ought to remember that we are but in the March days of our year yet. Still we have some noble things to show already. And when our church has gone into its ripe autumn as yours has, we also shall have good fruit to show in abundance. Besides, your best hymns are just what we want. My

service book has lots of good Methodist hymns in it and we never tire of singing them. But here is an Evening Hymn by a dear personal friend of my own, one of our ministers that 'needeth not to be ashamed.'

'Slowly by God's hand unfurled
Down around the weary world
Falls the darkness—O how still
Is the working of his will.

Mighty spirit ever nigh,
Work in me as silently;
Veil the day's distracting sights,
Show me heaven's eternal lights.

Living stars to view be brought
In the boundless realms of thought.
High and infinite desires
Flaming like those upper fires.

Holy truth, eternal right,
Let them break upon my sight;
Let them shine, serene and still,
And with light my being fill.' [11]

"Best love to all,
"Good-bye.
"Ever your true friend,
"Robert Collyer."

So the days jogged on—happy days, and troublous days too, for the minister of Unity Church, glad and proud as he was in his work,

[11] This is printed here exactly as it appears in Dr. Collyer's letter. Several variations from the approved version will be noted.

and marvellously successful withal, was not without besetting anxieties.

Conspicuous among these, as the above epistles clearly indicate, was the constant worry as to his ability, as a good shepherd, to lead and feed his flock. Many, if not most, of his parishioners, were men and women of breeding, culture, and noble character. They were born of the deep-rooted stock of colonial New England, educated in academies and colleges, and were leaders of light and learning in the community. In more ways than one the people of Unity, like the people of the First Church, were "the pick" of Chicago's business, social and cultural life. And here at their head was a rude blacksmith from the English midlands, who could not count a sum total of two years' education, whose tongue still carried the thick "burr" of peasant dialect, whose pen still halted at the spelling of such words as "Illinois," "friends," and "prairie," [12] and whose ways must have been in many details not the ways of those he served. This discrepancy was obvious enough—and it acted not only as a challenge but as a source of recurring worry and embarrassment. Both moods are reflected in a letter under date of March 5, 1861, addressed

[12] "Illisnois," "freinds" and "praire" are the spellings in these early letters.

to "my dear friend," Wirt Dexter. It is evident that his correspondent had communicated to him some suggestions, and perhaps admonitions, anent his preaching. In answer, Robert Collyer writes:

"I have received and read your letter with the deepest gratitude. When God wants to make a man feel how much he loves him, it seems to me that he always gives him just such a friend as you are, with a large heart and brain, and frank, free, fearless tongue, whose friendship is ever as true for correction as for encouragement. If anything more is needed to help me strive to be my best self beside the present promptings of the divine spirit, it is just such kind, strong words as you speak to me. I think exactly those things are needful, because I have the most woful sense of being stupid very often, and very seldom any idea that I am otherwise. You have heard me say from the pulpit perhaps that I feel unequal to the work of speaking to the men and women of Unity Church, who I believe to be by all odds the very foremost among religious thinkers in this city. I feel this at times so acutely that I should feel more gladness than grief at my dismissal. . . ."

Then follows in this letter a long paragraph in which he tells the story of his life, as a kind of explanation of his feelings, and of wistful pleading that he may not have "done so badly."

At the close, most appropriately, comes the call for help.

"I shall be grateful," he writes, "if you will, as the thing occurs to you, note some fruitful books of the sort you mention that I may read to some profit. I am aware of a rather narrow range. I have not read so much in American history as I ought to and will do. I shall be glad if you can save me prospecting, I have so little time, and help me strike a lead at once when I do dig. And now, dear friend, let me thank you again, and do not count these confidences egotistic—never let them interfere with your most flat-footed rebuke, where you see occasion. God knows I'm not the man I should be, but when I get hold of such a man as you I feel like trying to be so that I may be worthy of your friendship. I value that friendship all the more and ever shall do for its clear, strong insight, and I try to keep before me the words of a good old Quaker to me when I came here. 'Robert, do not try to be great, but to do thy duty. If thee does that, thee will be as great as thee can be.' "

Sermons were an especial trial at this time. In all of his preaching as a Methodist circuit-rider, in this country as well as in England, he had followed the leadings of the free spirit. Never once had he committed a sermon to manuscript, and then read it to his congregation.

When called upon to face the Unitarian audiences of Chicago, however, a different method, for mere safety's sake if nothing more, seemed advisable. He still did not write, for his labours as minister-at-large left him no time for this kind of preparation. But he fell very soon into the habit of making notes on a half-sheet of writing-paper in outline or skeleton form; and sometimes on the basis of these notes, writing out the sermon in full a few days after its delivery. The famous discourse, "How Enoch Walked with God," was thus developed into the first manuscript which Dr. Collyer ever owned. From this the transition to writing and reading sermons as a regular homiletical method was easy, and in this case, perhaps, inevitable. In a letter to Flesher Bland, dated June, 1861, he says:

"I read my sermons almost entirely. I have to. I seldom get done writing before bed-time Saturday evening, and do not like to commit them to memory. I cannot help the writing and reading. There is not any chance for the man who stands in such a pulpit as this of mine where the hearers are full of intelligence, wide-awake, entirely intolerant of tautology and repetition, demanding that you stand abreast of them at least, if not ahead. To extemporise would be to fail. You would find it out even in your churches in a great city. . . ."

Timidity of a very natural kind undoubtedly had its part in this decisive change of pulpit method. But a sense of duty—a consciousness of what he owed himself, his people and the high cause to the service of which he had been called—was the really decisive factor. That Dr. Collyer was wise in thus abandoning extempore delivery is unquestionable. Nothing less than the stern discipline exacted by setting words carefully to paper, could have developed him into the potent orator which he later became. Throughout the remainder of his days, on lecture-platform as well as in pulpit, his manuscript was always before him; and those which have been preserved to us reveal with what ease, in course of time, he came to write, and with what skill he learned to mould the grace and power of the spoken word.

The sudden change at this period in the character of Collyer's work, the strain and excitement of his labours, and the high conscientiousness of all his endeavours, combined at times to throw him into fits of indescribable depression. There was "more fear than faith" a good part of the time, and a real struggle therefore to hold the pace. At such moments "Father" Furness in Philadelphia was "a refuge and strength"; Flesher Bland in distant Canada a never-failing help; and nearer friends, like Wirt Dexter for

example, genuine sources of good-cheer. Nothing availed so much, however, as the trust and love of Mrs. Collyer. She was instantly to the rescue with a word of rebuke, a summons to courage, or a gentle caress, as each particular crisis in her husband's experience seemed at the moment to demand. One very beautiful story, set down in "Some Memories," must here be repeated. "One day," he writes, "when fear held me fast, (I) said, 'Mother, I think it was a mistake all round. In a year from now, I shall not have a word to say. It will be dropping buckets into empty wells.' She must have been busy and did not want to be bothered with my moods, for I see her turn to me with something in her hand she was still doing, and she says, 'Don't bother me with such nonsense! Yours is not a cistern: it is a living spring. Keep it running clear and deepen your well when you must, and you will have more to say in a year from now than you have ever had before in your life.' "

A true word, bravely spoken! Here indeed, in the great heart of this Englishman, was a living fountain of pure spiritual life. There was some choking and roiling at the start, no doubt. But in a surprisingly short time the spring was flowing sweet and clear and full. The tides

were free—the swelling stream had found its course.

Such was the beginning of things for Robert Collyer in Chicago and in the Unitarian ministry. No one event of all the story is particularly impressive, but the sum total of achievement in these months is little less than miraculous. We have only to compare the Methodist heretic just fresh from the Shoemakertown forge, in February, 1859, with the full-fledged minister of Unity Church in January, 1860, to marvel at the distance travelled and the height attained in so short a period of time. Chance, of course, had its place in this, as in every such, event. But in the last analysis it was the native quality of the man which really counted. The discovery of Robert Collyer was as sure and swift in Chicago as in Ilkley, and by the cultured townsmen of Illinois as by the uncouth dalesman of Yorkshire. Greatness of soul was as conspicuous with him as bigness of body. He could be as little hidden spiritually as physically. Wherever he was—at the anvil, on the moorside, in the pulpit—he bulked large, loomed high, shone with beauty, and thus, like some rough-hewn but verdant mountain, filled the landscape. All that he now had and was, belonged to him by right and not by favour. What wonder that anxieties began

to fade, and burdens, even as they multiplied, to grow lighter! He could not for long be the victim of even occasional misgiving and despair. The past was a sure prophecy of the future. It needed but gradual adjustment to strange routine, slow formation of new habit, and the confidence born of real success, to make him the happiest of men. Just when there first stole into his heart that serenity of inward mood and outward demeanour which sanctified his later years, it is impossible to say. But we shall not be far wrong, I believe, if we name these days of '59 and '60.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CIVIL WAR—NATIONAL
1861-1865

"War is hell, the great commander said. Yes, I would answer; war is hell. But these memories steal out, and then I say, Is this all? And I turn to the seer's vision in the Holy Book and read, 'There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought the dragon and his angels, and the dragon was cast out.' And then I ask, What do these things mean?"—R. C. in "Some Memories," page 151.

On April 12, 1861, was fired "that first gun at Fort Sumter which brought all the free states to their feet as one man." [1] From the moment of Abraham Lincoln's inauguration—nay, from the moment of his election in November, 1860—everything in the North had been in a hopeless state of confusion and dismay. The secession of South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, and the organisation of the Confederacy—the honest doubts as to the character and ability of the newly-elected

[1] James Russell Lowell, in *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1861.

President—the conflicting counsels of the administration, the Congress, and the people at large—the genuine desire on the part of the North that hostilities might be averted, and a divided nation reunited in the ancient bonds of confidence and love—all these circumstances combined to bring about a condition of almost unprecedented chaos. No man knew what a day nor an hour would bring forth, nor, indeed, what he really desired it to bring forth. The battle in Charleston harbour, however, transformed the situation as in the twinkling of an eye. "Judged by loss of life," says James Ford Rhodes,[2] "no battle could be more insignificant; not a man on either side was killed. Judged by the train of events which ensued, few contests in our history have been more momentous." On Sunday afternoon, the 14th, Major Anderson surrendered Sumter to General Beauregard. On the next day, April 15th, appeared Lincoln's proclamation calling for 75,000 volunteers. On Wednesday, the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment started for Washington, and on Friday, the 19th, met and overcame the Baltimore mob. It was a terrific week, characterised on the one hand by indescribable excitement, and on the other by an almost instantaneous fixa-

[2] In his "History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850," Vol. III, page 355.

tion of northern sentiment in support of President Lincoln's determination to defend the Union. "The North crystallised into a unit," wrote Emerson, "and the life of mankind was saved."[3]

The news of Sumter reached Chicago on Sunday morning, the 14th. Hard on the heels of the first despatch announcing the bombardment of the fort came a second announcing its surrender. Excitement, for a time at fever-heat, was momentarily succeeded by dismay; and then was every other sensation swallowed up in one great passion of response to the President's call for troops. Meetings were everywhere held in halls and on street corners, recruiting stations were opened and straightway thronged, banners were flung to the breeze and wildly cheered. Men of influence and power in every walk of life pledged their allegiance to the Union, and sought at once for some form of public service. Robert Collyer was among the first to lift his voice and pledge devotion to the nation. Samuel Collyer, the oldest son, "distinctly remember(s) being one of a vast audience addressed by him in front of the Court House, when he said that, being a minister, he could not go to the front as a soldier, nor

[3] See James Elliott Cabot's "A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson," Vol. II, page 605.

could he let his boy go, who was only fourteen, but he had a hundred dollars in gold to give to a good man who would go in his place."[4]

On the following Sunday, April 21st, the churches of the city spoke. Unity was decked with flags; they hung from the organ, from the iron rods supporting the frame-work of the roof, and from the wall behind the platform. The pulpit was enveloped in "red, white and blue," so that it could not be seen at all. The pews of course were thronged with eager listeners; the minister, profoundly stirred by the events of the past week, prepared to speak as he had never spoken before. The first hymn was Isaac Watts's "Before Jehovah's Awful Throne," the second, "America," sung as though to "lift the roof in despite of the iron rods." Then came the sermon, preached from the text, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one." The service was closed with the Doxology; and then, after the benediction, all stood and sang

[4] "A young man came to our house the next morning," writes Samuel, "and said he would like to accept the offer, and would send the money to his mother in Canada. He enlisted in a Chicago regiment, and was killed at the battle of Lookout Mountain. His sword was sent to me from the battlefield and was hung in my room over the foot of my bed, but could not be found after the Chicago fire, having been taken away by relic hunters. My father then sought out another substitute for me, who was afterwards killed in battle also."

with mingled shouts and tears, "The Star Spangled Banner." Straight from this service went more than one young man to enlist for the march to Cairo. The sermon, borne far and wide as though on wings of air, lifted Collyer in an instant to a position of primacy among his Chicago colleagues. From this moment to the close of the war, Unity Church forgot completely its parochial problems and ambitions, and lived but for the one purpose of saving the Union.

The life and thought of the next two months or so are vividly suggested in a passage from a letter to Flesher Bland, dated June, 1861. Collyer begins jocularly—

"I have been saving a ten cent stamp for you ever so long, and so shall write at once to get rid of it, and to tell you how glad I was to have such a budget of good things all in one day. . . ."

Then passing to more serious matters, he says—

"We are full of the war. The whole country is a great camp and drill ground. The spirit that has been called out in defence of the Union is the grandest thing ever seen in the country, perhaps in the world. It was the most stirring time for a few days after the President's proclamation I ever felt. Of course I have hardly preached on any other topic. Last Sunday was the

first time I have got out of it. I have preached on 'Our Relation to the War,' 'Woman and the War,' 'Christ and the War,' 'God and the War.' What or when the end will be is not yet seen. We have a great trial to go through before we have done with it. But the North is sure to conquer, and we shall put slavery to death in the conflict. At least I devoutly long for and hope so. . . ."

Recruiting was everywhere the first order of business. Excitement was of course intense, but it was more than ordinarily high and sustained in Chicago, owing to the fact that the unrivalled railroad facilities of this city made it the natural centre for the assembling of the armies of the Middle West and their distribution to strategic points. At first all interest was focused on the Chicago boys, who left their schools, workshops and offices to enlist for service at the front. They were the flower of the city's youth, men of splendid vigour and pure idealism—"a number of fine young fellows from our own church," says Collyer proudly, "were among them." No sooner, however, had the public mind become somewhat adjusted to the local situation, than it was stirred anew by the arrival of the regiments and batteries which had been recruited in Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska and the distant West. Week after week, they poured in in a steady stream,

tall, handsome, consecrated young men, the picked and chosen of village and farm-land, clothed, booted and spurred by the loyal hands at home. Scarcely a day went by, which did not bring its thrill of crashing music, waving banners, and excited cheers, as one more regiment detrained, marched through the crowded streets, and either took up its appointed place of encampment on the city's outskirts or started east for immediate service. Little wonder is it that the boy, Samuel, fretted and fumed in the Collyer home and could not understand his father's persistent refusal to let him take up arms.[5] Little wonder, also, that the father and minister, forbidden by what he regarded as the sacred obligations of his clerical office to go to the front, sought consolation in keeping alive the fires of patriotic sentiment by the untiring labours of tongue and pen, and in doing whatever odd jobs

[5] "He was loath to let me go until of enlisting age in spite of my pleadings. . . . My repeated efforts to get him to consent to my enlistment, and his pleadings for me to wait, finally culminated one day in my walking into a recruiting office and saying that I wished to enlist. When I was given a pen with which to sign my name, my conscience came to my rescue, I laid the pen down, quietly walked out, sought my father in his study, and we had it out together, resulting as usual in his persuading me to wait, and the waiting continued to the end, because the war ended by the time I became of enlisting age."—Samuel Collyer, in a personal statement.

of public service might come to hand! To speak at a great public rally at Bryan Hall, to preside at a meeting at the Briggs House for the organisation of a women's nursing corps, to meet with a committee of citizens to consider problems of relief—these were the routine labours of nearly every day. For these were the times when the best and truest everywhere were thinking only of "Father Abraham" and his call for help to save the Union; and Robert Collyer, citizen, preacher, and minister-at-large, toiled unceasingly in every field open to him for the single cause.

During the early months of the war, Collyer remained at his post in Chicago, finding plenty to engage him in his own parish and city. Nor is there indication in contemporary documents that he had either desire or expectation at this time of entering upon any different kind of work from that offered by his regular parochial and civic duties. In mid-summer, however, there came a summons which was as welcome as it was sudden. I refer to the message from Dr. Henry W. Bellows, minister of All Souls Church in New York, to come to Washington to take up service with the United States Sanitary Commission.

The story of this great organisation comprises one of the most familiar as it does one

of the most beautiful chapters of Civil War history. Conceived very largely in the mind of Dr. Bellows, who served as its president from the beginning to the end of its beneficent existence, sponsored by influential groups of men and women in New York and elsewhere, privately established by ministers, physicians and public-spirited citizens who were determined that the health and comfort of the enlisted men should not be neglected by a government absorbed in the technicalities of political, military and diplomatic procedure, the Sanitary Commission was first officially recognised on June 9, 1861, by an order of the Secretary of War, issued with the approval of the President, as "A Commission of Inquiry and Advice in Respect to the Sanitary Interests of the United States Forces." On April 16, 1862, Congress passed a bill "to reorganise and increase the efficiency of the Medical Department of the Army," which gave the Sanitary Commission definite standing as a department of government; and from this time on, under the administrative direction of Frederick Law Olmsted, Secretary, and the inspired leadership of Dr. Bellows, President, it laboured authoritatively and successfully for the good of the soldiers. During its existence it secured nearly five million dollars in cash, and distributed sup-

plies of various kinds to the estimated value of fifteen million dollars. Its work from first to last was without scandal, and "the names of men permanently engaged in the work," as James Ford Rhodes well states in his monumental history,[6] "make a roll of honour."

The work of the Commission was of two kinds, preventive and relief. On the one side, warned by the frightful experience of the English army in Crimea, it undertook to safeguard the Union troops against the diseases that haunt the wake of armies. Therefore, throughout the war, agents of the Commission laboured untiringly in camp and on the march for the maintenance of such conditions and habits of life as would keep the soldiers at the maximum of physical health. They gave lectures on sanitation, distributed tracts and articles, and gave personal instruction on the care of the body and its functions. They watched the food supply, tested the drinking water, provided for the proper disposal of refuse, and insisted always upon sanitary, well-policed, and thoroughly drained and salubrious encampments. They gave assiduous attention to the personal cleanliness of the men, insisting upon the proper care of clothing, the

[6] See "History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850," Vol. V, pages 244-259.

use of tooth-brushes and other important toilet articles, and frequent bathing. Athletic recreations were fostered, vice discouraged and fought, home ties steadfastly maintained. No detail of army life was either neglected or forgotten, with the result that the Union soldiers were wholly spared such devastation as made the Crimean War a horror.

Along with this preventive work, went the work of relief. This was largely centred, of course, in the hospital and transport service. Wherever were gathered the wounded, there were gathered also the representatives of the Commission, not only guarding sanitary conditions, but serving also the needs of the thousands picked up wounded and broken on the fields of battle. The dressing of wounds, the giving of medicines, the making of beds and serving of meals, the writing of letters to the dear ones at home, comfort of the dying, decent disposal of the dead—all these and other trying tasks fell to the attention of the countless nurses working under the direction of the Commission, and were discharged with lovely fidelity and devotion. When the news of some great battle reached the Washington headquarters, instantly the nearest agents were despatched to the scene of carnage, there to labour and watch until the last wounded

soldier had been found and sent on his way to the base hospital. Supplies for the sick and wounded—bedding, clothing, food delicacies, bandages, etc.—were gathered and sent forward by the Commission in a never-failing stream. Money was raised by the thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars in all parts of the country. Wonderful was the energy displayed, and wonderful the results achieved.

Now it was to this great work of prevention and relief that Robert Collyer was summoned in the mid-summer of 1861 by a letter from Dr. Bellows; and it was in this work, at intervals, that he gladly engaged throughout the continuance of the war. As a matter of form, the minister of Unity laid the invitation of the President of the Sanitary Commission before his congregation for action, but he had little doubt that they would release him. Nor was his doubt confirmed. With one voice the people bade him, "Go!" So he went, and for a period of weeks extending to the early part of October, gave himself unremittingly to the good cause.

On his arrival in Washington, Collyer was assigned to the camps about the city, where the scattered army from Bull Run had only recently taken shelter, and where General McClellan was just starting on the prodigious task of creating

the "Army of the Potomac" which was later to be led to victory not by himself but by his successors. It was Collyer's business to visit the camps, examine their sanitary condition and the general health of the men, and report to headquarters. He was given a team, with the escort of a soldier, to take him from place to place; and he writes that before he left he had visited and inspected every camp of the great Union army.

As "all was quiet along the Potomac" that summer, Collyer's adventures were few and unexciting. His story was mostly that of hard work, and plenty of it. Amusing, however, was his experience with "a rebel battery" across the river. Accompanied by his ever-faithful squire, the soldier, he was making his way through a patch of woods toward the camp which he was planning to visit, when he took a wrong turn and was straightway "lost." The two plunged along for a time, hoping to get out of the woods and take their bearings in the open country, when suddenly they came to a clearing and found themselves face to face with a row of frowning cannon. "A rebel battery," whispered the soldier. "What'll we do?" "Turn about and make for the river," said Collyer, no non-resistant but wise enough not to attempt to capture a battery single-handed. The two made their escape, and

on the return to Washington were not slow to tell of their experience. But there were sceptics among the hearers, and soon it came out that the Confederate cannon were none other than Munson's Hill Battery of "Quaker," or wooden, guns!

Equally amusing is Dr. Collyer's account of the one glimpse which he caught of President Lincoln. "It was on a sunny Saturday afternoon," he writes, "and I remember, as we went past the White House toward the bridge, my soldier said, 'See them feet, sir?' There were perhaps half a dozen pairs set sole toward us at two open windows, and my man said, 'That's the Cabinet a-settin'. See the big feet in the middle o' that window? Them's Old Abe's.' "

Collyer returned to Chicago, after this somewhat extended period of service, in early October, not to resume his church work, however, but to pass right on to Missouri and inspect the army of General Fremont.[7] Starting in at Jefferson City, he first examined the military hospitals and found them "in the most fearful condition you can imagine. I cannot stop to tell you of the

[7] In his "Some Memories," he says that he "opened his church for one Sunday perhaps" on this return to Chicago. The letter of October 29, quoted on page 258, however, indicates plainly that the Doctor's memory here failed him. He did not resume his preaching until after his return from Missouri.

scenes I saw," he states; "it is enough to say that one poor fellow had lain there sick on the hard boards and seen five men carried away dead, one after another, from his side. He was worn to a skeleton; worn through so that great sores were all over his back, and filthy beyond telling." He then went out into the country, which had been the scene of such hot campaigning by General Lyon only a short time before, to hunt out and care for the sick and wounded. The land was as though devastated by a scourge of grasshoppers. There was nothing to eat apparently anywhere: "I was never so hungry, so far as I remember, before or since," says the Doctor. Fortunately his trip was short, and he was soon in St. Louis reporting to his old friend Dr. Eliot, minister of the Unitarian church, who was in charge of this particular department of the Sanitary Commission's work. From St. Louis, he went straight back to Chicago; and on the following Sunday faced his people, to tell them something of all that he had seen and done since he left them in mid-summer.

A vivid light on this chapter in Collyer's life, as well as on the army conditions of this early period of the Civil War, is shed by a letter written to Flesher Bland on October 29, within a

week of his return to his parish. Beginning "My dear brother," he says—

"Your kind letter reached me in Washington and was very welcome. If it had been possible for me to come by way of Canada I should not have failed. But I was needed at once and had to go right through, also I came back, not home, but to join Fremont's army in Missouri. I have now got done, got through with a whole skin!!, and come home. Had my first service on Sunday to a splendid congregation and feel real hearty and like work. I was really disappointed at not getting round but this war upsets all calculations. I cannot get home next summer now, for I cannot ask my church for leave of absence so soon again. They behaved like Trojans, better in fact. Were all on hand when I got home and paid my salary all the same while I was away. I am to turn my last Sunday's sermon into a lecture for the citizens, as it was a narrative of what I had seen during my absence. I shall give it in about a week.

"Of course soldiering even as a civilian is not an easy life. I should have preferred shoeing donkeys for 'old Jacky' so far as ease went, but it was such an opportunity as can only come once in a life time for seeing men under strange, new circumstances. I came into contact with about 50,000 all told and found camps like homes, a few nearly perfect, a good many that needed to be amended, and the rest dirty, disorderly and disorganised. I found men whose pure steadfast goodness went with them and shone from them under all circum-

stances, officers who had taken to arms because they had failed shamefully in everything else, and officers who were true as steel, unbending as granite, tender as a woman. I saw hundreds of men sitting in the golden Sunday sunset listening to the prayer or sermon as it poured from the heart of the preacher, or helping to raise the hymn with a heartiness that destroyed all discord as the sound swept up through the great arches of heaven. And many of the same men in the week day uttering blasphemies that smote you with a sudden pain as when you tread on a thorn. I saw chaplains in immaculate white cravats, men who would hardly soil their fingers to save a soul, preaching to perhaps forty instead of a whole regiment and even they suspecting the sermon was meant for somebody else; and chaplains whose every sermon was a week long and was made up of genuine, hearty loving helpfulness, writing letters for the men to wives and maidens far away, watching by and comforting the sick, receiving the photograph and Bible and the last message home for the dying. I have seen the sick left of their own officers to rot in squalor and destitution, and an old black man or woman come in and bear them off to their poor homes and nurse them back to life.

"Our cause so far does not prosper. We have met with little besides reverses and mostly very sore reverses. It is a dark day for America and all the darker for our fears. Our rulers are more tender for slavery than they are for freedom. I think they are shamefully backward in dealing with the root of the matter, but I think the

word emancipation will have to be said and stood to before we get through and we shall have a real republic in the end. I see by the paper this morning that Cameron has authorised the employment of slaves as soldiers by our army in the South. If that be true it is full of significance and will do more for abolition than any other thing that has been done except the rebellion itself.

"I wrote some letters to the *Tribune* here. My wife does not remember whether she sent you a copy. I have a copy of the last and will send it to you. I wish I had the rest, I would send them also. I hope you got a copy of a sermon on the Bull Run disaster which was printed in the *Inquirer*. I wrote a good deal more than I printed and the velvet footed New Yorkers left out one long paragraph of what I sent which advocated a younger man than Scot for the chief command. I see by the papers he is about to retire, so I was right after all.

"Thank you for being so steady with the *Mercury* while I was away. Now I have got back I can begin to return your favours. I see by the one that came to hand yesterday that the Myers wing of Methodism in Addingham has got itself a church, 'an ornament to the town' which your church certainly was not. I hope they will prosper and even if Christ be preached of contention if he *be* preached there will be good done. What a queer new world must be mingling with the old in Wharfedale by this time. . . .

"I hope you are very well and will have a good winter.

I perceive you are *growing* out there as I was sure you *must;* perhaps before I get to Montreal you will be *there.* You must not refuse if you have the offer. A minister in a city has vastly better leverage than in the country, can lift more and do more in every way. I have no desire to go into the country to live any more and should reply as the old preacher did down in Pennsylvania when Conference sent him over the Blue Mountains to a sparse settlement. He went to the Bishop to remonstrate; the Bishop at last said to him, 'Brother, you must go where the Lord sends you,' and the old man said 'I know the Lord never would send *me* over the Blue Mountains. Conference is mistaken.'

"Ever in love,

"Robert Collyer."

After his return from Missouri, Collyer did not leave the city for four months. Indeed, he was never again away from his pulpit for more than two Sundays at a time. Short absences, however, were not infrequent, for the people of Unity were as eager to send their minister on errands of mercy as he was to go.

The next call of this kind came in February, 1862, from the triumphant field of Fort Donelson. When the news of the great feat of General Grant reached Chicago, the city went fairly mad with delight. It had had many a bitter disappointment to carry since the first Bull Run,

and it had more than once been deceived by word of victories which had never been won, with resulting humiliation and disgust. But here at last was real news of a real achievement! A public meeting was instantly called for jubilation, congratulation, and also for action. For not even the delirium of rejoicing which seized upon the citizens at this moment could make them forget the price which had been paid for the capture of the Confederate stronghold. There on the Cumberland were great numbers of friends and foes together, wounded, dying, in urgent need of assistance! Supplies must be had without delay, men must be found to rush these supplies to the battlefield, men and women both must be enlisted for service in the crowded hospitals. The wonderful meeting held on this great day rose nobly to the occasion. Without a moment's unnecessary delay, a relief expedition was organised, equipped, and started on its way, with Robert Collyer a not inconspicuous member of the committee in charge.

This trip to Donelson seems to have made a deeper and more lasting impression on Collyer's mind than any other of his war experiences. This was probably because it was his first close-range look at a battlefield and the wreckage of a battle-

ROBERT COLLYER
From a Photograph taken on his visit to Boston in 1862

field. In a sermon preached to his people[8] on the Sunday following his return, March 2, he gave a vivid description of what he had seen and felt on this occasion. His first impression was of Cairo, the distributing centre of all this fiercely embattled area of the Middle West, and therefore the place where were encountered the first traces of the great conflict. "A mud-hole," as Dr. Collyer describes it, noisy, crowded, cluttered with supplies moving one way and the pathetic debris of the battle, including "those long boxes that hold only and always the same treasure," moving the other, it was a city hideous to enter and good to leave behind. Therefore the Chicago party remained only long enough to change from steam train to boat. A journey of one hundred and sixty miles up the Ohio and Cumberland Rivers brought them at last to Donelson and the work which they had come to do.

Collyer's first task, upon landing, was to hunt out the Chicago men, and more especially the "dear friends who used to sit in (the) pews" of Unity. These were found without difficulty; and, delighted with the sight of familiar and much loved faces, they entertained the visitors with coffee, "which they drank as if it were nec-

[8] And printed in his first book, "Nature and Life," page 274. See also "Some Memories," pages 136-151.

tar," says the Doctor, "and we as if it were senna." Then came the news from home—tales of the joy of Chicago over the great victory, pride in the boys who had fought and won so gallantly, love from mother to son, wife to husband, sister to brother. Finally, as clusters of soldiers gathered around to see and hear, there came the inevitable demand for "a few remarks" from the minister. So Collyer rose and, choking through his tears, told "how proud and thankful they had made us, and what great tides of gladness had risen for them in our city, and wherever the tidings of victory had run; and how our hands gave but a feeble pressure, our hearts but a feeble echo, of the mighty spirit that was everywhere reaching out to greet those that were safe, to comfort the suffering, and to sorrow for the dead."

This duty done, grimmer work must now be attended to. Close by the battlefield was the little town of Dover, and here were gathered a liberal share of the sick and wounded. The condition of the suffering men was indescribably agonising. There were no comforts or conveniences of any kind. Many of the soldiers were lying on the floor, most were unprovided with changes of linen or bandages, and all were without proper nourishment. "Had it not been for

the things sent up by the Sanitary Commission in the way of linen," says Collyer, "and things sent by our citizens in the way of nourishment, I see no possibility by which these wounded men could have been lifted out of their blood-stained woollen garments saturated with wet and mud, or could have had any food and drink except corn-mush, hard bread, and the turbid water of the river." For the first few days there was constant labour for every member of the Chicago party. Gaping wounds were awaiting bandages, parched lips were crying for water, homesick hearts were eager to dictate letters, dying souls were seeking consolation and confession. It was a trying time, and no hand was allowed to rest, or eye to sleep. As fast as possible, the wounded who were able to be moved, were sent on steamboats to Paducah, Mound City, and other places on the river for permanent care; and one such trip Collyer took with a group of one hundred and fifty-eight sorely-stricken soldiers.

The long cabin of the steamboat was packed with men, laid side by side so close that one could hardly put one foot between to give them a drink or to cool their fearful hurts. "Here is one who has lost an arm, and there one who has lost a leg. This old man of sixty has been struck by grape-shot, and that boy of eighteen has been shot

through the lung." The boy in the corner is suffering untold agony; all day long his cries of pain are heard through half the length of the boat. This other boy, on the contrary, is quiet; his white drawn face is falling into lines of gentle repose as the tide of life runs slowly out. A third is giving his last message to one hastily summoned to his side. "I am going," he gasps; "I want you please to write a letter to my father; tell him I owe such a man two dollars and a half, and such a man owes me four dollars; and he must draw my pay and keep it all for himself." Then he lies silently a little while, and, as the nurse wets his lips, says, "Oh, I should so like a drink out of my father's well!" and, in a moment, has gone. A case of especial interest is that of a yellow-haired German with big blue eyes, who can take no nourishment because of facial injury, and is perishing for lack of food. In a trice, the Yorkshireman's ingenious mind has found a way. Through "a pretty silvered funnel" which he has spied on a shelf, he pours into a slit, in one corner of the invalid's mouth, some milk mixed with sugar and brandy. Slowly but surely the refreshing liquid gurgles its way down into the hungry stomach and does its work. Once, twice, thrice, at safe intervals, the stream is poured through the funnel into the shattered

mouth, and, before Mound City is reached, the surgeon declares the fellow will get well. "Do you believe it," writes the Doctor in raptures, "I think that by heaven's blessing on the milk and things, I saved the blue-eyed boy's life."

Aside from this one trip, Robert Collyer spent all of his time in the local camps and hospitals, giving aid to the suffering, consolation to the dying, and last rites to the dead. In this business, he was in many ways at his best. His hand was as gentle as a woman's, his heart as quick in its sympathy and tenderness as a child's. A little service done, a few simple words spoken, perhaps only an understanding smile upon his handsome face as he passed by, seemed as if by some miracle to create a kind of personal contact which not only quickened the sufferer at the moment but endured in his heart forever. There was healing in his touch and presence, even as in the garment of the Master. One incident which began in Cairo, on the way up to Donelson, and ended years later in Chicago, tells the whole story. While strolling on the outskirts of the town, he came upon a young soldier badly wounded in the head, sitting on the bank of the river, with his feet in the mud and slime. A few inquiries elicited the information that he was from Donelson, and was now on his way to his

home in Indiana. "Is there anything that I can do for you?" asked Collyer. "Yes," said the man, "you can give me a bit of tobacco." Collyer did not smoke at this time, and therefore had no tobacco with him. He gave the lad some money, however, "and some over to help him home"; and by way of reward, the young soldier removed the bandage from his head and showed him his wound—a bad bulge on the forehead! "The bullet did not go in, then," said Collyer cheerily. "No, sir," came the answer, "my head was too thick for the bullets of them rebs. It flatted and fell off. I got it here in my pocket." Whereupon he pulled the thing out, and exclaimed with a fine disdain, "That ain't no use ag'in a head like mine." Years later, on a Sunday in Unity Church, a young man greeted the minister at the foot of the pulpit stairs. "You don't remember me, sir," he said. Then he did two things—lifted a tuft of hair from a scar on his forehead, and laid in Dr. Collyer's hand a flattened bullet. "I am all right now," he continued. "I went back to my regiment, and kept my thick head safe and sound through the war, and took a notion to come up to Chicago to see you. I had to, for I will never forget how you acted about that tobacco." [9]

[9] See "Some Memories," pages 141-143.

In the intervals of the nursing at Donelson, Collyer took pains to visit the Chicago boys; and now and again, he explored the battleground. Once he went over the entire field of conflict under the escort of General Webster, who had had command of the artillery during the late action. Here he saw the shattered breastworks, the ravaged fields, strewn with garments, harness, weapons, shot and shell, dead horses, the clustered and hurriedly marked graves of those who had "paid their last full measure of devotion," while in one trench he "counted three men who had not been buried, and in another, on the edge of the woods, there were eleven." One day, he says, "as I stood in a bit of secluded woodland, in the still morning, the spring birds sang as sweetly, and flitted about as merrily, as if no tempest of fire and smoke and terror had ever driven them in mortal haste away. In one place where the battle had raged, I found a little bunch of sweet bergamot that had just put out its brown-blue leaves, rejoicing in its first resurrection; and a bed of daffodils, ready to unfold their golden robes to the sun; and the green grass in many places was fair to see. But where great woods had cast their shadows, the necessities of attack and defence had made one haggard and almost universal ruin —trees cut down into all sorts of wild confusion,

torn and splintered by cannon-ball, trampled by horses and men, and crushed under the heavy wheels of artillery. . . . One sad wreck covered all."

In a little over a month after Collyer's return from this expedition to his duties in Chicago, he was summoned to depart on an exactly similar mission to Pittsburg Landing. This was early in April. A larger company than before went out for the work of relief and rescue, and this time Robert Collyer, thanks to his experience at Donelson, was appointed captain. It was much the same kind of trip—first, railroad down to Cairo, then steamboat up the river, and then the awful plunge into the waste of blood and terror! The task, however, was more trying, in spite of the initiation into this business in February, for the two days' battle was one of the fiercest of the Civil War, the number of men engaged very large, and the carnage on both sides well-nigh beyond description. Night and day, for over a week, the men from Chicago laboured to better conditions which were "confusion worse confounded," and to alleviate sufferings which in a thousand cases seemed greater than could be borne. At one moment they were nurses, at the next surgeons' assistants, and at the last perhaps consolers and confessors. Finally, after a week

of exhausting labour, Collyer took charge of a steamer, loaded to the gunwales with wounded for Mound City, and from there returned again to Chicago.

It was on this expedition that Robert Collyer had his famous encounter with Dwight L. Moody. They met on the steamboat which was bound up the river from Cairo to Pittsburg Landing, Moody being one of a group of ministers who constituted a so-called "Christian Commission." In the course of the trip, these men arranged a prayer-meeting in the saloon of the boat, to which Moody personally invited "Brother Collyer." The addresses took the usual course of talks on such occasions—the sinfulness of men, their need of salvation, the atonement of Christ, etc., all in due order. Moody, called upon to speak early in the meeting, referred to the soldiers of Shiloh, who were dying in their sins, and rejoiced that they were now bound for the battlefield to save their souls.

This was more than Collyer could stand. Rising quickly to his feet, he said, "Brother Moody is mistaken: we are not going there to save the souls of our soldiers, but to save their lives, and leave their souls in the hands of God." He then told of the work that he had done at Fort Donelson—the staunching of wounds, the bathing and

nursing of broken bodies, the soothing of distracted minds—and affirmed with ringing eloquence that this, in the beginning, at least, was what he was now coming to this latest battlefield to perform.

This startling outburst of unregeneracy was followed by an awed silence. Then rose a brother clergyman from Chicago, who testified that this undoubtedly was good Unitarianism but hardly good Christianity. "The Unitarians," he said, "always work from the surface inward; but we go directly to the heart first, and then work out to the surface, ending where they begin. We must do the one thing and not leave the other undone—warn the sinner, pray with him, and point him to the thief on the cross."

Collyer was instant with his reply. "My friends," he said, "we know what those men have done, no matter who or what they are. They left their homes for the camp and the battle, while we stayed behind in our city. They endured hardness like good soldiers, while we were lodged safely. They have fought and fallen for the flag of the Union and all the flag stands for, while here we are safe and sound. I will not doubt for a moment the sincerity of my friend and yours who has just spoken; but I will say for myself that I should be ashamed all my life long

if I should point to the thief on the cross in speaking to these men, or to any other thief the world has ever heard of."

These were brave words, and they did not fail of their response. "When I sat down," says the Doctor, "there was a roar of applause."[10]

Another "call from Macedonia" came when Lawrence, Kansas, was swept with burning, plundering and murder by Quantrell and his guerillas. The great heart of Chicago was again touched, and Robert Collyer was again selected as the proper man to bear the city's relief to the stricken population. Jeremiah Brown, a brother of the immortal John, who knew Kansas as he knew the Bible, went out with him, and together they did the blessed work of succour. On the Sunday following his return, sixteen men who had gone out from Chicago and perished in

[10] See "Some Memories," pages 126-127. "About a year before Brother Moody was taken to his well-won rest and reward, I was standing one morning on a platform of the elevated, waiting for a train, when a hand was laid on my shoulder from behind, and, turning, there was Brother Moody! I had not met him since that day on the way to Pittsburg Landing. There was a smile now on his honest face, I was glad to notice; and with no word of preface, he said, 'You were all wrong that day in the saloon.' And I answered, 'Old friend, if I was ever all right in my life, it was on that afternoon on the steamer; and, if we must all answer for the deeds done in the body, my answer will be ready, and don't you forget it!' We parted then, and I saw him to speak to him no more."—R. C. in "Some Memories," page 126.

the massacre, were buried from the city's largest hall. Collyer, appointed to preach the sermon on this impressive occasion, spoke as only he could speak for his mourning fellow-citizens. In the magic simplicity of his Saxon English, and with the deep fervour of his unspoiled heart, he told what he had seen, and what these sixteen men had done, in Kansas. No word of bitterness passed his lips—he had seen too much of the passion, suffering and heroism on both sides of the bitter conflict, to cherish hate or speak denunciation. Only the sweet compassion for distress and the swift delight in gallantry, which he felt as keenly as any man who ever lived, found utterance this day, and all who heard were touched as though by some miracle of the spirit, and straightway purified. "I can never forget that Sunday," says Dr. Collyer; nor could those, we may be sure, to whom he spoke.

Before the war was over, Robert Collyer looked back in retrospect upon these experiences at the front, and summed them up as follows: "It has been my lot . . . to see some of the most frightful scenes the war has had to show. I have been on our great battlefields in the West, while the dead were strewn thick where they fell, sunk in the mud, with the rain beating down upon them all day long. I have gone through the

camps and hospitals from the banks of the Potomac to the far western wilds of Missouri. I have seen our men cared for by our own noble Sanitary Commission, and utterly neglected in the far away places where, in the earlier days of the war, its blessed influences had not yet penetrated. And let me stop for a moment here to say that but for this Commission, so far as I am able to judge, the results of the war would have been frightful beyond all power of description in neglected soldiers. I have seen men in distant hospitals housed and fed as you would not house and feed a dog. I have found twenty-seven men, most of them sick to death, sent two hundred miles on the car floor of two box cars, with raw pork and hard bread and water for their sustenance, and a coffin containing a dead man for their table, and seven of the twenty-seven dead on the way. I have found our men dying in a corner utterly alone. I have attended them in crowded steamers where we could not step for the heavy ranks of maimed men. And I declare to you, on my honour, I have never yet found a born child of this nation, wounded or sick or dying, who did not show some grand mark of patience and heroic quality such as make men weep for pride and joy that they belong to such stock. I have heard last messages, written last letters,

carried little gifts, seen last looks that were full of the purest and most noble love. I have seen not one man, but many and many a time men who, all shattered and dying themselves, could take the one hand that was not gone, to do some kind office for the man who was lain down beside him. I have seen the American woman delicately shrinking from all coarse sights and sounds, go quietly through scenes which made the strongest of us shrink—all day long an angel of mercy from heaven. Ay, I have seen an old black woman, a child of Africa, surpass them all." And then, telling a touching story of Negro devotion, he declared, "We have grown noble in our suffering."

This war service of Robert Collyer was valiant and unselfish. The actual time spent at the front, however, during the war, was not great. During the larger part of this momentous period, he was at home in Chicago, engaged in tireless activities. The parish work was always with him, and this meant much more than in ordinary times, for the people, young and old, were organised for the service of the Sanitary Commission, and the church therefore was a hive of activity from one week's end to another. Then there were the insistent calls of the city upon his time and strength. No man was more popular or

influential as a speaker at public meetings. No man was more successful in raising large sums of money for the ever-pressing work of relief. No man was more active on the various committees organised from time to time for public service. His labours, for example, on a committee appointed to supervise the care of prisoners at Camp Douglas were constant and untiring through a long period of time. His heart drew him as instinctively to this personal service on behalf of the captured Confederates, as to the similar service on behalf of the stricken Unionists at Donelson and Pittsburg Landing. Here were men in distress—lonely, sick, wounded—that was all he wanted to know! The fact that they were enemies—men who had been battling for the hated cause of disunion and in defence of the iniquitous institution of slavery—never touched him in the remotest degree. These prisoners had their point of view, they had fought for what they regarded as their rights—they were not to be blamed. And even if they were, it still remained true that they "were sick and in prison," and therefore he must "come unto them." And so he came—to bind up their wounds, to bathe their fevered brows, to write their letters to their loved ones, to talk homesickness out of their hearts with tales of merriment

and words of sympathy, to teach them now and again "of faith in God our Father and of his Christ who came to tell us of his Father's love for all his children, not here and now alone, but forever here and hereafter." It was a ministry which was wearing in body, mind and soul, but infinitely lovely and rewarding.

And then, during all these months and years of the war, there was the preaching! In the beginning, as we have seen, he talked constantly on subjects suggested by the great conflict. Later on, when the initial excitement was over, he relapsed into that normal consideration of normal themes which becomes the lot of every minister even in days of direst cataclysm. He was too near the centre of things, however, too deeply stirred by what was going on, and too keenly aware of the real nature of the struggle, to remain in any sense aloof or apart from events in his pulpit utterances. Always on the first Sunday after his return from an expedition to the front, for example, he would dispense with any formal sermon, and tell in simple narrative of what he had seen and done. These addresses were invariably regarded as of great public moment, and, generously reported in the newspapers, exerted a potent influence in maintaining interest in the war and spurring on the home

folks to ever greater efforts for the relief of the soldiers. Then too, when some great battle was monopolising public attention, or some patriotic holiday was stirring the pulses of the people, or especially some dire disaster shaking the confidence of the nation, he was sure to mount his pulpit like a herald, and sound therefrom a clarion call which echoed to the remotest bounds of the city, and sometimes far beyond.

One such sermon he preached on July 28, 1861, the Sunday following the shameful rout at Bull Run. The outcome of this battle was a terrific blow to every man in the North from Abraham Lincoln down. Expectation had mounted high when McDowell's army moved against the Confederate forces. Arlington Heights and Alexandria had been seized and held two months before. The expedition against Big Bethel had been badly mismanaged and therefore unsuccessful; but this was more than counterbalanced by the brilliant victories of McClellan and Rosecrans in West Virginia. Meanwhile, during all of these weeks of abounding enthusiasm, regiments had been pouring into Washington in a steady stream from all sections of the North. What more natural, nay, inevitable, than the public demand that the newly gathered army should prove its worth and therefore

the justice of its cause by marching on Richmond and ending the rebellion upon the instant? That there might be difficulties in the way of immediate victory was never imagined by any one. So certain seemed the capture of the Confederate capital and the early close of the war, that it needed but a mere rumour that Richmond had fallen, to turn all the citizens of Chicago into the streets to join in celebration of the return of peace. They shouted, cheered, marched, flung out their flags, rang the great bell in the cupola of the courthouse until it broke. And then came the incredible news that the Union army had been not only defeated, but driven back in shameful rout and senseless panic upon the defences of Washington! It was a dreadful awakening, not merely to the direful uncertainties of war, but also to the grim and tragic character of this conflict which now was joined between North and South. "Only a few proposed to give up the contest," says Rhodes,[11] "but it was perceived that instead of one short campaign, the war would be long and severe, and that training as well as enthusiasm was needed to win."

It was in this crisis of disillusionment that Robert Collyer preached his sermon on "Sifting," from the text, "And the Lord said, Simon,

[11] See his "History of the United States," Vol. III, page 455.

Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." Laying down the principle that evil may very well be conceived of as performing the invaluable function in the lives of men and nations of "purification, sifting, showing what is good in proving what is evil," the preacher ventured the affirmation that America was at that moment being "shaken, separated, sifted" by the shock of defeat and humiliation, "that the real grain may come out for a new spring-time and summer and harvest of God." He then went on to make what he called "two or three important applications bearing upon the sad reverse which we all lament to-day."

"The goodness of our cause," he said, "with the divine blessing at the back of it, and the most perfect devotion in our men, will not be a match against the thoroughness of our enemies, if our leaders are only remarkable for half-heartedness or executive blunders. The Roundheads fought for constitution and law, as clearly as we do; but they were beaten from post to pillar, until they formed a real power and found a true leader. And it is said that when Cromwell formed his great regiment of Ironsides, and numbers flocked to the standard, all likely men, he did not feel sure until he had them betrayed into an ambush that he had set for them; then, as he rode down

the ranks, in the seeming imminent danger, he saw in their faces which good men would not do for an Ironside, and told such frankly that the Lord wanted their arms and horses for other men. And it came to pass that these select men were never beaten—first, I devoutly believe, because they were good men, but greatly because by personal vigour, skill in the use of the best weapons known to that time, with a commander that they could trust as they trusted their right hand, every separate man, without reckoning his saintship, was a match for any sinner that could be matched against him. So, in this great cause to-day, there must be this correlative force of man to man, brain to brain, prime to prime. . . ."

He next raised the question as to whether Bull Run was not "a sifting" of the unwisdom of sending "beardless boys" to the front, "while so many strong men stayed at home." He asked if it was not a revelation of the fact that "fifty thousand men in a good cause, however brave and true, breakfasting on crackers and water, cannot carry miles of entrenchments on a sweltering day, against seventy thousand well-fed and determined defenders." And then he concluded with the soul-stirring challenge, "We shall be sifted until we resolve to grow to the measure of our good cause altogether. . . . We shall be sifted

until we are pure, strong, and all for freedom under the Constitution. . . . We shall be sifted of all traitors and all treachery. So will this evil spirit sift us, and set us with the wheat or the chaff, as we belong. Then, in this soil of the New World, God will plant a pure seed, and water it from heaven. There shall be a handful of corn, and the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Another sermon entitled "Our National Peril: A Sermon for the Times," was preached from the text, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this," on July 6, 1862.[12] This was a dark period in the history of the Rebellion. The war in the West, to be sure, had been signalised by the storming of Forts Henry and Donelson in February, the hard-won victory at Shiloh in April, and the capture of Island No. 10 in the same month. From the sea had come the thrilling stories of New Orleans, Roanoke Island, and the *Monitor* and *Merrimac*. But all these were forgotten in the shame of Jackson's triumphant raid of the Shenandoah, the overwhelming disappointment of the Penin-

[12] In the newspaper report, this sermon is headed by the following editorial note—"We give place to the following sermon at the request of a large number of citizens, not the parishioners of Mr. Collyer. His views are historic, striking and sound, and should command the attention of the reader."

sular campaign, and the darkening menace of European, or at least English, intervention. July 4th, which saw the nation breathing a sigh of relief that McClellan's host was safe, instead of lifting a shout of joy that Richmond was taken, was a holiday of mingled gloom, indignation and rededication. All the moods of the hour are clearly reflected in Collyer's discourse on the Sunday following.

"Our nationality is in peril of being blotted out," he began. "That is the first thing to say to you this morning. The reasons why we shall not be a great distinctive people from this time, are stronger than they have ever been before—stronger than they were a year ago, I think, and the question of nation or no nation is now more than ever a grave question; the solution of the problem depends eventually under God upon ourselves. The questions I shall put to you, and by consequence to myself, are plain questions, and they admit of a plain answer. They are not my questions. I only come here as the word. God himself has put the questions . . . and they must be answered; and as God shall put them one by one, if we say, Ay, we say salvation and no ruin."

Then came the questions—each a heart-searching challenge to faltering courage, and an appeal

for nobler zeal and a braver consecration. First of all was the question of national unity. "Have we made up our minds," he asked, "that we will preserve to our children what has come down to us from the fathers—a compact, solid, American nationality, one and indivisible? Are we so bound to this that, like Fisher Ames, we mean to teach it to our children, if need be, in their catechism, as one of the deep essential first things of life—to possess them with the conviction that the sun will not shine, nor the corn grow for body or soul as it ought to, when this glory departs from us—that this loss, if it come from any sin in us, or them, is the unpardonable sin, that is, it takes a solid quantity clean out of our being that can never be restored in earth or heaven? . . . The more I study this question, the more clearly I see the fatal result of the broken trust. National ideas are more than armies. Let those ideas be broken in our nation by the dividing lines of new nationality, and the main strength has gone out of her heart. . . . And my fear when I consider this problem is, that the men on the right side may not be set in the determination to keep the whole nation at every cost within the Union. On that first of all rests our future; and the man who would divide while ever we can keep together is at the best ignorant of one of the deepest princi-

ples of a commanding national life, and at the worst, if he will examine his heart faithfully, though he may think it says Union, he will find the undertones whispering cowardice, or treason. We cannot afford to be indifferent or uncertain. If we are not for America, we are against her. There are but two sides for us. We are with the great mother to defend her, or we are with the assassins who seek her life. If we stand and look on and the deed is done, we are guilty, inasmuch as we did not try to prevent it. If we stand and look on and she prove victor, woe to us when she shall look at us with her great clear eyes, and say, Coward!"

Secondly, came the lowering question of foreign intervention. To have France and England step in, either to stop the war, or as allies to help the North put down the rebellion, was to him equally intolerable. As an Englishman, he yearned for English sympathy. "To me," he said, "it is one of the saddest of all the issues of this struggle, that England, my noble old mother, has sent us no word of cheer." But as an American, he cried, Hands off! "We are on trial as a democracy," was his word. "We stand alone—stand or fall according to our own internal strength or weakness. We shall be utterly disgraced by any buttressing whatever. If the

tower will not stand by its internal strength, better pull it down course by course to the first foundation and begin afresh. As I look out to our future in case of interference, I see but one of two issues—we must confess to the world that democracy . . . is a failure, and is to live only by the tolerance of monarchies from this time out, or we must turn our country into one swarming fortress of aroused men until we have vindicated our name and won our place on the battlefields of the world."

Then there was the final question of individual duty and responsibility in the great crisis. How full and strong rang out the preacher's voice, as he summoned his people to perfect loyalty. "If I am ready to give myself, I am a true son of the fathers; if I am not ready, I am a craven. I do not say that every man is called to be a soldier, though I cannot say who is not; but I do say that every man is bound to give himself. If John Smith gives life, and I am not ready in some way to give mine, then he is exalted up to heaven, and I am cast down to the hell of this kingdom and power of God. As we went up the Cumberland to Fort Donelson, we met the first boatload of prisoners coming down—poor bareheaded men, with pieces of carpet for cloaks—and I felt not one impulse to laughter, but rather

to tears at the sight, for I said, how much stronger are these men than they ought to be. How like an angel of light is this devil of rebellion when it can muster its adherents and submit them to such discipline as this. So then I have not a penny, not a book, not a coat, if the balance of coin turns against us, before the war is done, that I must not be ready to give, or sell, or pawn . . . to conquer this national integrity and preserve it unbroken."

Brave were such words as these, and many were the hearts to whom they brought both comfort and new resolution. As the weary weeks dragged on, however, and the summer passed into history with little to record but divided counsels in the closet and inactive "quiet along the Potomac," it became increasingly difficult to sustain the burden of the war. Again and again, the gallant Collyer found the tides of life running low within his soul. "The war is upon us like a dead weight," he writes, under date of September 9, 1862. "What a woe and darkness (it) has become. Surely we cannot go much longer as we are—God help us." Then hard upon these periods of unutterable depression, would come great moments of courage and new faith, and sometimes of boundless wrath, when he would rouse himself like a hungry lion, and,

in the majesty of conscious strength, speak till all the jungle of despair and terror heard and echoed to his call. Such a moment came in Boston, on October 23, when he addressed the Parker Fraternity in Tremont Temple. This lecture, called "Night and Morning," is full of witty and pathetic stories, thrilling narratives of personal experience, inimitable human touches, and heroic challenges of destiny, and thus is a supremely characteristic utterance. In its analysis of events and criticism of national policy, it shows traces of that fallibility of judgment to which every contemporary mind is liable. But as a revelation of Collyer's attitude, and of that of millions of his fellow-countrymen at this turning-point of the battle for the Union, it is an invaluable historic document.

He began his statement by pointing to the "ruin that is all about us to-day." Seeking its causes, he told a characteristic story of a Scotch corporation which constructed a bridge from a good plan and with good workmen, only to see it collapse when the props were removed, because the bricks used were "bad—there was too much sand in the clay!" "If you ask me to tell you," he continued, "why the stately structure built by the fathers has gone down with a great crash, I should answer, there was too much sand in the

bricks; if you ask me why Abraham Lincoln does not succeed better in rebuilding, I shall still answer, because there is too much sand in the bricks; and if you ask me whether he will ultimately succeed, I shall say it depends upon whether he has resolved to use nothing but good bricks. . . . The sand of slavery in our Commonwealth has brought this ruin; the sand of slavery has beaten out all our efforts at restoration up to this time, and if the great worker and those that help him do not shovel it out of the way, the structure can never be restored. . . ."

Then followed a scathing indictment of the administration for its "conduct of the struggle"—an indictment of almost startling character in view of Collyer's unwavering support of the Union and his sturdy trust from beginning to end in Abraham Lincoln. The iron of disappointment, however, had entered deep into the vitals of his being, and he must speak, more in sorrow than in anger, lest he be unfaithful to his soul and the cause to which he had dedicated that soul.

"Such a sight as this democracy has presented," he cried, "of mistaken confidence and broken hope, this world never saw. (Our people) have said to their executive, tell us what you want

done and we will do it. Striplings and strong men and grey-headed men have marched out joyfully to death for their great inheritance. Money has been poured out in such floods as were never seen in the world before. The woman has stood up grandly by the man as her great mother in the forests of Gaul and Britain did in the old time. And yet our record, from first to last, has been one long black night, with but here and there a star. Vultures have been all about us ready to gorge themselves on the distracted nation when it should die. . . . Our great commanders have been made out of epaulettes and apathy. They have been recklessly winning battles on paper, and losing them in the field. . . . I know very little about state affairs. The President, cabinet and commanders may have done the best they knew. I believe the President has done his best. I trust in Abraham Lincoln as I trusted in my own old father who rests in heaven. But I cannot shut my eyes to three cardinal principles of action, which our President has followed, so far as I can understand him, which to me seem to be radically wrong."

These three articles of indictment Collyer elaborated in great detail and with excoriating vigour. "In the first place, (Mr. Lincoln had) selected his cabinet mainly from among the men

who stood as candidates for the presidency in the Chicago convention, and were rejected by the people. . . . A cabinet like this," said the preacher, "may do very well when the great work is to divide party spoils . . . but when it needs the most commanding intellect, integrity and united purpose that the whole land can furnish . . . I cannot believe that these men are the best that could be found in all the nation to stand at the head of money and ships, and munitions of war, simply as men. Their training has been entirely of another sort; they are only political preachers, and for such men to unite in a firm, strong way to carry on the war is difficult or perhaps impossible." Then "Mr. Lincoln (had gone) not only to the rejected candidates for his cabinet, but to the Bell-Everett, milk-poultice party, for his policy . . . a party that wanted to pat and tickle, while events that followed each other like the long tattoo summoned the nation to strike quick and hard and 'to the brisket' for her honour and her life, or she was lost. . . . There was but one way out of this trouble; the country was prepared for that way from the start. The Milky-Way was not it, and Mr. Lincoln went that way for his policy." And "the third mistake to a plain man, the mistake most fatal of all, was that Mr. Lincoln went to

the pro-slavery democrats for his generals—or, in other words, the men who are placed in every one of the most important commands are men who have wanted or do now want to see the South victorious in the particular thing for which she has plunged us into this dreadful agony of a civil war. . . . There have been hopeful conversions, . . . but that was the sort that Abraham Lincoln began with. Every man who hated the cause of all that trouble, and declared he would make a cut at that, was kept well out of the way."

This was savage criticism, nor was it wholly unfounded. There were difficulties inherent in the vast problem of conducting the war, which the historical studies of a later day have brought clearly to the light for the first time; there were depths of understanding and of vision in the soul of the patient man in the White House which a half-century of worshipful observation has not yet sounded to the bottom. But the administration had made serious mistakes, the darkness which enshrouded the Union cause in the autumn of 1862 was appalling, and it was as natural as it was proper that the public sentiment of the North should speak in no uncertain terms. Whatever fallibility of judgment may be found in this Boston address, is more than compensated

for by the throbbing devotion, passionate loyalty, and insistent "will to triumph" that are revealed in every phrase. This man was in earnest. He had enlisted for the duration of the war. The America which had drawn him across the seas by her fair promises of freedom, and had fulfilled these promises beyond all that he had ever dared to dream, was in the toils of death, and nothing was worth while in these dreadful days but the work of saving her. This work must be done courageously, whole-heartedly, efficiently; if not, the glad sacrifice of millions must be in vain, and the great cause lost. Hence the unhesitating valour with which he spoke his censure of what seemed to him to be the sins of mind and will which were responsible for disaster! Collyer never spoke with greater power, nobler eloquence, more profound emotion than on this occasion. And never more fairly, too! For amid the darkness he saw that there were streaks of light, of which the President's Emancipation Proclamation was the most conspicuous, and these he recognised and acclaimed with a resounding "God bless Abraham Lincoln!" "The Night now and forever," he said, "is not the Master but the subject of the Day . . . and the Day has begun to break upon us."

The courage, love of truth, steadfast devotion

to the right as God gave him to see the right, which were in this man, was never better illustrated than by his famous sermon on the attempted suppression of the Chicago *Times,* preached in Unity Church on June 15, 1863. This newspaper was a scurrilous "copperhead" sheet, which had long tried the patience of the loyal citizens of Chicago almost to the breaking-point. Collyer had denounced it Sunday after Sunday in the pulpit with matchless daring, for the enmity of a newspaper was as cruel a "thorn in the flesh" in those days as it is to-day. At last General Burnside, the military commander of the district, took the paper in hand, and a great shout of applause and relief went up from one end of the city to the other. To Robert Collyer, however, bred in the hard-won traditions of old England, this was a flagrant attempt to suppress freedom of speech. Much as he hated the *Times,* he hated military autocracy even more. All the oppressions of the old world rose up like ghosts before him, and stirred him to revolt. Therefore on the Sunday following the seizure of the paper, braving misunderstanding and abuse of the cruelest type, he preached a sermon upholding the freedom of the press and censuring Burnside for his attempt to suppress the *Times.* "He got up in his pulpit," writes one of his parishioners, "and

with the tears streaming down his cheeks, said he was about to preach a sermon which his conscience had made him preach, but which he felt sure would cost him some dear friends, the loss of whose love would be a sore trial. So he preached it. When he began," says this narrator, "I came nearer feeling angry with him than I ever did before. But before he ended, I felt that he was right and we wrong."

That same evening, this friend wrote a letter of congratulation to Kalamazoo, whither Collyer had gone to deliver an address. His reply is interesting:

"*My dear friend:*

"I snatch a moment before my address comes off at the college here, to thank you for the sweet pure words of cheer conveyed in your note and which I received by the same mail with one from an old member of my church, accusing me of prostituting myself to the Chicago *Times*, of being a convicted liar (in going in the teeth of all I said before), and of selling myself for gold. . . . Thank you seems a poor word, but what can I say you do not believe me to mean in thank you? I have sent the letter I mentioned back with a note saying it admits of no answer. That I send it so that if my life and deeds should justify his judgment, he may have the letter to prove how accurately he read me. But if time and the judgment of the future justify

my step, I send it back because I dare not retain it for my children to read. So I recommit what seems to me a sad disgrace to his own keeping. Oh, it is very, very sad that no faithfulness and honour can ever win a man (some men) to believe even in man, let alone God."

Examination of the sermons and addresses of Robert Collyer during this period, reveals certain salient facts with great clearness. First of all, perhaps, is the hatred of slavery which had been bred into his bones by his liberty-loving father, and the zeal for immediate abolition which he had acquired as though with his citizenship papers in his early years in Pennsylvania. Slavery was the sand in the bricks which had caused the downfall of the republic in the great Civil War. Slavery was the crime which for two whole generations had palsied the lips and spoiled the beauty of American freedom. "Slavery," he said, "has been a strange tongue to the American democrat; he could never quite get it. We have carried it about with us as poor Byron carried his club foot. 'Beautiful as Apollo, that one thing was the deformity of our whole life.' We mingled with the world abroad forever conscious that not the noble face and form, not the genius, power and promise, but the club foot was the point of observation.

For that the preachers, with such noble exceptions as Parker and Cheever, had faltered and stammered in our pulpits. We have blotted our sermons when the old fires of freedom burned too fiercely into the paper. We have read our lesson beforehand for fear some echo from those turbulent old prophets should tear things when we got to church. We have studied our subjects with the full knowledge that we could not go beyond a certain line; that we must make justice and truth not utter and ultimate, but proximate and politic." Then, too, in addition to the cancer eating at the heart of American political idealism, must be noted the hideous cruelty and injustice to the black man which are involved in this institution! "Ever since the Negro dwelt by old Nile, he was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not. But here we find him bound up in our very existence, woven into our life as the woof is woven into the web—we stand or fall, live or die, together—he will wait for our decision to do him justice. If we do it now, we live. If we refuse to do it, we die as a republic, and deserve to die."

Here was speaking the thoroughgoing Abolitionist—the man of the Garrison, Phillips, Gree-

ley type, who would make no compromise with sin, and who saw with perfect distinctness that the war must strike the shackles from the limbs of the slave, or else be a failure, no matter how firmly the Union of the states was re-established. To Collyer, as to other Abolitionists, the wise deliberation, or, as they put it, the cowardly evasion, of Abraham Lincoln in dealing with this evil, was a source of constant irritation. He was of those who rebuked the President for not emancipating the slaves upon the instant; and his voice was one of the millions which was lifted in Horace Greeley's Open Letter,[13] to which Mr. Lincoln made so memorable a reply. "It is to me a terrible symptom of disease in some vital part," he said, in his July 6th sermon, "that nothing seems to be held sacred but this most infernal cause of all our agony and danger. We call our Sabbaths sacred, and yet we fight nearly every great battle on a Sunday. We consecrate our churches, and then we turn them into hospitals for the wounded, friend and enemy alike, and let the congregations worship wherever they can find a place, or not at all. We shatter tens of thousands of the noblest of all the temples of God, our bodies, with shot and shell on battlefields. In a word, we seem

[13] Entitled "The Prayer of Twenty Millions," and published in the New York *Tribune* of August 20, 1862.

to do whatever we will to desecrate what belongs to God. Sabbaths and churches and men are all destroyed without measure for the commonwealth, and the whole voice of the loyal nation testifies that the cause is worth the cost. We destroy what belongs to God, and never fear; but we are in terror of touching with the tip of our finger what belongs to the devil. The most sacred things are destroyed; the most infernal thing is guarded as if it were the holiest of holies. . . . Friends, this is the gravest danger of all to-day. The foe is in deadly earnest to shatter the Union and preserve slavery. We are in constant terror lest, in trying to save the Union, we should destroy slavery."

That Collyer looked upon the Emancipation Proclamation as "the first flash of the morning," has already been indicated. "We strip off our shame at this moment," was his exultant shout. Abraham Lincoln has vindicated himself. "The whole country was full of rumours. The President is in the hands of his cabinet. The President is in the hands of the army. The President has no power. The President is a weak man. The President dare not touch slavery. Men's hearts failed them for fear, and well they might. It was a fearful time." Then came the word of liberation and all was changed. "We have now

seen the hand of Abraham Lincoln; he has shown his hand—it unlocks the door of life. He has shown his head—it is held up for freedom and right; protect him." The future was from henceforth secure. "When man shall rise up," he cried, "and condemn this republic for the sin of slavery, and say, In the old time your fathers bought and sold men, our children shall point to the noble deeds, to the long line of men and women that gave themselves for the nation when the sin had brought the death, and they shall see how the sin was lost in the agony and penitence and resolute justice that has come with this struggle."

A second revelation contained in these Civil War sermons and addresses, is Collyer's attitude toward the question of war. Never at any time was he a non-resistant. His biting comment on pacifism of the extreme type was set forth in the form of a parable. "When the Quaker held the peace principle too strictly," he said, "his opponent at last told him a story: how away out in our western wilds, a settler went to plough, carrying his rifle, and, as he came home to dinner, saw his cabin all aflame, and his wife fleeing from the tomahawk of the savage—and the husband had but just time to raise his rifle and shoot the savage down. And the man said to the Quaker, 'What would you have done?' 'Well, I would

have shot him, if I had a gun, but still it would have been against my principles; I ought not to shoot him.' 'Madam,' said the man turning to the wife, 'what do you think he ought to have done?' The quiet reply was, 'If he hadn't shot him, he might be a very good Quaker, but he would be a very bad husband.' "

But if not a non-resistant, Collyer had been before the war a peace man. "I suppose," he said, "I could find you five hundred texts that were all on that side. I devoutly believed that the Prince of Peace had taught men that war was wrong under all circumstances whatever."

"When the first cannon shot shattered the ark of the covenant at Fort Sumter," however, Collyer's "blood with the blood of every loyal man began to boil." The Union was in danger. The chance to destroy slavery was come. These two considerations were permanent, and all conflicting theories of war and peace must yield to the supreme necessities of the hour. And with a forth-right resoluteness which had a touch of the magnificent about it, he appealed to Christ in justification of his change of front.

"We have all been teaching," he said, "that certain things were unchristian, that it would be contrary to the spirit of Christ to do them. Now we find we have to do them, and in our perplexity

we rather put Christ aside. We admit the absolute beauty of the Sermon on the Mount, but think it had better be put by until we get done with this war. . . . But I fear this is a great mistake. Surely here, as everywhere, Christ claims to be in vanguard and rear and centre, and, whether we fight in this or any other great right cause, to be the captain of our salvation. Do we not perplex ourselves by trying to make certain words of the Master a finality, instead of receiving his whole life as our inspiration, and letting our life, in its turn, be an expression of that union? It seems to me we not only need Christ, but that Christ needs us—not to hold on to certain logical sequences, but to live such a life as he lived, fearlessly and fully, so that whatever new relations the evident duties of the new day may bring with them, to do those duties, whether they harmonise with what we were understood to say on some previous occasion, or no, should be the one overwhelming determination of the hour. For you cannot reduce the life of Christ to logical sequence such as it is claimed we should observe. . . . For life is more than logic. The gospels were not meant for a book of set rules, but a fountain of inspiration. . . . As the sap of the tree goes out to every uttermost living twig, so the life of Christ enters into every different form

of human life, to consecrate and protect that form, not to destroy it. One with the Father in heaven, and one with the little child shouting under my window; able to wrestle with loneliness, hunger and evil spirits in the wilderness, yet to enter with hearty interest with the embarrassments of the poor bridegroom who could afford no more wine; now, when it was best, submitting to insult and indignity, as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, now when a great truth or the cause of God or man was to be vindicated, sweeping through the Temple like a whirlwind!" Such was Christ! Wherefore "the Christian soldier does not need to lay aside his sword, but more sacredly to keep it bright, and to be one with this mighty Captain—tender and gentle beyond all, wherever there is penitence and submission to the right, irresistible as the great tides, to sweep through banded opposition and wrong."

Impressive also in these addresses and sermons in war time is Collyer's unwavering belief in, and fidelity to, Abraham Lincoln. He was at times a remorseless critic, as we have seen. The collapse of the Virginia campaign in the summer of 1862, and the refusal of the President to take any decisive step toward the liberation of the slave, tested his loyalty to the utmost. More than once he was tempted into hasty and incon-

siderate judgment, as, for example, when he referred to his experience of seeing the row of boots on the window-ledges of the White House,[14] and said, "For months and months after that time, whenever I tried to see the cabinet through my newspaper telescope, I seldom saw anything but five or six pairs of feet turned flat out, that never seemed to move. I saw no heads, but only feet, and they were not put down, they were turned out." On one occasion, at least, it must be confessed that he was guilty of an utterance which now seems little short of cruel.[15] But such lapses were momentary. Even when he was most outspoken in censure of the policies of the administration, Collyer took pains to affirm his faith in Mr. Lincoln. When every other brick in the national structure was crumbling because of "too much sand," Collyer declared that Lincoln was "a good brick. When he was created anew, after he left Kentucky, the sand was left out." At bottom there was a kinship between these two men which made understanding as inevitable as

[14] See above, page 256.

[15] "The country looked in those sad, dark hours, to see its President rise up, massive and muscular; to see him stand silently at the wheel, grasping the spokes until his knuckles grew white; to see the shadow on his face that comes from looking into great deeps, like the shadow that was on the face of Cromwell, or Washington. It heard of him ready to tell a story à propos of anything in the earth, or under, or above it."—R. C., on October 23, 1862.

the mingling of mountain streams in their courses to the sea. The Yorkshire apprentice, who had toiled in the cotton mills at Blubberhouses, could not be seriously or long alienated from the Kentucky lad, who had split rails in the frontier wilderness. The blacksmith, who had read his books by the light of the forge fire in Ilkley, and climbed by "painful steps and slow" into the ministry, could not fail to discern the final purposes of this village clerk who had hewn, by the sheer strength of intellect and will, a pathway to the law. These men were one in the circumstances of birth and rearing. They had sprung from lowest peasant stock, known direst poverty and deprivation, laboured in earliest years for bread, sought in chance books and personal contacts the open way to knowledge, won against terrific odds the levels of influence and fame. They had known as well the woods and fields, the running stream and singing bird. They had penetrated the human heart, and learned the secrets of its moods and passions. They had joyed and sorrowed greatly, and thus known the revelry of laughter and the bitter dregs of tears. Above all were they at one in the possession of those mystic qualities of tenderness, compassion, pity, which can at once fashion a tale of human frailty with boundless humour, and rise with inexpressibly

noble and pathetic dignity to the heights of tragedy. That Lincoln should pass before the gaze of Robert Collyer and not be recognised and acclaimed was as impossible as that the sun should mount the skies and not be seen of men. How Collyer revelled in the fact that America had elected to the Presidency a man "who sprang from probably the poorest family of poor whites in Kentucky—who was famous for splitting rails, and had run a flat-boat, the hardest work one can do—who had kept a grocery and sold rum—whose voice rang out clear wherever he went, 'As a man, in my relation to slavery as a man—I hate slavery!' " How he acclaimed him as a true scion of the West! Lincoln, he said, "is a man—an upright, downright, honest man. He is homely and angular, to be sure—our Prairie-bred men are not handsome. They are not what you might call Grecian in their outlines, and Mr. Lincoln in homeliness stood number one, even on the Prairie. But if Diogenes had gone into Springfield blinking with his lantern, and had met Abraham Lincoln on the sidewalk, he would have blown out the light and shouted, You are the very man I am after."

Collyer knew and believed in Lincoln from the first. The censures and criticisms of the early months of the war were but the waves ruffled by

the gusts of impatience and hot desire which did not touch, much less disturb, the quiet deeps of loyalty. As the struggle wore on through the weary years, and the burdened President in the White House loomed ever more majestic and beautiful, love for him came to possess every fibre of Collyer's heart. When criticism was spoken in these latter months, Collyer resented it as though directed against himself. "Conway's article on Lincoln," he wrote to Edward Everett Hale on February 12, 1865, "is bitter and bad. I am sorry for it and for him." And when at last on the fatal day of April, 1865, there fell the awful blow of assassination, no man in all the land was more nearly or more deeply touched than he. "Here we are," he wrote to a friend, "in the quiet after the great storm of sorrow that swept over us for the murder of our good President. We had little else in our hearts and minds while he was above the ground, and the scene last Monday and Tuesday was very impressive—one of those sights that are never forgotten." His grief at first registered its depth of anguish by a demand for the most unrelenting prosecution of the conspirators. "I perceive," he wrote in this same letter, "that I have offended a few (in Unity) by insisting upon the severest punishment to whoever is found implicated in the mur-

der, and they punish me by staying away from church." But this mood passed from his heart long before it passed from the country. He understood the martyred President too well, and was himself too compassionate in nature, to nurse revenge even for such a deed as this, and therefore in due season came to show the inevitable "quality of mercy."

In this Civil War period, the most stupendous in American history up to our own dreadful day,[16] Robert Collyer played a highly useful and honourable, if not nationally conspicuous, part. In the country at large, he was one of many thousands of loyal citizens who did their "bit" at such place and time as opportunity offered, and in such ways as talent and profession made possible. In his own community, however, he stood, like Agamemnon, a leader among leaders. By the mid-period of the struggle, he was one of the great men of the city. As an interpreter and moulder of public opinion, he was from the beginning without a rival. It was to him that Chicago learned to look more and more singly, as the war wore on, for the right word of admonition, comfort and good cheer. As a servant of public safety and need, he was among the first to be summoned for counsel or to be despatched

[16] 1917.

afield for action. Whether on the Donelson battlefield, or in the Douglas prison-camp, or at some one of the innumerable committee meetings in public offices or private parlours, he was the representative incarnation of Chicago's loyalty, zeal and unwearied benevolence in the nation's cause. The mouthpiece of its hopes and fears, the administrator of its charities, a leader of its counsels, Robert Collyer was through all these years a dominant figure of the city's life. Nor is it difficult to assay the quality of his success. At bottom was a certain combination of personal charm and rugged native strength which made him not only to be admired but also trusted of men. Never a leader in the great sense of the word, he was throughout his life, as at this time, a kind of rallying-centre for those who needed the shelter of an undaunted spirit and the service of a loving heart. But more than this, as a determining factor of his influence at this critical period of national destiny, was the indwelling passion of supreme conviction. Robert Collyer believed in the nation, and at this, the hour of rebellion, in the nation's cause. The firing on Sumter, like a lightning flash from darkened skies, smote the altar of his heart, and kindled thereupon a fire of pure devotion which burned with undiminished flame throughout the entire period

of the war. The preservation of the Union, the emancipation of the slave, the perpetuation of the great American experiment of democracy—these were ideals for the service of which the sacrifice of life itself seemed to him to be an almost trivial price. Hence his passion, which stirred him to prophetic utterance, dedicated him to dangerous and heart-breaking tasks of service, persuaded him to harsh indictment of officials struggling with problems too vast for understanding, and lifted him to prayer and praise for the victories of patience, courage and unfaltering fortitude which saved at last the day! He saw the issues of the mighty struggle with a clearness shared by many others, but felt the urgency of their right settlement with almost unique emotion. Hence the sweep of conviction which lifted him at the very opening of the war to the forefront of Chicago's life, and held him there until its close!

Finally is it to be noted that this great period marks a definite transition in the Collyer romance. It takes us at once from the story of a private life to that of a public career. Unknown before 1861 beyond a very narrow circle of personal friends and associates, Robert Collyer is now in 1865 full launched upon his later course of honour, fame and power. From this time on, it is a different man we envisage, and set in a very

different environment. After long preparation, he has "arrived." Hence a transformation of our tale! But before we enter upon this new and vaster chapter of events, we must first record the more personal happenings of this stormy era of civil conflict; and then narrate, as a kind of idyllic interlude between two great though contrasted periods of achievement, the episodes of the summer spent in Europe.

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