REMINISCENCES OF
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

BLESSED IS THE COUNTRY IN WHICH HE WAS BORN, BLESSED ARE THEY WHO LIVED ON THIS EARTH AT THE SAME TIME AND BLESSED, THRICE BLESSED ARE THE FEW WHO SAT AT HIS FEET.

Sister Christine

REMINISCENCES
OF
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

By
HIS EASTERN AND WESTERN ADMIRERS

ADVAITA ASHRAMA
5 DEHI ENTALLY ROAD
CALCUTTA 14

PUBLISHED BY

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA
PRESIDENT, ADVAITA ASHRAMA
MAYAVATI, ALMORA, HIMALAYAS

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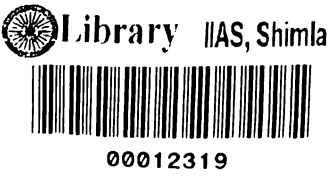
FIRST EDITION, MAY 1961
M M C C

294.555
V836R



PRINTED IN INDIA
BY J. N. DEY
AT THE EXPRESS PRINTERS PRIVATE LTD
20A GOUR LAHA STREET
CALCUTTA 6

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Most of these reminiscences appeared in periodicals from time to time. They are reproduced with due permission and thanks. The memories of Sister Christine are copyrighted by Shri Boshishwar Sen of Almora. In the absence of a most comprehensive term for the contributors, we have styled them as "His Eastern and Western Admirers", though some of them are disciples, some friends, and some others admirers. The last writer is rather prejudiced. His article, however, deserves inclusion as depicting a picture not generally known. The articles are printed almost as they appeared earlier. In Sundararama Iyer's second account, a few paragraphs summarizing Swamiji's Madras speeches have been omitted, as these would have been superfluous.

A few more articles have been treated thus for similar reasons, and the omitted portions have been marked with three dots.

Although these reminiscences are attractive, informative, and instructive, we must tell the readers that the publisher does not necessarily subscribe to all the opinions expressed in them. For instance, B. G. Tilak's belief that Swamiji agreed with him that the Gita does not speak of monasticism and Reeves Calkins's insinuation that in his talks Swamiji reproduced verbatim some of his set speeches are palpably wrong, and no student of Swamiji's life and works can be misled. Such errors, however, are not many. At some places we have added footnotes to rectify biographical inaccuracies.

We hope that the book will be received as a timely publication coming as it does on the eve of Swamiji's birthday centenary celebrations.

Mayavati
1 May 1961

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

I

NEARLY a quarter of a century has elapsed since Swami Vivekananda went to his rest; and every year that passes is bringing fresh recognition of his greatness and widening the circle of appreciation. But the generation that knew him in life and heard his voice is also passing with the years. Such of his contemporaries as are left owe it to his memory and to their countrymen to place on record their impressions of one who, by universal assent, was one of the greatest Indians as well as one of the world's great men. There is no need to repeat the story of his life, for that has been well and fully done by his disciples in the four volumes[1] compiled by them. But one who knew him, as I did, may endeavour to strike a personal and reminiscent note, and to recall, so far as memory may serve, some small details of large significance, and the traits of character and the bearing that distinguished him from the people around him. I knew him when he was an unknown and ordinary lad, for I was at college with him; and I knew him when he returned from America in the full blaze of fame and glory. He stayed with me for several days and told me without reserve everything that had happened in the years that we had lost sight of each other. Finally, I met him at the monastery at Belur near Calcutta shortly before his death. In whatever relates to him I shall speak of what I heard from himself and not from others.

The conditions in India were very peculiar when Swami Vivekananda first attracted public attention. The imposition of a foreign domination and the grafting of a foreign culture had produced a pernicious effect on

[1] Now published in one volume after leaving out some of the details.—*Publisher.*

Indian life and Indian thought. The ancient ideals were either forgotten or obscured by the meretricious glamour of Western materialism. There was an air of unreality about most of the progressive movements in India. In every field of activity a sort of smug unctuousness had replaced the single-minded earnestness and devotion of the ancient times. The old moorings of steadfast purpose had been slipped and everything was adrift and at the mercy of every wind and wave from outside India. The ancient Aryan had realized that there could be no achievement without sacrifice and self-surrender. The modern Indian in his new environment fancied that surrender was not necessary for attainment. Following the example of the West, the Indian reformer did his work while living in comfort and ease. The method followed was that of the dilettante, touching the surface of great problems, but seldom attempting to probe deeper. Men with an eloquent tongue and the gift of persuasive speech stirred the emotions and feelings of their hearers, but the effect was more or less fleeting, because of the lack of strength in the appeals. The conditions in India might be described as a flux, if there were any assurance of a return of the tide. Perhaps there was no conscious self-deception, but people were deceived and mistook the sham for the reality. The placid self-complacence noticeable everywhere was an unmistakable sign of growing weakness and inability to resist the inroads of habits of thought and ideals of life destructive of everything that is enduring, everything that is real in the long established order of things in India.

In the midst of these depressing surroundings was the quiet and scarcely noticed emergence of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa after a period of preparation and meditation unknown to the people about him. He was practically an unlettered man like some of the great prophets of old, and by occupation he was the priest of a temple, a vocation for which he became unfit later on.

Ignorant people thought his mind was giving way, but in reality it was a struggle of the spirit seeking true knowledge and finding its expression. And when this was attained, he no longer avoided men, and drew round him a small band of earnest young men who sought for guidance from him and endeavoured to follow his teachings. Many of his sayings have been collected and published, but these give only a faint indication of his individuality. It may be said with absolute truth that he was one of the elect who appear at long intervals in the world for some great purpose. It has been my privilege to hear him speak ; and I felt then, as I feel now, that it is only rarely that men have the great good fortune of listening to such a man. The Paramahamsa's language was Bengali of a homely kind ; he was not supple of speech as he spoke with a slight though delightful stammer, but his words held men enthralled by the wealth of spiritual experience, the inexhaustible store of simile and metaphor, the unequalled powers of observation, the bright and subtle humour, the wonderful catholicity of sympathy and the ceaseless flow of wisdom.

Among the young lads and men attracted by the magnetic personality of the Paramahamsa was Narendra Nath Datta, afterwards known as Swami Vivekananda. There was nothing to distinguish him from the other young men who used to visit Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. He was an average student with no promise of brilliance, because he was not destined to win any prize of the learned or unlearned professions, but the Master early picked him out from the rest and predicted a great future for him. "He is a thousand-petalled lotus," said the Paramahamsa, meaning that the lad was one of those who come fully equipped into the world for a great purpose and to be a leader of men. The reference was to the spiritual sphere, since the Paramahamsa took no account of worldly success. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa could not only read faces with unerring accuracy, but he

had also extraordinary psychic power, which was demonstrated in the case of Vivekananda himself. That young man was not very regular in his visits to the Paramahamsa. On one occasion he was absent for several weeks. The Paramahamsa made repeated inquiries about him and ultimately charged one of Vivekananda's friends to bring him. It may be mentioned that the Paramahamsa lived in the temple of Dakshineswar, some miles to the north of Calcutta. The Paramahamsa added that when Narendra came he wished to see him alone. Accordingly, there was no one else in the room when Narendra came to see the Paramahamsa. As soon as the boy entered the room the Paramahamsa left his seat and saying, "Why have you been staying away when I wanted to see you?" approached the lad and tapped him lightly on the chest with a finger. On the instant —these are Vivekananda's own words—the lad saw a flash of dazzling light and felt himself swept off his feet, and he cried out in alarm, "What are you doing to me? I have parents." The Paramahamsa patted him on the back and soothed him, saying "There, there, that will do".

Shortly after this incident Vivekananda became an accepted disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. The number of these disciples was very small and the Paramahamsa was very careful in choosing them. Every one of these disciples was subjected to a constant and unrelaxing discipline more than Spartan in its severity. There was no spoon-feeding and coddling. The Paramahamsa's prediction about Vivekananda was not communicated to any publicity bureau, and he and his fellow-disciples were always under the vigilant eyes of the Master. *Vratas* (vows) of great hardship were imposed upon the disciples, and the discipline was maintained unbroken even after the passing of the Paramahamsa. Vivekananda went to Varanasi, and it was there that he acquired the correct enunciation and the sonorous chant-

ing of the hymns and the *mantras*[1] which he recited very impressively at times in a deep musical voice. I have heard him singing in a fine tenor voice at the request of friends, and as an orator there were both power and music in his voice.

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa frequently passed into a trance or *samâdhi*. The exciting cause was invariably some spiritual experience or some new spiritual perception. On one occasion—it was in 1881—I formed one of a party that had gone with Keshab Chandra Sen by river to see the Paramahamsa. He was brought on board our steamer, which belonged to Maharaja Nripendra Narayan Bhup of Cooch Behar, Keshab's son-in-law. The Paramahamsa, as is well known, was a worshipper of the goddess Kâli; but he was also an adept in the contemplation of Brahman the formless, *nirâkâra*, and had some previous conversation with Keshab on this subject. He was sitting close to Keshab facing him, and the conversation was practically a monologue, for either Keshab or some one else would put a brief question and, in answer, the Paramahamsa with his marvellous gift of speech and illustration would hold his hearers entranced. All of us there hung breathless upon his words. And gradually the conversation came round to *nirâkâra* (formless) Brahman, when the Paramahamsa, after repeating the word *nirâkâra* two or three times to himself, passed into a state of *samâdhi*. Except the rigidity of the body there was no quivering of the muscles or nerves, no abrupt or convulsive movement of any kind. The fingers of the two hands as they lay in his lap were slightly curled. But a most wonderful change had come over the face. The lips were slightly parted as if in a smile, with the gleam of the white teeth in between. The eyes were half closed with the balls and pupils partly visible, and over the whole countenance was an ineffable expression of the holiest

[1] According to another version, he preferred and learnt the Maratha intonation.—*Publisher.*

and most ecstatic beatitude. We watched him in respectful silence for some minutes after which Trailokya Nath Sanyal, known as the singing apostle in Keshab Chandra Sen's sect, sang a hymn to the accompaniment of music, and the Paramahamsa slowly opened his eyes, looked inquiringly around him for a few seconds and then resumed the conversation. No reference was made either by him or any one else to his trance.

On another occasion the Paramahamsa wanted to see the Zoological Gardens of Calcutta. His eagerness was like a child's and would not brook any delay. There were times when his ways were strongly reminiscent of the saying in the *Shrimad-Bhâgavata* that the *mukta*, the emancipated and the wise, is to be known by his childlike playfulness. A cab was sent for and the Paramahamsa, accompanied by some disciples, was driven the long distance from Dakshineswar to Alipur. When he entered the Gardens, the people with him began showing him the various animals and aquatic collections, but he would not even look at them. "Take me to see the lion," he insisted. Standing in front of the lion's cage he mused, "This is the Mother's mount"—the goddess Kâli in the form of Durgâ or Pârvati is represented as riding a lion—and straightway passed into *samâdhi*. He would have fallen but for the supporting arms around him. On regaining consciousness, he was invited to stroll round the gardens and see the rest of the collection. "I have seen the king of the animals. What else is there to see?" replied the Paramahamsa. And he went back to the waiting carriage and drove home.

There seems to be an obvious incongruity between the predisposing causes of *samâdhi* on these two occasions. On the first, it was the contemplation of the *nirâkâra* Brahman, a high and abstruse spiritual concept; on the second, it was merely the sight of a caged lion. But in both instances the process of the concentration of the mind and the spirit is the same. In one, it is the intense

realization of the supreme Brahman without form; in the other, it is a realization in the spirit of a visual symbolism inseparably associated with the goddess Kâli. In both cases a single spiritual thought occupies the mind to the exclusion of everything else, obliterates the sense of the objective world, and leads to *samâdhi*. No photograph taken of the Paramahamsa in *samâdhi* ever succeeded in reproducing the inward glow, the expression of divine ecstasy, *brahmânanda*, stamped on the countenance.

As a young enthusiast passing through a probation of discipline Vivekananda desired that he should have the experience of continuous *samâdhi*. The Paramahamsa explained to him that this was unlikely as he had to do important work in the cause of religion. But Vivekananda would not be dissuaded, and once, while sitting in meditation, he fell into *samâdhi*. The Paramahamsa, when apprised of it, said, "Let him enjoy it for a time." Vivekananda realized afterwards that the Master was right, and the time came when in fulfilment of the prophecy of the Master he held aloft the torch of Truth in distant lands and proclaimed that the light of knowledge comes from the East.

Under the vow of poverty and mendicancy Vivekananda travelled widely in northern and southern India for eight years,[1] and his experiences, as may be imagined, were varied. He spent a great deal of his time in the Madras Presidency, and he had first-hand knowledge of the evil influence of professional *sâdhus*. He knew intimately the village life of the Telugu and Tamil-speaking peoples, and he found his earliest admirers in the Madras Presidency. He was in Behar when there was great excitement in that Province on account of the marking of mango trees with lumps of mud mixed with vermilion and seed grain. In a number of districts in Behar numerous mango topes were discovered marked in this

[1] Actually less, as his travelling started long after the passing away of the Master.—*Publisher.*

fashion. The trustees of an empire, as the Government in this country somewhat theatrically call themselves, may have a lofty function; but they have an uneasy conscience; and the official mind was filled with forebodings of some impending grave peril. The wonderful secret police got busy at once, and it was shrewdly surmised that the marks on the mango trees bore a family resemblance to the mysterious *châpâtis* which were circulated immediately before the outbreak of the Mutiny. The villagers, frightened out of their wits by the sudden incursion of armed and unarmed, but not the less terrible on that account, authority in their midst, denied all knowledge of the authorship of these sinister marks. Suspicion next rested upon the itinerant *sâdhus* wandering all over the country; and they were arrested wholesale for some time, though they had to be let off for want of evidence, and the recent facilities of regulations and ordinances did not then exist. It was found out afterwards that the marking of mango trees was merely by way of an agricultural mascot for a good mango or general crops. Vivekananda had to get up early in the morning and to trudge along the Grand Trunk Road or some village path until some one offered him some food, or the heat of the sun compelled him to rest under a roadside tree. One morning as he was tramping along as usual, he heard a shout behind him calling upon him to halt. He turned round and saw a mounted police officer, bearded and in full panoply, swinging a switch and followed by some policemen. As he came up, he inquired in the well-known gentle voice affected by Indian policemen who Vivekananda was. "As you see, Khan Saheb," replied Vivekananda, "I am a *sâdhu*." "All *sâdhus* are *badmashes* (rogues)," sententiously growled the Sub-Inspector of Police. As policemen in India are known never to tell an untruth, such an obvious fact could not be disputed. "You come along with me, and I shall see that you are put in jail," boomed the police officer. "For how long?" softly asked Viveka-

nanda. "Oh, it may be for a fortnight, or even a month." Vivekananda went nearer him and in an ingratiating and appealing voice said, "Khan Saheb, only for a month? Can you not put me away for six months, or at least three or four months?" The police officer stared, and his face fell. "Why do you wish to stay in jail longer than a month?" he asked suspiciously. Vivekananda replied in a confidential tone, "Life in the jail is much better than this. The work there is not hard compared with this wearisome tramp from morning till night. My daily food is uncertain, and I have often to starve. In the jail I shall have two square meals a day. I shall look upon you as my benefactor if you lock me up for several months." As he listened, a look of disappointment and disgust appeared on the Khan Saheb's face, and he abruptly ordered Vivekananda to go away.

The second encounter with the police took place in Calcutta itself. Vivekananda with some of his fellow-disciples was living in a suburb of Calcutta quietly pursuing his studies and rendering such small social service as came his way. One day he met a police officer who was a friend of Vivekananda's family. He was a Superintendent of Police in the Criminal Investigation Department, and had received a title and decoration for his services. He greeted Vivekananda cordially and invited him to dinner for the same evening. There were some other visitors when Vivekananda arrived. At length they left, but there were no signs of dinner. Instead, the host spoke about other matters until suddenly lowering his voice and assuming a menacing look he said, "Come, now, you had better make a clean breast of it and tell me the truth. You know you cannot fool me with your stories for I know your game. You and your gang pretend to be religious men, but I have positive information that you are conspiring against the Government." "What do you mean?" asked Vivekananda, amazed and indignant, "What conspiracies are you speaking of, and what have

we to do with them?" "That is what I want to know," coolly replied the police officer. "I am convinced it is some nefarious plot, and you are the ringleader. Out with the whole truth, and then I shall arrange that you are made an approver." "If you know everything, why don't you come and arrest us and search our house ?" said Vivekananda, and rising he quietly closed the door. Now, Vivekananda was an athletic young man of a powerful build, while the police officer was a puny, wizened creature. Turning round upon him Vivekananda said, "You have called me to your house on a false pretext and have made a false accusation against me and my companions. That is your profession. I, on the other hand, have been taught not to resent an insult. If I had been a criminal and a conspirator, there would be nothing to prevent me from wringing your neck before you could call out for help. As it is, I leave you in peace." And Vivekananda opened the door and went out, leaving the redoubtable police officer speechless with ill-concealed fright. Neither Vivekananda nor his companions were ever again molested by this man.

Another experience that Swami Vivekananda related to me bordered on the tragic. The particular vow he had undertaken at that time was that he should steadily walk the whole day without either looking back or begging from any man. He was to halt only, if accosted, and to accept food if it was offered to him unasked. Sometimes he had to go without any food for twenty-four and even forty-eight hours. One afternoon about sunset he was passing in front of a stable belonging to some wealthy person. One of the grooms was standing on the road. Vivekananda had had nothing to eat for two days and was looking weak and weary. The groom saluted him and looking at him asked, "*Sâdhu bâbâ*[1], have you eaten anything today?" "No," replied Vivekananda, "I have eaten nothing." The groom took him into the stable, offered

[1] Lit. "Father monk".—*Publisher.*

him water to wash his hands and feet and placed his own food consisting of some *chàpâtis* and a little chutney, before him. The chutney was hot, but in the course of his wanderings Vivekananda had got accustomed to eat chillies, which were often the only condiment he had with his food. I have seen him eating a handful of pungent, green chillies with evident relish. Vivekananda ate the *chàpâtis* and the chutney, but immediately, afterwards felt a frightful burning sensation in his stomach and rolled on the ground in agony. The groom beat his head with his hands and wailed, "What have I done? I have killed a *sàdhu*." The pain must have been due to eating the chutney on an empty stomach. Just about this time a man with a basket on his head happened to be passing and halted on hearing the cries of the groom. Vivekananda asked him what he had in his basket, and the man replied it was tamarind. "Ah, that is just what I want," said Vivekananda, and taking some of the tamarind he mixed it with water and drank it. This had the effect of allaying the burning sensation and the pain, and after resting for a while Vivekananda resumed his journey.

In the remote regions of the Himalayas Vivekananda met with some perilous adventures, but nothing daunted him and he went through the treadmill of discipline with high courage and tireless energy. The vows imposed upon him entailed prolonged trials of endurance, an unbroken course of self-discipline, meditation, and communion. When he arrived in America, without friends, without funds, he had nothing beyond his intellectual and spiritual equipment, and the indomitable courage and will that he had acquired in the course of his purposeful wanderings in India. One of his own countrymen, who had attained some fame and was a man of considerable eminence, attempted to discredit him by circulating unfounded calumnies against him. In spite of difficulties Vivekananda found his way to the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, and it was there that recognition

came to him. He was probably the youngest man in that memorable and historical as well as unique gathering. Beyond the fact that he was a Hindu he carried no other credentials. The name of his *guru* was unknown in Europe and America. He was an obscure young man unknown to fame, with no reputation either in his own country or out of it for scholarship, holy living, or leadership. It is impossible to conceive an assembly more critical or less emotional than that gathering of learned and pious men from all parts of the world representing all the churches and creeds of the world. Men of great erudition steeped in sacred lore, reverend and high dignitaries of many churches, men who had left the seclusion of the cloister and the peace of the monastery had met in solemn conclave in a great city in the Far West. It was a Parliament not filled from the hustings and polling booths, but from the temples and pagodas, the synagogues and churches and mosques of the world. They were mostly men well-advanced in life, accustomed by years of discipline to self-control, engaged in contemplation and meditation, and not likely to be lightly swayed by extraneous influences. Some of them were men of an international reputation, all of them were men of distinction. Obviously the least among them was this youthful stranger from the East, of whom no one had ever heard and who was probably there more by sufferance than by the right of any achievement to his credit. How he carried that grave assembly of religious men by storm, how pen-pictures of the young Hindu monk in the orange-coloured robe and turban filled the newspapers of America, and how the men and women of America crowded to see and hear him are now part of history. Slightly varying Caesar's laconic and exultant message it may be truthfully said of Swami Vivekananda, he went, he was seen and heard, and he conquered. By a single bound as it were he reached from the depth of obscurity to the pinnacle of fame. Is it not remarkable, is it not

significant, that of all the distinguished and famous men present at the Parliament of Religions only one name is remembered today and that is the name of Vivekananda? There was, in sober fact, no other man like him in that assembly, composed though it was of distinguished representatives of all religions. Young in years, the Hindu monk had been disciplined with a thoroughness and severity beyond the experience of the other men who had foregathered at the Parliament of Religions. He had had the inestimable advantage of having sat at the feet of a Teacher the like of whom had not been seen in the word for many centuries. He had known poverty and hunger, and had moved among and sympathized with the poorest people in India, one of the poorest countries in the world. He had drunk deep at the perennial fountain of the wisdom of the ancient Aryan Rishis, and he was endowed with a courage which faced the world undismayed. When his voice rang out as a clarion in the Parliament of Religions, slow pulses quickened and thoughtful eyes brightened, for through him spoke voices that had long been silent but never stilled, and which awoke again to resonant life. Who in that assembly of the wise held higher credentials than this youthful monk from India with his commanding figure, strong, handsome face, large, flashing eyes, and the full voice with its deep cadences? In him was manifested the rejuvenescence of the wisdom and strength of ancient India, and the wide tolerance and sympathy characteristic of the ancient Aryans. The force and fire in him flashed out at every turn, and dominated and filled with amazement the people around him.

Other men from India had preceded him in the mission from the East to the West—men of culture, men of eloquence and religious convictions—but no other man created the profound impression that he did. These others assumed a tone which was either apologetic, or deferential to the superiority of the West to the East. Some said they had come to learn and did not presume to

teach, and all were more or less overawed by the dazzling magnificence of Western civilization. But Swami Vivekananda never had any doubts or misgivings, and he knew he came from a land which had produced most of the great and wise teachers of men. The glitter of the West held no lure for him, and his voice never lost the ring of authority. Besides the people anxious to profit by his teachings, there was a good deal of promiscuous admiration. There was the usual sheaf of romantic letters from gushing and impressionable young women, and well-meant offers of service from many quarters. A dentist offered to clean his teeth free of charge whenever necessary. A manicure presented him with a set of his dainty instruments for which an Indian monk has no use. A more substantial offer was about a lecturing tour with a well-filled purse of shining dollars at the end of the tour. The money would have been useful for the monasteries afterwards established by Swami Vivekananda, but his vows precluded him from either earning or laying by any money.[1] Besides the open lectures that he delivered in America and England, he held what may be called informal classes attended by a small number of select people, usually earnest inquirers or people anxious to learn what the Swami had to teach. The actual number of his disciples in those countries was not large, but he set many people thinking while his marvellous personality made itself felt wherever he went.

Swami Vivekananda had left India an obscure and unknown young man. On his return he was preceded by the fame he had won in America and England, and was acclaimed everywhere as an apostle and leader of the ancient Aryan faith. At Madras he was given an enthusiastic reception. Some of the organizers of his public reception at Calcutta thoughtfully sent him a bill of costs.

[1] But he actually accepted the monetary offer of a lecture bureau and delivered lectures under it for some time in different cities of U.S.A.—*Publisher.*

Swami Vivekananda mentioned this incident to me with indignation. "What have I to do with any reception?" he told me. "These people fancied I have brought a great deal of money from America to be spent on demonstrations in my honour. Do they take me for a showman or a charlatan?" He felt humiliated as well as indignant. On his return to India earnest young men came to him to join the Ramakrishna Mission founded by him. They took the vows of celibacy and poverty, and they have established monasteries in various parts of India. There are some in America also so that Swami Vivekananda's work in that part of the world is still carried on, and his memory is held in great reverence. Swami Vivekananda told me that the Paramahamsa insisted on celibacy and moral purity as the essence of self-discipline, and this is equally noticeable among Swami Vivekananda's disciples and those who have joined the Brotherhood after his passing. Every member of the Ramakrishna Mission is pure of heart and pure in life, cultured and scholarly, and is engaged in serving his fellow-men to the best of his ability, and the community is the gainer by their example and their selfless and silent service.

The last time I had met Swami Vivekananda before he left for the United States was in 1886. I happened to be in Calcutta on a brief visit and one afternoon I received intimation that Paramahamsa Ramakrishna had passed into the final and eternal *samâdhi*. I drove immediately to the (Cossipore) garden-house in a northern suburb of Calcutta where the Paramahamsa had passed his last days on earth. He was lying on a clean white bed in front of the portico of the house, while the disciples, Vivekananda among them with his eyes veiled with unshed tears, and some other persons were seated on the ground surrounding the bedstead. The Paramahamsa was lying on his right side with the infinite peace and calm of death on his features. There was peace all around, in the silent trees and the waning afternoon, in

the azure of the sky above with a few clouds passing overhead in silence. And as we sat in reverent silence, hushed in the presence of death, a few large drops of rain fell. This was the *pushpa-vrishti,* or rain of flowers of which the ancient Aryans wrote, the liquid flowers showered down by the gods as an offering of homage to the passing of some chosen mortal to rank thenceforth among the immortals. It was a high privilege to have seen Ramakrishna Paramahamsa in life and also to have looked upon the serenity of his face in death.

It was not till eleven years later in 1897 that I met Vivekananda again. He was then famous alike in the East and the West. He had travelled largely, seen many countries and many peoples. I was at Lahore and I heard he was staying at the hill station of Dharamsala. Later on he went on to Jammu in Kashmir territory and next came down to Lahore. There was to be a demonstration and a house had been engaged for him. At the railway station when the train came in, I noticed an English military officer alighting from a first class compartment and holding the door respectfully open for some one else, and the next second out stepped Swami Vivekananda on the platform. The officer was about to move away after bowing to the Swami, but Vivekananda cordially shook hands with him and spoke one or two parting words. On inquiry Vivekananda told me that he did not know the officer personally. After entering the compartment he had informed Swami Vivekananda that he had heard some of the Swami's discourses in England and that he was a colonel in the Indian Army. Vivekananda had travelled first class because the people at Jammu had bought him a first class ticket. The same night Vivekananda came away to my house with two of his disciples. That night and the following nights and during the day whenever I was free we talked for long hours, and what struck me most was the intensity of Vivekananda's feelings and his passionate devotion to the

cause of his country. There was a perfect blending of his spiritual fervour with his intellectual keenness. He had grappled with many problems and had found a solution for most of them, and he had in an unusual degree the prophetic vision. "The middle classes in India," he said, "are a spent force. They have not got the stamina for a resolute and sustained endeavour. The future of India rests with the masses." One afternoon he slowly came up to me with a thoughtful expression on his face, and said, "If it would help the country in any way, I am quite prepared to go to prison." I looked at him and wondered. Instead of making the remotest reference to the laurels still green upon his brow, he was wistfully thinking of life in prison as a consummation to be wished, a service whereby his country might win some small profit. He was not bidding for the martyr's crown, for any sort of pose was utterly foreign to his nature, but his thoughts were undoubtedly tending towards finding redemption for his country through suffering. No one had then heard of Non-cooperation or Civil Disobedience, and yet Vivekananda, who had nothing to do with politics, was standing in the shadow of events still long in coming. His visit to Japan had filled him with enthusiastic admiration for the patriotism of the Japanese nation. "Their country is their religion," he would declare, his face aglow with enthusiasm. "The national cry is *Dai Nippon, Banzai* ! Live long, great Japan ! The country before and above everything else. No sacrifice is too great for maintaining the honour and integrity of the country."

One evening Vivekananda and myself were invited to dinner by a Punjabi gentleman (the late Bakshi Jaishi Ram), who had met Vivekananda at Dharamsala, a hill-station in the Punjab. Vivekananda was offered a new and handsome *hookah* to smoke. Before doing so, he told his host, "If you have any prejudices of caste, you should not offer me your *hookah,* because if a sweeper were to offer me his *hookah* tomorrow, I would smoke it

with pleasure, for I am outside the pale of caste." His host courteously replied that he would feel honoured if Swamiji would smoke his *hookah*. The problem of untouchability had been solved for Swami Vivekananda during his wanderings in India. He had eaten the food of the poorest and humblest people whom no casteman would condescend to touch, and he had accepted their hospitality with thankfulness. And yet Swami Vivekananda was by no means a meek man. In the course of his lecture on the Vedanta at Lahore, one of the loftiest of his utterances, he declared with head uplifted and nostrils dilated, "I am one of the proudest men living." It was not pride of the usual worthless variety but the noble pride of the consciousness of a great heritage, a revulsion of feeling against the false humility that had brought his country and his people so low.

I met Goodwin, the young Englishman who at one time was on the high road to become a wastrel, but fortunately came under Vivekananda's influence and became one of his staunchest and most devoted followers. Goodwin was a fast and accurate stenographer and most of Vivekananda's lectures were reported by him. He was simple as a child and wonderfully responsive to the slightest show of kindness. Later on I met some of the lady disciples of Swami Vivekananda, Mrs. Ole Bull, Miss MacLeod, and Miss Margaret Noble, the gifted young Irishwoman to whom Vivekananda had given the beautifully appropriate name of Nivedita, the Offered One, one dedicated and consecrated to the service of India. I first met Sister Nivedita at Srinagar in Kashmir and next at Lahore where I saw a great deal of her, and again in Calcutta where she came to my house more than once. I took her through the slums of Lahore and showed her the Râmlilâ[1], which greatly interested her. She made eager inquiries about everything relating to India. She was in splendid health when she first came out to India,

[1] Dramatic presentation of Shri Râmachandra's life.—*Publisher.*

but the austerities which she practised affected her health, and she rapidly spent herself and was spent in the service of India. Of her fine intellect and gift of literary expression she has left abiding evidence in her exquisite books.

In conversation Vivekananda was brilliant, illuminating, arresting, while the range of his knowledge was exceptionally wide. His country occupied a great deal of his thoughts and his conversation. His deep spiritual experiences were the bedrock of his faith and his luminous expositions are to be found in his lectures, but his patriotism was as deep as his religion. Except those who saw it, few can realize the ascendancy and influence of Swami Vivekananda over his American and English disciples. Even a simple Mohammedan cook who had served Sister Nivedita and the other lady disciples at Almora was struck by it. He told me at Lahore, "The respect and the devotion which these Memsahebs (foreign ladies) show the Swamiji are far greater than any *murid* (disciple) shows to his *murshid* (religious preceptor) among us." At the sight of this Indian monk wearing a single robe and a pair of rough Indian shoes his disciples from the West, among whom were the Consul General for the United States living in Calcutta, and his wife, would rise with every mark of respect; and when he spoke, he was listened to with the closest and most respectful attention. His slightest wish was a command and was carried out forthwith. And Vivekananda was always his simple and great self, unassuming, straightforward, earnest, and grave. Once at Almora he was visited by a distinguished and famous Englishwoman whom he had criticized for her appearance in the role of a teacher of the Hindu religion. She wanted to know wherein she had given cause for offence. "You English people," replied Swami Vivekananda, "have taken our land. You have taken away our liberty and reduced us to a state of servility in our own homes. You are draining the country of its material resources. Not content with all this, you want to take our religion, which is all

that we have left, in your keeping and to set up as teachers of our religion." His visitor earnestly explained that she was only a learner and did not presume to be a teacher. Vivekananda was mollified and afterwards presided at a lecture delivered by this lady.

The next year I met Swami Vivekananda in Kashmir, our house-boats being anchored near each other on the Jhelum. On his way back to Calcutta he was my guest for a few days at Lahore. At this time he had a prescience of early death. "I have three years more to live," he told me with perfect unconcern, "and the only thought that disturbs me is whether I shall be able to give effect to all my ideas within this period." He died almost exactly three years later. The last time I saw him was at the monastery at Belur shortly before his death. It was the anniversary of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, and I saw Swami Vivekananda, when the *sankirtana* (singing of hymns with music) was at its height, rolling in the dust and heaping dust on his head in a paroxysm of frenzied grief. . . .

His thoughts ranged over every phase of the future of India, and he gave all that was in him to his country and to the world. The world will rank him among the prophets and princes of peace, and his message has been heard in reverence in three continents. For his countrymen he has left a priceless heritage of virility, abounding vitality, and invincible strength of will. Swami Vivekananda stands on the threshold of the dawn of a new day for India, a heroic and dauntless figure, the herald and harbinger of the glorious hour when India shall, once again, sweep forward to the van of the nations.

(Prabuddha Bharata, March & April 1927)

II

About the year 1892, i.e., before the famous Parliament of Religions in the World's Fair at Chicago, I was once returning from Bombay to Poona. At the Victoria Terminus a Sannyâsin entered the carriage I was in. A few Gujarati gentlemen were there to see him off. They made the formal introduction and asked the Sannyâsin to reside at my house during his stay at Poona. We reached Poona, and the Sannyâsin remained with me for eight or ten days. When asked about his name he only said he was a Sannyâsin. He made no public speeches here. At home he would often talk about Advaita philosophy and Vedanta. The Swami avoided mixing with society. There was absolutely no money with him. A deerskin, one or two clothes and a *kamandalu* were his only possessions. In his travels some one would provide a railway ticket for the desired station.

The Swami happened to express a strong hope that as the women in the Maharashtra were not handicapped by the *purdah* system, it was probable that some of the widows in the higher classes would devote their lives to the spread of spirituality and religion alone like the old *yogis* of the Buddhist period. The Swami also believed like me that the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita did not preach renunciation but urged every one to work unattached and without the desire for fruits of the work.

I was at that time a member of the Deccan Club in the Hirabag which used to hold weekly meetings. At one of these meetings the Swami accompanied me. That evening the late Kashinath Govind Nath made a fine speech on a philosophical subject. No one had to say anything. But the Swami rose and spoke in fluent English presenting the other aspect of the subject very

lucidly. Every one there was thus convinced of his high abilities. The Swami left Poona very soon after this.

Two or three years thereafter Swami Vivekananda returned to India with world-wide fame owing to his grand success at the Parliament of Religions and also after that both in England and America. He received an address wherever he went and on every one of such occasions he made a thrilling reply. I happened to see his likeness in some of the newspapers, and from the similarity of features I thought that the Swami who had resided at my house must have been the same. I wrote to him accordingly inquiring if my inference was correct and requesting him to kindly pay a visit to Poona on his way to Calcutta. I received a fervent reply in which the Swami frankly admitted that he was the same Sannyâsin and expressed his regret at not being able to visit Poona then. This letter is not available. It must have been destroyed along with many others, public and private, after the close of the *Kesari* Prosecution of 1897.

Once after this, during one of the Congress sessions at Calcutta, I had gone with some friends to see the Belur Math of the Ramakrishna Mission. There Swami Vivekananda received us very cordially. We took tea. In the course of the conversation Swamiji happened to remark somewhat in a jocular spirit that it would be better if I renounced the world and took up his work in Bengal while he would go and continue the same in Maharashtra. "One does not carry", he said, "the same influence in one's own province as in a distant one."

(Vedanta Kesari, January 1934)

III

DEAR READER, if you wish to enjoy reading a few pages of my reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda, you must bear with me for a while till I have given you some idea about the sort of man I was before I met the Swami, the conceptions I had of religion, my education, and my nature in general. Unless you have this background, you will not understand what I gained from my contact with Swamiji. Before I passed the Entrance (High School) Examination, I had not the faintest idea about religion; but when I reached the fourth class, and had a smattering of English, I developed a great dislike for the Hinduism of our days, and this though I had not studied in any missionary school! After passing the Entrance Examination, it became quite impossible for me to subscribe to the Hinduism that I knew. Then during my college life, that is to say, when I was between nineteen and twenty-five, I read a little of physics, chemistry, botany, and other branches of science, and had a little acquaintance with the Western thinkers like Darwin, Mill, Huxley, Tyndall, and Spencer. The result was what could be expected from ill-digested knowledge—I became an out and out atheist. I believed in nothing, and I knew nothing about devotion to God. I then condemned all religions, though mentally; and I thought that others were inferior to me intellectually.

At this time, the Christian missionaries began to visit me very often. While condemning other religions, they, with great intellectual acumen argued it out for me that faith is the *sine qua non* of religion. In Christianity, one must start with faith, and then only one can appreciate its uniqueness, as well as its superiority to other religions. But such queer approach and scholasticism could hardly convert me, a sworn atheist that I was then.

Western education had taught me, "Do not believe in anything without evidence", whereas the missionaries said, "First faith and then proof". My mind remained unconvinced. Then they said, "You should read the Bible attentively, and then you will get faith." I followed the advice, and it was my good fortune that I had quite a number of distinguished missionaries to help me. Still faith was far away from me. Nevertheless, some of them said that I had advanced considerably and had imbibed faith in Christianity, but that my orthodoxy was standing in the way of my conversion. The net result was that I began to doubt my doubt itself. As a way out of this impasse, they suggested that they would answer ten questions put by me; that as each question was answered satisfactorily, they would take my signature on it; and that when the last question would thus be solved to my satisfaction, I should embrace Christianity. It so happened that soon after finishing the third question, I left the college and entered the world. Even after this, I continued to read religious literature and frequented places of worship—churches, temples, and Brahmo prayer halls. But I could not chalk out a path for myself. At last, I came to the conclusion that nobody really knew anything about the soul or its existence after death, that one can get some solace in this life by holding on to some religion, whatever it may be, and that faith in any particular religion comes as a matter of habit. As a matter of fact, nobody can convincingly prove or disprove religion with the help of reasoning.

Fortune was in my favour, and I got an employment with a high salary. I now led a comfortable life. Yet a strange want made me ill at ease. Thus days, months, and years rolled on.

Belgaum, Tuesday, October 18, 1892: It was about two hours past evening, when a stout young monk, with a cheerful countenance, came to my house with a lawyer friend of mine of the same locality. The friend intro-

duced him with the words, "Here is a learned Bengali Sannyâsin who has come to meet you." I turned back and found a serene figure with eyes flashing like lightning and a face clean shaven. His body was covered with an ochre robe, in his feet he had strapped sandals of the Maharashtrian type ; and on his head was an ochre turban. The figure was so impressive that it is still vivid in my memory. It pleased me and attracted me, though I did not realize then why it was so. After a while, I saluted him and said, "Sir, do you smoke ? I am a Kayastha, and I have but one *hookah*. If you have no objection to smoke from it, I can have some tobacco prepared for you." He replied, "I smoke whatever comes to hand—tobacco from a *hookah* or cigarette. And I have no objection to smoke from your *hookah*." I ordered for some tobacco.

My belief at that time was that all Sannyâsins in ochre robes were cheats, and I naturally thought that this one, too, had come to me with some motive. Besides, the lawyer friend belonged to Maharashtra, while he was a Bengali. It was inconvenient for Bengalis to live with Maharashtrians : and that was why he had come to live with me. Despite all such thoughts passing through my mind, I invited him to stay with me and asked him whether his belongings should be brought to my house. He replied, "I am quite at home with the lawyer ; and if I leave him just because I have found a Bengali, he will be hurt, for they all love and respect me. But I shall think about it and let you know later on." We did not have much talk that night. But the few words that he spoke convinced me that he was more learned and intelligent than myself. He could have earned a decent sum if he wanted, but he did not touch money. Although he had not the wherewithal to make him happy, he was, in fact, a thousand times happier than myself. It struck me that he had no want, just because he had no thought for any personal gain. When I learnt that he would

not come to my house, I said, "If you have no objection to take tea with me, I shall be happy to have you here in the morning". He agreed and went back with the lawyer. At night I was thinking about him for a long time—I had never before met a man so free from wants, so happy and content, and having such a smiling face. I believed that a man without wealth might as well depart from this world, and that a Sannyâsin truly free from wants is an impossibility; but that belief got a shaking today, which left it rather weak.

October 19, 1892: I had been waiting for Swamiji from six o'clock in the morning. It struck eight. So without waiting any longer, I left for Swamiji's place with a friend. There we found him seated in the midst of a respectable gathering of lawyers and other learned men, and carrying on conversation with them. He answered their questions without the slightest hesitation, sometimes in English and sometimes in Hindi or Sanskrit. There were also people like myself who accepted Huxley's philosophy as their Bible, and started arguing with Swamiji on that basis. But he silenced them all either through repartees or serious dissertation. As I sat there after saluting him, I was thinking, "Is he a man or a god?" So I could not remember all that I heard. I write down only the few words that come to my mind.

A very respectable lawyer asked, "The *mantras* we use in our morning and evening prayers are in Sanskrit, and we do not understand a bit of them. Is it of any use to us to go on uttering them?"

Swamiji replied, "They do have good results. Born in a Brahmin family as you are, you can easily learn the meaning of those few *mantras*. If you do not do so, who is to blame? Even if you do not understand the meaning, I hope, when you sit for prayer, you have the feeling that you are doing something virtuous and not sinful. If you have the belief that you are doing something meri-

torious, then that in itself is enough to yield good results."

Just then, somebody said, "Talks on religious matters should not be carried on in a foreign language, since it is prohibited in such-and-such a *purâna*."

Swamiji replied, "It is good to talk of religious things, no matter what the language is." In support of this he quoted from the Vedas and added, "A judgement passed by a High Court cannot be set at nought by a lower court."[1]

Thus it went on till it struck nine, when those who had to attend office or court left, while others still sat there. Swamiji's eyes now fell on me, and he said, "My son, I had not the heart to disappoint so many people and go to your place. Please don't mind this". When I pressed him to come and stay with me, he replied at last, "I shall go if you can make my host agree to your proposal". So I persuaded the lawyer friend somehow and returned to my place with Swamiji. His belongings consisted only of a *kamandalu* (a water pot used by monks) and a book wrapped in a piece of ochre cloth. Swamiji was then studying French music. We had our tea at ten o'clock after reaching home. He understood my hesitation in expressing my own doubts, and so he himself gauged my intellectual make-up through a few words.

Some time earlier, somebody had published a poem in the *Times* asserting that it was extremely difficult to determine what is God, which religion is true, and such other abstruse questions. As that poem had much affinity to my religious ideas of those days, I preserved it carefully. I now produced it before him. He read it and remarked, "The man has become confused". Gradually I got over my hesitation. From the Christian missionaries I had not got any solution of the contradiction involved in holding that God is both just and merci-

[1] The Vedas are more authoritative than the *purânas*.—*Publisher*.

ful ; and I feared that Swamiji, too, could throw no better light. When I put the question to him, he said, "Methinks you have read much of science. Do not two opposite forces—centripetal and centrifugal—act in each material substance ? If such a contradiction can meet in matter, may not justice and mercy be reconciled in God ? All I can say is that you have a poor idea of your God." I was silenced. Again, I believed that truth is absolute, and that all religions cannot be true at the same time. In answer to such questions he said, "All we know about things now or may know in future are but relative truths. It is impossible for our limited mind to grasp the absolute truth. Hence, though truth be absolute, it appears variously to diverse minds and intellects. All these facets or modes of truth belong to the same class as truth itself, they being based on the same absolute truth. This is like the different photographs of the same sun taken from various distances. Each of them seems to represent a different sun. The diverse relative truths have the same kind of relation with the absolute truth. Each religion is thus true, just because it is a mode of presentation of the absolute religion."

When I said that faith is the basis of all religions, Swamiji smiled a little and said, "A man goes beyond all wants once he becomes a king ; but the difficulty is how to become one. Can faith be infused from outside ? Nobody can have real faith unless he has personal experience." When in the course of talk I called him a *sâdhu* (holy man), he said, "Are we really so ? There are holy men whose very sight or touch wakes up spirituality in others."

Again I asked, "Why do the Sannyâsins idle away their time in this way ? Why do they depend on the charity of others ? Why don't they undertake some work beneficial to society ?" Swamiji said, "Now, look here. You are earning this money with such struggle, of which only a little portion you spend on yourself ; and some

of it you spend for others who, you think, are your own. But they neither acknowledge any gratefulness for what you do for them, nor are they satisfied with what they get. The balance you save like the mythological *yaksha* who never enjoys it. When you die, somebody else will enjoy it all; and perchance, he will abuse you for not having accumulated more. This is your condition. On the other hand, I do nothing. When I feel hungry, I let others know by gestures that I want food; and I eat whatever I get. Neither do I struggle nor do I save. Now, tell me who among us is the wiser—you or I?" I was astonished, for before this nobody dared to talk to me so boldly and frankly.

After lunch we had some rest. Then we went to the house of that lawyer friend, where we had more of such discussion. At nine o'clock at night we returned home. On the way I said, "Swamiji, you must have been greatly bored today by all this argumentation."

He replied, "My son, would you have offered me even a morsel of food, if I had kept mum, the out and out utilitarians that you all are? I go on chattering like this. People get amused, and so they crowd around me. But know it for certain that people who argue, or put questions like this before an assembly are not at all eager to know the truth. I also read their motives and answer them accordingly."

"Swamiji," I put in, "how do you get such ready and pointed answers for all the questions?"

"These questions are new to you," he said, "but these have been put to me and I had to answer them times without number."

The conversation continued during dinner. He told me of the many adventures he had during his travelling through the country under the vow of not touching any money. As I listened, it struck me that he must have endured great hardship and trouble; and yet he

related them with a smile, as though it was all a great fun ! Sometimes he went without food ; sometimes he ate so much of chilles that for lessening the burning sensation in the stomach he had to drink a cupful of tamarind water ! At some places he was curtly turned away with the remark, "Sannyâsin have no place here." Sometimes he was shadowed by government spies. Many other incidents he related in great glee, which were a great fun to him, but they made my blood curdle. As the night had advanced very far, I spread a bed for him and then retired for the night. But sleep I had none that night. I wondered how the deep-rooted doubts that had haunted me all these years took flight at the very sight of Swamiji. Now I had nothing more to ask. As days passed by, not only my family, but also our servants developed such love and respect for Swamiji, and they served him so meticulously, that he became rather embarrassed.

October 20, 1892 : In the morning I saluted Swamiji. Now I had more boldness as also more devotion. Swamiji, too, was pleased to hear from me many accounts of forests, rivers, hills, and valleys. He had been now in this town for four days. On the fifth day, he said, "A Sannyâsin must not live in a town for more than three days, and in a village for more than four days. I want to leave soon". I would not listen to all that ; I was determined to argue it all away. After a long discussion he said : "If one stays at one place for long, one develops attachment for others. We left our home and friends. It is but proper for us to be away from all such sources of *mâyâ*." I entreated him to stay on and argued that he would never fall into *mâyâ's* snares. At least he agreed to stay for a couple of days more.

In the meantime I thought that, if Swamiji addressed a public gathering, we would get the benefit of his wisdom and others also would gain thereby. I pressed him for this, but he would not agree on the plea that such platform speeches might generate in him a desire for name

and fame. At the same time he intimated that he would have no objection to a public conversazione.

One day, in the course of a talk, Swamiji quoted verbatim some two or three pages from the *Pickwick Papers*. I wondered at this, not understanding how a Sannyâsin could get by heart so much from a secular book. I thought that he must have read it quite a number of times before he took orders. When questioned he said, "I read it twice—once when I was in school, and again some five or six months back." "Then how do you remember," I asked in wonder, "and why can we not remember thus?" "One has to read with full attention," he explained, "and one must not fritter away the energy one draws from food."

Another day, Swamiji was reading a book all by himself, reclining in his bed. I was in another room. Suddenly he laughed so aloud that I thought that there must be some occasion for such a laughter, and so I advanced to his door to find that nothing special had happened; he continued to read as before. I stood there for some fifteen minutes; till he did not notice me. His mind was all riveted on the book. Later on, he noticed me and asked me to walk in. When he heard that I had been standing there for a pretty long time, he said, "Whatever one has to do, one must apply to it one's whole attention and energy for the time being. Pavhari Baba of Ghazipur would clean his brass water vessel with the same undivided attention as he used in his meditation, *japa*, worship, study, etc. He cleaned it so diligently that it shone like gold."

Once I asked Swamiji, "Why is stealing considered a sin? Why do all religions prohibit stealing? To me, it seems that to think that one thing belongs to me and another to somebody else is only a figment of the brain. As a matter of fact, it does not amount to stealing if one of my relatives should take away one of my things with-

out informing me. Besides, we do not brand it as stealing when the birds or animals snatch away anything."

"It is true," said Swamiji, "that no act can be regarded as stealing at all times and under all circumstances. Again every act may be considered wrong or even sinful under altered conditions. You should not do anything that brings misery to others, or weakens you physically or morally. That is sinful and its opposite is virtuous. Just think of this: Don't you feel sorry when somebody steals something from you? What is true for you, you should know, is true for the whole world. If you can be so bad as to inflict some pain on some being in this world, though you are fully aware that everything here is evanescent, you will gradually come to such a state that no sin will be too great for you. Again, social life becomes impossible if there is no division of virtue and vice. When you live in society, you have to comply with its rules and regulations. If you retire to a forest, you can go about dancing naked; that harms nobody, and none will stop you. But should you behave so in a town, the reasonable thing to do will be to get you arrested by the police and have you locked up in some solitary place!"

Swamiji sometimes imparted very valuable lessons through humour or derision. Though he was my *guru*, to sit by him was not just like sitting before a schoolmaster. He would be merry, full of gaiety, fun, and laughter, just like a boy, even when imparting the highest instruction. He laughed and made others laugh with him. Then, suddenly, he would start explaining an intricate point with such seriousness that people wondered at his mastery over the subject and over himself. They used to think, "Did we not find him just now as but one like ourselves?" People would come to him at all hour for learning from him, and his door was always open. They had diverse motives. Some came to test him, some to enjoy his humorous talks, some others to

be in closer contact with the rich people of the town who came to Swamiji, and still others to get a few moments' respite from the worries of the world, to hear his spiritual talks, and to be enlightened thereby. Such was his power of diving into other minds that he understood their motives at once and dealt with them accordingly. Nobody could hide anything from his penetrating eyes. Once, a boy from a rich family began to frequent Swamiji's place just for the sake of avoiding his university examination, and he gave it out that he would become a monk. He happened to be the son of a friend of mine. I asked Swamiji, "Why does that boy come to you so frequently? Will you advise him to become a monk? His father is a friend of mine." Swamiji replied, "His examination is near at hand, and he wants to take orders just to avoid the examination. I told him, 'Come for the monastic life after passing the M.A. examination. It is easier to get the M.A. degree than to lead the life of a monk.'"

During Swamiji's stay at my house, so many people used to gather there at the evenings that it all looked like a big meeting. I shall never forget the words he told me one of those days while reclining against a bolster under a sandal-tree. As that subject requires a long introduction, I reserve it for a future occasion. Here I would like to add a few more words about myself. Some time earlier my wife had expressed a desire to take initiation from some *guru*; and I had told her, "Choose a *guru* who will command my respect as well. You will derive no benefit if the very advent of your *guru* in the house should create some adverse feeling in me. We shall both be initiated together if only we come across a good man, otherwise not." She too agreed to this. When Swamiji was with us, I asked her, "Would you like to be a disciple of this *guru*?" "Will he really agree to be a *guru*?" she asked eagerly, and added, "If he agrees, we shall be only too grateful."

With great hesitation, I asked Swamiji one day, "Swamiji, will you fulfil a desire of mine?" When he wanted to know what it was, I requested him to initiate both of us. He said, "For a householder, it is best to have some householder as his *guru*. It is very difficult to be a *guru*. The *guru* has to take the responsibility of the disciple. Before initiation the disciple must meet the *guru* at least three times." With these and other arguments he wanted to put me off. But when he found that I was not to be dissuaded, he agreed. He initiated us on October 25, 1892. Then I had a desire to have his photograph. He would not agree. I persisted, and after a long-drawn tussle, he gave his consent and a photograph was taken on the 28th. As Swamiji had not agreed to be photographed on an earlier occasion, in spite of the earnest request of another gentleman, I had to send two copies of this one to him on request.

In the course of a talk Swamiji said, "I have a great desire to spend a few days with you in the forest under a camp. But they are holding a Parliament of Religions at Chicago, and I shall go there if I get an opportunity." When I proposed to raise money by subscription, he refused it for some reason best known to himself. At this time, he was under a vow of not accepting or touching any money. After great effort I persuaded him to accept a pair of shoes in place of Maharashtrian sandals as also a cane walking stick. Before this, the Rani of Kolhapur had not succeeded in making him accept any gift, and so she had sent him a pair of ochre clothes. Swamiji accepted these and left behind the pieces he had been wearing with the remark, "A Sannyâsin must not have a burden about him".

Before my contact with Swamiji, I had tried to read the Gita more than once. As I could not understand it, I concluded that there was really nothing to know from it, and so I gave up the attempt. One day Swamiji began to explain the Gita to us; then I discovered what a

wonderful book it was. As I learnt from him to appreciate the teaching of the Gita, so also I learnt from him to read the scientific novels of Jules Verne, and *Sartor Resartus* of Carlyle.

At that time I used to take medicines rather liberally. He told me, "When you find that some disease has made you bed-ridden, then only you should take medicines, not otherwise. Ninety per cent of such diseases as nervous debility are mere figments of the brain. The physicians kill more people suffering from such diseases than they save. What do you gain by thinking and talking of all these for ever? Take it easy as long as you live, and be cheerful. Never indulge in pleasures which tax the body or which make you repent. As regards death, what does it matter if one or two like you or me die; that will not make the earth deviate from its axis. We should never consider ourselves so important as to think that the world cannot go on without us."

Just then, for some reason or other, I was not pulling on well with my superiors in office. Any little remark from them would make me lose my balance. Though I had a lucrative job, I could not be happy even for a day. When I told Swamiji about my difficulty, he remarked, "Why are you in service? Is it not for the salary you get? You are getting it regularly every month; so why should you be upset? When you are free to resign at any moment you like, and nobody binds you down to it, why should you add to your miseries by thinknig, O, in what bondage am I placed! Another thing: will you tell me whether, apart from doing the work for which you draw the salary, you ever did anything just to please your superiors? You never did so, and yet you are angry with them that they are not satisfied with you. Is that wise on your part? Know it for certain that the ideas we entertain about others express themselves through our conduct; and even though we

may not express these in words, people react accordingly. We see in the external world the same image that we carry in our hearts : nobody realizes how true the saying 'The world is good when I am good' is. From today try to get rid of the habit of finding fault with others, and you will find that, to the extent you succeed in this, the attitudes and reactions of others also change accordingly." Needless to say that, from that day, I got rid of the habit of drugging myself ; and a new chapter in my life opened from my effort to give up faultfinding.

When the question was raised once as to what constituted good and what bad, Swamiji said, "What is conducive to the goal aimed at is good, and what impedes it is bad. Our ideas of good and bad are just like our ideas of elevation and depression. As you rise higher, the distinction becomes obliterated. They say that the moon has mountains and planes ; but we see it all as a flat surface. It is just like that". Swamiji had this peculiar power that, whatever might be the question, the answer came so aptly and readily that the hearer stood convinced.

Words fail to express the sorrow that Swamiji felt another day on reading from the newspaper that a man had died of starvation in Calcutta. Repeatedly he said, "Now the country is about to go to rack and ruin !" Being asked to explain, he said, "Don't you see that in other countries hundreds of people die every year, in spite of their poor-houses, work-houses, charity funds, etc. But in our country we never heard of death through starvation just because of the system of alms-giving in vogue here. This is the first time I read in a newspaper that man dies of starvation in Calcutta even when there is no famine."

As a result of my English education, I thought it was a wastage of money to offer a pice or two to beggars. My idea was that such petty help not only did no good to the recipients, but it also brought about their ruin

by enabling them to smoke hemp with it. The only gain was that the giver's bill of expenditure went up by that amount ! So I concluded that, instead of giving trifling amounts to many, it is better to give somebody a bigger amount. When I asked Swamiji, he said, "When a beggar comes, it is better to give him something according to your means. After all you will pay a pice or two ; and so why should you rack your brain about what the man will do with it—whether he will spend it well or waste it ? Even if he wastes it on hemp, it is to the advantage of society that he gets those few pice ; for unless people like you offer it to him willingly, he will steal it from you. If instead of that, he buys hemp, smokes a little, and then sits quietly, is it not to your own advantage ? So even this kind of charity results in nothing but good for society."

From the very beginning I found that Swamiji was against the system of child marriage. He always advised all, and particularly the boys, to stand boldly against this social evil. Such patriotism, too, I had never seen in any other person. Those who met Swamiji after he returned from the West for the first time never knew how he had travelled through the length and breadth of India, observing all the rigorous vows of a monk and not touching money at all. When somebody suggested that a man of such a strong will as he had no need of so many rules and vows, he replied, "Look here, the mind is so mad, so intoxicated, that it can never sit quiet ; if it gets the least opportunity, it will drag you after itself. To keep control over that mind, even a Sannyâsin must observe rules. All are under the delusion that they have the fullest control over their minds and that they allow it some freedom knowingly. When one sits for meditation, one can very well understand how much control one really has over the mind. Even when one wants to think of a certain matter for some time, one cannot keep the mind fixed on that subject for so long as ten minutes.

All are under the delusion that they are not henpecked and that it is only out of love that they allow their wives to exercise some influence over them. The belief that one has the mind in tether is just like that. Never relax yourself under the false belief that you are the master of your mind."

In the course of a talk one day I said, "Swamiji, I think one must be highly educated in order to understand religion." He said, "One does not require any high education to understand religion for oneself; but one must have it if one has to explain it to others. Paramahamsa Ramakrishna signed his name as 'Ramkesto', but who indeed knew the essence of religion better than he?"

I had an idea that monks and holy men could never be stout and ever contented. One day, when I gave expression to this with a smile and a dig at him, he answered in a bantering tone, "This is my famine insurance fund! Even if I do not get food for days on end, my fat will keep me alive, whereas your vision will be blurred if you do not get food for a day. And a religion that cannot bring peace to men must be shunned as a disease brought on by dyspepsia."

Swamiji was a master in music. One day he started singing. I had no training to appreciate it; besides, how could I have the time to listen to it? We were charmed by his talks and stories. He was well acquainted with several branches of modern science to wit, chemistry, physics, geology, astronomy, mixed mathematics, and so on, so that he was able to solve our problems about all these in a few words. He would explain intricate religious questions with the help and analogy of science. I never knew anybody else who could prove so convincingly that science and religion had the same goal in view and that their progress was also along the same path.

He liked chillies, pepper, and such other pungent things. When I asked for the reason one day, he said,

"During his wanderings a monk has to take all kinds of food, and drink water from all sorts of places; that tells upon the health. To counteract their bad effect, many monks become addicted to hemp and other intoxicants. For the same reason I have taken to chilli."

Many princes, including those of Rajasthan and the Deccan, honoured him very much, and he too loved them sincerely. Many could not understand why a monk of such strong principles should mix so much with princes and Râjâs. There were fools enough who even hinted at this incongruity. Asked about the reason, Swamiji explained one day, "Just compare the results one can achieve my instructing thousands of poor people and inducing them to adopt a certain line of action on the one hand, and by converting a prince to that point of view on the other. Where will they get the means for accomplishing a good project even if the poor subjects have a will to do it? A prince has the power of doing good to his subjects already in his hands. Only he lacks the will to do it. If you can once wake up that will in him, then, along with it, the fortune of his subjects will take a turn for the better, and society will be immensely benefited thereby."

To explain that religion does not consist in learned discussion, but in realization, he would say, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Realize it. Without that you can understand nothing." He had no kind word for a false monk, and would say, "One should renounce only after one has got control over one's mind while still at home. Else one gets mixed up with the hemp-smoking monks once the first charm wears away." "But it is most difficult to have this at home," I intervened. For instance, if I start practising all those virtues like considering all to be equal, giving up likes and dislikes, and so on, which you say are the best means for becoming a man of realization, then from the very next day, my servants, my subordinates, and even the members

of my family will not leave me in peace even for a moment." In reply he related the parable of the snake and the holy man,[1] as narrated by Shri Ramakrishna, and then added, "Never give up the hissing. Go on with your work, thinking it to be your duty. Punish others when you have to; but don't be angry when inflicting punishment." Then he resumed the earlier topic and said, "Once I was the guest of a Police Inspector in a place of pilgrimage. He was a religious man, and had some devotion. His salary was only Rs. 125 per month, whereas his monthly expenditure went up to two hundred or three hundred rupees. When we became more intimate, I asked him, "Your expenditure seems to exceed your income. How do you manage it?" "Men like you manage it, sir," said he with a smile. "Don't think that all the monks who come to this place of pilgrimage are as good as yourself. Whenever any suspicion arises, I search their belongings; and often enough, much money is found. When any one of them is suspected for theft, he at once takes to his heels leaving behind everything, which then comes to my possession. I do not resort to any other means of illegal means of satisfaction like bribe."

One day I had a very beautiful talk with Swamiji about infinity. He said, "There can be no two infinites."

[1] A poisonous snake in a meadow became a terror to the cowherds and passers-by who had to cross it. At last a monk came that way, and as usual, the snake attacked him also. But the monk was more than a match for it. He not only subdued the snake, but also got a promise from it that it would not bite people any more. The monk took it into his discipleship, gave it a *mantra*, and departed. The snake became so harmless from that day, that the cowherd boys began to take liberty with it, till at last they gave it such a beating one day that it was all but dead. Somehow it dragged itself into its hole and lay there for days together, till at last the monk came that way once again. He called for the snake and searched for it. It was nowhere to be found. Yet he knew that it could not die, the *mantra* would keep it alive. At long last the snake somehow wriggled out of the hole and related the whole incident. The monk said, "The fool that you are! I asked you not to bite, but you could have hissed, just to scare away the boys."

When I said that time is infinite and so also is space, he replied, "I can understand that space is infinite, but it passes my understanding how time can be infinite. In any case, I can understand that only one thing can be infinite. If there be two infinites, how would you demarcate their respective spheres? If you advance further, you will find that time and space get lost in each other. Still further advance will show you that all things are infinite, but those infinite things are one in essence and not two."

Thus Swamiji's stay in my house till the 26th October brought a feast of joy to us. On the 27th he said, "I won't stay any more. I have been moving southward with a view to reaching Rameswaram." My further entreaties for keeping him back proved infructuous. On the 27th he decided to take the mail train for Marmagaon. I purchased a ticket for him. After seating him in the train, I saluted him and said, "Swamiji, I never saluted anybody in this life with my whole being, but I do so now and feel wholly rewarded."

* * *

I met Swamiji only three times. The first meeting was before he left for America. That was at Belgaum, about which I have already told you much. The second meeting was some time before he left for the West the second time. The third meeting was some six or seven months before he left this world. It is impossible to present a detailed account of all that I learnt from him during these meetings. Many events are so personal that they cannot be related, while others escape my memory. Of the few things that I still remember, I shall present only those that may be of interest to the readers in general.

I thought that the language of his lectures at Madras just after his return from the West, in which he dealt with caste system, was rather bitter against certain sections of Hindu society. When I told him so, he replied,

"I spoke only the truth and nothing but the truth. In comparison with the prevailing situation, the language was not at all harsh. I find no reason why truth should be watered down or hidden back. Just because I criticized those customs, it does not mean that I have any ill feeling towards these people, nor should one think that I am the least sorry for what I have done out of a sense of duty. Neither of the two positions is true. I did not speak out of anger, nor do I regret now. Should the occasion arise again for performing such an unpleasant duty, I shall still do so without the least hesitation."

In my previous account I said something about his estimation of false monks. When that topic cropped up another day, he said, "It is true that many rogues adopt the monk's garb for concealing their nefarious deeds or for avoiding detection after some serious crime ; but society, too, has its own share of the blame. Society labours under the false belief that a man goes beyond all shortcomings as soon as he takes the monk's vow. In your estimation, it is bad for him to have a full meal, bad to lie down on a bed ; he must not even use such a common thing as an umbrella or a pair of shoes ! Why, are they not men like yourselves ? It is quite wrong to think that one has no right to wear the ochre robe unless one is already a Paramahamsa (a monk of the highest perfection). Once, I met a monk who had a fancy for good dress. You would have mistaken him for a luxurious man, but in reality he was a true monk."

Swamiji used to say, "The mental attitudes and feelings of men differ very much according to time, space, and circumstances. The same is the case with religion. Then, again, each man has a bias for something, and every one in this world thinks himself to be wiser than others. That really matters little, but the difficulty arises when a person begins to think that the truth lies with none other than himself. Each one wants that others should look at a thing from his own point of view and understand

it accordingly. He is convinced that nothing else but what he has known can be true. But nobody should allow such an idea to get hold of him, be it in the field of religion or secular knowledge.

"No one rule can equally apply to people of this world in any field whatsoever. For instance, you can notice that moral principles and even an appreciation of beauty differ in accordance with time, space, and circumstances. In Tibet polyandry is in vogue. I came across such a family during my sojourn in the Himalayas. The family had six male members who had but one wife. When we became more friendly, I pointed out to them the outrageousness of the custom, at which they took offence and said, 'You are a monk, and yet you preach this kind of selfishness to people ! Is it not wrong to think that something is meant for one's own exclusive enjoyment, but not for others ?'

"Every one knows that beauty among the Chinese is judged in accordance with the shortness of the nose and the smallness of the feet. The same kind of peculiar judgement prevails in the field of food. The English do not like the sweet-smelling rice that we prefer so much. Once when a judge of a certain place was transferred, the members of the bar sent all kinds of excellent food to him. Among these was a quantity of sweet-smelling rice. When this was served to the judge, he thought it was rotten ; and when he next met the lawyers, he said, 'You ought not to have given me rotten rice'.

"Once while travelling in a train, I had in the same compartment some four or five Europeans as my fellow passengers. In the course of a talk, I remarked that the best way to enjoy tobacco is to smoke it from a *hookah* full of water at the bottom and having at its top a lump of flavoured tobacco prepared with spices and molasses. I had some such tobacco, and I showed it to them. They smelt it and said, 'It emits such a bad smell, and you call it a good flavour !' Thus, opinions about smell, taste,

beauty, etc. differ among men according to time, place, and social environment."

It did not take me long to appreciate those words of Swamiji. I remembered how I loved hunting in my earlier days. Whenever any animal or bird came to sight, I used to become restless to kill it, and feel miserable if I failed to do so. Now I do not like that kind of killing at all. So likes and dislikes are a matter of habit.

Each man has a tendency to stick to his own views dogmatically, and this is particularly true in matters religious. Swamiji used to tell us a story about this : Once a king advanced with his army against another territory. Naturally, a big council was summoned in the small kingdom to devise ways and means for its protection from the enemy. All classes of people were represented there—engineers, carpenters, cobblers, blacksmiths, pleaders, priests, and others. The engineers advised, "Put a barricade around and dig a deep trench." The carpenters said, "Raise a wooden wall." The cobblers said, "There is nothing like leather ; put a barricade of leather all around." The blacksmiths said, "All this will be of no avail. An iron wall is the best thing, for shots cannot penetrate through it." The pleaders said, "No such thing need be erected. Let us convince the enemy by arguments that he has no right to conquer our country." The priests said, "You are all raving like lunatics. Offer sacrifices, perform other rites for warding off this evil, offer *tulasi* leaves etc., and the enemy will be baffled in his attempt." The result was that nothing was done to save the kingdom, and the councillors went on debating *ad infinitum*. That is human nature.

The story reminded me of another incident. I told this to Swamiji : "Swamiji, as a boy, I liked very much to talk with lunatics. Once I came across a madman who seemed to be very intelligent. He knew a little of English, and all that he needed was to drink water. He

had a broken water pot with him, with which he used to drink water wherever he got it, no matter whether it was a ditch or a hose. When I asked him why he drank so much water, he replied, 'Nothing like water, sir'. I wanted to give him a good water pot, but he would not accept it. When asked for the reason, he explained that he had the broken one with him for so long just because it was broken. If it was a good one, it would have been stolen long ago."

When I had finished, Swamiji remarked, "He must have been a very funny lunatic. They are called monomaniacs. Each one of us has such a mania. Only, we have the power to conceal it, whereas the unbalanced man lacks that power. That's where we differ from the madmen. A man comes to grief once he loses that self-control through disease, sorrow, egotism, passion, anger, jealousy, or any kind of self-indulgence or oppression. Then he fails to suppress his mania. And we say, that he is off his head. That's all that it means."

Swamiji's patriotism was very profound. This I mentioned even earlier. Once that topic was broached, and somebody told him that though it was a duty for lay people leading a social life to have love for their country, a Sannyâsin should be above any attachment for his own country and that he should rather love all countries and pray for the good of all. I shall never forget the burning reply that these words evoked from Swamiji. He said, "How can a man who does not feed his own mother look after other people's mothers?" Swamiji admitted that there were many defects in our current religious practices, habits, and social customs; and he would say, "It is our bounden duty to try to rectify them by all means; but that does not mean that it is necessary to tell the English people about all these things by publishing them in the newspapers. There is no greater fool than one who washes one's dirty linen in public."

One day we started talking about the Christian

missionaries, and I happened to remark that they had done, and had been doing, a great deal of good to our country. At this he said, "But the amount of evil they have done is no less. They have done all in their power to throw to the winds the little faith that our people had in themselves and their own culture. Loss of faith means disintegration of the personality itself. Does anybody understand that? How can the missionaries prove the superiority of their own religion without decrying our deities, without condemning our religion? There is another point to consider. If anyone has to preach a particular religion, he must not only believe in it fully, but also practise it in life with full faith and sincerity. Most of the missionaries say one thing and do something else. I can never tolerate dishonesty."

One day he said some very fine things about religion and *yoga*. I shall reproduce the substance of these as far as I can: "All creatures are ever eager to get happiness. They are eternally engaged in this effort, but they are seldom seen to arrive at the goal. Yet most people do not stop to find out why they fail to do so. That is why men suffer. Whatever ideas a man may have about religion, nobody should try to shake his faith so long as he himself sincerely believes that he is deriving real happiness thereby. Even if one tries to rectify, it does not yield any good result unless the man himself cooperates willingly. Whatever the profession may be, when you find that a man is eager merely to hear of religion, but not to practise it, you may at once conclude that he has no firm faith in anything.

"The basic aim of religion is to bring peace to man. It is not a wise thing for one to suffer in this life so that one can be happy in the next. One must be happy here and now. Any religion that can bring that about is the true religion for humanity. Sense-enjoyment is momentary, and it is inevitably mixed with sorrow.

Only children, fools, and animals can believe this

mixed happiness to be the real bliss. Even so, I won't mind if anybody can have perpetual happiness and freedom from anxiety by holding on to that happiness as the be-all and end-all of life. But I have still to find a man like that. Rather, in common experience, it is found that those who mistake sense-enjoyment for the highest bliss become jealous of others who happen to be richer or more luxurious than themselves. They suffer from their hankering after that kind of more refined sense-enjoyment. After conquering the world, Alexander the Great felt miserable at the thought that he had no other country to conquer. That is why thoughtful men, after long experience and examination, have decided that men can be really happy and free from anxiety only when they have full faith in some religion or other.

"Men naturally differ in so far as their intellectual equipments and attainments are concerned. So religion also must differ according to men's temperaments; else they will never have any satisfaction from it, nor will they derive the highest benefit from it. The religion that will suit any particular nature has to be found out personally by the man concerned through a process of careful thinking, testing, and experimenting. There is no other way. Study of religious literature, instructions of a *guru,* company of holy men, etc. can only help him in his quest.

"About works also, it should be understood that nobody can wholly avoid doing something or other, and no work can be either wholly good or wholly bad. If you undertake a good work, you are bound to do some amount of bad work along with it. As a result, along with the happiness derived from the good work, some amount of unhappiness and dissatisfaction also will come inevitably. If you want to avoid that much of evil, you will have to give up the hope of deriving the apparent happiness from sense-enjoyment, that is to say, you will have to give up all selfish motives and go on doing your works out of

a sense of duty. That is what is called 'work without any motive' (selfless work). While instructing Arjuna about this in the Gita, Shri Krishna says, 'Work, but dedicate its fruit to Me, that is to say, work for Me'."

* * *

I asked Swamiji one day whether the instruction of Shri Krishna to Arjuna, just on the eve of the battle of Kurukshetra was a historical event. What he said in reply is very charming:

"The Gita is a very old book. In ancient times there was no such fuss about writing histories or getting books printed; and so it is difficult to prove the historicity of the Gita to men like you. Still I see no reason why you should rack your brains about the truth of the event recorded in the Gita. Even if somebody were to prove to you with incontrovertible facts that the Gita represents the actual words of Shri Krishna as told to Arjuna, will you really believe in all that is written in that book? Should even God Himself incarnate and come to teach you, you will challenge Him to prove His Divinity, and you will apply your own arguments to disprove His claim. So why should you be worried about the authenticity of the Gita? If you can, accept as far as it lies in your power the teachings of the Gita and actualize them in your life. That will be a real benefit to you. Shri Ramakrishna used to say, 'If you happen to be in a mango garden, eat as many of the luscious fruits as you can; what need have you to count the leaves?' It seems to me that any belief or disbelief in the events recorded in a religious book is determined by a personal equation. When somebody falls into certain circumstances and finds that his condition is similar to some incident mentioned in the book concerned, he believes that the incident must be true; and then he eagerly adopts the means prescribed by the book for tiding over the difficulty."

One day he explained to us in a very attractive way the need for conserving one's physical and mental energy

for the adequate discharge of one's duty. He said, "One who wastes one's energy in dabbling in other people's affairs and in other aimless activities can hardly have any energy left for performing a desirable duty. The sum total of the energy that can be exhibited by a person is a fixed quantity. As such, if it finds an outlet in a useless way, it can no further be drawn on for any purposeful activity. One requires tremendous energy to realize the deeper truths of religion. That is why the religious books of all races advise the aspirants not to waste their energy in the enjoyment of sense-objects, but to preserve it through continence and other means."

Swamiji disliked some of the customs prevailing in the villages of Bengal. He was disgusted with the habit of using the same reservoir of water for bathing, washing clothes, and drawing drinking water. He often said, "What can you expect from those whose brains are filled with all the dirt in the world? And this rural habit of dabbling in other people's affairs is extremely bad. Not that the urban people also don't have that habit. But they have not much time to spare, for urban life is costly so that it means harder labour. After the day's hard labour, they do not have much time left for moving about the chess-men while smoking and gossiping about other people. Were it not so, the urban ghosts would have ridden over the shoulders of (that is to say, would have outdone) the rural ghosts in such matters."

A volume could have been filled with the fine words of this kind that Swamiji uttered every day. It was not his habit to give the same kind of reply to the same question or to repeat the same illustration. Whenever he had any occasion to deal with the same question he threw such new light on it and used such new similes and illustrations that it seemed altogether a fresh subject and a fresh way of explaining it. As a result, his talks never bored any one; rather the interest increased at every step and people sat spellbound. In his public speeches also

he used the same method. It was not his habit to think over the whole matter earlier and jot down the points on paper. Even a minute before the speech he would be talking on all sorts of subjects, making fun, and cutting jokes—none of them having any connection with the subject of the speech. In fact, he himself would not know what he would be talking. However that may be, I shall put on record, as far as I can, the things he told us during the few days that we had the good fortune of coming in contact with him.

I stated earlier that I had not met anyone who could equal Swamiji in his brilliant exposition of religion in the light of science and his successful reconciliation of the two. A few of those words are presented here. It is to be understood, however, that it is all a reproduction from memory, so that there are chances of inaccuracy. If anything in this account appears to be wrong, that is not the fault of Swamiji's exposition, but rather of my poor memory. Swamiji said :

"All things, sentient and insentient, are rushing helter-skelter towards unity. In the beginning, men gave different names to the diverse things on which their eyes fell. Then, after examination, they arrived at the conclusion that all things are derived from sixty-three primary elements. Now again, many suspect that those elements themselves are compounds of more basic materials. When chemistry will reach its goal, all things will be discovered as emerging out of unity, of which they are but so many states. At first people considered heat, light, and electricity to be different. Now it has been proved that they are but different states of the same energy. In early days men divided the things of this world into the sentient, the insentient, and the plants. Then they discovered that just like other living creatures plants also have life and feeling, the only difference being that they cannot move. So we are now left with only two divisions

—the sentient and the insentient. A day will soon come when it will be found that even that which is considered insentient has some sort of sentience.

"The undulated land that we see on the surface of the earth is also trying to become plane. Rain water is washing down the hills to fill up the valleys. A hot thing placed amidst other things tries to attain the same state of warmth through radiation of heat. Things are thus advancing towards unity through conduction, convection, and radiation.

"Although the flowers, fruits, leaves, and roots of a tree appear to be different to us, science has proved that they all are same. A ray of light is perceived to have seven colours when seen through a prism. What is seen with bare eyes as having one colour may be seen as blue or red when seen through blue or red glasses.

"Thus also, truth is but one; but through *mâyâ* we see it diversely. It is in this way that people get all kinds of knowledge in and through the one, undivided Truth, which is beyond time and space. But people are neither aware of this one Truth, nor can they comprehend it."

When Swamiji had spoken thus, I added, "Can we really believe even our own eyes? If two rails are placed parallel to each other, they seem to meet at the furthest end. That is the vanishing point. Mistaking a rope for a snake is a matter of daily occurrence; and so is there mirage as an optical illusion. . . . John Stuart Mill said that though man is mad after Truth, yet he lacks the power to comprehend the absolute Truth; for should even the real Truth come to him, how can he know that it is really so? All our knowledge is relative, we have no capacity to grasp the Absolute."

Swamiji said, "It may be true that you, or people in general, do not have absolute knowledge; but how can you say that nobody can have it? What you call knowledge now is really a form of ignorance. When true knowledge dawns, this false knowledge disappears; then you see

everything to be but One. The idea of duality arises from ignorance."

"Swamiji, that is a very precarious position" I protested. "If there are two kinds of knowledge, viz true knowledge and false knowledge, then what you consider to be true knowledge may well be false, and the dualistic thought that you denounce to be false may very well be true."

"Quite so" said he. "That is why one has to believe in the Vedas. The Vedas contain the truths experienced by the sages and seers of old who went beyond the range of duality and perceived unity. Depending on mere reasoning, we cannot pass any judgement as to whether the waking state or the dream state is the true one. How can we know which of the two is true so long as we cannot take our stand on something beyond both of them, from where we can look at them objectively ? All that we can say now is that two different states are experienced. When you are experiencing one, the other seems to be false. You might have been marketing in Calcutta in your dream, but you wake up to find yourself lying in your bed. When the knowledge of unity will dawn, you will see but One and nothing else ; you will then understand that the earlier dualistic knowledge was false. But all that is a long way off. It won't do to aspire to read the Râmâyana and the Mahâbhârata before one has hardly begun to learn the alphabet. Religion is a matter of experience, and not of intellectual understanding. One must practise it in order to understand it. Such a position is corroborated by the sciences of chemistry, physics, geology, etc. It won't do to put together one bottle of oxygen and two of hydrogen and then cry : 'Where is water ?' They have to be placed in a closed container and an electric current passed through them, so that they can combine into water. Then only you can see water, and you can understand that water is produced from a combination of hydrogen and oxygen. If you wish to

have the unitive experience, you must have that kind of faith in religion, that kind of eagerness, diligence, and persistence; and then only you will succeed. One can hardly get rid of the habit one has acquired a month ago; when that is so, what to speak of those habits acquired ages earlier? Each man carries a huge burden of tendencies acquired through a series of past lives, which blur his vision. And yet all and sundry would have the absolute Truth now and here! One feels a momentary dislike for the world when one gets a hard knock, and then one cries out, 'Oh, why don't I realize unity?'"

"Swamiji, if what you say is true," I argued, "it will lead to fatalism. If the accumulated results of past lives cannot be wiped off in a single birth, then one may as well give up all attempt. I can wait for my liberation until all will have it."

"That is not exactly the case" he explained. "While it is true that one has to suffer the consequences of one's past actions, it is also possible to exhaust those results very quickly through certain processes. You can display ten magic lantern pictures in ten minutes, or you can spend the whole night in showing them. That depends on your own earnestness."

Swamiji's explanation of the mystery of creation was very interesting: "All created things are divided into classes—sentient and insentient—for the sake of convenience. Man belongs to the highest rank of created beings. According to some religions, God created man in His own image, while some people think that man is only a monkey without tail. Still others assert that man alone has the power of thinking, since his brain has a greater proportion of grey matter. In any case, all agree that man is a creature and, as such, he is included in creation as a whole. Now to understand what creation is, on the one hand, the Western scholars have recourse to the processes of analysis and synthesis, and they go on

examining everything individually. On the other hand, our forefathers in India spent very little time for the maintenance of the body in this warm climate and fertile land, and then with a bare loin cloth and a dim lamp, they started in all earnestness to find an answer to their question, 'What is that by knowing which everything will be known ?' Their ranks were made up of all kinds of people. So in our religion, we come across all shades of opinion ranging from the ultra-materialism of the Châr vâkas to the non-dualism of Shankarâchârya. Both these groups of people (in the West and in the East) are now converging on the same point, and they are beginning to speak the same language. They now assert that all the things in the universe have evolved out of one basic Reality, which is infinite in time and space, and which defies all description. Time and space also are of that kind. Time, that is to say such conception of time as days, months, years, aeons, etc., is determined for us chiefly by the motion of the sun. Now, think of time seriously. What does it amount to ? The sun is not without a beginning ; there was a time when the sun did not exist, and it is certain that a time will again come when the sun will cease to exist. So undivided time comes to mean nothing more than an inexpressible idea or entity. By the term "space" we understand the limited space delimited by the earth or the solar system, which is only an infinitesimal part of the infinite creation. It is quite possible that there is a space without any matter in it. So infinite space is also an inexpressible idea or entity like time. Now from where and how did the solar system and all this creation come ? Generally we do not see any product where there is no producer, and so we conclude that this creation must have a creator. But then this creator may have another creator, which is absurd. So the first creator, or first source, or God also comes to be an infinite and inexpressible idea or entity. That which is infinite cannot be many ; and hence all

these infinites are but the different expressions of a single entity, and they must be one."

Once, I asked him, "Swamiji, is the common belief in the *mantra* etc. true ?" He replied, "I find no reason why it should not be true. You become pleased when somebody addresses you with soft, sweet words, and you fly into a rage when you are spoken to in a harsh, jarring tone. Then why should not the deities presiding over different things be pleased by sweet invocation ?"

After all this discussion, I said, "Swamiji, now that you have fully gauged my intellectual capacity, will you kindly chalk out the path that I should follow." Swamiji replied, "First, try to bring the mind under control, no matter what the process is. Everything else will follow as a matter of course. And knowledge—the non-dualistic realization is very hard to attain. Know that to be the highest human goal. But before one reaches there, one has to make a long preparation and a prolonged effort. The company of holy men and dispassion are the means to it. There is no other way."

(*Translated from Swamijir Katha in Bengali*)

IV

I HAD the rare privilege of having the late Swami Vivekananda as our guest at Belgaum, I believe some time in 1892. I am not sure of the date, but it was about six months before he reached Madras and there became better known than he was before. If I remember aright, it was his first visit to Madras that led to his selection as representative of India at the Congress of Religions held at Chicago. As very few people in India had the advantage of knowing him before he made a name for himself, I think it would be interesting to set down a few reminiscences, however hazy, of his visit and stay at Belgaum.

The Swami came to Belgaum from Kolhapur with a note from Mr. Golvalkar, the Khangi Karbhari of the Maharaja. He had reached Kolhapur with a note from the Durbar of Bhavnagar to the Durbar of Kolhapur. I do not remember whether the Swami had stayed in Bombay or merely passed through. I remember him appearing one morning about six o'clock with a note from Mr. Golvalkar who was a great friend of my father's. The Swami was rather striking in appearance and appeared to be even at first sight somewhat out of the common run of men. But neither my father nor any one else in the family or even in our small town was prepared to find in our guest the remarkable man that he turned out to be.

From the very first day of the Swami's stay occurred little incidents which led us to revise our ideas about him. In the first place, though he wore clothes bearing the familiar colour of a Sannyâsin's garments, he appeared to be dressed differently from the familiar brotherhood of Sannyâsins. He used to wear a banyan. Instead of the *danda* he carried a long stick, something like a walking-stick. His kit consisted of the usual gourd, a pocket copy of the Gita, and one or two books (the names of which I

do not remember, possibly they were some Upanishads). We were not accustomed to see a Sannyâsin using the English language as a medium of conversation, wearing a banyan instead of sitting bare-bodied, and showing a versatility of intellect and variety of information which would have done credit to an accomplished man of the world. He used to speak Hindi quite fluently, but as our mother-tongue was Marathi he found it more convenient to use English more often than Hindi.

The first day after the meal, the Swami made a request for betel-nut and *pân* (betel). Then either the same day or the day after, he wanted some tobacco for chewing. One can imagine the kind of horror which would be inspired by a Sannyâsin who is commonly regarded as having gone above these small creature comforts, showing a craving for these things. We had discovered by his own admission that he was a non-Brahmin and yet a Sannyâsin, that he was a Sannyâsin and yet craved for things which only householders are supposed to want. This was really topsy-turvydom, and yet he succeeded in changing our ideas. There was really nothing very wrong in a Sannyâsin wanting *pân* and *supâri* (betel-nut) or tobacco for chewing, but the explanation he gave of his craving disarmed us completely. He said that he was a gay young man and a distinguished graduate of the Calcutta University and that his life before he met Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was entirely different to what he became afterwards. As a result of the teachings of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa he had changed his life and outlook, but some of these things he found it impossible to get rid of, and he let them remain as being of no very great consequence. As regards food, when he was asked whether he was a vegetarian or a meat-eater, he said that as a man belonging not to the ordinary order of Sannyâsins but to the order of the Paramahamsas, he had no option in the matter. The Paramahamsa, by the rules of that order, was bound to eat whatever was offered, and in

cases where nothing could be offered he had to go without food. And a Paramahamsa was not precluded from accepting food from any human being irrespective of his religious beliefs. When he was asked whether he would accept food from non-Hindus, he told us that he had several times been under the necessity of accepting food from Mohammedans.

The Swami appeared to be very well grounded in the old Pandit method of studying Sanskrit. At the time of his arrival, I was getting up the *Ashtâdhyâyi* by rote, and to my great surprise as a boy, his memory even in quoting portions of the *Ashtâdhyâyi* which I had been painfully trying to remember, was much superior to mine. If I remember aright, when my father wanted me to repeat the portions that I had been preparing, I made some slips which to my confusion the Swami smilingly corrected. The effect of this was almost overwhelming as far as my feelings towards him were concerned. When there was another occasion for repeating some portions of the *Amarakosha,* I thought it better to be prudent than clever ; and as I felt doubtful about my ability to repeat the portion with accuracy, I frankly confessed that I was unable to do so without committing mistakes. My father was naturally angry and annoyed at my failure to come up to his expectation ; but I did not want to be caught once more, and I preferred the temporary annoyance of my father to what I regarded as a humiliation at the hand of our newly arrived guest.

For a day or two after his arrival my father was busy in trying to take a measure of his guest. In that period he made up his mind that the guest was not only above the ordinary, but was an extraordinary personality. So he got a few of his personal friends together, in order to fortify his own opinion of the Swami. They soon agreed that it was quite worth while to get all the local leaders and learned men together. What struck us most in the crowded gatherings, which began to be held every day after

the presence of the Swami became known to all in Belgaum, was the unfailing good humour which the Swami preserved in his conversations and even heated arguments. He was quick enough at retort, but the retort had no sting in it. One day we had a rather amusing illustration of the Swami's coolness in debate. There was at that time in Belgaum an Executive Engineer who was the best-informed man in our town. He was one of the not uncommon types among Hindus. He was in his every-day life an orthodox Hindu of the type that I believe Southern India alone can produce. But in his mental outlook he was not only a sceptic, but a very dogmatic adherent of what used to be then regarded as the scientific outlook. He almost appeared to argue in spite of his orthodox mode of life that there was practically no sanction for religion or belief in religion except that the people were for a long time accustomed to certain beliefs and practices. Holding these views he found the Swami rather an embarrassing opponent, because the Swami had larger experience, knew more philosophy and more science than this local luminary. Naturally, he more than once lost temper in argument and was discourteous, if not positively rude, to the Swami. So my father protested, but the Swami smilingly intervened and said that he did not feel in any way disturbed by the methods of show of temper on the part of this Executive Engineer. He said that in such circumstances the best method to adopt was the one adopted by horse-trainers. He said that when a trainer wants to break colts, he merely aims at first to get on their backs, and having secured a hold on the back, limits his exertions to keeping his seat. He lets the colts try their best to throw him off and in that attempt to exhaust their untrained energies; but when the colts have done their best and failed, then begins the real task of the trainer. He becomes the master, and soon makes the colts feel that he means to be the master; and then the course of train-

ing is comparatively smooth. He said that in debates and conversations this was the best method to adopt. Let your opponent try his best or worst, let him exhaust himself; and then when he has shown signs of fatigue, get control of him and make him do just whatever you wish him to do. In short, conviction rather than constraint or compulsion must be the aim of a man who wants something more than mere silence from an opponent. Willing consent on the part of the opponent must be the inevitable result of such a procedure.

The Swami was a most embarrassing opponent for an impatient and dogmatic reasoner. He soon nonplussed in argument all the available talent in a mofussil town. But his aim appeared to be not so much victory in debate and argumentation, as a desire to create and spread the feeling that the time had come for demonstrating to the country and to the whole world that the Hindu religion was not in a moribund condition. The time had come, he used to say, for preaching to the world the priceless truths contained in Vedanta. His view of Vedanta was, it appears to me, a great deal different from the view that has become traditional. His complaint appeared to be that Vedanta had been treated too much as the possession of a sect competing for the loyalty of the Hindu along with other sects, and not as a life-giving perennial source of inspiration that it really was. He used to say that the particular danger of Vedanta was that its tenets and principles lent themselves easily to profession even by cowards. He used to say that the Vedanta may be professed by a coward, but it could be put into practice only by the most stout-hearted. The Vedanta was strong meat for weak stomachs. One of his favourite illustrations used to be that the doctrine of non-resistance necessarily involved the capacity and ability to resist and a conscious refraining from having recourse to resistance. If a strong man, he used to say, deliberately refrained from making use of his strength against either a rash or a weak opponent, then

he could legitimately claim higher motives for his action. If, on the other hand, there was no obvious superiority of strength or the strength really lay on the side of his opponent, then the absence of the use of strength naturally raised the suspicion of cowardice. He used to say that that was the real essence of the advice by Shri Krishna to Arjuna. The wavering of mind on the part of Arjuna may have been easily due to other causes besides a genuine reluctance to use his undoubted and unfailing strength. Therefore the long and involved argument embodied in the eighteen chapters of the Gita.

(*Prabuddha Bhārata, July 1923*)

V

I MET Swami Vivekananda for the first time at Trivandrum in December 1892, and was then privileged to see and know a good deal of him. He came to Trivandrum in the course of an extended Indian tour, fulfilling the time-honoured practice obtaining among Indian monks of paying a visit to, and making *tapas* (spiritual austerities), at the four sacred shrines in the four corners of the *punya-bhumi* (sacred land), viz Badari, Kedara, Dwaraka, Puri, and Rameswaram, and claiming the hospitality and obeisance due to his sacred order from the Hindu householder. He came to me accompanied by a Mohammedan guide. My second son—a little boy of twelve, who has since passed away—took him for, and announced him to me as, a Mohammedan too, as he well might from his costume which was quite unusual for a Hindu Sannyâsin of Southern India. I took him upstairs, entered into conversation, and made him due obeisance as soon as I learnt what he was. Almost the first thing he asked me to do was to arrange for his Mohammedan attendant's meals. His Mohammedan companion was a peon in the Cochin State service, and had been detailed to accompany him to Trivandrum by the then Secretary to the Dewan, Mr. W. Ramaiyya, B.A., formerly Principal of the Vizagapatnam College. For himself the Swami would take no introduction, or have any sort of arrangement previously made for his comfort while on the way or after reaching Trivandrum. The Swami had taken almost nothing except a little milk during the two previous days, and only after his Mohammedan peon had been provided with meals and taken leave would he have any thought bestowed on himself.

Within a few minutes' conversation, I found that the Swami was a mighty man. Having ascertained from him

that, since leaving Ernakulam he had taken almost nothing, I asked him what food he was accustomed to. He replied, "Anything you like; we Sannyâsins, have no tastes." We had some little conversation, as there was yet an interval of a few minutes before dinner. On learning that the Swami was a Bengali, I made the observation that the Bengalis had produced many great men—and, foremost of them all, the Brahmo preacher, Keshab Chandra Sen. It was then that the Swami mentioned to me the name of his *guru* Shri Ramakrishna, and expatiated briefly on his eminent spiritual endowments, and took my breath completely away by the remark that Keshab was a mere child when compared with Shri Ramakrishna, that not only he, but many eminent Bengalis of a generation past, had been influenced by the sage, that Keshab had in later life received the benefit of his inspiration and had undergone some considerable change for the better in his religious views, that many Europeans had sought the acquaintance of Shri Ramakrishna and regarded him as a semi-divine personage, and that no less a man than the late Director of Public Instruction in Bengal, Mr. C. H. Tawney, had written a paper on the character, genius, catholicity, and inspiring power of the great sage.

All this conversation had occupied us while the Swami's food was being prepared and during the time he was breaking his nearly two days' fast by a hearty dinner. The Swami's presence, his voice, the glitter of his eye, and the flow of his words and ideas were so inspiring that I excused myself that day from attending at the palace of the late Martanda Varma, the First Prince of Travancore, who was prosecuting his M.A. studies under my tuition—my services having been lent to the Travancore State by the Madras government to prepare him first for the B.A. Degree and later for the M.A. The Swami having had some rest, I took him in the evening to the house of Prof. Rangacharya, who was then professor of chemistry in the Trivandrum college—his services, too, having then been

lent to the Travancore State—and who was even then at the height of his reputation as a scholar and man of science not only in Travancore, but throughout Southern India. Not finding him at home, we drove to the Trivandrum Club. There I introduced the Swami to various gentlemen present, and to Prof. Rangacharya when he came in later on, to the late Prof. Sundaram Pillai, M.A., and others among whom I distinctly remember a late Brahmin Dewan Peshkar and my friend Narayana Menon —who, I believe, is one of the Dewan Peshkars today in Travancore—owing to an incident which, however trifling in itself, brought out a prominent characteristic of the Swami, how he was all eyes and noted closely all that was passing around him and could use them effectively, how he combined with his rare gentleness and sweetness of temper, the presence of mind and the power of retort which could quickly silence an opponent. Mr. Narayana Menon had, while leaving the Club earlier in the evening saluted the Brahmin Dewan Peshkar and the latter had returned it in the time-honoured fashion in which Brahmins who maintain old forms of etiquette return the salute of Shudras, i.e., by raising the left hand a little higher than the right. Many members of the Club had come and gone, and at last five of us were left, the Swami, the Dewan Peshkar, his brother, Prof. Rangacharya, and myself. As we were dispersing, the Dewan Peshkar made his obeisance to the Swami which the latter returned in the manner usual with Hindu monks by simply uttering the name of Narayana. This roused the Peshkar's ire, for he wanted the Swami's obeisance, too, in the fashion in which he had made his own. The Swami then turned on him and said, "If you could exercise your customary form of etiquette in returning Narayana Menon's greeting, why should you resent my own adoption of the Sannyâsin's customary mode of acknowledging your obeisance to me?" This reply had the desired effect, and next day the

gentleman's brother came to us and conveyed some kind of apology for the awkward incident of the night previous.

During the evening, short as his stay had been at the Club premises, the Swami's personality had made an impression on all. Hindu society in Trivandrum town presents a strikingly motely appearance, as all the race and caste varieties peculiar to Southern India commingle within its narrow limits. The Trivandrum Club of which all the leading educated men are members presents, too, every evening a similarly motely gathering representative of all those varieties, or almost all. The Swami entered freely into conversation with all, but in Professor Rangacharya he found the man most near to himself in all that he most valued in life—an almost encyclopaedic learning, a rare command of eloquent expression, the power to call up readily all his vast intellectual resources to point a moral or prick the bubble of a plausible argument, an emotional temperament which unerringly pointed to the love of whatever is good and noble in man and beautiful in nature and art. One remark of Professor Sundaram Pillai—that he considered himself, as a Dravidian, entirely outside the Hindu polity —put him somewhat out of court with the Swami, who, later on, remarked of him that eminent as he was as a scholar, he had thoughtlessly given himself away to the sway of race prejudice, which already during his travels the Swami had noted as an unpleasant characteristic of certain South Indian minds of the unbalanced or mediocre type.

The Swami paid a visit the next day to Prince Martana Varma, who, as already stated, was then under my tuition and studying for the M.A. Degree, and who, when informed by me of the remarkable intellectual and imposing presence of my visitor, communicated to the Swami his desire for an interview. Of course I accompanied the Swami and was present at the conversa-

tion between him and the Prince. The Swami happened to mention his visits to various Native Princes and courts during his travels. This greatly interested the Prince who interrogated him regarding his impressions. The Swami then told him that, of all the Hindu ruling princes he had met, he had been most impressed with the capacity, patriotism, energy and foresight of H. H. the Gackwar of Baroda, that he had also known and greatly admired the high qualities of the small Rajput Chief of Khetri, and that, as he came more and more south, he had found a growing deterioration in the character and capacity of Indian princes and chiefs. The Prince then asked him if he had seen his uncle, the ruler of Travancore. The Swami had not yet had time to arrange for a visit to His Highness. I may here mention at once that a visit was arranged two days later through the good offices of the then Dewan, Mr. Sankara Subbier. The Maharaja received the Swami, inquired of his welfare, and told him that the Dewan would provide him with every convenience during his stay both in Trivandrum and elsewhere within the State. The visit lasted only for two or three minutes, and so the Swami returned a little disappointed, though impressed with H. H.'s gracious and dignified deportment.

To return to the Swami's conversation with the Prince. The Prince inquired regarding his impression of the late Maharaja of the Mysore State, whose guest the Swami had been for several days. The gist of the Swami's view was that the Maharaja, like many other Indian rulers, was a good deal under leading strings, that he could not or would not assert himself, and that that had produced some undesirable results. One incident he mentioned may be of some interest. I cannot give names. The Swami ventured a advise the Maharaja to remove from his neighbourhood a man of some reputation, who was supposed to be a favourite of his and of whom there had prevailed, rightly or wrongly, possibly

wrongly, an unfavourable impression in the public mind. To this request, the Maharaja made the strange reply that, as the Swami was one of the greatest men he had seen and destined to fulfil a great mission in the land, he should not expose his life to the risk there certainly existed in the Indian Prince's palace for one who openly ventured to disparage, or to endeavour to secure the dismissal of, one of his favourites. This throws light on the way in which the Swami and the Maharaja understood themselves and understood each other. The Swami then made earnest inquiry regarding Prince Martanda Varma's studies, and his aims in life. The Prince replied that he had already taken some interest in the doings of the people of Travancore and that he had resolved to do what he could, as a leading and loyal subject of the Maharaja and as a member of the ruling family, to advance their welfare. The Prince was struck, like all others who had come into contact with him, with the Swami's striking figure and attractive features; and, being an amateur photographer, asked the Swami for a sitting and took a fine photograph which he skilfully developed into an impressive picture and later on sent as an interesting exhibit to the next Fine Arts Exhibition held in the Madras Museum. On leaving the Prince's presence, the Swami remarked to me that he thought there was plenty of promise in him, but that he trusted that the University education which he was receiving would not spoil him, evidently meaning that he might be left more to himself, the graduate that he was already, than he seemed to be by being kept under my further care and instruction. But in fact, the Prince was only being helped to think for himself and no longer kept under control and, after another year or so, discontinued his studies.

Throughout the second day and even during the greater part of the third, we were left a good deal to ourselves, except for a brief visit in the evening from Prof.

Rangacharya. The Swami found me much inclined to orthodox Hindu modes of life and beliefs. Perhaps that was why he spoke a good deal in the vein suited to my tastes and views, though occasionally he burst out into spirited denunciation of the observance of mere *desh-âchâra* or local usage. As I keep no diary and write only from the tattered remains of an impression left on the mind by events which took place fully twenty years back, I cannot vouch for the exact order of topics as they arose on this and other days. I had occasional and deeply interesting conversations with the Swami, sometimes when we were left to ourselves, at other times when visitors, to whom the news had been taken that a highly learned and gifted Sannyâsin from the North was staying with me, called to see him and earn the spiritual merit of rendering him homage in due form.

The Swami once made a spirited attack on the extravagant claims put forth by science on men's allegiance. "If religion has its superstitions," the Swami remarked, "science has its superstitions too." Both the mechanical and evolutionary theories are, on examination, found inadequate and unsatisfying, and still there are large numbers of men who speak of the entire universe as an open secret. Agnosticism has also bulked large in men's esteem, but has only betrayed its ignorance and arrogance by ignoring the laws and truths of the Indian science of thought-control. Western psychology has miserably failed to cope with the superconscious aspects and laws of human nature. Where European science has stopped short, Indian psychology comes in and explains, illustrates and teaches how to render real and practical laws appertaining to higher states of existence and experience. Religion alone—and especially the religion of the Indian sages—can understand the subtle and secret working of the human mind and conquer its unspiritual cravings so as to realize the one Existence and comprehend all else as its limitation and

manifestation when under the bondage of matter. Another subject on which the Swami spoke was the distinction between the world of gross matter (*laukika*) and the world of fine matter (*alaukika*). The Swami explained how both kept man within the bondage of the senses, and only he who rose superior to both could attain to the freedom which is the aim of all life and raise himself above the petty vanities of the world, whether of men or gods. The Swami spoke to me of the institution of caste, and held that the Brahmin would continue to live as long as he found unselfish work to do and freely gave of his knowledge and all to the rest of the population. In the actual words of the Swami which are still ringing in my ears, "The Brahmin has done great things for India; he is doing great things for India, and he is destined to do still greater things for India in the future." The Swami also declared himself sternly against all interference against the *shâstric* (scriptural) usages and injunctions in regard to the status and marriage of women. Women, as well as the lower classes and castes, must receive Sanskrit education, imbibe the ancient spiritual culture, and realize in practice all the spiritual ideals of the *rishis*; and then they would take into their own hands all questions affecting their own status and solve them in the light thrown on them by their own knowledge of the truths of religion and the enlightened perception of their own needs and requirements. I also asked the Swami for his views on the question of sea-voyage. He replied that the social environment in Western countries must be better prepared than it was and is by the preaching of the Vedanta before Brahmins and other caste Hindus could find it suitable for their accustomed life of ceremonial purity and those time-worn and time-honoured restrictions as regards food, drink, etc., which have made them for ages almost the sole champions of, and channels for, the gospel of mercy. There was not the least objection, however, in the case

of Hindus who were already free from, or were prepared to throw aside, all such restrictions.

On the third and fourth day of the Swami's stay with me, I sent information to a valued friend of mine in Trivandrum, who is my senior in years and still living, a man for whom, on account of his character, culture, purity of life, and sincere devotion to the Lord, I felt then, and have continued to feel, attached by the ties of genuine regard and friendship, M. R. Ry. S. Rama Rao, then Director of Vernacular Instruction in Travancore. Mr. Rama Rao felt infinitely attracted to the Swami by the power of his spirituality and devotional fervour and asked him for the favour of having *bhikshâ* (alms) in his house, which the Swami graciously consented to do. After the *bhikshâ* was over, they returned together, and the Swami continued his instructive and fervid discourses to us. I remember vividly how once Mr. Rama Rao wished the Swami to explain *indriya-nigraha,* the restraint of the senses. The Swami then launched forth into a vivid narration of a story very much like what is usually told of Lilâ-Shuka, the famous singer of *Krishna-Karnâmrita.* The vivid picture he gave of the last stage in which the hero is taken to Vrindaban and puts out his own eyes when he gets severely handled for his amorous pursuit of a Sett's daughter there, and then proclaims his repentance and his resolve to end his days in unswerving meditation on the divine Shri Krishna at the scene of the Lord's sportive deeds in the days of His childhood on earth, bursts on my mind, even at this distance of twenty-one years, with somewhat of the effect of those irresistibly charming and undying notes on the flute by the late miraculous musician Sarabha Shastriar of Kumbakonam. The Swami's concluding words after mentioning the closing incident of putting out the eyes were : "Even this extreme step must, if necessary, be taken as a preliminary to the restraint of the wandering and unsub-

jugated senses and the consequent turning of the mind towards the Lord."

On the third or fourth day of his stay, I made inquiries, at the Swami's request, regarding the whereabouts of Mr. Manmatha Nath Bhattacharya—now deceased—who was then Assistant to the Accountant-General, Madras, and who had come down to Trivandrum on official duty in connection with some defalcations alleged to have taken place at the Resident's Treasury. From that time the Swami used daily to spend his mornings with Mr. Bhattacharya and stay for dinner. One day, however, I complained, and unfortunately there was a visitor too, to detain him, as I shall presently have to state. The Swami made a characteristic reply on seeing how unwilling I was to part with him, "We, Bengalis, are a clannish people." He said also that Mr. Bhattacharya had been his school or college mate, and that he had an additional claim for consideration as he was the son of the late world-renowned scholar, Pandit Mahesh Chandra Nyâyaratna, formerly the Principal of the Calcutta Sanskrit College. The Swami also told me that he had long taken no fish food, as the South Indian Brahmins whose guest he had been throughout his South Indian tour were forbidden both fish and flesh, and would fain avail himself of this opportunity to have his accustomed fare. I at once expressed my loathing for the taking of fish or flesh as food. The Swami said in reply that the ancient Brahmins of India were accustomed to take meat and even beef and were called upon to kill cows and other animals in *yajnas* or for giving *madhuparka* to guests. He also held that the introduction and spread of Buddhism led to the gradual discontinuance of flesh as food, though the Hindu *shâstras* (scriptures) had always expressed a theoretical preference for those who avoided the use of flesh-foods, and that the disfavour into which flesh had fallen was one of the chief causes of the gradual decline of the

national strength, and the final overthrow of the national independence of the united ancient Hindu races and states of India. He informed me, at the same time, that in recent years Bengalis had, as a community, begun to freely use animal food of several kinds and that they generally got a Brahmin to sprinkle a little water consecrated by the utterance of a few *mantras* over a whole flock of sheep and then, without any further qualms of religious conscience, proceeded to hand, draw, and quarter them. The Swami's opinion, at least as expressed in conversation with me, was that the Hindus must freely take to the use of animal food if India was at all to cope with the rest of the world in the present race for power and predominance among the world's communities, whether within the British Empire, or beyond its limits. I, as a Brahmin of strong orthodox leanings, expressed my entire dissent from his views and held that the Vedic religion had alone taught to man his kinship and unity with nature, that man should not yield to the play of sensuous cravings or the narrow passion for political dominance. The ennobling gospel of universal mercy which had been the unique possession of the Hindus, especially of the Brahmins of South India, should never be abandoned as mistaken, out of date, or uncivilized, and that the world can and ought to make a great ethical advance by adopting a humane diet, and also that no petty considerations of national strength or revival should prevail against the adoption of a policy of justice and humanity towards our dumb brother-*jivas* of the brute creation. Knowing, as I fully did, the Swami's views on this question, I was not surprised to learn that, while in America he had been in the habit of taking animal food, and I think he treated with silent contempt the denunciations and calumnies directed against him on this account.

The Swami visited the Dewan by appointment one evening, when this same subject somehow cropped up,

and the Dewan held views identical with mine and even went on to express his views that animals had never been killed, or flesh used in *yajnas* in ancient times. This led to some little controversy in which the Dewan's son-in-law, the late Mr. A. Ramier who was then his secretary, took sides with the Swami, so far as the use of flesh in *yajnas* was concerned. The Swami had also some little talk with the Dewan, on the subject of *bhakti*. How the subject came in or what were the details of the Swami's conversation has clean dropped out of my memory. Mr. Sankara Subbier, the Dewan, was one of the most learned men of his time and even at his advanced age—for he was then 58—was a voracious reader of books of all sorts, and daily adding to the vast stores of his knowledge. The Swami, however, was not much impressed, nor could the Dewan spare time for a prolonged meeting. So we took our leave. As the Swami parted, the Dewan assured him that every want or wish of his would be attended to, and every attention paid to him throughout the State, wherever he might go. The Swami, however, wanted nothing and asked for nothing.

I have above referred to a visitor detaining the Swami one morning from his usual visit to his Bengali countryman, Mr. Bhattacharya. This visitor was the Assistant Dewan or Peshkar in the Huzoor office, Trivandrum, one Mr. Piravi Perumal Pillay. He seemed to have come on purpose to ascertain what the Swami knew of various cults and religions in India and elsewhere, and began by putting forward various objections to the Advaita Vedanta. He soon found out that the Swami was a master from whose stores it was more important to draw what one could for inspiration without loss of time than to examine what were the depths and heights in which his mind could range. I have seen the Swami exhibit on this occasion (as on another during his famous sojourn of nine days at Kernan Castle on the Madras Marina in March 1897) his rare power of gauging in a

moment what is the mental reach of a self-confident visitor, and then turning him unconsciously away to ground suitable to him and then giving him the benefit of his guidance and inspiration. On the present occasion, the Swami happened to quote from *Lalita Vistara* some verses descriptive of Buddha's *vairâgya* (dispassion), and in such an entrancingly melodious voice that the visitor's heart quite melted, and he speedily fell into a passive listening mood, which the Swami skilfully utilized to carry home to his mind a lasting impression of Buddha's great renunciation, His unflinching search after truth, His final discovery of it and His unwearied ministry of forty-five years among men and women of all castes, ranks, and conditions of life. The discourse occupied nearly an hour, and at its close the Swami's visitor was so visibly affected and acknowledged himself as feeling so much raised for the time being above the sordid realities and vanities of life, that he made many devout prostrations at the Swami's feet and declared when leaving, that he had never seen his like and would never forget the discourse which had impressed him greatly.

During this and the following days various topics came up, upon which I had the pleasure of knowing the Swami's views. Many of these have passed out of my recollection, but two of them come home to me with more or less vividness just at present. Once I happened to ask him to deliver a public lecture. The Swami said that he had never before spoken in public and would surely prove a lamentable and ludicrous failure. Upon this I inquired how, if this were true, he could face the august assembly of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago at which he told me he had been asked by the Maharaja of Mysore to be present as the representative of Hinduism. The Swami gave me a reply which at the time seemed to me decidedly evasive, namely, that if it was the will of the Supreme that he should be made His mouthpiece and do a great service to the cause of truth

and holy living, He surely would endow him with the gifts and qualities needed for it. I said I was incredulous as to the probability or possibility of a special intervention of this kind, as, even though I had at this time much faith in the central and fundamental verities of Hinduism, I had not studied its source-books and had not obtained an insight into their rationale, nor even had so much of a practical realization of those verities as would enable me to perceive the truth underlying a statement like the one made by the Swami. He at once came down on me with a sledge-hammer stroke, denouncing me as one who, in spite of my apparent Hindu orthodoxy so far as my daily observances and verbal professions went, was at heart somewhat of a sceptic, because I seemed to him prepared to set limits of my own to the extent of the Lord's power of beneficent interposition in the affairs of the universe.

On another occasion, too, some difference of opinion existed in regard to a question of much importance in Indian ethnology. The Swami held that wherever a Brahmin was found with a dark skin, it was clearly a case of atavism, demonstrating the descent of a characteristic due to Dravidian admixture. To this I replied that colour was essentially a changeable feature in man and largely dependent on such conditions as climate, food, the nature of the occupation as entailing an out-door or in-door life, and so on. The Swami combated my view and maintained that the Brahmins were as much a mixed race as the rest of mankind, and that their belief in their racial purity was largely founded on fiction. I quoted high authority—C. L. Brace and others—against him in regard to the purity of Indian races, but the Swami was obdurate and maintained his own view.

I must get on rapidly to the close. But I must not fail to mention the fact that during all the time he stayed, he took captive every heart within the home. To every one of us he was all sweetness, all tenderness, all

grace. My sons were frequently in his company, and one of them still swears by him and has the most vivid and endearing recollections of his visit and of his striking personality. The Swami learnt a number of Tamil words and took delight in conversing in Tamil with the Brahmin cook in our home. It hardly seemed as if there was a stranger moving in our midst. When he left, it seemed for a time as if the light had gone out of our home.

Just as he was about to leave, accompanied by his Bengali companion, Mr. Bhattacharya—it was on the 22nd December 1892—an incident happened which is worth recording. Pandit Vanchisvara Shastri—a master of that most difficult branch of learning, Sanskrit grammar, and highly honoured by all who knew him for his piety, learning and modesty—was a dependent of the first Prince of Travancore, who, at my request, had secured his services as teacher of Sanskrit to my son. During all these days of the Swami's stay he never once came to my house. As the Swami was leaving, he made his appearance and implored me to arrange for an interview, however short, even if it be of a few minutes' duration. He had heard of the arrival and stay with me of a highly learned Sannyâsin from the North, but had been ill and could not come. He was anxious to have some conversation. The Swami and Mr. Bhattacharya were just then descending the stairs to get into their carriage and drive away. The Pandit entreated me in the most pressing manner to ask the Swami for at least a few minutes' delay. On being informed of this, the Swami entered into a brief conversation with him in Sanskrit, which lasted seven or eight minutes only. At that time I knew no Sanskrit, and so I could not understand what they talked about. But the Pandit told me that it related to some knotty and controverted point in *vyâkarana* (grammar) and that, even during that brief conversation, the Swami showed that he could display his accurate knowl-

edge of Sanskrit grammar and his perfect mastery of the Sanskrit language.

With this the Swami's stay of nine days had come to a close. It seems to me in my recollection of today somewhat of a nine days' wonder, but the impression is one which never can be effaced. The Swami's towering personality and marvellous career must be said to mark an epoch in history whose full significance can become discernible only in some distant future time. But to those who have had the privilege of knowing him intimately, he seems to be only comparable to some of those immortal spiritual personages who have shed an undying lustre on this Holy Land. It is very pleasant to have recorded these personal reminiscences, meagre as they are, and even though they can add little or nothing to our knowledge of the Master, who enchanted and enchained the heart of human society in the East and in the West in his time and generation.

(*The Life of Swami Vivekananda,* first edition, Volume IV, *Appendix I*)

VI

I MUST first mention the name of Mr. M. C. Alasinga Perumal, late headmaster of the High School attached to Pacheyappa's College. From the time when the Swami first came to Madras in December 1892 after his visit to Kanyakumari and Rameswaram, he attached himself with adoring love and never-failing enthusiasm to the Swami's person and to his ministry in the world in all its phases and details—an adhesion and service to the Great Master which, to me at least, has always seemed a thing of beauty and brought to me a consolation and joy in many a dark hour of my heart's sinkings. That our degenerate Hindu society could still produce one who had in his nature so pure and perfect a passion of reverence and tender affection towards the Swami's prophetic soul was to me a discovery, and I have seen nothing like it in this southern peninsula at least of the Indian continent. He was the life and soul of the work of all kinds done in South India in support of the Swami's ministry, or by his direction and suggestion. "Achinga"—as we used familiarly to call him—was hard at work and ever vigilant and got everything needing to be done in order to make the Swami's reception at Madras a success. He first got up some sort of a reception committee—one not of a formal character, but which was of use to him. Dr. Subrahmanya Ayyar was its chief, and it included Messrs. V. Krishnaswami Ayyar, P. R. Sundara Ayyar, Mr. C. Nanjunda Rao, V. C. Seshachari, Col. Olcott, Dr. Barrows of Chicago (who had come over to deliver a course of lectures on Christianity) and others. The committee got ready two or three leaflets for distribution everywhere in the town; the object was to give our people some account of the Swami's memorable work of preaching in the West, and contained chiefly extracts

from the opinions formed of him by leaders of thought and the leading journals in the United States and Great Britain. They also arranged for the putting up of a number of triumphal arches from the Egmore railway station to Kernan Castle and for sticking placards regarding the Swami's arrival in all parts of the City. Everywhere a wide interest had already been created in consequence of the reports, daily received and published in the papers, of the hearty welcome accorded to the Swami in his progress from Colombo, through Rameswaram, Ramnad, and Sivaganga, to Madura, Trichinopoly, and Kumbakonam. Even in the small and insignificant intermediate rural railway stations men flocked to catch a glimpse of the great man. Men came from the mofussils in large numbers to Madras to meet the Swami, or even to have the inestimable privilege of looking at this new and world-moving messenger of the Indian sages of yore. Lots of young men who had come to Madras for the University Examinations remained to have a glimpse of him and to hear his voice and to learn his message to his countrymen. Everyone—in fact men of all ages, classes, and sects—felt that the Swami had done an everlasting service to the cause of the motherland and its immortal prophets and *âchâryas* (teachers) and *gurus* (religious leaders), past and present, such as no one had ever done before—and that he was not only a true saint and religious messenger from India to the civilization of the West, but a patriot who had raised his country and his compatriots in the estimation of the civilized world. Everywhere the Swami's personality, mission, and achievements became the one topic of absorbing interest, and all awaited his arrival with eager interest and intense expectation. The *Hindu* published a leader extolling the Swami's work in the West in terms of the highest enthusiasm leading up towards its close to a white heat of passionate outburst. Indeed, one still remembers vividly how among its educated leaders many here and there

quoted its concluding sentences, asking who there could be who would not associate himself with the Swami's great work for humanity and advance it in all possible ways.

The morning previous to the Swami's arrival Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, two of his zealous Western disciples, accompanied by one Mr. Harrison—a Ceylonese Buddhist and an admirer and friend of the Swami—arrived at Madras and were met at the railway station and taken to Kernan Castle. That same evening a public reception was arranged for them, and it was attended, among others, by Col. Olcott. I thought, from what Col. Olcott said to me, that he was a warm friend and sincere admirer of the Swami. I had also once read in the *Theosophist* a paragraph that the Swami had, during his previous visit to Madras in December 1892, gone to the Adyar headquarters and received a hearty welcome there from the Colonel and his associates. Hence what we heard from the Swami on his arrival the next day and his outburst against the Theosophical Society at his first Madras lecture in a manner altogether unusual with him came on me as a surprise; but more of this later in its due place. We were all squatting on the floor in the temporary platform at one end of the *shâmiânâ* (canopy) put up for the Swami's interviews and question meetings at the Kernan Castle. Mrs. Sevier was saying something about the Swami's stay in London, and about one of his meetings or lectures at Mr. Sturdy's house. Colonel Olcott at once quoted the example of Mrs. Besant, and asked Mrs. Sevier to take a chair while we remained squatting, and tell us all she knew about the Swami and how she became his disciple. At once Mrs. Sevier replied that she was not Mrs. Besant—that, while Mrs. Besant was a speaker and scholar and could command every one's attention on any and every occasion to what fell from her lips, she (Mrs. Sevier) was only a plain woman and could say nothing which was of much interest or importance to

them. Col. Olcott was nonplussed and became silent. After making their acquaintance with the visitors, all who had assembled lingered on for a while and then dispersed.

The next morning was the long and eagerly expected day of the Swami's arrival. Enormous crowds wended their way to the railway station and also gathered together and kept waiting for him to have a glance while he passed through the streets in order to reach Kernan Castle. The station, inside and outside, was a veritable sea of heads and faces. The previous night my neighbour, Mr. R. V. Srinivasa Iyer came to me and asked me to accompany him in his carriage to the Egmore railway station. I had known him for several years as a colleague of mine in the Kumbakonam College and had also frequently met him after his transfer to the revenue department. He had never felt much interest in religious problems or personalities, though he had been a diligent student of European philosophy. His offer to join in the welcome which the city of Madras was offering to the Swami was to me a pleasant surprise. On our way he said he too was eager to see what the Swami was like after all the glory he had gained in his career as an Indian teacher and promulgator of our ancient philosophic religion. At last the train steamed into the station to the great delight of all who had gathered there and been kept waiting owing to the lateness of its arrival. The Swami alighted in company with two of his fellow-disciples of Shri Ramakrishna and another who was his own disciple and had been attracted to him while he was formerly a station-master in some railway line in North India. They had gone to Colombo to meet him and to give him new *kâshâya* (ochre) clothing for his wear as an Indian Sannyâsin in lieu of his European constume. The Swami was also accompanied by Mr. Goodwin, the Englishman who had been engaged to take down in shorthand his lectures in America and who had become

his disciple and refused to take any wages for his work and now had got himself attached to the Swami for the rest of his life. He was clothed in purely Indian and Brahmin costume to the surprise of us all. A few introductions were made to the Swami at the station. As I had known the Swami at Trivandrum in December 1892 even before he paid his first visit to Madras, and as we had moved and conversed freely and intimately with each other, I was very eager to meet the Swami at once, but owing to the enormous crowds, it was a pure chance, except in the case of a few big men, whether one got an opportunity or not to see the Swami at the station. I managed, however, to elbow my way through the crowd to where the Swami stood and to see and exchange a few words with him before he entered his carriage and the procession started. I made a *sâshtânga namaskâra* at the Swami's feet, and asked whether he still remembered me. He replied that he never forgot a face and referred to his staying in my house at Trivandrum. It was then that my name was mentioned to him by Dr. Subrahmanya Aiyar. Professor M. Rangacharya, my old friend and colleague at the Kumbakonam College, had also accompanied the Swami from Kumbakonam, and both of us went together to Castle Kernan, following the procession. As we went on, we found that at the beach some students had insisted on having the horses unharnessed, and dragged the carriage themselves for some distance. This idea of displacing the horses and of young men dragging the carriage was rather disgusting to our Indian ideas and tastes. Later in the day I mentioned the matter to the Swami himself, and he too seemed not to quite relish the idea. He told me that he had already himself mentioned it to the students who had made and carried out the proposal.

On the route from Kumbakonam, the Swami had been joined at the Chingleput railway station by the representative of the *Madras Mail* who sought an inter-

view. The interview, in the form of questions and answers, appeared that evening in that paper and gave a most interesting account of the Swami's observations and activities in America and of his future aims during his stay in India. Later on Mr. Rangacharya told me that the questions put were all his own and had elicited from the Swami his short, pithy, and ready replies. The *Madras Mail's* representative had only to take them down in shorthand. At this distance of time, however, I only remember that the Swami said that the American..., men were absorbed in business and money-making and so the women were the masters of the situation and availed themselves of every opportunity to improve their minds and culture, and that it was the women who largely attended his lectures and classes. The Swami expected that his labours would bear better fruit in England than in America; for though the English people were rather "thick-skulled" and therefore were slow to take in new ideas, they never flinched from carrying out their convictions into practice when once their minds had been influenced. The Swami arrived at Kernan Castle and met several *gurubhâis* or brother-disciples of Shri Ramakrishna, and entered into close and familiar intercourse with them. Their simple ways and hearty greetings, their easy manners and frank unconventional behaviour towards each other, were very attractive to all who had the privilege of getting into the interior of Castle Kernan. The Swami and they soon sat at dinner and when it was over, the Swami came up into the hall in the upper storey for rest and slumber after his hard labours during his journey in receiving deputations and replying to addresses and almost always in giving more or less formal discourses when the demands and importunities for them could not be put off.

The Swami's health had largely given way in the course of his unwearied labours in the West during three years of lecturing, teaching, and training of disciples in

various courses of Vedic discipline and methods of meditation. Much anxiety was evinced by his associates and felt even by himself in regard to this matter. It was a wonder how he responded under these conditions to the demands made on his almost exhausted stock of energy, while on this return visit of his to the motherland and in the course of his energetic attempts to start his mission of India's spiritual renovation under his Great Master's banner and the influence of his own unique personality and enlightened guidance.

Professor Rangacharya and myself were invited by "Achinga" to interview the Swami and arrived at an arrangement with regard to his lecture programme during his Madras sojourn to satisfy the public expectations and also to reveal to his countrymen his plans and hopes for the future. The Professor was returning to Kumbakonam the next day, and so the matter must be settled at once. The Swami had taken some rest, and we found him seated on a carpet in a room upstairs. When we broached the topics, the Swami replied that we might settle between ourselves the topics of his discourses and simply inform him and leave them in his hands. His first public appearance was to be made in order to receive and reply to the address to be presented to him on behalf of the people of Madras, then there were to be four public addresses, devoted to a comprehensive and detailed exposition of his ideas regarding India's mission to the world and the mission of her sages to their own children in the motherland. The Swami had also to reveal his means and methods for renovating the national and spiritual life of India in accordance with its altered conditions. We fixed the Swami's topics (1) My plan of campaign, (2) The Sages of India, (3) Vedanta in its relation to practical life, and (4) the Future of India. The Swami also had, at "Achinga's" special request, to deliver an address to the Triplicane Literary Society on "Some Aspects of his Work in India".

This programme was actually carried out, and all the topics mentioned were fully treated by the Swami according to his own method and manner. The Swami also consented to have two morning sittings at the Castle to meet people who desired to put him questions and elicit answers on any topic they liked.

The same evening, or the next day's forenoon (I do not remember which, very likely the latter) Rangacharya and myself wished to listen to a little music of the Swami of which we had heard a great deal. We suggested the Ashtapadi. The Swami had no public engagements, and, having had necessary rest, was in one of his sweetest and most serene moods and at once responded. He sang one of Jayadeva's songs in a most entrancing voice and in the appropriate *rāga* (tune) which we never heard before in this part of the country. The impression then received is one never to be effaced, and the Swami revealed himself to us in one of the lighter veins or aspects of his composite nature and his weird and soaring personality —I may also here say that from the first day on which he reached the Kernan Castle and up to the last, his residence was at all times crowded with visitors from all classes of the population and by the people of both sexes. Many delicate and retiring women of high and respectable families approached the Castle Kernan as if they were visiting a temple. Their devotional feeling reached its climax when they gained admission inside and prostrated themselves before the Swami as if he were one of our *avatāras* or *āchāryas* revisiting the scene of their labours. Crowds kept constantly waiting in front of the Castle at all hours of the day and even for sometime after it was dark. It had gone forth that he was an *avatāra* of Sambandhaswâmi (a Shaiva saint) and the idea was taken up everywhere and with absolute trustfulness among the common people. Whenever the people who kept watching and waiting caught a glimpse of him while passing to and fro within the Castle grounds

or when he passed by them to get into his coach on the way to one of his meetings, they prostrated *en masse* before him. The scene on such occasions was as impressive as it was unusual to see. Even when our heads of *maths* (monasteries) appeared in public on the rare occasions in which they went on a visitation tour among their enrolled or avowed disciples, or paid a visit to a temple deity, or passed in procession (*vishwa-yâtrâ*) through the streets of the place in which they had their permanent residence (*math*)—I had never witnessed this kind of collective worship and homage giving conspicuous vent to the popular emotions of love and reverence, and revealing to the world where the heart of the nation still lay. The renunciation of the world's pompous vanities and its unsubstantial fleeting attachments was the sole means to the attainment of the lotus feet of the Supreme and the resulting liberation from the miseries of the *sâmsârika* (transmigrating) wanderings in the material universe.

When the appointed day, the third after his arrival, came for the Swami to receive the Madras address, he left the Castle Kernan at about 4 p.m. It was a day of universal and high-wrought expectations. The interest felt and evinced by the entire educated community and the student population of Madras had reached heights and summits not easily imaginable. The scene in front of the Victoria Hall and along the roads and by-ways leading to it defies adequate definition or accurate description. The Swami's carriage, as it passed, could not easily find the space it needed for reaching its destination. Professor Rangacharya and myself, at the Swami's gracious request, took our seats in his carriage. I enjoyed the infinite pleasure and privilege of once more looking at his wonderful eyes direct, recalling to my recollection all he had achieved and mentally running over what his future career might be as the minister of the Vedic religion of the future. I could not but indulge

in high hopes and aspirations regarding the future of this great land of Bhârata (India) after it had yielded itself in faith and hope to this new heaven-sent messenger of our holy *rishis* (seers). I must avow that so far a gaping width or chasm separates the expectations of that moment and the actualities of the quarter of a century that has since passed. There is, however, no need at all for despondency. I fully believe that the propaganda then started by the Swami will sooner or later attain developments which will command our confidence in the efficacy of the working constitution framed by him, even though its rate of progress towards the ultimate goal, namely, the spiritualization of all human nature and human institutions, must necessarily be slow.

As we alighted from the carriage, there were loud cries of "Open air meeting" from all the vast crowds assembled in front of the Hall. It had been arranged that the address to the Swami should be presented inside the Hall. The Hall was filled to its utmost capacity. Sir V. Bhashyam Ayyangar had already occupied the chair. The Swami took his seat on the dais by his side, and Mr. M. O. Parthasarathy Ayyangar read the address. All eyes were fixed on Swamiji, and expectation was at its highest pitch. Every heart was receptive and ready to imbibe the sweet flow of melody from the voice and wisdom of the Great Master on whose every word his Western hearers had so long hung with delight and which had charmed all ranks and conditions of people of both sexes in the very life centres of the material civilization of the West. Meanwhile loud and continuous shouts of "Open air meeting" breaking into the Hall, interrupted the proceedings within. They issued from every part of the immense gathering of students and young people outside, so that the Swami's heart was touched and it became impossible for him to speak from the dais where he was standing. He said also that he could not disappoint the countless masses of the young

men, eager and enthusiastic, assembled beyond the doors. The Swami and his crowded audience outside issued out to meet and mingle with the vast and seething mass of human faces and figures visible as far as the eye could reach and which rejoiced and broke into thundering shouts of joy when the Swami appeared before them. Soon, however, he found that the sounds and shouts from vast crowds made it impossible that his voice could be heard everywhere or even beyond the few who stood in his neighbourhood. The Swami's voice, too, in spite of its attractive sweetness and the even flow of its thrilling cadence, wanted those qualities of sonorousness and strength which, mounting to the swell of a trumpet blast, made a Gladstone, Bright, or O'Connel heard to the utmost limits of a vast concourse of fifty thousand people or more. The Swami spoke from the top of a Madras coach—"in Gita fashion" as he called it, to the mirth of all who heard him—meaning that there was some sort of distant analogy between himself speaking from a coach and imparting his counsel and inspiration to his people at the dawn of the new epoch he was inaugurating, and Shri Krishna re-delivering his lost message of *yoga* to a world which had allowed it to sink into oblivion owing to the steady decline of national spirituality during the "great efflux of time" (Gita, IV.) The huge crowd became so unmanageable, and their loud shouts and cheers so swelled as to make the Swami's voice inaudible. So he spoke briefly, though he did not fail to clearly enunciate the central truths of Hinduism, how renunciation, love, and fearlessness were India's offer to humanity in order to help souls cross the ocean of *samsâra* and the "Mystery of Life" into the Joy of Truth and the ever-present realization and illumination of the Self, the One only without a second....

But the Swami found it impossible to proceed further and concluded by thanking all who had heard him to "keep up" their enthusiasm and to give all the

help he "required" from them, "to do great things for India" and carry out all his plans for the revival of this "big gigantic race". . . .

The subject of the first lecture was "My plan of Campaign". The Swami told me and others in the course of his conversation that he intended "to be out once for all" with the truth regarding what the Theosophical Society had done for him in America and elsewhere. Some friends had told the Swami that Colonel Olcott had been claiming that the Theosophical Society had paved the way for the Swami in America, that had it not been for the spade work done by the Society in its mission of spreading "occultism" or "ancient wisdom" everywhere, the Swami would not have been able to accomplish even the little he had been able to do in propagating the truths and ideals of the Vedantic religion and philosophy. The Swami had heard, too, on his arrival in Madras, from one of his *gurubhâis* that a well-known Buddhistic friend of his at Calcutta had received a letter from a prominent Madras Theosophist in which that gentleman, on hearing that the Swami had from America once wired to his friends in Madras that he had only a trifling sum left of the funds he had received when starting for the Parliament of Religions and would soon be nearing starvation-point and without the warm clothing required for the approaching cold season, had written as follows of the Swami, "they would soon be rid of the devil". This letter had been handed over for safe custody to the Belur Math. The Swami also told us that, wherever he had been invited to lecture in America, the Theosophists had tried to hinder his own Vedantic propaganda in various ways. Moreover, the prejudice which many leading Americans had everywhere contracted against the Mahâtmic cranks of Theosophy and its puerile trumperies and monstrous fictions had made them imagine that the Swami's mission, too, was a kindred movement of obscurantism appeal-

ing similarly to the credulity imbedded in the innermost recesses of the minds of the common masses of men and must be similarly ostracized by all enlightened leaders and by all who care to base their beliefs and convictions regarding religion on sound methods of investigation and proof and on the experiences resulting from established and authoritative processes of meditation. The Swami had to remove mountains of unreasoning dislike and unfounded opposition which had been engendered everywhere owing to this circumstance. Moreover, the Christian missionaries, too, tried to prevent people everywhere from receiving him or even countenancing his endeavours to enlist support and sympathy for the doctrines and spiritual methods of the Vedas and the Vedanta. The Swami told me that even (Mr.) Mazoomdar, a leader of the Brahmo Samaj, who was attending the Parliament of Religions—a man whom he had known and esteemed almost from his boyhood and student days —joined the missionaries in the work of spreading false reports against him and discrediting his endeavours on behalf of the Vedic religion and went about saying that that religion was receding and losing its hold on the Indian mind—on the cultured intellects of India as well as on the mass mind—and that therefore Christ had come to stay in India. The Swami also showed me two issues of a Christian weekly journal published in America —whose name I do not distinctly recollect at this distance of time, but perhaps its name was *The Witness*— in which the missionaries had published an appeal for funds in aid of Mazoomdar's propagandist work in India, pointing out how he too would preach Jesus Christ and help forward the ultimate triumph of the Christian religion. The Swami condemned in unmeasured terms this transaction as opposed to all recognized canons of honourable public life and the relations between leaders of opposing creeds or churches. It was Mazoomdar that the Swami had in view, when he referred in this first

Madras lecture of his to "one of my own countrymen", "the leader of the reform party in India" (and so on).... Some of the Swami's friends and supporters in Madras tried to dissuade him from making these references to his enemies and detractors in America, and especially his attack on the Theosophical Society and its founder. They told him that several members of that Society entertained unlimited regard and reverence towards him and had gathered in large numbers from the mofussil to greet and honour him on his return from the West. The Swami was inexorable, and gave forcible expression to the facts as he knew them and the feelings evoked in him by the troubles he had had to encounter from those who had ever been proclaiming from the house-tops that they formed "the nucleus of universal brotherhood"....

The first of the four lectures arranged for him was delivered on the evening of Thursday the ninth, the fourth day after his arrival (sixth). That same day he lectured in the morning at the Triplicane Literary Society. As I could not be present at that lecture, I can say nothing about it from my own impressions. Nor was I present at his visit to the Social Reform Association on Wednesday the 10th. I however asked the Swami about what happened, and he replied that he said nothing of special interest, but gave little or no encouragement to the revolutionary views entertained by its chief members, though he "admitted the need for social reforms", such as the removal of untouchability, the restoration and re-distribution of the caste system so as to recover its ancient basis, etc.

Before I pass on, I must go back and narrate some incidents of the 8th February. I have the dates, and will try to preserve the chronological order of the facts, so far as I can rely on my memory of them. At about noon, Prof. P. Lakshmi Narasu—whom I have always esteemed as a gentleman of great learning and high character—came to the Castle, accompanied by the late Mr. N. K.

Ramaswami Iyer. Mr. Lakshmi Narasu was a student of science and an avowed Buddhist, but I did not know who his companion was. The latter gentleman I learnt was the publisher, and the former the editor and the leading (or even the sole) contributor to a journal which was appearing somewhat irregularly and abandoned after a few issues had been published, called *The Awakener of India*. It was so named in order to deny (or dispute) the impression or implication conveyed by the title of another journal, a monthly, which had been started at Madras some time previously with the support or at the suggestion of the Swami, viz *The Awakened India* (or *Prabuddha Bhârata*) which was later on transferred to the Advaita Ashrama established by the Swami at Almora and is still published there. These two visitors of the Swami were evidently of opinion that his mission and labours in America and the propaganda work started in Madras at his instance by the publication of the *Brahmavâdin* and *Prabuddha Bhârata* had yet had no effect in imparting a new impulse of activity, and India still remained sunk as deep as ever in her lethargic slumber of ages. Their own *Awakener of India,* however, was, on the whole, a bright and rousing performance while it lasted. I still remember some vitriolic contributions on what it called "Blavatskosophy", containing uncompromising attacks on the creed of Theosophy as formulated by M. Blavatsky in her writings. On entering the side-room upstairs, I saw the Swami's two visitors and others seated, and the Swami in front of them but close to one of the walls, though not leaning against it and sitting in his usual *vyâkhyâsana,* posture appropriate to an expounder of the *shâstras* (scriptures). Mr. Lakshmi Narasu sat calm and silent like one cofident of his own invincible position of strength. As I entered the room, his companion, whom we all knew well during his subsequent career, was saying, "We want, Swami, to have a free talk on various problems of philosophy and religion, especially on the

Vedanta to which we have strong objections. When will you be able to find the time for us?" I took my seat, when the Swami called me to his side. Soon he said, with his usual smile lightening up his face, "Here is my friend, Sundararaman ; he has been a Vedantist all his life, and he will meet all your arguments. You can refer to him." This greatly enraged N. K. Ramaswami Iyer who turned at me with eyes betokening scorn, if not contempt, and then turned once more to the Swami, "We have come here to meet you, and not any other person." The Swami did not reply, of course. Meanwhile, other persons and topics turned up. The Swami remained where he was for some time longer. I left the room, and do not know what passed afterwards there.

In the evening of the same day, the Swami, after a short afternoon nap, was seated in the back room upstairs in the Castle Kernan and I found him in one of those moods of sweet serenity when his face assumed the air both of a child and an angel from heaven, an appearance with which I had become familiar at Trivandrum and whose fascination was irresistible to all who had the fortune to meet and converse with him on such occasions or moments. I have just mentioned the Swami's afternoon nap, and I will now say what used to happen on such occasions. He was always having visitors about him and sat listening or speaking to them. Suddenly his eyes became still, though remaining open, and he seemed not to listen or even to be conscious of what was passing about him. When once more he became aware of the scene, he seemed as if he had been utterly insensible to it. He had been neither asleep nor awake. On one of such occasions during these nine days at the Castle, I asked the Swami what sort of mood it was. He only answered, "I can't say what." I did not wish to press the matter. I do not know if it was not a case of voluntary retirement for the nonce into his inner-self as a sort of escape from the weariness of the busy scene and life about

him. Some may think that it was simply a state of drowsiness preliminary to the regular slumber which the Swami fell into later. But I who have seen him both while getting into, and getting out of, this condition, and remember, too, how long he remained in a sitting posture and how peculiar his eyes appeared while they remained fixed and without the least sign of movement, cannot help saying that he seemed to me like one who for a while had left his physical tenement and fleeted away to another state of existence, something like what is described in one of the many strange episodes narrated in the *Vâsishtha-Mahârâmâyana.*

Later still in the same evening, at about 4 p.m., there came a deputation to the Swami from Tiruppattur in the Salem District, a place now transferred to the North Arcot District. The Swami was, I think, seated in the same room as before. The deputation consisted of five or six persons, all Shaivites. There was no Brahmin among them. This would be easily understood when one knows that they seemed—at least to me—to have been prepared and sent on to meet the Swami by the then District Munsiff of the place, who was later on in the same year to become the founder and editor of the *Siddhânta-Deepikâ,* now for some years defunct, and also the founder and organizer of the movement known as the "Shaiva-Siddhânta-Mahâsabhâ", which continues still to hold a peripatetic annual gathering and has also given the inspiration for many local Shaiva Sabhâs and their activities and annual festive gatherings. Mr. Nallaswami Pillai was well known to me and even very friendly. Though he was a strong advocate of the Shaiva cult and *siddhânta,* he wanted to liberalize it and propagate its tenets so as to make it acceptable to all, not only in India, but all over the world. He seemed to me—and I still think so—to have been fired by the example of the Swami and his activities and triumphal progress in America, England, India, and elsewhere. He was anxious to

maintain the traditions of Shaivism, and to include the Brahmins, too, among the believers and brethren of the Shaiva faith. As the Swami was an Advaitin, the deputation from Tiruppattur was perhaps, expressly, prepared and sent to beard the lion in his den and to tackle him on some fundamental points of Advaita doctrine. The head of the deputation had a whole sheet filled with questions, and he told the Swami that he wanted answers. The Swami nodded assent, and wanted him to begin. The first question was, "How does the Unmanifested become the manifested?" The Swami's reply came on at once without a moment's hesitation, but it fell, too, like thunder from the blue vault of heaven, paralyzing its victims and stultifying their nervous system and its workings. The same question was put later at one of the Swami's question meetings (in the *shâmianâ* put up for the purpose at Kernan Castle) by a young Madhva Brahmin who was then, I think, a college student and is now an active member of the Madras Corporation. He, too, got the same answer, couched in the same or similar terms, and with the same stunning and electrifying effect. The Swami's reply was, "Questions of how, why, or wherefore relate to the manifested world, and not to the Unmanifested which is above all change and causation and therefore above all relation to the changing universe and our *sâmsârika* (transmigrating) life in it. The question, therefore, is not one which can be reasonably put. Put a proper question—a more rational question—and I will answer." The reply brought about an *impasse,* and his interlocutors felt that they were face to face with one who could meet and solve philosophic puzzles and queries of all kinds, a master before whom they must need bow in humility and meekness rather than launch forth in a game of dialectics. They seemed at once to have forgotten their carefully prepared and transcribed scheme and synopsis of questions in the manuscript they had brought, and suddenly, felt the wand of the magician in

their front, and his enchantment was stealing over their minds and hearts with its occult power and overpowering grasp. The Swami at once realized the situation. Then followed a scene which it is not possible adequately to depict. This past master of the arts and weapons of Indian dialectics, this lion of the Vedanta with his conquering air and roar, the impetuous and rolling thunder of his voice, and his lower jaw symbolizing, as he once told me himself, his "combative temperament", all on a sudden became transformed into what seemed a long-lost comrade of one's youth or a tenderly-loved brother restored after a long separation and whole-heartedly interested in all that concerned one's welfare. The Swami began to address them in a strain and in tones captivating all his listeners and all who were present. He spoke somewhat as follows : The best way to serve and seek God is to serve the needy, to feed the hungry, to console the stricken, to help the fallen and friendless, to attend upon and serve those who are ill and require service, and so on and on. The deputation kept listening while the Swami's heart went out to them in a fervour of passionate exhortation to serve their fellow-men. It seemed as if after all they had met the one messenger of joy and peace from heaven for whom they had been searching in vain, one in whom there was no doubt or equivocation, a master who had searched their hearts and finding the void in them, had supplied the pabulum they needed, had taught them the central truth of life and of deliverance from its troubles. The shades of evening fell, they offered their homage at the feet of the saint ; and as they took their departure, their countenances showed traces of a new light having touched their hearts and given them a new impulse to life and work.

We now come on to the day of his second Madras lecture. That morning I met the Swami at the house of Dr. Subrahmanya Iyer in the Luz Church Road at the latter's special invitation. We met in the room upstairs,

and the Swami explained to us his plans for a vast religious reformation and revival in India which would serve to bring Hindus, Christians, Mohammedans, Buddhists, and all under a common flag of brotherly union and serve as a star of hope and harmony, and a ceaseless incentive to the striving by men of all creeds and colours after a common goal of national aspiration. He wanted a new sort and style of temple with a hall in the front containing statues of the sages and prophets of all great religions, and behind it an inner precinct containing a pillar with the letter (or letters) *Om* inscribed on it and underneath the open sky. Nothing else worth chronicling occurred here, except that the kind host had got ready for the Swami a lot of sweet *lâddus* and other sweet and well-spiced preparations of which he partook but in name. There was also the inevitable coffee which the Swami barely tasted. The Swami was, perhaps, never a good eater, at least was not one such, to my knowledge. When he stayed with me at Trivandrum, he used to take but one light meal in the daytime, and only a little milk at night. At the Castle itself, in course of the day, I saw nothing noteworthy. There was the usual stream of visitors steadily flowing, and among them also the usual flow of lady-visitors of high family status come to worship at the Swami's feet and receive his blessing. There was one young man from Coimbatore who had read the Swami's lectures on *râja-yoga,* published by Longmans, and had tried to practise *yoga* according to the instructions conveyed therein. He related his experiences, and among them he mentioned that he felt that his body was growing lighter and lighter. He also informed the Swami that some of his friends, and especially Pandits, had warned him of the danger and even certainty of becoming insane, if he persisted in his *yogic* practices without seeking a practical instructor to correct or enlighten him wherever he went wrong or had a doubt as to the next step in his course of *yoga*. The Swami told him not to give ear to

these men, but to persist in his resolve to reach the goal of *samâdhi*. Each step he won would lead him onward and enable him to overcome obstacles. There was no danger at all anywhere and he was always ready to help him whenever he needed help. The young man was quite satisfied and left for his native place. He did not seem in the least interested by the Swami's career as a prophet of Vedantism in the West or in India at the time he met him in the Castle.

In the evening the Swami delivered his second lecture on "The Sages of India". The Victoria Hall was crowded to its utmost capacity. The one exceptional feature of this day's gathering was that the editor of the *Madras Mail*, the late Mr. H. Beauchamp, was present on the platform. No other European in Madras was present at any of the Swami's lectures or meetings. But he rose and left in the middle of the Swami's address. I noticed, but it might have been a mere accident, that, just as Mr. Beauchamp was leaving the Swami was saying of Shri Krishna the following, after quoting a well-known verse of the *Gopikâ-Gitâ* : "One kiss of those divine lips, and all sorrow vanishes and the thirst for Thee increases for ever," etc. This was a free rendering of the verse quoted. I trust that Mr. Beauchamp's British sense of social propriety was not wounded, and the Swami's utterances regarding Shri Krishna was not the direct cause of his leaving the meeting....

On Friday the 12th of February I met the Swami twice. In the morning, the *shâmiânâ* at the Castle was full to overflowing and bubbling with enthusiasm when the Swami arrived and took his seat on the platform. We had read glowing accounts of the manner in which he had replied to questions put to him in America, how his replies came like "Flashes of lightning" and revealed to his audiences the extraordinary force of his intellect and his grasp of the varieties of life and the universe, how his retorts to those who attempted to land him in a

deadlock or discomfiture carried confusion into the ranks of his opponents or detractors ! Here was the opportunity for all to witness his dialectical sword-play and his sympathetic response to honest inquiry, and he had a large and admiring audience before him. He rose to the occasion, but I regret that my memory avails me not, and most or all of what happened is obliterated and gone out of my mind altogether. There was a young European lady of high intelligence and attractive in appearance and demeanour who put various questions on topics of Vedanta : What is realization of the *âtman* ? What is *mâyâ* ? What is the relation of the one existence to the universe ? And so on. The Swami's resources of knowledge and argument were all brought out in full to the delight and enlightenment of the lady and the entire audience. She expressed her intense gratification and gratitude to the Swami, and told him that she would be leaving for London in a few days to resume her social work among the dwellers in its slums and how great a privilege it would be to her if she could ever meet him again, but doubted much whether it would be vouchsafed to her. The Swami replied that she might rest assured as to that, as he intended to go back to London after taking some rest and starting the Shri Ramakrishna Mission here. The Swami rose from his seat and advanced a few steps to see that way was made for her to leave the meeting, and remained standing till she bowed and retired. In the afternoon, she came back, I was told, with her father who was engaged in Christian missionary work in Madras, and sought and obtained for him an interview which lasted nearly an hour. When I saw the Swami after his visitors had departed, I asked him how he found the strength and stamina needed for this incessant activity, and he gave me the following reply full of significance to those who can appreciate it : "Spiritual work never tires in India." I have already referred above to the young Madhva student who put a question, the same

as stood first in the long array with which the members of the deputation from Tiruppattur, and had hoped to confound and baffle the Swami. The whilom young questioner of the Swami has now, I believe, developed into an ardent and public-spirited citizen of Madras and is active among its city-fathers who form the Corporation Assembly. I hope he will not misunderstand me if ever these pages or lines happen to attract his notice. The Swami's answer was given in the very words already quoted by me, of course so far as I remember them at this distance of time. The terms of the reply confounded him somewhat, as they did almost every one to whom I had seen them addressed or have myself addressed them sometimes since after these meetings and interviews of mine with the Swami. The point raised is one fundamental to the Vedanta and is perhaps met somewhat differently therein ; but the Swami's manner of meeting it is quite his own, though implied in the language of the great *bhâshyakâra* (commentator), Shri Shankarâchârya. As I have earlier given the exact terms of the Swami's reply, I shall not repeat. But the young man as he then was, who put the question felt somewhat stunned and confused for the nonce, and replied, "What, Sir ?" The audience murmured somewhat when he used the term, "Sir", in addressing the Swami. But the incident closed at that point, so far as I can recollect it now. Another interesting event then occurred. A Vaishnava Pandit spoke to the Swami in Sanskrit and raised some knotty point in the Vedanta for discussion. As at that time, I had not studied Sanskrit, I was not in a position to know what it exactly was, and I can now say nothing of it. The Swami patiently heard the Pandit, but then began addressing the audience in English. He said he did not care to waste his time in mere fruitless wranglings on doctrinal details which had no practical value in life. The Pandit then asked the Swami to tell him in precise language whether he was an Advaitin or Dvaitin. The Swami

replied again, and in English and in a tone and voice still ringing in my ears, "Tell the Pandit that, so long as I have this body, I am a Dvaitin, but not afterwards. This incarnation of mine is to help to put an end to these useless and mischievous squabbles and puzzles which only serve to distract the mind and make men weary of life and even turn them into sceptics and atheists." The Pandit then said in Tamil, "The Swami's statement is really an avowal that he is an Advaitin." The Swami rejoined, "Let it be so". The matter then dropped.

Yet another incident at this meeting, and it has a personal interest for me. I have mentioned the name of the late Mr. R. V. Srinivasa Iyer, secretary to the Board of Revenue, whom I accompanied to the Egmore railway station on the day the Swami arrived. Once we were conversing about the Swami and his career and ministry among men in the West and here in India after his return from America. Mr. Srinivasa Iyer said that, so long as no one remembered what occurred in previous births, no relation of cause and effect could be discovered between what then occurred and one's present experiences of life. What then was the profit to be gained by the teachings of the Vedanta regarding liberation and the means to it? So long as there is no proof of *karma* (result of past works) and of reincarnation as its fruit, one can rest content with learning or endeavouring how to get on here, and there the matter ends. The Vedanta has no practical value, and has only a speculative interest for students of philosophy and metaphysics. He wanted me to put a question or two to the Swami and obtain his reply. The questions were as follows, and I give also the Swami's replies.

Q. 1. So long as we have no memory of previous births, how can the doctrines of *karma* and reincarnation command assent or have a practical bearing and significance in life? How can they be effective as an impulse to purification in thought and act and thereby lead to the

attempt to realize the *âtman* and gain liberation from *samsâra* (worldly existence) ?

A. Even in this life we have no continuous memory of events, and still we act as if they are related as cause and effect and influence our life and fortunes. Why not we act similarly in regard to the relation between the events of the past and present lives, and follow the injunctions of the Veda and of our *guru* in regard to the means of liberation from *samsâra* and its troubles past and present ?

Q. 2. In this life, we have the continuing consciousness of our personal identity as we pass through the various stages and events of our life. We have no such consciousness of personal identity persisting in relation to our past and present births.

A. We can, by going through certain well-recognized processes, gain such a consciousness of the persistence of our own personality in different births. Why don't you try ?

This was in substance what I had myself told Mr. Srinivasa Iyer from my study of the Swami's lectures and writings in the West and of translations of Indian works in English. So, I was quite satisfied. Some of the people whom I met after the meeting was over expressed the opinion that the Swami had not attempted to meet the question raised in a serious manner and he only fenced about and parried what was a home-thrust. I replied that I got exactly the answers I had expected. The Vedanta was a *practical religion,* and no mere dialectics. When I met Mr. Srinivasa Iyer later, and told him all, he told me that he was sure that he had raised the one question which needed an answer, and that no real reply had been given. It was no answer to say that our course of life must be changed so long as no attempt was made to carry conviction by argument and instruction. The practical Vedantin knows better, and there we let the matter rest.

I again met the Swami in the central hall upstairs, at about 1 p.m. Visitors were coming in as usual. But nothing of interest occurred. At last, there turned up late Mr. K. P. Shankara Menon, the then High Court Vakil, Madras, and who later became a Judge of the Travancore High Court. He seemed to have known the Swami before. He and the Swami were seated together on a sofa. I took a seat in front and kept watching what was going on. The Swami said something about the absurd lengths to which the Malabar people carried their ideas of pollution and purification and especially their cries and groans to warn or scare away untouchables while passing on the roads and lanes. Suddenly, the Swami turned to the question of castes and marriages in Malabar, and said that the Nairs had every right to claim the status of Brahmins as for several centuries or even *yugas,* the Nambudiri Brahmins had lived in *sambandham* (relation) with their women. *Manu-Smriti* insisted on seven successive generations marrying Brahmins in order that non-Brahmins may secure Brahminical status by birth. The *spirit* of Manu's ruling was fulfilled among the Nairs, for, even though there might be interruptions in the middle, there was a certainty that, on the whole, there must be at least seven times seven *sambandhams,* if the whole period of Malabar history and Malabar society were taken in consideration. Mr. Shankara Menon seemed to be much interested in the Swami's proposal or suggestion, and even seemed to think the attempt feasible and that an effort might be made to see if it could be materialized. Just at this moment, Mr. (Now Sir) C. Shankaran Nair —even then famous as a Madras lawyer and political leader—entered the hall, approached the Swami, and received a hearty welcome. He was handed to a seat on the sofa, Mr. Shankara Menon having, like myself, taken a chair. Mr. Shankaran Nair told the Swami that he had called at his residence in London when he was last there, but left on learning that he was not at home. The Swami

was about to say something when Mr. Shankara Menon, looking at Mr. Shankaran Nair, broke forth suddenly as follows : "The Swami thinks that we, Nairs, must all claim to be Brahmins, and gives a reason based on the *Manu-Smriti* where the status of a Brahmin is said to have been earned by a Shudra who had been born to seven generations of Brahmin fathers in succession." Mr. Shankaran Nair understood the situation in the twinkling of an eye, but was clearly in no mood for entering into a discussion on so delicate a matter, especially when, as it seemed to me, he found a stranger and Brahmin like myself was present and the whole discussion might generate mixed feelings and would certainly be long remembered and even recorded at some future time, even as it is being done so far as it had proceeded before Mr. Shankaran Nair appeared on the scene. Mr. Shankaran Nair dropped the topic altogether, being too sober and shrewd a man not to know that that was neither the place nor the occasion for setting a programme, or even raising a discussion regarding a social revolution of far-reaching import and involving momentous and delicate issues, and cutting at the root of existing relations, social and marital, between men and women belonging to various strata of Malabar Hindu society. Mr. Shankaran Nair stayed but a few minutes longer, and then left accompanied by Mr. Shankara Menon. . . .

The next day, Saturday the 13th of February, the Swami delivered his lecture on "Vedanta in Indian life" at the Pacheyappa's Hall. The Hall was packed to its utmost capacity. I was on the platform, and just by my side sat Mr. G. Subrahmanya Iyer, the later editor of *The Hindu*. At one point of his address the Swami addressing the students assembled before him, said something to the following effect : Don't be constantly crying out, Gita, Gita, Gita. The Gita teaching cannot be truly understood or put into practice by those who, like you, are weak in frame and whose vigour is decaying

prematurely by the cramming of text-books for examinations. Go and play football, and develop your biceps muscles, and get strong, and you will then be fit to understand the Gita teachings. Here was the opportunity for Mr. G. Subrahmanya Iyer, and he exclaimed in Tamil to those who were near him, even while the Swami was on his legs, "I have said the same thing often, but none would give ear. The Swami says it now, and you all cheer."

Mr. G. Subrahmanya Iyer had once been a very orthodox Hindu, and rigidly addicted to Vedic rituals and *sadâchâra* (observances). He changed to the opposite extreme of a social revolutionary after the virgin-widowhood of his young daughter had given him a rude and painful shock and made him realize the penalties and pains inevitably associated with Hindu orthodoxy which men had long borne and still do bear with invincible strength and serenity of heart, simply because they believe that the *shruti* and *smriti* impose them on the faithful in order to qualify them for and raise them ultimately to the spiritual blessing and innermost joy of supreme liberation from *samsâra*. Mr. Subrahmanya Iyer was in a mood of ecstasy as the Swami went on with his deliverances in this occasion on the topics of "strength" and "fearlessness", and said that without them no spiritual perfection was possible. His words came on the audience with telling effect. "Believe," he said, "that you are not the body or mind, but the soul, the *âtman*; and that is the first step to the gaining of strength and to uphold and realize the teaching of the Upanishads." He also dwelt at length on the organismal basis and value of caste. Caste was a natural order, the only natural way of solving the problem of life....Mr. G. Subrahmanya Iyer's enthusiasm and ecstacies had somewhat cooled when the Swami spoke on caste and said too, that caste was not only found in India, but everywhere, and in every country he had seen.

On Sunday, 14th of February, the Swami delivered his fourth and last lecture on the "Future of India". I never saw a more crowded scene or a more enthusiastic audience. The Swami's oratory was at its best. He seemed like a lion, traversing the platform to and fro. The roar of his voice reverberated everywhere, and with telling effect. One remarkable utterance I can never forget, and it showed the Swami's powers of foresight and omniscience : Peace, religion, language, government—all together make a nation ; but some one of these is the basis and the rest we build on that one. Religion is the keynote of Indian life and Indian nationality can be built on that basis. . . .

The next day, Monday the 15th February, the Swami left for Calcutta by steamer. Several of his admirers and followers and personal friends accompanied him in order to take leave when the steamer sailed. Mr. Tilak had invited the Swami to Poona, and he first thought of going there. But he wanted rest, and was ever pining for the Himalayan atmosphere. At the beach, several merchants of the caste of Arya-Vaishyas (known as Komattis) met him and presented a formal address of thanksgiving to him for his services to the holy motherland. The Hon. Mr. Subba Rau of Rajahmundry, presented the address to the Swami on their behalf. The Swami simply bowed his acknowledgement, and made kind inquiries of them. Several boarded the steamer, and remained with the Swami to the last. I was one of them, and the pain of having to part from this heaven-sent *mahâpurusha* (great soul) was felt by each and all of us, who kept crowding about him. I begged of the Swami the favour of a moment's interview apart, and he came. We walked a few steps, and then I asked and obtained permission to put two questions. *First,* "Swamiji, tell me, if indeed, you have done lasting good by your mission to so materialistic a people as the Americans and others in the West." He replied, "Not much. I hope that here

and there I have sown a seed which in time might grow and benefit some at least." The *second* query was, "When shall we see you again, and on your mission work in South India ?" He replied, "Have no doubt about that. I shall take some rest in the Himalayan region, and then burst on the country everywhere like an avalanche." This was not to be, and I never saw the Swami again. I had looked for the last time on his fathomless and compelling eyes, and at the prophetic fire and glow in the face of him whom I consider the greatest man and teacher of the age, a true *mahâpurusha* and messenger from the heaven to the people of India and to all mankind. Glory to Swami Vivekananda for ever and ever !

(*Vedanta Kesari, January-February 1923*)

VII

It was given to me to meet Swami Vivekananda and spend many days with him at Trivandrum towards the close of 1892 before he went to Chicago to represent Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions there in September 1893 and also at Madras after he returned from Chicago and landed at Colombo on 15th January 1897 and reached Madras a few days later. My entire life was transformed by those memorable and holy contacts. I shall briefly record my impressions here to the best of my memory....

From Cochin he came to Trivandrum where my father (Prof. K. Sundararama Iyer) and I were at that time. He brought with him a letter of introduction from Cochin to my father at Trivandrum. My father was then the tutor to Prince Mârtanda Varma of Travancore at Trivandrum. My father's services had been lent by the Madras Government to the Travancore Government. I passed my Matriculation in 1892 and joined the Maharaja's college, Trivandrum, for the Intermediate class. It was at this juncture, towards the end of 1892, that fate threw me into Swamiji's holy company.

Swamiji was then unknown to fame but felt a great urge to spread Hinduism and spirituality all over the world. One morning while I was in my house he came unexpectedly. I found a person with a beaming face and a tall, commanding figure. He had an orange-coloured turban on his head and wore a flowing orange-coloured coat which reached down to his feet and round which he wore a girdle at the waist.

Swamiji asked me, "Is Professor Sundararaman here ? I have brought a letter to be delivered to him." His voice was rich and full and sounded like a bell. Well does Romain Rolland say about the voice, "He had a beautiful

voice like a violoncello, grave without violent contrasts, but with deep vibrations that filled both hall and hearts. Once his audience was held he could make it sink to an intense *piano* piercing his hearers to the soul." I looked up and saw him and somehow in my boyishness and innocence (I was only fourteen years old at that time) I felt that he was a Maharaja. I took the letter which he gave and ran up to my father who was upstairs and told him, "A Maharaja is come and is waiting below. He gave this letter to be given to you." My father laughed and said, "Ramaswami ! What a naive simple soul you are ! Maharajas will not come to houses like ours." I replied, "Please come. I have no doubt that he is a Maharaja." My father came down, saluted Swamiji, and took him upstairs. After a pretty long conversation with Swamiji, my father came down and said to me, "He is no doubt a Maharaja, but not a king over a small extent or area of territory. He is a king of the boundless and supreme domain of the soul."

Swamiji stayed in our house for nine days at that time. My father has described his impressions of that period in an article[1] entitled "My first Navarâtri with Swami Vivekananda". I shall set down here briefly the indelible impression left on my mind by Swamiji's words to me durnig that memorable visit of his to our house at Trivandrum.

One morning as I was reading Kâlidâsa's *Kumârasambhavam,* which was one of my text-books in Sanskrit, Swamiji came in. He asked, "What is that book you are studying ?" I replied, "It is *Kumârasambhavam,* Canto I." He asked, "Can you repeat the great poet's description of the Himalayas ?" I repeated, in the usual musical mode current in South India, the beautiful and sonorous verses which constitute Kâlidâsa's description of the Himalayas. Swamiji smiled and looked pleased. He said, "Do you know that I am coming after a long stay amidst

[1] Vide pp. 62 *et seqq.*

the sublimity of the Himalayan scenes and sights?" I felt elated and interested. He asked me to repeat again the opening stanza. I did so. He asked, "Do you know its meaning? Tell me." I did so. He said, "That is good, but not enough." He then repeated the stanza in his marvellous, musical, measured tones :

अस्त्युत्तरस्यां दिशि देवतात्मा
हिमालयो नाम नगाधिराजः ।
पूर्वापरौ तोयनिधावगाह्य
स्थितः पृथिव्या इव मानदंडः ॥

He said, "The important words in this verse are *devatâtmâ* (ensouled by Divinity) and *mânadanda* (measuring-rod). The poet implies and suggests that the Himalaya is not a mere wall accidentally constructed by nature. It is ensouled by Divinity and is the protector of India and her civilization not only from the chill icy blasts blowing from the arctic region but also from the deadly and destructive incursions of invaders. The Himalaya further protects India by sending the great rivers Sindhu, Ganga, and Brahmaputra perennially fed by melted ice irrespective of the monsoon rains. *Mânadanda* implies that the poet affirms that the Indian civilization is the best of all human civilizations and forms the standard by which all the other human civilizations, past, present, and future, must be tested. Such was the poet's lofty conception of patriotism." I felt thrilled by his words. I treasure them even to this day, and they shine in my heart even now with an undimmed and undiminished splendour.

On another of the nine days, he said to me and my father, "Practical patriotism means not a mere sentiment or even emotion of love of the motherland but a passion to serve our fellow-countrymen. I have gone all over India on foot and have seen with my own eyes the ignorance, misery, and squalor of our people. My whole soul

is afire and I am burning with a fierce desire to change such evil conditions. Let no one talk of *karma*. If it was their *karma* to suffer, it is our *karma* to relieve the suffering. If you want to find God, serve Man. To reach Nârâyana you must serve the *daridra-nârâyanas*—the starving millions of India." That was the root from which came the great tree of the Ramakrishna Mission later on. His words melted our hearts and kindled in our souls the flame of social service. Thus service was as dear to him as spirituality. In his later life, in a memorable letter[1] he exclaimed, "May I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls : and, above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship." We seem to hear in these passionate words the voice of Rantideva himself.

On yet another day Swamiji told me, "You are still a young boy. I hope and wish that some day you will reverentially study the Upanishads, the *Brahma-Sutras,* and the Bhagavad-Gita which are known as the *prasthâna-traya* (the three supreme sources of Truth), as also the *itihâsas,* the *purânas,* and the *âgamas.* You will not find the like of all these anywhere else in the world. Man alone, out of all living beings, has a hunger in his heart to know the whence and whither, the whys and wherefores of things. There are four key words which you must remember, viz *abhaya* (fearlessness), *ahimsâ* (non-injury), *asanga* (non-attachment), and *ânanda* (bliss). These words really sum up the essence of all our sacred books. Remember them. Their implication will become clear to you later on." I was too young then to grasp all these ideas in full. But I gladly laid those lessons to my heart and have tried all my life since then to learn them in their fullness.

[1] To Mary Hale (Letter from Almora, dated 9th July 1897).

During the nine days (in 1892) when Swamiji was in our house, I was near him often as he was gracious to me and also because something in him, like a magnet, drew me towards him. My father had many a discussion with Swamiji on recondite questions of philosophy and religion which were above and beyond my comprehension. But Swamiji's eyes were so magnetic—though full of kindness and love, his voice had such an unusual combination of sweetness and strength, and his gait was so majestic, that it was a great joy to me to be in his presence and bask in the sunshine of his smiles. He told me many other things, briefly, now and then. But at this distance of time—over sixty years since that event—the memorable utterances narrated above are the ones which stand out most prominently from among the memory-pictures of the past....

... Swamiji reached Madras in the beginning of February 1897. Romain Rolland's description of the grand public reception accorded to Swamiji at Madras is perfectly accurate and I can vouch for it as I myself was an eyewitness. He says, "Madras had been expecting him for weeks in a kind of passionate delirium. She erected for him seventeen triumphal arches, presented him with twenty-four Addresses in various languages of Hindusthan, and suspended her whole public life at his coming—nine days of roaring fêtes.

"He replied to the frenzied expectancy of the people by his Message to India, a conch sounding the resurrection of the land of Rama, of Shiva, of Krishna, and calling the heroic Spirit, the immortal *âtman,* to march to war. He was a general, explaining his 'Plan of Campaign' and calling his people to rise *en masse.*"

I was one of the delirious hearers and admirers of Swamiji. I had by that time passed the B.A. Degree examination from the Kumbakonam College and had joined the Law College at Madras. At that time studies

in the Law College were not heavy, the classes being held for two hours every evening, between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m., in the premises of the Presidency College, Madras. The Law students and the Medicos have always been a keen and valiant group. I and my friends went to the railway station at Egmore on the day Swami Vivekananda was expected to reach Madras. A carriage, to which two horses had been yoked, was kept waiting for the Swami. He was to be taken in procession to the Castle Kernan on the beach, where Swamiji stayed for nine days. We saw at the station a sea of human faces. Shouts of "*Jai*" rent the air when the train carrying Swamiji was sighted. He got down from the train and made his way slowly to the carriage. When the procession had wended its way for some time, I and some others insisted on unyoking the horses and dragging the carriage ourselves. The horses were unharnessed, and many of us started pulling Swamiji's carriage, and, walking slowly, we covered a long distance before reaching the destination. We were perfectly happy as we had achieved our hearts' desire. To us Swami Vivekananda was "India incarnate" and God's holy messenger.

During all the nine days of his stay at Madras I was with Swamiji for most of the time. Throughout all the days there was a never-ending stream of visitors. Many silently sat near him and listened to his words. Some discussed momentous matters with him. A few intimate persons, among whom were some of Swamiji's friends and admirers, discussed with him his plans for future Vedanta work in South India. I was constantly with Swamiji, who had recognized me and recalled his visit to our house at Trivandrum in 1892. I can never forget his eyes which brightened up with a new light and his mobile lips which shone with a divine smile whenever he saw me sitting just in front of him. My father, Professor K. Sundararama Iyer, was also in Madras at that time and met Swamiji several times. He has left on record his memories of

Swamiji, during the latter's stay for nine days at Madras, in a lengthy article entitled "My second Navarâtri with Swamiji" (*Vedanta Kesari,* January-February 1923).[1]

The difference that I noticed between Vivekananda of 1892 and Vivekananda of 1897 was what struck me most. In 1892 he looked like one who had a tryst with destiny and was not quite sure when or where or how he was to keep that tryst. But in 1897 he looked like one who had kept that tryst with destiny, who clearly knew his mission, and who was confident about its fulfilment. He walked with steady and unfaltering steps and went along his predestined path, issuing commands and being sure of loyal obedience.

One other experience which I had in 1897 was my hearing the songs sung by Swami Vivekananda. That he had a musical voice was already experienced by me in 1892. That his songs had the power of transporting Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa into ecstasy became known to me much later only. During the nine days of his stay at Castle Kernan we heard him sing a few of the Ashtapadi songs of Jayadeva, from the famous devotional lyric poem *Gita-Govinda.* The mode of singing these lyrics in Bengal was evidently different from that adopted in South India. Vivekananda's melodious voice left a lasting impression on my mind.

One evening a somewhat curious and unusual incident took place. An orthodox Pandit, who was one among the visitors, suddenly got up and asked Swamiji a direct and unexpected question in Sanskrit, "I learn that you are not a Brahmin and that according to the *shâstras* (scriptures) you have no right to take to *sannyâsa.* How then does it happen that you have donned ochre-coloured robes and entered into the holy order of Sannyâsins?" Not wishing to discuss at length with such a person, Swami Vivekananda cut short the Pandit's argument by

[1]Extracts of this article have been included in this volume. Vide pp. 78 *et seqq.*

pointedly saying, "I belong to the line of Chitragupta to whom every Brahmin prays during his *sandhyā* worship. So, if Brahmins are entitled to *sannyāsa,* much more so am I entitled." Swamiji then turned the tables on the questioner by telling him, "In your Sanskrit question there was an unpardonable mispronunciation. Pânini denounces such mispronunciation—**न म्लेच्छितं वै, नापभाषितं वै** (one should not degrade or mispronounce words). So you have no right to carry on this debate." The Pandit was nonplussed and went away, especially when he understood that the audience revered Swamiji and resented the irrelevant question....

Swami Vivekananda's first public lecture in Madras was on "My Plan of Campaign" and made a profound and indelible impression on me.... I felt thrilled to the innermost core of my being by his words and my eyes were wet with tears. Many others who heard the speech were in the same predicament. Then and there some of us took a vow to do what we could to relieve the ignorance, poverty, and misery of the masses of India to the extent possible for each one of us.

I attended also Swamiji's lecture (at Madras) on "Vedanta in its Application to Indian Life"....

Yet another lecture by Swamiji was on "The Sages of India". It also made a deep impression on my mind.

In conclusion I wish to refer to the unique experience which I had in May 1952. I was then on a pilgrimage to holy places in North India. It was my privilege and happiness to spend some hours in the Ramakrishna Math at Belur, near Calcutta. The kind Swami who took me round the Belur Math led me eventually into the room where Swami Vivekananda spent his last days. Ordinarily no visitors are allowed inside the room. But the Swami who took me there said: "In your case we gladly made an exception as you contacted Swamiji early in your life and have been, like your honoured father, an admirer

and follower of the Ramakrishna Mission all your life." I entered the holy room with deep devotion and bated breath. It overlooks the river Gangâ (Hooghly). The room throbs with an atmosphere that is sacred, solemn, and serene. I drank with brimming eyes the beauty of the grand view from the room and deeply felt the holiness of the place. I sat there in meditation for a while, thinking of Swami Vivekananda and of his peerless services to India, to Hinduism, and to the cause of spirituality all over the world. While inside that room where Swami Vivekananda once lived, I felt that the divine flame of spiritual knowledge (*jnâna-dîpa,* as referred to by Shri Krishna in the Gita), was lighted in my heart.

(*Prabuddha Bhârata, September & October 1953*)

VIII

In the year 1893 while I was a student reading in the Presidency College, Madras, I had the good fortune of coming into personal contact with Swami Vivekananda.[1] It was shortly before he left for America to attend the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. He was then unknown to fame but his unique personality attracted a considerable number of people—a good proportion among them being students—to his informal talks. I do not recollect seeing at these meetings any of the leaders of Hindu Society in Madras then, but there were students, teachers, second grade officials and vakils. It was after the Swami returned from America in 1897 with a name and a world-wide fame that the leaders and high grade officials and people used to flock in hundreds to listen to his talks and lectures. He was residing then (1893) with Mr. Bhattacharya (a Bengali gentleman, then Deputy Accountant General at Madras) in a house situated at a short distance from the southern end of the Marina. I used to go to this house in the evenings with some fellow students to listen to the Swami. We used to squat in the orthodox fashion very near the Swami on carpets spread on the floor. Vivekananda would smoke while talking. His talk touched on a large variety of subjects. And it was delightful to listen to him.

In those days a knowledge of the ancient Hindu philosophy and doctrines was far less spread among the English-educated Hindus in Madras than now; and there were also far fewer popular writings on the subject. Our great gods in those days were Mill, and Herbert Spencer, Huxley, Leslie Stephen, and Haekel. To us theirs was the last word in philosophy, politics, and sociology. And

[1]These reminiscences are based on the recollections of myself and my younger brother with whom I "compared notes" before recording.—*Author.*

so, Vivekananda's expositions—logical and trenchant as they were—came as wonderful surprises. We had, however, no proper grounding to appreciate his expositions at their true worth. And the prejudices of some of us students in favour of the above-named European writers were hard to break through.

Once Vivekananda explained to us how the modern doctrine of evolution had been anticipated by our sage Kapila. On another occasion speaking of a Personal God and Impersonal God, he tried to show how the position of an agnostic or even atheist was really not one of negation, as they had to believe in continuity—a continuous Principle running through all eternity. The position of the orthodox Christians, he said, was illogical and untenable. An arbitrary and sudden creation of a soul and then its eternal damnation or salvation—it was like "a stick with only one end".

There was plenty of talk on lighter subjects. His own college days and the pranks that he and his fellow students played on some of their professors; how once they struck work and "went away and smoked". The stories of "the marvellous" which he told us I distinctly remember. One of these was of a blind man whose memory and sense of hearing were exceptionally acute. When the Swami was quite a young boy, this blind man had once heard him talk and sing. Years afterwards he came one night to a house where Vivekananda was staying. On hearing the Swami sing he at once recognized the voice and asked whether he was not the boy whom he had heard in such and such a year at such and such a place. This blind man while walking in the streets would clap his hands and listening to the sound would say, "Here on my right is a vacant space", or "There on my left is a tall building", and so on. The other story was of a "magician", a man (a Mussulman, if I recollect correctly) who had acquired certain *siddhis* or (so-called) supernatural powers. A European wanted to test his powers, and

one evening they drove together in an open carriage of the European to a street in Calcutta. While they were driving the "magician" said to the European, "Now ask for anything you want and I shall give you". The European thought for a moment and then said, "Give me a bottle of Champagne", knowing that no such thing was in the carriage or anywhere near at hand. The "magician" stretched out his arm, clutched at something in the air and brought in a bottle of Champagne. Then saying "Now look", he waved his hand towards the right row of shops in the street and all the lights in that row were put out; while the lights in the opposite rows were burning as before. Before the people in the street and shops could quite recover from their surprise, he waved his hand again and the lights in the right row were relit.

I am reminded of another story he told us while on the subject of the rude and at times insulting behaviour of Europeans in India to "Natives". Naturally he spoke with much feeling on the subject as every self-respecting Indian would. Once, it seems, a solicitor in Calcutta was rude and insulting to an Indian barrister. The leading Indian clients and lawyers held a meeting and resolved to boycott that particular solicitor. "And from the next day", said Vivekananda, with an expressive gesture tilting his thumb towards his lips, "the solicitor had to suck his thumb".

The bare-headed photographs in the book "Swami Vivekananda's speeches and writings," published by Messrs G. A. Natesan & Co. give a good idea of the appearance of the Swami. But no photograph or description can give a correct idea of the power of his eyes. They were wonderful. Like the "Ancient Mariner" in Coleridge's famous poem he "held you by the eye". The voice too had an indefinable attraction. Though not ringing and silvery like Mrs. Beasant's in her prime, more soft and pleasant like Mr. Norton's it attracted you and held you. He could sing beautifully. One evening as we

were sitting listening to him, a pretty little child—a daughter of Mr. Bhattacharya, I believe—toddled in. He took the child on his lap and sang a Punjabi song. He observed that the song was attributed to Guru Nanak and told us of its origin. One evening at the time of *ârati* Nanak went to a temple. The Brahmin priests would not allow him to enter. So, he turned aside and sang this song in which he compares the sky to a silver plate, the stars to little lights—*nirâjans*—in that plate used for *ârati*, the perfumed evening breeze to incense, and so on, reminding us students of Moore's poem which we had read in one of the School Text Books of the time, beginning with the lines:

"The Turf shall be my fragrant shrine,
My Temple, Lord, that arch of Thine."

In person Vivekananda was not flabby like many of the Bengalis whom we see, but was sturdy and somewhat thick-set. The complexion was brown with a slight coppery hue.

In manner Vivekananda was natural, unaffected and unconventional. There was none of that solemn gravity, measured utterance, and even temper that we usually associate with a sage. At times his manner was somewhat Johnsonian and brusque when he wanted to put down one who had asked a silly question or a question intended to show off one's knowledge. One hot morning (this was after he returned from America to Madras) at the end of a long sitting when many questions had been asked and answered, a somewhat conceited young man asked pompously, "What is the cause of misery in this world, Swami ?" "Ignorance is the cause of misery", blurted out Vivekananda and rose and closed the interview. On another occasion one in the audience pointed out to the Swami that the view expressed by the Swami on some point of philosophy differed from that of Shri Shankarâchârya. "Well," said the Swami, "Shankarâchârya was a man, you are a man, and you can think for yourself." An orthodox Pandit

appears to have had an interview with the Swami and attempted to show off his learning. Speaking of that interview the Swami said, "The fellow who cannot pronounce *jnâna* properly has the cheek to criticize my pronunciation of Sanskrit."

On Vivekananda's return to Madras from America in 1897, the public reception given to him was magnificent and the crowds which came to greet him, some of the largest. His first public lecture in Madras cannot be called a success as a lecture. But that was due to the over-enthusiasm of the crowds. It was arranged for, I believe, in a big circus-tent, but even that was found insufficient to hold the crowds, and the Swami had to come outside and mount a carriage to address the huge concourse in the "Gita fashion" as he said. He strained his voice to the utmost, gesticulated, but it was all no good. The noise and disorder were great and the lecture had to be given up after a short time. The subsequent lecture in the Victoria Hall on "The sages of India" was a grand success. It was a very impressive lecture marked by a flowing eloquence. When he came to that portion of the lecture which deals with *râsa-krîdâ* or the love of Gopis to Shri Krishna and explained the true significance of that sublime love, the expression of his face and especially of his eyes was beatific and soul-stirring.

Informal talks in the mornings and answering of questions were arranged for in a pandal put up on the Marina, near the old Capper-House Hotel, somewhere near the site of the present premises of Queen Mary's College. Now, the leaders of Hindu Society in Madras, big Officials and vakils and people in hundreds came, and we students found it hard to get near to the Swami. One morning a European lady (a Protestant missionary, I believe) came and spoke somewhat disparagingly of the enforced celibacy of a Sannyâsin's life and of the harmful results of the starving of a noble instinct (noble, when rightly regulated). After a short psychological and philo-

sophical explanation of the necessity of celibacy in a Sannyâsin (which perhaps was not quite appreciated or understood by the lady), he turned to her and said half-humorously, "In your country, madam, a bachelor is feared. But here you see they are worshipping me, a bachelor."

Here I may mention that once the Swami in a communicative mood made a personal confession, "I am thirty years old now and have never known a woman."

Once he said to a number of young students in the audience that it was their first duty to cultivate physical strength and health. "You may have the Gita in your left hand but have a football in your right." He expressed on one occasion the view that it was the men who were physically weak that yielded to temptations easily, and that those with plenty of physical vigour and strength were far better able to resist temptations and exercise self-control than the former.

Once referring to himself he said, "There is an *ustâd* under these robes" (*ustâd* an expert gymnast or a teacher of gymnastics).

At this time (1897 after his return from America) Vivekananda was residing in Castle Kernan the well-known house on the Marina. When I first went to Madras it was known as the Ice-House ; then the late Mr. Biligiri Iyangar bought it as his house ; and he named it Castle Kernan after Mr. Justice Kernan. There was a "Kernan-maze" in its compound which some of us students used to take pleasure in entering and getting lost.

In Castle Kernan during these memorable days some of us students were invited, and we ate with Vivekananda. The Swami's appetite was great and he ate heartily. Once pointing humorously to a dish of ice-cream before him he said, "I can renounce everything excepting this". At times baskets of fruits sent to him by friends from Bangalore used to arrive. As soon as they would arrive,

they would be opened and the contents distributed among those present and the Swami also ate.

Sometimes in the early mornings Vivekananda would bathe in the sea opposite to Castle Kernan along with a number of students.

Informal talks were at times held in the rooms of the Triplicane Literary Society. The late Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunatha Rao and a number of other social reformers including my old Assistant Professor of history the late Mr. A. Subba Rao (a sturdy social reformer and agnostic) used to attend. Some of the social reformers were snubbed by the Swami and their views and methods criticized. Once when Mr. A. Subba Rao spoke rather disparagingly of the thinking power and views of our old *rishis,* the Swami remarked that Mr. Subba Rao could have no idea of the power of intense meditation which the *rishi* had acquired through long self-discipline, and added, "You will be burnt to ashes if you think for half a minute like them".

When one evening the Swami was discoursing on "Faith in God" in the Triplicane Literary Society, Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Rao broke in a solemn manner, "I have always preached that no nation, no race, no individual who did not believe in God ever became great." At this some of the irreverent young students smiled in an amused manner.

He spoke of his *guru* Shri Ramakrishna and some of Shri Ramakrishna's apparently mad actions undertaken with a view to killing the "self" in him, the significance of which many—especially in Europe and America—could not understand. With reference to ordinary American audiences he said, "If I had spoken of these acts to them, they would have thrown me and my *guru* into the nearest ditch."

When the effect of religious beliefs (Hindu and Christian) on the masses came up for discussion, Vivekananda said, "If like me you had visited the slums

of Europe and America and seen how near to brutes the inhabitants of those slums are, and then compared them with our masses in India, your doubts as to the effect of Hindu religious belief on the masses would have vanished".

(*Vedanta Kesari, May 1927*)

IX

WHEN Swami Vivekananda's Madras disciples decided to raise a sum of money sufficient to send him to represent Hinduism at the World's Fair at Chicago in 1893, they were in ignorance of the exact date of the opening of the Parliament of Religions. Consequently the Swami reached Chicago in the spring, several months before the time set for the delegates to meet. At first, he was much disturbed when he learnt how long he would have to wait, because his funds, none too extensive to start with, were running low. They had been greatly depleted by the bad management of his travelling companions to whom he had entrusted them. It became a problem to him how to maintain himself in a strange land until the time should come for him to fulfil his mission in America. He found his way to Boston and nearly resolved to return at once to India; but his charming personality soon won him friends, and his confidence returned.

He was most hospitably entertained in the family of a Professor of Harvard College, who persuaded him to adhere to his original plan to speak at the approaching Religious Congress.[1] By the advice of this kind friend Swami Vivekananda returned to Chicago, and his brilliant success at the Parliament of Religions is still fresh in the minds of all who heard him there. His very first words in his melodious voice aroused a perfect storm of applause. It is doubtful if any one of the thousands who listened to those first eloquent utterances had the least idea that never before in his life had he stood before an audience. So ready was his speech, so excellent his mastery of English, so finished his language, so flashing his wit and repartee that every one supposed he was an experienced

[1]Actually he lived elsewhere, but the professor helped him in his mission.—*Publisher.*

public speaker. Surely the spirit and power of his Master spoke through him that day!

After the close of the Parliament of Religions, Swami Vivekananda received many flattering offers to lecture in various parts of the United States. He was so desirous to send help to his fellow Sannyâsins in India that he accepted an engagement with a Lecture Bureau and delivered many lectures in the Western States. He soon found, however, that he was utterly unsuited for such a career. Naturally, he could not speak to promiscuous audiences on the topics nearest to his heart, and the life of ceaseless change was too strenuous for a contemplative nature like his own. He was at this time a far different being from what he afterward developed into. He was dreamy and meditative, often so wrapped in his own thoughts as to be hardly conscious of his surroundings. The constant friction of alien thoughts, the endless questioning, the frequent sharp conflict of wits in this Western world awoke a different spirit, and he became as alert and wide awake as the world in which he found himself.

At great pecuniary sacrifice, the Swami severed his connection with the Lecture Bureau ; and once more his own master, he turned his steps toward New York. A Chicago friend was instrumental in bringing him to this metropolis of the U.S., and he reached New York in the early part of 1894. His Western experiences had convinced him that there were many in America who would gladly learn of the ancient philosophy of India, and he hoped that in this city he would be able to come in contact with such inquiring minds.

He gave a few public lectures, but was not yet in a position to begin regular work, as he was a guest in the homes of his friends. In the summer of that year he went to New England, still as a visitor, and spent a week or two at Greenacre where Miss Farmer was inaugurating the "Greenacre Conferences", which in later years became so widely known through the school of Comparative

Religions conducted there by the late Dr. Lewis G. Janes, who was long the gifted and liberal-minded President of the Brooklyn Ethical Association.

From New England, Swami Vivekananda returned to New York in the autumn, and at a lecture he gave in the parlour of a friend he met Dr. Janes, who at once recognized the unusual character and attainments of the Swami and invited him to lecture before the Association in Brooklyn. The two men became warmly attached to each other and formed a friendship that lasted as long as they lived.

Swami Vivekananda lectured in Brooklyn for the first time on 31st December, 1894 and his success was immediate. A large and enthusiastic audience greeted his appearance at the Pouch Mansion, and a course of lectures there and at other places in Brooklyn soon followed. From this time his public work in America really began. He established himself in quarters of his own, where he held several classes a week and came into more intimate relations with his students. Earnest people flocked to hear him and to learn the ancient teachings of India on the all-embracing character of her philosophy that every soul must be saved, that all religions were true, being steps in the progress of man toward a higher and ever higher spiritual realization—and above all to hear the constant lessons of the Swami on a world-wide, universal religious toleration.

At this time the Swami was living very simply in New York ; and his earliest classes were held in the small room he occupied, and in the beginning were attended by only three or four persons. They grew with astonishing rapidity, and, as the little room filled to overflowing, became very picturesque. The Swami himself always sat on the floor, and most of his audience likewise. The marble-topped dresser, the arms of the sofa, and even the corner washstand helped to furnish seats for the constantly increasing numbers. The door was left open, and the

overflow filled the hall and sat on the stairs. And those first classes! How intensely interesting they were! Who that was privileged to attend them can ever forget them? The Swami so dignified yet so simple, so gravely earnest, so eloquent, and the close ranks of students, forgetting all inconveniences, hanging breathless on his every word!

It was a fit beginning for a movement that has since grown to such grand proportions. In this unpretentious way did Swami Vivekananda inaugurate the work of teaching Vedanta philosophy in New York. The Swami gave his services free as air. The rent was paid by voluntary subscriptions, and when these were found insufficient, Swami hired a hall and gave secular lectures on India and devoted the proceeds to the maintenance of the classes. He said that Hindu teachers of religion felt it to be their duty to support their classes and the students too, if they were unable to care for themselves; and the teachers would willingly make any sacrifice they possibly could to assist a needy disciple.

The classes began in February 1895, and lasted until June. But long before that time, they had outgrown their small beginnings and had removed downstairs to occupy an entire parlour floor and extension. The classes were held nearly every morning and on several evenings in each week. Some Sunday lectures were also given, and there were "question" classes to help those to whom the teaching was so new and strange that they were desirous to have an opportunity for more extended explanation.

In June, after four months of constant lecturing and teaching, Swami Vivekananda accepted the invitation of one of his friends and went to Percy, N.H., for a period of rest in the silence of the pine woods. Before he left New York, he promised to meet at Thousand Island Park any students who were sufficiently interested in Vedanta to follow him so far, and there give them more special instruction. One of the class members had a cottage there

and had invited the Swami to be her guest for as long a period as he felt inclined to remain. Swami said that those students who were willing to put aside all other interests and devote themselves to studying Vedanta, travelling more than three hundred miles to a suitable spot, were the ones really in earnest, and he should recognize them as disciples. He did not expect many would take so much trouble; but if any responded, he would do his share of helping them on the path.

About the middle of June, six or eight students gathered in the little house at Thousand Island Park; and true to his promise, Swami Vivekananda came there on the 20th of the month and remained for seven blessed weeks. A few more students joined us, until we numbered twelve, including our hostess. To those who were fortunate enough to be there with the Swami, those are weeks of ever hallowed memory, so fraught were they with unusual opportunity for spiritual growth. No words can describe what that blissful period meant (and still means) to the devoted little band who followed the Swami from New York to the Island in the St. Lawrence, who daily served him with joy and listened to him with heartfelt thankfulness. His whole heart was in his work, and he taught like one inspired. Every morning he could hardly wait for the household duties to be attended to, so eager was he to begin his work of teaching. As early as it could be managed, we gathered around him, and for two and sometimes three hours he would steadily expound the teachings of his Master Shri Ramakrishna. These ideas were new and strange to us, and we were slow in assimilating them; but the Swami's patience never flagged, his enthusiasm never waned. In the afternoons, he talked to us more informally, and we took usually a long walk. Every evening we adjourned to an upstairs piazza that commanded a glorious view over the waters and islands of the broad river. It was an enchanting picture that our eyes rested upon. At our feet stretched a thick wood,

the tops of its waving trees like a lake of vivid green, gradually lost themselves in the dancing blue waters of the St. Lawrence. Not one building of any kind was in sight, save a hotel on a distant island whose many gleaming lights were reflected on the shimmering waves. We were alone with Nature, and it was a fitting scene in which to listen to the utterances of such a Teacher. The Swami did not appear to address us directly, but rather seemed to be speaking to himself in words of fire, as it were, so intense were they, so eloquent and convincing, burning into the very hearts of his listeners never to be forgotten. We listened in utter silence, almost holding our breath for fear of disturbing the current of his thoughts, or losing one of those inspired words.

As the days and weeks passed by, we began to really understand and grasp the meaning of what we heard, and we gladly accepted the teaching. Every one of the students there, received initiation at the hands of the Swami, thus becoming disciples, the Swami assuming towards them the position of *guru*, or spiritual father, as is done in India, where the tie uniting *guru* and disciple is the closest one known, outranking that of parent and child, or even husband and wife. It was purely a coincidence that there were just twelve of us !

The ceremony of initiation was impressive from its extreme simplicity. A small altar fire, beautiful flowers, and the earnest words of the Teacher alone marked it as different from our daily lessons. It took place at sunrise of a beautiful summer day, and the scene still lives fresh in our memories. Of those who became Brahmachârinis at Thousand Island Park, two are dead, and one is now in India helping to carry on the work nearest to Swami Vivekananda's heart, the uplifting of his fellow countrymen. Most of the others have rendered faithful service in the cause of Vedanta during the ten years that have passed since then.

In August the Swami went to France and later to

England to start there a centre for Vedanta work. At the earnest solicitation of his many friends and students in New York Swamiji returned to us in December of 1895 and opened classes once more. There were nine in each week and all were attended by large numbers, to the full capacity of the rooms. This time we were fortunate enough to secure the services of a good stenographer, who, to unusual abilities, later added the service of a devoted adherent. He became strongly attached to the Swami and his teaching and never spared himself in his work for the cause. He subsequently accompanied the Swami to England and to India, and it is entirely due to his efforts that the Swami's utterances in those countries have been preserved. The fruits of his labours in New York are known to us in the books, *Râja-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Karma-Yoga,* besides several pamphlets of the Sunday lectures. The New York lectures on *jnâna-yoga* have never been published, although they are among the finest Swami ever gave. Those in book form that bear the name *Jnâna-Yoga* were delivered in England and India.

A few more students became disciples in New York, some of them being initiated on the occasion of the celebration of the birthday of Shri Ramakrishna in 1896. In March of this year Swami Vivekananda went to Boston, Detroit, and Chicago to lecture. He delivered several addresses in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and one of these, known as the "Harvard Address" has been preserved in pamphlet form and became widely known, both in the United States and in India.

In the middle of April, the Swami sailed for England where he lectured for many months, being joined there first by Swami Saradananda and later by Swami Abhedananda, who is now the head of the Vedanta Society in New York. From London Swami Vivekananda returned to India at the close of 1896 accompanied by his ever-faithful stenographer and several of his English disciples. He did much public work there and many of his lectures

delivered in India are now in print, both in book and in pamphlet form. After more than two years of most arduous labour, the Swami's health broke down, and he was forced to retire to the Math at Belur for a much needed rest. In the autumn of 1899 he sailed for England, accompanied by Swami Turiyananda. He did not remain long in London, but came once more to the United States. He made only a brief stay in New York and then went to California. The climate there proved very beneficial to his health, and he was able to deliver many lectures, from Los Angeles to San Francisco. He thus made a successful beginning of Vedanta work on the Pacific Coast; and later, Swami Turiyananda went to California to carry on the work thus inaugurated. A friend of the cause presented a large tract of land in the California mountains to Swami Vivekananda. It is situated about twelve miles from the far-famed Lick Observatory on Mt. Hamilton. The Shanti Ashrama has been established there, and for a couple of months each year the Swami in charge of the Vedanta work in San Francisco establishes a retreat there, accompanied by those members of his classes who wish to enjoy a period of meditation. They mostly live in tents, although a few wooden cabins have been erected under the fine old trees.

In the summer of 1900, Swami Vivekananda returned to New York, making short stops *en route* at Chicago and Detroit to visit his old friends there. When he reached New York, he was much pleased to find that the Vedanta Society had at last succeeded in securing a home. This was in East 58th Street, and the Swami spent seven weeks there. He gave a few public lectures, but he did not care to do much work of this kind. He was chiefly desirous to meet his old friends and disciples; and as in the days at Thousand Island Park, he spent most of his time in teaching them and in conversation with them. It was a happy time apparently for both Teacher and disciples. All too soon, it came to an end. The Swami had received

an invitation to address the Religious Congress held that year at the Paris Exposition. So he sailed from New York in August, never to revisit the city where he had done so much work in teaching and lecturing. He might have returned had his life been prolonged, but it was not to be.

In Paris, Swamiji met many prominent people and made many warm friends. He mastered the French language sufficiently to converse with those who could not speak English. From France he started with a party of friends for Egypt to visit the Cataracts of the Nile. But at Alexandria he received news of the death of a friend in India, which necessitated his immediate return to that country. His many Western friends saw him no more, but his memory will never die in our hearts and our gratitude for his loving service to us can never fail. It is a priceless privilege to have known such a man. He was truly a *mahâtman* and did a great work, work that will long be an influence in the lives of his own countrymen as well as in those of his European and American friends. May he be for ever blessed !

(*Prabuddha Bhârata, January 1906*)

X

BEFORE the Congress (or Parliament) of Religions met in Chicago at the time of the Columbian Exposition in 1893, members of various churches volunteered to ask into their homes as guests delegates to it. My grandmother, Mrs. John B. Lyon, was one of these, requesting, if possible, that a delegate who was broad-minded be sent to us, as my grandfather was much interested in philosophy but heartily disliked bigots ! Our home was 262 Michigan Avenue, a pleasant somewhat old-fashioned frame-house, painted olive green with boxes of red geraniums across the front. It was full of guests all that summer as my grandparents were naturally hospitable and this World's Fair was a very exciting and fascinating affair. So all our out-of-town relatives and friends were eager to come to Chicago to see it. When word came that our delegate was to arrive on a certain evening, the house was so crowded that my grandmother had to send her elder son to a friend's house to have his room for our guest. We had been given no idea who he would be, nor even what religion he was representing. A message came that a member of our Church—the First Presbyterian—would bring him after midnight. Everyone went to bed except my grandmother who waited up to receive them. When she answered the door-bell, there stood Swami Vivekananda in a long yellow robe, a red sash, and a red turban —a very startling sight to her, because she had probably never seen an East Indian before. She welcomed him warmly and showed him to his room. When she went to bed, she was somewhat troubled. Some of our guests were Southerners, as we had many friends in the South, because we owned a sugar plantation on the Bayon Têche in Louisiana. Southerners have a strong dislike for associating with anyone but whites, because they stupidly think

of all people who are darker as on a mental and social plane of their former Negro slaves. My grandmother herself had no colour prejudice, and she was sufficiently intelligent any way to know that Indians are of the same Caucasian inheritance as we are.

When my grandfather woke up, she told him of the problem and said he must decide whether it would be uncomfortable for Swami and for our Southern friends to be together. If so, she said he could put Swami up as our guest at the new Auditorium Hotel near us. My grandfather was dressed about half an hour before breakfast and went into the library to read his morning paper. There he found Swami and, before breakfast was served, he came to my grandmother and said, "I don't care a bit, Emily, if all our guests leave! This Indian is the most brilliant and interesting man who has ever been in our home, and he shall stay as long as he wishes." That began a warm friendship between them which was later summed up—much to my grandfather's embarrassment! —by having Swami calmly remark to a group of my grandfather's friends one day at the Chicago Club "I believe Mr. Lyon is the most Christlike man I ever met!"

He seemed to feel especially close to my grandmother, who reminded him of his own mother. She was short and very erect, with quiet dignity and assurance, excellent common sense, and a dry humour that he enjoyed. My mother, who was a pretty and charming young widow, and I—who was only six years old—lived with them. My grandmother and my mother attended most of the meetings of the Congress of Religions and heard Swamiji speak there and later at lectures he gave. I know he helped my sad young mother who missed her young husband so much. Mother read and studied Swamiji's books later and tried to follow his teachings.

My memories are simply of him as a guest in our home—of a great personality who is still vivid to me! His brilliant eyes, his charming voice with the lilt of a

slight wellbred Irish brogue, his warm smile! He told me enchanting stories of India, of monkeys and peacocks, and flights of bright green parrots, of banyan trees and masses of flowers, and markets piled with all colours of fruits and vegetables. To me they sounded like fairy-tales, but now that I have driven over many hundreds of miles of Indian roads, I realize that he was simply describing scenes from the memories of his own boyhood. I used to rush up to him when he came into the house and cry "Tell me another story, Swami", and climb into his lap. Perhaps, so far from home and in so strange a country, he found comfort in the love and enthusiasm of a child. He was always wonderful to me! Yet—because a child is sensitive—I can remember times when I would run into his room and suddenly know he did not want to be disturbed—when he was in meditation. He asked me many questions about what I learnt in school and made me show him my school-books and pointed out India to me on the map—it was pink, I recall—and told me about his country. He seemed sad that little Indian girls did not have, in general, the chance to have as good an education as we American children. Imagine how interested I was when Swami Shankarananda, President, Belur Math, told me he founded a girls' School in Calcutta !

My grandmother was president of the Women's Hospital at home, and he visited it with lively interest and asked for all the figures in infant mortality etc. So again it showed how much he was learning in our country to be used in helping his own people, because I was told that a maternity hospital was also founded later. How very happy that would have made my grandmother!

I was fascinated by his turban which struck me as a very funny kind of a hat, especially as it had to be wound up afresh every time he put it on! I persuaded him to let me see him wrap it back and forth around his head.

As our American food is less highly seasoned than

Indian, my grandmother was afraid he might find it flat. He told us, on arrival, that he had been told to conform to all the customs and the food of his hosts, so he ate as we did. My grandmother used to make a little ceremony of making salad dressing at the table, and one of the condiments she used was Tabasco Sauce, put up by some friends of hers, the Mrs. Ilhennys, in Louisiana. She handed him the bottle and said, "You might like a drop or two of this on your meat, Swami". He sprinkled it on with such a lavish hand that we all gasped and said, "But you can't do that! It's terribly hot!" He laughed and ate it with such enjoyment that a special bottle of the sauce was always put at his place after that.

My mother took him to hear his first Symphony Concert on a Friday afternoon. He listened with great attention but with his head a bit on one side and a slightly quizzical expression. "Did you enjoy it?" mother asked at the end. "Yes, it was very beautiful", he replied, but mother felt it was said with some reservation. "What are you thinking?" she asked. "I am puzzled by two things", he answered, "First, I do not understand why the programme says that this same programme will be repeated on Saturday evening. You see in India, one type of music is played at dawn. The music for noontime is very different, and that for the evening is also of a special character. So I should think that what sounds suitable to your ears in the early afternoon would not sound harmonious to you at night. The other thing that seems strange to me is the lack of overtones in the music and the greater intervals between the notes. To my ears it has holes in it like that good Swiss cheese you give me!"

When he began to give lectures, people offered him money for the work he hoped to do in India. He had no purse. So he used to tie it up in a handkerchief and bring it back—like a proud little boy!—pour it into my grandmother's lap to keep for him. She made him learn

the different coins and to stack them up neatly and to count them. She made him write down the amount each time, and she deposited in her bank for him. He was overwhelmed by the generosity of his audience who seemed so happy to give to help people they had never seen so far away!

Once he said to my grandmother that he had had the greatest temptation of his life in America. She liked to tease him a bit and said, "Who is she, Swami?" He burst out laughing and said, "Oh, it is not a lady, it is Organization!" He explained how the followers of Ramakrishna had all gone out alone and when they reached a village, would just quietly sit under a tree and wait for those in trouble to come to consult them. But in the States he saw how much could be accomplished by organizing work. Yet he was doubtful about just what type of organization would be acceptable to the Indian character, and he gave a great deal of thought and study how to adapt what seemed good to him in our Western World to the best advantage of his own people. I can see that Belur Math and his many charities are the result of this period in his life. I spoke earlier of his delightful slight Irish brogue. I recall that this came as a surprise to Swami Shankarananda. My grandfather used to joke him about it. But Swami said it was probably because his favourite professor was an Irish gentleman, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin.

After Swami left us, my mother was eager to do some studying along the lines of oriental philosophy, as she realized she had not enough background to understand his teachings as fully as she wished. A Mrs. Peake held some classes in Chicago that following winter and, in the course of them, mother discovered much to her surprise that if she held a letter torn up into fine bits between her hands, she received a brief but vivid impression of the writer, both physically and mentally. When Swamiji returned to Chicago a year or so later to give lectures,

mother asked him about this strange gift, and he said he had it also, and that when he was young, he used to have fun doing it to show off, but that Ramakrishna had wrapped his knuckles and said, "Don't use this great gift except for the good of mankind! Hands that receive these impressions can also bring relief from pain. Use this gift to bring healing!"

On this second visit, he only stayed with us for a short time. He knew he could teach better if he lived in his own regime of food and of many hours for meditation. It also left him free to receive many who came to him for help. So my grandmother helped him find a simple but comfortable little flat, but I do not recall that I ever saw it.

Swamiji was such a dynamic and attractive personality that many women were quite swept away by him and made every effort by flattery to gain his interest. He was still young and, in spite of his great spirituality and his brilliance of mind, seemed to be very unworldly. This used to trouble my grandmother who feared he might be put in a false or uncomfortable position, and she tried to caution him a little. Her concern touched and amused him, and he patted her hand and said, "Dear Mrs. Lyon, you dear American mother of mine, don't be afraid for me! It is true I often sleep under a banyan tree with a bowl of rice given me by a kindly peasant, but it is equally true that I also am sometimes the guest in the palace of a great Maharaja and a slave girl is appointed to wave a peacock feather fan over me all night long! I am used to temptation, and you need not fear for me!"

After having talked with Swami Shankarananda and been encourged by him, I wished I had talked to my mother's younger sister, Katharine (Mrs. Robert W. Hamill) about her recollections of Swamiji. So when I reached home I asked her what she could add to my scattered memories. She was a bride and had her own home. So she was not at her mother's and father's so

very much. She recalled Swamiji much as I did, but never heard him lecture. However, she and her husband were "young intellectuals" and had a group of young professors from our university, young newspaper men, etc. around them. One Sunday evening she was telling them how remarkable Swamiji was, and they said that modern scientists and psychologists could "show up" his religious beliefs in no time! She said, "If I can persuade him to come here next Sunday evening, will you all come back and meet him?" They agreed, and Swamiji met them all at an informal supper party. My aunt does not recall just what subjects were brought up, but that the entire evening was a lively and interesting debate on all sorts of ideas—Aunt Katharine said that Swamiji's great knowledge of the Bible and the Koran as well as the various oriental religions, his grasp of science and of psychology were astounding. Before the evening was over, the "doubting Thomases" threw up their hands and admitted that Swamiji had held his own on every point and that they parted from him with warmest admiration and affection.

When I was taken to meet Swami Shankarananda, I felt my memories were too childish and trivial to put down in black and white. I felt very humble and apologetic for taking up others' time. But the Swami said something infinitely kind and gracious which I shall never forget: That every great man is like a jewel with many facets. That each facet is important as it reflects a different aspect of his character. That I had come to him to offer a facet that was lacking in his records of Swamiji—of the weeks he had spent in our home when he first left India. So here is my very tiny "facet" offered in memory of someone I have loved for all these 62 years —not as a teacher, nor a great religious leader—but as a wonderful and vivid friend who lived in our home.

(*Prabuddha Bhârata, May 1956*)

XI

EARLY in November 1935, I landed in Calcutta and set foot for the first time on the soil of India. As I left my home in the United States of America journeying westward to encircle the globe, I thought of myself as a tourist in the different countries through which I passed. Only when I reached India did I in thought become a pilgrim. As a pilgrim I went the day after landing to the Belur Math on the farther side of the Ganges to bow my head in reverence before the tomb of the great Swami Vivekananda. In the upper room of the guest-house I met Miss Josephine MacLeod, his devoted friend. I also met several of the resident Swamis. When to each of them I said that I had once known Swami Vivekananda, their eagerness to hear of that far-off meeting surprised me. It was indeed to me one of the most vital influences of my life, but could it mean anything to others ? Since they assured me that it was so, I am setting down my recollections of those two days, now 42 years ago, when I came under the influence of that great man.

In September 1893, at the World's Fair held in Chicago to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus, a Parliament of Religions was a part of the programme. To this journeyed the then unknown young Hindu monk, Swami Vivekananda. His power over the audiences who heard him set forth his universal Gospel and the magic of his personality are common knowledge.

At the close of the Parliament, in order to be independent of the personal benefactions of his admirers, the Swami engaged with a Lecture Bureau to tour the States beginning with the East, and early in November he came to the town of Northampton, Massachusetts. This charming old town, half-way between New York and

Boston, and since prominent as the home of Calvin Coolidge, is situated on low hills in the Connecticut Valley just before the river plunges into the gap between Mt. Tom and Mt. Holyoke. In flood seasons the low-lying meadows about the town shine with the covering waters, and the purple outline of the Mt. Holyoke range forms the horizon to the south. Stately elm trees border the streets, and the place had then a slumberous aspect except when an eruption of students woke it to animation. For a women's college formed the centre of its intellectual life, Smith College, founded in 1875 by Sophia Smith for the higher education of women.

To this College I went as a freshman in the fall of 1893, an immature girl of eighteen, undisciplined but reaching out eagerly for the things of the mind and spirit. Brought up in a sheltered atmosphere, in the strictest Protestant Christian orthodoxy, it was with some misgivings that my parents saw me leave the home and be exposed to the dangers of so-called "free-thinking". Had not one of my friends gone the year before to Vassar College and was rumoured to have "lost her faith"?

The College dormitories were not large enough to house all of the incoming class, so I with three other freshmen boarded in a square brown house near the campus. This was kept by a lady whose independent spirit and humorous outlook endeared her to us, despite her despotic rule. College lectures for the whole body of students with compulsory attendance, were of frequent occurrence, and many well-known leaders of thought visited us.

On the Bulletin for November was the name of Swami Vivekananda who was to give two evening lectures. That he was a Hindu monk we knew, nothing more; for the fame he had won in the recent Parliament of Religions had not reached our ears. Then an exciting piece of news leaked out; he was to live at our house, to eat with us, and we could ask him questions about

India. Our hostess' breadth of tolerance may be seen in receiving into her house a man with dark skin, whom the hotel had doubtless refused to admit. As late as 1912 the great poet Tagore with his companion wandered through the streets of New York looking in vain for shelter !

The name of India was familiar to me from my earliest childhood. Had not my mother almost decided to marry a young man who went as a missionary to India, and did not a box from our Church Missionary Association go each year to the zenanas ? India was a hot land where snakes abounded, and "the heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone". It is astonishing how little an eager reader like myself knew about the history or literature of that great country. The life of William Carey I had read, had heard of St. Francis Xavier at Goa, but it was all from the missionary standpoint. You must remember "Kim" had not yet appeared. To talk with a real Indian would be a chance indeed.

The day came, the little guest-room was ready, and a stately presence entered our home. The Swami's dress was a black Prince Albert coat, dark trousers, and yellow turban wound in intricate folds about a finely shaped head. But the face with its inscrutable expression, the eyes so full of flashing light, and the whole emanation of power, are beyond description. We were awed and silent. Our hostess, however, was not one to be awed, and she led an animated conversation. I sat next to the Swami, and with my superfluity of reverence found not a word to say.

Of the lecture that evening I can recall nothing. The imposing figure on the platform in red robe, orange cord, and yellow turban, I do remember, and the wonderful mastery of the English language with its rich sonorous tones, but the ideas did not take root in my mind, or else the many years since then have obliterated them.

But what I do remember was the symposium that followed.

To our house came the College president, the head of the philosophy department, and several other professors, the ministers of the Northampton churches, and a well-known author. In a corner of the living-room we girls sat as quiet as mice and listened eagerly to the discussion which followed. To give a detailed account of this conversation is beyond me, though I have a strong impression that it dealt mainly with Christianity and why it is the only true religion. Not that the subject was the Swami's choosing. As his imposing presence faced the row of black-coated and somewhat austere gentlemen, one felt that he was being challenged. Surely these leaders of thought in our world had an unfair advantage. They knew their Bibles thoroughly and the European systems of philosophy, as well as the poets and commentators. How could one expect a Hindu from far-off India to hold his own with these, master though he might be of his own learning? The reaction to the surprising result that followed is my purely subjective one, but I cannot exaggerate its intensity.

To texts from the Bible, the Swami replied by other and more apposite ones from the same book. In upholding his side of the argument he quoted English philosophers and writers on religious subjects. Even the poets he seemed to know thoroughly, quoting Wordsworth and Thomas Gray (not from the well-known *Elegy*). Why were my sympathies not with those of my own world? Why did I exult in the air of freedom that blew through the room as the Swami broadened the scope of religion till it embraced all mankind? Was it that his words found an echo in my own longings, or was it merely the magic of his personality? I cannot tell, I only know that I felt triumphant with him.

In speaking with a Swami . . . at the Belur Math, he said that to him Swami Vivekananda personified Love.

To me that night he personified Power. I think that I can explain this from my later knowledge. No doubt these great men of our college-world were narrow-minded, of closed convictions, "wise in their own conceits". How could they accept the saying "Whosoever comes to Me through whatsoever form, I reach him?" At Chicago the Swami had recently felt the rancour of Christian missionaries, and undoubtedly his accents took on an austerity as he felt the same spirit in these representatives of Western learning. To them Love would not appeal, but Power can awe even when it does not force agreement. The discussion, beginning with the utmost courtesy, became less cordial, then bitterness crept in, a resentment on the part of the champions of Christianity as they felt that it was "thumbs down" for them. And truly it was. The repercussion of the triumph that filled me then is with me to this day.

Early the next morning loud splashings came from the bathroom, and mingling with them a deep voice chanting in an unknown tongue. I believe that a group of us huddled near the door to listen. At breakfast we asked him the meaning of the chant. He replied, "I first put the water on my forehead, then on my breast, and each time I chant a prayer for blessings on all creatures". This struck me forcibly. I was used to a morning prayer, but it was for myself first that I prayed, then for my family. It had never occurred to me to include all mankind in my family and to put them before myself.

After breakfast the Swami suggested a walk, and we four students, two on each side, escorted the majestic figure proudly through the streets. As we went, we shyly tried to open conversation. He was instantly responsive and smiled showing his beautiful teeth. I only remember one thing he said. Speaking of Christian doctrines, he remarked how abhorrent to him was the constant use of the term "the *blood* of Christ". That made me think. I had always hated the hymn "There is a fountain filled

with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins", but what daring to criticize an accepted doctrine of the Church ! My "free-thinking" certainly dates from the awakening given me by that freedom-loving soul. I led the conversation to the Vedas, those holy books of India he had mentioned in his lecture. He advised me to read them for myself, preferably in the original. I then and there made a resolve to learn Sanskrit, a purpose which I regret to say I have never fulfilled. Indeed as far as outward result goes, I am a case of the good seed choked by thorns.

One rather humorous outcome of this advice about the Vedas should not be omitted. The following summer a pretty little Guernsey calf was added to the family live-stock, and when my father gave it to me, I named it "Veda". Unfortunately the little one only lived a few months and my father said its name had killed it.

Of the succeeding lecture I can say nothing. The great Swami left us and I never saw him again. I even lost sight of his journeyings through our country and did not know that he made another visit to it two years later. And yet those two days of his mighty presence have certainly coloured all the rest of my life. I wrote to my family a detailed account of this visit, expressing myself so strongly that my devoted but over-solicitous father became alarmed. He pictured me leaving the faith of my fathers and becoming a disciple of the Swami. He used argument and ridicule, and to spare him further anxiety—for I adored my father—I stopped talking of my new thoughts, and kept them to myself.

I often think of the time I have lost, of the roundabout way I have come, groping my way, when under such guidance I might have aimed directly for the goal. But for an immortal soul it is wiser not to spend time in regrets, since to be on the way is the important thing.

One reads of the seeds found in Egyptian sarcophagi, buried thousands of years previously and yet retaining enough vitality to sprout when planted. Lying apparently

lifeless in my mind and heart, the far-off memory of that great apostle from India has during the past year begun to send forth shoots. It has at last brought me to this country. During the intervening years—years of sorrow and responsibility and struggle mingled with joy—my inmost self has been trying out this and that doctrine to see if it was what I wanted to live by. Always some dissatisfaction resulted. Dogmas and rituals, made so important by orthodox believers, seemed to me so unimportant, so curbing that freedom of the spirit that I longed for.

I find in the universal Gospel that Swamiji preached the satisfaction of my longing. To believe that the Divine is within us, that we are from the very first a part of God, and that this is true of every man, what more can one ask? In receiving this, as I have on the soil of India, I feel that I have come Home.

(*Prabuddha Bhārata, September 1936*)

XII

WHEN a man steps from darkness into a very bright light, his eyes are dazed for a while and refuse to work properly for the moment. And when we are asked to speak and describe that great joy which lights our very soul, our answer would be, as it were, but a mere groping in the darkness for words. One may perceive and feel most perfect joy, yet not be able to describe it. It is with such feeling that my thoughts wander back to the great impressions of my life, which I can never forget. Although a number of years have passed, these events live in my memory as if they had occurred but yesterday.

I well remember my first meeting with the Swami Vivekananda, that great teacher whose nativity we are commemorating this evening. Though filled with prejudice by my friends, I went to one of the Swami's classes, not so much to hear his lecture as to see for the first time a native of India, the land which I had learnt to love through reading the Bhagavad-Gita, the *Song Celestial*. I was seated in the class-room waiting for the Swami's appearance when soon a man came in—one whose walk expressed dignity and whose general bearing showed majesty, like one who owns everything and desires nothing. After a short observation I also saw that he was a very superior man, and withal, one who quickly disclosed a most lovable character. Now I became anxious to hear the words he would speak; and after I had done so but a few minutes, I firmly resolved to be a regular attendant at all his lectures and classes. That prejudice which was so strong within me when I entered, now seemed to be driven away by his profound knowledge and charming magnetism. It would be too long to describe the great treats that followed. As wholesome food satisfies the hungry and fresh water quenches the thirsty, so my longing for truth was

satisfied through the teaching of this wonderful man. And to this very day I have found nothing that gives a better answer and a clearer explanation to the various vital questions which arise in a man's mind than the Vedanta philosophy so ably taught by the Swami Vivekananda.

Not only were his words in class-room and lecture-room those of instructive value, but also his conversations, while walking on the street or through Central Park, always conveyed the one message. Many of our interesting little talks I can readily call to mind; for instance, on one occasion I expressed my regret to the Swami that his sublime teachings had no larger following, and his wise and fitting answer was: "I could have thousands more at my lectures if I wanted them. It is the sincere student who will help to make this work a success and not merely the large audiences. If I succeed in my whole life to help one man to reach freedom, I shall feel that my labours have not been in vain, but quite successful." This remark filled me with the desire to be one of his students.

The strong impression which this lovable teacher always gave to his students was that of causing them to feel that they alone, while with him, had his whole attention and sympathy. Always willing to devote his entire attention to heeding his students' most humble wants and queries, he, by this most pleasing attitude, made them most enthusiastic and faithful disciples. This created that enduring bond of love between teacher and disciple which is so necessary for any teacher's real success. And how glorious was his success! Today almost every intelligent person is more or less familiar with the literature which like a flower blossomed out of his work. And many are those—the professor, clergyman, and layman alike—who have been influenced to the better through acquaintance with these literary gems.

His teaching bore to us the peace of mind of the Aryan *rishis* of which we are so much in need. It is but

recently that an American scientist pointed out how our fashionable and business life is a continuous nerve storm —a literal hurrying to the grave, speeding along every life-way, exhausting energy, and inviting premature nervous and mental ruin. Through the strong desire for wealth and sense-gratification the nerve energy is exceedingly over-taxed, and no remedy is sought to restore it. What better cure for this evil could be conceived than the living of that life which the Vedanta philosophy teaches? Not the excessive nervous rushing hither and thither, nor inactive dullness, but *sattva*—equipoise and tranquillity—is what is offered by Vedanta, and this only can bring back to us the calm which Western nations have long lost.

In his teachings the Swami has admonished us not to direct the war-spirit in us to win the greatest victories, to the slaying of our fellowman in anger and hatred when he differs from us, but to the transmuting of this energy into a strict practice of self-control. And what better teaching can a man spread than one which contains such original thoughts as: "He conquers all who conquers self; know this and never yield", or "In books and temples vain thy search. Thine only is the hand that holds the rope that drags thee on. Then cease lament, let go thy hold."

And now, though he has gone into the great Peace beyond, because his work was finished, he still lives in our memory and in his work, as he also lives in the message which he brought to us. He has done his duty as a great, good, and true teacher, and gave us the means, *That we may know the Truth*. But that is only one part, the other, without which all is in vain, is our duty, *That we may live the Truth*, and increased knowledge brings this additional duty with it. For that purpose, to help and assist us to better live the truth, Vedanta Societies have been formed, classes and lectures are being held, and his Brother-Swamis and Sannyâsin disciples have come to our shores. However mighty a nation we may be, he did not

seek us for anything but for giving Truth and Wisdom, of which we are surely in need. Let us, by living the Truth of Vedanta, prove that this great Master has not brought his wonderful message in vain to us.

(*Prabuddha Bhârata, June 1911*)

XIII

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AS I SAW HIM

Now and then, at long intervals of time, a being finds his way to this planet who is unquestionably a wanderer from another sphere; who brings with him to this sorrowful world some of the glory, the power, the radiance of the far distant region from which he came. He walks among men, but he is not at home here. He is a pilgrim, a stranger, he tarries but a night.

He shares the life of those about him, enters into their joys and sorrows, rejoices with them, mourns with them, but through it all, he never forgets who he is, whence he came, or what the purpose of his coming. He never forgets his divinity. He remembers that he is the great, the glorious, the majestic Self. He knows that he came from that ineffable, supernal region which has no need of the sun or moon, for it is illumined by the Light of lights. He knows that he *was*, long before the time when—"all the sons of God sang together for joy".

Such a one, I have seen, I have heard, I have revered. At his feet I have laid my soul's devotion.

Such a being is beyond all comparison, for he transcends all ordinary standards and ideals. Others may be brilliant, his mind is luminous, for he had the power to put himself into immediate contact with the source of all knowledge. He is no longer limited to the slow processes to which ordinary human beings are confined. Others may be great, they are great only as compared with those in their own class. Others may be good, powerful, gifted, having more of goodness, more of power, more of genius than their fellowmen. It is only a matter of comparison. A saint is more holy, more pure, more single-minded than ordinary men. But with Swami Vivekananda, there could be no comparison. He was in a class by himself. He

belonged to another order. He was not of this world. He was a radiant being who had descended from another, a higher sphere for a definite purpose. One might have known that he would not stay long.

Is it to be wondered at that nature itself rejoices in such a birth, that the heavens open and angels sing paeans of praise ?

Blessed is the country in which he was born, blessed are they who lived on this earth at the same time, and blessed, thrice blessed are the few who sat at his feet.

THE MASTER AND THE MESSAGE

There are times when life flows on in a steady deadly stream of monotony. Eating, sleeping, talking—the same weary round. Commonplace thoughts, stereotyped ideas, the eternal tread-mill. Tragedy comes. For a moment it shocks us into stillness. But we cannot keep still. The merry-go-round stops neither for our sorrow nor our happiness. Surely this is not all there is to life. This is not what we are here for. Restlessness comes. What are we waiting for ? Then one day it happens, the stupendous things for which we have been waiting—that which dispels the deadly monotony, which turns the whole of life into a new channel, which eventually takes one to a far away country and sets one among strange people with different customs and a different outlook upon life, to a people with whom from the very first we feel a strange kinship, a wonderful people who know what they are waiting for, who recognize the purpose of life. Our restlessness is stilled for ever.

After many incarnations, after untold suffering, struggle, and conquest, comes fruition. But this one does not know until long, long after. A tiny seed grows into the mighty banyan. A few feet of elevation on a fairly level plain, determine whether a river shall flow north and eventually reach the icy Arctic Ocean or south, until it finds itself in the warm waters of the Black or Caspian Sea.

Little did I think when I reluctantly set out one cold February night in 1894 to attend a lecture at the Unitarian Church in Detroit that I was doing something which would change the whole course of my life and be of such stupendous import that it could not be measured by previous standards I had known. Attending lectures had been part of the deadly monotony. How seldom did one hear anything new or uplifting ! The lecturers who had come to Detroit that winter had been unusually dull. So unvarying had been the disillusion, that one had given up hope and with it the desire to hear more. So that I went very unwillingly to this particular lecture to hear one "Vive Kananda, a monk from India", and only in response to the pleading of my friend, Mrs. Mary C. Funke. With her beautifully optimistic nature, she had kept her illusions and still believed that some day she would find "That Something". We went to hear this "Man from India". Surely never in our countless incarnations had we taken a step so momentous ! For before we had listened five minutes, we knew that we had found the touchstone for which we had searched so long. In one breath, we exclaimed—"If we had missed this . . . !"

To those who have heard much of the personal appearance of the Swami Vivekananda, it may seem strange that it was not this which made the first outstanding impression. The forceful virile figure which stepped upon the platform was unlike the emaciated, ascetic type which is generally associated with spirituality in the West. A sickly saint everyone understands, but who ever heard of a powerful saint ? The power that emanated from this mysterious being was so great that one all but shrank from it. It was overwhelming. It threatened to sweep everything before it. This one sensed even in those first unforgettable moments. Later we were to see this power at work. It was the mind that made the first great appeal, that amazing mind ! What can one say that will give even a faint idea of its majesty, its glory, its splendour ?

It was a mind so far transcending other minds, even of those who rank as geniuses, that it seemed different in its very nature. Its ideas were so clear, so powerful, so transcendental that it seemed incredible that they could have emanated from the intellect of a limited human being. Yet marvellous as the ideas were and wonderful as was that intangible something that flowed out from the mind, it was all strangely familiar. I found myself saying, "*I have known that mind before*". He burst upon us in a blaze of reddish gold, which seemed to have caught and concentrated the sun's rays. He was barely thirty, this preacher from far away India. Young with an ageless youth and yet withal old with the wisdom of ancient times. For the first time we heard the age-old message of India, teaching of the *ātman,* the true Self.

The audience listened spellbound while he wove the fabric as glowing and full of colour as a beautiful Kashmir shawl. Now a thread of humour, now one of tragedy, many of serious thought, many of aspiration, of lofty idealism, of wisdom. Through it all ran the woof of India's most sacred teaching : the divinity of man, his innate and eternal perfection ; that this perfection is not a growth, nor a gradual attainment, but a present reality. "*That thou art.*" You are that now. There is nothing to do but to realize it. The realization may come now in the twinkling of an eye, or in a million years, but "All will reach the sunlit heights." This message has well been called, "The wondrous Evangel of the Self". We are not the helpless limited beings which we think ourselves to be, but birthless, deathless, glorious children of immortal bliss. Like the teachers of old he, too, spoke in parables. The theme was always the same—man's real nature. Not what we seem to be, but what we *are*. We are like men walking over a gold mine thinking we are poor. We are like the lion who was born in a sheepfold and thought he was a sheep. When the wolf came he bleated with fear quite unaware of his nature. Then one day a lion came,

and seeing him bleating among the sheep called out to him, "You are not a sheep. You are a lion. You have no fear." The lion at once became conscious of his nature and let out a mighty roar. He stood on the platform of the Unitarian Church pouring forth glorious truths in a voice unlike any voice one had ever heard before, a voice full of cadences, expressing every emotion, now with a pathos that stirred hitherto unknown deeps of tragedy, and then just as the pain was becoming unbearable, that same voice would move one to mirth only to check it in a midcourse with the thunder of an earnestness so intense that it left one awed, a trumpet call to awake. One felt that one never knew what music was until one heard that marvellous voice.

Which of us who heard him then can ever forget what soul memories were stirred within us when we heard the ancient message of India,—"Hear ye, Children of Immortal Bliss, even ye who dwell in higher spheres, I have found the Ancient One, knowing whom alone ye shall be saved from death over again." Or the story of the lion and the sheep. Blessed Truth! In spite of your bleating, your timidity, your fear, you are not the sheep, you are and always have been the lion, powerful, fearless, the king of beasts. It is only an illusion that is to be overcome. You are THAT now. With these words came a subtle force or influence that lifted one into a purer and rarer atmosphere. Was it possible to hear and feel this and ever be the same again? All one's values were changed. The seed of spirituality was planted to grow and grow throughout the years until it inevitably reached fruition. True, this sublime teaching is hoary with age. It may even be true that every Hindu man and woman knows it, many may be able to formulate it clearly, but Vivekananda spoke with authority. To him, it was not a speculative philosophy but the *living Truth*. All else might be false, this alone was true. He realized it. After his own great realization, life held but one purpose—to

give the message with which he was entrusted, to point out the path and to help others on the road to the same supreme goal. "Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached."

All of this one sensed more or less dimly in that first unforgettable hour while our minds were lifted into his own radiant atmosphere. Later, slowly and sometimes painfully, after much effort and devotion, some of us found that our very minds were transformed. Great is the *guru* !

Those who came to the first lecture at the Unitarian Church came to the second and to the third, bringing others with them. "Come," they said, "hear this wonderful man. He is like no one we have ever heard", and they came until there was no place to hold them. They filled the room, stood in the aisles, peered in at the windows. Again and again he gave his message, now in this form, now in that, now illustrated with stories from the Râmâyana and Mahâbhârata, now from the *purânas* and folklore. From the Upanishads he quoted constantly, first chanting in the original Sanskrit, then giving a free poetic translation. Great as was the impression which his spoken words made, the chanting produced an even greater effect. Unplumbed deeps were stirred ; and as the rhythm fell upon the ear, the audience sat rapt and breathless. Our love for India came to birth. I think when we first heard him say the word, "India", in that marvellous voice of his. It seems incredible that so much could have been put into one small word of five letters. There was love, passion, pride, longing, adoration, tragedy, chivalry, *heimweh,* and again love. Whole volumes could not have produced such a feeling in others. It had the magic power of creating love in those who heard it. Ever after, India became the land of heart's desire. Everything concerning her became of interest—became living—her people, her history, architecture, her manners and customs, her rivers, mountains, plains, her

culture, her great spiritual concepts, her scriptures. And so began a new life, a life of study, of meditation. The centre of interest was shifted.

After the Parliament of Religions, Swami Vivekananda was induced to place himself under the direction of Pond's Lecture Bureau[1] and make a lecture tour of the United States. As is the custom, the committee at each new place was offered the choice of several lectures —"The Divinity of Man", "Manners and Customs of India", "The Women of India", "Our Heritage". ... Invariably, when the place was a mining town, with no intellectual life whatever, the most abstruse subjects were selected. He told us the difficulty of speaking to an audience when he could see no ray of intelligence in response. After some weeks of this, lecturing every evening and travelling all night, the bondage became too irksome to bear any longer. In Detroit he had friends who had known him in Chicago and who loved and admired him. To them he went, and begged, "Make me free ! Make me free !" Being influential they were able to get him released from his contract, though at a financial loss which seemed unfair. He had hoped to begin his work in India with the money earned in this way, but this was not the only reason for engaging in this public work. The impulse which was urging him on and which was never entirely absent from his mind was the mission with which his Master had entrusted him. He had a work to do, a message to give. It was a sacred message. How was he to give it ? By the time he reached Detroit, he knew that a lecture tour was not the way, and not an hour longer would he waste his time on what did not lead towards his object. For six weeks he remained in Detroit, his mind intent upon his purpose, and he would give an occasional lecture. We missed no opportunity of hearing him. Again and again we heard the "wondrous

[1] The actual name of the Bureau is difficult to ascertain.—*Publisher.*

Evangel of the Self". Again and again we heard the story of India, now from this angle, now from that. We knew we had found our Teacher. The word *guru* we did not know then. Nor did we meet him personally, but what matter? It would take years to assimilate what we had already learnt. And then the Master would somehow, somewhere, teach us again!

THE DISCIPLES AT THOUSAND ISLAND PARK

It happened sooner than we expected, for in a little more than a year, we found ourselves in Thousand Island Park in the very house with him. It must have been the 6th of July 1895, that we had the temerity to seek him out. We heard he was living with a group of students. The word "disciple" is not used very freely in these days. It implies more than the average person is willing to give. We thought there would be some public teaching which we might attend. We dared not hope for more. Mrs. Funke has told of our quest in her preface to the *Inspired Talks* of Swami Vivekananda.

Of the wonderful weeks that followed, it is difficult to write. Only if one's mind were lifted to that high state of consciousness in which we lived for the time, could we hope to recapture the experience. We were filled with joy. We did not know at that time that we were living in his radiance. On the wings of inspiration, he carried us to the height which was his natural abode. He himself, speaking of it later, said that he was at his best in Thousand Islands. Then he felt that he had found the channel through which his message might be spread, the way to fulfil his mission, for the *guru* had found his own disciples. His first overwhelming desire was to show us the path to *mukti* (freedom), to set us free. "Ah," he said with touching pathos, "If I could only set you free with a touch!" His second object, not so apparent perhaps, but always in the under-current, was to train this group to carry on the work in America. "This mes-

sage must be preached by Indians in India, and by Americans in America", he said. On his own little veranda, overlooking the tree tops and the beautiful St. Lawrence, he often called upon us to make speeches. His object was, as he said, to teach us to think upon our feet. Did he know that if we could conquer our self-consciousness in his presence, could speak before him who was considered one of the great orators of the world, no audience anywhere would dismay us? It was a trying ordeal. Each in turn was called upon to make an attempt. There was no escape. Perhaps that was why certain of our group failed to make an appearance at these intimate evening gatherings, although they knew that often he soared to the greatest heights as the night advanced. What if it was two o'clock in the morning? What if we had watched the moon rise and set? Time and space had vanished for us.

There was nothing set or formed about these nights on the upper veranda. He sat in his large chair at the end, near his door. Sometimes he went into a deep meditation. At such times we too meditated or sat in profound silence. Often it lasted for hours and one after the other slipped away. For we knew that after this he would not feel inclined to speak. Or again the meditation would be short, and he would encourage us to ask questions afterwards, often calling on one of us to answer. No matter how far wrong these answers were, he let us flounder about until we were near the truth, and then in a few words, he would clear up the difficulty. This was his invariable method in teaching. He knew how to stimulate the mind of the learner and make it do its own thinking. Did we go to him for confirmation of a new idea or point of view and begin, "I see it is thus and so", his "Yes?" with an upper inflection always sent us back for further thought. Again we would come with a more clarified understanding, and again the "Yes?" stimulated us to further thought. Perhaps after the third

time, when the capacity for further thought along that particular line was reached, he would point out the error —an error usually due to something in our Western mode of thought.

And so he trained us with such patience, such benignity. It was like a benediction. Later, after his return to India, he hoped to have a place in the Himalayas for further training of Eastern and Western disciples together.

It was a strange group—these people whom he had gathered around him that summer at Thousand Islands. No wonder the shopkeeper, to whom we went for direction upon our arrival, said, "Yes, there are some queer people living up on the hill, among whom is a foreign-looking gentleman." There were three friends who had come to the Swami's New York classes together—Miss S. E. Waldo, Miss Ruth Ellis, and Doctor Wight. For thirty years, they had attended every lecture on philosophy that they had heard of, but had never found anything that even remotely approached this. So Doctor Wight gravely assured us, the new-comers. Miss Waldo had during these long years of attendance at lectures acquired the gift of summarizing a whole lecture in a few words. It is to her that we owe *Inspired Talks.* When Swami Vivekananda went to England that same year, he gave her charge of some of the classes, and on his return she made herself invaluable. It was to her that he dictated his commentary on the Patanjali's Aphorisms. She assisted too in bringing out the different books *Karma-Yoga, Râja-Yoga, Jnâna-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga.* Her logical, trained mind and her complete devotion made her an ideal assistant. Ruth Ellis was on the staff of one of the New York newspapers. She was gentle and retiring and seldom spoke, yet one knew that her love and devotion were unbounded. She was like a daughter to "little old Docky Wight", as we all called him. He was well over seventy but as enthusiastic and full of interest as a boy. At the end of each

class there was usually a pause, and the little old "Docky" would stoop down and rub his bald head and say, with the most pronounced nasal twang, "Well, Swami, then it all amounts to this, 'I am the Absolute!'" We always waited for that, and Swamiji would smile his most fatherly smile and agree. At times like this, the Swami's thirty years in the presence of seventy seemed older by countless years—ancient but not aged, rather ageless and wise with the wisdom of all times. Sometimes he said, "I feel three hundred years old." This, with a sigh.

In a room below lived Stella. It was several days before we saw her, for she seldom came up to the classes, being, as we were given to understand, too deeply engrossed in ascetic practices to break in upon them. Naturally our curiosity was excited. Later we came to understand much. She had been an actress. Past *samskâras* are not so easily wiped out. Was this only another play which would restore her fast fading beauty and bring back her lost youth? For strange as it may seem, the demonstration of youth, beauty, health, prosperity is considered the test of spirituality in America in these benighted days. How could Swami Vivekananda understand that anyone could put such an interpretation upon his lofty teaching? How much did he understand, we wondered? And then one day he said, "I like that Baby. She is so artless." This met with a dead silence. Instantly his whole manner changed, and he said very gravely, "I call her Baby hoping that it will make her childlike, free from art and guile." Perhaps for the same reason, for her *ishta* (chosen ideal), he gave her Gopala, the Baby Krishna. When we separated for the summer, she went to live on a small island in Orchard Lake. There she built a tiny one-roomed house and lived alone. Strange stories began to be circulated about her. She wore a turban; she practised uncanny rites, called *yoga*. No one knew the meaning of *yoga*. It was a strange foreign word that had to do with India—the mysterious, and with occultism. Newspaper men

came to interview her. One well-known writer tells the story of his first success. He was a lad engaged in running an elevator (lift) for his living. He wrote the story of this young woman practising *yoga* on an island not far away. He sent it to the *Detroit Free Press* and to his astonishment it was accepted. Long afterwards when his position was assured, he said, "After that I expected that everything I wrote would be accepted at once." Alas, the road to fame is not so easy. It was a long up-hill struggle, and it was years before his name became so well-known, that his manuscripts received respectful attention. Since then he had learnt the true meaning of *yoga,* and India has become for him the "Holy Land" to which one goes, not as a tourist but as a pilgrim. The scene of his first novel was laid largely in India. With what feeling and what rare insight he depicted the Indian village to which his hero comes at dusk! The homesick wanderer who reads the book lives in India again for a few hours. Who shall say that this career was not inspired in part at least by Swami Vivekananda, especially since the writer came to know him personally? It was he who said, "There is a glow about everyone who was in any way associated with Vivekananda." Stella went back to live the ordinary human life, and none of us knew anything of her afterwards until news came of her death a few months ago. What life had held for her during those thirty years in which she voluntarily cut herself off from all connection with us, even from him who had planted and watered the seed, who can say? One can only believe that the seed so planted bore fruit worthy of the planting.

Of Mrs. Funke Swamiji said, "She gives me freedom." He was seldom more spontaneous than in her presence. "She is naive," he said on another occasion. This amused her, for she did not spare herself in her efforts to meet his moods. Perhaps more than any of us she realized how much he needed rest and relaxation. The body and mind should not be kept at so great a ten-

sion all the time. While others were afraid of losing even a word, she thought how she could amuse him. She would tell funny stories, often at her own expense, and talk lightly and entertainingly. "She rests me," he said to one. To the same one, she said, "I know he thinks I am a fool, but I don't care as long as it amuses him." Is it because of her attitude of not wanting to gather anything from one who had so much to give, that she most of all retains the impress of his personality undistorted? Her sunny disposition, her optimism, her enthusiasm, were refreshing. Nor was she less attractive in other ways, possessing beauty, grace, and charm to an unusual degree. Even today, in spite of her physical disability, the old charm is there. Nothing rekindles the flame and brings the fire of enthusiasm to such a glow as conversation about the Swami. He lives. One actually feels his presence. It is a blessed experience. Who can doubt that when the time comes for her to drop the body which has now become such a burden, she will find the darkness illumined and in that luminous atmosphere a radiant presence who will give her that great gift—*Freedom.*

The Swami's choice of two others grew out of the theory which he then held that fanaticism is power gone astray. If this force can be transmuted and turned into a higher channel, it becomes a great power for good. There must be power. That is essential. In Marie Louise and Leon Landsberg, he saw that there was fanaticism to a marked degree, and he believed that here was material which would be invaluable. Marie Louise was, in some respects, the outstanding personality in this small community. A tall, angular woman, about fifty years of age, so masculine in appearance that one looked twice before one could tell whether she was a man or a woman. The short, wiry hair, in the days before bobbed hair was in vogue, the masculine features, the large bones, the heavy voice and the robe, not unlike that worn by men in India, made one doubtful.

Her path was the highest, she announced, that of philosophy—*jnâna*. She had been the spokesman for ultra-radical groups and had learning and some degree of eloquence. "I have magnetism of the platform," she used to say. Her vanity and personal ambition made her unfit for discipleship, and useless as a worker in Swami Vivekananda's movement. She left Thousand Islands before any of us, and soon after organized an independent centre of Vedanta in California, and later, one in Washington.

One of the most interesting, as well as the most learned of the group was Leon Landsberg, an American by citizenship and a Russian Jew by birth. He had all the great qualities of his race — emotion, imagination, a passion for learning, and a worship of genius. For three years, he was Swami Vivekananda's inseparable companion, friend, secretary, attendant. His intimate knowledge of Europe, its philosophies, its languages, its culture, gave him a profundity and depth of mind which are rare. He was fiery and picturesque. His indifference to his personal appearance, his fanaticism, his pity for the poor, which amounted to a passion, drew Swamiji to him. He often gave his last penny to a beggar, and always he gave not out of his abundance, but out of a poverty almost as great as the recipient's. He had as well a position on a New York paper which required but little of his time and gave him a small income. While he and Swamiji lived together in 33rd Street in New York, they shared what they had. Sometimes there was sufficient for both and sometimes there was nothing. After the classes were over at night, they would go out for a walk, ending with a light meal which was inexpensive, as the common purse was often empty. This did not trouble either of them. They knew that when it was needed, money would find its way into the purse again.

Landsberg was an epitome of Europe, its philosophies, its literature, its art. Swamiji found greater

delight in reading a man, than a book. Then, too, he was a revelation of the Jewish race— its glory, its tragedy. In this companionship, two ancient races met and found a common basis.

Landsberg was one of the first to come to Thousand Islands and to be initiated. He was given a new name as was customary at that time. Because of his great compassion, he was named Kripananda. His path was Bhakti, worship, devotion. In this his fiery emotional nature could most easily find its true expression. He was the first to be sent out to teach.

After leaving Detroit, Swamiji had gone to New York hoping that there, in the cultural metropolis of America, he might find an opening to begin the work he felt destined to do. He was soon taken up by a group of wealthy friends who loved and admired him and were attracted by his personality, but cared nothing for his message. He found himself in danger of becoming a social lion. He was fed, clothed, and housed in luxury. Again there came the cry for freedom: "Not this! Not this! I can never do my work under these conditions."

Then he thought the way might be found by living alone and teaching in classes, open to all. He asked Landsberg to find inexpensive rooms for both of them. The place which was found (64 West 33rd Street) was in a most undesirable locality, and it was hinted that the right sort of people, especially ladies, would not come to such a place ; but they came—all sorts and conditions of men and women—to these squalid rooms. They sat on chairs, and when chairs were filled, anywhere—on tables, on washstands, on the stairs. Millionaires were glad to sit on the floor, literally at his feet. No charge was made for the teaching and often there was no money to pay the rent. Then Swamiji would give a secular lecture for which he felt he could accept a fee. All that winter, he worked as he could. Often the last penny was spent. It

was a precarious way of carrying on the work and sometimes it seemed as if it would come to an end.

It was at this time that some of those with means offered to finance the undertaking. But they made conditions. The "right place" must be selected and the "right people" must be attracted. This was intolerable to his free *sannyâsin*-spirit. Was it for this that he had renounced the world? Was it for this that he had cast aside name and fame? A little financial security was a small thing to give up. He would depend upon no human help. If the work was for him to do, ways and means would come. He refused to make a compromise with the conventional outlook and worldly methods. A letter written at this time is revealing :

"...wants me to be introduced to the 'right sort of people'. The only 'right sort of people' are those whom the Lord sends—that is what I understand in my life's experience. They alone can and will help me. As for the rest, Lord bless them in a mass and save me from them. . . . Lord, how hard it is for man to believe in Thy mercies ! ! ! Shiva! Shiva! Where is the right kind? And where is the bad? It is all *He*! ! In the tiger and in the lamb, in the saint and in the sinner, all *He*! ! In Him I have taken my refuge, body, soul, and *âtman,* will He leave me now after carrying me in His arms all my life ? Not a drop will be in the ocean, not a twig in the deepest forest, not a crumb in the house of the God of wealth, if the Lord is not merciful. Streams will be in the desert and the beggar will have plenty if He wills it. He seeth the sparrow's fall—are these but words, or literal, actual life?

"Truce to this 'right sort of presentation'. Thou art my right, Thou my wrong, my Shiva. Lord, since a child, I have taken refuge in Thee. Thou wilt be with me in the tropics or at the poles, on the tops of mountains or in the depths of oceans. My stay—my guide in life—my refuge—my friend—my teacher—and my God—my real

self—Thou wilt never leave me, never. . . . My God, save Thou me for ever from these weaknesses, and may I never, never seek for help from any being but Thee. If a man puts his trust in another good man, he is never betrayed. Wilt Thou forsake me, Father of all good—Thou who knowest that *all* my life, I am Thy servant, and Thine alone? Wilt Thou give me over to be played upon by others or dragged down by evil? He will never leave me, I am sure."

After this, a few earnest students took the financial responsibility for the work, and there was no further difficulty. Again he wrote: "Was it ever in the history of the world that any great work was done by the rich? It is the heart and brains that do it, ever and ever, and not the purse."

All that winter the work went on and when the season came to an end, early in the summer, this devoted group was not willing to have the teaching discontinued. One of them owned a house in Thousand Island Park on the St. Lawrence River, and a proposal was made to the teacher that they all spend the summer there. He consented, much touched by their earnestness. He wrote to one of his friends that he wanted to manufacture a few *"yogis"* out of the materials of the classes. He felt that his work was now really started and that those who joined him at Thousand Islands were really disciples.

In May 1895, he writes to Mrs. Ole Bull:

"This week will be the last of my classes. I am going next Saturday with Mr. Leggett to Maine. He has a fine lake and a forest there. I shall be two or three weeks there. From thence, I go to Thousand Islands. Also I have an invitation to speak at a Parliament of Religions at Toronto, Canada, on July 18th. I shall go there from Thousand Islands and return back."

And on the 7th of June:

"I am here at last with Mr. Leggett. This is one of the most beautiful spots I ever saw. Imagine a lake sur-

rounded with hills and covered with a huge forest, with nobody but ourselves. So lovely, so quiet, so restful. You may imagine how glad I am after the bustle of cities. It gives me a new lease of life to be here. I go into the forest alone and read my Gita and am quite happy. I shall leave this place in about ten days or so, and go to Thousand Islands. I shall meditate by the hour and day here and be all alone by myself. The very idea is ennobling."

Early in June three or four were gathered at Thousand Island Park with him and the teaching began without delay. He came on Saturday, July 6, 1895. Swami Vivekananda had planned to initiate several of those already there on Monday. "I don't know you well enough yet to feel sure that you are ready for initiation," he said on Sunday afternoon. Then he added rather shyly, "I have a power which I seldom use— the power of reading the mind. If you will permit me, I should like to read your mind, as I wish to initiate you with the others tomorrow." We assented joyfully. Evidently he was satisfied with the result of the reading, for the next day, together with several others, he gave us a *mantra* and made us his disciples. Afterwards, questioned as to what he saw while he was reading our minds he told us a little. He saw that we should be faithful and that we should make progress in our spiritual life. He described something of what he saw, without giving the interpretation of every picture. In one case, scene after scene passed before his mental vision which meant that there would be extensive travel apparently in Oriental countries. He described the very houses in which we should live, the people who should surround us, the influences that would affect our lives. We questioned him about this. He told us it could be acquired by anyone. The method was simple at least in the telling. First, think of space— vast, blue, extending everywhere. In time, as one meditates upon this space intently, pictures appear.

These pictures must be interpreted. Sometimes one sees the pictures but does not know the interpretation. He saw that one of us would be indissolubly connected with India. Important as well as minor events were foretold for us nearly all of which have come to pass. In this reading the quality of the personality was revealed—the mettle, the capacity, the character. Having passed this test, there can be no self-depreciation, no lack of faith in one's self. Every momentary doubt is replaced by a serene assurance. Has the personality not received the stamp of approval from the one being in the world . . . ?

Thousand Island Park, nine miles long and a mile or two in width, is the largest of the Thousand Islands. The steamers land at the village on the river. At that time the remainder of the island was practically a solitude. The house to which we were directed was a mile above the village. It was built upon a rock. Was that symbolic? It was two storeys high in the front and three behind. A dense forest surrounded it. Here we were secluded and yet within the reach of supplies. We could walk in all directions and meet no one. Sometimes Swamiji went out only with Landsberg. Sometimes he asked one or two of us to accompany him. Occasionally the whole party went out together. As we walked, he talked, seldom of controversial subjects. The solitude, the woods seemed to recall past experiences in Indian forests, and he told us of the inner experiences during the time he wandered there.

We in our retirement seldom saw anyone except now and then someone who came for the view. The conditions were ideal for our purpose. One could not have believed that such a spot could be found in America. What great ideas were voiced there! What an atmosphere was created, what power was generated! There the Teacher reached some of his loftiest flights, there he showed us his heart and mind. We saw ideas unfold and flower. We saw the evolution of plans which grew into

institutions in the years that followed. It was a blessed experience—an experience which made Miss Waldo exclaim, "What have we ever done to deserve this?" And so we all felt.

The original plan was that they should live as a community, without servants, each doing a share of the work. Nearly all of them, were unaccustomed to housework and found it uncongenial. The result was amusing: as time went on it threatened to become disastrous. Some of us who had just been reading the story of Brook Farm felt that we saw it re-enacted before our eyes. No wonder Emerson refused to join that community of transcendentalists! His serenity was evidently bought at a price. Some could only wash dishes. One whose work was to cut the bread, groaned and all but wept whenever she attempted the task. It is curious how character is tested in these little things. Weaknesses which might have been hidden for a lifetime in ordinary intercourse, were exposed in a day of this community life. It was interesting. With Swamiji the effect was quite different. Although only one among them all was younger than himself, he seemed like a father or rather like a mother in patience and gentleness. When the tension became too great, he would say with the utmost sweetness, "Today, I shall cook for you." To this Landsberg would ejaculate in an aside, "Heaven save us!" By way of explanation he said that in New York when Swamiji cooked he, Landsberg, would tear his hair, because it meant that afterwards every dish in the house required washing. After several unhappy experiences in the community housekeeping, an outsider was engaged for help, and one or two of the more capable ones undertook certain responsibilities, and we had peace.

But once the necessary work was over and we had gathered in the class room, the atmosphere was changed. There never was a disturbing element within those walls. It seemed as if we had left the body and the bodily con-

sciousness outside. We sat in a semicircle and waited. Which gate to the Eternal would be opened for us today? What heavenly vision should meet our eyes? There was always the thrill of adventure. The Undiscovered Country, the Sorrowless Land opened up new vistas of hope and beauty. Even so, our expectations were always exceeded. Vivekananda's flights carried us with him to supernal heights. Whatever degree of realization may or may not have come to us since, one thing we can never forget: We saw the Promised Land. We, too, were taken to the top of Pisgah and the sorrow and trials of this world have never been quite real since.

He told us the story of the beautiful garden and of one who went to look over the wall and found it so alluring that he jumped over and never returned. And after him another and another. But we had the unique fortune of having for a Teacher one who had looked over and found it no less entrancing, but out of his great compassion he returned to tell the story to those left behind and to help them over the wall. So it went on from morning until midnight. When he saw how deep the impression was which he had made, he would say with a smile, "The cobra has bitten you. You cannot escape." Or sometimes, "I have caught you in my net. You can never get out."

Miss Dutcher, our hostess, was a conscientious little woman, a devout Methodist. How she ever came to be associated with such a group as gathered in her house that summer would have been a mystery to anyone who did not know the power of Swami Vivekananda to attract and hold sincere souls. But having once seen and heard him, what could one do but follow? Was he not the incarnation of the Divine, the Divine which lures man on until he finds himself again in his lost kingdom? But the road was hard and often terrifying to one still bound by conventions and orthodoxy in religion. All her ideals, her values of life, her concepts of religion were, it seemed

to her, destroyed. In reality, they were only modified. Sometimes she did not appear for two or three days. "Don't you see" Swami said, "this is not an ordinary illness? It is the reaction of the body against the chaos that is going on in her mind. She cannot bear it." The most violent attack came one day after a timid protest on her part against something he had said in the class. "The idea of duty is the midday sun of misery scorching the very soul," he had said. "Is it not our duty," she began, but got no farther. For once that great free soul broke all bounds in his rebellion against the idea that anyone should dare bind with fetters the soul of man. Miss Dutcher was not seen for some days. And so the process of education went on. It was not difficult if one's devotion to the *guru* was great enough, for then, like the snake, one dropped the old and put on the new. But where the old prejudices and conventions were stronger than one's faith, it was a terrifying, almost a devastating process.

TEACHING AT THOUSAND ISLAND PARK

We all attended our class lectures. To a Hindu the teaching itself might have been familiar, but it was given with a fire, an authority, a realization which made it sound like something entirely new. He too "spake like one having authority". To us of the West to whom it was all new it was as if a being from some radiant sphere had come down with a gospel of hope, of joy, of life. Religion is not a matter of belief but of experience. One may read about a country, but until one has seen it, there can be no true idea. All is within. The divinity which we are seeking in heaven, in teachers, in temples is within us. If we see it outside, it is because we have it within. What is the means by which we come to realize this, by which we see God? *Concentration* is the lamp which lights the darkness.

There are different methods for different states of

evolution. All paths lead to God. The *guru* will put you on the path best suited to your development. With what sense of release did we hear that we not only may, but must follow reason. Before that it had seemed that reason and intuition are generally opposed to each other. Now we are told that we must hold to reason until we reach something higher—and this something higher must never contradict reason.

The first morning we learnt that there is a state of consciousness higher than the surface consciousness—which is called *samâdhi*. Instead of the two divisions we are accustomed to, the conscious and the unconscious—it would be more accurate to make the classification, the subconscious, the conscious, and the superconscious. This is where confusion arises in the Western way of thinking, which divides consciousness into the subconscious or unconscious and the conscious. They cognize only the normal state of mind, forgetting that there is a state beyond consciousness—a superconscious state, inspiration. How can we know that this is a higher state ? To quote Swami literally, "In the one case a man goes in and comes out as a fool. In the other case he goes in a man and comes out a God." And he always said, "Remember the superconscious never contradicts reason. It transcends it, but contradicts it never. Faith is not belief, it is the grasp on the Ultimate, an illumination."

Truth is for all, for the good of all. Not secret but sacred. The steps are: hear, then reason about it, "let the flood of reason flow over it, then meditate upon it, concentrate your mind upon it, make yourself one with it." Accumulate power in silence and become a dynamo of spirituality. What can a beggar give? Only a king can give, and he only when he wants nothing himself.

"Hold your money merely as custodian for what is God's. Have no attachment for it. Let name and fame and money go; they are a terrible bondage. Feel the

wonderful atmosphere of freedom. You are free, free, free! Oh blessed am I! Freedom am I! I am the Infinite! In my soul I can find no beginning and no end. All is my Self. Say this unceasingly."

He told us that God was real, a reality which could be experienced just as tangibly as any other reality; that there were methods by which these experiences could be made which were as exact as laboratory methods of experiment. The mind is the instrument. Sages, *yogis,* and saints from prehistoric times made discoveries in this science of the Self. They have left their knowledge as a precious legacy not only to their immediate disciples but to seekers of Truth in future times. This knowledge is in the first instance passed on from Master to disciple, but in a way very different from the method used by an ordinary teacher. The method of religious teaching to which we of the West have become accustomed is that we are told the results of the experiments, much as if a child were given a problem in arithmetic and were told its answer but given no instruction as to how the result was reached. We have been told the results reached by the greatest spiritual geniuses known to humanity, the Buddha, the Christ, Zoroaster, Laotze, and we have been told to accept and believe the result of their great experiments. If we are sufficiently reverent and devotional, and if we have reached that stage of evolution where we know that there must be some Reality transcending reason, we may be able to accept and believe blindly, but even then it has but little power to change us. It does not make a god of man. Now we were told that there is a method by which the result may be obtained, a method never lost in India, passed on from *guru* to disciple.

For the first time we understood why all religions begin with ethics. For without truth, non-injury, continence, non-stealing, cleanliness, austerity, there can be no spirituality. For many of us in the West ethics and religion are almost synonymous. It is the one concrete

thing we are taught to practise and there it generally ends. We were like the young man who went to Jesus and asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said, "Thou hast read the prophets. Do not kill, do not steal, do not commit adultery." The young man said, "Lord, all these have I kept from my youth up." Now we wanted to hear about *yoga, samâdhi,* and other mysteries. This emphasis upon things which were by no means new to us was something of a surprise. But soon we found it was not quite the same, for it was carried to an unthought-of length. The ideal must be truth in thought, word, and deed. If this can be practised for twelve years, then every word that is said becomes true. If one perfect in this way says, "Be thou healed", healing comes instantaneously. Be blessed, he is blessed. Be freed, he is released. Stories were told of those who had this power, and who could not recall the word once spoken. To the father of Shri Ramakrishna this power had come. Would that explain why such a son was born to him? Then there was the life of Shri Ramakrishna himself. "Come again Monday," he said to a young man. "I cannot come on Monday, I have some work to do; may I come Tuesday?" "No," answered the Master, "these lips have said 'Monday': they cannot say anything else now." "How can truth come unless the mind is perfected by the practice of truth. Truth comes to the true. Truth attracts truth. Every word, thought, and deed rebounds. Truth cannot come through untruth." In our time we have an instance in the case of Mahatma Gandhi, regarded by some as the greatest man in the world, of how far the practice of truth and non-injury will take a man. If he is not the greatest man in the world today, he is certainly one of the greatest characters.

Non-injury in word, thought, and deed. There are sects in India which apply this mainly to the taking of life. Not only are they vegetarians, but they try not to injure still lower forms of life. They put a cloth over

their mouth to keep out microscopic creatures and sweep the path before them so as not to injure whatever life may be underfoot. But that does not go far, even so there remain infinitesimal forms of life which it is impossible to avoid injuring. Nor does it go far enough. Before one has attained perfection in non-injury he has lost the power to injure. "From me no danger be to aught that lives" becomes true for him, a living truth, reality. Before such a one the lion and the lamb lie down together. Pity and compassion have fulfilled the law and transcended it.

Continence—Chastity : This subject always stirred him deeply. Walking up and down the room, getting more and more excited, he would stop before some one, as if there were no one else in the room. "Don't you see," he would say eagerly, "there is a reason why chastity is insisted on in all monastic orders ? Spiritual giants are produced only where the vow of chastity is observed. Don't you see there must be a reason? The Roman Catholic Church has produced great saints, St. Francis of Assisi, Ignatius Loyola, St. Teresa, the two Catherines, and many others. The Protestant Church has produced no one of spiritual rank equal to them. There is a connection between great spirituality and chastity. The explanation is that these men and women have through prayer and meditation transmuted the most powerful force in the body into spiritual energy. In India this is well understood and *yogis* do it consciously. The force so transmuted is called *ojas* and is stored up in the brain. It has been lifted from the lowest centre of the *kundalini*—the *mulâdhâra*—to the highest." To us who listened the words came to our remembrance: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

In the same eager way he went on to explain that whenever there was any manifestation of power or genius, it was because a little of this power had escaped up the *sushumnâ*. And did he say it? Or did we come to

see for ourselves the reason why the *avatâras* and even lesser ones could inspire a love so great that it made the fishermen of Galilee leave their nets and follow the young Carpenter, made the princes of the clan of Shakya give up their robes, their jewels, their princely estates? It was the divine drawing. It was the lure of divinity.

How touchingly earnest Swami Vivekananda was as he proposed this subject. He seemed to plead with us as if to beg us to act upon this teaching as something most precious. More, we could not be the disciples he required if we were not established in this. He demanded a conscious transmutation. "The man who had no temper has nothing to control," he said. "I want a few, five or six who are in the flower of their youth."

Austerity! Why have the saints in all religions been given to fasting and self-denial, to mortification of the body? True, there have been those who foolishly regarded the body as an enemy which must be conquered and have used these methods to accomplish their end. The real purpose however is disciplining the will. No ordinary will-power will carry us through the great work before us. We must have nerves of steel and a will of iron, a will which is consciously disciplined and trained. Each act of restraint helps to strengthen the will. It is called *tapas* in India and means literally, to *heat,* the inner or the higher nature gets heated. How is it done? There are various practices of a voluntary nature, e.g. a vow of silence is kept for months, fasting for a fixed number of days, or eating only once a day. With children it is often the denial of some favourite article of food. The conditions seem to be that the vow must be taken voluntarily for a specific time. If the vow is not kept, it does more harm than good. If it is kept, it becomes a great factor in building up the character so necessary for the higher practices.

Beyond a few directions in meditation there was very little set instruction, yet in course of these few days our

ideas were revolutionized, our outlook enormously enlarged, our values changed. It was a re-education. We learnt to think clearly and fearlessly. Our conception of spirituality was not only clarified but transcended. Spirituality brings life, power, joy, fire, glow, enthusiasm—all the beautiful and positive things, never inertia, dullness, weakness. Then why should one have been so surprised to find a man of God with a power in an unusual degree? Why have we in the West always associated emaciation and anaemic weakness with spirituality? Looking back upon it now one wonders how one could ever have been so illogical. Spirit is life, *shakti*, the divine energy.

It is needless to repeat the formal teaching, the great central idea. These one can read for himslf. But there was something else, an influence, an atmosphere charged with the desire to escape from bondage—call it what you will—that can never be put into words, and yet was more powerful than any words. It was this which made us realize that we were blessed beyond words. To hear him say, "This indecent clinging to life," drew aside the curtain for us into the region beyond life and death, and planted in our hearts the desire for that glorious freedom. We saw a soul struggling to escape the meshes of *mâyâ*, one to whom the body was an intolerable bondage, not only a limitation, but a degrading humiliation. "*Azad, Azad*, the Free," he cried, pacing up and down like a caged lion. Yes, like the lion in the cage who found the bars not of iron but of bamboo. "Let us not be caught this time" would be his refrain another day. "So many times *mâyâ* has caught us, so many times have we exchanged our freedom for sugar dolls which melted when the water touched them. Let us not be caught this time." So in us was planted the great desire for freedom. Two of the three requisites we already had—a human body and a *guru*, and now he was giving us the third, the desire to be free.

"Don't be deceived. *Mâyâ* is a great cheat. Get out. Do not let her catch you this time," and so on and so on. "Do not sell your priceless heritage for such delusions. Arise, awake, stop not till the goal is reached." Then he would rush up to one of us with blazing eyes and fingers pointing and would exclaim, "Remember, God is the only Reality." Like a madman, but he was mad for God. For it was at this time that he wrote *The Song of the Sannyâsin.*[1] We have not only lost our divinity, we have forgotten that we ever had it. "Arise, awake, Ye Children of Immortal Bliss." Up and down, over and over again. "Don't let yourself be tempted by dolls. They are dolls of sugar, or dolls of salt, and they will melt and become nothing. Be a king and know you own the world. This never comes until you give it up and it ceases to bind. Give up, give up."

The struggle for existence, or the effort to acquire wealth and power, or the pursuit of pleasure, take up the thought, energy, and time of human beings. We seemed to be in a different world. The end to be attained was Freedom—freedom from the bondage in which *mâyâ* has caught us, in which *mâyâ* has enmeshed all mankind. Sooner or later the opportunity to escape will come to all. Ours had come. For these days every aspiration, every desire, every struggle was directed towards this one purpose—consciously by our Teacher, blindly, unconsciously by us, following the influence he created.

With him it was a passion. Freedom not for himself alone, but for all—though he could help only those in whom he could light the fire to help them out of *mâyâ's* chains :

"Strike off thy fetters! Bonds that bind thee down,
Of shining gold, or darker, baser ore ; . . .
Say—*'Om Tat Sat, Om'.*"

[1]*Complete Works,* Vol. IV, pp. 392-5.

IN LIGHTER VEIN

But it was not all Vedanta, and deep serious thought. Sometimes after the classes were over, it was pure fun, such gaiety as we had never seen elsewhere. We had thought of religious men as grave all the time, but gradually we came to see that the power to throw off the burden of the world at will and live for a time in a state of childlike joy, is a certain sign of detachment and comes only to those who have seen the Great Reality. For the time being, we were all light-hearted together.

Swamiji had a stock of funny stories, some of which he told again and again. One was about a missionary to the cannibal islands who upon his arrival, asked the people there how they liked his predecessor and received the reply, "He was de-li-cious!" Another was about the Negro preacher, who in telling the story of the creation of Adam, said, "God made Adam and put him up against de fence to dry", when he was interrupted by a voice from the congregation, "Hold on dere, brudder. Who made dat fence?" At this, the Negro preacher leaned over the pulpit and said solemnly, "One more question like dat, and you smashes all teology!" Then Swamiji would tell about the woman who asked, "Swami, are you a Buddhist?" (pronounced like bud), and he would say wickedly but with a grave face, "No, Madam, I am a florist."

Again, he would tell of the young woman, cooking in the common kitchen of the lodging house in which he lived with Landsberg. She had frequent disputes with her husband, who was a spiritualistic medium, and gave public seances. Often she would turn to Swamiji for sympathy after one of these differences. "Is it fair for him to treat me like this," she would say, "when I make all the ghosts?"

He would tell about his first meeting with Landsberg. It was at a Theosophical meeting where

Landsberg was giving a lecture on "The Devil". Just in front of him sat a woman who was wearing a scarlet blouse. Every now and then, Landsberg said the word "devil" with great emphasis, and when he did, he invariably pointed a finger at the woman with the scarlet blouse.

But soon we found ourselves in an entirely different mood for he was telling the story of Shakuntalâ. With what poetic imagination! Did we think we knew something of romance before? It was but a pale, anaemic thing—a mere shadow of real romance. Nature became a living thing when the trees, flowers, birds, deer, all things lamented, "Shakuntalâ has departed!" "Shakuntalâ has departed!" We too were bereft. Then followed the story of Sâvitri, the wife whose faithfulness conquered even the dread Lord of Death. Not "faithful unto death", but with a love so great that even death retreated before it. Then Sati, the wife, who fell dead when she inadvertently heard someone speak against her husband. Umâ, who remembered even in another body. Of Sitâ, he never spoke at length at any one time. It seemed to touch him as not even the story of Sâvitri did. It was too deep and precious for expression. Only now and then, a phrase, or sentence, at most a paragraph. "Sitâ, the pure, the chaste." "Sitâ, the perfect wife. That character was depicted once for all time." "The future of the Indian woman must be built upon the ideal of Sitâ." And then he usually ended with "We are all the children of Sitâ", this with a melting pathos. And so was built up in our minds the ideal of Indian womanhood.

Sometimes he would tell us of his life in India—how even when he was a little child the *geruâ* cloth exercised upon him such a spell that he would give away everything he could lay hands on when a holy man came into the courtyard. His family would lock him up when one of these men appeared. Then he would throw things out of the window. There were times when he would sit

in meditation until he was lost to all outer consciousness. But the other side was there too—when he was so naughty that his mother would hold him under the tap, saying, "I asked Shiva for a son and he has sent me one of his demons!" The power which was to shake India could not be so easily harnessed! When a tutor came and poured out his knowledge, he sat like an image with his eyes closed. The enraged teacher shouted, "How dare you go to sleep when I am instructing you?" at which he opened his eyes and, to the amazement of the man, recited everything that had been said. It was not difficult to believe this story, for his memory was phenomenal. Once when someone commented on it, he said, "Yes, and my mother has the same kind of memory. After she hears the Râmâyana read, she can recite what she has heard." One day, he was speaking on some point of Swedish history when a Swede who was present, corrected him. Swamiji did not defend his position, so sure was he of the facts that he made no comment. The next day the Swede came looking rather shamefaced and said, "I looked up that matter and I find you are right, Swami." Time after time came such confirmation. He considered a good memory one of the signs of spirituality.

Many were the stories he told of his mother—the proud, little woman who tried so hard to hide her emotions and her pride in him. How she was torn between disapproval of the life he had chosen and her pride in the name he had made for himself. In the beginning she would have chosen a conventional life for him, perhaps marriage and worldly success, but she lived to see the beggar exalted and princes bowing before him. But in the meantime, hers was not an easy task. Asked, many years later, what kind of a child he was, she burst out with, "I had to have two nurses for him!"

Those of us who were privileged to see his mother, know that from her he inherited his regal bearing. This tiny woman carried herself like a queen. Many times did

the American newspapers in later years refer to her son as "that lordly monk, Vivekananda". There was a virginal purity about her which it seems she was able to pass on, and which was perhaps her greatest gift. But could a soul so great find a perfect habitation? India and such parents gave him one that was a fairly satisfactory vehicle. How he loved his mother! Sometimes when he was in other parts of India the fear would come that something had happened to her, and he would send to inquire. Or perhaps he was in the monastery in Belur, in which case he would send a messenger post-haste. To the very end her comfort and her care was one of his chief considerations.

And so perhaps for days we re-lived his childhood in his father's house in the Simla quarter of Calcutta. His sisters for whom he had a special love and his father for whom he had a son's devotion, flitted across the picture. "To my father," he said, "I owe my intellect and my compassion." He would tell how his father would give money to a drunkard, knowing for what purpose it would be used. "This world is so terrible, let him forget it for a few minutes, if he can," the father would say, in self-defence. His father was lavish in his gifts. One day when he was more recklessly extravagant than usual, his youthful son said, "Father, what are you going to leave me?" "Go, stand before your mirror," was the father's reply, "and you will see what I leave you."

As he grew to boyhood, his energy was turned into other directions. There came a time when he would gather his companions together and hold religious services in which preaching played an important part. "Coming events cast their shadows before." Years afterwards, Shri Ramakrishna said, that if he had not interfered, Naren would have become one of the great preachers of the world and the head of a sect of his own.

EARLY ADVENTURES OF THE SPIRIT

As he grew towards young manhood, he became an agnostic, reading Herbert Spencer with great enthusiasm, with whom he also carried on some correspondence. But agnostic or devotee, the search for God was always uppermost in his mind. It was touching to hear him tell how he went from one religious teacher to another, asking, "Sire, have you seen God ?" and not receiving the answer he hoped for, until he found Shri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar. With that began a new chapter in his life, but that is a long story, often told.

He spoke of his struggles to accept this priest of Kâli who worshipped the Terrible One. He, the unorthodox agnostic, product of Western education, to sit at the feet of a superstitious worshipper of idols ! It was unthinkable ! And yet, in this simple man and in him alone, he found what he had been seeking—living spirituality. If the worship of Kâli could produce such purity, such truth, such flaming spirituality, one could only stand before it in reverence. One was compelled to reverse all one's former opinions. The intellect surrendered, but the instincts did not submit so easily. There was a long struggle and many arguments with Shri Ramakrishna after he had accepted him as his *guru*. At last, he was conquered by an experience of which he never spoke. It was too sacred !

His devotion to his Master was unique. Such words as love and loyalty acquired a new meaning. In him he saw the living embodiment of Divinity, whose very body changed with the realization of his ideas. Although he was illiterate, Vivekananda said of him, "He had the greatest intellect of anyone I ever met." This from one whose scintillating intellect amazed men of outstanding intellectual achievements.

The process of re-education into Hinduism began. He was among those who had stormed against idol worship, but in this priest of Kâli, who worshipped the

image of Dakshineswar as his Mother, he found a character greater than any he had met before—a being of shining radiance, the very embodiment of love, of Divinity. "If idol worship can produce such a character," he thought, "I bow down before it." He saw one who practised each religion in turn and found that all led to the goal. He learnt the truth of the Sanskrit verse, "Many rivers flowing in various directions, all lead to the one ocean," or "Whether we call it water, *aqua, pâni, jal,* it is all one water." Best of all, he learnt that religion may be experienced, not merely believed, and that there are methods which give this experience ; that man may here and in this body become divine-transmuted, from the human into the superhuman. In Shri Ramakrishna, he saw one who lived "God is the only Reality".

The time with the Master was drawing to an end. All too soon, this God-intoxicated one left a little band of disconsolate disciples who at first felt like sheep without a shepherd. After a time, this feeling of helplessness and desolation gradually gave way to the knowledge which amounted to a certainty of the presence of the Master. From that time on, there was always a centre, however humble, where the Master was worshipped. However far many of them might wander, one was there to keep the altar-fire burning.

And now began years of wandering for them. From Dakshineswar to the Himalayas, from the Himalayas to Rameswaram, they travelled : by foot, by bullock cart, by camel, by elephant, by train, these children of Shri Ramakrishna would wander. Some went into Tibet, some lived in caves in the Himalayas. The palaces of Râjâs knew them as well as the huts of peasants. It was not until many years had passed that they were all gathered together again, in the monastery on the other side of the Ganga from Dakshineswar. Vivekananda too became a wanderer, driven by an overwhelming desire

to find some means of help for his country. It was not strange that he went first to Bodh Gaya to worship under the Bodhi-tree where 2500 years ago the "Enlightened One" in this jungle of the world had found the way out.

What Buddha meant to Swamiji, it would not be easy to say. The very name stirred profound depths. For days together this would be his theme. With his dramatic genius, he was able to bring before us the story with such intimacy that we not only saw it, but re-lived it as scene after scene was depicted. It seemed as if it had happened to us—and that only yesterday. We saw the young prince, his palaces, his pleasure gardens, the beautiful Yashodharâ with her wistful intuition—"Coming events cast their shadows before!" Then the birth of the child, and with it the hope that was born in her heart. Surely this son would hold him to the world and to her! But when Siddhârtha named him Râhula, the fetter, what a sinking of the heart there must have been! Even this could not hold him, and the old fear came over her again. The shadow of the fear came over us too. We suffered as she suffered. Not until long afterwards did we remember that in the telling of this story never once did Swamiji suggest a struggle in Siddhârtha's mind between his duty to father, kingdom, wife, and child and the ideal that was calling him. Never did he say to himself, "I am my father's only son. Who will succeed when he lays down the body?" Never once did such a thought seem to enter his mind. Did he not know that he was heir to a greater kingdom? Did he not know that he belonged to a race infinitely greater than the Shakyas? He knew—but they did not, and he had great compassion. In listening, one felt the pain of that compassion and through it all the unwavering resolution. And so he went forth, and Yashodharâ, left behind, followed as she could. She too slept on the ground, wore the coarsest cloth, and ate only once a day. Siddhârtha knew how great she was. Was she not the

wife of the future Buddha ? Was it not she who had walked the long, long road with him ?

Then came the story of the years of heart-breaking struggle that followed. One teacher after the other Gautama followed, one method after the other he tried. He practised the greatest asceticism, spent long days in fasting and torturing the body to the point of death—only to find that this was not the way. At last rejecting all these methods he came to the *pipal* tree at Bodh Gaya and called to all the worlds : "In this seat let the body dry up—the skin, the bone, the flesh go in final dissolution. I move not until I get the knowledge which is rare, even in many rebirths."

He found it there. And again, he lifted up his voice, this time in a shout of triumph :

"Many a house of life hath held me,
Ever seeking him who wrought this
prison of the senses
Sorrow-fraught, sore was my strife.
But now thou builder of this tabernacle—thou,
I know thee. Never shalt thou build again
these walls of pain.
Nor raise the ridge-pole of deceit,
Nor lay fresh rafters on the beams.
Delusion fashioned thee.
Safe pass I thence, deliverance to obtain."

Then the return to his father's kingdom ; the excitement of the old king ; the orders for the decorations to welcome the wanderer ; the capital in gala attire. All is expectancy—the prince is coming ! But it was a beggar who came, not a prince. Yet such a beggar ! At the head of the monks he came. Watching from her terrace Yashodharâ saw him. "Go, ask your father for your inheritance," she said to little Râhula at her side. "Who is my father ?" asked the child. "See you not the lion coming along the road ?" she announced in quick

impatience. Then we see the child running towards the majestic figure and receiving his inheritance—the yellow cloth. Later, we see the same Râhula walking behind his father and saying to himself, "He is handsome, and I look like him. He is majestic and I look like him," and so on until the Blessed One, having read his thought, turns and rebukes him ; and Râhula, as a penance, does not go out to beg his food that day, but sits under a tree and meditates upon the instructions he has received. But that first day the king and the nobles of the Shâkyas listened to the teaching of the Buddha and one by one entered the path. Yashodharâ, too, found peace and blessedness. Scene after scene, day after day it went on. We re-lived the life of the Buddha from before his birth until the last hour at Kusinagara, when like the Mallas, we, too, wept—"The Blessed one".

Swamiji spent long months in Varanasi in the company of holy men and Pandits, questioning, studying, learning. Here one day, one of the best known and oldest of the *sâdhus,* enraged at what he thought the presumption of a mere lad, all but cursed him, only to be met with the response, "I shall not return to Varanasi until I have shaken India with the thunder of my voice." And Varanasi knew him no more until 1902 when he had long made good his assertion.

He always thought of himself as a child of India, a descendant of the *rishis.* While he was a modern of the moderns, few Hindus have been able to bring back the Vedic days and the life of the sages in the forests of ancient India as he did. Indeed, sometimes he seemed to be one of the *rishis* of that far-off time come to life again, so living was his teaching of the ancient wisdom. Asked where he had learnt to chant with that marvellous intonation which never failed to thrill the listener, he shyly told of a dream or vision in which he saw himself in the forests of ancient India hearing a voice—his voice—chanting the sacred Sanskrit verses. Again,

another dream or vision, of this same time in which he saw the sages gathered in the holy grove asking questions concerning the ultimate reality. A youth among them answered in a clarion voice, "Hear, ye children of immortal bliss, even ye who dwell in higher spheres, I have found the Ancient One, knowing whom alone, ye shall be saved from death over again!"

He told of his struggle against caste prejudices in the early years of his wandering life. One day just after he had been thinking that he would like to smoke he passed a group of *mehtars* who were smoking. Instinctively, he passed on. Then, as he remembered that he and the lowest *chandâla* were one Self, he turned back and took the *hookâh* from the hands of the untouchable. But he was no condemner of caste. He saw the part it had played in the evolution of the nation, the purpose it had served in its day. But when it hardens the heart of the observer towards his fellow-man, when it makes him forget that the *chandâla* as well as he is the one Self, it is time to break it—but never as a matter of mere indulgence.

SADANANDA

It was during these wanderings that Vivekananda made his first disciple. On the train that came to Hathras one day, the young station-master of that place saw among the third class passengers, a *sâdhu* of his own age with a marvellous pair of eyes. Only a few nights before, he had dreamt of these very eyes. They had haunted him ever since. He was startled and thrilled. Going up to the young Sannyâsin, he begged him to leave the train and go with him to his quarters. This the wanderer did.

Later, when the station-master's duties were finished, and he was free to sit at the feet of the stranger in devotion, he found him signing a Bengali song to the refrain of: "My beloved must come to me with ashes

on his moon face." The young devotee disappeared—to return divested of his official clothes and with ashes on his face. The train which took the Swami Vivekananda from Hathras, carried with it the ex-station-master, who later became the Swami Sadananda. In after years he often said that he did not follow Swami Vivekananda for religion, but followed "a devilish pair of eyes".

And now began for Sadananda the life of the wanderer. The hardships of the road might have made him miss the ease of his former life, but his travelling companion exercised such a spell that he forgot the body. The tender care of the *guru* made him forget how footsore he was. To the last day of his life, Sadananda could not speak of this time without emotion. "He carried my shoes on his head!" he cried.

They were blessed, never-to-be-forgotten days. Both were artistic, both were poets by nature, both were attractive in appearance. Artists raved about them.

Sadananda had so beautiful a devotion that it alone was a great attraction. He was a true disciple. Vivekananda had none truer, more devoted, nor indeed greater. The intellect played but a small part in his understanding of his *guru*. He meditated on every look, every motion of the body, as well as on every word. Years afterwards he was still meditating upon these intimate personal expressions of his Master. As a result he understood him as perhaps no one else. Certain it is, that he saw facets of that great being that would otherwise have remained unknown. It is not to be wondered at, then, that by a word or a phrase he could conjure up before us, a picture of Swamiji which we could never forget. We would see them both walking through the tiger-grass in the Terai, the Master carrying the footsore disciple's shoes, coming to a spot where a few rags of *geruâ* and some bones were all that was left to tell the story of a *sâdhu* killed by a tiger. "Are you afraid?"

asked the *guru*. "Not with you," answered the disciple; and they went on. All through these first wonderful days, fear, hunger, thirst, fatigue, the very body was forgotten.

The scene of another picture was laid in Southern India, at the time of Swami Vivekananda's return from the West. Great crowds had gathered to welcome him. Like the sea they surged around his carriage, like the waves of the sea, they threatened to overwhelm him. In that great multitude, he saw one face which startled and stirred him—the face of Sadananda.

Sadananda, no one knows how, had made his way from Northern India to be one of the crowd to welcome back his beloved Master. Vivekananda ordered the carriage to stop and called him to his side. "He is the child of my spirit!" he exclaimed, and they drove on together.

The work of the *guru* began. What divine power, what love was it that Vivekananda released in Sadananda? As a station-master he had not thought much of religion. He was gay, young, full of the joy of life. Yet something there must have been, for even in those days at Hathras, before the coming of the young Sannyâsin with the "pair of eyes", it was his custom to distribute *âttâ*, ghee, and wood to the *sâdhus* on pilgrimage who passed his station. He was generous to a fault—a quality much appreciated by Swamiji.

Sadananda's family lived in Jaunpur, a centre of Mohammedan culture. Instead of Sanskrit he had studied Persian. He had the fine manners of the aristocratic followers of the Prophet. He was much influenced by Sufi culture, and shared it with his Master, who found great delight therein. Both had the capacity of throwing themselves into the mood of the moment, of identifying themselves with the subject under discussion. While they recited Sufi poetry, they were Sufis.

Sadananda had, in almost equal degree with Vivekananda, the true poet's feeling for beauty. Together they gazed with rapture at the heaven-aspiring Himalayas, abode of the great god Shiva, at the rushing mountain torrents, at the shadows on the hills, at the green and violet hues in the light of the late afternoon, at the moonlight on the eternal snows. Their spirits were raised to the heights.

His contact with Mohammedanism strengthened and increased his natural sense of democracy, which, owing to his love for humanity and a generous expansive nature, was already great. To this was added the Vedantic idea of the unity of all beings, the Self-in-all, when he became a Sannyâsin. Seeing a bullock beaten one day, he afterwards found the marks of the whip on his own body. Once in his wanderings, he reached the *dharmashâlâ* where he was to halt after nightfall, and, being utterly exhausted by the day's journey, he fell into a deep sleep. In the morning he found, to his horror, that he had slept beside a leper. His first instinct was to flee from the place. Then he remembered, the leper, too, is Nârâyana. He went back and for three days ministered to the unfortunate creature, bathing him, dressing his wounds, and worshipping him as God in human form. Another time, when he was nursing a case of small-pox, the patient felt himself on fire. The coolest thing Sadananda could do for him, was to offer his own body, and he held the suffering man against it for hours.

So the years passed. Some there were who thought he was not as much concerned with religion as a Sannyâsin should be. Perhaps not; but his religion was the worship of the Divine in man: God in the sinner, God in the saint, God in the poor, God in the rich, God in the helpless, God in the powerful, God in the successful, God in the defeated. He not only worshipped, but served and loved.

When the plague broke out in Calcutta, he was one of the first to organize a band of sweepers in Baghbazar with the money he had begged. How he loved these splendid young untouchables ! He worked with them as one of themselves, doing sweeper's work even as they did. Together they cleaned *busties* and made foul places sanitary, working with unabating enthusiasm. He inspired them with his own spirit. In doing this work he was carrying out the ideas of his beloved *guru,* who had entered *mahâsamâdhi* but a short time before. Into it he put his heart and soul, and he did not spare his magnificent physique.

His last effort in this direction was to take groups of college students on pilgrimage to Badrinarayan. These lads had never left home before. Some indeed had never been out of Calcutta. To them, such a journey was an adventure that roused fear and misgiving. One of them said, with tears streaming down his face, "I have never gone abroad before !" It can easily be seen why Swami Vivekananda considered such journeys an important part of the education of young men, one of the methods of developing manliness, self-reliance, hardihood. He often said, "To love India, one must know her."

Swami Sadananda's task was not light. Instead of travelling like the students in Europe with only a knapsack on their backs, these young men would plan to take nearly all their possessions. One by one, these were eliminated until only the bare necessities remained. To nearly all of them this entailed hardships which some of them did not relish. Sadananda spent himself in keeping up their spirits, seeing that they got proper food, had hot baths, kept out of danger ; in short he watched over them like a loving mother. Two such pilgrimages broke down his splendid constitution and shortened his days. After his return from the second, his health never again permitted him to do any active work. His life

henceforth was one of seclusion and meditation, during which he attained the Great Realization. Only a short time still remained to him, and this he spent in the company of his devoted band of nursers : "Sadananda's dogs" they called themselves.

They lived in a little house at Bosepara Lane in Baghbazar, which is now known as the "Sadananda Ashrama(?)" and has a shrine for worship in the very room in which he lived. Here several of this group still live, and to them it is the "Holy of Holies". Great were the sacrifices which they made to keep it in the lean years that followed the passing of Sadananda. Through everything, they felt that at any cost it must be kept. Here they had nursed their Master with a devotion which excited the wonder of all who saw them. Their service was given without any reservation whatsoever. Those who were in college gave up their studies, and, so far as they knew, their careers. There was nothing they permitted a servant to do. They washed, scrubbed, scoured, and cooked for him. Day and night they held him in their arms when the struggle for breath did not permit him to lie down. Night after night they passed without sleep. The love which he inspired made them forget the body and its needs. The few minutes' sleep, which they were able to snatch now and then, were taken on the floor at his side, without pillows or bedding. Meals were irregular and were usually served on a common platter, Sadananda putting titbits into the mouth now of one, now of another. All the money that was needed came, and there was nothing, which the Indian or European markets offered, which was not provided.

There was no formal relationship of *guru* and disciple. It was not even thought of, but in the course of these two or three years, Sadananda passed on all he knew and felt of Swami Vivekananda. His knowledge and his interpretation made his own *guru* live again. Is it to be wondered at, that one still feels that spirit in

these young men who are the spiritual children of Sadananda? "I can only do one thing for you," he often said, "I can take you to Swamiji." "That is enough," they would shout in reply. Wonderful, wonderful were those days. When Sadananda was not in actual pain, they lived in a state approaching ectasy. Life held nothing then, and it has held nothing since which can compare with it. There was an exuberance of emotion, of adoration, of joy. He lifted them to the heights and kept them there. He gave them a new and unique training. His love was unbounded, yet he did not indulge them nor ever allow one careless or unworthy thing to pass unrebuked. He was severe in the extreme. An onlooker might sometimes have considered his treatment of them cruel, but these boys who were devoting body, mind, and soul to his service, knew his love and never lost their joy. Their adoration grew from day to day. Their only fear was that he would leave them. How could they face such desolation? At that time they did not know that he would leave them his joy.

In this way, talking, laughing, singing, worshipping, serving, days, months, years passed, and life was a foretaste of heaven. And when after nearly three years of such sevice, Sadananda entered into *mahâsamâdhi,* with his eyes on the picture of his *guru,* and the word "Swamiji" on his lips, he left no sorrow behind. Even as his name means "joy", so he left a deep abiding joy in the hearts of these "dogs of Sadananda".

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S WANDER-YEARS

Then he told of his life alone in the caves of the Himalayas trying to find the solution within. But he was not left in peace and undisturbed for long. The vicissitudes of life drove him forth once more to the deserts of Rajputana and the cities of Western India. During this time he had deliberately cut himself off from his brother-disciples, for he felt a great need to be alone.

Once after long search, one of them saw him driving in a carriage somewhere in the Bombay Presidency. "His face shone, he reported, like the face of a God. It was the face of a knower of Brahman." This witness describes how he came before his adored brother-disciple. but, although kindly received, was sent away again at once.

Vivekananda stopped for some time in Khetri, at the court of the Maharaja who became his disciple. One day while he was sitting in Durbar, a nautch-girl made her appearance and was about to sing. He rose to leave the assembly. "Wait Swamiji," the Maharaja said, "you will find nothing to offend you in the singing of this girl. On the contrary you will be pleased." The Swami sat[1] down and the nautch-girl sang :

O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities !
Thy name, O Lord, is Same-sightedness,
Make of us both the same Brahman !
One piece of iron is in the Image in the Temple,
And another the knife in the hand of the butcher,
But when they touch the philosophers' stone
Both alike turn to gold !
So Lord, look not upon my evil qualities !
Thy name, O Lord, is Same-sightedness,
Make of us both the same Brahman !
One drop of water is in the sacred Jamuna,
And another is foul in the ditch by the roadside,
But when they fall into the Ganga,
Both alike become holy. (So, Lord etc.)

The young Sannyâsin was inexpressibly touched. He blessed the singer who, from that day gave up her profession and entered the path leading to perfection.

During these years when Vivekananda travelled from one end of India to the other as a mendicant monk, his constant thought was how to solve the problems of India.

[1]Actually he left the place, but came back attracted by the appeal of the song and owned his mistake.—*Publisher.*

Problem after problem presented itself—the poverty, the condition of the masses and the depressed classes ; the duties of the privileged classes towards them ; malaria, plague, cholera, and other diseases ; early marriages, the condition of women, of widows, illiteracy, diet, caste, sanitation, the whole dark brood.

The value of pilgrimage grew upon him. "To help India, one must love her ; to love her, one must know her." To this day groups of ardent young students, following in his footsteps, make pilgrimages all over India, often travelling hundreds of miles on foot. Not only did it foster spirituality, it made for the unity of India. Pilgrims came to know and love their Motherland. They came with one faith, one hope, one purpose. This vast country has one sacred language, from which all the northern languages are derived ; one mythology, one set of religious ideas, one supreme goal. What the Holy Sepulchre was to the crusaders, what Rome is to the Catholic, what Mecca is to the Moslem, this and more is the pilgrimage to the Hindu. If one could draw a map showing the pilgrim routes, it would be seen that they cover the face of India, from the Himalayas to Rameswaram, from Puri to Dwaraka. What is it that these pilgrims seek? "Whither winds the bitter road?" Their faces are set to the eternal goal of humanity; they seek something we have lost, they go in quest of the Holy Grail.

Is it a wonder that men like these love India, understand her problems and needs, as no other can, and devote their lives to her service? These are men who do not make the mistakes of mere reformers. For the work that they do is born of reverence for all that has gone before, together with an understanding for the present need, and great faith and love. They realize that all growth is organic. They do not destroy; their work is constructive.

Swamiji himself was not a reformer. He believed in

growth, not destruction. He studied the history of Indian institutions and found that in the beginning they invariably fulfilled a need. As time went on, the need passed away, the institutions remained, while evil after evil had been added to them. He saw poverty wide-spread and dire. He saw famine and pestilence. The ancient glories of India were only a memory. The race with its great heritage appeared to be passing. Out of the emotions stirred by these sights there grew up later a form of service which still persists. When there is an epidemic of cholera or any other disease, where plague decimates the population, there, serving the suffering, regardless of their own health or life, you will surely find the spiritual descendants of Vivekananda. In times of famine they are there to distribute food to the starving, clothing to the naked. In times of flood, they are there to administer relief. For these purposes money comes in from all parts of the country, for it is now well known that every pice will be accounted for, and that the money will be spent to the best possible advantage.

It was while he was in the Bombay Presidency that the Swami perfected his knowledge of Sanskrit, paying particular attention to pronunciation. He considered the accent of the Deccan particularly good. From there he wandered on from place to place, staying a night here, a few weeks there, until he finally reached Madras, where he met the band of devoted young men who hailed him as a true *mahâtmâ*. These orthodox Brahmins accepted him as their *guru*, feeling that he was one with authority from on high, which placed him beyond the limitations of caste or any human restrictions. Poor as they were, they raised a sum of money which was to help towards his passage to America.

Filled with the message that he had to give and the work he had set himself, his mind had turned to America. There he hoped to find the solution. There, in the richest country in the world, he hoped to find

help for his needy people. "You cannot expect people to be spiritual," he said, "when they are hungry." Although he went with the purpose of asking help, yet when he found himself there, this royal soul could only give. What did he give? A mendicant—what had he to give? He gave regally the most precious thing he possessed, the one priceless gift which India still has to offer the world—the teaching of the *âtman*.

Alone, unheralded, he went to that distant continent. In telling of his experience at the Parliament of Religions, he said, "I had never given a lecture before. True, I had spoken to small groups of people sitting around me, but in an informal way, usually only answering questions. Moreover I had not written out my speech as the others had done. I called upon my Master, and upon Saraswati, giver of *vâk*, and stood upon my feet. I began : 'Sisters and Brothers of America'—but I got no further. I was stopped by thunders of applause." It seems the audience broke all bounds. He described the emotions which this amazing reception stirred in him—the thrill amounting to awe. He felt as never before the power behind him. From that time not a shadow of doubt assailed his mind as to his commission from on high. He was the pioneer, the first preacher of Vedanta. His spirituality caused astonishment. People began to ask, "Why send missionaries to a country which produces men like this?"

SOME *IPSE DIXITS*

Some great ideas stand out, not because they are the most important, but rather because they are new and startling. As when Swamiji told the story of Yâjnavalkya and Maitreyi and ended with : "Verily it is not the husband who is loved, but the Self who is loved in the husband."

Love. It was a new idea that all love is one ; that we love child. father, mother, husband, wife, friend, be-

cause in them we see the Self. It is the bliss shining through. The mother feels the divinity in her child, the wife sees it in the husband, and so in all other relations. We have put it into compartments and called it : mother's love, child's love, friend's love, lover's love, as if they were different kinds of love instead of one love manifesting in various forms.

Bliss—Joy. "In joy were we born, in joy do we live, and unto joy do we return." Not born and conceived in sin, but in joy. Joy is our nature, not something to be attained or acquired. "Thou art That." In the midst of sorrow, of tragedy, still it is true ; still I must say : "I am the Blissful One, I am the Radiant One. It depends upon nothing. Nothing depends on It." It is at once a terrible and a beautiful Truth.

Growth. Hitherto we had believed that final emancipation and enlightenment were a matter of growth, a gradual advance towards something higher and better, until at last the goal was reached. But from this great Master of the Ancient Wisdom we learnt that the process is not one of growth but of uncovering, of realization. The real nature of man is perfection, divinity, *now*. Nothing to be attained. The Truth is only to be realized. It is a hallucination to think that we are imperfect, limited, helpless. We are perfect, omnipotent, divine. We are that *now*. Realize it and you are free at once.

Incarnations. He believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, a divine incarnation. He worshipped and adored him, but not as the only incarnation. In other ages and in other climes God had vouchsafed this mercy to others also.

The Parsees. He told the story of the Parsees, a remnant of the followers of Zoroaster, who were saved by flight to India when Mohammedan hordes overwhelmed Persia a thousand years ago. These children of fire are still faithful to their ancient rites, which they have practised in undisturbed freedom in the land of their

adoption. Although a comparatively small community, they have made an honoured place for themselves and have produced great men. If there be anything to criticize in them, it is perhaps that they have kept themselves too aloof, for even after living in this country for a thousand years, they do not identify themselves with India, do not look upon themselves as Indians.[1]

Christianity. Christianity, he told us, was first introduced into India by the Apostle Thomas, about twenty-five years after the Crucifixion. There has never been any religious persecution in India, and there are even to this day descendants of the first converts to Christianity living in Southern India. Christianity in its purest form was practised in India at a time when Europe was in a state of savagery. They now number scarcely one million though at one time there were almost three times as many.

Sameness. At one time Swamiji's effort was to attain sameness, he told us, and often quoted : "He who sees the Supreme Lord dwelling alike in all beings, the Imperishable in things that perish, sees indeed. For, seeing the Lord as the same, everywhere present, he destroys not the Self by the Self. He then goes to the highest goal." One was reminded of the lines he had lately written :

> "Love, hate—good, bad—and all the dual throng."
> . . . "No praise or blame can be
> Where praiser praised, and blamer blamed, are one."

It was given to us to see how he practised this in the little details of life. Not until long long afterwards did we understand how great was the sensitiveness and pride which made this practice for him particularly difficult. When asked why he did not defend himself against the machinations of a family of missionaries long con-

[1]Whatever it might have been in the past, this is no longer the case now.—*Publisher.*

nected with Calcutta, who threatened to "hound him out of Detroit", he said, "The dog barks at the elephant, is the elephant affected? What does the elephant care?" The one with whom he lived had a violent temper. "Why do you live with him?" some one asked. "Ah," he replied, "I bless him. He gives me the opportunity to practise self-control." What a revelation to us with the Western outlook demanding comfort at any cost! Thus daily, hourly, we saw the great ideals of the Gita put into practice in the actual experience of daily life. To see the Self in a foe as well as in a friend, in the one who blames as well as in the one who praises, to be unmoved by honour or dishonour, this was his constant *sádhaná*.

Seldom has it fallen to the lot of one at his age, to achieve fame overnight, or rather in a few minutes, but this is what occurred to Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions. It was not merely fame, but the enthusiasm he inspired rose at times to frantic adulation. In the midst of the wildest popular emotion, he remained as calm as if he were alone in a cave of the Himalayas. This, for which other men pay by a lifetime of struggle, he put aside and referred to as the "filthy rags of name and fame".

Sometimes he was in a prophetic mood, as on the day when he startled us by saying, "The next great upheaval which is to bring about a new epoch will come from Russia or China. I can't quite see which, but it will be either Russia or China." This he said thirty-two years ago, when China was still under the autocratic rule of the Manchu Emperors, from which there was no prospect of release for centuries to come, and when Czarist Russia was sending the noblest of her people to the Siberian mines. To the ordinary thinker those two countries seemed the most unlikely nations in the world to usher in a new era.

In answer to our questions, he explained that in the

beginning society was a theocracy under the rule of the Brahmin, or priestly caste. This was followed by the military caste, the Kshatriya. Now we were under the sway of the Vaishya, and commercial interest ruled the world. Economic considerations are all important. This phase is nearing its end, and would be followed by the ascendancy of the Shudra, the labourer.

Still the question arose : how did he know that the commercial era was nearing its end ? and, a still greater mystery, how could he foresee that Russia or China would be the countries that would bring it about ? With him it was never an expression of opinion, begging with, "I think," but an authoritative statement about some- came the explosion !

A little later he said, "Europe is on the edge of a volcano. Unless the fires are extinguished by a flood of spirituality, it will blow up." This of Europe in 1895, when it was prosperous and at peace. Twenty years later came the explosion !

THE MOGULS

The Moguls seemed to have cast a spell over Swami Vivekananda. He depicted this period of Indian history with such dramatic intensity, that the idea often came to us that he was perhaps telling the story of his own past. We often wondered whether we saw before us the re-incarnation of the mighty Akbar. How else could he have known the thoughts, the hopes, the purposes of the greatest of the Moguls ?

One of his beliefs was, that before one reached the life in which the enlightenment was to be achieved, one must have run the whole gamut of experiences—suffered every tragedy and the direst poverty, and enjoyed to the utmost all that the world has to offer—wealth, adulation, fame, power, ecstatic happiness, dominion. "Millions of times have I been emperor," he would say in his ex- uberant fashion. Another idea was, that after lives of

effort in which complete success had not been reached, there came a final life of worldly attainment, in which the aspirant became a great emperor or empress. This precedes the last life in which the goal is reached. Akbar, it is believed in India, was a religious aspirant in the incarnation before he became emperor. He just failed to reach the highest and had to come back for one more life in which to fulfil his desires. There was only one more re-incarnation for him.

So vividly did Swami depict these historic figures for us—rulers, queens, prime ministers, generals—that they seemed to become for us real men and women whom we had known. We saw Babar, the twelve year old King of Ferghana (Central Asia), influenced by his Mongol grandmother, and living a hard rough life with his mother. We watched him later as King of Samarqand for one hundred days, still a boy and delighted with his new possession as though it were some super-toy; his chagrin and dismay when he lost the city of his dreams; his struggles, defeats, and conquests. The time came when we saw him and his men booted and spurred, crossing the great mountain passes and descending on to the plains of India. Although an alien and an invader, as Emperor of India, he identified himself with the country, and began at once to make roads, plant trees, dig wells, build cities. But his heart was always amongst the highlands of the land from which he came and where he was buried. He was a lovable, romantic figure, founder of one of the greatest dynasties within the history of man.

After his death the kingdom fell into other hands and Babar's heir, Humayun, became a fugitive. In the deserts of Sind, with only a handful of followers, he fled from place to place, in danger of his life. Here he met the exquisite young Mohammedan girl Hamida, married her, and shared with her his most unhappy fate. We saw him giving up his own horse to her while he walked at her side. And in the deserts of Sind was born her

only son, later to become the Emperor Akbar. So reduced in circumstances was Humayun at that time, that he had no gifts for his followers with which to celebrate the event, except a ped of musk. This he divided among them with the prayer : "May my son's glory spread to all parts of the earth, even as the odour of this musk goes forth."

Humayun regained the empire, but he was not to enjoy it long ; for in the forty-eighth year of his age he met with a fatal accident in his palace at Delhi and died, leaving his throne to his only son, Akbar, then little more than thirteen years old. From that time until his death at the age of sixty-three Akbar was the undisputed master of India. There have been few figures in history with such a combination of qualities. His nobility and magnanimity put even his great general, Bairam, to shame. While still a boy, when his enemy was brought before them, and Bairam, putting a sword into his hand, told the young King to kill him, he said, "I do not kill a fallen foe." His courage was unquestioned and won the admiration of all. Few excelled him in sports : no one was a better shot, a better polo player, or a better rider. But with it all, he was severely ascetic in his habits. He did not take meat, saying "Why should I make a graveyard of my stomach ?" He slept only a few hours every night, spending much time in philosophic and religious discussions. Mohammedan though he was, he listened to teachers of all religions—*listened* and questioned. Whole nights he spent in learning the secrets of Hindu *yoga* from the Brahmin who was pulled up to his *Kawa Khana* (*buzh*).

In later years he conceived the idea of establishing a new religion of which he was to be the head—the Divine Religion, to include Hindus, Christians, and Parsees as well as Mohammedans.

King of kings though he was, he had the faculty of making real friends. There were three who were worthy

to be the friends of this Shadow of God : Abul Fazl, his Prime Minister ; Faizi the poet laureate ; Birbal the Brahmin minstrel ; and his brother-in-law and Commander-in-chief, Man Singh. Two Hindus and two Mohammedans, for there were two brothers Fazl. His friends shared not only his lighter moments but stood by his side in the Hall of Audience and followed him into battle. We see them making a line of swords for him when his life is in danger in a battle with the Rajputs. They, Mohammedan and Hindu alike, become adherents of the new religion and support him loyally in all his undertakings. Never was a man blessed with truer friends. This is rare enough in ordinary life, but almost unheard of regarding one in so exalted a position. His empire extended from Kabul to the extreme parts of Southern India. His genius as an administrator enabled him to pass on a united empire to his son Salim, later known as the Emperor Jehangir. Under this "Magnificent son of Akbar" the Mogul court reached a splendour before which all previous ideas of luxury paled.

Now appears the fascinating figure of Nur Jehan, the Light of the World, Empress of Jehangir and, for twenty years, the virtual ruler of India. The influence of this remarkable woman was unbounded. To her great gifts of wisdom and tact were due the stability, prosperity, and power of the empire, in no small degree. Her husband had coins struck in her name, bearing the inscription : "Gold has assumed a new value since it bore the image of Nur Jehan." The Great Mogul's trust and faith in her were unbounded. To the protest of his relatives that he had delegated his power to her, he replied, "Why not ? since she uses it to much better advantage than I could." When he was ill, he preferred her treatment to that of all his physicians. She was the only one who had power to check his habits, limiting him to three cups of wine a day.

It was during the supremacy of Nur Jehan that the

new style of architecture was introduced, a feminine type of architecture in which the virile red sand-stone of Akbar's buildings was supplanted by white marble inlaid with precious and semi-precious stones. Jewelled walls instead of rough stone ones. The delicacy and effeminacy of Persia replaced the vigour and strength of the Central Asian Highlands. Its gift to posterity was the Taj Mahal and the marble palaces of Agra, Delhi, and Lahore. The exquisite building known as the tomb of Itmad-ud-daulah on the other side of the Jamuna, was built by Nur Jehan in memory of her father, the Lord High Treasurer, and later Prime Minister to Jehangir. It was one of the first buildings in the new style of architecture. It is believed that the stones were inlaid by the slaves of Nur Jehan. It is interesting to compare this first imperfect attempt with the perfection attained in the Taj Mahal where 44 stones of different shades of red are used to reproduce the delicate shades of one rose petal. The progress in efficiency is striking.

Nur Jehan's own apartments in the Agra palace, the Saman Burg, were also decorated under her personal supervision. She was truly a great patroness of the arts, and her charity was boundless.

In a man like Vivekananda, with a genius for seeing only what was great in an individual or a race, such understanding of the Mussulman was nothing strange. To him India was not the land of the Hindu only, it included all. "My brother the Mohammedan" was a pharse he often used. For the culture, religious devotion, and virility of these Mohammedan brothers, he had an understanding, an admiration, a feeling of oneness which few Moslems could excel. One who accompanied him on one of his voyages tells how passionately thrilled Vivekananda was, when their ship touched at Gibralter, and the Mohammedan lascars threw themselves on the ground, crying : "The Din, the Din !"

For hours at a time his talk would be of the young

camel driver of Arabia, who, in the sixth century after Christ attempted to raise his country from the degradation into which it had fallen. He told of the nights spent in prayer, and of the vision that came to him after one of his long fasts in the mountains of the desert. By his passion for God, and the revelation granted to him, he became one of the Illumined Ones, destined to rank for all time with the very elect of God. There have been few of these Great Ones ; of each, one may say with truth, "Of his kingdom there shall be no end."

We realize that, whether in Arabia, in Palestine, or in India, the children of God speak one language when they are born into the new life. He felt the loneliness of the Prophet who, to the average person seemed a madman. For years, a mere handful believed in him and his message. Little by little we understood the patience, the compassion, the burden of the mission laid upon this Prophet of Arabia.

"But he advocated polygamy !" protested one with a Puritanical turn of mind. Vivekananda explained that what Mohammed did was to limit a man to four wives : polygamy in a far worse form was already practised in Arabia.

"He taught that women have no souls," said another with an edge to her voice. This called forth an explanation regarding the place of woman in Mohammedanism. The Americans who listened were somewhat chagrined to find that the Moslem woman had certain rights not enjoyed by the so-called free American woman.

From this trivial questioning we were again lifted into an atmosphere of wider sweep and more distant horizons. However limited and ignorant his outlook may seem, it cannot be denied that Mohammed was a world figure, and that the force which he set free has shaken this world and has not yet expended itself.

Did he deliberately found a new religion ? It is easier to believe that the movement evolved without

conscious thought on his part; that in the beginning he was absorbed in his great experience and burning with the desire to share this precious attainment with others. Was the form which it took during his lifetime in accordance with his wishes? It is certain that the conflicts which soon ensued were no part of his plan. When a great force is let loose, no man can harness it. The Moslem hordes swept over Asia and threatened to overrun Europe. After conquering Spain, they established there great universities which attracted scholars from all parts of the then known world. Here was taught the wisdom of India and the lore of the East. They brought refinement, courtliness, and beauty into the everyday life. They left behind them Saracenic buildings—structures of surpassing beauty—a tradition of learning, and no small part of the culture and wisdom of the East.

TRAINING A DISCIPLE

The training Swamiji gave was individualistic and unique. Unless the desire for discipleship was definitely expressed, and unless he was convinced that the aspirant was ready for the step, he left the personal life of those around him untouched. To some he gave absolute freedom and in that freedom they were caught. When speaking of some of those whom we did not know, he was careful to explain, "He is not a disciple; he is a *friend.*" It was an altogether different relation. Friends might have obvious faults and prejudices. Friends might have a narrow outlook, might be quite conventional, but it was not for him to interfere. It seemed as if even an opinion where it touched the lives of others, was an unpardonable intrusion upon their privacy. But once having accepted him as their *guru,* all that was changed. He felt responsible. He deliberately attacked foibles, prejudices, valuations—in fact everything that went to make up the personal self. Did you in your immature enthusiasm, see the world as beautiful, and believe in the

reality of good and the unreality of evil? He was not long in destroying all your fine illusions. If good is real, so is evil. Both are different aspects of the same thing. Both good and evil are in *mâyâ*. Do not hide your head in the sand and say, "All is good, there is no evil." Worship the terrible even as now you worship the good. Then get beyond both. Say, "God is the only Reality." Shall we have the courage to say that the world is beautiful when disaster comes upon us? Are not others the prey of disaster now? Is not the world full of sorrow? Are not thousands of lives overshadowed by tragedy? Are not disease, old age, and death rampant upon the earth? In the face of all this anyone who lightly says, "The world is beautiful", is either ignorant or indifferent to the sorrows of others—self-centred.

Terrible in its sternness was this teaching. But soon there came glimpses of something beyond, an unchanging Reality. Beyond birth and death is immortality; beyond pleasure and pain is that *ânanda* which is man's true nature; beyond the vicissitudes of life is the changeless. The Self of man remains serene in its own glory. As these great ideas became part of our consciousness, we "saw a new heaven and a new earth". "For him, to whom the Self has become all things, what sorrow, what pain, can there be, once he has beheld that Unity?" Without once saying, "Be sincere, be true, be single-minded", he created in us the most intense desire to attain these qualities. How did he do it? Was it his own sincerity, his own truth, his own straightness which one sensed?

"This world is a mud puddle," was received with shocked protest, doubt, and a tinge of resentment. Years after, driving along the Dum Dum Road in the suburb of Calcutta one glorious Sunday morning, I saw some buffaloes wallowing in a pool of mire. The first reaction was a feeling of disgust. It seemed that even buffaloes should find delight in something more beautiful than

mire. But now, they felt physical pleasure in it. Then suddenly came a memory, "This world is a mud puddle." We are no better than these buffaloes. We wallow in the mire of this mud puddle of a world and we too find pleasure in it. We, who are meant for something better, the heirs of immortal glory.

He refused to solve our problem for us. Principles he laid down, but we ourselves must find the application. He encouraged no spineless dependence upon him in any form, no bid for sympathy. "Stand upon your own feet. You have the power within you !" he thundered. His whole purpose was—not to make things easy for us, but to teach us how to develop our innate strength. "Strength ! Strength !" he cried, "I preach nothing but strength. That is why I preach the Upanishads." From men he demanded manliness and from women the corresponding quality for which there is no word. Whatever it is, it is the opposite of self-pity, the enemy of weakness and indulgence. This attitude had the effect of a tonic. Something long dormant was aroused and with it came strength and freedom.

His method was different with each disciple. With some, it was an incessant hammering. The severest asceticism was imposed with regard to diet, habits, even clothing and conversation. With others his method was not so easy to understand, for the habit of asceticism was not encouraged. Was it because in this case there was spiritual vanity to be overcome and because good had become a bondage ? With one the method was ridicule—loving ridicule—with another it was sternness. We watched the transformation of those who put themselves into line with it. Nor were we ourselves spared. Our pet foibles were gently smiled out of existence. Our conventional ideas underwent a process of education. We were taught to think things through, to reject the false and hold to the true fearlessly, no matter what the cost. In this process much that had seemed worth while and of value was cast

aside. Perhaps our purposes and aims had been small and scattered. In time we learnt to lift them into a higher, purer region, and to unite all little aims into the one great aim, the goal which is the real purpose of life, for which we come to this earth again and again. We learnt not to search for it in deserts, nor yet on mountain tops, but in our own hearts. By all these means the process of evolution was accelerated, and the whole nature was transmuted.

So is it any wonder that we shrank from the first impact of so unusual a power? Nor were we alone in this. Some time afterwards a brilliant American woman in speaking of the different Swamis who had come to the United States, said, "I like Swami...better than Swami Vivekananda." To the look of surprise which met this statement she answered, "Yes, I know Swami Vivekananda is infinitely greater, but he is so powerful he overwhelms me." Later almost the same words came from the lips of a well-known teacher of one of the new cults whose message was so obviously influenced by Vedanta that I asked him whether he had ever come under the influence of Swami Vivekananda. "Yes, I knew him and heard him," he said, "but his power overwhelmed me. I was much more attracted to Swami...," mentioning a preacher of Vedanta from Northern India who had spent some time in the United States. What is the explanation? Is it that we are temperamentally attracted by certain qualities and personalities and repelled by others? Even for that there must be an explanation. Is it the fear that the little personal self will be overwhelmed and nothing will be left? "Verily, he that loseth his life shall find it." Still those who feared to be caught in the current of this great power were but few; the others by thousands were drawn with the irresistible force, even as iron filings to a magnet. He had power of attraction so great, that those who came near him, men and women alike, even children, fell under the magic spell he cast.

Far from trying to win us by expediency and by fitting into our conceptions of what the attitude of a religious teacher towards his disciples should be, he seemed bent upon offending our sensibilities and even shocking us. Others may try to hide their faults, may eat meat and smoke in secret, reasoning with themselves that there is nothing essentially wrong in doing these things, but that one must not offend a weaker brother and should hide these things for expediency's sake. He on the contrary said, "If I do a wrong, I shall not hide it but shout it from the house-tops."

It is true that we were conventional and proper to the point of prudishness. Still even one more Bohemian might have been disconcerted. He, in the days when men did not smoke before ladies, would approach, and blow the cigarette smoke deliberately into one's face. Had it been anyone else, I should have turned my back and not spoken to him again. Even so for a moment I recoiled. I caught myself and remembered the reason for coming. I had come to one in whom I had seen such spirituality as I had never even dreamed of. From his lips I had heard truths unthought of before. He knew the way to attainment. He would show me the way. Did I intend to let a little whiff of smoke turn me back? It was all over in less time than it takes to tell it. I knew it was over in another sense as well. But of that more later.

Then we found that this man whom we had set up in our minds as an exalted being did not observe the conventions of our code. All fine men reverence womanhood; the higher the type, the greater the reverence. But here was one who gave no heed to the little attentions which ordinary men paid us. We were allowed to climb up and slide down the rocks without an extended arm to help us. When he sensed our feeling, he answered, as he so often did, our unspoken thought, "If you were old or weak or helpless, I should help you. But you are quite able to jump across this brook or climb this path

without help. You are as able as I am. Why should I help you? Because you are a woman? That is chivalry, and don't you see that chivalry is only sex? Don't you see what is behind all these attentions from men to women?" Strange as it may seem, with these words came a new idea of what true reverence for womanhood means. And yet, he it was, who wishing to get the blessing of the one who is called the Holy Mother, the wife and disciple of Shri Ramakrishna, sprinkled Ganga water all the way so that he might be purified when he appeared in her presence. She was the only one to whom he revealed his intention. Without her blessing, he did not wish to go to the West. Never did he approach her without falling prostrate at her feet. Did he not worship God as Mother? Was not every woman to him a manifestation in one form or other of the Divine Mother? Yes, even those who had bartered their divinity for gold! ... Did he not see this divinity in the nautch-girl of Khetri, whereupon she, sensing his realization of her true nature, gave up her profession, lived a life of holiness, and herself came into the Great Realization! Knowing the criticism that awaited him in India, he still dared in America to initiate into *sannyâsa* a woman, for he saw in her only the sexless Self.

Sannyâsin and beggar though he was, never did he forget to be regal. He was generous to a fault, but never uncontrolled in his generosity. Needless to say, there was never a trace of display in any act which he did. If he was with those who had abundance of this world's goods, he accepted what was offered gladly and without protest, even with an alacrity which at times approached glee. But from those who had little, he would accept nothing. He was no longer the mendicant monk, but something so different that one asked, "Has he at one time been one of the Great Moguls?" Foolish thought! Was he not greater than the greatest of the Moguls, than all the

Moguls combined ? Was he not more than regal ? Was he not *majestic* ?

His compassion for the poor and downtrodden, the defeated, was a passion. One did not need be told, but seeing him one knew that he would willingly have offered his flesh for food and his blood for drink to the hungry. To this day his birthday is celebrated by feeding the poor. The downtrodden, the outcasts are on this day served by Brahmins and Kâyasthas, young men of the highest castes. To those in the West it is impossible to convey the significance of such service. Caste and outcaste ! Who but a Vivekananda could bring about this relationship so unobtrusively ? No arguments regarding caste and the depressed classes. Nothing but heart and devotion. So even in small things while he was still in America. Thus, when asked why he was taking French lessons, he said in confusion, "This is the only way M.L. can keep from starving." Thrusting a ten dollar bill into the hand of another he said, "Give this to S . . . , do not say it is from me." When one of the group, a weak brother, was accused of juggling with the Vedanta Society's money, he said, "I will make good any deficiency." Then the matter was dropped and he said to one of the others, "I do not know where I could have found the money to make up the loss, but I could not let the poor suffer."

Even after he left America, he still had great concern for those he left behind, who found life a great struggle. Especially did he feel for "women with men's responsibilities". Asked whether he endorsed a certain woman who was going about the country as a religious teacher and using his name and reputation to get a following, he said "Poor thing ! She has a husband to support, and she must get a certain amount every month." "But Swami," someone said, "she claims to be authorised by you to prepare students for your teaching. She says, if we go through her two preliminary classes, then we will be ready to be taught by you. It is so absurd and un-

scrupulous. To the first class she gives a few gymnastic exercises, and to the second she dictates some quotations or gems which she has gathered from various books on occultism. Should she be allowed to mislead people, take their money, and use your name?" All that he said was, "Poor thing! Poor thing! Shiva! Shiva!" With this "Shiva! Shiva!" he put the matter out of his mind. Someone asked him once what he meant when he said "Shiva! Shiva!" and he answered with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes "Shiver my timbers. Ho, ho, ho, and a bottle of rum." This was not flippancy. How could he answer a casual question otherwise? We had noticed that when something disturbed him, after allowing himself to be troubled by it for a few minutes, his "Shiva! Shiva!" seemed to end it. We knew that he had reminded himself of his true nature, in which everything of a disquieting nature was dissolved.

In New York once there was a pitiful little group that clung to him with pathetic tenacity. In the course of a walk he had gathered up first one and then another. This ragged retinue returned with him to the house of 58th Street which was the home of the Vedanta Society. Walking up the flight of steps leading to the front door the one beside him thought, "Why does he attract such queer abnormal people?" Quick as a flash he turned and answered the unspoken thought, "You see, they are Shiva's demons."

Walking along Fifth Avenue one day, with two elderly forlorn devoted creatures walking in front, he said, "Don't you see, life has conquered them!" The pity, the compassion for the defeated in his tone! Yes, and something else—for then and there, the one who heard, prayed and vowed that never should life conquer her, not even when age, illness, and poverty should come. And so it has been. His silent blessing was fraught with power.

PLANNING THE WORK

In those early days we did not know the thoughts that were seething in Swamiji's mind, day and night. "The work ! the work !" he cried. "How to begin the work in India ! The way, the means !" The form it would take was evolved gradually. Certainly before he left America, the way, the means, and the method were clear in every detail. He knew then, that the remedy was not money, not even education in the ordinary sense, but another kind of education. Let man remember his true nature, divinity. Let this become a living realization, and everything else will follow—power, strength, manhood. He will again become MAN. And this he proclaimed from Colombo to Almora.

First a large plot of land on the Ganga was to be acquired. On this was to be built a shrine for worship, and a monastery to give shelter to the *gurubhāis* (brother-disciples) and as a centre for the training of younger men. They were to be taught meditation and all subjects relating to the religious life, including the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita, Sanskrit, and science. After some years of training, whenever the head of the monastery considered them sufficiently prepared, they were to go out, to form new centres, to preach the message, to nurse the sick, to succour the needy, to work in times of famine and flood, to give relief in any form that was needed. How much of what he thought out at this time has been carried out ! To this India can bear testimony.

It seemed almost madness for a mendicant monk to plan such an extensive work. In later years we were to see it carried out in every detail.

The summer before he had been at Greenacre, a place on the coast of Maine, where seekers of Truth gathered year after year to hear teachers of all religions and cults. There, under a tree which to this day is called "The Swami's Pine", he expounded the message of the

East. Here he came in contact with a new phase of American life. These splendid young people, free and daring, not bound by foolish conventions, yet self-controlled, excited his imagination. He was much struck by the freedom in the relations between the sexes, a freedom with no taint of impurity. "I like their *bonne camaraderie*," he said. For days at a time his mind would be concerned with this problem. Pacing up and down, every now and then a few words would fall from his lips. He was not addressing anyone but thinking aloud. His soliloquy would take some such form: "Which is better, the social freedom of America, or the social system of India with all its restrictions? The American method is individualistic. It gives an opportunity to the lowest. There can be no growth except in freedom, but it also has obvious dangers. Still, the individual gets experience even through mistakes. Our Indian system is based entirely upon the good of the *samâj* (society). The individual must fit into the system at any cost. There is no freedom for the individual unless he renounces society and becomes a Sannyâsin. This system has produced towering individuals, spiritual giants. Has it been at the expense of those less spiritual than themselves? Which is better for the race? Which? The freedom of America gives opportunities to masses of people. It makes for breadth, whilst the intensity of India means depth. How to keep both, that is the problem. How to keep the Indian depth and at the same time add breadth?"

It goes without saying that this was not merely a speculative problem, mental gymnastics. It was a question vital to the welfare of India. In America he saw the value and effect of social freedom, yet no one was more fully alive than he to the inestimable good produced by the system of India—a form of society which has kept the country alive throughout many ages which have witnessed the rise and fall of other countries equally great. His

problem was to find out whether there was a way of adding to this structure the best of other countries, without endangering the structure itself.

For days he would speak out of the depths of his meditation on this part of the work. In this case, location, buildings, ways and means were all subordinate to the ideal. He was trying to see the woman of the future, the ideal for India. It was not a light task for even his luminous mind, which wrought it slowly, detail by detail. Like a great sculptor standing before a mass of splendid material, he was lost in the effort to bring to life an image, such as no artist had ever conceived before : an image which was to be an expression of the Divine Mother, through which the Light of spirituality shines. We watched fascinated as this perfection slowly took shape. So might some favoured one have watched Michael Angelo at work with chisel and hammer, bringing into form the concept of power, strength, and majesty, which was to grow into his "Moses !"

What was the work for women which he had in mind ? Certainly not merely a school for children. There were already thousands of these. One more or less would make no appreciable difference. Neither was it to be a boarding school, even if it supplied a need by providing a refuge for girls whose parents were unable to marry them off. Nor a widow's home, though that too would fill a useful purpose. It was not to be a duplication of any of the forms of work which had so far been attempted. Then what? To answer that question it is only necessary to ask: What is the significance of Shri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda to the world, and more especially to India at this time? The new power, the new life that came with this influx of spirituality was not meant for men alone, but how could it be brought to the women of India? How could they be set on fire and become torches from which millions of others might catch the flame? This was one of his greatest concerns. "For

this work a woman is needed," he cried. "No man can do it. But where is the woman?"

As far back as his wander-years, he consciously searched for the woman who should be able to meet his need. One after another was put to the test and failed. Of one in whom he had had great hopes he said, in answer to the question: why not she?—"You see she intends to do her own work." There was no criticism in this, only a statement of fact. Again and again it happened that those in whom he had attempted to rouse the latent power within, mistook the power emanating from him for their own, and felt that under the same circumstances they too could manifest greatness. They wanted to do not his work but their own! It was not easy to find someone who had the necessary qualifications, spiritual and intellectual, who had the devotion of the disciple, who was selfless, and who could pass on the living fire. Having found such a one, and trained her, she in turn would have to train others, from amongst whom five or six would be capable of continuing and extending the work. These five or six would have to be women of towering spirituality, women of outstanding intellectual attainments, combining the finest and noblest of the old and the new. This was the goal. How was it to be accomplished? What kind of education would produce them?

Purity, Discipleship, and Devotion were to him essential for the one who was to do his work. "I love purity," he often said, always with a touching pathos. "All attempts must be based upon the ideal of Sitâ," he said, "Sitâ, purer than purity, chaster than chastity, all patience, all suffering, the ideal of Indian womanhood. She is the very type of the Indian woman as she should be, for all the Indian ideals of a perfected woman have centred around that one life of Sitâ, and here she stands, these thousands of years, commanding the worship of

every man, woman, and child throughout the length and breadth of Âryâvarta."

Of purity he spoke constantly; but there was a quality which he seldom named, a quality which is not directly associated with womanhood—yet from the stories he told, one knew that to him no type could be complete without it. Again and again he told the story of the Rajput wife who, whilst buckling on her husband's shield, said, "Come back with your shield or on it." How graphically he pictured the story of Padmini, the Rajput queen. She stood before us in all her dazzling beauty, radiant, tender, lovely. Rather than permit the lustful gaze of the Mohammedan invader, every woman of that chivalrous race would rush to meet death. Instead of sympathizing with the trembling timid woman, full of fear for the one she loved, he said, "Be like the Rajput wife!"

Had it been merely a question of a college degree, were there not already numbers of women who had achieved that? The young men who came to him, many of them with degrees, needed training. Much that had been learnt must be unlearnt. New values must be substituted for old, new purposes and aims must be brought into focus. When the mind had been purified, then it was ready for the influx of spirituality, which was poured into it by teaching, conversation, and most of all by the living contact with those who could transmit it. In this way a gradual transformation could take place and they would be fitted to give the message and continue the work. Intellectual attainments were but secondary, although he did not underestimate their value. Reading and writing must be the key which would unlock the door to the treasure-house of great ideals and wider outlook. For it was not merely a school which he had in mind, not an institution, but something much larger, something which cannot be easily labelled or defined, something which would make thousands and tens of

thousands of institutions possible in the future. In short it was to be an attempt to create the educators of a new order. The education must not be merely academic, but, to meet the requirements of the time, it must be intellectual, national, and spiritual. Unless those who initiated it lighted their own torches at the altar where burns the fire that was brought from above, the work would be of little value. That is why discipleship is necessary. All cannot come to the altar, but one torch can light others, until hundreds, thousands are aflame. Spirituality must be transmitted. It cannot be acquired, although regular practices are necessary—meditation, association with those who have realized, the reading of scriptures and other holy books.

Not that it was ever stated that devotion was one of the qualifications. It is only now, after this lapse of time, that in looking back, one knows how necessary it is. Swamiji made no demands of any kind. His respect, nay reverence, for the divinity within was so sincere and so profound that his mental attitude was always: "Hands off." He did not ask for blind submission. He did not want slaves. He used to say, "I do not meddle with my workers at all. The man who can work has an individuality of his own, which resists against any pressure. This is my reason for leaving workers entirely free." Imperious though he was, he had something which held this quality in check—a reverence for the real nature of man. Not because he believed all men equal in the sense in which that phrase is often glibly repeated, but because in the language of his own great message, all men are potentially divine. In manifestation there are great differences. All should not have equal rights, but equal opportunities. With his great compassion he would have given the lowest, the most oppressed, more than those who manifested their divinity to a greater degree. Did they not need it more? Could such as he exact anything in the nature of control of the will of

another? The devotion which he did not demand, but which was necessary nevertheless, lay in acceptance of him as a *guru*, a faith and love in him that would replace self-will.

India is passing through a transition, from the old order of things to the new, the modern. No matter how much we may deplore it, how much we may cling to the old and oppose the change, we cannot prevent it. It is upon us. The question is : how shall we meet it ? Shall we let it overtake us unawares, or shall we meet it fearlessly and boldly, ready to do our part to shape it to the needs of the future? Some have met it by blindly accepting an alien culture, suited to the needs of the land from which it sprang, but unsuited for transplantation. Each country must evolve its own culture and the institutions necessary for its development. If India cannot escape the change, which is taking place all over the world, especially in Asia, she must control the situation. The new must grow out of the old, naturally and in harmony with the law of its growth. Shall the lotus become the primrose? Rather let us create conditions by which the lotus can become a more beautiful, a more perfect lotus, which shall live for ever as the symbol of a great race, and, which, although its roots be in the mud of the world, bears flowers in a rarer, purer atmosphere.

In some respects the transition which is upon us affects women particularly. With the growth of cities, women are taken out of the free natural life of the village, and confined within brick walls in crowded towns. If they are poor but of high caste, as most of them are, they often do not escape from this confinement for months at a time. The economic pressure is incredibly severe. Anxiety, poor food, lack of air and exercise result in unhappiness, disease, and premature death. The lot of the widow is worse than that of the married woman. There is no place for her in the scheme of things. In the old village life she was part of the social

order, a respected, useful asset. Now she is in danger of becoming the household drudge. She feels that the least she can do in return for food and shelter is to save the family the expense of a servant. When poverty becomes still more grinding, she is the first to know that in her absence the family would dispense with such help. In such a case there is a feeling of humiliation for the less sensitive. For others it is much deeper. They feel that they are taking the bread out of the mouths of those around them. Their suffering is great, the more so in that they are helpless. There is nothing they can do to add to the family's income.

It was this class that Swamiji particularly wished to help. "They must be economically independent," he said. How this was to be done, it was not for him to say, so he implied. It was a problem to be worked out by the one who should undertake the work. "They must be educated," he said next. Here he was more explicit and laid down certain principles. Education should not be according to Western methods but according to the Indian ideal. Reading and writing are not ends in themselves. The teaching could be such that these achievements would be used for a noble purpose and for service, not for self-indulgence and not to add one more superficial weapon. If the woman who learns to read, uses the knowledge only for imbibing vulgar, frivolous, sensational stories, she had better be left illiterate. But if it becomes the key which opens the door to the literature of her own country, to history, to art, to science, it proves a blessing. The great ideals of the Râmâyana and the Mahâbhârata were to be kept before their minds constantly, by stories, by readings, *jâtrâs, kathakatâs,*[1] until the characters lived and moved among them, until these ideas became part of their very being, something

[1]Open-air theatres and oral elaboration of mythological events. —*Publisher.*

living, vital, powerful, which would in time produce a race of superwomen.

There should be, to begin with, a thorough education in the vernacular, next Sanskrit, then English, science, history, mathematics, geography. Add to this, work with the hands : sewing, embroidery, spinning, cooking, nursing, anything in the way of indigenous handicraft. While all Western knowledge, including science, must be given a place, Indian ideals and Indian traditions must always be held sacred. Education will come by the assimilation of the greatest ideas of the East and of the West. Any kind of education which undermines the faith of the Indian woman in the past culture of her race, its religion and traditions, is not only useless but detrimental. She had better be left as she is. Mathematics must become a discipline for the mind, a training in accuracy and truth, history a practice in tracing effects to their causes, a warning against repetition of the mistakes of the past. The emancipation of women meant to him a freedom from limitations, which should disclose their real power.

The old methods of education in the West, concern themselves only with the mind, its training, its discipline. To this, certain facts relating to history, literature, science, geography, and languages were added. This is a very limited conception. Man is not a mind only. Why not build up a new education based upon the true nature of man? When a new Light comes into the world, it must illumine all aspects of life. If man is divine now, education must be an uncovering of the knowledge already in man. "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man," he said.

Let us try a new experiment. At this crucial time when it becomes necessary to review the whole subject, let us break away from some of the old traditions of education. Let us build upon a broader conception, larger aims. Not only must Indian women be highly educated,

but a few at least should be of outstanding intellect—the intellectual peers of any women in the world—their flame of spirituality set aglow by the Great Light which has illumined the world in these modern times. They should be on fire, renunciation and service should be their watchwords. A few such women could solve the problems of the women of India. In the past, women made the supreme sacrifice for a personal end. Are there not a few now who will devote heart, mind, and body for the greater end? "Give me a few men and women who are pure and selfless," Swamiji would say, "and I shall shake the world!" No man can do this work. It must be done by women alone. On this point he was stern. "Am I a woman that I should solve the problems of women? Hands off! They can solve their own problems." This was consistent with his unbounded faith in the power and greatness latent in all women. "Every woman is part of the Divine Mother, the embodiment of Shakti[1]," he believed. This Shakti must be roused. If woman's power is often for evil rather than for good, it is because she has been oppressed; but she will rouse the lion in her nature when her fetters drop. She has suffered throughout the ages. This has given her infinite patience, infinite perseverance.

Just as in theology, we no longer teach that man is a child of sin and sorrow, born and conceived in iniquity, but is a child of God, pure and perfect, why should we not change our attitude towards education, and look upon the student as a creature of light and knowledge, unfolding the leaves of his destiny in joy, freedom, and beauty? All religions have taught: "The Kingdom is within you."

For obvious reasons, a new experiment in education can be worked out more easily with women than with men. Women need not work for a degree, as for some time to come they will not attempt to get positions requir-

[1]Divine Energy.—*Publisher.*

ing one. In this respect they do not yet find it necessary to conform to accepted standards. Out of it will grow a new race, a race of supermen and women—a new order. Schools for children? Yes, for education should be widespread. Widows' homes. nursing, all forms of service and activity. New life on all planes, the new intellectual outlook, full of new vigour. If the experiment fails, it will not be an entire loss. Power, initiative, self-responsibility will have been developed. If it succeeds as it inevitably must, the gain will be incredibly great. Results can hardly be foreseen at this stage. The woman who is the product of such a system will at least approach the stature of a superwoman. A few such are urgently needed at the present critical time.

Some of us believe that if Swami Vivekananda's ideas regarding the education of women are carried out in the true spirit, a being will be evolved who will be unique in the history of the world. As the woman of ancient Greece was almost perfect physically, this one will be her complement intellectually and spiritually—a woman gracious, loving, tender, long-suffering, great in heart and intellect, but greatest of all in spirituality.

(*Prabuddha Bhârata, January-December 1931*)

SOME PROBLEMS OF INDIA

It often seemed to us that Swami Vivekananda was not consistent. For days together he would inveigh passionately against child-marriage, caste, *purdah,* emotionalism in religion, or some other subject, until he made us believe that there was no other point of view. Then quite suddenly, perhaps in answer to a facile acceptance of all that he had said, he would turn and rend those who agreed with him, demolish all his previous contentions, and prove conclusively that the opposite was true. "But, Swamiji," someone said in distress, "you said just the opposite yesterday." "Yes,

that was yesterday," he would reply, if at all. Neither did he try to reconcile the two points of view or make any explanation. If we did not think he was consistent, what was that to him? As Emerson says, "A foolish consistence is the hobgoblin of little minds." He was looking at all the problems of life from a different vantage point. From his observation tower, the surrounding country looked different from what it did to us who were a part of the landscape. The most he ever said was, "Don't you see, I am thinking aloud?"

We came to know long afterwards that after weighing all the pros and cons, he came to a conclusion. This did not mean that he thought that one side was altogether right and the other altogether wrong, but rather that the balance was slightly in favour of the one, and probably only so because of the needs of the time. Having come to this decision, he no longer discussed the matter but thought of some way to put his conclusions into practice.

Criticism he considered detrimental. Reform, he thought, did more harm than good because it always begins with condemnation. This was disintegrating especially in a country in the position of India where it is most important to restore the lost faith of the individual and the race. All change of value must be growth and could not be superimposed from outside. With his prophetic sense he could see the causes already at work bringing about the changes which so many felt to be necessary. Economic causes prevailed at this period. Very little thought was required to see how the growing poverty would affect *purdah,* caste, child-marriage as well as other customs.

Some one ventured to oppose him one day, and he turned swiftly saying, "What, you dare argue with me, a descendant of fifty generations of lawyers!" Then he marshalled his facts and arguments and spoke so brilliantly that some of us were convinced that black was white. But if one said to him, "I can't argue with you,

Swamiji, but you know that thus and thus is true," to that he always yielded with amazing gentleness, "Yes, you are right." All of this was but a little fun, a little relief from the tension at which he and we with him were kept much of the time.

What amazed us was that he not only saw the problems clearly but found solutions for them—solutions that were quite unique. Every custom was traced back to its origin. In the beginning there was a reason for it; it filled a need. In time it became a custom, and, as is usual with customs, accretions like barnacles were added and militated against its usefulness. What was valuable and what was harmful in this or that custom was now the question. As certain conditions brought it into existence, were the present conditions such as to put an end to it? After all, these institutions are not peculiar to India, as most seem to think. The United States has been in existence as an independent nation not much more than one hundred and fifty years, yet there are already two distinct castes which are as rigid as it is possible to make them. A Negro may be as blond as a Swede, but can never cross the barrier between the two races. And then India never lynched its depressed classes! Besides these two rigid castes there are many subdivisions less rigid, generally based on money. Is it not nobler to place highest the caste that is rich only in spirituality, than to make money the standard? Child-marriage was practised in Europe until quite recently. We read again and again of princesses married at twelve and we know that what the royal families did, the subjects imitated. In *Romeo and Juliet* of Shakespeare, Juliet is stated to have been just under fourteen at the time her parents planned her marriage to Count Paris.

Is it not evident that these customs grow out of the limitations of human nature and out of certain conditions which made them necessary at the time? Instead of condemning, Swami Vivekananda, after tracing them

back to their source, following their history, and seeing clearly what undesirable things had been incorporated, tried to find first of all the corrective idea. In some cases this in itself would be sufficient. In others, the forces at work in India today would bring about the change. But there are cases, in which without implying any condemnation of the old a new institution must be created, which will gently, almost imperceptibly, in time displace the old.

Marriage is a great austerity. It is not for self but for *samâj*—the society. There must be chastity in word, thought, and deed. Without a great ideal of faithfulness in monogamy there can be no true monasticism. There must be fidelity even when the emotion is no longer there. Chastity is the virtue which keeps a nation alive. To chastity he attributed the fact that India still lives while other nations no older than herself have sunk into oblivion.

Such an observation would lead to a recital of the rise and fall of the nations of antiquity. In the beginning of the national life, in its days of struggle, there was self-denial, restraint, austerity. As the nation grew prosperous, this was replaced by self-indulgence, laxity, luxury, resulting in decay, degeneration, destruction. Babylon, Assyria, Greece, Rome—this is the story of each and all. But India lives. However individuals may fail, India had never lowered the standard.

Then thinking of the changes which will inevitably come soon, he questioned, "Which is better? The arranged marriage of India or the individual choice of the West? But our young men are even now demanding the right to choose their wives." Again, "Is intermarriage advisable? Heretofore, the worst of both races have produced an unfortunate breed. What if the best of the two races unite? It might produce a race of supermen. Would it? Is it advisable?" His country, always

Swami's country! How to preserve this great race which has given to the world some of its most transcendental ideas, and is still the custodian of spiritual treasures of which the world outside stands in need.

Or he would turn to the question of child-marriage. Was there any subject upon which he did not throw the rays of his luminous mind? It was a revelation to watch the concentration of this searchlight upon problems. A question or a chance remark was enough. He would jump up, walk rapidly to and fro while words poured forth like molten lava. His mind would seize upon a subject and he would not let it go until it had revealed its secret to him. It has been said that he upheld child-marriage, caste, *purdah*. He has been accused of being untrue to the great principle inherent in his message. Those of us who saw him wrestle with these problems, know how far from truth this is. He who was roused to a very passion of chivalry at the sight of injustice, of suffering due to man's cruel domination, was he the one to add another link to the fetters which bind the helpless? He "whose heart was like butter," whose feeling for the downtrodden was a passion, whose mission it was to help those in bondage to attain the Great Freedom, how could one think that he would not prove himself the Master of compassion, the Deliverer?

Yet he had but little sympathy with reform and reformers. How could he be in harmony with a method which, while it tore up the evil by the roots, destroyed so much that was beautiful and precious in the process, leaving ugly barren places behind? Whatever changes were to be made in his country, must not be brought about by the loss of her self-respect or by loss of faith in herself. Denunciation of her customs and institutions, no, that was not the way. What perversity was it that made so many of his own generation see only evil in the land of their birth and unalloyed good in everything Western? How had this hypnotism come about? Could

India have lived through the ages if this were true? The heart of India is sound. Evils there may be. Where are they not? Is the West free from them? Pacing back and forth, hour after hour, he would wrestle with the problems of India.

It is essential in all cases, but particularly in India at the present day, not to destroy faith and reverence. Can you eliminate the evil without bringing graver dangers into existence? There was neither child-marriage nor *purdah* in ancient India—nor do they exist in all parts of India today. They are only in the provinces which have been under Mohammedan domination. What has it done? It has preserved the chastity of the race. Not only must women be chaste but men as well. The chaste woman must not so much as look at another man nor must she allow her face to be seen.

To him it seemed incredible that any man should look with contempt upon the institutions of his country or upon past institutions of which they were the product. But he was not blind to the other side. "We are degenerating in physique. Is this the cause? What is the remedy?" Of the evils that followed in the wake of child-marriage, he said little. Were they not too well known? He did not say that they must be ended, for he never gave expression to what to him was obvious. Here was an institution that entailed suffering, that made for weakness, that was evil in some of its aspects. One cannot believe that after having faced the facts he did not at once try to find some way to eliminate all the undesirable elements. But was there any reason why he should adopt methods which would result in still worse evils. His was no stereotyped mind: then why expect of him stereotyped methods? Some of us were later to know why this subject stirred him so deeply.

After perhaps hours of thought on the subject, he would heave a deep sigh and say, "Well, well, the economic pressure will bring about changes. This together

with education will do much to end it. Education! We must educate our women! But not the kind of education that is open to them now. Heaven forbid ! That would be worse than the existing evil."

(*Prabuddha Bhârata, Golden Jubilee Number, 1945*)

XIV

ON the twentyninth of January 1895, I went with my sister to 54 West 33rd Street, New York, and heard the Swami Vivekananda in his sitting room where were assembled fifteen or twenty ladies and two or three gentlemen. The room was crowded. All the arm chairs were taken; so I sat on the floor in the front row. Swami stood in the corner. He said something, the particular words of which I do not remember, but instantly to me that was truth, and the second sentence he spoke was truth, and the third sentence was truth. And I listened to him for seven years and whatever he uttered was to me truth. From that moment life had a different import. It was as if he made you realize that you were in eternity. It never altered. It never grew. It was like the sun that you will never forget once you have seen.

I heard him all that winter, three days a week, mornings at eleven o'clock. I never spoke to him, but as we were so regular in coming, two front seats were always kept for us in this sitting room of the Swamiji. One day he turned and said, "Are you sisters?" "Yes", we answered. Then he said, "Do you come very far?" We said, "No, not very far—about thirty miles up the Hudson." "So far? That is wonderful." Those were the first words I ever spoke to him.

I always felt that after Vivekananda, Mrs. Roethlisberger was the most spiritual person I ever met. It was she who took us to him. Swamiji had a great place for her also. One day she and I went to the Swami and said, "Swami, will you tell us how to meditate?" He said, "Meditate on the word 'OM' for a week and come again and tell me." So after a week we went back and Mrs. Roethlisberger said, "I see a light." He said, "Good, keep on." "O no, it is more like a glow at the heart."

And he said to me, "Good, keep on." That is all he ever taught me. But we had been meditating before we ever met him, and we knew the Gita by heart. I think that prepared us for recognition of this tremendous life force which he was. His power lay, perhaps, in the courage he gave others. He did not ever seem to be conscious of himself at all. It was the other man who interested him. "When the book of life begins to open, then the fun begins," he would say. He used to make us realize there was nothing secular in life; it was all holy. "Always remember, you are incidentally an American, and a woman, but always a child of God. Tell yourself day and night who you are. Never forget it." That is what he used to tell us. His presence, you see, was dynamic. You cannot pass that power on unless you have it, just as you cannot give money away unless you have it. You may imagine it, but you cannot do it.

We never spoke to him, had nothing much to do with him; but during that spring we were dining one night with Mr. Francis H. Leggett, who later became my brother-in-law. "Yes, we can dine with you but we cannot spend the evening with you," we had told him. "Very well," he answered, "just dine with me." When dinner was over, he said, "Where are you going this evening?" We told him we were going to a lecture; and he asked, "Mayn't I come?" We said, "Yes." He came, he listened; and when it was over, he went up to Swamiji, shook hands with him and said, "Swami, when will you dine with me?" And it was he who introduced us to Swami socially.

Then Swami came to Ridgely Manor, Mr. Leggett's place in the Catskill Mountains, and spent some days there. At the time some of the students said, "But Swamiji, you can't go. The classes are going on." Swami turned with great dignity and answered, "Are they my classes? Yes, I will go." And he did. While he was there, he met my sister's children who were then twelve and fourteen years old. But when we came down to New

York and the classes began again, he did not seem to remember them, and they, very much surprised, said, "Swami doesn't remember us." We said to them, "Wait until the class is over." While he was lecturing, he was always completely absorbed in what he was talking about. When he was through speaking, he came up and said, "Well children, how nice to see you again," showing he did remember them. They were very happy.

Perhaps it was during this period; one day when he was our guest in New York City, he came home very quiet and subdued. He did not speak for hours, and finally we said to him, "Swami! What did you do today?" And he said, "I have seen a thing today that only America can show. I was in the street car. Helen Gould sat on one side and a Negro washer-woman, with her washing on her lap, on the other. No place but America can show that."

In June of that year Swami went up to Camp Percy, Christine Lake, N. H., to be the guest of Mr. Leggett at his fishing camp. We also went. There my sister's engagement to Mr. Leggett was announced, and Swami was invited to go abroad and be the witness at the wedding. While he was at the Camp, Swami would go out under those beautiful white birch trees and meditate for hours. Without telling us anything about it he made two beautiful birch bark books, written in Sanskrit and English, which he gave to my sister and me.

Then when my sister and I went to Paris to buy her trousseau, Swami went to Thousand Island Park and for six weeks gave those wonderful talks called *Inspired Talks*, which to me are the most beautiful words that were written, because they were given to a group of intimate disciples. *They* were disciples, whereas I was never anything but a friend. But that quality that he gave them! Nothing I think revealed his heart as those days did.

He came over to Paris with Mr. Leggett in August. There, my sister and I stayed at the Holland House, and

the Swami and Mr. Leggett stayed at a different hotel ; but we saw them every day. At that time Mr. Leggett had a courier who always called Swami *'Mon Prince !'* And Swami said to him, "But I am not a prince. I am a Hindu monk." The courier answered, "You may call yourself that, but I am used to dealing with Princes, and I know one when I see one." His dignity impressed everyone. Yet, when someone once said to him, "You are so dignified, Swami", he replied, "It isn't me, it's my walk."

On the ninth of September Mr. and Mrs Leggett were married, and the next day Swami left for London to be the guest of Mr. E. T. Sturdy, who had already met some of the Ramakrishna monks in India and who was a Sanskrit scholar. After Swami had been there some time he wrote, "Come over and get up classes." But by the time we went over he was already lecturing. He lectured very eloquently at Princes' Hall, and the next day the papers were full of the news that a great Indian Yogi had come to London. He was very honoured there. Until the fifteenth of December we stayed in London. Then Swami again came to America to continue his work here. In April of the following year he went back to London when he established classes and began a real definite work. That was in 1896. He worked there all summer until July when he went to Switzerland with the Seviers.

Swamiji's knowledge was prodigious. Once when my niece, Alberta Sturgis, later Lady Sandwich, was with him in Rome, showing him the sights, she was amazed at his knowledge of where the great monuments were. And when she went to St. Peter's with him, she was still more amazed to see him so reverential to the symbols of the Roman Church—to all the jewels, all the beautiful draperies, put upon the saints. She said, "Swami, you don't believe in a Personal God ; why do you honour this so much?" He answered, "But Alberta, if you do believe in a Personal God, surely you give it your best."

That autumn he went from Switzerland to India with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier and Mr. J. J. Goodwin, where a great ovation awaited him by the entire nation. This can be read about in the discourses called *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*. Mr. Goodwin was the stenographer who had been engaged at 54 West 33rd Street to take down the lectures of Swami Vivekananda. Mr. Goodwin was a court-stenographer, which meant two hundred words a minute, and he was very expensive; but as we did not want to lose any of Vivekananda's words, we engaged him. After the first week Mr. Goodwin refused any money; when they said to him, "What do you mean?" he said, "If Vivekananda gives his life, the least I can do is to give my service." He followed Swami around the world, and we have seven volumes[1] hot from his lips that Mr. Goodwin took down.

I never wrote to Swami after he went to India, waiting to hear from him. Finally I had a letter, "Why don't you write?" Then I sent back, "Shall I come to India?" And his answer was, "Yes, come, if you want filth and degradation and poverty and many loin cloths talking religion. Don't come if you want anything else. We cannot bear one more criticism." Naturally I went over by the first ship; I sailed on the twelfth of January with Mrs. Ole Bull and Swami Saradananda. We stopped in London. Then on to Rome. We arrived in Bombay on the twelfth of February where Mr. Alasinga met us, who wore the vertical red marks of the Vaishnavite sect. Later on, once when I was sitting with Swami on our way to Kashmir, I happened to make the remark, "What a pity that Mr. Alasinga wears those Vaishnavite marks on his forehead!" Instantly Swami turned and said with great sternness, "Hands off! What have you ever done?" I did not know what I had done then. Of course I never answered. Tears came to my eyes and I waited. I

[1]An eighth volume has been added to the series in 1951. —*Publisher.*

learnt later that Mr. Alasinga Perumal was a young Brahmin teaching philosophy in a college in Madras earning 100 rupees a month, supporting his father, mother, wife, and four children, and who had gone from door to door to beg the money to send Vivekananda to the West. Perhaps without him we never would have met Vivekananda. Then one understood the anger with which Swamiji met the slightest attack on Mr. Alasinga.

When we arrived in Bombay they were very keen that we stay there; but we took the first train to Calcutta, and at four o'clock on the second morning following Swamiji met us with a dozen disciples. There were a score of other distinguished Indians with purple and gold and crimson turbans, to whom Mrs. Ole Bull had offered hospitality when they were in America. They covered us with garlands. We were literally enwrapped with flowers. It is always frightening to me to have garlands put on. Mrs. Ole Bull and I went to a hotel and Mr. Mohini Chatterjee came and stayed there from five o'clock in the afternoon until ten at night. I happened to remark, "I hope your wife will not be worried?" He answered, "I will explain to mother when I get home." I did not understand what that meant. After I knew Mr. Chatterjee well enough, perhaps a year later, I said to him, "What did you mean that first day when you said you would explain to mother?" He answered, "O, I never go to my room for the night without first going to my mother's room and confiding to her everything that happened during the day." "But your wife?" I said, "Don't you confide to her?" He answered, "My wife? She gets that relation from her son." Then I realized that fundamental difference between the Indian and our Western civilizations. The Indian civilization is based upon motherhood, and our civilization is based upon wifehood, which makes a tremendous difference.

In a day or two we went up to see Swami at his temporary monastery at Belur, at Nilambar Mukherjee's

garden-house. During the afternoon Swami said, "I must take you to the new monastery that we are buying." I said, "O, but Swami, isn't this big enough?" It was a lovely little villa he had, with perhaps an acre or two of land, a small lake and many flowers. I thought it was big enough for anyone. But he evidently saw things in a different scale. So he took us across little gullies to the place where is now the present monastery. Mrs. Ole Bull and I, finding this old riverside house empty, said, "Swami, can't we use this house?" "It isn't in order," he answered. "But we'll put it in order," we told him. With that he gave us permission. So we had it all newly whitewashed and went down to the bazars bought old mahogany furniture and made a drawing room half of which was Indian style and half of which was Western style. We had an outside dining room, our bedroom with an extra room for Sister Nivedita who was our guest until we went to Kashmir. We stayed there quite two months. It was perhaps the most beautiful time we ever had with Swamiji. He came every morning for early tea which he used to take under the great mango tree. That tree is still in existence. We never allowed them to cut it down, though they were keen to do it. He loved our living at that riverside cottage; and he would bring all those who came to visit him, to see what a charming home we had made of this house he had thought uninhabitable. In the afternoons we used to give tea-parties in front of the house, in full view of the river, where always could be seen loads of boats going up-stream, we receiving as if we were in our own drawing rooms. Swamiji loved all that intimate use we made of things which they took as a matter of course. One night there came one of those deluges of rain, like sheets of water. He paced up and down our outside dining room verandah, talking of Krishna and the love of Krishna and the power that love was in the world. He had a curious quality that when he was a *bhakta,* a lover, he brushed aside *karma* and *râja*

and *jnâna yogas* as if they were of no consequence whatever. And when he was a *karma-yogi,* then he made that the great theme. Or equally so, the *jnâna.* Sometimes, weeks, he would fell in one particular mood utterly disregardful of what he had been, just previous to that. He seemed to be filled with an amazing power of concentration ; of opening up to the great Cosmic qualities that are all about us. It was probably that power of concentration that kept him so young and so fresh. He never seemed to repeat himself. There would be an incident of very little consequence which would illuminate a whole new passage for him. And he had such a place for us Westerners whom he called "Living Vedantins". He would say, "When you believe a thing is true, you do it, you do not dream about it. That is your power."

It was one rainy night that Swami brought the Ceylonese Buddhist monk, Anagarika Dharmapala, to visit us. Mrs. Ole Bull, Sister Nivedita, and I were so happily housed in this cottage, it gave Swami particular joy to show his guests how simply Western women could settle there and make a real home.

On the twelfth of May in 1898 we started *en route* to Kashmir. We stopped at Naini Tal, the summer residence of the U. P. Government, and there hundreds of Indians met Swami with a beautiful hill pony on which they put him. Then they scattered before him flowers and palms, exactly as they did before Christ when he went into Jerusalem. And I said at once, "So, this is an oriental custom."

He left us alone for three days. We did not see him at all. We stayed at a hotel. Finally he sent for us. We went into one of the little houses, and there I saw him sitting on his bed wreathed in smiles, so happy was he to see us again. We had given him utter freedom. We never paid any attention to him. He never felt the weight of us. There was never any feeling of the necessity of entertainment.

From there we started for Almora where he became the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. We took a bungalow of our own, and there we stayed a month. Swamiji always meant Almora to be the Himalayan home of his Western disciples and expected the monastery to be founded there. But Mr. Sevier, who took his vocation of founding a monastery very seriously, was so interrupted by people coming in to tea-parties daily that he insisted on going forty miles farther into the Himalayas; so Mayavati Ashrama, when started, was eighty miles from a station—and there were no proper roads.

While we were there, word came that Mr. Goodwin had died at Ootacamund. When Swamiji learnt that Mr. Goodwin had died, he looked a long long time out upon the snow-capped Himalayas without speaking and presently he said, "My last public utterance is over." And he seldom spoke in public again.

We left Almora on the twentieth of June for Kashmir. By train to Rawalpindi, where we got *tongas* with three horses abreast to drive us the two hundred miles up into Kashmir. There were relays of horses every five miles, so that we dashed through on top of this beautiful road, as perfect then as any road the Romans ever made. Then to Baramulla where we got four native house boats These boats called *dungas* are about seventy feet long and broad enough to have two single beds in them and a corridor between, covered with a matting house; so wherever we wanted a window we only had to roll up the matting. The whole roof could be lifted in the day time, and thus we lived in the open, yet knew there was always a roof over our heads. We had four of these *dungas,* one for Mrs. Ole Bull and me, one for Mrs. Paterson and Sister Nivedita, and one for Swami and one of his monks. Then a dining room boat where we all met to have our meals. We stayed in Kashmir four months, the first three in these simple little boats until after September, when it got so cold, we took an

ordinary house boat with fire places and there enjoyed the warmth of a real house. Sister Nivedita has written a good deal of the talks we had there. Swami would get up about half past five in the morning, and seeing him smoking and talking with the boatmen, we would get up too. Then there would be those long walks for a couple of hours until the sun came up warm ; Swami talking about India, what its purpose in life was, what Mohammedanism had done and what it had not done. He talked, immersed in the history of India and in the architecture and in the habits of the people, and we walked on through fields of forget-me-nots, bursting into pink and blue blossoms, way above our heads.

Baramulla is something like Venice. So many of the streets are canals. We had our own little private boat in which we went to and from the main land. But the merchants would come in small crafts all about our boats. We did most of our shopping over the rails of the boat. Each of our boats cost thirty rupees a month, which included the boatmen who fed themselves. The boatmen consisted of father, mother, son, daughter, and tiny children. They had their own little place at the end of the boat, and many a time we begged them for a taste of their food, the aroma being so delicious. The manner of travelling in these boats is that the boat is punted up the river, or it is dragged, the boatmen walking along the shore, or it is rowed. There is nothing extra to pay regardless of how one is navigated. When we wanted to move up the Jhelum river to some of the lakes, we would tell our servants the night before ; they would get in supplies of food including ducks or chickens, vegetables, eggs, butter, fruits, and milk. In the morning, when we awakened, we would feel the boat moving along, gliding so imperceptibly that we were scarcely conscious of the motion. Our servant who had walked ahead would then have a delicious meal waiting for us. This he made over a little trough long enough and narrow enough to hold

three pans, one containing soup, one meat, and the other rice. The dexterity of these people was a wonder and something we never got over. As a chicken is not considered clean food by the orthodox Hindus, we never told the people we intended to eat the chickens we bought. But when we went up the river, the lower part of the boat held half a dozen clucking chickens. The Pandits who could come to visit Swami would hear them and look around for them. Swami, who knew they were hidden underneath, had a twinkle in his eye, but he would never give us away. Then the Pandits would say, "But Swami, why do you have to do with these ladies. They are *mlechchhas.* They are untouchables." Then the Westerners would come to us and say, "But don't you see? Swami is not treating you with respect. He meets you without his turban." So we had great fun laughing at the idiosyncrasies of each other's civilization.

Swamiji then sent for Swami Saradananda to come and travel with us, to show us the sights of India—Lahore, Delhi, Agra, Kurukshetra, and so on, Swami going straight down to Calcutta. By the time we got down there, he had already founded the monastery in our little cottage at Belur. As we could not go back there, we took a small house about two miles up at Bally and stayed there until we left for the West.

Mrs. Ole Bull had given several thousand dollars to found the monastery. I having very little, it took me some years to have eight hundred dollars. One day I said to Swamiji, "Here is a little money you may be able to use." He said, "What ? What ? I said, "Yes." "How much?" he asked. And I said, "Eight hundred dollars." Instantly he turned to Swami Trigunatita and said, "There, go and buy your press." He bought the press which started the *Udbodhan,* the Bengali magazine published by the Ramakrishna Mission.

In July 1899 Swami came to England again with Sister Nivedita, where Sister Christine and Mrs. Funke

met him. From there he came to America and he came to us at Ridgely Manor in September of that year where we gave him his own cottage with two of his monks, Turiyananda and Abhedananda. Sister Nivedita was also there, and Mrs. Ole Bull. It was quite a community of people who loved and honoured the Swami. He used to call my Sister, Mrs. Leggett, "Mother", and always sat beside her at table. He particularly liked chocolate ice cream, because, "I too am chocolate and I like it," he would say. One day we were having strawberries, and someone said to him, "Swami do you like strawberries?" He answered, "I never tasted them." "You never tasted them, why you eat them every day!" He said, "You have cream on them—pebbles with cream would be good."

In the evening, sitting around the great fire in the hall of Ridgely Manor, he would talk, and once after he came out with some of his thoughts a lady said, "Swami, I don't agree with you there." "No? Then it is not for you," he answered. Someone else said, "O, but that is where I find you true." "Ah, then it was for you," he said showing that utter respect for the other man's views. One evening he was so eloquent, about a dozen people listening, his voice becoming so soft and seemingly far away; when the evening was over, we all separated without even saying good-night to each other. Such a holy quality pervaded. My sister, Mrs. Leggett, had occasion to go to one of the rooms afterward. There she found one of the guests, an agnostic, weeping. "What do you mean!" my sister asked, and the lady said, "That man has given me eternal life. I never wish to hear him again."

It was while the Swami was at Ridgely Manor that a letter came from a lady unknown to us to say our only brother was very ill in Los Angeles and that she thought, he would die and we ought to know it. So my sister said to me, "I think you must go." And I said,

"Of course." Within two hours I was packed, the horses were at the door, we had four miles to drive to a railway station, and as I went out Swami put up his hand and said some Sanskrit blessing and then he called out, "Get up some classes and I will come." I went straight to Los Angeles and in a small white cottage covered with roses, on the outskirts of the city, lay my brother, very ill. But over his bed was a life-size picture of Vivekananda. I had not seen my brother for ten years, so after I had an hour's talk with him and saw how very ill he was, I went out to see our hostess, Mrs. Blodgett and said to her, "My brother is very ill." She said, "Yes." I said, "I think he will die." She said, "Yes." "May he die here?" I asked. She said, "O yes." Then I said, "Who is that man whose portrait is over my brother's bed?" She drew herself up with all the dignity of her seventy years and said, "If ever there was a God on earth, that is the man." I said, "What do you know about him?" She answered, "I was at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893, and when that young man got up and said, 'Sisters and Brothers of America', seven thousand people rose to their feet as a tribute to something they knew not what; and when it was over and I saw scores of women walking over the benches to get near him, I said to myself, "Well, my lad, if you can resist that onslaught, you are indeed a God." Then I said to Mrs. Blodgett, "I know him." "You know him?" she asked. I said, "Yes, I left him in the little village of Stone Ridge, of two hundred people, in the Catskill Mountains in New York." She said, "You know him?" I said, "Why don't you ask him here?" She said, "To my cottage?" "He will come", I told her. In three weeks my brother was dead and in six weeks Swamiji was there and began his classes on the Pacific coast, in "Kalifornia".

We were Mrs. Blodgett's guests for months. This little cottage had three bedrooms, a kitchen, a dining room, and a sitting room. Every morning we would hear

Swami chanting his Sanskrit from the bath, which was just off the kitchen. He would come out with tousled hair and get ready for breakfast. Mrs. Blodgett made delicious pancakes, and these we would eat at the kitchen table, Swami sitting with us; and such discourses he would have with Mrs. Blodgett, such repartee and wit, she talking of the villainy of men and he talking of even the greater wickedness of women! Mrs. Blodgett seldom went to hear him lecture, saying her duty was to give us delicious meals when we got back. Swami lectured a great number of times at the Home of Truth and in various halls, but perhaps the most outstanding lecture I ever heard was his talk on "Jesus of Nazareth", when he seemed to radiate a white light from head to foot, so lost was he in the wonder and the power of Christ. I was so impressed with this obvious halo that I did not speak to him on the way back for fear of interrupting, as I thought, the great thoughts that were still in his mind. Suddenly he said to me, "I know how it is done." I said, "How what is done?" "How they make mulligatawny soup! They put a bay leaf in it," he told me. That utter lack of self-consciousness, of self-importance, was perhaps one of his outstanding characteristics. He seemed to see the strength and the glory and the power of the other man who felt that courage enter into him, until everyone who came near him went away refreshed and invigorated and sustained. So when people have said to me, "What is your test of spirituality?" I have always said, "It is the courage that is given by the presence of a holy man." Swamiji used to say, "The saviours should take on the sins and tribulations of their disciples and let the disciples go on their way rejoicing and free. There is the difference! The saviours should carry the burdens."

Another thing he once said to my niece at Ridgely Manor is, "Alberta, no fact in life will ever equal your imagination of it."

One day Mrs. Blodgett had three ladies come to call

on the Swami. I left immediately, so he could be alone with them; and after half an hour he came to me and said, "These ladies are three sisters and they want me to come and make them a visit at Pasadena." I said, "Go." He said, "Shall I?" "Yes, go," I told him. They were Mrs. Hansborough, Miss Meade, and Mrs. Wyckoff. Mrs. Wyckoff's house is now the Vivekananda House in Hollywood, and one of Swamiji's monks is there with her.

It was from Alameda, California, he wrote me on April eighteenth 1900, the most beautiful letter I think he ever wrote. This is the last letter in *Inspired Talks.*

Later in 1900 my sister and Mr. Leggett took a house in Paris for the Exposition. We went over in June, and Swami followed in August. He stayed some weeks with us until he went to stay with Mr. Gerald Nobel, a bachelor. Afterwards he said of Mr. Nobel: "It is worth having been born to have made one friend as Mr. Nobel." So greatly he honoured this friend of ours. We entertained largely during these six months, Swami coming nearly every day to luncheon.

One day at luncheon in Paris Madame Emma Calvé, the singer, said she was going to Egypt for the winter. So as I suggested accompanying her, she at once turned to Swami and said, "Will you come to Egypt with us as my guest?" He accepted. We started out via Vienna for two days, Constantinople for nine days, and four days in Athens, then to Egypt, when after a few days Swami said, "I want to go." "Go where?" I asked. "Go back to India." I said, "Yes, go." "May I?" he asked. "Certainly", I said. So I went to Madame Clavé and said, "Swami would like to go back to India." She said, "Certainly." She bought him a first class ticket and sent him back. He arrived there in time to hear of the death of Mr. Sevier, and he wrote me at once of the serenity and beauty of the way in which Mrs. Sevier had taken the death, she continuing the life at the Mayavati Ashrama as if her husband were there.

Going up the Nile and meeting some charming English people who begged me to go to Japan with them, I had occasion to pass again through India *en route*. Again I saw Swamiji, and he said he would go to Japan if I wrote for him. In Japan I made the acquaintance of Okakura Kakazu who had founded the fine arts Bijitsuin school of painting in Tokyo. He was very anxious to have Swami come over and be his guest in Japan. But Swami refusing to come, Mr. Okakura accompanied me to India to meet him. One of the happy moments of my life was when after a few days at Belur, Mr. Okakura said to me rather fiercely, "Vivekananda is ours. He is an Oriental. He is not yours." Then I knew there was a real understanding between them. A day or two after, Swami said to me, "It seems as if a long lost brother has come." Then I knew there was a real understanding between these two men. And when Swami said to him, "Will you join us?" Mr. Okakura said, "No, I haven't finished with this world yet." Which was a very wise thing.

That summer General Paterson, the American Consul General, allowed me to have the Consulate, and there I had as guest Mr. Oda, who had been my host at the Asakusa temple in Tokyo.

I saw Swami off and on all that year. One day in April he said, "I have nothing in the world. I haven't a penny to myself. I have given away everything that has ever been given to me." I said, "Swami, I will give you fifty dollars a month as long as you live." He thought a minute and then he said. "Can I live on that ?" "Yes, O yes," I said, "but perhaps you cannot have cream." I gave him then two hundred dollars, but before the four months were passed he had gone.

At Belur Math one day, while Sister Nivedita was distributing prizes for some athletics, I was standing in Swamiji's bedroom at the Math, at the window, watching, and he said to me, "I shall never see forty." I, knowing

he was thirtynine, said to him, "But Swami, Buddha did not do his great work until between forty and eighty." But he said, "I delivered my message and I must go." I asked, "Why go?" and he said, "The shadow of a big tree will not let the smaller trees grow up. I must go to make room."

Afterwards I went again to the Himalayas. I did not see Swami again. I went back to Europe for the King's Jubilee. As I said, I never was a disciple, only a friend, but I remember in my last letter to him in April 1902, as I was leaving India—I was never to see him again—I distinctly remember writing in this good-bye letter the one sentence, "I swim or sink with you." I read that over three times and said, "Do I mean it?" And I did. And it went. And he received it, though I never had an answer. He died July 4, 1902.

On the second of July, Sister Nivedita saw him for the last time. She went to inquire whether she should teach a certain science in her school. Swami answered, "Perhaps you are right, but my mind is given to other things. I am preparing for death." So she thought he was indifferent. Then he said, "But you must have a meal." Sister Nivedita always ate with her fingers, *à la* Hindu; and after she had eaten, Swami poured water over her hands. She said, very much the disciple, "I cannot bear you to do this." He answered, "Jesus Christ washed the feet of his disciples." Sister Nivedita had it on the tip of her tongue to say, "But that was the last time they ever met." It was the last time she ever saw him. That last day he spoke to her of me and of many people, but when he spoke of me he said, "She is pure as purity, loving as love itself." So I always took that as Swamiji's last message to me. In two days he died having said, "The spiritual impact that has come here to Belur will last fifteen hundred years—and this will be a great university. Do not think I imagine it, I see it."

They cabled me on the fourth of July, "Swami

attained *nirvâna.*" For days I was stunned. I never answered it. And then the desolation that seemed to fill my life made me weep for years and it was only after I read Maeterlinck who said, "If you have been greatly influenced by anyone, prove it in your life, and not by your tears", I never wept again; but went back to America and tried to follow the traces of where he had lived. I went to Thousand Island Park and became the guest of Miss Dutcher to whom the cottage belonged, who gave me the same room that Swami had used.

Fourteen years elapsed before I returned to India. Then I went accompanying Professor and Mrs. Geddes. I then found, instead of India being a place of desolation, all India was alive with Swamiji's ideas, with half a dozen monasteries, thousands of centres, hundreds of societies. Since that time I have been going frequently. They like to have me at the monastery guest house, because I keep Vivekananda alive, as none of these young men have ever seen him. And I like to be in India, remembering once when I asked him, "Swamiji, how can I best help you?" his answer was, "Love India!" So the upper floor of the guest house at the monastery is mine where I go and will probably go winters, until the end.

(*Prabuddha Bhârata, December 1949*)

XV

Out of the Old World of India forty years ago came a young, courageous, and handsome man in whose face shone the light of triumph over self. He came to the New World of America uninvited, unheralded, unknown. He had no money. He was provided with only the most meagre instructions regarding place, date, occasion, or any other of the essentials vital to the adequate delivery of the message he carried in his heart. He simply knew that his goal was a certain Congress of Religions to be held at a Fair in a great inland American city called Chicago.

How Vivekananda proceeded serenely on his hazardous pilgrimage—though more than once lacking food and change of raiment; how he was admitted as a delegate at the final session of the Congress of Religions; how he electrified the assemblage with the simplicity and beauty of his message; how on the following morning the metropolitan press of three continents exhausted their powers in proclaiming his spiritual stature among the great teachers of the world—all of this is still remembered by generations now living.

My personal story of Vivekananda—hitherto unpublished—seems to stand alone. When I met him he was twenty-seven years old.[1] I thought him as handsome as a god of classic sculpture. He was dark of skin, of course, and had large eyes which gave one the impression of "midnight blue". He seemed larger than most of his race, who often to us appear slight of frame, because they are small-boned. He had a head heaped with short black curls. At our first meeting I was struck by the emphasis of our colour contrast. I was twenty-four, fair,

[1]He was actually thirty-one years old.—*Publisher.*

tall, and slender, with golden hair and grey-blue eyes. Probably there could have been no greater contrast.

Our meeting was rather unusual. After his triumph at Chicago he was, of course, showered with invitations to come to New York, where the great of all the world are entertained. Here lived at that time a very famous physician, Dr. Egbert Guernsey, genial, literary, and ideally hospitable, with a spacious and very handsome house on Fifth Avenue at Forty-fourth Street. It was Dr. Guernsey's pleasure, heartily endorsed by his charming wife and daughter, to introduce celebrated visitors from abroad to New York society. It was to be expected that he would pay special honour to the great Swami, whose ideal of closer relations between the East and the West in the interest of religion and world peace so strongly appealed to him.

Dr. Guernsey accordingly arranged to give a Sunday afternoon dinner party at which every guest should represent a different religious creed, he himself holding the view-point of Robert Ingersoll, who was absent from the city. His Grace the Cardinal was interested but declined to dine or to appoint a substitute from among his clergy. So it happened that I, being a Catholic and trained by the noted Jesuit Priest, William O'Brien Pardow, S.J., had the privilege of being a guest at that famous Sunday dinner. Dr. Guernsey, who was my physician, sent for me to uphold Catholicism. Dr. Parkhurst was there, and Minnie Maddern Fiske, the famous American actress, who was staying with the Guernseys at the time. I remember that there were fourteen at table.

There was, of course, a tacit understanding that everyone should be polite about his or her religious differences with the Swami and his so-called non-Christian ("Pagan" is a hard word!) attitude. Alas! as the dinner progressed, the most heated dispute was not with the Swami at all. All of the differences were confined to the Evangelical brethren!

I was seated beside the Swami. We looked on in amused silence at the almost comical intolerance of the Creeds. Now and again our host would adroitly make some wise or humorous remark that kept the conversation on a plane not actually injurious to the function of digestion. The Swami would make from time to time a little speech apparently in explanation of his native land and the customs of its people, so different from our own, but always to gain his point in philosophy and religion. A more broad-minded and tolerant man surely could not have been found anywhere in India to carry out the mission of founding Vedanta Centres in America.

He wore on that occasion his orange cassock, a tincture of deep rose-red silk, and his turban of white shot with threads of gold. His feet, otherwise bare, were covered by sandals of soft brown leather.

It was at this dinner that our friendship began. Afterwards, in the drawing-room, he said to me, "Miss Gibbons, your philosophy and mine are one; and the heart of our faiths is the same."

I then lived with my mother at the Beresford Apartments at 1 East Eighty-first Street, overlooking Central Park. My mother was Southern, of the royal French blood, from Charleston, South Carolina, and a famous beauty, dark of eyes and hair. She was a witty woman and delighted in the social pleasures centring about the Church of England, to which, she maintained, all the aristocratic world belonged. Thus the Swami and I were outside the fold. I told my mother of him on my return home from Dr. Guernsey's dinner party, and what a splendid mind he had. I dwelt on the great force which had come to us. To which she replied, "What a terrible dinner party, with all those Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, and one black Pagan in orange cloths!" But she grew to like Vivekananda, to respect his view-point, and afterwards joined one of the Vedanta Centres. She was awfully amusing to him, and I can see

him now, after all these years, laughing so gaily at her remarks about him.

On one occasion there was an all-star cast in "Faust" at the Metropolitan Opera, on a Monday night when all society appeared to sit in their boxes and show their anatomy covered with jewels; to gossip, to visit, to come in late and be observed of all observers, and to do everything but listen to the opera. There was Melba in her prime, and de Reszkes, and Bauermeister. The Swami had never been to the opera, and our subscription seats were in a conspicuous part of the orchestra. I had suggested that the Swami be invited to accompany us. Mama said to him, "But you are black. What will the world say?" To which he laughed and said, "I will sit beside my sister. She does not mind, I know."

He never looked more handsome. Everyone about us was so wrapped up in him that I am sure they did not listen to the opera at all that night.

I tried to explain the story of "Faust" to Vivekananda. Mama, hearing me, said, "Heavens! you, a young girl, should not tell this awful story to a man."

"Then why do you make her come herself, if it is not good?" said the Swami.

"Well," replied Mama, "it is the thing to do to go to the opera. All the plots are bad; but one need not discuss *the plot.*"

Alas for poor, vapid humanity and its foolishness! Later on during the performance the Swami said, "My sister, the gentleman who is making love to the beautiful lady in song, is he really in love with her?"

"Oh, yes, Swami."

"But he has wronged her, and makes her sad."

"Yes," I said humbly.

"Oh, now I see," said the Swami. "He is not in love with the handsome lady, he is in love with the handsome gentleman in red with the tail—what do you call him?—the Devil." Thus that pure mind reasoned out,

weighed and found wanting both the opera and the audience.

One of society's pets, a very young girl, came down between the acts to Mama and said, "Mama is consumed with curiosity to know who the elegant man is in the yellow dressing gown."

Ours was a great friendship, and I fancy the only one that remains unpublished to the world. It was purely of the spirit, absolutely apart from the material loves and hates. He spoke always of when and what and where our souls would be ultimately, where in that other realm. He never spoke of me to anyone, nor mentioned my name. It was a friendship of Spirit. It still is. He taught me much of the philosophy he preached and wrote about, how to meditate, and what a power it would be against the hurts of life; what force of purpose it would attain for the preservation of the body, for logical thought, for self-control, for ecstasy, for the attraction of others; its power for good, its knowing how to read others and their needs; not to dull the edge of your sword, to be moderate in one's consumption of food, to know what one's own body needs to make it live well; of chastity, tolerance, purity of thought, and love for the world—not of one person but of everyone and of all created things.

And now, forty years later, he has released me from the long silence and has demanded and commanded certain things he wishes done. These I shall do later in book form.

How liberal he was, how understanding of others' points of view! He went to Mass with me at St. Leo's Church, the little one on Twenty-eighth Street, where all was beauty, and the old priest, Father Ducey, such an artist. There he knelt at high noon at the canon of the Mass. A ray of light falling from the stained-glass window—blue, red, and gold—lit his white turban and outlined his beautiful profile against the marble walls. A

great, gorgeous spot of living fire his orange robe made on the marble pavement, and the dear face was rapt in prayer. As the bell rang at the consecration and all heads were bowed in adoration of the presence of Christ on the altar, his hand touched mine, and he whispered, "It is the same God and Lord we both worship."

(Prabuddha Bhârata, January 1934)

XVI

Such a beautiful spot! There is a large class-room and a kitchen on the ground floor and a number of bedrooms on the second floor. The Swami has a private suite with a separate entrance by an outside stairway. There is a small verandah attached to his room to which he invites us every evening. The view is lovely, as we are higher up than any of the other cottages. We gaze over the tree tops and for miles the beautiful St. Lawrence River winds its way.

We are deeply touched by the very cordial reception given to us who were strangers. Even the Swami had never met us personally, although we had attended all his lectures given in Detriot during the winter of 1894. The joy of it to be so sweetly received by him!

We were merely frightened to death when we finally reached the cottage, for neither the Swami nor his followers at Thousand Island Park had the remotest idea of our existence, and it seemed rather an impertinent thing for us to do, to travel seven hundred miles, follow him up, as it were, and ask him to accept us. But he did accept us—he did—the Blessed One !

It was a dark rainy night, but we could not wait. Every moment was precious, and our imagination was stirred up to the nth degree. We did not know a soul in the place, but finally we hit upon the plan of making inquiries at the various shops and thus find out where Miss Dutcher lived. At one place we were told that there was a cottage occupied by a Miss Dutcher and that a "foreign looking man who dressed queerly" was staying there.

Then we knew our quest was ended, and we found a man with a lantern who went ahead of us.

Up, up the wet and slippery path! It seemed as if

we were taking one step up and two back, it was so slippery. The first thing we heard when we reached the house was the rich, beautiful voice of the Swami who was talking to those who had gathered on his porch. Our heartbeats could have been *heard,* I truly believe. His hostess asked him to come downstairs to see us as "two ladies from Detroit", and he greeted us so sweetly ! It was like a benediction. "I like Detroit," he said. "I have many friends there, isn't it?" And what do you think? Instead of our staying at a hotel or boarding house, as we had expected, those dear people insisted upon our becoming members of the household. Our hearts sang paeans of praise.

So here we are—in the very house with *Vivekananda,* listening to him from 8 o'clock in the morning until late at night. Even in my wildest dreams I could not imagine anything so wonderful, so perfect. To be with Vivekananda! To be accepted by him! Surely we shall wake up and find it all a dream. For in our *dreams* we have sought the Swami, now, Reality ! *Are* we "such stuff as dreams are made on?"

Oh, the sublime teaching of Vivekananda! No nonsense, no talk of "astrals", "imps", etc., but God, Jesus, Buddha. I feel that I shall never be quite the same again for I have caught a glimpse of the Real.

Just think what it means to listen to a Vivekananda at every meal, lessons each morning and the nights on the porch, the eternal stars shining like "patines of bright gold"! In the afternoon, we take long walks and the Swami literally, and so simply, finds "books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good (God) in everything." And this same Swami is so merry and fun-loving. We just go *mad* at times.

Later : We have been soaring on the Heights, since I last wrote you. Swami tells us to forget that there is any Detroit for the present—that is, to allow no personal thoughts to occupy our minds while taking this instruc-

tion. We are taught to see God in *everything* from the blade of grass to man—"even in the diabolical man".

Really, it is almost impossible to find time to write here. We put up with some inconveniences as it is so crowded. There is no time to relax, to rest, for we feel the time is all too short, as the Swami leaves soon for England. We scarcely take time to array ourselves properly, so afraid are we of losing some of the precious jewels. His words *are* like jewels, and all that he says fits together like a wonderfully beautiful mosaic. In his talks he may go ever so far afield, but always he comes back to the one fundamental, vital thing—"Find God ! Nothing else matters".

I especially like Miss Waldo and Miss Ellis, although the whole household is interesting. Some unique characters. One, a Dr. Wight of Cambridge, a very cultured man, creates much merriment at times. He becomes so absorbed in the teaching that he, invariably, at the end of each discourse ends up with asking Swamiji, "Well, Swami, it all amounts to this in the end, doesn't it? I *am* Brahman, I *am* the Absolute." If you could only see Swami's indulgent smile and hear him answer so gently, "Yes, Dokie, you are Brahman, you are the Absolute, in the real essence of your being." Later, when the learned doctor comes to the table a trifle late, Swami, with the utmost gravity but, with a merry twinkle in his eyes, will say, "Here comes Brahman" or "Here is the Absolute."

Swamiji's fun-making is of the merry type. Sometimes he will say, "Now I am going to cook for you!" He is a wonderful cook and delights in serving the "brithrin". The food he prepares is delicious but for "yours truly" too hot with various spices ; but I made up my mind to eat it if it strangled me, which it nearly did. If a *Vivekananda* can cook for me, I guess the least I can do is to eat it. Bless him!

At such times we have a whirlwind of fun. Swamiji

will stand on the floor with a white napkin draped over his arm, *à la* the waiters on the dining cars, and will intone in perfect imitation their call for dinner—"Last call fo' the dining cah. Dinner served".—Irresistibly funny! And then, at table, such gales of laughter over some quip or jest, for he unfailingly discovers the little idiosyncrasies of each one—but never sarcasm or malice—just fun.

Since my last letter to you when I told you of Swamiji's capacity for merriment, so many little things have occurred to make one see how varied are the aspects of Vivekananda. We are trying to take notes of all that he says but *I* find myself lost in listening and forget the notes. His *voice* is wondrously beautiful. One might well lose oneself in its divine music. However, dear Miss Waldo is taking very full notes of the lessons and in that way they will be preserved.

Some good fairy must have presided at our birth—C's and mine. We do not, as yet, know much of *karma* and reincarnation but we are beginning to see that both are involved in our being brought into touch with Swamiji.

Sometimes I ask him rather daring questions, for I am so anxious to know just how he would react under certain conditions. He takes it so kindly when I in my impulsive way sometimes "rush in where angels fear to tread". Once he said to some one, "Mrs. Funke rests me, she is so naive". Wasn't that dear of him?

One evening, when it was raining and we were all sitting in the living room, the Swami was talking about pure womanhood and told us the story of Sitâ. How he can tell a story! You *see* it, and all the characters become real. I found myself wondering just how some of the beautiful society queens of the West would appear to him—especially those versed in the art of allurement—and before I took time to think, out popped the question, and immediately I was covered with confusion. The Swami, however, looked at me calmly with his big, serious eyes and gravely replied, "If the most beautiful woman in the

world were to look at me in an immodest or unwomanly way, she would immediately turn into a hideous, green frog, and one does not, of course, admire frogs!"

Apropos of my name, something so funny happened. One day, we all walked down to the village and passed a glass-blower's tent. Swami was much interested in this, and held a whispered conversation with the glass-blower. Then he asked us to take a walk through the main street of the village and upon our return the glass-blower handed him sundry mysterious packages which proved to contain a gift for each of us, a large crystal ball, each one different with our names blown in the glass "With the love of Vivekananda". Upon reaching the house, we opened our packages. My name was spelled "Phunkey". We were convulsed with laughter but not where *he* could hear us. He never having seen my name written, "Phunkey" was the result.

And he was so sweet, so gentle and benign all that evening, just like an indulgent father who had given his children beautiful gifts, although many of us were much older than he.

The Swami has accepted C. as one fitted for his work in India. She is so happy. I was very disappointed, because he would not encourage me to go to India. I had a vague idea that to live in a cave and wear a yellow robe would be the proper thing to do if one wished to develop spiritually. How foolish of me and how wise Swamiji was! He said, "You are a householder. Go back to Detroit, find God in your husband and family. *That* is your path at present."

Later: This morning we went to the village and Swami had tin-types taken of himself at our request. He was so full of fun, so merry. I am trying to write you in class as there is literally no other time. I am sitting near the Swami, and he is saying these very words. "The *guru* is like a crystal. He reflects perfectly the consciousness of all who come to him. He thus understands how

and in what way to help." He means by this that a *guru* must be able to see what each person needs and he must meet them on their own plane of consciousness.

Now he has closed the class for the morning, and he has turned to me, "Mrs. Funke, tell me a funny story. We are going to part soon, and we must talk funny things, isn't it?". . .

We take long walks every afternoon, and our favourite walk is back of the cottage down a hill and then a rustic path to the river. One day there was olfactory evidence of a polecat in the vicinity, and ever since Swami will say, "shall we walk down Skunk Avenue?"

Sometimes we stop several times and sit around on the grass and listen to Swami's wonderful talks. A bird, a flower, a butterfly, will start him off, and he will tell us stories from the Vedas or recite Indian poetry. I recall that one poem started with the line, "Her eyes are like the black bee on the lotus." He considered most of our poetry to be obvious, banal, without the delicacy of that of his own country.

Wednesday, August 7th: Alas, he has departed! Swamiji left this evening at 9 o'clock on the steamer for Clayton where he will take the train for New York and from there sail for England.

The last day has been a very wonderful and precious one. This morning there was no class. He asked C. and me to take a walk, as he wished to be alone with us. (The others had been with him all summer, and he felt we should have a last talk.) We went up a hill about half a mile away. All was woods and solitude. Finally he selected a low-branched tree, and we sat under the low-spreading branches. Instead of the expected talk, he suddenly said, "Now we will meditate. We shall be like Buddha under the Bo-tree." He seemed to turn to bronze, so still was he. Then a thunderstorm came up, and it poured. He never noticed it. I raised my umbrella and protected him as much as possible. Com-

pletely absorbed in his meditation, he was oblivious of everything. Soon we heard shouts in the distance. The others had come out after us with raincoats and umbrellas. Swamiji looked around regretfully, for we *had* to go, and said, "Once more am I in Calcutta in the rains".

He was so tender and sweet all this last day. As the steamer rounded the bend in the river, he boyishly and joyously waved his hat to us in farewell, and he had departed indeed!

As I finish these brief reminiscences, the calendar tells me that it is February 14, 1925—just thirty-one years almost to the very hour I first saw and heard Swamiji at the Unitarian Church.

Ah, those blessed, halcyon days at Thousand Island Park ! The nights all glowing with the soft mystery of moonlight or golden starlight. And yet the Swami's arrival amongst us held no mystery, apparently. He came in simple guise.

We found later that anything which smacked of the mystery-monger was abhorrent to him. He came to make manifest the Glory and Radiance of the Self. Man's limitations are of his own making. "Thine only is the hand that holds the rope that drags thee on." This was the motif running through the Swami's teaching.

With infinite pains he tried to show us the path he himself had trod. After thirty-one years Swamiji stands out in my consciousness a colossal figure—a cleaver of bondage, knowing when and where not to spare. With his two-edged flaming sword came this Man "out of the East"—this Man of Fire and Flame, and some there were who received him, and to those who received him he gave Power.

Such was Vivekananda !

(*Prabuddha Bharata, February 1927*)

XVII

IT has been my good fortune and my joy to know a man who truly "walked with God", a noble being, a saint, a philosopher, and a true friend. His influence upon my spiritual life was profound. He opened up new horizons before me; enlarging and vivifying my religious ideas and ideals; teaching me a broader understanding of truth. My soul will bear him eternal gratitude.

The extraordinary man was a Hindu monk of the order of the Vedantas. He was called the Swami Vivekananda, and was widely known in America for his religious teachings. He was lecturing in Chicago one year when I was there; and as I was at that time greatly depressed in mind and body, I decided to go to him, having seen how he had helped some of my friends.

An appointment was arranged for me; and when I arrived at his house, I was immediately ushered into his study. Before going I have been told not to speak until he addressed me. When I entered the room, therefore, I stood before him in silence for a moment. He was seated in a noble attitude of meditation, his robe of saffron yellow falling in straight lines to the floor, his head swathed in a turban bent forward, his eyes on the ground. After a brief pause he spoke without looking up.

"My child", he said, "what a troubled atmosphere you have about you! Be calm! It is essential!"

Then in quiet voice, untroubled and aloof, this man, who did not even know my name, talked to me of my secret problems and anxieties. He spoke of things that I thought were unknown even to my nearest friends. It seemed miraculous, supernatural!

"How do you know all this?" I asked at last. "Who has talked of me to you?"

He looked at me with his quiet smile as though I were a child who had asked a foolish question.

"No one has talked to me", he answered gently. "Do you think that is necessary? I read in you as in an open book."

Finally it was time for me to leave.

"You must forget", he said as I rose. "Become gay and happy again. Build up your health. Do not dwell in silence upon your sorrows. Transmute your emotions into some form of external expression. Your spiritual health requires it. Your art demands it."

I left him, deeply impressed by his words and his personality. He seemed to have emptied my brain of all its feverish complexities and placed there instead his clear and calming thoughts.

I became once again vivacious and cheerful, thanks to the effect of his powerful will. He did not use any of the ordinary hypnotic or mesmeric influences. It was the strength of his character, the purity and intensity of his purpose, that carried conviction. It seemed to me, when I came to know him better, that he lulled one's chaotic thoughts into a state of peaceful acquiescence, so that one could give complete and undivided attention to his words.

He often spoke in parables, answering our questions or making his points clear by means of a poetic analogy. One day we were discussing immortality and the survival of individual characteristics. He was expounding his belief in reincarnation, which was a fundamental part of his teaching.

"I cannot bear the idea!" I exclaimed. "I cling to my individuality, unimportant as it may be! I don't want to be absorbed into an eternal unity. The mere thought is terrible to me."

"One day a drop of water fell into the vast ocean", the Swami answered. "When it found itself there, it

began to weep and complain just as you are doing. The great ocean laughed at the drop of water. 'Why do you weep?' it asked. 'I do not understand. When you join me, you join all your brothers and sisters, the other drops of water of which I am made. You become the ocean itself. If you wish to leave me, you have only to rise up on a sunbeam into the clouds. From there you can descend again, a little drop of water, a blessing and a benediction to the thirsty earth.'"

With the Swami and some of his friends and followers I went upon a most remarkable trip, through Turkey, Egypt, and Greece. Our party included the Swami; Father Hyacinthe Loyson; his wife, a Bostonian; Miss MacLeod of Chicago, an ardent Swamist and charming, enthusiastic woman; and myself, the song bird of the troupe.

What a pilgrimage it was! Science, philosophy, and history had no secrets from the Swami. I listened with all my ears to the wise and learned discourse that went on around me. I did not attempt to join in their arguments, but I sang on all occasions, as is my custom. The Swami would discuss all sorts of questions with Father Loyson, who was a scholar and a theologian of repute. It was interesting to see that the Swami was able to give the exact text of a document, the date of a Church Council, when Father Loyson himself was not certain.

When we were in Greece, we visited Eleusis. He explained its mysteries to us and led us from altar to altar, from temple to temple describing the processions that were held in each place, intoning the ancient prayers, showing us the priestly rites.

Later, in Egypt, one unforgettable night, he led us again into the past, speaking to us in mystic, moving words, under the shadow of the silent sphinx.

The Swami was always absorbingly interesting, even under ordinary conditions. He fascinated his hearers with his magic tongue. Again and again we would miss

our train, sitting calmly in a station waiting-room, enthralled by his discourse and quite oblivious of the lapse of time. Even Miss MacLeod, the most sensible among us, would forget the hour, and we would in consequence find ourselves stranded far from our destination at the most inconvenient times and places.

One day we lost our way in Cairo. I suppose, we had been talking too intently. At any rate, we found ourselves in a squalid, ill-smelling street, where half-clad women lolled from windows and sprawled on doorsteps.

The Swami noticed nothing until a particularly noisy group of women on a bench in the shadow of a dilapidated building began laughing and calling to him. One of the ladies of our party tried to hurry us along, but the Swami detached himself gently from our group and approached the women on the bench.

"Poor children!" he said. "Poor creatures! They have put their divinity in their beauty. Look at them now!"

He began to weep. The women were silenced and abashed. One of them leaned forward and kissed the hem of the robe, murmuring brokenly in Spanish, "Humbre de Dios, humbre de Dios!" (Man of God!) Another, with a sudden gesture of modesty and fear, threw her arm in front of her face as though she would screen her shrinking soul from those pure eyes.

This marvellous journey proved to be almost the last occasion on which I was to see the Swami. Shortly afterward he announced that he was to return to his own country. He felt that his end was approaching, and he wished to go back to the community of which he was director and where he had spent his youth.

A year later we heard that he had died, after writing the book of his life, not one page of which was destroyed. He passed away in the state called *samâdhi,* which means, in Sanskrit, to die voluntarily, from a will to die, with-

out accident or sickness, saying to his disciples, "I will die on such a day."[1]

Years later, when I was travelling in India, I wished to visit the convent where the Swami had spent his last days. His mother took me there. I saw the beautiful marble tomb that one of his American friends, Mrs. Leggett, had erected over his grave. I noticed that there was no name upon it. I asked his brother, who was a monk in the same order,[2] the reason of this omission. He looked at me in astonishment, and with a noble gesture that I remember to this day. "He has passed on," he answered.

The Vedantas believe that they have preserved, in their original purity and simplicity, the teachings of Hinduism. They have no temples, saying their prayers in a simple oratory, with no symbolic figures or pictures to stimulate their piety. Their prayers are all addressed to the Unknown God.

"O, Thou who hast no name ! O, Thou whom none dare name ! O, Thou the Great Unknown !" they say in their supplications.

The Swami taught me a sort of respiratory prayer. He used to say that the forces of the deity, being spread everywhere throughout the ether, could be received into the body through the indrawn breath.

The monks of the Swami's brotherhood received us

[1]It is not known if Swamiji spoke to any of his disciples about the exact date of his passing away. He had, no doubt, a foreknowledge of his coming *mahāsamādhi* as many significant facts clearly indicated. He also mentioned about it in general terms on more than one occasion. In 1901 after finishing his public lectures he unexpectedly came one day to his group of disciples at Dacca, and said—"I shall at the most live about a year more." "I am making ready for death," he said to one who was with him on the Wednesday before he died. Other incidents of a similar nature may also be mentioned. The very last days of Swamiji's life on earth were full of events which foreshadowed the approaching end, though they passed by unsuspected at the time they occurred.—Ed., *P.B.*

[2]Swamiji's brother referred to here is not a monk of the Order of Shri Ramakrishna.—Ed., *P.B.*

with simple, kindly hospitality. They offered us flowers and fruits, spreading a table for us on the lawn beneath a welcome shade.

At our feet the mighty Ganga flowed. Musicians played to us on strange instruments, weird, plaintive chants that touched the very heart. A poet improvised a melancholy recitative in praise of the departed Swami. The afternoon passed in a peaceful, contemplative calm.

The hours that I spent with these gentle philosophers have remained in my memory as a time apart. These beings, pure, beautiful, and remote, seemed to belong to another universe, a better and wiser world.

(Prabuddha Bhârata, November 1922)

XVIII

1. *Calcutta, February 15, 1899:* My lecture on Kâli came off on Monday. The Albert Hall was crammed. The Chairman spoke against Kâli and me, and was very touching, when unfortunately a devotee got up and amidst tremendous excitement called him all sorts of names. I am sorry to tell you that I laugh whenever I think about it all. Swami was greatly pleased about the lecture, and I trust that there is some reason, for I have several times since been inclined to think that I had done nothing but harm. You see the—declare that *that* was not Kâli Worship, and that only what appealed to their lowest feelings was understood by the mob.

Anyway, the Kalighat people have asked me to speak on Kâli worship there, at Kalighat. It may not come to anything, but Swami thinks that would be the greatest blow that could be struck against exclusiveness. One lovely gift my lecture has brought me is the friendship and enthusiasm of a young boy full of noble impulses and freshness. I have found out the culminating point of sacrifice, and wonder if I could express it. It seems that the sacrifice of animals only goes on till the devotee is strong enough to offer himself instead, and then, like the Pelican he draws his own blood, and buries the feet of the Mother in flowers dipped in it. To me it explains and justifies the whole. I don't know how you will feel about it. Everyone seemed to know about that when Swami explained it to me, so I suppose it is recognized.

Yesterday morning two of us went early to be blessed by the old Devendra Nath Tagore. Swami sent word early that he was particularly pleased, and I told the old man this, and said I felt that I was making Swami's *pranâms* as well as my own. He was quite touched, said he had met Swami once when wandering round in a boat,

and would greatly like him to come to him once more. When I told Swami, he was wonderfully moved, and said, "Of course I'll go, and you can go with me, and fix a day as soon as you please!" It seems that as a boy he clambered up into Mr. T's boat and put anxious questions about Advaitism, and the old man paused and said gently at last, "The Lord has only shown me dualism." And then he had patted him and said he had the *yogi's* eyes.

2. *Calcutta, February 21, 1899:* My Kâli lecture had been a good foundation for bringing Swami to an issue with some friends, whom we were visiting. And so the talk had been all of symbolism. He said, "Poor M. has never studied the history of symbolism. That is why he does not understand that the natural symbols are no good. You see I had a curious education; I went to Shri Ramakrishna and I loved the man, but I hated all his ideas. And so for six years it was hard fighting all the time. I would say, 'I don't care in the least for this thing you want me to do', and he would say, 'Never mind, just do it, and you will see that certain results follow.' And all that time he gave me such love; no one has ever given me such love, and there was so much reverence with it. He used to think, 'This boy will be So-and so', I suppose, and he would never let me do any menial service for him. He kept that up to the very moment of his death too. He wouldn't let me fan him, and many other things he would not let me do."

3. *Calcutta, March 12, 1899:* Last night a monk called, and when I said I wanted to interview Swami for *Awakened India,* offered to take me back at 6 in the house-boat, if I would drive home. S. came too, in order to bring me home, so we walked. We got there at 8 o'clock. Swami had been sitting beside the fire under the tree.... When I had interviewed him, he said, "I say, Margot, I have been thinking for days about that

line of least resistance, and it is a base fallacy. It is a comparative thing. As for me, I am never going to think of it again. The history of the world is the history of a few earnest men, and when one man is earnest the world must just come to his feet. I am *not* going to water down my ideals, I am going to dictate terms." . . .

4. *Calcutta, April 9, 1899:* Swami says my great fault is attempting too much, in which he is emphatically right. I am to give up all thought of plague-nursing and throw my whole heart and soul still deeper into the sanitaiton that we have now on hand. Won't I be just? This is an infinitely higher proof of self-sacrifice and obedience on my part, as you know well, than the delightful excitement of risking plague would be. I say this out of a childish haughtiness, because a friend I prize well is grieved that I have not gone on. And I, too proud to give him a chance of overtly saying so, much less of vindicating myself, am still not proud enough to be beyond the doubts of conscience.

We have had two hundred and thirty-five rupees subscribed for sanitation. It seems a great success, though of course we could do with a great deal more. When the monk who has the work in hand went over on Saturday to report, he said Swami was so touched by the news, that they had two hours of everything, from the Upanishads onwards, "There could be no religion without that activity, that manhood and co-operation. There was Nivedita living in a corner and English people helping her. God bless them all!" But to my great amusement when I reported today, he just winked and said, "Plague, Margot, plague." He told me, "Our men might be rough and unpolished, but they were the manly men in Bengal. The manhood of Europe was kept up by the women, who hated unmanliness. When would Bengali girls play this part, and drench with merciless ridicule every display of feebleness on the part of man?"

5. *Calcutta, May 1, 1899:* ... At the Math Swami is lying ill with fever and bronchitis.

On Friday I went to lunch with Swami.... His mood on Saturday was entirely different, however. His days were drawing to an end; but even if they were not, he was going to give up compromise. He would go to the Himalayas, and live there in meditation. He would go out into the world and preach *smashing* truths. It had been good for a while to go amongst men and tell them that they were in their right place, and so on. But he could do that no longer. Let them give up, give up, give up. Then he said very quietly, "You won't understand this now, Margot; but when you get further on you will." . . .

I find there is money enough in Bengal for Swami, but people want to make their conditions, and so it never reaches him. This is his true attitude of staunchly refusing plum cake, and accepting starvation as the price of principle. . . . Swami is right about the world being reached that way and no other. The world is something that overcomes the man who seeks it and crouches to him who renounces it....

6. *Calcutta, May 8, 1899:* How beautiful those lines are, "Thy place in life is seeking after Thee. Therefore be thou at rest from seeking after it." After all, that is the whole truth. The things after which one may and must seek are so very different.

I have seen Swami today. He told me how, as a child of thirteen, he came across a copy of Thomas à Kempis which contained in the preface an account of the Author's monastery and its organization. And *that* was the abiding fascination of the book to him. Never thinking that he would have to work out something of the sort one day. "I love Thomas à Kempis, you know, and know it almost off by heart. If only they had told what Jesus ate and drank, where he lived and slept, and how

he passed the day, instead of all rushing to put down what he said! Those long lectures! Why, all that can be said in religion can be counted on a few fingers. That does not matter, it is the man that results that grows out of it. You take a lump of mist in your hand, and gradually, gradually, it develops into a man. Salvation is nothing in itself, it is only a *motive*. All those things are nothing, except as motives. It is the man they form, that is everything!" And now I remember he began this by saying, "It was not the words of Shri Ramakrishna but the life he lived that was wanted, and that is yet to be written. After all, this world is a series of pictures, and man-making is the great interest running through. We were all watching the making of men, and that alone. Shri Ramakrishna was always weeding out and rejecting the old, he always chose the young for his disciples."

7. *Calcutta, 1899 :* The event of the week has been my talk with my friends on Friday night. The husband told me, with some bitterness, that he meant to school himself into calling me "Sister Nivedita" instead of "Miss Noble", then he would be able to think of me less of a human being. At present my dreadful narrowness hurt him unbearably. I got him to tell me our differences. Then it came out. The worship of Swami's *guru*, "A man cast in a narrow mould, a man who held woman to be something half-fiend, so that when he saw one, he had a fit." Between a gasp and a smile I said I could not accept the description. I pointed out that we, none of us, least of all Swami, wanted him to worship too. That was personal. Then again, "An *avatâra*-doctrine could not supply India's present need of a religion all-embracing, sect-uniting, etc." To me this is curious, for it seems the only possible way to meet that need—an *avatâra* that declares that sects are at an end. The man who does not believe in incarnation will not call him an *avatâra* like Swami. Again my friend said, "This could not prove the

new religion." I said no one wanted it, no one was planning or bothering to do more than this one bit of educational work that the Order had before it, in all directions now. Questions of worship and the religion of the future could do what they liked. Then he spoke of the great thrill with which he heard Swami say that his mission was to bring manliness to his people, and with which still in England he read the Calcutta lectures and saw him contemptuously tear his great popularity to tatters for the real good of truth and man. But when he found him proceeding to worship his *guru* and other things, he had dropped with a groan. The man who had been a hero had become the leader of a new sect. I tell you all this by way of record. Some day people will say, "Swami neither did nor taught anything new", so this emotional divergent is very precious to me.

8. *Coasting Ceylon, June 28, 1899:* It was quite exciting at Madras. Crowds of people had an appeal to the Governor to let Swami land. But plague considerations prevailed, and we were kept on board, to my great relief, for the sea-voyage is doing him a world of good, and one day of crowds and lectures would be enough to cause him utter exhaustion. It was sufficiently tiring to have to look down and be polite to the constant succession of boat-loads who came to the ship's side with presents and addresses all day . . . .

. . . Swami had just been here for an hour, and somehow the talk drifted on to the question of Love. Amongst other things he talked about the devotion of the English wife and the Bengali wife, of the suffering they would go through without a word. Then of the little gleam of sunshine and poetry, to which all human love must wade through oceans of tears. Then the tears of sorrow alone bring spiritual vision, never tears of joy. That dependence is fraught with misery, independence alone is happiness. That almost all human love, save

sometimes a mother's, is full of dependence. It is for oneself, not for the happiness of the one loved, that it is sought. That the love on which he could most surely count, if he became a drunkard tomorrow, was not that of his disciples, they would kick him out in horror, but that of a few (not all) of his *gurubhâis*. To them he would be still the same. "And mind this, Margot," he said. "It is when half a dozen people learn to love like this that a new religion begins. Not till then. I always remember the woman who went to the sepulchre early in the morning, and as she stood there she heard a voice and and she thought it was the gardener, and then Jesus touched her, and she turned round, and all she said was 'My Lord and my God!' That was all, 'My Lord and my God.' The person had gone. Love begins by being brutal, the faith, the body. Then it becomes intellectual, and last of all it reaches the spiritual. Only at the last, 'My Lord and my God'. Give me half a dozen disciples like that and I will conquer the world."

9. *America, October 9, 12 & 13, 1899 :* Swami has been pacing up and down for an hour and a half, warning me against politeness, against this "Lovely" and "Beautiful", against this continual feeling of the external. "Come to the Himalayas," he would say every now and then. "Realize yourself without feeling ; and when you have known that, you can fall upon the world like a bolt from the blue. I have no faith in those who ask, 'Will any listen to my preaching?' Never yet could the world refuse to hear the preaching of him who had anything to say. Stand up in your own might. Can you do that? Then come away to the Himalayas and learn." Then he broke into Shankarâchârya's sixteen verses on Renunciation, ending always with a humming refrain "Therefore, you fool, go and worship the Lord". To get rid of all these petty relations of society and home, to hold the soul firm against the perpetual appeals of senses, to

realize that the rapture of autumn trees is as truly sense-enjoyment as a comfortable bed or a table dainty, to hate the silly praise and blame of people—these things were the ideal that he was holding up. "Practise *titikshâ*," he said again and again, that is, bearing the ills of the body without trying to remedy, and without remembering them. The monk whose fingers were rotting away with leprosy and who stooped gently to replace the maggot that fell from the remaining joint, was the example he used. And he talked about loving misery and embracing death. Later he was pointing out how the only civilizations that were really stable were those that had been touched with *vairâgya*.

Surely it cannot be that anyone of us fails to see that even the round of duties is merely a formula. It seems so clear that one is held by a chain that one has never yet been strong enough to break. Yesterday Swami talked of Shiva. "Let your life in the world be nothing but a thinking to yourself." Even meditation would be a bondage to the free soul, but Shiva goes on and on for the good of the world, the Eternal Incarnation, and Hindus believe that but for the prayers and meditations of these great souls, the world would fall to pieces (that is, others would find no chance of manifesting and so coming to freedom) at once. For meditation is the greatest service, the most direct, that can be rendered.

He was talking too of the Himalayan snows and the green of the forests melting into them. "Nature making eternal Suttee on the body of Mahâdeva," he quoted from Kâlidâsa.

10. *America, October 18, 1899:* At lunch on Friday, Swami talked about Shri Ramakrishna. He abused himself for being filled and poisoned with the Western reaction of those days, so that he was always looking and questioning whether this man was "Holy"

or not. After six years he came to understand that he was not "Holy", because he had become *identified with holiness*. He was full of gaiety and merriment and he had expected the Holy to be so different! Later he began to talk of the functions of the nations, apropos, I suppose, of the Boer War. And as he passed to the problems of the Shudra, which would first be worked out here, his face took on a new light, as if he were actually seeing into the future; and he told of the mixture of races, and of the great tumults, the terrible tumults through which the next state of things must be reached. "And these are the signs," he quoted from old books! "The Kali Yuga is about to thicken, when money comes to be worshipped as God, when might is right, and men oppress the weak."

At one of the meals, Mrs. B. turned and pointed out how his poetry had been the weak point on which he had been beguiled to the loss of honour. And she said her husband was never sensitive to criticism about his music. That he expected. He knew it was not perfect. But on road engineering he felt deeply, and could be flattered. Then, in our amusement, we all teased Swami for his carelessness about his religious teacherhood and his vanity about his portrait painting; and he suddenly said, "You see there is one thing called Love, and there is another thing called Union; and Union is greater than Love. I do not love religion, I have become identified with it. It is my life; so no man loves that thing in which his life has been spent, in which he really has accomplished something. That which we love is not yet oneself. Your husband did not love music for which he had always studied; he loved engineering, in which as yet he knew comparatively little. This is the difference between *bhakti* and *jnâna;* and this is why *jnâna* is greater than *bhakti.*" All morning his talk of the great sweep of the Mogul hordes under Genghis Khan had been going on. It had begun in his talking about Law, the old Hindu

conception of it as the King of kings who never slept and showing that the Hindu had in the Vedas the true notion of it, while other nations only knew it as regulations. On Sunday evening three of us accompanied a guest to her home. We had been reading Schopenhauer on "Women" aloud. Coming back it was wonderful moonlight, and we walked on up the avenue in silence ; it seemed as if a sound would have been desecration. About it Swami said, "When a tiger in India is on the trail of prey at night, if its paw or tail makes the least sound in passing, it bites it till the blood comes." And he talked of the need we Western women had to absorb beauty quietly, and turn it over in the mind at another time.

One afternoon so quiet was everything, we might have been in India. I had been feeling quite inferior to the people who wanted Advaitism and the Vedic texts, but oh, what a dose of the other was here.

It began with a song of Ram Prasad, and I'll try to give you the whole of that early talk.

From the land where there is no night
Has come unto me a man.
And night and day are now nothing to me,
Ritual-worship is become for ever barren.

My sleep is broken. Shall I sleep any more?
Call it what you will, I am awake.
Hush! I have given back sleep to Him whose it was.
Sleep have I put to sleep for ever.

The music has entered the instrument,
And of that mode I have learnt a song.
And that music is always playing before me,
And concentration is the great teacher thereof.

Prasad speaks, understand O Mind, these words of science,
The secret of Her whom I call my Mother.

Shall I break the pot before the market?[1]
Lo, the six philosophers[2] could not find out
Kâli.

The world hast thou charmed, Mother,
Charmer of Shiva.
Thou who playest on the *vinâ,*
Sitting on the huge lotus of *mulâdhârâ.*[3]

This body is the great *vina*
And *sushumnâ, idâ* and *pingalâ* are the
strings thereof.
And thou playest on the three gamuts,
With the great secret of qualitative
differentiation.

Ramakrishna used to see a long white thread proceeding out of himself. At the end would be a mass of light. This mass would open, and within it he would see the Mother with a *vinâ*. Then She would begin to play; and as She played, he would see the music turning into birds and animals and worlds and arrange themselves. Then She would stop playing and they would all disappear. The light would grow less and less distinct till it was just a luminous mass, the string would grow shorter and shorter, and the whole would be absorbed into himself again. And as Swami told this, he said, "Oh, what weird scenes things bring before me, the weirdest scenes of my whole life! Perfect silence, broken only by the

[1]To make public a secret.—Ed.
[2]The six systems of Hindu philosophy.—Ed.

[3]According to the *yogis,* there are two nerve currents in the spinal column called *pingalâ* and *idâ* and a hollow canal called *sushumnâ* running through the spinal cord. At the lower end of the hollow canal is what the *yogis* call the *Kundalini*—the coiled up energy. When that *kundalini* awakes, it forces a passage through the hollow canal and as it rises up step by step, as it were, through the various plexuses of the spine or *chakras* as the *yogi* conceives them, different visions are seen by him. The *kundalini* starts from the basic centre, the *mulâdhâra chakra* and when it reaches the brain or the *sahasrâra chakra,* the *yogi* is perfectly detached from the body and the mind.—Ed.

cries of the jackals, in the darkness under the great tree at Dakshineswar. Night after night we sat there, the whole night through, and He talked to me, when I was a boy. The *guru* was always Shiva and was always to be worshipped as Shiva, because he sat under the tree to teach, and destroyed ignorance. One must offer all one's doings, or even merit would become a bondage and create *karma;* so Hindus getting you a cup of water will say, 'To the World' or may be 'To the Mother'. But there is one soul that can take it all without harm—One who is eternally protected, eternally the same, unspoilt—He who drank the poison of the world and only made Himself the blue-throated. Offer all you do to Shiva."

Then he talked of *vairâgya,* how much grander to give one's youth, how miserable to have only age to offer. Those who come to it old, attain their own salvation; but they cannot be *gurus,* they cannot show mercy. Those who come young shall carry many across without any benefit to themselves.

Then he talked of the school, "Give them all you like, Margot, never mind A, B, C. It matters nothing. Give as much Ram Prasad and Ramakrishna and Shiva and Kâli as you like. And do not cheat these Western people, do not pretend it is education and A B C you want money for. Say it is the old Indian spirituality that you want and demand help, do not beg it. Remember you are only the servant of Mother, and if She sends you nothing, be thankful that She lets you go free."

11. *America, October 27, 1899:* Yesterday three of us were together when Swami came in, and said, "Let's have a chat". He talked about the Râmâyana. I'll tell you a curious thing. When Sadananda talks about the Râmâyana, I become convinced that Hanumân is really the hero; when Swami talks of it, Râvana is the central figure. So he told us: Râma was called "The Blue-lotus-eyed", and he trusted to Mother to help him to

Shall I break the pot before the market?[1]
Lo, the six philosophers[2] could not find out Kâli.

The world hast thou charmed, Mother,
Charmer of Shiva.
Thou who playest on the *vinâ*,
Sitting on the huge lotus of *mulâdhârâ*.[3]

This body is the great *vina*
And *sushumnâ*, *idâ* and *pingalâ* are the strings thereof.
And thou playest on the three gamuts,
With the great secret of qualitative differentiation.

Ramakrishna used to see a long white thread proceeding out of himself. At the end would be a mass of light. This mass would open, and within it he would see the Mother with a *vinâ*. Then She would begin to play; and as She played, he would see the music turning into birds and animals and worlds and arrange themselves. Then She would stop playing and they would all disappear. The light would grow less and less distinct till it was just a luminous mass, the string would grow shorter and shorter, and the whole would be absorbed into himself again. And as Swami told this, he said, "Oh, what weird scenes things bring before me, the weirdest scenes of my whole life! Perfect silence, broken only by the

[1]To make public a secret.—Ed.
[2]The six systems of Hindu philosophy.—Ed.

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recover Sitâ.[1] But Râvana had prayed to Mother too, and Râma came and found him in her arms, so he knew he must do something tremendous, and he vowed one hundred and eight blue lotuses to her image if she would help him. Hanumân went off and got the lotuses, and Râma began the great "Call upon the Mother". (It was autumn, and the time of Her *pujâ* was the spiring, so it is in memory of that worship by Râma that the Great Mother Worship has ever since been held in September). Now he covered Her feet with blue lotuses till one hundred and seven were offered (and Mother had stolen one); and lo, the last was missing. But Râma was determined. He was not to be beaten, and calling for a knife, he was about to cut out his own eye that the number of blue lotuses might be complete. And that won the Mother; and She blessed the great hero, so that his arms prevailed. Though not indeed his arms altogether, for in the end Râvana was betrayed by his own brother, and the struggle was brought to an end. "But it was great about the traitor brother in one sense," said Swami. "For he was taken away to reside at the court of Râma, and thither came the widow of Râvana to look upon the face of the warrior who had robbed her of her husband and son. Râma and his court stood prepared to receive the *cortège;* but to his amazement, he could see no great queen adorned in splendour, only a simple-looking woman attired in the simple garb of a Hindu widow. 'Who is this lady?' he asked the brother in bewilderment, and he replied, 'Behold, O King, the lioness whom thou hast robbed of her lion and whelps! She comes to gaze upon thy face.'"

What ideals of womanhood Swami holds! Surely not even Shakespeare or Aeschylus when he wrote of Antigone, or Sophocles when he created Alcestis had such a tremendous conception. As I read over the things he

[1]The story is depicted in the Râmâyana of Krittivâsa—a Bengali recension.—Ed.

has said to me of them, and as I realize that it is all, every word of it, a trust for the women of the whole world's future, but first and chiefly for them of his own land, it seems a trifling thing whether oneself should ever be worthy or not.

One night he was in a great mood of devotion, and told us of Hrishikesh and the little hut that each Sannyâsin would make for himself and the blazing fire in the evening, and all the Sannyâsins sitting round it on their own little mats, talking in hushed tones of the Upanishads, "For a man is supposed to have got the truth before he becomes a Sannyâsin. He is at peace intellectually. All that remains is to realize it; so all need for discussion has passed away and at Hrishikesh, in the darkest of the mountains, by the blazing fire, they may only talk of the Upanishads. Then by degrees, the voices die—silence! Each man sits bolt upright on his mat, and one by one they steal quietly off to their own huts." Another time he broke out with: "The great defect in Hinduism has been that it offered salvation only on the basis of renunciation. The householder was bound by his consciousness of an inferior lot. His part was *karma*. Renunciation was nothing to him. But renunciation is the whole law. It is all illusion that anyone has been trying to do anything else. We are all struggling to release this great mass of energy. What does that mean but that we are hurrying towards death as fast as we can? The burly Englishman who thinks he wants to possess the earth is really struggling more than most of us to die. Self-preservation is only a mode of renunciation. The desire for life is one method of the love of death." Swami talked some time of the Sikhs, and their ten Gurus, and he told us a story of Guru Nanak, from the *Granth Sahib*: He had gone to Mecca, and lay with his feet towards the Caaba Mosque. Then came angry Mohammedans to waken, and if need be, to kill him, for turning his feet towards the place where God was. He woke up quietly, and said simply,

"Show me, then, where God is not, that I may turn my feet that way". And the gentle answer was enough.

12. *America, November 4, 1899:* On Thursday evening, Swami came in when two of us were talking earnestly; so he joined in, of course. For the first time he talked of defection and disease and treachery. Amongst other things, he said he found himself still the Sannyâsin, he minded no loss, but he could be hurt through defection. Treachery cut deep.

The details of this Boer War are terrible to me. Strange how the fate of a nation overshadows a man's *karma,* and brings a man like General White to disaster! Not England, but Victoria, says the Hindu, won the empire; and even so today, in a detail like the Boer War, no greater than so many that have gone before, no man can foretell the results, for they will be governed by the fact that a new star has appeared in the sky of destiny. By this, and not by any force of arms or numbers, or any visible factor whatever, even the very greatest of men seem like blind pawns on the chess-board of time, don't they? The hand that moves them is unseen; only a Prophet's eye now and then catches a glance of the reason; and he who is dashed to pieces in the game seems the only one who is not befooled.

When Swami was talking of Krishna and Rukmini, he said something of the double strain in us of preference and approval. Of how often we give way to desire, and of how our only guide should be the good. Therefore, the wise man is he who likes nothing, and witnesses all. Men find it easy to play part of life, but something holds the heart captive, and there they do not play. Let the whole be play; like nothing; act a part all the time. Again he talked of Umâ and Shiva. As he says, "It beats all mythology hollow." Speaking of Shiva he said, "Young is the *guru,* old is the disciple," because in India the man who gives his young life is the true *guru,* but

the time for learning religion is old age. And then he commanded us to offer all we did to Shiva, the only protected soul in the universe. Umâ, speaking to the Brahmin said, "Why should He, the Lord of the Universe, dwell in a grave-yard?"

At lunch time I laughed and said that your letter spoke of your wanting "nothing and nobody". Swami looked up and said, "No, she doesn't, that's right. It's the last stage one comes to. The beggar must look for alms and rebuffs; but for him who asks nothing, there are no rebuffs." He said he had been reciting the hatred of fame and wealth all his life, but he was only now beginning to understand what is really meant.

13. *Chicago, December 10, 1899:* Somebody asked me, "How is it that Swami is so great, and yet today he says, 'Spirituality is the only thing for my country; I was wrong to desire material good,' and tomorrow he will be insisting that material benefits must be India's and so on?" "And his action remains constant both times," I said; then I went on, showing part of the great helpfulness of these contradictions to myself, how he dramatized for one absolute renunciation of the fruits of action.... How true it is indeed that there is no peace without Freedom. Is it not absurd to be touched by trifles? I feel the whole need of the whole Vedanta, for it is so helpful to have a will to serve and help absolutely, than to have to sit encased in one body with one way of throwing oneself at difficulties, and only one little narrow path to walk along. But we are all one: is not your way as much mine as Nivedita's? If one could only realize it!

Anne Arbor,
January 13, 1900.

To Swami Vivekananda :[1]

Your birthday-poem reached me here last night.

[1] Swami Vivekananda sent her a poem on her birthday conveying his benedictions and in reply she wrote this letter to him.

There is nothing I could say about it that would not seem commonplace : except that if your beautiful wish were possible, it would break my heart.

For here I am one with Ram Prasad—"I do not want to become sugar ; I want to *eat* sugar !" I do not want even to know God in any way ; even to think of such things is ridiculous of course—that would not leave my Father unattainably above.

I know one would not need to think of one's *guru*—that he would vanish if one realized the Divine—but even in that moment I cannot conceive of perfect bliss without the assurance that his was greater.

One is trying to say impossible things, to think unthinkable thoughts, but you well know what I would express.

I used to think that I wanted to work for the women of India—I used to have all kinds of grand impersonal ideas—but I have steadily gone on climbing down from these heights, and today I want to do things only because they are my Father's will.

Even knowledge of God seems too like a return of benefits. One longs to serve for serving's sake, for ever and ever, dear Master—not for one miserable little life.

And another thing I am sure of, and need to be sure of in true moments, and that is that you will have thousands of children who will be bigger and worthier and able to love you and serve you infinitely better than I, in days that are close at hand.

Yours, daughter,
Margot.

14. *Detroit, January 18, 1900 :* At present I have not in any way come to grief over my relation to Swami—and I have *not* told it to the world at all. Of that I am sure.

But experience contradicts theory all the time.

On this journey I have seemed to find my feet and to be led every step by Mother Herself. And as I look back I see that the same thing was true before. When I have been *free,* everything has gone well, but it has

been necessary that people should accept *my personality* with a certain readiness to love me, and when this is so, I find that I simply sit and tell them, for the present, the things Swami tells us. I don't will one thing or another but unconsciously I seem to be a channel, and I sit and listen to him talking. When I first discovered this, I kept a tight hold over myself, because the acknowledgement of plagiarism while it would have satisfied myself would have been a jarring note. Now I see that it is all right and I don't bother. Shall a child not rejoice in speaking its father's message?

15. *Chicago, January 26, 1900 :* I am finding daily that Kâli's ways are not as ours, if one may put it so. She puts one person out of the way, only to discover someone else standing ready where one had no more dreamt of help than of flying.

Did I tell you at the last centre how my most blessed helper was the thorniest of all thorns at the beginning of the week? And here it is just the same ; two or three of the strongest workers are the most unspeakably unexpected. I find, too, that the marks of a great Renunciation are very different from those of a small, and I laugh daily at our mutual friend's blindness about Swami's. Why, that way he has of finding himself in any company, of holding or withholding light indifferently, of caring nothing about people's opinions of him, are simply gigantic. I only realized when, after all the love and warmth I had in one town, I reached another and found myself fuming and chafing against the artificiality of people about me, what Swami's greatness really was, in this respect! And it was these very people, from whom I would have escaped at once if I could, who proved Mother's appointed instruments—thus setting the seal on Swami's ways. That irresponsibility of his is so glorious too. Nothing is more enticing than to put oneself into the attitude of generalissimo of the forces, and

make splendid plans, compelling fortune; but Swami just waits, and drifts in on the wave. And so on. I am just beginning to understand his bigness.

16. *New York, June 4, 1900:* You know to my nature a thing hardly seems true or accomplished till it is somehow uttered and left on record.

Swami has just lectured.

I went early and took the seat at the left end of the second row—always my place in London, though I never thought of it at the time.

Then as we sat and waited for him to come in, a great trembling came over me, for I realized that this was, simple as it seemed, one of the test-moments of my life. Since last I had done this thing, how much had come and gone! My own life—where was it? Lost—thrown away like a cast-off garment that I might kneel at the feet of this man. Would it prove a mistake; an illusion; or was it a triumph of choice; a few minutes would tell.

And then he came; his very entrance and his silence as he stood and waited to begin were like some great hymn. A whole worship in themselves.

At last he spoke—his face broke into fun, and he asked what was to be his subject. Someone suggested the Vedanta philosophy and he began.

Oneness—the Unity of all.... "And so the final essence of things is this Unity. What we see as many—as gold, love, sorrow, the world—is really God.... We see many, yet there is but One Existence.... These names differ only in the degrees of their expression. The matter of today is the spirit of the future. The worm of today—the God of tomorrow. These distinctions which we so love are all parts of one Infinite fact and that one Infinite fact is the attainment of Freedom....

"All our struggle is for Freedom—we seek neither

misery nor happiness but Freedom.... Man's burning unquenchable thirst—never satisfied—asking always for more and more. You Americans are seeking always for more and more. At bottom this desire is the sign of man's infinitude. For infinite man can only be satisfied when his desire is infinite and its fulfilment infinite also...."

And so the splendid sentences rolled on and on, and we, lifted into the Eternities, thought of our common selves as of babies stretching out their hands for the moon or the sun—thinking them as baby's toys. The wonderful voice went on:

"Who can help the Infinite.... Even the hand that comes to you through the darkness will have to be your own."

And then with that lingering, heart-piercing pathos, that no pen can even suggest, "We—infinite dreamers, dreaming finite dreams."

Ah, they are mistaken who say that a voice is nothing—that ideas are all. For this in its rise and fall was the only possible music to the poetry of the words—making the whole hour a pause, retreat, in the market place of life—as well as a song of praise in some dim cathedral aisle.

At last—the whole dying down and away in the thought—"*I* could not see *you* or speak to you for a moment—I who stand here seeing and talking—if this Infinite Unity were broken for a moment—if one little atom could be crushed and moved out of its place.... Hari Om Tat Sat!"

And for me—I had found the infinitely deep things that life holds for us. To sit there and listen was all that it had ever been. Yet there was no struggle of intellectual unrest now—no tremor of novelty.

This man who stood there held my life in the hollow of his hand—and as he once in a while looked

my way, I read in his glance what I too felt in my own heart, complete faith and abiding comprehension of purpose—better than any feeling.... Swami says, "All accumulations are for subsequent distribution, this is what the fool thinks."

17. *New York, July 15, 1900:* This morning the lesson on the Gita was grand. It began with a long talk on the fact that the highest ideals are not for all. Non-resistance is *not* for the man who thinks the replacing of the maggot in the wound, by the leprous saint, with "Eat, Brother!" disgusting and horrible. Non-resistance is practised by a mother's love towards an angry child. It is a travesty in the mouth of a coward, or in the face of a lion.

Let us be true. Nine-tenths of our life's energy is spent in trying to make people *think* us that which we are not. That energy would be more rightly spent in *becoming* that which we would like to be. And so it went—beginning with the salutation to an incarnation:

Salutation to thee—the *guru* of the universe,
Whose footstool is worshipped by the gods.
Thou one unbroken Soul,
Physician of the world's diseases.
Guru of even the gods,
To thee our salutation.
Thee we salute. Thee we salute. Thee we salute.

In the Indian tones—by Swami himself.

There was an implication throughout the talk that Christ and Buddha were inferior to Krishna—in the grasp of problems—inasmuch as they preached the highest ethics as a world-path, whereas Krishna saw the right of the *whole,* in all its parts—to its own differing ideals. But perhaps no one not familiar with his thought would have realized that this lay behind his

exclamation, "The *Sermon on the Mount* has only become another bondage for the soul of man!"

All through his lectures now, he shows this desire to understand life as it is, and to sympathize with it. He takes less of the "Not this, not this" attitude and more of the "Here comes and now follows" sort of tone. But I fear that people find him even more out of touch at a first hearing than ever used to be the case.

He talked after lunch about Bengali poetry, then about astronomy. He confessed to a whimsical doubt as to whether the stars were not merely an optical delusion, since amongst the million of man-bearing earths that must apparently exist, no beings of higher development than ours yet seemed to have attempted signalling to us.

And he suggested that Hindu painting and sculpture had been rendered grotesque by the national tendency to refuse psychic into physical conceptions. He said that he himself knew of his own experience that most physical or material things had psychic symbols, which were often to the material eye grotesquely unlike their physical counterparts. Yesterday he told me how, as a child, he hardly ever was conscious of going to sleep. A ball of coloured light came towards him and he seemed to play with it all night. Sometimes it touched him and burst into a blaze of light, and he passed off. One of the first questions Shri Ramakrishna put to him was about this, "Do you see a light when you sleep?" "Yes," he replied, "does not everyone sleep so?"

One of the Swamis says this was a psychic something which showed that concentration was a gift with which he started this life, not to be earned during its course. One thing I am sure of, that gift of Swami's of never forgetting any step of his experience, is one of the signs of great souls. It must have been a part of that last vision of Buddha.

When *we* get to the end, we shall not want to know our past incarnations. Maria Theresa and Petrarch and

Laura will have no meaning for us, but the steps of our realization will. *This* is what he shows. I sit and listen to him now, and all appears to the intellect so obvious, to the will so unattainable; and I say to myself, "What were the clouds of darkness that covered me in the old days? Surely no one was ever so blind or so ignorant!" You must have been right when you thought me hard and cold. I must have been so, and it must have been the result of the long effort to see things by the mind alone, without the feelings.

Swami is all against *bhakti* and emotion now—determined to banish it, he says. But how tremendous is that unity of mind and heart, from which he starts. He can afford to dispense with either—since both are fully developed, and the rest is merely discipline. I fancy most of us will do well to feel all we can.

18. *New York, July 24, 1900:* Swami is also a visitor in this house where I am staying.

I have just wound up my stay in America by writing a comforting letter to the Rev. Mother,[1] telling the dear soul how all his luck has turned, and he is looking like a god and leaving her to infer that all earth's crowns are at his feet.

But indeed it is all true! As he is now, nothing can resist him.

This morning at eleven, he is to lecture on *Mother-Worship,* and you shall have every word of that lecture, if I have to pay ten dollars to get it taken down. It was mentioned by someone yesterday to me, before him, and he turned and said, smiling, "Yes—*Mother-Worship*—that's what I am going to lecture on, and that is what I *love.*"

The other morning I offered him advice that struck him as wrong. I wish you could have seen him! It was worth the offence to catch such a glimpse!

[1]Mother of Swami Vivekananda.

He said, "Remember that I am free—free—*born* free!" And then he talked of the Mother and of how he wished the work and the world would break to pieces that he might go and sit down in the Himalayas and meditate. That Europeans had never preached a religion, because they had always *planned;* that a few Catholic Saints alone had come near to this; that it was not *he but Mother* who did all, and *whatever* She might do was equally welcome to him. That once Shiva, sitting with Umâ in Kailâsa, arose to go, and when she asked him why, He said "There, look, that servant of mine is being beaten. I must go to his aid." A moment later He came back and again She asked him why. "I am not needed. He is helping himself," was all the reply.

And then he blessed me, before he went, saying "Well! well! You are Mother's child." And I went away much moved, because the moment was somehow so great.

(Prabuddha Bhârata, January-December 1935)

XIX

WHEN Swamiji came to London, he created considerable attention. Something of the wonder and admiration which had surrounded him during the Parliament of Religions at Chicago had anticipated his advent. His arresting appearance and even more arresting eloquence called many persons to his presence. London affords full scope for multitudinous experiences. It is a city of a thousand phases. Preachers and pleaders of all opinions from all parts of the world gravitate to London. The metropolis with its teeming millions is the natural lodestone that attracts men whose views are as varied as the countries by which they are sent forth. Every form of doctrine is exploited there. Every day a host of halls are filled by anxious inquirers listening to exponents of theories more or less thrilling. Opinions and theories are weighed in the balance. Religions are reviewed. Creeds are criticized and compared. The notation of human impulse, onward, upward, is sounded by performers of all degrees.

London is indeed a very volcano of erruptions, sometimes pious, sometimes philosophical, sometimes pretentious, but mainly eager and earnest. Here, then, to London came Swamiji to place himself, among many conflicting elements, as the protagonist of Hinduism. No more fitting or outstanding person could have arrived at the centre of British thought. Fortified by his intimate acquaintance of, and his infinite belief in, Shri Ramakrishna, he brought the full force of that great soul to bear upon the minds of his hearers. The bed-rock principle on which Shri Ramakrishna stood, and which Swamiji expounded, is stated by the latter in these few words: "Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for

little compared with the essence of existence in each man which is spirituality; and the more this is developed in each man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticize no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realization. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those that have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are powers of light" (*My Master*). *This* essential doctrine of spirituality and its realization preached as only Vivekananda could preach it, drew folks towards him from far and near. London quickly learnt that a striking personality had made his advent. Swamiji started a course of addresses, received visitors—in a word made himself known and felt. Among his earnest admirers was Miss Margaret Noble who was predestined subsequently to become his ardent follower, a nun of the Order of Shri Ramakrishna, a resident in India, a wonderfully vivid speaker and writer in defence of the Vedanta. It was indeed at her persistent urging that this present correspondent journeyed from an outlying district to Swamiji's lodging. There, on certain specified occasions, he might be seen and conversed with. A very uncomfortable evening, cheerless and dismal, found us at his door, where we were met, at first, by disappointment. Swamiji was not at home. However, a very kindly message awaited us. We were permitted—so the message ran—to follow him to the Sesame Club whither he had gone, at brief notice, to speak in place of a lecturer who was prevented from appearing. Obeying instructions with alacrity we sought the Club. We found ourselves in a big drawing room or hall, filled almost to overflowing by smart people in evening dress. Some courteous and obliging person ushered us close to a platform where one or two chairs were vacant. The

position was conspicuous and so, alas ! were we. Our overcoats were dripping with rain, nor were we otherwise clothed in fine raiment ; not anticipating a summons to so distinguished a gathering. Most of those present were, we discovered, schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, tutors and the like. The subject announced for lecture was "Education". Soon he, Swamiji, appeared. He had little, if any notice, and his speech could not have been in any wise prepared. Yet, then, as always, he proved himself more than equal to the occasion. Collected, calm, self-possessed, he stood forward. A Hindu, primed in heart and tongue with Hindu lore and Hindu faith, backed by the prestige of an ancient civilization and culture which inspired him. It was a novel sight, a memorable experience. His dark skin, his deep glowing eyes, even his costume, attracted and fascinated. Above all, eloquence acclaimed him, the eloquence of inspiration. Again, his surprising command of the English language delighted and held his audience, an audience it must be remembered which consisted largely, as we have said, of men and women whose profession it was to teach English students their mother-tongue and through the medium of that tongue instruct them in other branches of knowledge. More, Swamiji soon showed that he was equally versed in history and political economy. He stood among these people on their own ground. Without fear, beseeching no favour, he dealt them blow upon blow enforcing the Hindu principle that the teacher who taught for the money-making was a traitor to the highest and deepest truth. "Education is an integral part of religion and neither one nor the other should be bought nor sold." His words, rapier-like, pierced the armour of scholastic convention ; yet no bitterness spoilt his speech. This Hindu, cultured, gracious with his notable smile that disarmed unkindly criticism, held his own and made his mark. He had come sent by the spirit of Shri Ramakrishna, to make

that mark; and he had succeeded at the first attempt. The idea that teachers should work with their pupils for love, and not for the love of lucre, not even for the love of livelihood.

Discussion followed. Climatic and other reasons for charges for teaching were set forth, but Swamiji maintained his position.

Such then was our first meeting with him; a meeting which resulted in reverent friendship, in genuine admiration and in most grateful remembrance.

(Vedanta Kesari, May 1922)

XX

ALTHOUGH I am not to be present at your gathering in remembrance of your great predecessor, Swami Vivekananda, I think those present may like to have a pen-picture of him from one who was very closely associated with him.

It is now some forty years since Vivekananda left this country, but the impression that he left with me is as vivid now as on the day that I said farewell to him.

I think this is largely accounted for—for I am not strong in reminiscence—by a quality in him, which is described by a Sanskrit word *ojas:* it signifies bodily strength, virility and also vitality and splendour.

In fact he had a magnetic personality, associated with great tranquillity. Whether he was walking in the street or standing in a room, there was always the same dignity.

He had a great sense of humour and as a natural correlative, much pathos and pity for affliction. He was a charming companion and entered with ease into any environment he found. And I found that all classes of educated persons that he was brought in contact with looked up to and admired the innate nobility that was in the man. One felt at all times that he was, to use a modern expression, "conscious of the presence of God". In walking, travelling, and leisure times, there constantly came from him some hardly formulated invocation or expression of devotion.

As a teacher he had a great capacity for perceiving the difficulty of an inquirer, and would elucidate it with great simplicity and point to its solution. At the same time he could enter into great intricacies of thought.

I remember well his discussion with Dr. Paul Deussen, the then head of Kiel University. He pointed

out where Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann were wrong in founding their philosophy upon the blind will, the Unconscious, as contrasted with Universal Thought, which must precede all desiring or willing. Unfortunately that error continues today and vitiates a great deal of Western psychology by its using a wrong terminology.

I will close this by remarking that, although if we were enlightened we should see Deity in every manifestation, nevertheless it is a great boon when we can perceive it as patent in noble and holy men. One of such was the Swami Vivekananda.

(Vedanta Kesari, February 1937)

XXI

ABOUT this time (1895) I had an invitation from Miss Müller to attend the two public lectures delivered by Swami Vivekananda. I heard the first lecture at St. James' Hall with Mrs. Ingall. That was the first time I saw the commanding figure of the great Swami. He looked more like an Indian Prince than a *sâdhu* (holy man). He had a *bhagvâ patkâ* (ochre coloured turban) on his head. He electrified the audience by his grand and powerful oratory. The next day the report appeared in the papers that he was the next Indian after Keshab Chandra Sen, who had surprised the English audience by his magnificent oratory. He spoke on the Vedanta. His large eyes were rolling like anything, and there was such an animation about him that it passeth description. After the meeting was over, the Swami took off his turban and put on a huge and deep Kashmiri cap looking like a big Persian hat.

The next time I heard him was at the Balloon Society. He spoke there for some time but not with his former fire. A clergyman got up after the lecture and attacked the Swami, and said that it would have been better if the Swami had taken the trouble of writing out his lecture at home and of reading it there etc. The Swami got up to reply, and he was now on his mettle. He made such a fiery speech that the clergyman was nowhere. He said that some people had crude notions that the Vedanta could be learnt in a few days! The Swami further said that he had to devote about twelve long years of his life to the study of the Vedanta. He replied to the objections of the clergyman categorically one by one, recited the sonorous Vedic hymn beginning

with *"Suparnam"*[1] and ended with a triumphant peroration that still rings in my ears.

In 1896 I became a member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. I came in contact with some of the best scholars of the day. Prof. Rhys Davids was the secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society. He was a reputed Sanskrit scholar. The times of the meetings were notified to the members beforehand. A paper on some subject of general interest was read, and then discussion followed. Refreshments were then served, and we had ample opportunities of exchanging our views in conversation, and of making friendship with some of the greatest literary lights of the day. The proceedings of the meetings were published in the quarterly journal of the Society. Miss Duff and several ladies were also members of the Royal Asiatic Society and were generally found at the meetings. Miss Duff was a Sanskrit scholar and had translated into English the book called *The Elements of Metaphysics* by Prof. Deussen of Germany. It was quite a treat to talk with the "Blue Stockings", as highly educated ladies were nick-named in England by orthodox people. I spoke in some of the meetings of the Royal Asiatic Society.

Once I remember that a paper was read by Prof. Bain on the Upanishads. Swami Vivekananda and Mr. Ramesh Chandra Dutt, C.I.E., were also there. Sir Raymond West had taken the chair. After the paper was finished, I made a vigorous and spirited speech. I made some remarks there on "egoism" in general and love of "individuality" of Europeans, as hindrances in the way of realizing the *Impersonal and Infinite Brahman*. Prof. Rhys Davids was particularly tickled, and he made a violent speech. I got up again and quietly told him that I meant no offence, and that I had the greatest respect for the European intellect, but when

[1] *Taittiriya Âranyaka*, III. xi. 1.

they dabbled in the philosophy of the Upanishads and the Vedanta, they could be safely guided, in some respects, by the Hindus, as it was their *forte*—just as a common Arabian sailor-boy would know more about the Arabian sea and would safely lead us to the desired place, rather than the greatest European sailor who was an utter stranger to the shoals and rocks in the Arabian sea. The effervescence subsided, and we all had a hearty cup of tea together after the temporary storm. This was the first time I saw Mr. Dutt. He also spoke—but in a temperate persuasive manner.

Swami Vivekananda liked my speech very much, and he took me to his place, talking on various subjects on the way. Strange that the Swami had put on a top hat on that day. If I err not, it was on that day that he and some other Swami (Saradananda or Abhedananda) prepared *khichudi,* etc., at his place, and asked me to partake of the supper with them.

Swami Vivekananda delivered a series of lectures in different places in London on *karma-yoga, jnâna-yoga, bhakti-yoga,* and *râja-yoga,* during this year (i.e. 1896). He had also been invited to speak at the Blavatsky Lodge. I attended a good many of them. The cream of the English society attended his lectures, and all were mad after him. The Swami used to take walks with me from the lecture-hall to his house, or from his house to some neighbouring places. I very often dined at his place of residence, at his own invitation, or that of my pupil—Miss Müller, and of Mr. Sturdy, who, I believe, paid for the household expenses after the Swami came to live in London from America. Mr. Sturdy was like a real *yogi.* Mr. Goodwin was another staunch adherent of the Swami, and he took down in shorthand the lectures of the Swami, which were afterwards published.

In July, 1896, a conference of the London Hindu Association was held at the Montague Mansions. The chair was taken by Swami Vivekananda, the Hon. Presi-

dent of the Association. Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji was also present. A lecture was delivered on the "Needs of India" by Mr. Ram Mohan Roy, a gentleman from Madras. I, being the Secretary of the Association, had to arrange for the meeting, refreshments, etc. Swami Vivekananda, as chairman of the conference, rose to speak, and he electrified the audience. Reporters of the press were also present. When he struck his hand on the table during his speech, my watch bounded from the table and fell down on the ground, and created a visible sensation ! He had a commanding figure, and my landlady, who had come to the meeting with me, was greatly impressed with his speech and personality. While the Swami had captivated the British public by his oratory, it was placarded as I was going home, that Prince Ranjit Singji had saved the honour of England against the Australian team. He had scored 154 runs and was not out ! The next day there was a big leading article in the *London Times* about the "Exploits of Indians in England". Mr. Chatterji had come first in the Indian Civil Service Examination, and Prince Ranjit Singji had stood *first* in the cricket averages in that very year.

Later on in the year, when I was living with the Owens for the second time, Swami Vivekananda had come to my house with another Swami (Saradananda or Abhedananda), as he was invited to take his dinner with us. It seemed from his conversation that he did not object to meat-eating, although he and the other Swami took only the vegetarian dishes prepared for us. The Swami used to smoke cigars. The Owens were generally pleased by Swami Vivekananda's visit. They admired his personality and powers of conversation.

I came in close contact with the Swami during this year (i.e. 1896). Once he delivered a magnificent speech in a magnificent hall in the West End of London, wherein he narrated the story of a young Sannyâsin who accidentally happened to go to the palace of a Raja, hold-

ing a *svayamvara*[1] for his daughter. The princess, instead of throwing the *vara-mâlâ*, or the "Garland of the choice of a bridegroom", round the neck of any of the princes present, took a fancy for the young Sannyâsin, and suddenly dropped it round his head! The Sannyâsin ran away, and she followed him wherever he went, but to no purpose, as he would not lay down his *sannyâsa*, and marry her. After the lecture was over, the Swami was surrounded by the best of the beauty of England, and they put questions after questions to him and asked for explanations. He anyhow managed to extricate himself from them; and when he was alone, he heaved a sigh of relief, and asked me to go with him to his house. On the way, in order to sound the mind of the Swami, I asked him whether it was not wrong on the part of the young Sannyâsin to break the heart of that young princess by not marrying her, on which he indignantly cried out, "Why should he desecrate himself?"

On another occasion, when Swami Vivekananda and myself were alone in his house, I put to him several knotty questions on Vedanta, and he explained them to me. One of them was about the unity of the individual soul (i.e. *jivâtman*) with the *brahman* or *paramâtman*. As I had devoted much of my time to the study and realization of the nature of *brahman*, I was looking for an answer in speechless silence, and at the same time was trying mentally to identify myself with the Universal Spirit. The Swami, on finding that at a particular moment at that time I was *en rapport* with *brahman*, simply cried out, *tat-tvam-asi* (Thou art That)! I wanted no further explanation. The Swami returned to India towards the end of this year (i.e. 1896).

I subsequently paid a visit to the learned Swami at his private residence. He kindly received me in a cordial manner. I had a talk with him on religious matters

[1]Choosing one's husband by a princess from among the assembled dignitaries at her father's house.

during which he repeated several *shlokas* (verses) from the Bhagavad-Gitâ : [1]

इहैव तैर्जितः सर्गो येषां साम्ये स्थितं मनः ।

निर्दोषं हि समं ब्रह्म तस्माद्ब्रह्मणि ते स्थिताः ॥ (V. 19.)

बहूनि मे व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तव चार्जुन ।

तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि न त्वं वेत्थ परंतप ॥ (IV. 5.)

कर्षयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः ।

मां चैवान्तःशरीरस्थं तान्विद्ध्यासुरनिश्चयान् ॥ (XVII. 6.)

क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परंतप ॥ (II. 3.)

Thereupon, I naturally repeated within myself in an audible manner :

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत ।

स्थितोऽस्मि गतसन्देहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ॥

[Destroyed is my delusion, and I have gained my memory through thy grace, O Achyuta. I am firm ; my doubts are gone. I shall do thy word. Gitâ, XVIII. 73].

He said that *ahimsâ paramo dharmah* was a tenet of the Buddhists, and it had gone so far that it had enfeebled the people. He preached a bold and manly religion. He told me that when he had to speak before the Chicago Parliament of Religions for the first time, he felt a little nervous in the beginning, but the *mahâvâkya* (great Upanishadic saying), *aham brahmâsmi* (I am Brahman) at once flashed through his brain, and

[1]Even in this life they have conquered the round of birth and death, whose minds are firm-fixed on the sameness of everything, for God is pure, and the same to all, and therefore, such are said to be living in God. O Arjuna, you and I have run the cycle of birth and death many times. I know them all, but you are not conscious of them. Know them to be of *âsurika* resolve who, senseless as they are, torture all the organs of the body and Me dwelling within the body. Cast off this mean faint-heartedness and arise, O scorcher of thine enemies.

such a tremendous power entered his frame that he outdid himself. He electrified the American audience by his subsequent speeches, and the fact, no doubt, is testified by the reports of the American papers.

He, therefore, advised all men not to belittle themselves, but to realize their *brahman*-hood, their Divinity.

(*Vedanta Kesari, January 1932*)

XXII

In 1890 when I was a student in the Ripon College, Calcutta, I had the greatest blessing of my life to know of Shri Ramakrishna. With some of my class-mates and friends I attended the anniversary of the dedication of the temple at Kankurgachhi (east Calcutta) in the month of August of that year. There we first heard of Shri Ramakrishna from one of his greatest devotees, the late Ramachandra Dutt. His devotion to Shri Ramakrishna is indescribable. Only those who knew him personally can appreciate it. We often chant the sacred verse, "Thou art our Mother; Thou art our Father; Thou art our Friend; Thou art our Companion; Thou art our Wisdom; Thou art our Wealth; Thou art our All in All", but Rama Babu was one of those who realized its true meaning. To him Shri Ramakrishna was really his "All in All". He worshipped no other God than Shri Ramakrishna; never visited any other temple than the one at Kankurgachhi in which Shri Ramakrishna's ashes were interred; never read or preached any other religious doctrines or discourses than those he had heard from Shri Ramakrishna.

Master Mahâshaya (Babu Mahendra Nath Gupta) was our professor. We heard that he was also a disciple of Shri Ramakrishna. One day we approached him and introduced ourselves to him. We had a little talk on Shri Ramakrishna. He recommended us to visit the Math (monastery) at Baranagore where Shri Ramakrishna's Sannyâsin disciples were then living. He was naturally a very reserved man, but was most cordial to us and candid in his opinion about a devotee who lives in his family and a disciple who has renounced the world to devote his whole life to the practice of religion. He used this simile: The former is like a sour mango, but quite

ripe and the latter (a Sannyâsin) is like a mango of the highest grade (*Fazli* or *Langra*), but not yet ripe. Master Mahâshaya's illustrations were very much to the point. He further said, if we wished to see the living examples of the teachings of Shri Ramakrishna, we must go to the Math.

Shortly afterwards, we visited the Math. Our first visit was on a week day, as we went directly from the college. It was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon when we reached there. We first met Shashi Maharaj (Swami Ramakrishnananda). He was delighted to see us and inquired about us. When he learnt that we were students, he asked us some questions and advised us not to neglect our studies. We stayed until 5 or 6 o'clock. He took us to the chapel (*thâkur ghar*) after the doors were opened at 4 o'clock, gave us some flowers from the altar and *prasâda* (dedicated fruits and sweets) which we valued most. We prostrated ourselves before the picture of Shri Ramakrishna on the bed and the wooden receptacle (*koutâ*) on the altar in which his sacred remains were preserved. There were four or five other Swamis. We saluted them all, one after the other, and they also very kindly spoke to us and blessed us with their well-wishes. When we parted, they invited us to come again. We walked back home, and all the time we talked of the wonderful visit—the renunciation of the Swamis and the peaceful atmosphere of the Math.

Master Mahâshaya then lived in Kambuliatolah (Calcutta). On our way home, we stopped at his house and told him of the visit to the Math. He congratulated us and urged us to go there often and render personal services to the Swamis, such as shampooing their feet, preparing tobacco for their smoking, etc. To see them and serve them, to him, was like seeing and serving Shri Ramakrishna himself.

Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) had just left the Math

for a pilgrimage in the North-Western Provinces[1] of India. This time he wanted to live so exclusively that he very seldom wrote letters to the brothers at the Math. In fact, for a year or two nobody knew where he was.

Shashi Maharaj, Baburam Maharaj, Mahâpurushji, Yogen Maharaj, Kali Maharaj, and Niranjan Maharaj were at the Math then. They all told us about Swamiji and Shri Ramakrishna's love for him and his love to Shri Ramakrishna. Some of them even then assured us that Swamiji would be pleased to initiate us to *sannyâsa* when he returned to the Math.

Strangely enough several years before that time (most probably in 1887) when I was a student in the Metropolitan School, Bowbazar Branch, I saw Swamiji, who was then headmaster of that School for a few weeks. I belonged to a lower grade and did not have the privilege and pleasure of hearing him teach our class. But I used to watch him from our class-room window almost every day as he entered the school compound. I still vividly remember the scene. He was clothed in trousers and *Âlpâkâ Châpkân* with a white scarf (*châdar*) about six feet long around his shoulders. In one hand he carried an umbrella and in the other a book, most probably the text-book of the Entrance Class. With sparkling eyes and smiling face he looked so indrawn that some would be attracted to him for his charming personality, and some would not dare approach him for his extreme gravity and solemnity. It was not however until I came to the Baranagore Math that I knew that the great headmaster who impressed me so much was Swamiji himself.

He returned to India in December 1896, from his mission in America and Europe. He landed in Colombo in January, and arrived in Calcutta in February 1897. I was then a teacher in a High School in a village near my home about twenty miles west of Calcutta. The

[1] Later renamed United Provinces and still later Uttar Pradesh.

anniversary of the birth of Shri Ramakrishna then used to be celebrated in the compound of the temple gardens at Dakshineswar. The Swamis then lived in the Math at Alambazar about two miles from Dakshineswar temple gardens. That year the anniversary took place as usual either in the last week of February or in the first week of March. The day before I came to the Math. That was a Saturday as the public celebration was held then as it is now on the Sunday following the actual birthday (*tithipujâ*).

Swamiji was then temporarily living in a house on the bank of the Ganga about three miles from the Math. Early in the morning on Sunday I saw him there. It was about six o'clock—still dark—when I arrived at the house. Swamiji was an early riser. He first saw me from the window of his room and came downstairs to open the door. I saluted him and he received me very kindly as if he had known me long before. He talked to me in a familiar way and asked me to fetch him a glass of water. He was then washing his mouth. When he learnt that I was preparing for an examination, he was pleased and gave me his blessing. Mahâpurushji was there too. He told Swamiji that I was one of the group of young men who had been coming to the Math for several years and that I was planning to join the Order. On hearing this, Swamiji said he would initiate me to *sannyâsa* in the near future. Those words made the hope of the realization of my dream brighter.

A few days before the public anniversary—most probably on the actual birthday of Shri Ramakrishna—Swamiji initiated four Brahmachârins to *sannyâsa,* and on that day gave *mantra*-initiation (*dikshâ*) to one or two devotees. At about 8 o'clock he arrived at the Math. I came with him, by his permission, in the same carriage. Shortly after arrival, he took his bath and went into the chapel for meditation. We followed him. It was a most inspiring occasion.

At about 11 o'clock he went to the Dakshineswar temple gardens where the public festival was being held. There was a vast concourse of people at the gardens, and Swamiji's presence was another reason for that great crowd. Many requested him to deliver a lecture near the Panchavati (the cluster of five sacred trees). But the crowd was so enthusiastic and noisy in their expression of joy at his sight that he found it impossible to make a speech. About 1 o'clock he returned to the Math for a rest. I was with him all that day and had the privilege of rendering him a little personal service as an attendant. That was a most glorious day of my life. Its impression is indelible in my memory. As I think of it now I still seem to feel the thrill of the joy I felt then.

The next day I had to return to my school duties with great reluctance. The sense of gratitude and exaltation of this unique occasion remained in me several days afterwards. I longed to see Swamiji again and sit at his feet for his further grace and guidance.

(Prabuddha Bhârata, October 1934)

XXIII

BEFORE I knew Swamiji personally, I had heard much about his greatness from persons who had moved and lived with him on the closest terms of intimacy. Therefore, when it was announced in the year 1893 that he had gone over to America to represent our religion at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, I started following his movements with the closest attention and the greatest interest. I was anxiously waiting to see if his achievements would not confirm me in my very high estimate of him. I need not tell you, people of Madras, that every bit of my expectation was much more than satisfied. But till I saw him with my own eyes, the perfect satisfaction of knowing the man could not come. Till then I could not be quite free from the secret misgivings that I might be after all labouring under a delusion. So you see, gentlemen, that I did not meet Swamiji as one in any way biased against him. The throbbing interest and convincingness which attach to the glowing description of the conquest of opponents of a great man of overmastering personality does not belong to my subject. I may say, I was already a great admirer of his. But I must say at the same time that it was not too late in the day to retrace my steps and give Swamiji up as one unworthy of my love and esteem if facts were found to give the lie. Perhaps, the shock which such a disclosure would have given to my mind would be too painful; perhaps it would have cost a great wrenching of the heart. But I can assure you that the instinct of moral self-preservation was yet stronger than my admiration of Swamiji, and cost how much it would, the heart could not long cling round him if reason and moral sense condemned him with one voice.

And what was the nature of the greatness I was

expecting to see in Swamiji? It was not the dashing and daring spirit displayed by a heroic warrior on the battlefield, nor the fine etherial vision and ecstacy of the poet, nor the vast erudition of a scholar, nor the dazzling intellectual flourish of the master controversialist, nor the quick penetration and the wide comprehension of the philosopher, nor the weeping heart of a true lover of humanity. It was not that I had not had enough testimony as to these qualities of head and heart being abundantly present in him, but because my conception of religion was not wide enough to include all these under it. His marvellous achievements in the West were bringing us overwhelming evidences of his wonderful intellectual powers. But either from some constitutional necessity or my extreme poverty in that direction I was always attributing the brightness of his intellect to his highly elevated religious life, and it was this religious life that I expected to see in him. My idea of religion was then confined to purity and meditation. Sitting at the feet of the holy and good disciples of Bhagavân Shri Ramakrishna, I had learnt that these two were the indispensable conditions of acquiring spirituality and are the sure marks by which a religious man can always be known. My debt of gratitude to the blessed Swamis at whose feet I had learnt these great lessons is too large to be repaid. Personal contact with Swamiji instead of diminishing the value of purity and meditation in my eyes, has only enhanced it. At the same time it has heightened and intensified my conception of religion by adding new elements to it. Till I came in personal contact with Swamiji my temperament had led me to expect to see in him a man of intense purity and meditative inwardness. And I need not tell you that I was not disappointed. The first sight of Swamiji, the peculiar brightness of his face, his lustrous yet soft and sweet eyes, at once carried into my heart an overwhelming sense of satisfaction that I had come to a man the like of whom I had never seen

before. Then when he began to talk to us making personal inquiries and giving us words of hope and encouragement with the cordiality of one truly interested in our welfare, we felt that our hearts were being drawn closer to him. To us who were very insignificant compared with his friends and visitors who were standing or sitting around him in large numbers, this kindness on his part filled us with great joy and gratitude. Then the wonderfully free and frank way in which he was talking to his visitors revealed to us a heart that knew nothing of guile or fear nor cared a bit for social conventionality. The transparently clear and pointed words that were shooting out of his lips like meteors gave us a peep into the keen penetration of his intellect and the breadth and profundity of his mental vision. We felt ourselves in the presence of an overpowering personality whose immensity it was not possible for us to gauge, but which was drawing us to itself as by a tie of close personal relationship. There arose on the first day of our meeting an excellent opportunity of knowing something of his real humility. I say real humility because it had nothing to do with that sense of self-abasement with its external manifestation of facial contortions which so often pass for humility. It was self-effacement and was not therefore without the charming dignity of self-respect. A question from one of the visitors as to why Swamiji's lecture on his Master delivered in America had not seen the light of day, brought the bold confession : "I did not allow it to be published as I had done injustice to my Master. My Master never condemned anything or anybody. But while I was speaking of him I criticized the people of America for their dollar-worshipping spirit. That day I learnt the lesson that I am not yet fit to talk of him." These words were really startling to us for more than one reason. Here was a man who was being idolized, nay actually worshipped by so many, and this man in their very presence confessing his inability to represent his

guru! "What an unpretentious man is before us", said we to ourselves. "What a wonderful man must his *guru* have been to occupy such a high place in the heart of this great man!"

This, in short, was my impression of Swamiji on the first day of our meeting. As days went and I knew more and more of him, it gained greater and greater strength. I only saw on the first day the few sparks that shot forth into our range of vision from a soul aglow with the fire of divine love and wisdom. It was yet in store for me to see many more sparks from the same source that drew me near to it, gave me a closer view of it and enabled even my icy cold heart to possess a little of its warmth. I have already told you that I had always thought that Swamiji's gigantic intellect was the result of his highly elevated life of purity. Greater acquaintance with him was making my belief stronger till one day his own words made it a settled conviction with me. It was a memorable evening in my life, which shall never be effaced from my mind, when a question from one of his would-be disciples brought forth an exhaustive and stirring discourse on *brahmacharya* or sexual purity. In the course of the discourse he was explaining to us the incalculable value of purity in religious life, how to practise it, how religious fervour, suddenly aroused by working on the emotional side of man to the utter neglect of the moral and intellectual, is apt to produce great reaction on the sexual desires and so forth. Then at last when he came to talk of the infinite powers of strict sexual purity and how the animal propensity is converted into spiritual might, he warmed up to such a high pitch of earnestness that it seemed as if the transparent soul within was flowing out in torrents through his lips, bathing its hearers with its heavenly waters. The picture that was being drawn by his words in our minds saw its own prototype in the figure that stood before us. And I leave it to you, gentlemen, to imagine the effect of these con-

cluding words of the discourse upon us: "My Master had told me that if I could attain to the perfect state of purity I had just described, I will have spiritual insight. I ventured to stand before the world only when I had been satisfied that I had attained to it. I earnestly appeal to you, my boys, to keep to this ideal with adamantine firmness. Pray, do not be unworthy of me." On another occasion too I heard him speak of his spiritual insight which could at once see the end of a thing hidden in the womb of futurity, of which the beginning is only made. I must not be understood to mean that intellectual brightness is always a sign of spirituality. A man may have a great intellect without being in the least spiritual. On the other hand a man may be spiritual without having his mind stored with informations vast and varied or without the power to put his words in a logical form. But truth will always be his and will flash upon his mind of itself. My present idea of Swamiji's intellect has undergone some modification from what it was before I knew him personally. He combined in him spiritual insight with an intellect of the highest order. Truth came to him by intuition. But he would press his intellect into its service by giving it a logical form and making it convincing by a rich supply of facts and analogies stored in his brain.

And the purity which gave Swamiji this spiritual insight was something extraordinary. It was not the fragile purity that can protect itself by keeping itself away from all corrupting influences. It had long outgrown the need of the citadel of isolation. But that was not all. It became aggressive, taking a sort of delight in encountering its enemies on their own grounds and winning them over to its side. In other words it could not only keep itself untouched amidst corrupting influences, but could turn them into positive powers for good. Gentlemen, I cannot go into personal details on a subject like this. But my knowledge of Swamiji's marvel-

lous achievements in this direction compels me to lay at his feet my deepest reverence; this one element of perfection in Swamiji would have been quite enough to compel me to give him the highest place in my heart.

... There was one more prominent feature of Swamiji's life which speaks to me volumes about his renunciation. I mean his dealing with rich men. Many of you are aware that among his foreign disciples some are very wealthy and a few of them came out to India to help Swamiji in his work. The treatment which he used to give them did not in the least differ from that given to his most insignificant Indian disciples. He was kind and loving by nature to all, but his love did not make him blind to their flaws and defects which needed mending.

Gentle speech would not always serve the purpose, and Swamiji would have to be at times hard. And in this apparently unpleasant treatment, his wealthy disciples would have exactly the same fate as his begging Sannyâsins. At times, this would be too much for persons born and brought up in the lap of luxury and accustomed to hear words of praise and flattery. From a worldly point of view, Swamiji paid dear for it. But did he ever regret? Far from it. The perfect unconcern which he showed whether rich people would stick to him or give him up is truly unprecedented.

... Of the few pregnant proverbs and epigrammatical expressions which Swamiji would never be tired of repeating, one was, "शिरदार सरदार— The giver of the head is alone the leader", that is, he alone can be a leader who is ready to die for others. And Swamiji's own life determines his place among his fellow-beings. I have already told you that Swamiji was not only kind and soft but was very hard also at times. He could not only lay down his life for others, but could take arms against others if needed. Whatever he would think or feel he would do so with wonderful vehemence and intensity.

And this whole-souled-ness was another marked feature of Swamiji's life. One evening in the course of a talk that Swamiji was giving to one of his disciples, opening his eyes to the fact that the disciple's inability to manage the servants of the Math (which was one of his duties then) and make them do their respective duties was a weakness and did not proceed from love, he said, "Don't think that your heart is full of love, because you cannot give them a little scolding now and then. Can you give your life for them? I know, you can't. Because you do not love them. This minute I can die for them ; but also I can hang them on this tree this minute if need be. Can you do that? No, my boy, namby-pamby is not love. Remember the words of the poet, वज्रादपि कठोराणि, मृदूनि कुसुमादपि—'Harder than the thunderbolt and softer than the flower', this is the ideal. No, love is not weak sentimentality."

I have seen no man who could be so soft as Swamiji. The death of a *gurubhâi* or a disciple would rob him of rest and consolation for days and days together. Sometimes, in the year 1898 it pleased the Lord to take away one of his *gurubhâis.* The pang of bereavement was so intense in Swamiji that for a week he remained exceedingly heavy and absent-minded keeping as much away from others as possible. On the evening of the seventh or eighth day he came to the temple-room of the Math, and began to talk to those that were present there, like a simple child: "I did not come to the temple these days, because I was very angry with my Master for having deprived me of my dear brother. I love them so much because I have lived longer and more intimately with them than even with my own brothers.... But why should I be angry with my Master? Why should I expect at all things will be ordained according to my wishes? And why should I be sad at all? Am I not a hero? My Master used to say laying his arm upon my shoulder: 'Naren, you are a hero ; the very sight of you

inspires me with courage.' Yes, I am a hero. Why should I then give way to grief?"

... Ask each one of his disciples, American or English, Bengali or Madrasi, and you will hear the same thing from all that their hearts were won by Swamiji's wonderful love and sympathy. Swamiji's marvellous intellectual powers, no doubt, evoked the awe of all. But this awe would have kept at a distance all un-intellectual people like myself and would have proved more a barrier than a help to them to come in direct touch with him and drink from the fountain of his soul. Heaps of instances could be cited to show Swamiji's wonderful heart.

... And how can universal love be without the ever-present consciousness of the closest kinship with the universe without the realization that whatever is, is mine, nay whatever is, is me? And this is *brahmajnâna* (knowledge of Self) as our holy books describe it. This is the very core of Swamiji's teaching—the Selfhood of all—the Divinity of man. And this is, I am fully convinced, the key to his wonderfully versatile nature. He was a lover of all, because he was a *jnâni*. And here I must tell you that the fatal illusion under which I had long laboured that *jnâna* and *bhakti* are destructive of each other, dispersed in the presence of Swamiji as darkness before the sun. Swamiji was a tremendous worker because he was a *bhakta* and *jnâni*. The tremendous energy that shook the whole world and is still at work awakening many a slumbering soul to its innate Divinity, instilling life into dead bones, bringing sunshine in the darkness of despair and love in dry, arid souls—this tremendous energy owes its origin to his realization of *brahman* in all. Here too, I must tell you that the fatally-erroneous idea that *karma* is antagonistic to *jnâna* and *bhakti* is dispelled at once by the life of Swamiji.

I told you at the outset that before I met Swamiji I did not, on account of my limited religious views, expect to see in him anything of the warrior, the poet, the

philosopher, or the philanthropist. But I found that he was all these and more than these. He was as much a poet, as a philosopher; as much a sentimental visionary, as a man of action. And he was all these, not in spite of his religion but on account of it.

I have learnt that a religion which does not call forth into vigorous activity and chasten and elevate the moral, intellectual, and aesthetic faculties of man, make him humane and self-sacrificing and at the same time self-absorbed and meditative is an imperfect religion. But I have also learnt that even such imperfect religions have their great purpose to serve in helping the growth of persons less evolved and that our attitude towards them all should be one of extreme sympathy and love. I have learnt that I should hesitate thrice before I condemn any form of religious faith however repellent it may appear to me. For I have seen forms of worship, generally condemned as superstitious, yield treasures of infinite beauty and holiness touched by the magic wand of Swamiji. I have learnt that every individual however degraded he may appear in my eyes is God involved and therefore cannot be lost for ever. We should look upon him with respect and if possible give him a lift Godward not by condemning his perverted ideal and by cruelly tearing it away from his heart but by gently replacing it by a true one suited to his temperament and culture. I have learnt that under peculiar circumstances even hardness and cruelty become a virtue, stubborn resistance, and excellence, and that activity is as much a help to spiritual growth as comtemplative calmness. I have learnt that God can be enjoyed both within ourselves and outside of ourselves; within ourselves by effacing completely from our consciousness all impression of the world of senses and making the Spirit touch Spirit. Outside ourselves by seeing God in everything and pouring out our hearts unto His feet in the shape of loving service. I have learnt the incalculable value of great personalities

in the scheme of individual, national, and universal redemption. I have also learnt that I have learnt all these only intellectually and am yet far from getting them woven into my nature. And all these I have learnt from the life of Swamiji. One thing more: My conviction that Swamiji's spiritual realization was of the highest order came to me not only from his intense purity, fearlessness, love of truth, and universal sympathy, but also from those subtler personal manifestations described in our *shâstras*. I have seen him weep like a child and becoming disconsolate at the name of God. I have seen him go into such deep meditation that even the function of the lungs stopped. Last of all came his own words to give the finishing touch to my conception of his spiritual greatness....

(Vedanta Kesari, January-February 1923)

XXIV

Long years have rolled away. It was February 1897, I believe, when Swami Vivekananda set his foot in *Bhâratavarsha* (India) after his triumph in the West. From the moment when in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago Swamiji proved the superiority of the Hindu *dharma* and left the banner of Hinduism flying victoriously in the West, I had gathered every possible information regarding him from newspapers and read them with great interest. I had left college only two or three years ago, and I had not settled down to earning. So I spent my time, now visiting my friends, now going to the office of the *Indian Mirror,* devouring the latest news about him and studying the reports of his lectures. Almost all that he had spoken in Ceylon and in Madras from the time he had set foot in India had thus been read by me. Besides this, I used to visit the Alambazar Math and hear from his *gurubhâis* as well as from those of my friends who used to frequent the Math many things about Swamiji. Further, nothing escaped my notice of the comments concerning him that appeared in *Bangabâsi, Amritabazar, Hope, Theosophist,* etc.—some satirical, some admonishing, some patronizing, each according to its own outlook and temperament.

Today *that* Swami Vivekananda alights at the Scaldah station and comes back to Calcutta, the city of his birth. The idea I had formed of him through hearsay and reports has to be tested today and confirmed by seeing his personality. So, early at break of day many had come to welcome the Swami. I met many of my acquaintances and had many pleasant chats with them concerning him. I noticed that two leaflets printed in English were being distributed freely. These were the farewell addresses which the Americans and Englishmen

had presented Swamiji on the eve of his departure from the West, expressing their feelings of gratitude for the services rendered to them by the Swami. By and by the dense crowd eager to see him began to pour in batches. The station platform became a surging mass of humanity. With anxious expectation every one was inquiring of one another, "What more delay for the Swami's arrival?" We heard then that Swamiji was coming in a special train, and that there was not much delay for his arrival. There it is! The sound of the train is being heard, and with usual puff, the train heaves into the platform. As the carriage stopped, I was fortunately placed on that very spot overlooking the carriage that brought in Swamiji. Swamiji was standing up and making his salutation with folded palms to all assembled to receive him. At that moment I only could get a cursory glance of him. The Reception Committee with Babu Narendra Nath Sen at its head approached Swamiji and brought him down from the train. Many crowded to take the dust of his feet. On this side of him the anxious crowd was spontaneously shouting in exultation of joy—"*Jai Swami Vivekanandaji Ki Jai* ! *Jai Ramakrishna Paramahamsa Dev Ki Jai* !" My voice too mingled with it and began to ring in tune with theirs. When we came out of the platform, we found that Swamiji's carriage was already unhorsed and a band of young men were getting ready to draw it up themselves. I also tried to join them, but the crowd prevented my doing so. So giving up this attempt, I began to walk accompanying the carriage from a little distance. In the station a *sankirtana* party had come to receive him, and along the road a band was playing, ahead of the procession. The roads were decorated with festoons and buntings. The carriage came and drew up in front of Ripon College. This time I was able to get an opportunity to see Swamiji well. I found him with his head projected out of the carriage and talking with some old acquaintance. That face was

extraordinarily brilliant, and it seemed as if it was emitting rays of brilliant light; yet it seemed to be a bit dim because of the fatigue the journey entailed. There were two carriages. In one were Swamiji and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. The Hon. Babu Charu Chandra Mitra was standing in this carriage and with the movements of his hand was manipulating the crowd. In the other carriage were seated Mr. Goodwin, Mr. Harrison (a European Buddhist monk from Ceylon), G. G., Kidi, and Alasinga (who were three of Swamiji's Madrasi disciples), and Swami Trigunatita. Because of the earnest entreaties of many, Swamiji got down from the carriage and addressed those present for two or three minutes, and then drove towards the house of Pashupati Babu in Baghbazar. I also tendered my salutations mentally and wended my way back to my house.

After my noonday meal I went to the house of Khagen (Swami Vimalananda) and from there drove together in their cab to the house of Pashupati Babu. Swamiji was at that time resting in an upstairs room. Many people were not allowed to go in. Fortunately for us we were able to meet with many of Swamiji's *guru-bhâis,* well known to us. Swami Shivananda took us to the presence of Swamiji and introduced us to him with the words: "These young men are your ardent admirers." Swamiji and Swami Yogananda were sitting side by side on two easy chairs in a well-furnished room in the first floor of the house. The other Swamis were moving hither and thither clad in their *geruâ* robes. We bowed down to Swamiji and occupied the carpet on the floor. Swamiji was then speaking with Swami Yogananda. The topic of conversation was his experiences in America and in Europe. "Well Yogin, do you know what I saw in the West? All over the world I was seeing only the play of the same great *shakti* (Divine Energy). Our forefathers manifested that power in religion and philosophy, and the West is manifesting the selfsame

energy in the modern age through dynamic activity. Truly, through the whole universe there are only different expressions of that same *mahâ-shakti* (Great Energy).

Looking towards Khagen and seeing his emaciated appearance, Swamiji said, "This boy looks very sickly." Swami Shivananda, "He has been suffering for a long time from dyspepsia." Swamiji, "Is not our Bengal a sentimental country? That is why there are so many cases of dyspepsia here." After a while tendering our obeisance we departed to our homes....

Swamiji and his disciples, Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, were staying in the garden-house of the late Gopal Lal Seal in Cossipore. We had been frequenting this house for some time with our friends and relations to attend the conversations of Swamiji. I shall try to put down here what little is left of my memory of these days.

It was in one of the rooms of this garden-house that I talked directly with Swamiji for the first time. Swamiji was then sitting within and I went and prostrated myself before him. There was nobody else in the room. Suddenly, I do not know why, Swamiji asked me, "Do you smoke?" I replied, "No," to which Swamiji replied, "Very well, smoking is not good. I am also trying to leave it off." Another day Swamiji was speaking with a *vaishnava* who had come to see him. Swamiji was saying, "Bâbâji,[1] once in America I lectured to them on Shri Krishna. Captivated by that lecture, one exquisitely beautiful young lady, the mistress of a great many attainments and heiress to an immense fortune, renounced everything and retired to a solitary island and lost herself in the intoxication of meditation on the Lord." Afterwards Swamiji began to speak on "Renunciation". "In all religious sects that do not keep aflame the fire of renunciation, degeneration quickly sets in...."

[1] Lit. Revered Father. *Vaishnava* holy men are addressed thus.

Another day we found a large gathering sitting before him. His conversation was aimed at a young gentleman, who was staying in the quarters of the Bengal Theosophical Society. The young gentleman was saying, "I went to many a sect and denomination, but I could not yet find out Truth." Swamiji replied in endearing terms, "Well, my child, once I too was in the same disconsolate state of mind as you are. Why should you be so anxious on this score? Tell me what they advised you to do, and what you have done all along." The young man replied, "Sir, in our society there is a preacher, Bhavani Shankar by name, who is a profound Sanskrit scholar. He made me understand in a beautiful way the value of image worship in the scheme of spiritual development. Obeying him I began to worship with the proper ceremonials for a time, but this did not give me the peace I was yearning for. At that time one gentleman told me, 'Try to make your mind void, and if you can succeed in the attempt, you will get peace.' I also spent some days in following this advice, but to no purpose. Sir, even now I sit in a closed room, and meditate as long as I can. Yet, peace is far, far away from me. How am I to gain peace ?"

Swamiji continued to speak to him in endearing terms: "My boy, if you have any respect for my words, the first thing I will advise you to do is to throw open all the doors and windows of your room ! In your quarter there are lots of poor people sunk in degradation and misery. You will have to go to them and serve them with all your zeal and enthusiasm. Arrange to distribute medicines to those who are sick, and nurse them with all care, supply food to him who is starving, teach with as much as lies in you the ignorant ; and if you begin to serve your brethren in this wise, I tell you, my child, you will surely get peace and consolation."

The youth: "Sir, weak as I am, if I alone go to serve the poor and thereby break the regularity of my

life by keeping awake late at nights, I might fall ill, and then what shall become of me?"

All along Swamiji was speaking with the youth very lovingly, sympathizing with all his mental troubles; but the last words of the youth very much vexed him, and so Swamiji next talked with him in another strain: "Look here, while volunteering to do service to your brethren, you set a higher price on your own life. I can now understand well—so also those who are present here—that you are not that sort of man who would exert so much in the service of the sick as to affect your own health and convenience." There was no more talk with that youth.

Another day the talk was with Master Mahâshaya, the author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Master Mahâshaya was asking Swamiji: "You speak of service, charity, and doing good to the world; do not they too belong to the domain of *mâyâ*? When the goal of Vedanta is *mukti* (liberation), to cut at the root of all *mâyâ*, what will be the result of these teachings to the people who are already bound tight in the coils of *mâyâ?*" Out came a curt reply from Swamiji that startled Master Mahâshaya and made him speechless: "Does not the idea of *mukti* also lie within the realm of *mâyâ? Âtman* (the Self) is *nitya-mukta* (ever free). Hence what necessity is there for you to attempt for it?" We understood that Master Mahâshaya was ready to prescribe *dhyâna, japa, dhâranâ*[1], and other devotional practices to all classes of aspirants setting aside the importance of service, charity, love, and benevolence. But according to Swamiji, just as devotional practices are of vital value to a class of aspirants, so there are other classes of aspirants for whom the ideals of *karma-yoga* are the real incentives of spiritual development. If you belittle the importance of the latter, you have also to set aside the

[1] Meditation, mental repetition of God's name, and concentration.

efficacy of the former; but when you accept one course of *sâdhanâ* (spiritual practice), necessarily you cannot help accepting the other course too. We were able to grasp from this pointed reply of Swamiji that Master Mahâshaya was belittling the ideals of *karma-yoga* as being a part of *mâyâ* and was accepting *dhyâna, japa, dhâranâ,* etc., as the only paths to *mukti.* The generous heart and subtle intellect of Swamiji at once perceived this fallacy, and he could not bear this limited and narrow interpretation of spiritual practices. He showed by his wonderful arguments that even the struggle for liberation is within the domain of *mâyâ,* and by giving service, charity, etc., the same place as the devotional practices in the development of the spiritual life, he enunciated that the followers of the *karma-yoga* too, have the same claim to recognition as the followers of the other *yogas.*

Next the conversation was diverted to Thomas à Kempis, and his *Imitation of Christ.* Many of us know that before Swamiji renounced the world, he was reading this book with special interest, and when the habitation of the Sannyâsins shifted to Baranagore, the *guru-bhâis* of Swamiji used to read this book and study its teachings as special aids to their *sâdhanâ.* Swamiji loved this book so much that in those days he had contributed to a contemporary magazine, *Sâhitya-kalpadruma,* an introduction to the book which he named in Bengali as *"Ishânusarana"* and had freely rendered its teachings into Bengali.

By reading the introduction we can understand with what an attitude of mind Swamiji looked upon this book; so much of awe and reverence he evinced towards its author! And really such innumerable and illuminating counsels the book gives on renunciation, discrimination, humility, *dâsya bhakti*[1], etc., that it cannot but

[1] Worship of God with the attitude of servant.

evoke these sentiments in the mind of any one who reads it. One of those present there felt the curiosity to know Swamiji's opinion on the teachings of the book now. So he read out a teaching in the book about humility and remarked that without considering oneself as the lowest of the low it is impossible to get spiritual development. Hearing this Swamiji said, "What more need for us to consider ourselves low? Where is ignorance again for us? We have enjoyed the bliss of Illumination—we are children of that Illumination."

From this reply we could easily understand that he had transcended the stages of preliminary *sâdhanâs,* as mentioned in that book, and had reached great heights of realization.

We especially noted that even trivial everyday occurrences of life did not escape his scrutiny and he transmuted them as aids to popularize high spiritual truths.

Once Shri Ramlal Chattopadhyaya, the nephew of Shri Ramakrishna, known amongst the Ramakrishna Order as Ramlal-Dada, came from Dakshineswar to visit Swamiji. Seeing him, Swamiji got one chair for him and requested him to take his seat while he himself strolled to and fro. "Dada" felt very delicate at this respect shown to him and began to implore Swamiji to take that seat; but Swamiji was not prepared to leave him; with much protestations, "Dada" was made to occupy the chair. Swamiji continued to walk up and down repeating to himself, *"guruvat guruputreshu*—One should treat the descendants of the *guru* with the same honour as one would treat the *guru."* Here we noticed that though Swamiji was the recipient of such glory and honour, there was not the least trace of any conceit in him. We learnt, too, that that was the way of showing one's *guru-bhakti* (devotion to *guru*).

Many students had come to see him. Swamiji was then sitting in a chair. All were squatting around him

eagerly waiting to hear a few words from Swamiji. There were no seats left where the boys could sit and hear him. Hence they had to sit on the floor. Perhaps it struck Swamiji that it was better to have given them seats; but perhaps soon his mind was turned on some other topic and he thought otherwise and said, "Doesn't matter! you have sat well. To practise a little *tapasyā* (austerity) is good."

One day we took with us Shri Chandi Charan Vardhan who lived in our quarter of the city. Chandi Babu was the manager of a small Hindu Boy's School where education was given up to the third class. From the beginning he was a great lover of God. After reading the lectures of Swamiji he developed an intense faith in him. Formerly he had even thought of renouncing the world for facilitating his devotional practices; but he was not successful in this attempt. For a while he was an amateur actor in a theatre and he even figured as a playwright. He was very emotional by temperament. He had picked up the acquaintance of Edward Carpenter, the famous democrat. In his book *Adam's Peak to Elephanta*, the author has given an account of his meeting with Chandi Babu as well as a picture of him.

Chandi Babu came and with great reverence made his obeisance and asked Swamiji, "Swamiji, whom can we accept as our *guru?*"

Swamiji: "He who can understand and speak to you of your past and future can be recognized as your *guru*. My *guru* spoke all about my past and future."

Chandi Babu: "Well Swamiji, does wearing *kaupina* in any way help in controlling lust?"

Swamiji: "A little help might be got thereby. But when the passion gets strong, could it be checked, my child, with a *kaupina?* Unless and until the mind is completely given to God, no external check can completely obliterate lust. But then you know, as long as

the mind has not reached that stage, it tries to protect itself by external aids. Once in me rose the feeling of lust. I got so disgusted with myself that I sat on a pot of burning cinders, and it took a long time for the wound to heal."

Chandi Babu put Swamiji many questions regarding *brahmacharya* (continence) and Swamiji with utter frankness clearly expounded all its secrets to him. Chandi Babu was making severe attempts at *sâdhanâ*—but being a householder he had not the facility at all times to do this to his entire satisfaction. Fully knowing that *brahmacharya* was the prime necessity for all *sâdhanâs,* he was not yet able to act up to it to his entire satisfaction. And as he was engaging his time in the management and education of young boys, he had occasion to notice how by the absence of any moral and religious education of young boys, and by association in bad company the boys lose their sexual purity even at a tender age ; and he was always thinking within himself how to resuscitate the lost sexual purity in the boys. But how can one who himself has not attained a thing give it to others?

Thus unable to gain *brahmacharya,* with regard to himself and plant the same in his boys, he used to get much worried and desperate at times. So now hearing from that ideal Brahmachârin, Swamiji, his straightforward counsels and energetic words, it struck him suddenly that this *mahâpurusha* (great soul), if he minds, could revive in him and his boys the ancient ideal of *brahmacharya.* I have formerly mentioned that Chandi Babu was very emotional by temperament. Suddenly, as if flared up by an uncontrollable enthusiasm, he shouted out in English in great excitement, "Oh Great Teacher, tear up this evil of hypocrisy and teach the world the *one* thing needful—how to conquer lust". Swamiji pacified Chandi Babu.

The topic of conversation next was Edward Car-

penter. Swamiji said, "At London, he used to call on me on many occasions and sit near me. Many other specialists and democrats also used to visit me. Finding in the religion of Vedanta a strong support for their ideals, they felt much attracted towards its teachings."

Swamiji had read his book *Adam's Peak to Elephanta*. This brought to his mind the picture of Chandi Babu printed therein, and he told him that he had already been familiar with his appearance. The shadows of evening began to fall, and so Swamiji got up for a little rest. And addressing Chandi Babu he said, "Chandi Babu, you come across many boys ; can you give me some excellent boys?" Chandi Babu was a bit absent-minded when Swamiji said this. So, unable to understand the full bearing of Swamiji's words, when Swamiji retired to his room he followed him and inquired what he had said as regards some beautiful boys. Swamiji replied : "I do not want those whose appearance looks well. I want some strongly built, energetic, serviceable boys of character. I want to train them up so that they may get themselves ready for their own liberation as well as for the good and welfare of this world."

Another day we went and found Swamiji walking up and down and talking very familiarly with Shri Sharat Chandra Chakravarti (the author of *Swâmi-Shishya-Samvâda*), We were very eagerly waiting to put Swamiji one question. The problem was this—what is the difference between an *avatâra* and a *mukta* (liberated soul) or *siddha purusha* (perfected being)? We especially requested Sharat Babu to place the question before Swamiji, and he did so accordingly. But without giving a direct reply to this question, Swamiji said, "Of all states *videha-mukti* (freedom after death) is the best—this is my firm belief. During my *sâdhanâ* period when I was travelling round *Bhâratavarsha* (India), how many days had I spent in caves, how many a time had I even thought of giving up this body since liberation was not

achieved, what strenuous efforts had I made for my spiritual practices! But now I have not that thirst for liberation. My present mood is that so long as even one individual lives in this world without gaining liberation, I do not want my own liberation."

Hearing these words of Swamiji I began to wonder at his infinite kindness of heart, and I thought within myself, "Does he convey to us the nature of the *avatâra* by quoting himself as an example? Is he also then a divine incarnation?" And I thought, "Maybe, he no longer aspired after liberation, because he had already attained it."

On another day myself and Khagen (Swami Vimalananda) went to him after dusk. In order that we might be specially introduced to Swamiji, Haramohan Babu (a devotee of Shri Ramakrishna) spoke to him, "Swamiji, these are your great admirers and they study Vedanta with great aptitude." Though the first portion of Haramohan Babu's words were literally true, the second part was overdone. For although we had studied something of the Gita and a few primers in Vedanta, we could be credited with no more than a superficial knowledge; we had not studied them with the thoroughness of a student nor had we recourse to the original texts and commentaries on the same. Whatever that might be, hearing Vedanta mentioned, Swamiji asked us, "Have you studied the Upanishads?"

I replied, "Yes, a little."

Swamiji: "Which Upanishad?"

Searching my mind and finding nothing else I replied, "Katha Upanishad."

Swamiji: "Well, repeat a few lines. Katha Upanishad is very grand, full of poetic beauties."

What a catastrophe! Perhaps Swamiji understood that I knew Katha Upanishad by heart, and I was asked to repeat a few verses from it. Though I had turned over the pages of this Upanishad, I had cared neither to

grasp its meaning nor commit it to memory. So I was in a sad predicament. What should be done! Suddenly I struck upon a plan. A few years back I had made some regular attempts in reading the Gita and as a result I could remember most of the verses. I knew for certain that if I did not repeat from memory some scriptural texts at least, I could hardly show my face before him afterwards. Therefore I said: "I do not know by heart Katha Upanishad; but from the Gita I can repeat a few verses." Swamiji ordered me to repeat a few verses from the Gita. From the latter part of the eleventh chapter I repeated all the verses which Arjuna sang in praise of the Lord. To inspire us with enthusiasm, Swamiji was punctuating my recitation with his appreciative remarks.

The next day, taking with us our friend Rajendranath, we went to see Swamiji. I told Rajen: "Brother, yesterday I was thrown in a very delicate position before Swamiji with my poor knowledge of the Upanishads. If you have with you any Upanishad, take one with you in your pocket so that if any occasion arises, we can draw it out from our pocket and read out before Swamiji." Rajen had a pocket edition of the Upanishads by Prasanna Kumar Shastri with a commentary in Bengali. We took this in our pocket. That evening we found Swamiji's room filled with visitors. What I had thought of came to pass. Somehow or other the topic of conversation turned to Katha Upanishad. Immediately taking out the book from my pocket I began to read the Upanishad from the beginning. And as I read, Swamiji spoke of the faith of Nachiketâ, that faith whereby he dared even to go to the house of Yama (Death). When I began to read of the second boon of Nachiketâ regarding the attainment of heaven, Swamiji asked me to read a few verses here and there and begin that part dealing with the third boon: Nachiketâ asks Yama about the doubts of men, whether man ever survives bodily death. And Yama places temptations before him, but he rejects

them all. After the reading of these was over Swamiji spoke in praise of his character, in words pregnant with celestial fire. But my weak memory retains but little of that day's talk.

But by these two days' talk on the Upanishads Swamiji infused into my mind something of his intense faith and love of the Upanishads. From that day, whenever I got an opportunity, I studied the Upanishads with due reverence and am still doing the same. Even now I seem to hear those Upanishadic *mantras* which Swamiji used to repeat at different times, in his own peculiarly fiery, clear, and ringing tone. Whenever I forget the Self, carried away by criticisms and judgement of others, memory brings back to me that familiar Upanishadic text which Swamiji used to repeat often in his own sweet and melodious tone: "Know that *âtman* alone. Give up all other talks. He is the bridge to Immortality." On any day when the sky is dark and thick set with clouds and lightning flashed I remember his familiar figure pointing to the flash of lightning in the sky and uttering the well-known *mantra:* "There the sun shines not, nor the moon nor stars. These lightnings also do not shine there; He shining, all shine after Him; His light illumines them all." Or whenever my heart gets filled with despondency that realization is far away from me, I seem to hear Swamiji with his face suffused with bliss, repeating in sonorous voice the message of hope from the Upanishads: "Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! Even ye that reside in higher spheres! I have found the Ancient One, who is beyond all darkness, all delusion; knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again—there is no other way!"...

It was the end of April, 1887. Only five days ago I had left home to live with the Sannyâsins of the Alambazar Math. Swamis Premananda, Nirmalananda, and Subodhananda were then living there. Swamiji presently came back after his visit to Darjeeling. Along with him

there were Swami Brahmananda, Swami Yogananda, and his Madrasi disciples, Alasinga, Kidi, G. G., and others.

Swami Nityananda, only a few days before, took *sannyâsa* from Swamiji. He spoke to Swamiji one day about the need for a systematic training for the Math, as a large number of young men had at that time joined the Math to lead a life of renunciation. Swamiji readily agreed to the suggestion and asked him to gather all the inmates who all assembled in the hall. "Let some one be writing as I dictate," said Swamiji. No one seemed to be prepared to come forward, and finally the task fell on me. It might be said in passing, that at that time with the inmates of the Math, literary education was out of favour, the prevailing notion being that to realize God by *sâdhanâ* and *bhajana* was the goal, while literary knowledge even though it might bring a little fame and name was really useless for a *sâdhaka* (aspirant). Only in the case of those who are chosen by God to carry His mission or message was the need for literary training recognized. When I came forward to take down Swamiji's dictation, Swamiji casually remarked whether I would stick on, and some one answered that I would. All the while I was getting the writing materials ready; and Swamiji before dictating the rules remarked as follows: "Look here, we are going to make rules, no doubt; but we must remember the main object thereof. Our main object is to transcend all rules and regulations. We have naturally some bad tendencies which are to be changed by observing good rules and regulations; and finally we have to go beyond all these even, just as we remove one thorn by another and throw both of them away." The course of discipline and routine decided upon was of this kind: Both mornings and evenings should be devoted to meditation, while the afternoons after a short rest should be utilized for individual studies, and in the evenings one particular religious book should be read and expounded. It was also provided that each

member would take physical exercise both morning and evening. Another rule was to the effect that no intoxicant save tobacco should be allowed. Having dictated the rules, Swamiji asked me to make a fair copy of the rules and instructed me that I should put all the rules in the positive form.

I found some difficulty in carrying out this last instruction. Swamiji's central idea was that it does no good to men to point out their various defects and tell them, "You should not do this, or that", and so on. But he believed that if the proper ideal be clearly placed before the aspirants it would help them to rise up, and the defects would gradually fall off by themselves. I was at every turn reminded of this principle when I carried out his instruction to put the rules in a positive form. Except in the case of the intoxicant all other rules I was able to make positive. Its original form was "that in the Math except tobacco, no other intoxicants shall be allowed". When I wanted to remove the negative form, I first of all made it thus : "All in the Math shall use tobacco"! But seeing that this seemed to make it obligatory to smoke even for those who are free from that habit, after many futile attempts I finally gave it this form: "That in the Math (of all intoxicants) tobacco alone can be used." Somehow I now find that we only made an awkward compromise. As a matter of fact in any set of rules and regulations it is not possible to do away with the negative form altogether ; but it must be remembered that the more the rules embody the positive aspect of the ideal, the more helpful they become. And this was Swamiji's main idea. . . .

Another day Swamiji was sitting in the hall, his face radiating an unusual brilliance. A variety of topics were talked about. Amidst the audience was our friend Vijaya Krishna Bose. In those days Vijaya Babu used to ascend many a platform and speak before many associations. He had once even spoken before the Congress in English.

Somebody let Swamiji know of his capacity to deliver lectures, and so Swamiji asked Vijaya Babu to deliver a lecture as there was quite a good audience. The subject suggested was *âtman* (Self). But Vijaya Babu exhibited no signs of willingness to act up to Swamiji's suggestion; and Swamiji and all the rest tried in vain to set him upon his legs. After nearly fifteen minutes of ineffectual persuasion their glance fell upon me. Before coming to the Math I had occasionally delivered a few lectures in Bengali, and in our Debating Society I trained myself to speak in English as well. Some one present referred to this, and I was caught hold of to speak on the same subject. I have never been encumbered much with that inconvenient commodity called modesty. I at once stood up and held forth for nearly half an hour giving out ideas about *âtman* beginning with those contained in the Yâjnavalkya-Maitreyi *samvâda* (conversation between Yâjnavalkya and Maitreyi) of the Brihadâranyaka Upanishad. I did not pay any heed whether there were grammatical mistakes or any incongruity of ideas in my speech. Our gracious Swamiji also without caring for any of these, began to cheer me enthusiastically. After me, Swami Prakashananda (who is now in charge of the Hindu Temple, San Francisco, U.S.A.), a new initiate into *sannyâsa,* also spoke for about ten minutes on *âtman.* He modelled his speech on that of Swamiji and in good sonorous voice spoke out what he had to say. Swamiji extolled much his speech also.

Really Swamiji never looked into man's failings and weaknesses. On the other hand he used to encourage whatever was good in anyone thereby giving him the proper surroundings and facility to manifest his latent possibilities. But our readers need not be under the impression that Swamiji used to praise one and all in every one of his doings. Far from it, many times we have seen him assuming a severe appearance and pointing out one's shortcomings, especially of his *gurubhâis*

and disciples. But he did that to rid us of our faults, to sound us a note of warning, and never to discourage us in any way. Where could we find another like him to fire us with such enthusiasm, courage, and hope? Where could we find such another to write to his disciples, "I want each one of you, my children, to be a hundred times greater than I could ever be. Every one of you must be a giant— *must*, that is my word"?...

At that time in the Math we received from Mr. E. T. Sturdy of London the copies of Swamiji's *jnâna-yoga* lectures printed in pamphlet form. Swamiji had not then returned from Darjeeling. We were reading with great enthusiasm those soul-entrancing and inspiring interpretations of the Advaita Vedanta contained in those lectures. The old Swami Advaitananda did not know English well. But it was his special desire to hear how "Naren" captivated the heart of the West, what interpretation of the Vedanta brought out their admiration of him. By his request we used to read and explain the substance of those lectures before him. One day Swami Premananda asked the new Brahmachârins to translate Swamiji's lectures into Bengali. So we began to do it. Meanwhile Swamiji returned to the Math, and Swami Premananda spoke of this to Swamiji and asked me to read out the translation before Swamiji. Swamiji also, while expressing his opinion on the translation, remarked that certain words would sound better if put in a particular way and so on. One day I was alone in the presence of Swamiji. Suddenly he spoke to me "Why not you translate my *Râja-Yoga*? I wondered why Swamiji ordered such an unfit person like me to do this work. Long ago I had tried to practise *râja-yoga*. For some time I had such an attraction for this *yoga* that I even used to look down upon the other paths of *jnâna, karma* and *bhakti*. I was under the impression that the *sâdhus* (holy men) of the Math knew nothing of *yogic* practices, and hence they did not encourage them. My

reading of the *Râja-Yoga* revealed to me that Swamiji had not only a thorough grasp of the truths of *râja-yoga*—for therein I found a masterly exposition of all ideas I had already gathered on the subject—but had also brought out in a beautiful manner their true relations with other *yogas* as well. Another reason which increased my faith and devotion was this. Was it that in asking me to translate the *Râja-Yoga* Swamiji meant to help me in my spiritual growth by bringing about thereby my close consideration of the truths of this *yoga?* Or was it because the *râjâ-yoga* practices are not much current in Bengal he desired that the truths should be sown broadcast there? In a letter to Babu Pramadadas Mitra he writes that the practice of *râja-yoga* is completely ignored in Bengal and what little there is of it is only such as blowing through the nose and the like.

Whatever that might be, without caring for my own shortcomings, I immediately set at work to carry out Swamiji's order.

(Vedanta Kesari, Dec. 1922 & Jan.-Feb. 1923)

XXV

It was in the year 1897, the year of my graduation, that I had the rare privilege of seeing at Calcutta the world-famous Hindu monk, the epoch-making Swami Vivekananda, in the house of the late Babu Balaram Bose, a devout *bhakta* well known to the disciples of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. I went to see him because I was profoundly interested in his message, though its significance was not yet quite clear to me. A few words may be necessary to explain my interest.

I was inquisitive from my boyhood and the question of religion had a strange fascination for my mind. Just as in these days the predominant interest of my countrymen is politics, so in my boyhood their predominant interest was religion. It was a time of great religious movements and controversies. There was a constant play of action and reaction. On the one hand, there was the rising tide of Brâhmoism with which most enlightened men were in sympathy. On the other, there was the frantic effort of the so-called orthodoxy with its pseudo-scientific and fanciful interpretation of the religion of the Hindus. Then, again, there was Theosophy with its Mahâtmas, occultism, and spirit-world to which many educated people were attracted because they did not like the Westernized outlook of the Brâḥmos, and further because they felt flattered by the uncritical eulogy of everything Hindu by Colonel Olcott of America and Mrs. Annie Besant of England. It must be said at the same time that not an inconsiderable section of University-bred young men were free-thinkers, rationalists or agnostics who swore by Mill, Comte, Spencer, Huxley, and Haeckel and thought that all religions were equally false. Such was my intellectual *milieu* as a boy and a youth. I listened to the discussions of my elders

and sometimes took part in the discussions. Religion to me was not yet a craving of the soul. It was more or less a question of intellectual interest. Though born in an orthodox Hindu family, yet the influence that I felt most was that of the Brâhmo Samâj and also that of a near relative who was an out and out agnostic. With the social programme of the Brâhmos I had every sympathy, but their theology I could not accept. I was swaying between two forces—Brâhmoism and agnosticism.

It is in this state of mind that I finished my school education and entered college. It is in the first year class, if I remember aright, that I first heard of Ramakrishna—yet I did not hear of him from any fellow-countryman of mine but from a foreigner—no less a personage than Professor Max Müller himself. I just happened to read two articles from his pen in *The Nineteenth Century*—one entitled *Esoteric Buddhism*, a scathing criticism of Madame Blavatsky and her theosophy and the other *A Real Mahâtman*. This Real Mahâtman was no other than our Bhagavân Ramakrishna. A new horizon opened before me. A new light flashed forth. And all this happened at a *mofussil* town.

About a year after this, I read in the papers all about the famous Parliament of Religions at Chicago and the resounding triumph of Swami Vivekananda there. Who was this Vivekananda? I came to know soon after that he was the chief disciple of Ramakrishna, the Real Mahâtman of Professor Max Müller. I was eager to know all about the man and his message. Unfortunately I was not present at Calcutta at the time when the whole city turned out to receive him with the tremendous ovation that signalizes the return of a conquering hero. I read, however, glowing accounts of the event and saw that honour such as this had never fallen to the lot of any man on the Indian soil.

From this time onward I read the reports of all the

speeches he delivered at different places in India. I felt that it was the spirit of India herself that breathed through his utterance. Such force, such fire was beyond the utmost stretch of my imagination. Several speeches of Keshab Chandra Sen I had read before. I had great admiration for his style, eloquence, and religious fervour. But here was a new atmosphere altogether, a new accent, a new emphasis, a new outlook at once national and universal. Here was Hinduism in all its phases, but how different from the Hinduism of the hide-bound Sanâtanists, pseudo-revivalists, the Scribes and Pharisees of India! I was under a spell. The two speeches that impressed me most were his Calcutta Town-hall speech and his Lahore address on Vedanta. When I read the Lahore address, I was a B.A. student at Calcutta.

I eagerly waited for an opportunity to see the man. The opportunity came, as I have said, in 1897. I went to see Swami Vivekananda in the Calcutta residence of the late Babu Balaram Bose in company with a class-fellow of mine, Babu Narendra Kumar Bose.

We entered a hall which was full to overflowing. The people assembled there were for the most part students of the Calcutta colleges. They were all seated cross-legged on the floor covered with *duree* and *pharâs* (floor matting covered with cotton sheets). In the centre was the seat meant for Swamiji. I managed somehow to occupy a place in the hall, and we all eagerly waited for the arrival of Swamiji. Perfect silence prevailed. A few minutes passed and the Swami stepped in. His gait was leonine and the dignity of his bearing simply royal. His frame was athletic and robust. He had a *gairic âlkhâllâ* (ochre cloak) on, his feet were bare and his head, chin and lips clean shaven—altogether a striking personality. He had the look of a man born to command. He was soon seated, and then he looked at us. His large eyes beamed with genius and spiritual fire. He spoke in Bengali interlarded with English. Words flowed from

his lips, and we heard him with rapt attention. Each word of his was like a spark of fire. His manner was impassioned. It was clear to all that here was a man with a message. His awakening power was wonderful. We heard him and felt aroused. A new spirit was breathed into us. Here was a man of faith in an age of doubt, sincere to the backbone, a dynamo of supernal force. To have seen him was education. To have heard him was inspiration. It was the most memorable day in my life, and it is impossible for me ever to lose its recollection.

What did he tell us all? To be strong and self-confident, to renounce and serve. Strength was the burden of all that he said. He poured torrential scorn upon what he called our "negative education" and spoke enthusiastically on man-making. He gave a vivid picture of our country's degradation and the misery of the masses. How he felt for the poor, the downtrodden and the oppressed! If we had a millionth part of his feeling, the face of the country would change at once. He spoke of the greatness of Hinduism and proudly said, "It is my ambition to conquer the world by Hindu thought—to see Hindus everywhere from the North Pole to the South Pole." As he uttered these words I saw in him the very Napoleon of Religion. I saw the warrior's heart throbbing beneath the yellow robe of the Sannyâsin. Not a mild Hindu at all this Swami Vivekananda but the most aggressive Hindu I have ever seen in my life. He was made of the same stuff of which Alexander and Caesar were made—only his role was different.

Some of his words are still ringing in my ears and they are these: "You must have steel nerves and cast-iron muscles. A moment's vigorous life is better than years of jelly-fish existence. Cowards die many times before their death. An honest atheist is a thousand times better than a hypocritical theist. Don't be jealous, for the slaves are jealous. Virtue is heroism—from *vir* in

Latin which means *man* and which again is the same word as *vira* in Sanskrit."

After about two hours the Swami left the hall and we dispersed in different directions. I returned to my lodgings but the words of the Swami filled the air. I could think of nothing but Swami Vivekananda. There stood his heroic figure whichever way I turned.

I could not resist the temptation of seeing him again, and so on the next day I went once more to the house of the late Babu Balaram. On this day there was no great gathering. Swamiji was seated in the verandah on an *asana* surrounded by a group of his brother-disciples. The *Brahma-Sutras* with Shankara's commentary was being read out by one of them, and Swamiji passed explanatory remarks here and there. Today's atmosphere was different altogether. It was all very quiet. Soon after the reading was finished, one of the Swami's brother-disciples spoke of the spirit-world and read an extract from a theosophical book. Swamiji at once came down upon him and extinguished him completely. I saw that the Swami was a hater of spookism. He clearly said that all this was weakening and debilitating and had nothing to do with true religion. After this, many light topics were introduced, and then Swamiji laughed and joked like a child. Here was another mood. I said to myself: Is it the same Swami I saw yesterday—the thundering Swami in dead earnest?

It was about a year after this that I saw the Swami once more—and this time on the platform. Now I was face to face with Vivekananda the orator. The scene was the Star Theatre of Calcutta. The occasion was the introduction of Sister Nivedita to the Calcutta public. The hall was crammed to suffocation. On the dais were seated many distinguished persons. I remember only Sir Jagadish Bose and Sir Ananda Charlu among them. Swami Vivekananda was in his best form. He wore a *gairic* turban and a long-flowing robe which was also

gairic in hue. He introduced Sister Nivedita in a neat little speech. The Sister addressed the meeting in a graceful style. Then rose Swami Vivekananda, and he spoke on his foreign policy. The speech is to be found in the Mayavati Memorial Edition of his *Complete Works*.[1] He brought forward a scheme of his future missionary work in the West. The speech was full of fire. Such thrilling voice, rich intonation, variation of pitch, strong and sonorous accent with occasional explosion as of the bolt of heaven I have never heard in my life nor am I likely to hear again. Sometimes he paced to and fro on the platform as he spoke and folded his arms across his chest. Sometimes he faced the audience and waved his hand. His expressions flowed free and fast with the rush and impetuosity of a mountain torrent. His words were like the roaring of a cataract. Well might *The New York Herald* say: "He is an orator by divine right." Altogether a more majestic, striking, and magnetic personality it is hard to conceive. We heard him spellbound. Each word was an arrow that went straight to the heart.

Such is my recollection of Swami Vivekananda. To fully understand his message I read subsequently all his speeches and writings and almost all about his Master. There is not a single problem of our individual, social, and political life, that he has not touched and illuminated. He has given a new impulse to the country. So far as I am concerned, he is growing more and more vivid to me with the lapse of years, and I see his stature dilated today "like Teneriffe or Atlas." His message is the message of freedom, strength, fearlessness, and self-confidence. It is the eternal truths of our religion that he has preached in a new way, in modern terms, and he has also shown how these truths are to be applied to the present conditions of India and the rest of the world. A more

[1]Volume III. pp. 440 *et seqq.*

constructive thinker and inspiring teacher I have not seen in my life. I do not know a single self-sacrificing Indian worker of the present century who has not been influenced more or less by his thoughts, words, and example. More than anybody else he has made India respected abroad. Many a child of the West has found in his message the solace of his life and the solace of his death. It is true that at the present moment the predominant interest of our country has become political, but the better minds believe with Swami Vivekananda that spirituality must be the basis of all our activities. It is difficult to say what form our national reconstruction will exactly take, it is difficult to predict anything about the future of the world as a whole, but I sincerely believe that the ideas and ideals of Swami Vivekananda are destined to play a very important part in the history of the human race. May his influence grow from more to more!

(Prabuddha Bhârata, February 1930)

XXVI

FIRST VISIT

It was the year 1897 (?) when I heard that Swamiji (that is, Swami Vivekananda) had arrived at Calcutta. I went to see him in Baghbazar where he was staying with Shri Balaram Bose. On the first floor, facing the street, there was a hall where a few persons waited to have a *darshana* of the great Swami, who was in an adjacent room. I took my seat in a corner of the floor which was carpeted, and in a short while there came Miss Noble (Sister Nivedita) through one of the doors inside the hall. She wore an overall robe of pale saffron which came almost to her ankles and there was a necklace of holy *rudrâksha* beads on her neck. As she entered the room barefooted she looked as pure as a goddess.

She went with slow strides straight to the door adjoining the room in which Swamiji was resting; but then she knelt down beside the door-frame and folded her hands; her finger and palms joined to offer her obeisance to the Lord. She bowed down in this posture and then remained quietly sitting on her ankles with joined palms as we do while praying. But she did not enter the room in which Swamiji was sitting on a cot. Swamiji talked with her for a while, and she also answered in a soft voice reverentially as if she was in a church. Then she again bowed down to the Swami and went away as silently as she had come.

I had heard a lot about Sister Nivedita but this was the first time that I saw her in person. Her face had a serenity and fullness that one sees in the face of Madonna that indicates the direct vision of God in person ....

After a while Shri Vijayakrishna Goswami entered the hall with a few of his followers who had an earthen

mridanga (long drum) and cymbals with them. The party were seated at one corner of the hall, a little apart from the rest of the people who by this time had assembled there. As soon as Swamiji saw Shri Vijayakrishna, he left his room and came inside the hall and stood in the middle. Seeing the Swami, Shri Vijayakrishna and his party stood up as a mark of respect. Then Shri Vijayakrishna Goswami advanced a step or two and tried to take the dust from the feet of Swamiji. But Swamiji was too alert for it, and he himself bent down to take the dust from the feet of Shri Goswami. Simultaneously both of them avoided to be touched by the other, and again both of them tried to outdo the other in this form of homage. At last Swamiji took hold of Shri Goswami's hand and made him sit beside himself on the carpet in the middle of the floor.

Shri Vijayakrishna was then in a great ecstatic mood and he looked like a man intoxicated with the love of God. A few minutes after, when he seemed normal, the Swami entreated him to speak a few words about Shri Ramakrishna. At this Shri Vijayakrishna was again choked with emotion and he slowly repeated the words several times with great effort: "Thakur (Shri Ramakrishna) has kindly blessed me". But he could speak no further due to his immense surge of devotion. We could see divine grace in his flushed face and ecstatic mood. He sat quiet and motionless and tears flowed from his eyes continuously for some time wetting his cheeks. At this the men who had come with him stood up and began *sankirtana* keeping him and the Swami in their centre. After some time Shri Goswami was able to stand up and though even then he seemed to be in a condition of half-awakened consciousness, his followers took him in their middle and moved slowly out of the hall.

It was then that I bowed to the Swami from a distance. There was none to introduce me to him, but I felt very happy to be able to see him face to face. I thought

that I was fortunate enough to see the great Swami, lionized in America for his great learning and oratory. I was a petty clerk in government service at Allahabad, but hearing about the Swami's return to India, I took leave from my office and went forth for his *darshana*. Thus I came to Calcutta where my elder brother lived and practised as a lawyer. Twice or thrice in the year I used to come to Calcutta, and I never lost the opportunity to know at a closer quarter the Sannyâsins of the Math, and the disciples of Shri Ramakrishna, for my own spiritual benefit.

On a few occasions I had seen the Holy Mother but never asked her for initiation. A Brâhmo friend of mine, Shri Narendra Nath Basu, got a touch of divine intoxication at the very first sight of Mother's holy feet. By her grace he got his initiation soon along with his wife. It is this friend of mine who came to me with the information that Swamiji was in the house of Balaram Babu. It was due to the kindness of this friend of mine that I own this fortune of seeing the Swami in person for the first time in my life.

I was born in an era which is difficult to be understood today by a generation which is so much removed from the ingrained thoughts of those times which now may have become meaningless. But then I also was so much influenced by the Brâhminic ideas that prevented me to touch the feet of even a Sannyâsin born of the Kâyastha caste. I am not ashamed to confess today that to me on that day Swamiji was not an exception to this rule. But the Swami spoke a few words to me in a kind voice and in a few minutes my Brâhminic barriers seemed to be vanishing altogether.

SECOND VISIT

It was in the last week of December when one morning I went to Belur. I found Swamiji standing near the open yard in front of the kitchen. On his head there

was an woollen cap of *geruâ* colour (ochre-brown). On his body there was a woollen dressing gown with large black checks on a white background. His complexion was fair, but his skin looked fairer due to a peculiar brilliance and softness in it. The most attractive part of this fine personality was his eyes. He had large expressive eyes. I have never come across another pair of such fine eyes.

This time I went up to him and bowed down touching his feet with the end of my fingers. Nearby was a small tent in which there was a small tea-table and a few stools to sit on. He asked a Brahmachârin to bring a cup of tea for me. Tea and *prasâda* were served on the table, and then Swamiji fell into a conversational mood. He asked me where I lived and what I did. I answered him pertinently.... Then he went elsewhere and I also moved about with other Swamis of my acquaintance. Thus some time passed till it was about ten.

Inside the verandah facing the courtyard of the Math, Swamiji was on a chair while Rakhal Maharaj, Mahâpurushji and Sharat Maharaj (Swamis Brahmananda, Shivananda, and Saradananda) were seated in one of the three benches, and I alone was in another bench at a little distance. Swamiji was in a talking mood and he was relating many of his experiences in America. In the course of the conversation he said, "In Chicago it was proved that Hinduism was the greatest religion of the world and then the padres there got infuriated. They wanted to convene another Parliament of Religions in France. They had thought of making it a convention at Paris to make it compulsory for the speakers to address the House in the French language. I did not know French at the time. And they thought that my ignorance of the language would debar me from the Parliament. But I went to France and picked up the language in about six months and then began to deliver some speeches in French. This damped the enthusiasm of the

missionaries. Later on the idea of recalling another Parliament was dropped."[1]

Swamiji said, "In America, outside my room there was a private letter box. I used to lock it up. Occasionally, in the day I opened it myself. Various were the letters that I used to get from all sorts of people. Many of them were threats from unknown persons. They asked me to stop preaching Hinduism. But sometimes I received letters of admiration and praise. Most of them were written by women. A few of them also contained proposals for marriage. There have been other occasions when some influential ladies have expressed the desire to get me married to some rich woman and settle down in America. I had to explain to them that Indian monks do not marry. But it was difficult for them to be convinced as some padres did marry in their country, and so they asked why should not I."

In the course of his conversation he spoke of one peculiar incident which to me seemed very strange, and Swamiji also did not try to explain the phenomenon. He said, "I was then travelling from city to city and addressing many gatherings even in a single day. One day I was thinking that I had spoken on all the topics that I knew about. I was to address a meeting the next day and I was sorry that this time I would speak something that might be a repetition of some former lecture. This I wanted to avoid. It was late at night. I was sitting on an easy chair quite relaxed. In my mind I was accusing the Master for this predicament of mine. Suddenly I heard him speaking to me. At that moment I had closed my eyes and I could not see him. I only heard his voice. He went on speaking for some time at length and said, 'You should speak thus—and thus—and don't worry at all.' I was very much astonished. But I was

[1] The words put in Swamiji's mouth here do not fully agree with other records in important details. The same remark holds good about some other passages.—*Publisher.*

glad to learn about the topics of my next lecture. There was even more astonishment in store for me. Next day in the morning a gentleman living in a room adjacent to mine asked me, 'Who was talking to you yesterday? I couldn't follow anything because the language was new to me.' Now, the language that I heard was Bengali. I wondered how could this man also hear it."

Swamiji continued, "Once I was asked in America to deliver a lecture on my *guru*. I told them that Shri Ramakrishna could not touch even a copper coin what to say of gold or silver. It was true not only in the figurative sense but true literally. If he touched a metal coin inadvertently his fingers cramped and the hand recoiled as if his nervous system rejected the touch instinctively. The contact would give him actual physical pain, and it was so intense that he would cry out even in sleep. One night the Master was asleep when I took a silver rupee and touched him with it. It had an instantaneous effect. Shri Ramakrishna woke up. It was evident that he was anguished with pain, and I was ashamed of my childish act."

Then Rakhal Maharaj requested Swamiji to write a life history of the Master. At this Swamiji winced and said, "I cannot do it. It is not for me to attempt such a difficult task. In the hand of a bad artist even the picture of Shiva may appear to be that of a monkey." At this Rakhal Maharaj said, "If you say so, then the task will remain undone." But Swamiji answered, "If Thakur wishes it, some one else shall accomplish it."

For the time, his brother-disciples dispersed leaving the Swami seated there alone, who now turned to me and started a casual conversation.

"So ! you live at Allahabad, isn't it? Do you know Doctor Nandi ? When I was at Jhusi, I used to go to his house for *bhikshâ* (alms). I knew him very well." Doctor Nandi was a devotee of Shri Ramakrishna. We liked him and there was some acquaintance

between us through this common bond. As far as I know, Dr. Nandi had seen Shri Ramakrishna. But I loved him because he had known Swami Vivekananda personally. He had told us that Swami Vivekananda, the chief disciple of Shri Ramakrishna, once stayed for some time on the other side of the Ganga where there were many *kuthiás* (thatched houses) for wandering monks. Swamiji was then a *parivrâjaka* Sannyâsin (itinerant monk). It was summer and the days were very hot. Often there was a hot breeze, locally known as the *loo*. Swamiji even in those hot days wore half of a coarse blanket as a *bahirvâsa* (outer garment) and half of it covered his upper body. He walked barefooted to and from the house of Dr. Nandi.

This time I went to Belur quite often. Many men young and old used to come to Belur for a *darshana* of Swamiji. But it was not so easy to see the Swami at all hours of the day. Mostly he remained in his own room, and he was seldom disturbed even by his *gurubhâis*. It was well known that often he was absorbed in his moods of tranquillity, and then it pained him to talk on affairs alien to his own mood. So the custom was that people saw him and could talk to him when he came down from the upper storey of his own accord, and then the visitors also were allowed to go to him without any restriction.

One morning Swamiji's mother came to see him. Her very appearance commanded respect. She was a strongly built lady with large fine eyes with long eyelashes. She had a remarkably strong personality that made her obeyed without any questioning. No wonder that Swamiji had inherited these qualities from her. She went up to the verandah of the first storey and cried aloud "Viloo-oo", and her child came out of the room at once. The great Vivekananda was just like a teen-aged son to his mother. He descended the stairs along with Bhuvaneswari Devi, and then they walked in the garden-path together and conversed softly on personal matters.

During the last few years whenever Swamiji was at Calcutta he would go himself to his mother. While at Belur he would occasionally visit his mother at Calcutta, but if perchance he could not go to her for a week or two she would herself come down to Belur to see him and also ask his advice on family matters.

It was about four in the afternoon when one day the Japanese Consul came to meet the Swami at Belur. He was asked to be seated on one of the benches inside the inner verandah where generally Swamiji received his guests. He was informed of the honourable guest, but he had to wait for some time before the Swami came down. It depended on Swamiji's mood altogether whether he would meet a person however important, instantly or at some more convenient time. On that occasion the Consul had been kept waiting for quite a long time as Swamiji came when it was wont for him to take his evening walk. He took a chair near the Consul and the conversation took place through an interpreter. After the formal greetings the Consul spoke to this purport: "Our Mikado is very keen to receive you at Japan. He has sent me to request you to visit Japan as early as may be convenient to you. Japan is eager to hear about Hindu religion from your lips."

Swamiji answered, "In my present state of health I think it will not be possible for me to visit Japan now."

The Consul said, "Then, may I with your permission inform the Mikado that you will go there some time in future when your health permits?"

Swamiji said, "It is very doubtful whether this body will ever be fit enough."

At the time, Swamiji was suffering from diabetes. His body was quite emaciated. He was not so ill when I had seen him for the first time.

Shortly after, I returned to Allahabad. But soon I availed an opportunity to go to Calcutta and proceeded

to Belur in the hope of seeing the Swami. To my utter disappointment he had gone elsewhere for the time.

Next to Swamiji, Raja Maharaj or Rakhal Maharaj was the head of the Order. I was well known to him; yet I felt him at the time to be rather distant and aloof from me. He was often absorbed in his own spiritual moods and was not very accessible to easy conversation. I had heard about his great spiritual attainments. He often had *samâdhi,* and he was beyond the reach of my understanding.

I sat near him while he remained quiet for some time after we exchanged a few casual words of greeting. I was thinking of a few problems that I wanted to solve through his help. But I did not speak, thinking if he was a great divine soul he would know them without my telling him. Suddenly Rakhal Maharaj said to me, "Come with me, let us have a walk." It was not yet dusk. The path led to one of the gates of the Math on one side and the river Ganga on the other. The temples were not built then. There were a few buildings only. Most of the place was open. There were a few shrubs and trees and we went up to the gate that led to the jetty and then turned back. Thus we strolled for a little while and Rakhal Maharaj did all the talking and to my great wonder he touched all the three problems of mine, one by one, and they were solved to my satisfaction. Then Rakhal Maharaj took me to the ghat of the Ganga just facing the Math on one side and he took his seat on one of the steps and asked me to sit beside him. I also sat on a step near his feet. I was at that moment overwhelmed with an emotion akin to devotion and wished to surrender myself to him completely. So I entreated him to give me initiation formally. He kept quiet for some time. Then he spoke slowly, "Your *guru* is Vivekananda, not I." It extinguished my hopes of ever being initiated as I knew that Swamiji had initiated very few persons, and to be one among his disciples was a dream

to me, never to be realized. So, I was absolutely disappointed and returned to Allahabad in a few days.

Next time when I went to Belur, Swamiji's health seemed to be a little improved and he was in good cheer. One day I had gone to Belur in the morning. Some one told me that Swamiji was in the *pujâ* (worship) room of Shri Thakur. I went up the stairs and saw Swamiji in a divine ecstasy. He was pacing from one end to the other inside the covered verandah just in front of the worship room. His hands were sometimes swinging and sometimes crossed above his breast as was his wont. He paced rapidly and his gait was in jerk-like motion. His face seemed red with an intense emotion which he was trying to suppress. . . .I heard him constantly muttering very audibly: गर्जन्तं राम रामेति, ब्रुवन्तं राम रामेति ॥ Then, all his mind was turned inwards and he was very restless as if he was keeping a watch before his ideal Shri Râma-Jânaki, as Mahâvira. He seemed to be a completely dedicated soul to Shri Ramakrishna, but his will was full of explosive possibilities and he was determined to do even the impossible for the sake of the service of the Lord.

That afternoon some young men had come to see Swamiji. They were about ten or twelve and most of them might be college students. They had assembled on the verandah facing the Ganga on the first floor before Swamiji's room. Swamiji came out after a short time and talked with them very freely. He was so jovial that he himself looked like them—quite young and enthusiastic. He talked to one, touched another on his back, or mildly slapped some other at the shoulder. It was a pleasing sight to see him in this mood for most often that I had seen him he was full of gravity and seriousness.

There was a solid gold chain, around his neck, attached to a gold watch in his pocket, and it matched very nicely with his fair complexion. One of the young men touched the chain with his fingers and said, "It is

very beautiful." At once Swamiji took the watch out of his pocket and put the chain with the gold watch in the hand of that youth who in amazement had then cupped his palms. He said, "You like it ! Then it is yours. But my boy, do not sell it. Keep it with you as a souvenir." Needless to say that the young man was extremely happy. I marvelled at the ease with which Swamiji could part with such a valuable thing ; not only for its cost but the present was also invaluable for its association. Once he had said before me, "Sacrifice means the sacrifice of something you possess. A man who has everything in his possession and yet is indifferent to them is a truly detached soul. The man who has nothing is only poor—what can he give?"

During the Christmas holidays some scholars came from Agra. A few of them were professors. It was about nine o'clock in the morning. Inside the courtyard of the Math there were a few ordinary benches on which the visitors were seated while Swamiji took a chair near them. The college dons put their questions one by one and Swamiji answered them with due gravity. The problems were various, some philosophical and some social or political. They seemed to be quite satisfied and after a while they all went away.

I was sitting at a little distance and tried to follow the trend of the conversation. Swamiji would occasionally look at me which made me feel at home.

It was then about twelve in the noon. Suddenly the Swami asked me, "Sâdhu Amulya lives at Allahabad. Do you know him? How does he do? Tell me all about him."

I said, "I know him for many years. He used to serve all without any self-interest. His courage and spirit of service endeared him to all. Once there was an epidemic of cholera and he nursed the helpless and the needy without the least fear for his life. So he was loved

by the rich and the poor who considered him as a congenial friend in times of distress."

Sâdhuji was the name given to Amulya who then wore white robes as do the Brahmachârins. But later on he put on *geruâ* clothes. By some he was then called *guruji*. Many of his devotees were addicts to *gânjâ, charas* and *bhâng*. They offered him these and when *guruji* had smoked a little, they got the *prasâda*. By and by he began to drink, and women of questionable character also visited him. After some time he left all clothes and lived like Nâgâs. When I saw him last he was a fully fallen man. On hearing this sorry tale of Amulya, Swamiji kept silent for some time. Then he said, "Ah ! a great soul—a great soul !" He added, "For him this life is lost. But he shall be free in his next birth. Amulya used to read with me in the college. He was a good student. He had a wide vision and was a follower of the path of knowledge.... Sâdhu Amulya had no spiritual *guru*. When the disciple takes a wrong move and is about to fall, it is the spiritual guide who guards him and the disciple regains his balance." I could see that Swamiji was visibly moved. He was very sympathetic. Though I knew him to be a great moralist, yet his love for the fallen made me wonder at his nature which was stern from outside but very tender within. Then he addressed me, "Manmatha, this time when you go to Allahabad, go to Amulya and tell him that it is me who have sent you to ask what he wants. Whatever be the things that he asks of you, make it a point to supply him with them."

Accordingly, a few days after, I went to *guruji* and said, "Sir, Swamiji has asked me to come to you, otherwise I would not come to you at all. Please tell me what are the things that you need." He seemed not to mind my taunt and exclaimed with a beaming face, "What! Swamiji has sent you—Swamiji? What did he say of me?" I reported all that I had heard him say.

For some time he was silent with an emotion that overwhelmed him, and he tried to suppress it. Then he said, "Bring me about four seers of ghee from cow's milk, and some fruits." In a few days I brought these to him and he expressed his satisfaction. That was the last that I saw him. In a few weeks I came to know of his death. Most probably Sâdhu Amulya left his life by not taking any food at all. He was a peculiar combination of a *râja-yogi* and an Aghori (of the Tântrika school). Perhaps he took nothing after I saw him except the little present I had made to him in the name of Swamiji.

After telling me about Sâdhu Amulya, Swamiji asked me, "What is that you want to know from me? You may put any question you like." I said, "I have seen your lectures on *mâyâ*. It has appealed to me. But I have not understood it. Please let me know what is *mâyâ*." For a while he was silent. Then he said, "If you have anything else to know, you can ask me." I said, "Sir, I have nothing more to ask. If a knower of Brahman like you cannot enlighten me then it will remain a closed book to me during this life." At this Swamiji began a discourse on *mâyâ*. He was speaking fast and I followed his words and the logic. By and by, my mind lost the contact of the sense-organs. I experienced a subtle world around me which was much finer than the gross world. I could see with my open eyes the Math, the trees, and everything before me vibrating. If you look above a large fire you can see a vibration. The objects were oscillating and vibrating before my eyes just like that. I was conscious of my uncommon experience and asked myself, "What is this that I see?"

I looked around me and saw there was a vibration everywhere. Slowly even Swamiji vanished from my eyes. Even then I could hear his voice, but I did not follow its meaning. Then suddenly I was aware of a vibration within my brain and there was only the void.

Again I could see and hear the Swami and then

followed the meaning as well. But my mind was conscious of my ego, and it no more exerted as it did before as I thought that I knew the meaning of *mâyâ*.

I, who never had the courage to speak before the Swami, considered myself a bubble in the ocean of *mâyâ* in which the Swami was also another. The difference was lost to me for the moment. The giant personality of the Swami and his great spiritual power and everything seemed to be a coincidence in the ocean that Swamiji called *mâyâ*. But it was nothing but an undivided *chit*—the Cosmic Consciousness.

Then I said, "Swamiji, you are also in the *mâyâ*. Your activities of the Math, schools, *daridra-nârâyana-sevâ* (service of God in the poor), hospitals, the Mission—everything is *mâyâ*. What is the need of all this ? You yourself are within the meshes of *mâyâ*."

At this he smiled and kept quiet for some time. It was through his grace that I considered myself as one with the *mâyâ*. And now again I entered the little shell of my own self. I saw the Math, the Swami, and everything once again in its true perspective, i.e. the one I was used to have before this experience. A little time before I had spoken with a high pitched voice and that in a piquant manner, and now I was ashamed for having done so. Swamiji and myself were not of the same substance any more and I felt the vast difference.

Swamiji must have known that now I was normal once again. Then, he said, "Yes ; you have said aright. I am playing with *mâyâ*. If you do not like this play of *mâyâ*, you can go in a deep cave of the Himalayas. There you can get yourself lost in *tapasyâ* (spiritual effort)."

It was high time for lunch and everyone was kept waiting. Swamiji stood up and I fell prostrate at his feet. He was Shiva in person, and I touched his feet.

It was then that I had the desire to have *prasâda* from Swamiji. But I said nothing. Swamiji was pacing in front of the open verandah before the store-room. He

went to the room and took an apple and asked for a knife from a Brahmachârin. Slowly he pealed the apple and then cut a slice. He came near me and offered the slice to me. I was gratified. Then he took a piece himself. Then I wished to have *anna-prasâda* from Swamiji. A little later when we were all seated for the midday lunch Swamiji asked a Brahmachârin to come to him and he said, "Take this cooked rice to Manmatha." It had been offered to Shri Ramakrishna.

When the midday meal was over everyone retired to his respective room and Swamiji also went to his own room. But he had little rest even then. He was very busy in framing the rules and regulations of the Math. Somehow he was apprehensive of his approaching death and he wanted to lay down the principles for the future guidance of the Sannyâsins of the Order.

I stayed at the Math that day and also the night. Next morning I went to Swamiji to offer my obeisance. He was standing near the door of his room while I bowed down before him. He said, "Go to the Ganga and have a dip. Then come soon to me." His face was beaming with kind benediction, and I knew at once that he was in a mood to shower his grace. My heart beat fast as I understood this to be his permission to be initiated. I was as happy as a teen-aged boy and literally ran to have a dip, so impatient was I. Unless Swamiji was filled with *guru-bhâva* (attitude of the teacher) which they called the mood of Shri Ramakrishna himself, he would not initiate any one. When I returned I found him lying on his back on a sofa. He let fall his right hand loosely and said, "Hold my hand". I sat down on the floor and held him at the wrist. His body had emaciated, yet his wrist was broad and in spite of my grip there remained a gap of about half a finger. Swamiji closed his eyes and lay motionless. Time passed and I held him as a young child. It seemed to me that his personality engulfed me, but I tried to retain my con-

sciousness. For a fraction of a second it seemed to have vanished completely. Then he sat up.

Swamiji got down from the sofa and stood in the room. He pointed to a carpet and asked me to sit on it. At a short distance there was another carpet and Swamiji took his seat on it. When I followed him, he said, "In dream you have seen the Mother as Kumârî. But henceforth you should meditate on Her as of the Shodashi form—like." As he said this I could vividly visualize the image and at the moment I did not wonder at this at all. About the vision I had never spoken to any soul, yet he knew it, and I did not marvel for I had taken it for granted that he knew everything. In my dream, many years before, I had seen seven maids. The tallest was a maid of eleven and the smallest and youngest only five. The difference of age and height decreased in a graded manner and all were very beautiful divine persons. Each of them had a gold crown and they were dressed in very fine garments and ornaments. But they had all the brightness of the goddesses. They emerged one by one from one side and moved forward on before me to vanish at a small distance. The vision was so vivid that the images left a permanent impression in my memory.

Swamiji went on, "After some time you saw Mahâdeva in your vision. He had the trident in His hand and He gave you this *mantra*.... From that time on you performed that *japa*." It was many years after the first one that I had this dream. He said, "But from now onwards your *mantra* is this...". He repeated the *bija-mantra* of the Mother thrice, aloud. And I saw before me a full size divine figure of the classical image with the tongue lolling out. I asked him, "Shall I have to meditate on Her like that?" He said, "If you wish, you can think of Her with the tongue in." And he smiled.

After this he gave me certain hints about initiation and the process of *sâdhanâ* that I was to practise. He gave me the *mantra* for the worship of the *guru* and

showed me the centres for *nyasa*. He said, "First of all perform the mental obeisance, then visualize your *guru* as vividly as you can. For this, *sahasrara* (thousand petalled lotus in the brain) is the best place. After this the *mantra* of the chosen deity should be slowly repeated and Her image should be meditated in the heart.

"In offering the mental worship, first of all meditate on the feet, then slowly go upwards till you come to the face, and then meditate on the face. When meditation will be deep, there will be no hands or feet. As long as you see the form, the *nirvikalpa* plane cannot be reached. But do not hurry. You must go slowly and across the stages one by one. Otherwise it may take a much longer time."

After my initiation was thus over, he said, "Sit here, beside me, and meditate. Practise meditation every day without fail, however busy you may be. It must be done even for a short time, say for a few minutes. If you do not find time otherwise, you may do it in the bathroom. Even that will do."

The last time that I saw him was a few months before his passing away. There were many occasions when I went to Belur between my initiation and the beginning of January 1902. As the impressions were not written at the time, the exact dates are not possible to give now. But some of the things that I heard from him I shall try to present here.

Once he said, "This body will never be fit again. I shall have to leave it and bring another body to complete the work. There are many things that remain undone."

On a previous occasion he had said in a divine mood, "I do not want *mukti* (liberation). As long as there shall be one soul left, I have to come again and again."

The internal condition of China was politically very wretched. The European powers wanted to divide China among them. Japan also joined them in this

exploitation and attacked China. One day I asked Swamiji, "China is such an old country. Do you think this ancient country with its civilization will die out?" He was silent for a while. Then he said, "I see before me the body of an elephant. There is a foal within. But it is a lion-cub that comes out of it. It will grow in future and China shall become great and powerful."

Of Indian freedom, he said, "Our country shall be free. But not with bloodshed. There is a great future for India after her independence." At the time he did not say when, but from another brother-disciple I had learnt later that he had said that India would be free within fifty years.

Once I asked, "What will happen if I do not follow your behest and fall?" He said, "Go and fall to the very depth of abyss. It is I who shall raise you by the tuft of your hair. There is no power on this earth to keep you fallen."

At one time he remarked casually, "There are many souls that will come in future. They shall be free from birth and some shall become free even by hearing the name of Shri Ramakrishna."

He had said, "I want a band of Sannyâsins for my work. But some good parents must constitute the nucleus of a better order of things. From this shall originate the future society to outshine the past glory of India."

On the question of women's emancipation, he said, "There is no need of any set programme for uplifting women. Give them education and leave them free. They will work out the solution of their own problems themselves." . . .

Here are a few incidents that I heard from Swamiji which have been referred to by others. But I give the details as I heard.

Swamiji said, "Then I used to beg my food from door to door in the Himalayas. Most of the time I

showed me the centres for *nyasa*. He said, "First of all perform the mental obeisance, then visualize your *guru* as vividly as you can. For this, *sahasrara* (thousand petalled lotus in the brain) is the best place. After this the *mantra* of the chosen deity should be slowly repeated and Her image should be meditated in the heart.

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The internal condition of China was politically very wretched. The European powers wanted to divide China among them. Japan also joined them in this

exploitation and attacked China. One day I asked Swamiji, "China is such an old country. Do you think this ancient country with its civilization will die out?" He was silent for a while. Then he said, "I see before me the body of an elephant. There is a foal within. But it is a lion-cub that comes out of it. It will grow in future and China shall become great and powerful."

Of Indian freedom, he said, "Our country shall be free. But not with bloodshed. There is a great future for India after her independence." At the time he did not say when, but from another brother-disciple I had learnt later that he had said that India would be free within fifty years.

Once I asked, "What will happen if I do not follow your behest and fall?" He said, "Go and fall to the very depth of abyss. It is I who shall raise you by the tuft of your hair. There is no power on this earth to keep you fallen."

At one time he remarked casually, "There are many souls that will come in future. They shall be free from birth and some shall become free even by hearing the name of Shri Ramakrishna."

He had said, "I want a band of Sannyâsins for my work. But some good parents must constitute the nucleus of a better order of things. From this shall originate the future society to outshine the past glory of India."

On the question of women's emancipation, he said, "There is no need of any set programme for uplifting women. Give them education and leave them free. They will work out the solution of their own problems themselves." . . .

Here are a few incidents that I heard from Swamiji which have been referred to by others. But I give the details as I heard.

Swamiji said, "Then I used to beg my food from door to door in the Himalayas. Most of the time I

spent in spiritual practices which were rigorous; and the food that was available was very coarse, and often that too was insufficient to appease the hunger. One day I thought that my life was useless. These hill people are very poor themselves. They cannot feed their own children and family properly. Yet they try to save a little for me. Then what is the use of such a life? I stopped going out for food. Two days thus passed without any food. Whenever I was thirsty I drank the water of the streams using my palms as a cup. Then I entered a deeper jungle. There I meditated sitting on a piece of stone. My eyes were open, and suddenly I was aware of the presence of a striped tiger of a large size. It looked at me with its shining eyes. I thought, 'At long last I shall find peace and this animal its food. It is enough that this body will be of some service to this creature.' I shut my eyes and waited for it, but a few seconds passed and I was not attacked. So, I opened my eyes and saw it receding in the forest. I was sorry for it and then smiled, for I knew it was the Master who was saving me till his work be done."

Here are a few of his remarks about the national traits of America and India. These were casual observations during his talks and discourses in a conversational mood.

"In America I found them to be full of *rajo-guna*. They will now try to proceed to *sattva-guna*. All Europe is predominantly active in achieving material success but America leads them all in this respect."

"Bhârata was *sattva-pradhâna* during the days of *rishis*. Even now inside the bone and marrow India is still *sattva-guni*. Among all the nations of the world Bhârata is still *sâttvika*—more so than any one else—but on the outer shell it has become full of *tamas*. For a long time they have been passing through a great storm, and their bad days have not ended yet. It is hunger

that is killing the nation, and the whole race is dying out slowly. Our duty is to give them food and education."

Once he said, "In America the beds are very soft and cozy. You do not even see such things here. But there have been many nights when I could not sleep in those soft beds thinking of the extreme poverty of my own people. I have then passed nights on the floor tossing, without any sleep or rest."

"To change the condition of India she must be fed and clothed properly. People must get education. The poor are the *nârâyanas*. They must be served with food and education."

"The Indians are religious inside. For want of food and clothing the spiritual fire has dimmed. When there will be no want and they get some education, the spiritual fire will blaze once more."

"Do not talk and think too much of child-marriage, widow-marriage, etc. When women get proper education and are enlightened, they will solve their own problems themselves."

About *brahmaçharya* and *medhâ* he seemed to have the orthodox view. I heard him say on his wonderful power of retentive memory in this manner, "If a man can be continent for twelve years, he can have extraordinary memory. One must be celibate and keep his *brahmacharya* absolutely even in his dream."

He had once told me, "You must know that the Sannyâsin is the *guru* of the householders. Even if you but see the *geruâ* (ochre cloth) bow down to it in reverence. Think of your own *guru* and pay your respect whether the person is fit or unfit. Keep the ideal of renunciation before you and *geruâ* should remind you of the highest renunciation and knowledge."

To me he advised, "Choose one path. Do not keep your feet in two boats." He wanted me to become a Sannyâsin or a householder. At that time I was unmarried. Later on, I chose to be a householder.

One day we were sitting in the right hand room of the Math facing the Ganga. It was generally called the music-room. Sâdhu Nag Mahashaya entered the room. He had a *dhoti* and a shirt on. His dress was anything but neat. His hair was unkempt. His eyes were a little red as if he was intoxicated and the look was rather vacant. He stood near the door within the room and with folded hands said, "You are *Nârâyana—Nârâyana* in a human form. The Master said so. My salutations to you." For some time he stood there as still as a statue.

Swamiji looked at us and said, "Look, engrave this scene in your memory. You will never see this again." Now I think, it must have been a state of *samâdhi*. When Nag Mahashaya opened his eyes again, Swamiji said, "Please, tell them something of the Master." Swamiji did not rise himself nor did he ask him to sit. Such attempt would have jarred the ecstatic mood in which he was at that time, and Nag Mahashaya himself would have been very uncomfortable.

Sâdhu Nag Mahashaya suddenly smiled the heavenly smile of the gods who have the vision of Shiva's world. He half raised his right hand and said, "It is this, it is this." Every one felt a charge of spiritual energy and the atmosphere of the room was tense with awe and reverence. Then he went out as suddenly as he had come.

(Vedanta Kesari, January & April 1960)

XXVII

ALL the superlatives in the language couldn't convey one's impressions of Swami Vivekananda when he introduced us, early in 1900, to a completely new conception of life and religion. I have been requested, as one who took notes of his lectures for her own use, with no thought of their ever being published, to give my impressions of him. How to do it? He seemed like a radiant being from a higher plane, and yet so understanding of every phase of humanity. He appealed to every grade of intelligence by his oratory, his humour, his mimicry, his scornful denunciation of any form of pettiness or intolerance, and by his compassion for every human need.

Startled at the loftiness of his conception compared with our little ideals, we knew, as we left the hall with the Swami's vibrant chanting of a Sanskrit *shloka* still ringing within, that he was ushering us, in the beginning of this twentieth century, into a new and larger conception of the meaning of life.

It is interesting to look back on a long life and note the changes in one's sense of values, and also to note what tiny, insignificant events changed the whole course of life. If I had not accepted the offer of a course in stenography just before entering high school, and if, in the second year of high school I had not had a nervous breakdown and been forced to leave school, I might never have met Swamiji, although I probably would have heard some of his lectures. I had been studying the piano as well as going to school. The doctor, whose verdict was, "You must give up school or music, or you will not need either", sent me to Miss Lydia Bell for help. Miss Bell was the leader of the California Street Home of Truth in San Francisco. I was staying in the

Home and taking notes of her morning classes and Sunday lectures.

In the morning classes we were studying Swami Vivekananda's *Râja-Yoga* (it had been published in New York during his earlier visit to the West) when the Swami, then in Los Angeles, accepted an invitation from Rev. B. Fay Mills to give some lectures in the First Unitarian Church in Oakland. There I went with Miss Bell and other friends, early in February 1900, and we were startled and astonished at what we heard, amazed and enraptured at the Swami's appearance. He was surely a Mahâtmâ or a divine being, more than human. No one had ever been so sublimely eloquent or so deliciously humorous, such an entrancing story-teller, or such a perfect mimic. When I saw and heard him and thought of the interpretation we had been given of the civilization that had produced him, I felt almost ashamed that I was an American. I went to most of his lectures with Miss Bell and to some with other friends and met the same glowing enthusiasm in all, though with some it was the man rather than the doctrine that appealed most. I remember one very wealthy and aristocratic young lady, who was studying music with my teacher, saying ecstatically, "Oh, he is like a lovely golden statue!"

Besides the public lectures, Swamiji had some morning classes for earnest students, in meditation. They were held in the living room of an apartment on Turk Street where Mrs. Alice Hansborough (Shânti) and Mrs. Emily Aspinall (Kalyâni) kept house for him. I was able to attend only a few of these classes and did not take any notes. First there would be a meditation and then a period of instruction, followed by questions and answers and practical suggestions as to exercise, rest, and diet. Swamiji stressed the importance of moderation in amount and mildness in quality of food. One suggestion I remember was that we refrain from eating salt for

a week, thereby benefiting the nervous system, as salt is considered an irritant.

Many questions were answered in these classes. Also, for those who arrived before class time, there was a little opportunity for getting acquainted personally with the Swami. We were invited into the dining room, where we enjoyed some informal talks. He would make fun of our habit of rushing here and there. He never hurried. That majestic calmness never left him. It amused him to see someone run for a street car. "Won't there be another one?" he would ask. It did not trouble him at all if he was late in beginning a class or a lecture, and there was no set time for its ending. He would continue until he finished his subject, even if it took more than double the allotted time. These early morning visits previous to the class were completely informal. Swamiji would wear a gray flannel robe, sit cross-legged in an arm-chair, and smoke, answer questions, and tell jokes. When it was time for the class, he would appear two minutes later in the living room, clad in his ochre robe, his hair smooth, and the pipe missing. But the jokes continued to be interspersed among the serious subjects.

The same was true in his public lectures. He playfully ridiculed the question: What becomes of one's individuality when one realizes his oneness with God? "You people in this country are so afraid of losing your in-di-vid--u-al-i-ty!" he would exclaim. "Why, you are not individuals yet. When you realize your whole nature, you will attain your true individuality, not before. In knowing God you cannot lose anything. There is another thing I am constantly hearing in this country, and that is that we should live in harmony with nature. Don't you know that all the progress ever made in the world was made by conquering nature? We are to resist nature at every point if we are to make any progress."

He encouraged questions at the end of each lecture, and once when someone suggested that they were tiring him with too many questions, he said, "Ask all the questions you like, the more the better. That is what I am here for and I won't leave you until you understand. In India they tell me, I ought not to teach Advaita (monistic) Vedanta to the people at large, but I say I can make even a child understand it. You cannot begin too early to teach the highest spiritual truths."

Speaking of spiritual training for the mind, he said, "The less you read, the better. Read the Gitâ and other good works on Vedanta. That is all you need. The present system of education is all wrong. The mind is crammed with facts before it knows how to think. Control of the mind should be taught first. If I had my education to get over again and had any voice in the matter, I would learn to master my mind first, and then gather facts if I wanted them. It takes people a long time to learn things because they can't concentrate their minds at will. It took me three readings to memorize Macaulay's *History of England*, while my mother memorized any sacred book she wanted to in one reading. People are always suffering because they can't control their minds. To give an illustration, though rather a crude one, a man has trouble with his wife. She leaves him and goes off with another. She's a terror! But the poor fellow cannot take his mind away from her even so, and so he suffers."

One Sunday evening Swamiji was scheduled to give a lecture at the Home of Truth. "Come to my lecture tonight," he said to some friends. "I am going to throw some bombs. It will be interesting and it will do you good!" It was interesting and terribly convincing. He told us in plain and forceful language just what he thought of us and it was not flattering, but very wholesome if we could take it, and I think we could. I don't remember that any one left. He stressed the idea of

chastity as a means of strengthening the mind, and purity for the householder as well as for the monk. He told of a Hindu boy who had been in America for some time and was suffering from ill health. The boy told Swamiji that the Indian theory of chastity must be wrong because the doctors here had advised him against it. Swamiji said, "I told him to go back to India and listen to the teachings of his ancestors who had practised chastity for thousands of years." And then he severely rebuked the American doctors for giving such advice.

Mrs. Steele had prepared an excellent dinner which was served before the lecture, at which Swamiji was delightfully informal and jolly. We waited expectantly for him to say the usual grace, but to our surprise he immediately commenced to eat. He made some remark about saying grace after dinner rather than before, and he also said, addressing Mrs. Steele, "I will say grace to you, Madame; you have done all the work." She had some very fine dates for dessert, which Swami evidently enjoyed, and when, after the lecture she expressed her appreciation of it, he replied, "It was your dates, Madame."

One evening Swamiji was talking of the different interpretations of heaven and hell presented in the Indian scriptures. He described several varieties of hell. Usually after a lecture some of the devotees would take him either to Mr. Louis Juhl's restaurant in the section of San Francisco known as Little Italy or to some uptown café, depending on whether his mood and the weather called for hot food or ice-cream. On this particular occasion it was a very cold night and Swamiji shivered in his overcoat, remarking, "If this isn't hell, I don't know what is." But, in spite of the hellishly cold weather, he chose ice-cream, which he liked very much. Just as it was time to leave the café the hostess had to go to the telephone and asked us to wait. As she left for that purpose, Swamiji called after her, "Well don't be

long or when you come back you will find only a lump of chocolate ice-cream."

On another occasion a waitress made a mistake in the order and brought Swamiji an ice-cream soda, which he did not like. He asked her if she would change it. As she was on her way to do so Swamiji happened to see the annoyed manager, and called out loudly, not caring who heard him, "If you scold that girl I'll eat all the ice-cream sodas in the place."

Congregational singing in the Christian churches he referred to as "bottle-breaking business". He made all sorts of fun of "Beulah Land":

> I've reached the land of corn and wine
> And all its riches freely mine.

Another hymn that amused him was the "Missionary Hymn":

> From Greenland's icy mountains
> To India's coral strand . . . .

He would sing it all through to the end, in his rich voice, and then pause, point dramatically at himself, and say, smilingly: "I am the heathen they came to save."

On March 30 Swamiji wrote to Swami Turiyananda, who was then in New York helping Swami Abhedananda, "I am leaving for Chicago next week." But more lectures followed and on April 23 he wrote to Mary Hale, "I ought to have started today, but cannot forego the temptation to be in a camp under the high redwood trees of California before I leave. Therefore I postpone it for three or four days." As it turned out he should have said "three or four weeks", for he did not leave the Bay district until May 26.

The invitation to be in such a camp had come to him from Miss Bell, to whom Mr. Juhl, the owner, offered it for a summer vacation. Miss Bell invited Mrs. Eloise Roorbach and me to accompany her. Various letters indicate that Swamiji remained in the Turk Street apartment until April 19, then worked and lived at

Alameda on the other side of the Bay for some days, not actually reaching the redwood camp until May 2.

On April 22, Miss Bell, Mrs. Roorbach, and I were established at Camp Irving (the name of Mr. Juhl's camp at the outskirts of Camp Taylor, a rustic summer retreat in Martin County) a few miles north of San Francisco. The camp ground was a narrow strip of land between a railroad track and a creek. There was a circular clump of trees at one end which we used as a sort of chapel for classes and meditation. The kitchen was at the other end and its equipment consisted of a stove under a tree, a trunk for supplies, a rough board table with benches on either side, and some shelves built into the tree for dishes, the pots and pans being hung on nails driven into the tree. Between these two provisions for spiritual and material food there was room for four tents and an open space for a camp-fire.

When Swamiji did reach the camp, he arrived with Shânti after a series of efforts to get there which she related to me when I was in San Francisco a few years ago. She told me of her mental conflict in regard to going to the camp. She was torn between the desire to accompany Swamiji and the wish, after three months' absence, to get back to her daughter in Los Angeles. Swami said to her, "Don't go to Los Angeles. Come with me to the camp and I will teach you to meditate." In order to go from Alameda to Camp Irving it was necessary to take two ferry boats, one across the Bay to San Francisco and one north from there to Marin County. In Alameda there were two railroad lines which carried passengers to the docks, one broad gauge and one narrow gauge, just a few blocks apart. Swamiji and Shânti missed the train at one of them and went to the other. Seated in the car, they discussed the matter of whether to have breakfast on the boat from Alameda to San Francisco or on the boat from San Francisco to Marin County, and then discovered that there was no engine attached to the car in

which they were sitting. They returned to the Home and had breakfast there, and Swamiji said, "We missed the train because your heart was in Los Angeles and there is no force or power in the universe that can pull against the human heart."

Shânti told me of how, after reading Swamiji's books for two years, she had first heard him lecture in Los Angeles the winter of 1899-1900. At once she had been eager to help in his work. A society was organized of which Shânti was the first Secretary. Lectures were given at Blanchard Hall, the Los Angeles Home of Truth, the Shakespeare Club of Pasadena, and other places. Swami had been staying at the home of Mrs. S. K. Blodgett. He was also the guest of the Mead sisters in South Pasadena, of whom Shânti was one. The other two were Mrs. Carrie Mead Wyckoff, who in later years gave her Hollywood home as the headquarters of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, and Helen Mead, who took some of Swamiji's Los Angeles lectures in shorthand. When Swamiji left for Oakland, he said, "You three sisters have become a part of my mind for ever".

Shânti told me: "Swamiji had such simplicity about him, he put one right on a level with himself. He said to me, 'You have no reverence'. When I told this to Swami Turiyananda, he remarked, 'Yes, he said that, but he was pleased that you did not have reverence. Where there is equality there is exchange of perfect love. Where there is no superior and inferior you have that perfect union.' "

When Swamiji received the invitation to lecture in the Unitarian Church in Oakland, he asked Shânti if she would like to accompany him north. He said, "If you want to go with me, don't let anybody keep you from coming." So Shânti went to San Francisco and at last to Camp Irving. There she was very active in caring for Swami's needs and comfort. One morning he found her in the kitchen preparing food when it was time for his

morning class. "Aren't you coming in to meditate?" he asked. "Yes," she replied, "but I have to get this broth simmering first. Then I shall come in."

Then Swamiji said, "Well, never mind; our Master said you could leave meditation for service."

Two never-to-be-forgotten nights stand out in my long life. To think of either of them is a cure for any ill. One is the first night at Shânti Âshrama with Swami Turiyananda, about whom I have already written. The other is Swamiji's first night at Camp Taylor, May 2, 1900. I close my eyes and see him standing there in the soft blackness with sparks from the blazing log fire flying through it and a day-old moon above. He was weary after a long lecture season, but relaxed and happy to be there. "We end life in the forest," he said, "as we begin it, but with a world of experience between the two states." Later after a short talk, when we were about to have the usual meditation, he said, "You may meditate on whatever you like, but I shall meditate on the heart of a lion. That gives strength." The bliss and power and peace of the meditation that followed could never be described.

The next day it rained all day. In the morning after breakfast Swamiji sat on Miss Bell's cot and talked for a long time, although even then he had a fever. That night he was very ill, so ill that he made a will, leaving everything to his brother monks. Shânti and Kalyâni took care of him. I can see Shânti now, in the pouring rain, heedless of getting drenched, spreading an extra piece of canvas over his tent directly opposite to the one I shared with Miss Bell.

The next day was Saturday and Miss Bell and I had to go to San Francisco. When we returned Sunday afternoon, Swamiji was better. He had been invited to the camp to rest, but every day after breakfast he would sit on Miss Bell's cot and talk to us for a long time, telling stories, answering questions. He told of his hopes for a

better understanding of the East and the West and their mutual benefit thereby. He told of his love for Thomas à Kempis and how he had travelled all over India with two books, the Gitâ and *The Imitation of Christ*. In one of his lectures in San Francisco Swamiji closed with a quotation from the latter: "Silence all teachers, silence all books; do Thou only speak unto my soul."

After the morning talk and meditation, Swami would be interested in the preparations for dinner. Sometimes he helped. He made curry for us and showed us how they grind spices in India. He would sit on the floor in his tent with a hollow stone in his lap. With another smooth, round stone he would grind the spices much finer than we can do with a bowl and chopper. This would make the curry quite hot enough for us, but Swami would augment it by eating tiny red-hot peppers on the side. He would throw his head back and toss them into his mouth with a great circular movement of his arm. Once he handed me one of them, saying, "Eat it. It will do you good." One would eat poison if offered by Swamiji, so I obeyed, with agonizing result, to his great amusement. At intervals all the afternoon he kept asking, "How is your oven?" Another time he made rock candy for us, explaining how it is the purest kind of candy, all the impurities being removed by boiling and boiling.

The meals were jolly and informal, with no end of jokes and stories. Shânti had been to Alaska and was accustomed to roughing it, and her carefree spirit and indifference to conventions pleased Swamiji. At one breakfast he reached over and took a little food from her plate, saying, "It is fitting that we should eat from the same plate; we are two vagabonds." He also said to her again, "You have become part of my life for ever," and to Kalyâni he remarked that if she had lived on the highest mountain she would have had to come down to take care of him. "I know it, Swami," she replied.

Nothing escaped Swami's notice. Some work was being done on the place by a Mexican or American Indian, and Swami noticed that he watched us having breakfast. Later on he talked to the boy, who complained of not having been given any coffee. He said, "Black man like coffee; white man like coffee; red man like coffee." This amused Swami very much. He requested that the boy be given some coffee, and all the afternoon he kept repeating the boy's remark and laughing.

The afternoons were devoted to long walks. The grand climax of the day's activities was the evening fireside talk and the following meditation. After telling stories and answering questions Swamiji would give us a subject for meditation such as "Firm and Fearless" before beginning to chant. One morning he inspired us with a talk on "Absolute Truth, Unity, Freedom" and the subject for the evening meditation was "I am All Existence, Bliss, and Knowledge."

So the days went by all too fast, with serious mornings, merry afternoons, and sublime evenings.

When Miss Bell invited me to spend the summer with her at Camp Irving, it was agreed that I would go down to San Francisco each Saturday morning, give a music lesson in the afternoon, and return Sunday after her lecture, which I was to try to take in shorthand. On the second week-end Miss Bell, for some reason that I have forgotten, went alone to San Francisco on Friday afternoon, with the understanding that I was to follow on Saturday.

When I was getting ready to take the train as usual, Swamiji said to me, "Why do you go?"

"I have to go, Swami," I replied. "I have to give a lesson." I have always regretted the answer, for the dollar I received for the lesson was not the motive for going. The real motive was Miss Bell's lecture.

Swamiji said, "Then go, and make half a million dollars and send it to me for my work in India." He took

me up the steep steps to the railroad track and flagged the train for me. There was no station and the train stopped only on signal. Swamiji's carriage was magnificent. His eyes were always turned skyward, never down. Someone said of him that he never saw anything lower than a telegraph pole.

When the engine passed us, as the train slowed down, I heard the fireman say to the engineer, "Hellow ! Who is this sky pilot ?" I had never heard the expression and was puzzled at first as to its meaning. Then I realized that it must mean a religious leader, and that it was evident to any one who saw him that Swamiji was such a leader.

It has always been a matter of regret that I went to San Francisco that week-end, for soon after that Swami left Camp Irving. The half million dollars for his work in India has not been made, but I have never given up the childish hope that in some miraculous way it may yet be accomplished. Swami Turiyananda said many times, "Mother can make the impossible possible."

I do not know the exact date that Swamiji left Camp Irving, but various letters written by him indicate that he was still in San Francisco on the 26th of May and that he was under the care of Dr. M. H. Logan, at whose home he stayed, and gave three lectures on the Gitâ on May 26, 28, and 29. He wrote from Los Angeles on June 17, "Am leaving for Chicago in a few days," and he was in New York on July 11.

Tom Allan and his wife Edith (Ajoy and Virajâ) are my oldest friends and they have told me many times of their first impressions of Swamiji and their experiences with him, and of the immense benefit they received from him. Edith was very ill when Swamiji first came to Oakland in 1900 and Tom went alone to hear the Hindu monk whose lecture was advertised in the paper. When he returned, he was very much excited and could scarcely contain his enthusiasm. He said, "I have met a man

who is not a man; he is a god! And he spoke the truth!" Edith asked him to tell her what he had said that impressed him so much, and the two most startling ideas were these: Good and evil are the obverse and reverse of the same coin; and you cannot have one without the other. We had been taught in the Home of Truth that all is good and there is no evil. The other idea that deeply impressed him was that a cow cannot tell a lie and a man can, but the cow will always be a cow, while a man can become divine.

Tom immediately began to give his services as usher in Swamiji's lectures, and as soon as she was able, Edith went to hear him. It was while she was standing near the entrance waiting for Tom to count the collection that Swamiji saw her, and called to her, "Madame, you come here." She went to him and he said, "If you would like to see me privately come to the flat. No collection is taken there; everything is free."

"When shall I come?" she asked.

"Tomorrow morning at nine o'clock."

She went to the flat the next morning and sat on one side of a bay window. Swamiji came in chanting and sat at the other side of the window. "Well, Madame," he said. Edith was so moved that she could not speak and could not stop crying for a long time. Then Swamiji said, "Come tomorrow morning at the same time." She went to him several times for spiritual instruction. He gave her some simple breathing exercises, warning her not to practise them except in his presence. He told her that he thought the work of the Home of Truth was the best then available in the West, and he appreciated the fact that the workers there did not charge for spiritual assistance, as some others did.

One time Swamiji said, "I am the disciple of a man who could not write his own name, but I am not worthy to unloose his shoes. How often I have wished that I could take this intellect and throw it in the Ganga."

"But Swami," protested one woman, "your intellect is what we like about you."

"That is because you are a fool, Madame, as I am," was Swamiji's answer.

At the end of the last meeting of the class, Edith was departing quietly when Swamiji shouted, "Madame, you come back. Go into the dining room and sit down." When he finished saying good-bye to the others, he went in and asked her to stay to dinner. Then he began to cook and made her peel potatoes and onions. While working, he was chanting verses from the Gitâ and once he stopped and recited in English the sixty-first verse of the eighteenth chapter: "The Lord lives in the heart of every creature. He turns them round and round upon the wheel of his *mâyâ*." "You see, Madame," he said, "he has us on the wheel. What can we do?"

When Swamiji was staying for a time at the Alameda Home of Truth, Edith had some wonderful times helping him cook. While the service was going on in the living room, they would be busy in the kitchen preparing the meal. There he was jolly and informal, but she also was given many incidental lessons. Once she was wearing a new green dress of which she was very proud. Suddenly some butter from the frying pan spattered on it. She was bemoaning the mishap and making a great tragedy of it, while Swami continued to chant and go about his work without taking the slightest notice of the incident. Once they bought some pickles in a little wooden dish. Some of the pickle juice ran out on Swami's hand. He immediately put his fingers to his mouth and began to lick off the liquid. This seemed undignified, and Edith said, "Oh Swami!" in a shocked tone.

"This little outside," Swami replied. "That's the trouble with you here; you always want this outside to be so nice."

Tom told me many of his experiences. He acted as usher at Swamiji's lectures and several times introduced

him to the audience. The first time they stood together on the platform, Tom had the feeling that Swamiji's height was about forty feet and his about six inches. After that, when introducing him, he always stood at the foot of the platform. On one occasion Swamiji was speaking on India. Before beginning the lecture he said, "When I start on India I never know when to stop; so you attract my attention at ten o'clock." So Tom stood at the back of the hall and at ten o'clock took out his watch and swung it back and forth on the chain like a pendulum. ' After a time Swamiji noticed the signal and said, "I told them to stop me at ten o'clock. They are already swinging the watch and I haven't got started yet." But he stopped and, from that time on as long as he lived, Tom Allan always carried and used every day that same old watch.

On Easter Sunday night a group of friends were sitting on the porch of the Home of Truth, and Swamiji was telling some of his experiences in America. On one occasion he was advised to consult a lady chiropodist for some foot treatment. He evidently did not think very highly of her, for he always referred to her as the lady toe-doctor and said, "My toe hurts every time I think of her."

That evening someone asked Swamiji about renunciation. "Babies!" he answered, "what do you know of renunciation? If you want to be my disciples, you must face the cannon without a murmur."

Tom was English and had been an officer in the British Army. His specialty was naval engineering, and he had a stiff military bearing. Swamiji once said to him, as Tom stood up in his presence, "Mr. Allan, we are both in the same caste. We are in the military caste." When Tom asked him where he found his best disciples, Swamiji replied promptly, "In England. They are harder to get, but when you get them, you've got them."

Swamiji always attracted attention wherever he went.

He had a majestic bearing which everybody recognized. As he would walk down Market Street, people would stand aside to let him pass or turn around and ask, "Who is the Hindu prince?" It was in this way that he was able to see a ship launched from the actual launching platform. Tom was working in one of the big iron works of San Francisco at the time, and when Swamiji expressed a wish to see a launching, he invited a little group to the shipyard. The launching platform was closed except to the invited guests of the management who had tickets, and the ramp leading to the platform was guarded by two attendants. Swamiji decided he would have a better view from the launching platform, so he just calmly walked past the guards, who made no protest. When he came down, after the launching, he said, "It is like the birth of a child."

Swamiji emphasized the fact that spiritual people are not fanatical or severe. "They are not long-faced and thin," he said. "They are fat, like me."

During one of the talks in Miss Bell's tent at Camp Irving, Miss Bell remarked that the world is a school where we come to learn our lesson. Swamiji asked, "Who told you that the world is a school?"

Miss Bell was silent.

Swamiji went on, "This world is a circus, and we are clowns come to tumble."

Miss Bell asked, "Why do we tumble, Swami?"

Swamiji replied, "Because we like to tumble. When we get tired of tumbling, we quit."

Tom and Edith had an apartment in San Francisco which was permeated with the atmosphere of Swamiji. All the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order in this country loved to visit them when they went to San Francisco, and some of them said or wrote, "You, more than anybody else in the West are able to make Swamiji real to us." One of my friends said of them when she and her son visited the Allans a few years ago that their account of

Swami Vivekananda was so full of joy and so vivid, it seemed as though he himself could walk into the room. There was a beautiful picture of him in the dining room, and the guests were always seated facing it. Chanting always preceded the meal, and there was little talk of anything during it other than of Swamiji, his Master, and his work. All his books were there, and the Allans had an enormous collection of pictures which they enjoyed showing to their guests. One particular favourite was taken in a garden. Swamiji was lying on the grass, enjoying a conversation with some friends, when someone came and wanted to take his picture. He did not want to get up but, urged by all to do so, he stood up, just as he was, without turban or robe, against a background of flowering vines, looking as if about to speak, and the result is one of his best portraits.

Edith had a nice contralto voice, and sometimes she would sing, with deep feeling, some of the songs associated with Swamiji. A favourite was the song of the nautch-girl, which she adapted from Swamiji's translation of a song sung by a courtesan in the palace of a Raja where he was staying just before leaving for America the first time. Although he left the room when he learnt that this girl was about to sing, he heard the song from outside and was so moved by the words and her manner of singing that he returned and spoke most beautifully to her, even thanking her for the lesson she had given him, thus removing the last vestige of a possible spiritual pride, and completing the preparation for his work in the West.

Never since the day Swamiji perceived Edith's need for help has he been out of her mind. Many times in the last fifty years she has remembered the words spoken at their last meeting: "If ever you are in trouble, you can call on me. No matter where I am, I'll hear you." Many ordeals she has met bravely, sustained by that promise.

In one of his lectures Swamiji said, "If a bad time comes, what of that? The pendulum must swing back to the other side. But that is no better. The thing to do is to stop it." Then he uttered an American expression which children used to use when swinging, when they would stop pumping and let the swing slow down to a halt : "Let the old cat die."

To have seen and heard Swamiji and to have *felt* his words of power flow through me on to paper and thence to print for many to read, thereby receiving courage and inspiration, is a rare privilege and is compensation for all ills of life. It makes me almost ready to let the old cat die.

(Vedanta and the West, May-June 1954)

XXVIII

I met Swami Vivekananda in San Francisco in California. It was at a lecture in the year 1900.

The Swami arrived some twenty minutes before the lecture and was engaged in conversation with some friends. I sat at a short distance from him and was very deeply interested, for I felt he was one who had something to give to me. The conversation was of the ordinary nature, and yet I felt a peculiar force emanating from him.

His health was poor at the time, and when he rose to go to the platform, it seemed an effort on his part. He walked with a heavy gait. I noticed that his eyelids were swollen, and he looked like one who suffers pain.

He stood for a while in silence before he spoke, and I saw a change. His countenance brightened, and I thought his very features were different now.

He began to speak, and there was a transformation. The soul-force of the great man became visible. I felt the tremendous force of his speech—words that were felt more than they were heard. I was drawn into a sea of being, of feelings of a higher existence, from which it seemed almost like pain to emerge when the lecture was finished. And then those eyes, how wonderful! They were like shooting stars— lights shooting forth from them in constant flashes. Over thirty years have elapsed since the day, but the memory of it is ever green in my heart and will remain so. His years on earth were not many. But what are years when the value of a life is weighed. Unknown and ignored, he entered the lecture hall of the great metropolis of Chicago in 1893. He left that hall an adored hero. He spoke. It was enough. The depth of his great soul had sounded forth, and the world felt the

vibration. One single man changed the current of thought of half the globe—that was his work.

The body is subject to decay. The great strain put upon him, weighed on the physical—his work was done. Scarcely forty years of life on earth, but they were forty years that outweighed centuries. He was sent from higher regions to fulfil a great mission, and that mission being fulfilled he returned to his seat among the gods, whence he had come.

Great soul, thy work will live for evermore.
We felt thy wondrous being from afar.
Thou brought the whispers of the morning star,
The murmur of the waves from greater shore.
I heard thy voice in torrents bold and free,
And yet the sweetness that flowed through it all
Was like the song of sylvan water-fall,
Like murmur round a cave in Southern Sea.
Thou'st sent thy message thund'ring through the years.
To hear thee was to blend the silver note,
The mellow warble of the songbird's throat,
With thunderbolt that comes from other spheres.
And still we feel the pow'r of that great love,
That noble spirit gently hover near,
To give us courage in this darker sphere,
Blessings from realms of greater bliss above.

(Prabuddha Bhârata, August 1938)

XXIX

In response to your wish that I should write a few words recalling early memories of my friendship with and admiration for Swami Vivekananda, I find to my regret that they have grown faint after the lapse of nearly forty years.

Perhaps it is as it should be: The memories have become absorbed into his teaching, and they live as the inspiration of my deepest thoughts and are hardly to be separated from the undercurrent of my daily life. The main impression left on me is that I had been in touch with a truth that was so large and so *gründlich* that it contained in itself all that I had previously believed. It became a ground pattern, or a mosaic, capable of constant adjustment to fit the needs of my growing thought.

Let me quote some of those sayings of the Master that have moulded my character in the most positive way under the stress of joy and sorrow, of anxiety and illness, and of the many perplexities that invariably accompany us when we start the way.

I must put first that they are a key to all the rest. Without it, I can confidently affirm, there can be no real inner growth or progress of the soul in its search for Peace and for Reality.

The key lies in daily meditation. The Master's words on this subject can never be forgotten. I am well aware that of late years it has been recognized as the pearl of great price in almost all spiritual enlightenment, but when I first heard the Swami's lessons on it, it was new to me. The monkey mind, the charioteer who controls the horses (i.e. the senses), the silence of the Inner Self, the necessity of practice, the study of the teaching which teaches liberation of the Self, discrimination between the Real and the unreal, are thoughts and

phrases that will at once recall the Swami to his disciples. Other words of practical wisdom, as I remember them in my own inadequate words are :

(1) Grow up within the fold of your own particular church, but do not die in it. Let it gradually lead you into fresh pastures.

(2) As scaffolding is an indispensable factor in material building, so is it in spiritual attainment. Do not destroy it either for yourself or for others (the Gospel says, "Let both grow until the harvest"), but wait for the inevitable moment of its automatic destruction.

(3) Never debase your ethical standard by calling wrong right. If you know that an act of yours is wrong, do it if you wish, but do not call it right for that is a fatal self-deception.

(4) Say to yourself when you repent of some small action: "I am glad I did that wrong, for now I see and I shall never do it again."

(5) Unselfish work for other people must be regarded as beneficial to the doer, for it is the doer that gains in his character.

(6) Do not identify your Self with any mental state. Perhaps this injunction is specially fundamental in sorrow or pity for the Self. Nothing leads so directly to wise judgement as holding the Real Self free from the unreal Self.

(7) The greatest heresy is separation.

(8) Unity is the Goal of Religion and of Science.

(9) I am That.

I must add to these great sayings the stories told by the Swami—inimitable stories which illustrated the points in his teaching. They became like the parables in the Bible—marvellous "lamps of light unto our feet".

Disciples of the Swami will remember the story of the lion brought up as a sheep but awakening afterwards to its true nature; of the man who lost his wife and children and possessions in a flood, but when he was himself cast up safely on a bank and came to himself, he found the disaster was all a dream and that he was now just as he was before the flood.

(*Prabuddha Bhârata, February 1939*)

XXX

EARLY in March 1900 the Swami Vivekananda gave a series of three lectures on "Indian Ideals" in Redmen's Hall, Union Square, San Francisco, and it was at the first lecture of this series that I had the blessed privilege of hearing him. Being in ill health, both mentally and physically, it was a great effort to go to the lecture; and as I sat in the hall waiting for the Swami to come, I began to wonder whether I had not made a mistake in coming to hear him; but all doubts vanished when the Swami's majestic figure entered the hall. He talked for about two hours telling us of India's Ideals and taking us with him, as it were, to his own country so that we might understand him a little and be able to comprehend even in the least the great truths he taught. After the lecture, I was introduced to the Swami; but feeling over-awed by his wonderful presence, I did not speak, but sat down at a distance and watched him, while waiting for friends who were busy settling up the business connected with the lectures. After the second lecture, I was again waiting, sitting at a distance watching the Swami, when he looked across and beckoned to me to come to him. I went and stood before him as he sat in a chair. He said, "Madame, if you want to see me privately, you come to the flat on Turk Street, no charge there, none of this botheration about money."

I told him I should like very much to see him. He said, "Come tomorrow morning", and I thanked him. Much of the night was spent thinking of all the questions I should ask him, as many questions had been troubling me for months and no one to whom I had gone was able to help me. On arriving at the flat next morning, I was told that the Swami was going out, so could not see any one. I said I knew he would see me because

he had told me I might come, so I was allowed to go up the stairs and into the front sitting-room. In a little while the Swami came into the room, dressed in his long overcoat and little round hat, chanting softly. He sat on a chair on the opposite side of the room and continued chanting softly in his incomparable way. Presently he said "Well, Madame!" I could not speak but began to weep and kept on weeping as though the flood-gates had been opened. The Swami continued chanting for a while, then said, "Come tomorrow about the same time."

Thus ended my first interview with the Blessed Swami Vivekananda, and as I went from his presence, my problems were solved and my questions were answered, though he had not asked me anything. It is now over twenty-four years since that interview with the Swami, yet it stands out in memory as the greatest blessing of my life. I had the wonderful privilege of seeing Swamiji every day for a month, and was in the meditation class which he held in Turk Street.

I used to stay after the class and help him cook lunch etc., or rather, he allowed me to be in the kitchen with him and do odd jobs for him, while he talked Vedanta and chanted and cooked. One verse from the Gitâ he chanted a great deal is verse 61, Chapter 18 : "The Lord dwelleth in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, by His illusive power, causing all beings to revolve as though mounted on a potter's wheel."

He chanted it in Sanskrit, and every now and then would stop and talk of it. He was so wonderful, his nature so many-sided, at times so childlike, at times the Vedanta Lion, but to me always the kind and loving parent. He told me not to call him Swami, but to call him "Bâbâji", as the children did in India. Once when walking along the street with Swamiji after a lecture, all at once he seemed to me so big, as though he towered above the ordinary mortals. The people on the

street looked like pigmies, and he had such a majestic presence, that people stepped aside to let him pass by. One evening after the lecture, Swamiji insisted upon taking a party of about 10 or 12 of us to have ice-cream. Some ordered ice-cream and some ice-cream soda. Swamiji was fond of ice-cream but did not care for ice-cream soda. The waitress who took the order made a mistake and brought ice-cream soda for the Swami; she said she would change it for him. The proprietor spoke to the waitress about it, and when Swamiji heard him, he called out, "Don't you scold that poor girl. I'll take all the ice-cream soda if you are going to scold her."

After living in Turk Street for a month, Swamiji went to Alameda and stayed at the "Home of Truth". It was quite a large house and was surrounded by a beautiful garden, where the Swamiji used to walk about in smoking. There was quite a large porch on the house on which Swamiji sat sometimes talking to the few of us who gathered around him. The Easter Sunday night was the full moon, the nisteria was in full bloom and draped the porch like a curtain. Swamiji sat on the porch smoking and telling funny stories, then he told of how his feet hurt him when he wore shoes in Chicago, and of his experience with a lady doctor who had undertaken to doctor his toe. He said, "Oh my toe, my toe! Whenever I think of that lady doctor, my toe hurts." Then one of the party asked him to talk on "Renunciation". "Renunciation?" said Swamiji, "Babies, what do you know of renunciation?" "Are we too young even to hear of it?" was asked. Swamiji was silent for a while and then gave a most illuminating and inspiring talk. He spoke of discipleship and of entire resignation to the *guru*, which was quite a new teaching to the Western world. While in Alameda Swamiji used to cook Hindu dishes for himself on Sunday afternoons, and I again had the privilege of being with him and partaking of his dishes; and although I attended all Swamiji's public lec-

tures both in San Francisco and Alameda, it was this close contact with the Swamiji that I most deeply cherish. Once after being quiet for some time Swamiji said, "Madame, be broad-minded, always see two ways. When I am on the Heights I say 'I am He', and when I have a stomach-ache, I say 'Mother, have mercy on me'. Always see two ways." On another occasion he said, "Learn to be the witness. If there are two dogs fighting on the street and I go out there, I get mixed up in the fight; but if I stay quietly in my room, I witness the fight from the window. So learn to be the witness." While in Alameda Swamiji gave public lectures in Tucker Hall. He gave one wonderful lecture "The Ultimate Destiny of Man" and finished by placing his hand on his chest and saying "I am God". A most awed silence fell upon the audience, and many people thought it blasphemy for Swamiji to say such a thing.

Once he did something in rather an unconventional way, and I was a little shocked at him. He said, "O Madame, you always want this little outside to be so nice. It is not the outside that matters, it is the inside."

How little we understood the Swamiji? We had no knowledge of what he really was. Sometimes he would tell me things, and I in the abundance of my ignorance, would tell him I did not think that way, and he would laugh and say, "Don't you?" His love and toleration was wonderful. Swamiji was not in good health—much lecturing told upon him. He used to say he did not like platform work, "Public lecturing is killing. At eight o'clock I am to speak on 'Love'. At eight o'clock I do not feel like love!" After he finished lecturing in Alameda, the Swami went to Camp Taylor and a little later started for the East and we in California never saw him again. Yet we who were blessed by his presence cannot feel he is entirely gone from us. He lives in our memories and in the teachings he gave us. Before he

left, he told me if I never got into psychic difficulty again to call on him and he would hear me wherever he was, even though hundreds of miles away, and it may be he can hear even now.

(Vedanta Kesari, September 1924)

XXXI

My first impression of the Swami was not a happy one. He had come to the World's Fair as India's representative at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, and I, a young preacher fresh from the University, did not greatly admire the magnificent ease with which he waved aside Christian history and announced a new Star in the East. I think it was his lordly manner that disturbed, somewhat, my American sense of democracy. He did not argue that he was a superior person, he admitted it. Afterwards, when I learnt that several cities, notably Boston, had formed Vivekananda Clubs, I was prepared to credit the report that, not his ideals, but his eyes, were leading captive silly American women, which was manifestly unfair. Then, for several years, I heard nothing further of him.

I reached India in December 1900, embarking at Naples on the "Rubattino" of the old Italian Line. It chanced that my seat in the saloon was at the end of one of the centre tables—which has considerable to do with my story. Mr. Drake Brockman, I.C.S., of the Central Provinces, occupied the first seat on the right, and another English Civilian whose name has escaped my memory sat opposite him. At Suez there was a shift at table, some of the passengers having left the vessel, and our first meal in the Red Sea saw a strange gentleman, in Indian habit, seated next to Mr. Drake Brockman. He was silent that first meal, taking only a ship's biscuit and soda water, and leaving before the meal was finished. There was some question up and down the board as to the identity of the distinguished stranger, for, as was quite evident, he was no mean personage; whereupon a rough and ready traveller, disdaining delicacy, called to the chief steward to bring him the wine orders. Osten-

sibly looking for his own wine card, he drew forth a modest soda water slip which was handed round the table. "Vivekananda", in pencil, was what passed across my plate. In a moment I remembered the furore he had created at the Parliament of Religions, and looked forward with some interest to the coming days at sea.

My earlier impression of the Swami was still strong upon me, so I did not immediately seek his acquaintance; a bow at table answered every requirement. But I chanced to overhear one of the passengers speak his name, and add, "We'll draw him!" I suppose my instinct for fair play pulled me toward Vivekananda as his unconscious ally in the intellectual recounters of the next ten days. Perhaps he discerned my unspoken friendliness, for, almost immediately, he sought me out.

"You are an American?"

"Yes."

"A missionary?"

"Yes."

"Why do you teach religion in my country?" he demanded.

"Why do you teach religion in my country?" I countered.

The least quiver of an eyelash was enough to throw down our guards. We both burst out laughing, and were friends.

For a day or two, at table, one or other of the passengers proceeded to "draw" the Swami—only he refused to be drawn! His answers were ready and usually sufficient; but, more than that, they were brilliant. They sparkled with epigram and apt quotation. Presently the lesser wits learnt the valour of putting up their swords, all excepting Mr. Drake Brockman; his keen and analytic mind constantly cut across Vivekananda's epigrams and held him close to the logic of admitted facts. It worried the Swami a lot! The rest of the company soon lost interest and permitted our little group at the

end of the table to hold uninterrupted forum, breakfast, tiffin, and dinner.

One night I participated in a discovery. Vivekananda had been particularly brilliant. His conversation was like Ganga at high flood. There was really no interrupting him. A question might deflect him for a moment, but presently he was moving again on the main current of his speech. At the close of an unusually eloquent period he bowed slightly to each of us, then arose and quietly left the saloon. The Civilian sitting opposite Mr. Drake Brockman leaned across the table.

"Have you noticed that when the Indian gentleman is interrupted, he begins again where he left off ?"

"Yes, we both had noticed it."

"He is repeating one of his lectures for our private benefit."

And so it was. But even so, it was an amazingly interesting performance, many leagues beyond the ordinary chitchat on board ship.

Vivekananda was a patriot much more than philosopher. I think his passion for the Vedantic propaganda was because this seemed to him the surest way of fostering Indian nationhood. I believe in this he was mistaken;[1] nevertheless, my recognition of his patriotism

[1] "The Swami's Vedantic mission served a twofold purpose as the Sister Nivedita says : 'One of world-moving, and another, of nation-making.' The function of the Swami's movement as regards India, to quote his own words, was: 'to find the common bases of Hinduism and awaken the national consciousness to them'. The object of his carrying the spiritual message of India to the West he clearly stated in the following terms: 'To give and take is the law of nature. Any individual or class or nation that does not obey this law, never prospers in life. We must follow the law. That is why I went to America. . . . They have been for a long time giving you of what wealth they possess, and now is the time for you to share your priceless treasures with them. And you will see how the feelings of hatred will be quickly replaced by those of faith, devotion, and reverence towards you, and how they will do good to your country even unasked.' That the Swami was right in the choice of his 'plan of campaign' is borne out by the fruits of his labour in India and abroad."—*Ed., P. B.*

washed away completely my first unhappy impression of him, and enabled me to know him as I think he would be glad to be remembered by his countrymen—not as a religionist propagating an ancient creed, but as a lover of his own land seeking to promote her good in the society of modern nations.

It was this passion for his country, short-circuited by a misapprehension of the purpose of Christian missions, that brought on an explosion. One evening, over the nuts and coffee, the conversation had turned on India's preparedness for self-government. (By the way, the conversation took place more than twenty-two years ago, when as yet the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform Bill was nebulous and far away; similar conversations may logically continue for one hundred and twenty-two years to come, for no nation ever yet was "prepared" for self-government.)

Suddenly Vivekananda blazed.

"Let England teach us the fine art of government," he burst forth, "for in that art Britain is the leader of the nations;" then, turning to me, "let America teach us agriculture and science and your wonderful knack of doing things, for here we sit at your feet—but"—and Vivekananda's pleasant voice grew harsh with bitterness—"let no nation presume to teach India religion, for here India shall teach the world."

That night we walked over the deck together and talked of the deeper things where there are no Britons, no Americans, no Indians, but only our hungry humankind and of one Son of Man whose sacrificial Blood, somewhere in the shifting sands of Asia, still abides. I think I helped the Swami to understand that no missionary in his senses is seeking to teach "religion" in India, but only to help India know and love that Man.

During the last day or two of the voyage our understanding of each other increased greatly, and, as I believe,

our mutual respect. The mysticism of Vivekananda was a fascination and wonder. For it was not affected. When our conversation touched, as it was bound to, on the hidden things of the spirit, his heavy eyelids would droop slowly and he wandered, even in my presence, into some mystic realm where I was not invited. When, on one such occasion, I remarked that a Christian's conscious fellowship with the Supreme Person must be alert and awake (as all personal fellowships must be), and therefore is essentially and necessarily different from a Hindu's immersion in the all-pervading Brahman, he looked at me with a quick glance of scrutiny but made no reply.

The last night, before the "Rubattino" reached Bombay, we were standing on the forward deck. Vivekananda was smoking a short sweet-briar pipe—the one "English vice", he said, which he was fond of. The wash of the sea and the unknown life which would begin on the morrow invited quietness. For a long time no word was spoken. Then, as though he had made up his mind I would do India no harm, he laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Sir," he said, "they may talk about their Buddhas, their Krishnas, and their Christs, but we understand, you and I; we are segments of the All-One".

His hand remained upon my shoulder. It was such a friendly hand, I could not rudely remove it. Then he withdrew it himself, and I offered him my own.

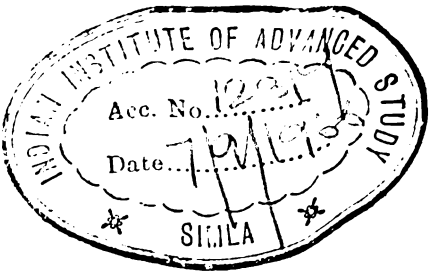
"Swami," I said, "you will have to speak for yourself and not for me. The All-One of which you speak is impersonal, and therefore must remain unknowable, even though we be immersed in it as this ship is immersed in the Indian Ocean; He Whom I know, Whom I love, is personal and very very real—and, Swami, in Him all fullness dwells."

The sweet-briar went swiftly to his lips, and the

drooping eyelids as he leaned against the rail gave token that Vivekananda had gone forth on a far quest.

Was it the All-One, or the One in all, the Swami sought the night ?

(Prabuddha Bharata, March 1923)



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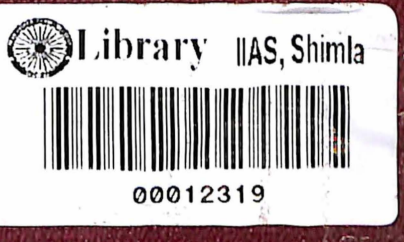
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