Maeterlinck's Symbolism

Henry Goose

Maeterlinck's Symbolism: The Blue Bird

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THE BLUE BIRD AND OTHER ESSAYS

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Chapter I

Maeterlinck as a Mystic—Relation to Swedenborg—The Key to "The Blue Bird"

ONE of the foremost of living symbolists is Maeterlinck. It has long been recognized that in "Pelleas and Melisanda," in his one-act play "The Sightless," and in some of his other works he has displayed powers of symbolic writing of the highest order—representing vital spiritual truths in garments of imagery which, if baffling to the foolish and profane, have yet made those truths appear the more brightly to the wise and devout. But the powers of Maeterlinck have grown most marvellously. In his more recent and, in most respects, his

chief work, "The Blue Bird," admirably translated into English by M. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos and produced at the Haymarket Theatre, London, he has given us a play which in its symbolism is far in advance of the others which have come from his pen.

To interpret this symbolism in its fullness would require an essay much longer than the play. This is impossible here: only some of the leading features of the work can be dealt with.

In entering upon the task of indicating these features there are one or two prefatory observations which I would like to make. To me it appears that this is a play which must be of special and peculiar interest to students of Swedenborg, the Swedish seer of whom, as mystic, philosopher, and scientist; we are hearing rather more in these days than was heard formerly. By those who are familiar with Swedenborg's teaching "The Blue Bird" must be recognized as to a very large extent written on

lines which are in accordance with what is known as the Science of Correspondences—a very prominent feature of Swedenborg's teaching.

Maeterlinck himself is admittedly a student of Swedenborg. The reading, whilst he was yet a young man, of the ancient Flemish manuscripts of Ruysbroeck first turned his attention to mysticism. From the writings of Ruysbroeck he passed to those of Novalis, and in time he made himself intimate with the teachings of yet earlier and later mystics—of Plato, Plotinus, Jacob Boehme, and, as stated already, of Swedenborg, not to speak of others of lesser note. There are traces of the influence of each of the writers whom I have named in his work, but especially of Swedenborg. Readers of "Wisdom and Destiny" will recall that in the pages of that beautiful and inspiring book Maeterlinck quotes Swedenborg with lively appreciation of the philosophy of the Swedish seer. And were not other evidence forthcoming there would be sufficient in "The Blue Bird" alone to

make Maeterlinck's familiarity with certain aspects of Swedenborg's teaching quite unmistakable, more especially that branch of his teaching to which I have referred, Correspondences—the science of the correspondence between the spiritual and the physical, by virtue of which physical things are recognized as severally endowed with specific spiritual meanings.

I do not, of course, intend to convey that in my opinion this play in its entirety is written on correspondential lines as Swedenborg defines them, or that when Maeterlinck sat down to write this play he deliberately aimed to produce a work which in its general conception and in its details would follow as closely as possible the rules and conditions of symbolism as Swedenborg expounds or interprets them in this particular branch of his teaching. Such a statement would be an absurd exaggeration. But what I do say is that the influence of Swedenborg is traceable in the work time after time,

that much of the symbolism is precisely of the kind that Swedenborg might have used himself for the purpose of illustrating his teaching, and further that there are parts of the play which are only intelligible by the use of the key which Swedenborg's doctrine of Correspondences supplies.

No doubt it is from want of knowledge of this doctrine on the part of many of the critics of this work that up to this moment so few have shown any real comprehension of "The Blue Bird" at all; that so few have recognized its spiritual purport, or have grasped the central idea of the work, round which every character, scene, and incident is consistently and artistically grouped or arranged. Generally speaking, those who have written on the subject have treated the play as though it were nothing more than a very superior sort of Christmas pantomime, showing here and there exquisite fancy and inventive power, but having no definite and consistent meaning. Some of the scenes have been as-

sumed to be the product of mere fantasy. The fact that the play is a homogeneous whole, related in all its parts, and vital in each one of them, has not been adequately realized.

Most writers who have attempted to expound the symbolism of this work have described the Blue Bird itself as representative of an ideal after which man may be striving. It is, indeed, meant to be this, but not strictly the ideal which is, popularly supposed, the ideal of happiness. In reality, the Blue Bird is the symbol of celestial truth, the truth which is essential to Man's highest spiritual well-being. The purpose of the play is to represent in types and figures the search of Man after the highest things of the spirit; the happiness which is more than once spoken of in the play is simply the happiness that comes from right seeking, and that is the reward of attainment.

It is important that we should quite understand this. In an explanatory note which is printed on the Haymarket programme we may

read, "The Blue Bird, inhabitant of the *pays bleu*, the fabulous blue country of our dreams, is an ancient symbol in the folk-lore of Lorraine, and stands for happiness."

That the people of Lorraine have any sort of knowledge of such a symbol is a remarkable example of the hidden wisdom which much of the folk-lore of the world contains. But Maeterlinck has given to the Blue Bird a fuller significance than it has in this folk-lore; or perhaps it would be more correct to say that he has penetrated to the meaning which lies behind the folk-lore and constructed his play on that basis.

It serves the more immediate purpose of a play-bill to say that the Blue Bird stands for happiness. But in studying this play with more thoroughness than the average playgoer can be expected to do, we must not fail to note a few simple facts well known to students of symbolism. There are birds of evil significance, and birds of good. To the former I shall have occasion to refer very shortly. Usually, however,

when the bird in the generic sense is employed in the language of symbolism, it is to signify some form of good. Most often—and this may be said to have been the case from time immemorial—the bird from its power to ascend, and also from its power to go to its destination in a perfectly straight way, has been the accepted symbol of some form of truth.

As regards the colour attributed to the particular bird after which this play is named, blue is the colour of the celestial region, of the sky, the region in which of old the gods were believed to reside, and in which so many Christians to this day, figuratively or in simple faith, locate their heaven. It follows that the truth which the Blue Bird symbolizes is the truth which is celestial.

It is hardly necessary for me to point out how entirely this interpretation of the symbolism of the Blue Bird of this play accords with Correspondence as expressed by Swedenborg. In "Arcana Cælestia" (No. 5149) Swedenborg says,

"Birds represent . . . thoughts, ideas, reasonings, principles: thus truths or falses. 'Birds of the heavens' signify truths." In the same work (Nos. 866 and 988) he says, "True intellectual things are described by gentle, beautiful, and clean birds; but false ones by fierce ugly, and unclean ones. . . . Gross and dense falsities are signified by owls and ravens; by owls because they live in the darkness of night, and by ravens because they are black." Maeterlinck's symbolism of the bird is consistent with this statement. His bird is one of the best and highest significance.

I do not wish to detain the reader unduly on the specific subject of the symbolism of the bird, but since I first published an interpretation of Maeterlinck's play a few additional facts bearing upon this symbolism have come under my notice to which I would like to refer.

Lorraine is not the only part of France in which the bird is prominent in legends. The Basque race who, be it remembered, are to be

found on the French side of the Pyrenees as well as on the Spanish side, have some old legends, in one of which a little bird is introduced which is endowed with the special quality of telling the truth. Certain women for ends of their own had deceived a king by telling him that his first child was a cat, his second a dog, and his third a bear. But the little bird tells him the truth, with, of course, very important consequences.

That diligent and reliable compiler of literary facts, Dr. Brewer, states that this little truth-telling bird appears in sundry tales of great antiquity. In the Arabian Nights there is a tale "The Two Sisters," in which a bird is introduced, and from its bearing on the work of Maeterlinck, it is very interesting to know that this Arabian Nights story was the basis of a tale by a French authoress who wrote in the earlier part of the seventeenth century, the Comtesse D'Aulnoy. This tale is called "Princess Chery" and it relates the circumstances of a

search not for a blue bird, but for a green bird. This green bird had the marvellous gift of being able to reveal every secret and impart information of events past, present, or to come. Prince Chery goes in search of this bird; so do his two cousins, Brightsun and Felix. They fail to obtain it, and as a result meet with much suffering, and are imprisoned. Last of all, Fairstar, who is, I think, a princess, and judging from the name given to her, may be a symbol of good fortune, is successful, and is able, at the same time, to liberate the three princes.

The Comtesse D'Aulnoy wrote another tale called "Princess Fairstar," in which "the little green bird who tells everything" appears.

In Maeterlinck's play one of the characters expresses the fear that if Man finds the Blue Bird "he will know all, he will see all" and that thus evil forces will have lost their power over him. This is only one of the score of points of similarity which are traceable between the play and the old legends and stories. It has

been suggested that Maeterlinck may have got the idea of writing "The Blue Bird" from Barrie's "Peter Pan." I think that after what I have just stated it will be seen that he may have found the idea much nearer home, and at the same time by no means exclusively in the legends of Lorraine.

"A bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter." So wrote the old Biblical writer ages ago in Ecclesiastes. He saw how peculiarly the bird was fitted to be the bearer of truth. There has never been a time when men have not seen this. What then more natural than that the bird should in time have become a symbol of truth?

It is as a symbol of truth that the bird is used by Maeterlinck. When, therefore, the play-bill tells us that the Blue Bird stands for happiness, whilst we accept that statement in a sense, whilst we admit that it may be good enough for popular consumption, we must see that it needs to be amplified or qualified. Primarily, the Blue

Bird stands for celestial truth, and it stands for happiness only in a subordinate sense. Primarily, the Blue Bird is not the symbol of happiness. But just as from bread we get sustenance, from celestial truth, which is what the Blue Bird typifies, happiness may be derived.

Unless we have these facts in mind there is much in the play that will be incomprehensible to us. But if we keep them in view all the images and incidents and the many characters which are introduced will be found to "come into line," and the beauty, the ingenuity, and the helpful meaning of the author's work will be discerned.

Chapter II

Allegory of a Great Quest—Truth Celestial and Truth Scientific—Conditions of Truth-Seeking

HAVING said this much as to the meaning of the bird from which the title of the play is derived, let us look for a moment at the story. Two peasant children, Tyltyl and Mytyl, are represented as having retired to bed on a certain Christmas Eve—the eve of the anniversary of the birth of the Great Teacher through whom the latest and greatest manifestation of spiritual truth was made to the world. The children are visited by a fairy, the Fairy Bérylune, who says that she is in search of "the grass that sings and the bird that is blue." She is especially desirous of obtaining the bird; she wants it for her little child who is ill. She asks the children to accompany her in the search, in reality to seek the bird themselves. She gives

to Tyltyl a little magic hat, having on it "the diamond that makes people see." By the use of this diamond the various things by which the children are surrounded, attended, and served suddenly emit their souls and become alive. We see, as though of human form, Light come out from the lamp; Fire, Water, Milk, Sugar, and Bread, and even the Dog and Cat all come from their accustomed places. These accompany the Fairy and the children. They go to the Palace of the Fairy, where some members of the strange party of searchers put on new and more becoming garments. The Fairy instructs Light to be the guide to the children. Tyltyl and Mytyl first are to go alone to what is described as the home of their late grandparents, the way to which lies over the threshold of the Land of Memory.

The scene at the Fairy Palace and the visit to the late grandparents occupy the second act, and in the third we find the children with their companions in the Palace of Night, where they

have many strange experiences. From this Palace, still in search of the Blue Bird, they pass into a forest, and here encounter not only trees, but animals. The fourth act reveals the children, again alone, seeking for the Blue Bird in a graveyard. Thence they pass, with the guidance of Light, into the Kingdom of the Future—an Azure Palace, where are countless children "waiting to be born." Finally, after a visit to the Palace of Happiness which forms the new, and fifth, act, Tyltyl and Mytyl are at home once more. At various times during their journey they have seen what they have thought to be the Blue Bird. But never have they really succeeded in getting it, and now we learn that all the while they have been in a dream.

Such is the story in roughest outline. Let us proceed to a few details of interpretation.

The children represent Humanity in that state of innocence and with that desire for knowledge which are favourable to the attainment of spiritual things. In making these chil-

dren the seekers after the Blue Bird Maeterlinck is consistent with the doctrine expressed in the words, "He hath hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them unto babes," and also in the words, "Except ye be as a little child, ye shall in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

Equally is it consistent with another doctrine of Christ that the author shows the Fairy as coming to the wood-cutter's children, to poor children. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter the Kingdom of Heaven." The children of the rich man in the house opposite are, it is plain, being surfeited with the things of this life, and from the decorations of their Christmas tree—swords, guns, cannons, and soldiers—we may see that their thoughts are being directed towards evil. It is not to them that the Fairy makes her appeal.

Viewing the play as an allegory of the search for truth the aspect in which the Fairy Bérylune first appears may puzzle us. The Fairy typifies

the movement of the Divine Spirit which comes to man and helps to make him conscious of his higher needs: she is the messenger of the Divine Spirit. Yet at first she is in the guise of a little old woman, hunchbacked and lame, and with only one eye. This, however, is an appearance only; the aspect in which Man sees her is dependent on Man's state. When the children embrace her proposal to go in search of the Blue Bird she is seen as a beautiful princess.

Besides inquiring for the Blue Bird the Fairy inquires for "the grass that sings." Of the many critics of this play not one, so far as I have been able to discover, has ventured so much as a guess as to what Maeterlinck means by this. And, indeed, unless we start in the interpretation of the play with a knowledge that it is to the search for truth that the allegory relates, and unless we have some knowledge of the Science of Correspondences to help us, "the grass that sings" must appear to have no meaning in particular, but to have been introduced by

the author from sheer playfulness, to tickle the fancy of the reader or playgoer by employing an element of mystery and appealing to a sense of curiosity which there is no intention of satisfying. To come to any such conclusion would be greatly to misjudge Maeterlinck. In this, as in the many other details of his work, he has a clear and definite meaning.

The bird ascends to the highest heavens: the grass clothes the earth under our feet. Whilst the one is the symbol of the truth which is of celestial origin, the other—which is the common food of animal life—is the symbol of the truth which pertains to our physical well being. Strictly speaking, however, it is the more advanced forms of scientific truth in relation to the physical universe which Maeterlinck denotes by "the grass that sings"—the scientific truth, and the applications of truth which, more especially in recent times, have been so conducive to Man's material advancement. With regard to this truth the Fairy remarks, however, "I can

do without the grass that sings, at a pinch: but I absolutely *must* have the Blue Bird." By this is meant that though the knowledge of the advanced forms of physical science is good, it is of relatively little importance to Man's higher spiritual needs: it is not to be compared for real serviceableness with the truth which is spiritual and of which our perception may be clear though our knowledge of the physical sciences be no greater than was that of the simple fishermen who were the first disciples. Given the attainment of spiritual truth and the right application of spiritual truth as the best and highest aims of life, the thing of primary importance is that there shall be sufficient fineness of intuition in those who take part in the Fairy search. Then the scientific truth, which the author designates, though much to be desired, may yet be dispensed with, or, at any rate, may be treated as of secondary importance. Even the truths of physical science which are attained in a spirit of reverence, and testify to the Creative Power

—"the grass that *sings*"—may "at a pinch" be done without. [Swedenborg's "Arcana Cælestia," Nos. 7112, 7571, 7691, 9936, bears on this point. There is an admirable essay on "Grasses" in Miss Brayley's "Natural Phenomena and their Spiritual Lessons." London: James Speirs.]

As I have stated, the Fairy, to aid in the proposed search, gives to Tyltyl a little magic hat, having on it "the diamond that makes people see." This diamond, from its purity, its sterling qualities, and their abiding efficacy, is intended to be the symbol of spiritual light. This is the light of which Tennyson speaks as "the light that never was on land nor sea." It is "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world"—provided it be his will to be illumined—the inner light. The desire for truth being precedent to all perception of truth, the Fairy instructs Tyltyl thus, "When you've got the hat on your head you turn the diamond a little. . . . Then it presses a bump which no-

body knows of, and which opens your eyes. You can at once see inside of things. One little turn more and you behold the past. Another little turn and you behold the future."

Complementary to the fairy-diamond is the radiant personage who comes out of the lamp and to whom the name of Light is given. She is the representative of human reason, intelligence, and knowledge. It is because of this that she is charged by the Fairy with the office of guide to the children. The association of the fairy-diamond and of the soul of the lamp, of Light, is a very important feature of the symbolism of the play. As I have said, the radiant personage who comes out of the lamp is "complementary" to the fairy-diamond—the one symbolizes spiritual light and the other human reason, intelligence and knowledge. Human reason, intelligence and knowledge are not in themselves sufficient for the search for celestial truth. Spiritual light also is needful, nay, is essential for the search. However perfect the nat-

ural eye may be, it cannot perceive objects in the dark; the rays of light must first play upon the retina. In like manner, however gifted we may be with faculties of mental vision and with knowledge, spiritual light, which corresponds with physical light, must illumine the objects, or subjects, to which that vision is directed before they can be discerned. Hence the uses of the fairy-diamond, and the association of this diamond with that personage of the play whom we know as Light.

Of the other characters who are introduced the Dog in this play, as in Maeterlinck's other work, "The Sightless," represents the primary instincts of humanity. He also represents the spirit of fidelity and obedience.

The Cat typifies the active power of evil. He is shown to be the special friend and ally of Night, and, like her, he is apprehensive of the result of the search after the Blue Bird.

The Fairy has spoken of the wondrous power of the magic diamond, which, when it is used,

opens the eyes, so that things may be seen in all their aspects, present, past and future—a diamond which reveals even the inside of things. With the aid of this diamond rightly used, the Blue Bird, Truth, may be found. The Cat regards it as his special business to prevent this. Who can wonder that he should do so? To the forces of evil there is no greater menace than the growth of knowledge of truth. Man sins only because he does not know—because of his ignorance. If we could see all the consequences of our actions in relation to ourselves and in relation to others, good would be so alluring and evil would be so repellent that we could not but choose the good. In words which I have quoted already, it is declared that if Man gets the Blue Bird he will not only see all, but know all. Then the Dominion of Darkness will be ended. It is into the mouth of the Cat that the author puts this expression of evil fear. And rightly is the Cat represented as apprehensive of what now may happen.

Other persons of the play whom I have named, Fire, Water, Milk, Sugar, and Bread, typify those things which are necessary to Man's physical life. The Fairy warns them that they "will die at the end of the journey." Thus the passing from the natural to the spiritual is figured: when the body of this life is put off the service of those things which minister to it on the material plane is ended.

In connection with the introduction of these characters the author plainly indicates that an allegory of the search for truth is intended. When the Quartern Loaves, of whom our friend Bread is one, scramble out of the pan in which they have been kept, Tyltyl asks, "Who are those ugly little men?" and the Fairy replies, "They are merely the souls of the quartern loaves who are taking advantage of the reign of truth to leave the pan in which they were too tightly packed." It is, indeed, the case that in the full and complete sense the reign of truth is not established so long as error and evil any-

where exist. But, none the less, that reign is inaugurated from the moment that the love of truth is manifested and the desire to search for it created. It follows, therefore, that the Fairy is "speaking by the card."

As we study the working out of the author's conception, we cannot but be impressed with the consistency of his allegory, even to the smaller details. When, for example, the search for the Blue Bird is about to begin the Fairy, who came in at the door, insists that the Children, the Animals, the Things, and the Elements shall accompany her out by the window. The door signifies the means by which the spirit which impels to the search for Truth may enter. Hence we speak of the door of the heart. Hence also the words, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him." When, however, we have not only the will to receive Truth but the desire to advance in the knowledge of it we must use "the window."

That is to say, whilst availing ourselves of the help of those things which come in at "the door," we must use the interiors of the mind, the "windows of the mind": we must depend very largely on perception and intuition. Maeterlinck is not a believer in the efficacy of receiving Truth on the basis merely of authority. Each must seek and confirm for himself. And if he is willing to seek, he will not fail to discover that he is equipped for the search and that the Divine Power is ready to aid him.

Another fact of which we must take note as we witness the departure of the Fairy and her companions is that the Fairy charges Bread to carry the cage in which to put the Blue Bird when it is found. Truth, spiritual Truth, is broad and universal: it is not a thing that can be held in the hand, or confined within narrow limits of our own devising. But this we none of us realize in the beginning of the search. What are many of our Churches but so many

cages in which it is sought to have the Truth in close keeping? All this, however, is in accordance with the Divine order. In our present state the belief that success in our search for Truth is soon and completely possible is ever a strong incentive to go forward. Hence we have the kindly instruction which the Fairy gives to Bread.

As to the style of the work on the examination of which we now are engaged, it may here be observed parenthetically that, if, in the opening of his play, as indeed throughout, the author wraps his teaching up in colloquial language, and resorts so frequently to the conventions of the old-fashioned fairy story, and so often adapts the incidents of folk-lore, it is because he is supremely an artist, and because so far as he is a teacher, he rightly prefers to teach in his own way. His method is, it seems to me, extremely well suited for his purpose. He introduces us to a region of enchantment, where everything being strange, nothing seems too strange to be

improbable or untrue. All things of mind and matter become obedient to his purpose. The result is a story of rare beauty, as imaginative as it is instructive.

Chapter III

Appeal to Tradition in the Search for Truth—The Struggle of Light against Darkness—Good in Opposition to Evil—The Relative Impotence of Evil—False Forms of Faith

WITH the experiences which the children go through in the search for the Blue Bird the readers of the play will be familiar. Those who are not acquainted with the work will do well to make it a subject of study: certainly they cannot follow the present exposition of the play with proper appreciation and understanding unless the play itself is before them.

The visit of the two children to their late grandparents represents the search for Truth by the appeal to tradition. The grandfather is made to remark that he and the other inhabitants of the Land of Memory only really live when they are thought of by those who have come

after them—which is precisely what traditions do. The growth of the children in spiritual stature is symbolized in the record of their measurement on the door-post.

From the Land of Memory the children pass to the Palace of Night. The whole structure of this palace is symbolic. Basalt steps, occupying almost the entire width, divide it into three successive stages which rise gradually towards the back, and represent the Adamic, the Mosaic, and the Christian periods of civilization, or alternatively, the animal, the intellectual, and the spiritual stages in Man's evolution, with which the historical periods just named, in a measure, coincide.

When the curtain rises Night is seen to be sitting on the middle of these stages, a suggestion on the part of the author that men in general have not yet advanced to the higher spiritual stage, and that Night regards it as her special office, for the present, to brood over the intellect, and thus hinder Man's progress.

To the student of Correspondences, as set forth in the teaching of Swedenborg, Maeterlinck's description of the nature of Night's palace must be of peculiar interest. Thus we are told that what light there is in it seems to emanate chiefly from the brilliancy of the marble and ebony of which it is composed. Swedenborg describes marble and ebony as corresponding on the material plane with "Divine truth in ultimates." If we would know what Swedenborg means by that and what Maeterlinck no doubt intends to symbolize when he represents the light of the palace as seeming to emanate chiefly from the brilliancy of the marble and the ebony of which it is composed, we may, perhaps, be assisted if we observe that Swedenborg speaks of "ultimates" as boundaries—as those things which are called natural principles, the principles in which spiritual and celestial principles terminate. Such principles or qualities must be supposed to pertain to the conditions of Humanity which are symbolized by the Palace

of Night. Maeterlinck would have us know that in the Palace of Night, besides so much that is evil, there are, in their lowest forms and qualities, many things which go to the making of Man's spiritual life. Even as regards the evil which is here symbolized he would have us perceive that its tremendous power to awe and terrify the human soul is due to Man's ignorance and lack of love of the true and the good. It needs but the spiritual light, of which the fairy-diamond is the symbol, to be brought into play, and the reason and knowledge which are represented by the children's guide, Light, to enter in, for us to see this.

The Palace of Night is the abode, however, for the most part of negations, and of active and passive evils, and of beliefs in which there is no real vitality. These beliefs are represented by the birds which are found there and appear to be blue, but which when caught are no longer alive.

By natural transition we pass next to the

Forest. The Forest well symbolizes that state of Man of which many of us in recent days have had experience—the state in which the inquirer after truth wanders in a maze of beliefs, each of which offers itself to him as the true one, and is pressed by its advocates upon his judgment.

In the Forest as seen in this play are trees of various kinds, which symbolize forms of religious belief, possessing, or having at one time possessed, the promise of good, and, no doubt, having in some cases been representative of actual good.

It may be expected that here at any rate a glimpse will be got of the Blue Bird of which Tyltyl has heard so much, but which he has not yet seen. It is a reasonable expectation, which may not quite be disappointed. The soul of the Oak comes forward, "fabulously old, crowned with mistletoe and clad in a long green gown"—the representative of the ancient religion of the Druids. And what certainly

looks like the Blue Bird is seen to be perched on his shoulder.

Since the Truth which the Blue Bird symbolizes thus appears to be with, or is with this, one of the most ancient of the religions, naturally the Bird is present also with the companion trees of much more recent growth which group themselves with the Oak. It certainly is not the purpose of the author to deny virtue to religious systems. Unfortunately, however, the facts of history testify that there are few, if any, religious systems which have not, in large measure, the taint of human infirmities. The most powerful, in particular, are apt to degenerate into ecclesiasticisms. And a time comes in the life of most of them when the love of power and the fear of new ideas are governing influences. This we have symbolized for us in the conflict which presently arises between the souls of the Trees and Tyltyl.

The Cat which has professed to be a faithful servant of Tyltyl and his sister, but who, as we

have seen, is actually their enemy, warns the Trees significantly, and with the exaggeration which is characteristic of the spirit of evil, that Tyltyl is seeking the Blue Bird which they "have kept hidden from Man since the beginning of the world." At the same time the Cat strives to cause mischief between Tyltyl and the Dog. "Why have you brought the Dog?" he whispers to Tyltyl. "I have told you that he is on the worst terms with everybody, even the Trees."

This attitude of the Cat we can well understand, remembering what has been said already as to the way in which the Dog represents the primary and unperverted instincts which—since they make for freedom and healthful and joyous life—are to be regarded as trustworthy aids to Man's upward ascent. It is just because the Cat knows them to be trustworthy aids that he seeks to cause prejudice in Tyltyl against them, and that afterwards, through the malice of the Cat, the Churches, as represented by the Trees,

are shown as striving to keep these instincts in bondage.

The Oak and the rest of the Trees are only too ready to join with the Cat against the Dog. On the advice of the Oak the Trees call the Animals, which represent the earthly or secular Powers, into council to determine how best Tyltyl may be hindered from actually catching the Blue Bird. In addressing them the Oak remarks somewhat deceitfully, "The child whom you see before you, thanks to a talisman *stolen from the powers of earth*, is able to take possession of the Blue Bird, and thus snatch from us the secret which we have kept since the origin of life. Now we know enough of Man to entertain no doubt as to the fate which he reserves for us, once he is in possession of this secret."

Thus the solicitude of ecclesiasticisms to be regarded as sole custodians of the secret of salvation is indicated; thus do Churches when they degenerate into ecclesiasticisms fear any

advancement which may deprive them of their exclusive privileges.

Unfortunately Tyltyl, for the moment—for he is only human—appears to have forgotten that he possesses the talisman. At any rate, he has neglected to use it. One result is that when the Cat attacks the Dog, and invokes the aid of the Ivy in the contest, Tyltyl assents to the binding of the Dog. The Ivy represents ecclesiastical power and religious narrowness in their worst, most restrictive and parasitical forms. The Ivy ties the Dog up "like a parcel," and it then exclaims, exultantly, "I've muzzled him finely. He can't utter a word." And the Oak, much relieved, cries out, "Fasten him tight down there, behind my trunk, to my big roots. We shall decide later what had best be done with him." And so for the moment we see the dominance of old and decayed forms of religion over Man's faithful friend and aid.

The Dog being well bound, the various Animals, including the representative of the most

cruel and rapacious of the earthly Powers, the Wolf, are incited by the Trees and join in an attack on Tyltyl. For, truly, ecclesiasticisms when most fearful of losing their peculiar privileges are only too ready to utilize the strength of the secular authority. In every such contest a point always comes, however, when Man's instincts as to what is fair and right and good for himself assert themselves against such attempts to extinguish his liberty. And though those instincts may be bound they never can be destroyed. A sense of the tremendous danger in which Tyltyl is placed stimulates the Dog to a supreme effort. He breaks his bonds, and rushes to the help of Tyltyl. Thus Man's right to freedom is triumphantly asserted. And when at this moment it is made known that Light is coming upon the scene, the Souls of the Trees and of the Animals disappear with haste. The Forest is harmless once more.

But as to the Blue Bird! As the play develops we learn that it is still an object of search.

Beyond the glimpse of it on the shoulders of the Oak the yearnings of the children are unsatisfied. As to the nature of this bird, as to the symbolic significance of this bird we have in this scene had another indication, in words which are put into the mouth of the Oak. Early in the scene the Oak has remarked to Tyltyl, "Yes, I know that you are looking for the Blue Bird; that is to say, the great secret of things, and of happiness." If we had no other evidence to guide us it would be reasonable to conclude that by "the great secret of things" the author means the truth of things; the terms, indeed, are synonymous. And, obviously, the author does not wish us to suppose that he regards "the great secret of things"—the truth of things—as, on its part, synonymous with happiness. His words are, "the great secret of things, *and* of happiness." Happiness may follow upon the attainment of the great secret, nay, it assuredly will follow. But happiness and the great secret are not one and the same.

Chapter IV

The Buried Past—Resurrection to New Life—The Infinity of Progress

TO many of those who have read this play or have seen it produced in the theatre the episode of the visit to the Graveyard which follows the conflict in the Forest appeals most strongly of all. In the Graveyard flowers appear when grinning skeletons are looked for and feared. "Where are the dead?" asks Mytyl. And Tyltyl replies, "There are no dead!"

It is indeed a beautiful scene, described with marvellous simplicity and power. It must readily appear that the Graveyard is the place where lie interred all Man's past experiences—all his experiences of good and of evil, of pleasure and of pain, of striving and of failure—most of all his experiences in "the Palace of Night" and in "the Forest." Of all these none is lost,

and, if only he have the will to use the fairy-diamond, none need be mourned over. From the past which has seemed dead he may gain strength for the present and inspiration for the future. It may even be that in the midnight hours of his life, the time when all is dark and fears most assail, the glorious vision will be revealed to him. But for this discovery he must not rely on tradition merely—that was impressed upon us by the author when he showed us the visit of Tyltyl and Mytyl to their late grandparents; neither must he allow himself to be overawed by the forces of evil, scepticism, and unbelief—such as are seen in the Palace of Night—or held in the bondage of ecclesiastical systems—such as were seen in the Forest. These things the author has been at pains to show. He must have the love of truth with and in him, and abounding courage in the search for it. And he must be willing to use the reasoning faculties which the friendship of Tyltyl and Mytyl with Light represents. Thus pre-

pared and equipped he shall find that there is nothing in his life that may not be made subservient to his spiritual advancement; that nothing is really dead or useless. When he looks at the Graveyard in which his past seems to be buried and asks, "Where are the dead?" the voice of experience will answer that they are not. Lo! that which he thought was dead is alive—alive in sweetest forms of loveliness.

Man's salvation lies, however, not only in the right interpretation of the past, and the right use of the present, but in the will ever to go forward. And certain it is that if he has not had the Blue Bird hitherto or got it now, he must not give up the search. There is strength to be derived and virtue gained even from the seeking. All good things will come in their due season—when Man is ready to receive them.

It is in this faith and belief that the author leads us next to "The Kingdom of the Future." Here we see the immense halls of an azure palace. All the colours which Maeterlinck

mentions have their special significance, and azure, the colour of this palace, is symbolic of the infinity of coming ages and the eternity of progress. In this kingdom we see countless children. They are described as children "waiting to be born." They are the symbols, most of them, of the new and better thoughts and ideas which, with the passing away of the Power of Darkness, and the subjugation of the Trees and the Animals that we saw in the Forest, or of all that they typify in the author's thought, are to come into the life of Humanity.

All the children in this Kingdom of the Future are not, however, to be so regarded. Ignorance and evil will not cease suddenly. Hence whilst amongst the children waiting to be born are many who are to be promoters of various forms of moral good and of material advancement, we have also the child who, as he struggles against being born too soon, exclaims, "I have forgotten the box containing the two crimes which I shall have to commit."

At the end of this scene old Time is surprised to discover the presence of Tyltyl and Mytyl. As they slip away from his threatening presence Light exclaims, "I have the Blue Bird. It is hidden under my cloak." In these words the fine optimism of Maeterlinck—which runs through the entire play—is especially evinced.

Light has the Blue Bird under her cloak. Of course she has! And of course she must have! Unless all Man's high faith and noblest endeavour are based on illusion the Truth in its brightness will yet be visible to his eyes.

Chapter V

True Joys and False Joys—Duty and Love—Seeing and Knowing

WHILST in the Kingdom of the Future the infinity of progress is symbolized, in the new act, the Palace of Happiness, which now forms the fifth act of the play, the conditions under which that progress may be secured are more especially emphasized. Wrong aims of life are sharply contrasted with right aims, false joys with true joys; the gospel of duty is affirmed, and still more the gospel of love. Light is heard to exclaim, "A man should know how to sacrifice something to the duty which he is performing." Maternal love, one of the highest types of love, here is extolled.

The love of the earthly mother does not readily expand, however, to the love of Humanity;

sometimes it is all too restricted to the circle of the natural relationships which are its first concern. It is the embryo of a larger love, but an embryo that does not always develop. Hence in this act we hear of, though we do not see, a yet greater love, a love which is universal, named by the author the Great Joy of Loving. In referring to this great joy, one of the Happinesses remarks to Tyltyl, "Do what you will; you are ever so much too small to see her altogether."

The picture which the author gives of false pleasures, the Luxuries, as he calls them, is extremely impressive, and reminds us, as indeed does the whole act, of the best work of the mediæval writers of miracle plays. "They are dangerous and would break your will," says Light to Tyltyl when he is tempted to partake of the riotous feast in which the Luxuries are engaged. But the more carnal appetites in Man are strong. Pressingly invited by The Luxury of Being Rich, some of the humbler companions

of the children join the festive board. Even the Dog, whose instincts hitherto had been true, and whose companionship in the search for the Blue Bird had been helpful, falls, for the moment, under the evil spell. The Children then are thrown back on the guidance and protection of Light.

If reason, intelligence and knowledge were now to fail them, their plight would be desperate indeed. Fat Laughter tries to assail even these higher attributes. Whilst the Luxuries, uttering cries of delight, try to drag Tyltyl and Mytyl to the table, Fat Laughter seizes Light vigorously round the waist.

Then is a peril which outwardly seems greater than has ever before been met with since the search for the Blue Bird began. But if Tyltyl whilst in the Forest without the company of Light forgot at the needful moment to use the fairy-diamond, he and his companions now have Light with them, and may in fact readily be protected. By the direction of Light the dia-

mond is turned, and at once all the Luxuries vanish.

It is significant—though here I make no comment upon it—that in the company of the Luxuries, which includes the Luxury of Satisfied Vanity, the Luxury of Knowing Nothing, the Luxury of Understanding Nothing, the Luxury of Doing Nothing, and many of like character, Maeterlinck puts the Luxury of Being a Land Owner!

Twice in this act we have allusions which, in my opinion, should be sufficient even in themselves to stamp the play as an allegory of Man's Search for celestial or spiritual truth. When the diamond is turned upon them, when spiritual light is shed upon them, and the Luxuries, revealed in all their naked ugliness, rush off to the shelter of darkness in the Cave of the Miseries, and when in place of the sensuous banqueting hall we see what the author describes as a cathedral of gladness and serenity, Tyltyl wonders at the transformation, and asks,

"Where are we?" To this inquiry Light replies, "We have not moved; it is your eyes that see differently. We now behold the truth of things; and we shall perceive the souls of the Joys that endure the brightness of the diamond."

Again, near the end of the act, when the pure Joys embrace Light—Light who is now veiled, because the time is not yet come when Man can have the fullest development of reason and intelligence of which he is capable, or can enter into all knowledge—the Joy of Understanding expresses the natural yearning of the soul for further advancement. She exclaims, "Come, sister, come; we are strong enough; we are pure enough. Put aside those veils which still conceal from us the last truths and the last happinesses."

"You are our queen and our reward," she rightly adds. For when with the aid of the spiritual light which the diamond symbolizes, all things are seen in their true aspects, and

when reason and intelligence have been brought into free exercise, and the higher knowledge—though not necessarily the highest—has been attained, Man is no longer subject, but regnant. And, of course,—who can think otherwise?—such attainment is itself the reward of the long and patient strife. Happiness in every form attends upon it.

I have but one thing to add before I conclude my reference to this act. Those readers who imagine that in "The Blue Bird" Maeterlinck gives us an allegory merely, or chiefly, of Man's search for happiness, will do well to reflect on this fact,—although in his new act the author brings us even to the Palace of Happiness, and, after the illusory pleasures have been banished, shows us countless forms of happiness, and, in the end, joy so great that it is dissolved in tears; although at the close of the act the curtain descends on a hush of silence, for the happiness which all feel is too great to be expressed in words, the Blue Bird remains still an object of search.

Chapter VI

The Way of Wisdom—The Virtue of Sacrifice—Doing the Duty that Lies Nearest

I MIGHT say much as to other features of the symbolism, and as to the philosophy of "The Blue Bird," but I must forbear. Let the end of it be carefully noted. Tyltyl, no longer dreaming, is asked to give a favourite bird to the invalid child of a neighbour. She is a little girl who has long been yearning for this bird. It is only a turtle-dove. But as Tyltyl looks at it with generous and self-sacrificing resolve that he will give it to the child the dove really appears to be blue. The greater will be the sacrifice to Tyltyl if he parts with it. But he gives the bird all the same. When the neighbour who has begged it has left, Tyltyl, who on his return from his imaginary journey had been

surprised at the greater beauty of his home—a beauty which is simply the reflection of his present spiritual state—more than ever wonders what Daddy and Mammy have been doing to the house in his absence.

Whilst Tyltyl marvels at the new aspect which the cottage presents, the neighbour comes back crying out that a miracle has been accomplished. The child has suddenly become well. And with the neighbour is the child, who carries the turtle-dove in her arms.

What follows is difficult to mark in its details, and, therefore, difficult to describe. There are occasions when we half regret our sacrifices: we would like, at one and the same time, the pleasure that comes from giving and the pleasure that comes from possession. It is not easy to tell, but it may have been so with Tyltyl. He begins to stroke the head of the dove with, perhaps, something of a feeling that he would like to think that the dove is still his own. He moves as if to get the bird back from the little

girl's hands. The girl resists instinctively. And taking advantage of the hesitation in the movements of the children the dove escapes and flies away.

We have it borne in upon us from the conclusion, as from the beginning, and, indeed, from the whole of the work, that the Blue Bird is a rare and precious thing, very hard to find. But well will it be for us if we learn that the instruments, at any rate, of the search are not so very difficult to discover, and that we may have them with us already. It all depends. "If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine." Not the turtle-dove alone, if one be ours, but all things may be converted into such instruments, and be found of miraculous power, if they are used by their possessors in the service of Humanity. And only so far as they are so used can we ever hope to create for ourselves the means to see, or in any wise attain to, the acquisition of the real Blue Bird.

It is the old moral of the virtue of sacrifice,

and the old moral of using rightly the things that are nearest to us. For in that way lies the path of high attainment—of progress in the search for the truth which is spiritual, and in the acquisition of those moral qualities which are the most to be esteemed, and on which real and abiding happiness depends.

In now drawing this exposition of "The Blue Bird" to a close there is one thing that I must not omit to speak of. Students of this play may have been a little perplexed at the very elusive descriptions of the Blue Bird, of the bird of the search, which Maeterlinck gives. The bird of the dream never comes into the hands of Tyltyl and Mytyl at all. They have a glimpse of it in the Forest. And when they are hurrying away from the anger of old Time, in the Kingdom of the Future, Light is heard to exclaim, "I have the Blue Bird. It is hidden under my cloak." But later on, in the scene of The Awakening, Tyltyl says that having seen the bird which Light had under her cloak he

found that it was not blue but quite pink. Pink is, at any rate, a colour of promise. There has been a time when Tyltyl thought that he had the Blue Bird, but found that his supposed Blue Bird was black!

Now, we must not suppose that Maeterlinck intends to suggest that the bird which Light had under her cloak, and which was afterwards found to be pink, was not all the while the true bird. In other words, we must not suppose that Light—Light whom the Fairy Bérylune had appointed as guide to the children, and who had performed her office faithfully, was herself deluded as to the bird which was in her possession.

In all this elusiveness as to the colour of the bird, and as to the difficulty of acquiring possession of it, Maeterlinck has in mind that absolute truth is in the Divine Spirit alone. Man's apprehensions of that truth never can be other than relative, and they vary according to the changes and transitions of his own spiritual state.

In times of spiritual exaltation the truth appears to him in aspects which assure him of his higher relationship to the Divine. And when his greater nearness to the Divine is realized, when his consciousness of advancement is more vivid, and the aspect of truth is more definite—then it is that the bird which, in the figurative language of Maeterlinck, is chosen as the symbol of truth—a bird of the existence of which Man may have intimations—a bird of which he may sometimes have glimpses, but which he never has really in his grasp—appears as blue.

Such I take to be the meaning of Maeterlinck in this beautiful play, one of the most beautiful ever written. Here and there difficulties arise in the interpretation, sometimes caused, it may be, by the exuberant fancy of the author, and the multitude of images which he employs. But the work as a whole has entire consistency and unity; the line of thought which runs through it is followed strictly. That thought may not be new to many of us, but it is in all respects

true, and it calls for wider acceptance than it has yet received. The service which the author performs is in the manner in which he presents it. And surely for this he is entitled to admiration and gratitude.

"Pippa Passes": The Optimism of Robert Browning

I

ROBERT BROWNING was an apostle of reverential free thought. He had freed himself from the conventional and orthodox religious beliefs of his age, and from the dominion of then-accepted authorities; he asserted the right freely to form opinions of his own in all high matters concerning God's relations with men. But he did this in the spirit of a humble and honest seeker after truth, with a full sense of the profound mystery of life, and a childlike and submissive acknowledgment of God's fatherhood. In his whole habit of thinking and feeling he was, indeed, profoundly reverential.

This much I must frankly concede in justice to Browning before I proceed to consider one of his representative works in what occasionally may seem to be a critical spirit, or, at any rate, to speak critically with regard to interpretations which are put on this work.

The reverence which was a distinctive quality in Robert Browning was a chief source of his power and usefulness in an age of transition in religious thought. Allied as it was with courage and the love of liberty, it made him preëminent as a teacher and guide. Unfortunately, the reverential free thought which impels a man to the abandonment of beliefs which have come to be viewed as commonly accepted dogmas does not safeguard the reverential free thinker from the assumption on his own part of a dogmatic form of expression. It certainly did not safeguard Browning. And this we should be careful to note.

There are two objections to dogmatic language on the part of one who comes before us,

as did Browning, with claims to be a great teacher. It is characteristic of dogmatic language that it excludes limitations; it excludes reservation and qualification. For this reason the wiser a man is, the less likely is he to use dogmatic language at all.

The second objection to dogmatic language is this—a man may have what he believes to be a truth clearly in his mind, and may believe in his power to give that truth adequate and definite expression. Nevertheless, the more he puts his language into a dogmatic form, the greater is the risk that those who come under his influence will adopt private and personal interpretations of the words used. It may even be that by reason of persistent iteration on the part of his professed disciples he may be made to give authority to views which he did not actually intend to teach, or, at any rate, which he did not intend to teach in the way ascribed to him. I fear that already Browning has suffered from these methods of private and personal in-

terpretation. Let us, however, without further preface, examine this work.

II

THE story of "Pippa Passes" is so well known that it is unnecessary to recall the details of it. Truly it is a charming story, this of the silk-mill girl in the beautiful valley of the Arno, who on her one holiday in the year—New Year's Day—wanders in the neighbourhood of her home, cheerily singing as she goes, by her songs awakening conscience in the guilty, and strengthening the resolves of the good.

The story is put into the dramatic form, which was no doubt the form most convenient for the purposes of the author. But Browning is not a master of this form; he is a great poet, but not a great dramatist. His Pippa talks like a wise philosopher and an acute observer of nature and life—all in magnificent blank verse—as no mill-girl ever talked before her time or

since. She is Robert Browning masquerading as Pippa. Lifelike characterization is not a strong feature of Browning's work, though here and there, where the personages, either good or bad, may be considered as at Browning's own level of education, as in the case of the bishop in this drama, we find that they are really well drawn.

It seems to me that Browning shows deficiency as an artist, even in the choice of his title. The title "Pippa Passes" is a mere stage direction. Pippa in her wanderings appears at one spot and then at another. She sings her song, and then, where the ordinary dramatist would write "exit," Browning writes "Pippa passes." And thus his title is derived.

I can well believe that just as Ruskin's title "Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds" proved misleading to a farmer who desired to add to his stock of practical information on farming, an Alpine traveller was led to inquire for "Pippa Passes" under the simple belief that

it would contain information of value for mountaineering. "Pippa," or "The Songs of Pippa," would, in my opinion, have been a better title.

This, however, is quite a small point, only of interest when we consider Browning not as a poet but as an artist. The real value of Browning lies in his religious and ethical teaching. It is this which we are more especially concerned with now.

III

THE religious teaching of Browning so far as it is embodied in "Pippa Passes" is especially indicated in two songs. The first of these I will quote in full:

> The year's at the spring,
> And day's at the morn;
> Morning's at seven;
> The hillside's dew-pearled:
> The lark's on the wing;
> The snail's on the thorn;
> God's in His heaven —
> All's right with the world!

Coincidently with, and consistently with this declaration of high faith, Browning elsewhere in the same drama makes Pippa quote this verse:

> All service ranks the same with God:
> If now, as formerly He trod
> Paradise, His presence fills
> Our earth, each only as God wills
> Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
> Are we; there is no last nor first.

In reality it is to illustrate and enforce the dogmas which are declared in these verses that the whole drama was written. Let us to the best of our power examine them; let us see what measure of helpful truth they contain. Let us also see how far they have been the subject of misconception and error, or have been made to serve in the advocacy of mistaken views. For that this has been their fate, I, for my part, do not doubt.

IV

God's in His heaven —
All's right with the world.

It is a portentous declaration! How far and in what sense are we to accept it?

To me it seems that the truth or otherwise of the statement, and certainly the whole of its practical value, depend upon the point of view from which we regard it. Let us consider it by the method of analogy.

A child, we will say, is ill. To all appearance it is sick unto death. The father is in agony of fear regarding it. As he stands by the side of the fever-heated bed, he recalls the time, but a few days ago, when the child was rosy of cheek and merry of voice; full of rude health. And he says to himself that his child is in terrible danger, and can hardly recover.

But at this very time the physician enters the room. He examines the patient. He views the

symptoms with experienced eye. The grave expression of his face softens. He knows that in the body of the child the healing microbes are at length gaining a victory over their poisonous rivals; that the worst stage of the disease is passing, and that only care and attention are needed to secure the recovery of the patient. He is an enthusiast in his profession. To him the laws of disease are as marvellous as the laws of health—because he understands them. He exclaims, "Beautiful—couldn't be better." From his point of view "All's right."

Yes, there is the point of view of the anxious father and the point of view of the wise physician. The latter is the point of view of scientific knowledge, faith, and prophecy. Days will pass before the father will fully share the optimism of the physician; more days still before absolute health is restored. And whether, after all, the patient makes a quick recovery or a slow one, and suffers much, little, or in no wise, from after-effects of the illness, will depend not

on the physician's opinion, but on the good nursing which is secured for the patient, and it will depend also upon the way in which the patient is able to coöperate in the efforts made for its recovery. For the present, however, we may accept the physician's dictum.

As it is with the child of this human parent, so it is with Humanity—with the still diseased and suffering children of the All-Father. If we are sure that the patient is on the right road, we may take the physician's view. We may say, "All's right."

V

The words of Browning which we are examining are but a restatement of a long-familiar doctrine—the doctrine that "whatever is is right." If we have faith in a Divine Providence overruling all things, the least equally with the greatest, we must believe the doctrine to be true. We must suppose that not only virtue and goodness, with their effects of happiness, health, and

beauty, are under the Divine Providence, but that vice and wickedness, with their effects of misery, disease, and ugliness, are under that Providence also. Thus there is a truth in the doctrine which Browning puts into such perfect verse. But a certain qualification or reservation is necessary in our reception of this doctrine. And of this some of the disciples of Browning do not seem to be aware.

"All's right with the world." Whatever is is right. But it does not follow that whatever is is *best*. We must beware of acquiring the habit of mind which leads one complacently to assume that because whatever is is right, there is no real occasion that we should feel, and strive to evoke in others, the Divine discontent which has well been described as the parent of upward aspiration. Humanity is still in the making, and we are not meant to be passive in the midst of the process.

One of the worst hindrances to political, social, and economic progress during the last

three or four generations has been the doctrine of *laissez-faire*—that we should leave things alone, interfere as little as possible, and even allow the evils which afflict the body-politic to work out their own remedies. The belief in this doctrine was inspired not a little by observation of the worst consequences of the French Revolution, and by the fear of vast change arising in this country because of the growth of democracy.

To-day the doctrine of *laissez-faire* is again being proclaimed in certain quarters and with wider application. It is being applied not only in politics and social and economic science, but in religion. And at bottom the motive is the same—fear of change.

I freely admit that this motive does not operate in all cases. There are people who take up this position because of a vague and undefined philosophy which identifies man with God completely. They deny that human freedom of will exists, and they regard as a

sort of pious obligation the duty of accepting, or acquiescing in, existing conditions, whatever appearance of evil those conditions may seem to involve. To accuse these men of fear of political, social, economic, and religious reform would be to misrepresent them. The practical issue of their views, however, is the same as though they were influenced by such a fear. It is actual *laissez-faire*.

Amongst such people I find not a few disciples of Browning.

VI

Of the virtual proclamation of the doctrine of *laissez-faire* in respect to religion I had a striking example recently. I had been invited to give a lecture to a society which is devoted to the study of social science. I took as my subject, "The Churches and the Poor." I had occasion to enlarge upon the evils of poverty, and to speak of the duty of the Churches in

relation to those evils. At the close of my lecture a member of the audience rose and criticized my remarks. He expressed surprise at the picture which I had drawn—not as I thought a too lurid picture—of the social and economic evils of our time. He suggested that my argument, reduced to simple terms, meant that "the world was ruled by the hells." And with respect to my insistence on the need and urgency of remedies, he remarked that I appeared to think that it was possible to "hurry up the Divine Being."

The language which he thus used was quaint and colloquial. All the more it left no room for misunderstanding as to the attitude which my critic adopted. He was, as I know, a warm disciple of Browning. It followed from his own peculiar interpretation of the Browning cult that he deprecated a form of argument on my part which in any wise appeared to question the existing order of things, and to indicate impatience for remedies.

That my critic was not alone in his view I may show by another example. Some time ago I heard a popular preacher discourse upon the problem of evil. The vastness of the problem was dwelt upon, and sorrow and pity for suffering humanity were present in the preacher's utterances. But of definite insistence on active and adequate measures of amelioration there seemed to me a strange lack, and certainly I was startled and even shocked when, reaching a climax in his eloquence, the preacher warned his hearers against being overweighted by the thought of the sin and suffering which abound, and crystallized his thought into one most expressive sentence, "This is God's world. *He* will save it."

As I looked round upon the congregation of rich, smug citizens, prosperous tradespeople for the most part, in full enjoyment of solid English comfort, I said to myself, "These are not people whom thoughts of the sin and suffering of Humanity will readily oppress." They were in no

need of a religious opiate such as the preacher administered. I felt that long after the caution against the risks of melancholia arising from the contemplation of human misery had ceased to operate in the souls of these people, the words would ring in their ears, "This is God's world. *He* will save it," and the acceptance of existing conditions would be all the more complacent in consequence.

Of course, the preacher was a disciple of Browning. He knew his Browning as well as he knew his Bible. "God's in His heaven, All's right with the world," was his favourite quotation.

VII

I CANNOT but lament this attitude on the part of any man in the Christian Church whether preacher or layman. The disposition to "take things easy"; to underestimate human responsibility, to minimize the part which human vo-

lition plays in the working out of the world's redemption is sufficiently great already, without stimulus from any quarter. It is a real retarding influence in the way of reform. Truly, this is God's world. He will save it. But unless my observation of all the phenomena of life, and my best intuitions are wholly at fault, I must believe that He has so ordered our relations towards Him that our coöperation is necessary in the process. If I am right it rests with us whether the process shall be long or short, whether it shall be greatly painful or free from pain, whether by convulsion or by peaceful change. By every means in our power, therefore, we must insist on the importance of the factor of human volition. Was it not on this factor that stress was laid when in the terrific words which are to be found in the Book of Judges, Deborah sang, "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against

the mighty"? And was it not this factor which Jesus recognized and insisted upon when He made the keeping of the Commandments the test and evidence of love towards Him, and when in His memorable words of lamentation He cried, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth her brood under her wings, *and ye would not?*" The appeal which the great Founder of the Christian Faith makes to the conscience and will is at all times direct and emphatic. We find in it no sanction for a doctrine of *laissez-faire*.

VIII

We have examined one of the songs of "Pippa Passes"; I have pointed out with what reservations and qualifications the doctrine, "All's right with the world," may be received. We pass to the other song which I quoted:

All service ranks the same with God:
If now, as formerly He trod
Paradise, His presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we; there is no last nor first.

This song brings us face to face with doctrines much more subtle than those which we have examined already and with forms of statement similarly dogmatic, but even more open to misinterpretation. I am not in the least surprised that the people of whom I have already spoken, who lean to *laissez-faire* views in religion, are fond of quoting this song even more than the other. Whether Browning would have approved the interpretation put upon his words may be questioned, but certain it is, that in this seeming statement of individual helplessness and of the indifference of circumstance and condition they find support for a belief which is really devitalizing, and would, if generally adopted, be extremely harmful.

Just as the doctrine, "Whatever is is right,"

necessarily follows from the doctrine of the Divine Providence, so does the doctrine, "Each only as God wills can work." But when the advocates of this doctrine push it so far as to belittle the doctrine of individual responsibility, to disguise the factor of human volition, and even to imply that what we call free-will in man himself is merely an appearance—even suggesting, as I have heard them do, that the criminal is as much the child of God in his crimes as the good man is in his virtues—one may surely suspect narrowness of vision and confusion of thought.

Before we come to a conclusion as to an actual passivity or helplessness in ourselves, we should consider the important question—What is the will of God? A right conclusion on that point is essential to any wise discussion of the problem.

If we accept the doctrine that it is the will of God that the human soul shall be evolved on the basis of a permitted and conditioned free-

dom, the problem at once assumes a simpler aspect. How can there be the gift of freedom without the power to use that freedom wrongly? The one follows from the other. But, then, we must not overlook the fact that with the gift of freedom goes the gift of responsibility. And since we never can conceive of the freedom as other than permitted and conditioned, the belief in the existence of such freedom is perfectly compatible with belief in God's own sovereignty. "Each only as God wills can work."

This, probably, is what Browning himself means. It may be suggested, however, that he is unfortunate in his choice of the word "puppets," as it appears in the context. This is a word which has a very definite popular meaning, implying entirely mechanical action on the part of a figure possessing human, or, at least, animal semblance. That Browning did not mean to use the word in so limited a sense is a reasonable inference. "God," he elsewhere tells us, "could not make Antonio's violin without An-

tonio." Our willing coöperation is a necessary factor in the working out of the Divine plan. In other words, God works only in accordance with His own order. And the freedom of the human will is part of that order.

IX

THERE is a characteristic passage in Swedenborg, which has an interesting bearing on this aspect of the problem. In his "Arcana Cælestia" (6489) he says: "The providence of the Lord is conjoined with foresight. . . . Evils are foreseen and goods are provided. And the evils which are foreseen are continually bent towards good, by the provident arrangement of the Lord. For the Divine end to good reigns universally. . . . As man has freedom to the intent that he may be reformed he is bent from evil to good, so far as he suffers himself to be bent in freedom."

In the sense that I have now indicated,

though in that sense only, we may safely accept the doctrine to which I have referred; "each only as God wills can work."

But in order that we may grasp the subject more clearly, let us note those other doctrines with which the declaration of this particular one is accompanied.

All service ranks the same with God
* * * * * *
there is no last nor first.

How are these doctrines to be regarded?

One must again insist that in these matters everything depends on the point of view. The widow who of her poverty gives a mite performs a service which, in the Divine estimate, is quite as great as the service of a rich man who of his abundance gives abundantly. If Pippa working in the silk-mill really intends that the silk which she assists to produce shall be an element in human serviceableness, and if, in so preparing silk, she aims in her own humble way,

just as much as the wearer of the silk may do, to be of use to her fellows, then her service counts not less than that of the wearer, even though the wearer be a queen. The measure of the service is the will to serve, not the form or apparent magnitude of the service. In this sense, "All service ranks the same with God."

In passing it will be well to observe that the poet is careful to point out that the mill-girl cannot control the uses to which the silk may be put. He makes Pippa say:

> If I wind
> Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind
> And broider Ottima's cloak's hem.

That is to say, it may add to the attractiveness of a wicked woman. It is a suggestive passage. But, then, the use to which the silk is put does not affect the Divine estimate of Pippa. It is the spirit in which the work is done which alone counts.

In the interpretation of the meaning of Brown-

ing in this part of his poem, we must recognize that the doctrine, "All service ranks the same with God," is, when thus understood, good and helpful. And similarly we may accept the statement, "There is no last nor first." If this statement is taken to be simply a reaffirmation of the former one obviously no objection arises. But do the *laissez-faire* section of Browning's disciples so regard it? Some of them do not.

At the very end of the poem Pippa is made to paraphrase the earlier words and say:

> All service is the same with God —
> With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
> Are we: there is no last nor first.

One cannot be quite surprised, if, from the very form in which the earlier statement is repeated, the complacent believers in the doctrine that whatever is is right, find in Browning's words not merely a proclamation of our ultimate dependence on a Supreme Power, but another declaration, as they imagine, on the part of the poet, of our impotence to govern or even modify

the events of life, and, at the same time, of our duty to reconcile ourselves to all existing differences in the circumstances and conditions of men. Nevertheless, these certainly are conclusions as to Browning's meaning which are not necessarily to be drawn from the language used, and they are conclusions which do not rest on any sound basis of philosophy.

We are all equally in the great hand of God. All our service is the same with Him, whatever its outward form or apparent magnitude in human eyes, so long as it is rightly offered and so far as it is rightly offered. There is no other standard of judgment. The king is not in this respect before the peasant. That I take to be Browning's view. So far as it goes, it is sound. But the question of the *power* to serve rightly has to be borne in mind. In this respect, differences do exist—vast differences.

If I discern the facts of the Divine order aright, I must conclude not only that God has established differences in the power of service,

but that the grounds of those differences may readily be perceived. They are determined not by riches and material strength, but by virtue; in a word, by the will to fulfil uses in the world.

"He that would be greatest among you, let him be your servant." Jesus certainly did not minimize the factor of volition in human affairs, nor leave us in doubt as to the manner in which our freedom should be exercised. Nor yet did He declare, "There is no last nor first," in the sense in which some interpreters of Browning think that that doctrine was proclaimed by their favourite poet. He saw a greatest and a least; He stated the law by which the one may be evolved from the other. It is the law of evolution of the spiritual world; also, if one will but examine into the matter, the law of evolution in the physical world. It is the law of the ultimate supremacy of the fittest. And, since this world is sanely ordered, this means the survival of the most useful—always.

X

Reviewing the position as a whole, I think that if Browning were alive to-day, he would himself be surprised and pained at the way in which his words are so often misused. At any rate, he did not on his own part underestimate the factor of human will, or of conscience from which its sanctions are derived. We have only to look at the indications which he gives of the influence of Pippa's songs upon their various hearers to see this.

Browning was a noble optimist; and, moreover, being a poet, he was readily responsive to Nature's influences, or, if you prefer the term, to the voice of God in Nature. He spent much of his life in sunny Italy. He saw the earth in its fairest aspects; he gazed on scenes of perfect beauty. The mood which the early song of Pippa—with its proclamation, "All's right with the world"—expresses may there-

fore have been with him no mere passing mood; certain it is that in the outer aspects of Nature he saw an earnest and prophecy of perfect good.

Let us not forget, however, that Browning's knowledge of men was large. Amidst this setting of natural loveliness, he saw the drama of life with all its good and evil. And, in my opinion, in recording his impressions of that drama, he was far from minimizing the factor of human volition in determining the direction and potency of the good or the evil. What he really does in "Pippa Passes" is to show that while the good and the evil are very closely associated in the breast of each of us, the balance readily inclines to the good—that it is to the extinction of evil that all things tend. The songs of the innocent and happy Pippa become, as we have seen, solemn warnings to the wicked and bright incentives to the good. In this, Browning transfers the optimism which the outward aspects of Nature inspire to his contemplation of human life. But, surely, it

is a far-fetched conclusion that in his survey of the drama of human life, he at the same time virtually excludes the factor of volition and of free-will in man. However much the dogmatic form of his language may seem to favour such an interpretation, I think I have shown that it is an interpretation which is not justified.

By all means let us accept the doctrine that, "All's right with the world." Let us perceive that we are in the Divine hands, but let us try to exercise discrimination and not allow ourselves to be misled by dogmatic forms of words into the proclamation of actual fallacies. Let us be cautious in the adoption of our point of view. I repeat, the point of view is everything where the interpretation of a dogma is concerned.

At an earlier part of this paper, I drew an illustration from the case of the sick child, watched by an anxious father and by a physician. It was an illustration of wider meaning than

might at first appear. We are bound to believe that the Creator of all combines the character of the good physician with that of the loving father. In His character of physician, He knows that even when His children are at their worst in spiritual disease, and in physical disease—which is its correlative—it still is well. Father—Creator—Ordainer, His purposes regarding us *must* be fulfilled. From this point of view, "All's right with the world." From this point of view also we are but "puppets." But I repeat that as applied to the actual conditions of Humanity and the purposes of God regarding us, all such language has a relative and not a positive and absolute meaning. How can it be otherwise? Can spiritual and physical disease in themselves represent a creative end? That could never be. Is it, then, an angelic kingdom which it is the Divine purpose to evolve? If it be an angelic kingdom—and to what other conclusion can we come?—then, however it may be "right," relatively speaking, with Humanity

as we behold it to-day—however justified we may be in showing the cheerful optimism of Browning and in singing the songs of Pippa—it can never be "right" in the positive sense of the term until the end which spiritual and physical disease are permitted to subserve has been attained, and the Divine Word can go forth, "All things have been made new."

The Musical Mind: A Study in Social Harmonies

I

I SOMETIMES think, in contemplating this great kindergarten of a world, where Humanity is being educated, or, as the scientist prefers to say, evolved from lower to higher forms of life and activity, that we do not sufficiently take into account the wonderful way in which the various arts, and especially the art of music, help to develop the coöperative idea—the sense of inter-dependence amongst men, the appreciation of the superiority of the result which is to be attained by combination in noble efforts, as compared with the result which is to be attained where such combination is wanting.

What unity of purpose, what community of feeling and perfect sympathy, what subordina-

tion of each individual performer to the achievement of a common object, and, at the same time, what obedience to law and consent to superior direction are witnessed whenever a great orchestral work is performed!

To secure in human affairs, and especially in our social and political organization, the qualities that correspond with those which go to make up such a musical performance is surely the problem that teachers and legislators have to solve.

In the literal and narrow sense of the term, "the musical mind" is a mind fitted to compose or play, or, at least, to appreciate music. But, as my readers will see, I claim to give a much wider application to these words.

The essential feature of the musical mind is the presence of a desire for harmonious and pleasing expression. In reality the musical mind may express itself, not alone in the department of music, but in an infinite variety of directions, as, for instance, in the choice of colours in

painting and dress, the designing of great buildings, in the ordering of one's personal affairs, in striving after political or social reform, or any ideal of life.

Practically we recognize this in relation to colour and dress when we speak of a picture or a garment as a symphony. As to building, did not Goethe speak of architecture as frozen music?

It is, however, of the musical mind, as expressed in the ordering of one's affairs, and in political or social reform, and in the striving after high ideals, that I wish to treat more especially.

How is it that most of our great poets, artists, and critics upon art have always displayed a sympathy for reform, and, in some cases, even a passion for it? Simply because of the musical mind—the desire to harmonize the whole of human life, to set up the kingdom of heaven upon earth.

The great singers and poets of the Bible were

reformers. Isaiah, Jeremiah, St. John the Revelator, and the rest were all deeply concerned with the disorder of human life, and all yearned for the kingdom of heaven to be established.

Dante and Milton, too, were political reformers as well as great poets. Dante, indeed, I regard as the true precursor of our more scientific humanitarian teachers. He was a teacher of the teachers.

If, after the manner of Mazzini in his essay "On the Minor Works of Dante," we collate the teaching of "De Monarchia" and "Il Convito," we find that the musical mind of Dante was expressed thus:

God is one; the universe is a thought of God; all things spring from God; they participate in the Divine nature, more or less, according to the end for which they are created, and tend towards that amount of perfectability of which they are capable. . . . The noblest of created things is Man. God has given to Man more of His own nature than to the others. The capacity of perfectability is indefinite in Man. . . . Hence there must be a single aim for all men, a work

to be achieved by all. The human race must work in unity, so that all the intellectual forces diffused amongst men may obtain the highest possible development in the spheres of thought and action.

In no writer, whether of ancient or modern times, was the musical mind so well developed as it was in the divine Dante.

II

Let it be noted that most of the finest references which our poets make to music are connected specifically with their social and humanitarian outlook, with the sense of the harmonies and discords, not so much of individual or private life, as of public life, with the yearning after social and political order, after nobler manners, purer laws—a regenerate society.

I might almost press Shakespeare into my service to illustrate this statement. Of course, I am well aware that having regard to the dra-

matic form of writing which Shakespeare adopted, we must be extremely careful in drawing inferences as to this, that, or the other expression being intended for the purpose of giving prominence to some personal preference of his own; we need to be extremely careful when we try to deduce from his writings conclusions as to his private convictions. Yet surely it is significant that in "The Merchant of Venice," in referring to music, he should make Lorenzo say:

> The man that hath no music in himself,
> Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
> Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
>
> * * * * * *
>
> Let no such man be trusted.

A poet of the versatility of Shakespeare might easily have hit upon many other methods of expressing his sense of the value of the musical mind. But it is just what may be called the social and public aspect of the subject which

has impressed him most, and of which he prefers to speak. To him, as to all great poets, social and political disorder is just so much horrid discord. It is, he warns us, "by the man who hath no music in himself" that treasons are hatched, stratagems practiced, and spoils appropriated. We must not trust men of that kind; we must make way for those who, having music in themselves, desire that the whole of life around them shall be orderly, rhythmical, and beauteous.

What Shakespeare may be considered only to have implied, other poets have expressed more or less definitely. Wordsworth has been called the poet of Nature. But his fine sympathy for human kind, his sense of the pathos of life, as well as his unbounded faith in the ways of God to men, show themselves in his work time after time. And when he looks at Nature it is of the human family, of the corporate life of his fellows, that he all the while thinks. There is unity, order, and loveliness in the one; why

not, he seems to ask, in the other? And thus in "Tintern Abbey" does his musical mind express itself:

> For I have learned
> To look on Nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of Humanity,
> Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power—
> To chasten and subdue.

When we read these words we cannot marvel that Wordsworth, gentlest of men, had a tremulous sympathy for the better side of the French Revolution.

III

TENNYSON, despite his apparent aloofness from some of the urgent social and economic questions of his time, could and did on occasion feel deeply with respect to them. It is impossible to mistake the spirit of the poet who in "Locksley Hall" wrote:

Men, my brothers, men, the workers, ever reaping
something new;
That which they have done but earnest of the things
that they shall do.
. . . I dipp'd into the future, far as human eye could
see,
Saw the vision of the world, and all the wonder that
would be.
. . . The war-drum throbb'd no longer, and the
battle-flags were furl'd
In the Parliament of men, the Federation of the world.
There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful
realm in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal
law.
. . . I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose
runs,
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns.

Here, surely, Tennyson gave evidence of a profound interest in the corporate life of the people, and of a faith in the future of the race which even the pessimism of "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After" did not neutralize. Indeed, it is fair to suppose that that pessimism itself probably was accentuated by the strength of the poet's yearning for the more speedy growth of a

larger humanity—that it had in it something of the sickness which arises from hope deferred. There was no lack of sympathy for human suffering in the poet who, in the poem just named, could write:

Is it well that while we range with science, glorying in the time,
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?
There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on palsied feet,
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand on the street.
There the master scrimps his haggard sempstress of her daily bread;
There a single sordid attic holds the living and the dead.
There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across the rotted floor,
And the crowded couch of incest in the warrens of the poor.

Nor were faith and hope dead in any wise in the poet when he added:

. . . You, my Leonard, use and not abuse your day,
Move among your people, know them, follow him who led the way,

Strove for sixty widow'd years to help his homeless
brother men,
Served the poor and built the cottage, raised the school
and drain'd the fen.
There may be those about us whom we neither see nor
name,
. . . Felt within us as ourselves, the Powers of
Good, the Powers of Ill,
Strewing balm or shedding poison in the fountains of
the will.
Follow you the star that lights a desert pathway, yours
or mine,
Forward, till you see the highest human nature is
Divine.
Follow light and do the right, for Man can half con-
trol his doom,
Till you find the deathless angel seated in the vacant
tomb.

And was it not with deepest yearning for the bringing about of the larger social relationship that Tennyson many years earlier in "In Memoriam" had written:

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell,
That mind and soul according well,
May make one music as before,
But vaster.

Thus it was that the deep chords which lie at the base of the human symphony were struck by Tennyson—thus that what I have called "the musical mind," the mind that yearns for the harmonious, the beautiful, and the true, for whatsoever things are lovely and of good report expressed itself in this master singer, who, strangely enough, by many of us has been thought to have lacked sympathy for those who are known as "the common people."

IV

George Eliot does not rank with our great poets. But she wrote a few poems which are not of mean quality. One of them expresses her great aspiration to—

> . . . join the choir invisible,
> Of those immortal dead who live again,
> In minds made better for their presence.

And these words, which may be seen engraved on her tombstone at Highgate cemetery,

show how the soul of George Eliot associated the ideas of music with progress and social order.

But when I speak of George Eliot I am reminded of another lady writer, who, at least in the field of poetry, was much in advance of her, Adelaide Anne Procter.

That beautiful poem, "A Lost Chord," has now become so familiar from the frequency with which it has been sung both in public and in private that it runs much danger of being called hackneyed. Yet I wonder how many people who know the words of this poem quite as well as they know the words of "God Save the King," or even better, have given a moment's reflection to their meaning, to the symbolic character of the picture which they present, and to its real significance. Audiences assemble in thousands and hear "A Lost Chord" powerfully and expressively sung. And often it is easy to judge from the nature of the applause, and the comments which one hears, that what appeals to

them most are the wonderful physical feats accomplished by the singer.

Yet the meaning of the song is worth considering:

> Seated one day at the organ,
> I was weary and ill at ease.

No soul stands alone. At birth we come into definite relationships—relationships of sonship, of brotherhood, it may be. The life which pulses and throbs around us even whilst we lie in the cradle affects our life—for good or for ill. To each it signifies just so much sweetness and light, or foulness and darkness. And we, by our very presence, as we lie there muling and pewking, affect the lives of others. New responsibilities have been incurred, new duties created. And just as these are faced and discharged, or evaded and neglected, will the music of Humanity become more beautiful or sad.

And as it is with us at birth, so it is through-

out life—for better or for worse—action and reaction between the man and his fellow man never cease; never does any child of Adam stand alone, however much in his ignorance, his selfishness, or his pride, he may imagine it is otherwise. Even at the hour of death he does not stand alone. For then the most momentous of all questions is how his debt to the Humanity of which he forms a part has been discharged; what has he done to hush the discords, to lengthen out the harmonies of life.

Thus it is that the poetess, when she comes to write her allegory of life, faithfully pictures the condition of all great, generous, and in the highest and best sense of the term, musical minds. Music in themselves they may have —angelic and perfect music. But looking out upon the world of sin and sorrow, they are "weary and ill at ease," and can sing only in strains which are sad and low.

They have, however, their prophetic moments —the inspiration which comes to them in times

of reverie, or as in dreams. Into such a state of abstraction does our musician fall. "My fingers wandered idly over the noisy keys."

But as she sits thus at the organ, a strange and wonderful thing happens.

I knew not what I was playing,
Or what I was dreaming then;
But I struck one chord of music,
Like the sound of a great Amen.

This music comes opportunely and clearly. It is the sound of prophecy—the sound of the Amen which, from the countless host of the redeemed, will ring out when order shall have come out of disorder, and the Throne of Righteousness shall have been established.

It is a great Amen, prophetic of the triumph of all good. Hence the poetess goes on:

It quieted pain and sorrow,
Like love o'ercoming strife,
It seemed the harmonious echo
From our discordant life.

It linked all perplexed meanings
Into one perfect peace,
And trembled away into silence
As if it were loth to cease.

Still it was only prophetic. The world remains unredeemed. Sin, and evil, and all their consequences still abound. And so long as it is so, however much a man may put himself on the lines of Divine order, he knows that the grand Amen can sound only in the dreams of the faithful. Thus it is that the poetess next exclaims:

I have sought, and sought it vainly,
That one lost chord divine;
Which came from the soul of the organ,

—from the Divine source of all music—

And entered into mine.

But the poetess is full of faith and hope. It may be that, like Moses on the heights of Pisgah, she will, in her latest hours, have at least a distant view of the Promised Land, the land of order, peace, and beauty, where all

shall be harmonious, or it may be that on earth she will never have so blessed an experience. Be it as Heaven shall decree, still the prophecy of the organ must be fulfilled.

> It may be that Death's bright angel
> Will speak in that chord again;
> It may be that only in heaven
> I shall hear that grand Amen.

"Only in heaven!" She doubts not that there, at least, it will be heard.

V

THE same line of thought has been followed, and with far greater power, by Robert Browning. The theme of "Abt Vogler" is virtually the same as that of "A Lost Chord," but the symbolism is worked out more elaborately, and with larger and deeper art. We have the story of the musician extemporizing on the instrument of his own invention—a rare kind of organ. And whilst he plays he is filled with wonder and awe

at his God-given power as a musician, and with profound reverence for the great Music Giver.

He rears a "palace of music." But when he ceases to play the wonderful music the palace is gone—becomes at once the mere memory of a thing imagined. Then is Abt Vogler sad. He wonders whether he shall ever build that palace again. He wonders also whether he shall build one even more beautiful. He thinks it may be so. But he knows that he owes his power from moment to moment to Divine permission. What is he himself but an instrument in the hands of the Great Musician? And how marvellous are the chords which are being struck, how wondrous the music that is being wrought by the All-wise Power!

Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, Thou, of houses not made with hands!
What! Have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands?

There shall never be one lost good! What was shall
live as before;
The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying
sound;
What was good shall be good, with for evil so much
good more;
On the earth the broken arc; in the heavens a per-
fect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good
shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty nor good,
nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the
melodist
When eternity affirms the conceptions of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too
hard;
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the
sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that He heard it once; we shall hear it by
and by.

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fullness of the days? Have we withered or
agonized?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing
might issue thence?
Why rushed the discords in but that harmony
should be prized?

Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe;
But God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear:
The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we musicians know.

VI

FROM amongst our prose writers it would be easy to cite many examples of the musical mind. The case of Mr. Ruskin is familiar to all of us. We know that after spending the best part of his years in writing upon art, he turned his entire energies to political economy. Why? Because he saw how wretchedly bad is the management, especially the more public management, of human affairs, and that without the creation of a suitable environment great and noble art could not be born, or, if born, would wither.

Writing in 1863 to his father, Mr. Ruskin said, "I am depressed only for great and true

causes, for the sufferings and deaths of thousands, the follies and miseries of millions, the perishing of the greatest works and deeds of human intellect."

Peace, Mr. Ruskin sometimes found, says one, but it was only by closing his ears, and then sounds of human misery soon pierced their way through—jarring on the musical mind. "The peace in which I am at present," wrote Mr. Ruskin at this time to Professor Norton, is only "as if I had buried myself in a tuft of grass on a battle-field wet with blood, for the cry of the earth about me is in my ears continually, [unless] I lay my head to the very ground. The folly and horror of Humanity enlarge to my eyes daily."

Tolstoy, who recently left us, is almost a parallel instance. Whilst Ruskin for half his lifetime wrote poetry under the name of art criticism, Tolstoy chose novel-writing as his earlier medium of expression. But to Tolstoy, as to Ruskin, came the sense of the terrible dis-

cords of human life. With equal passion he has given himself up to the work of the reformer, seeking to beat out for Humanity a nobler music than it yet has known.

VII

In these ways the musical mind has expressed itself in some of our great poets and teachers. Dryden, in the "Ode on Cecilia's Day," tells how:

> Orpheus could lead the savage race;
> And trees uprooted left their place;
> Sequacious of the lyre;
> But bright Cecilia raised the wonder higher;
> When to her organ vocal breath was given,
> An angel heard, and straight appeared,
> Mistaking earth for heaven.

Again in "Alexander's Feast" the poet relates how Timotheus, with his golden lyre, "raised a mortal to the skies," and how, with the glorious notes of her organ, that yet greater musician, Cecilia, "brought an angel down."

To unite earth with heaven—not in vision only—but in reality, is the true office of the musical mind.

I have quoted Dryden's "Ode on Cecilia's Day." Is it not in the same poem that we read:

> From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
> This universal frame began;
> From harmony to harmony,
> Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
> The diapason closing full in Man.

Such, indeed, in the language of poetry, was the character of God's creative work. But Abt Vogler is right. The work of the Divine Musician was not finished when Man was made. It had but begun; the instrument alone had been provided. And the music of that instrument is yet in the making. The grand Amen has yet to sound. But the Divine purpose which runs through the ages will be fulfilled. The finest harmonies of the earthly musician, the grandest songs of the most gifted poets, are

but the presage of the music which will be heard when the human shall be in accord with the Divine, and strife shall cease on the earth.

THE END