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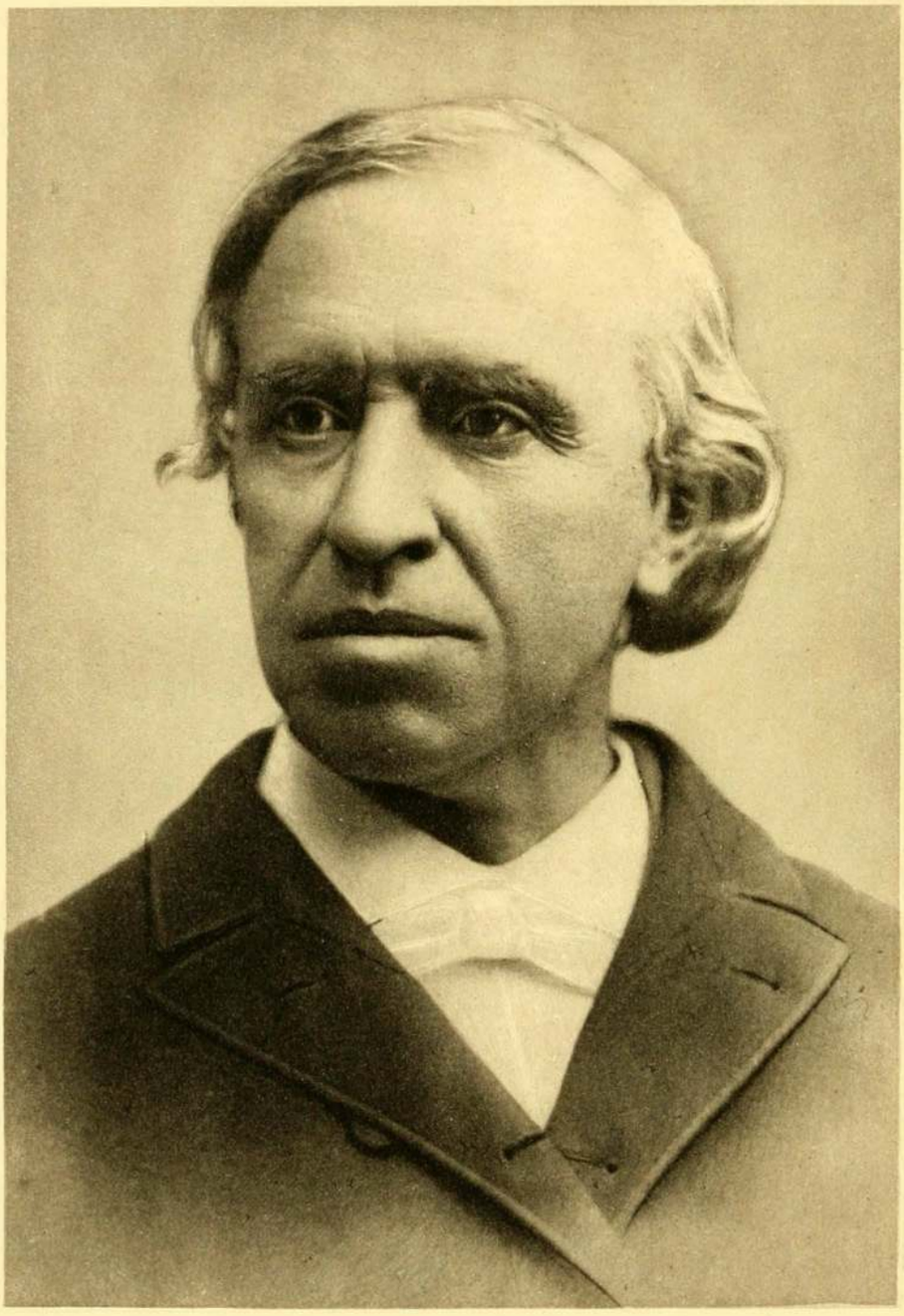
DAVID SWING



DAVID SWING
POET-PREACHER

BY
JOSEPH FORT NEWTON

CHICAGO
THE UNITY PUBLISHING CO.
ABRAHAM LINCOLN CENTRE
1909

THE TORCH PRESS
CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

TO

JENNIE MAI AND JOSEPH,
AND A LITTLE BOY WHO
SLEEPS, THIS BOOK IS AF-
FECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

PREFACE

No apology is needed for this record of the life of David Swing, unless it be that the story of his great ministry should not have remained for so long untold. This silence, which has been longer than falls to the lot of even lesser men, is due in part to the rush and hurry of the age, and to the bland facility with which it forgets the men of yesterday. Absorbed in the present, striving for the future, the past and those who with it depart count for too little. It must be that we the living have not been duly mindful of our obligation to the dead and to the advancing generation, or else we have forgotten that the image of a great preacher is kept in the world by the devotion of those whom he inspired.

It is of supreme importance that the life of such a man should be written if it be true, as F. W. H. Myers has said, that the record of a great and pure personality is the best bequest of time. The ministry of Swing was in every way unique and worthy of record, though one is safe in saying that it never once crossed his mind that any one would in the future sit down to tell its story. He was, as all who knew him can testify, at once the most lovable and least aggressive of men. For himself he made no claim, asked for no reward, and seemed to cherish no ambition. His theory of life was that what gift soever a man had should be used for his fellow man, and for no other end; and that theory he carried out. This modesty,

while it gave him a peculiar charm, has made it difficult to follow the course of his years.

My first obligation is to Mrs. Mary Ricker and Mrs. Helen Starring, the daughters of Prof. Swing, who have kindly aided me in every possible way. After them, my special gratitude is due to Mr. Lyman J. Gage, Mr. W. E. Curtis, Mr. Franklin H. Head, Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Bishop Samuel Fallows, Mrs. W. A. Talcott, the late Mr. Abram Pence, the late Miss Sophie B. Kimball, Mr. Thomas Chard, Judge J. B. Swing, of Cincinnati, and many others, for reminiscences, records, and suggestions. The chapters were published as a series of articles in "Unity," edited by Dr. Jenkin L. Jones, and after some revision and expansion are given this permanent form at the request of many readers.

Any account of Prof. Swing must necessarily be imperfect, but the author is keenly aware of special defects in this record. The genius of Swing was so quiet, unobtrusive and appealing that one finds it difficult to analyze or define it. He was an uncommon man with common principles, a meditative man in a noisy age, undisturbed by the base appetite for popularity, an example of the democracy of culture and the religious uses of common sense. It is as an atmosphere that he is remembered, a gentle, humane, refined spirit, touching the life of his city and his age, ameliorating its crudities, softening its harshness, and permanently modifying its spiritual climate.

J. F. N.

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

No attempt is here made to give a full list of the writings of Prof. Swing. To do so would be to fill many pages, for his pen was ever busy and his contributions to periodical literature prolific. He was also the subject of many articles, criticisms and appreciations, a few of which are noted. He made no attempt to preserve his own writings, but was content with the joy, and sometimes the pain, of writing, and the hope that they might help some one. Among his last requests was that all his sermons be burned, which happily could not be fulfilled. The following list may be of aid to any who wish to pursue the study of this essayist whose prose was poetical and whose reflections were philosophy.

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"When I heard him, I confess myself to have been under such a spell as only the finest orators may create, while I was saying to myself that this is not oratory at all. In the hour of his supreme power what resources he had, what forces came within his grasp! He had a finer humor than Beecher; it was a radiant atmosphere, never tumultuous with stormful glee, but kindly, genial, an air in which the laughter rippled o'er the soul as the water moves when a swallow flies close to the quiet pool. He had a perfect mastery of sarcasm and irony. They never mastered him. In these rare moments of superlative power his good humor kept the sharp edges from cutting a hair, while the blades flashed everywhither. Just at such an instant in his appeal, sober common sense, the strongest faculty he possessed, uttered its behest, while fancy and memory played about the message as sweet children about a gracious queen. He embodied in himself the mission of the Christian scholar — the Greek ensouled with the genius of Hebrewdom. But it was a Greek, clad with the splendor of a Christian knight, who uttered his plea with all that sobriety of statement, that artistic regard for the beautiful which made him the finest essayist who has stood in the pulpit of the nineteenth century."

FRANK W. GUNSAULUS.

INTRODUCTION

It is now fourteen years since the gracious figure of David Swing disappeared from mortal vision, and so far there has been no adequate record of his life, no serious appraisal of his ministry, no attempt to set him in due order among our teachers of faith. This is indeed strange to one who recalls his rare and beautiful genius, the nobility and amplitude of his thought, the beneficent impression of his personality, and the extent of his influence and fame. It is time that some account should be given of Swing, else that radiant man will fade, as he seems well nigh to have done, from his rightful place in human memory.

As one looks back at him now in the clearer perspective of the years, more and more Swing rises up as one of the great, simple, tender men of his age, and altogether worthy of our lasting and grateful remembrance. He was, perhaps, the most distinguished minister of his day, in the sense that he was set apart from others by such marked traits of mind, as well as by the methods of his ministry and the audience to which he appealed. He was a teacher so unique as to be exceptional in any day, and his historic ministry in Music Hall, Chicago, is one of the best traditions of the pulpit. In splendor of oratory Swing was excelled, like all others, by Beecher, and as a man of the spirit by Phillips Brooks — that cathedral-like personality. But it was to that order of genius that he belonged — the orator, the man who prevails less by the depth and

originality of his ideas than by the power of a kindled personality; the man in whom a genuine spirituality is joined with a rich and pure manhood, making his pulpit at once a throne of beauty and a shrine of worship. As unlike as ever men were in temper, training and method, these masters of assemblies were yet comrades in spirit, in faith, and in their common and high ambition; each, except for the others, the greatest preacher of his land; each the best beloved citizen of his city, if not the most distinguished. In varying tones and keys, and with abundant insight and beauty, they prophesied of Divine Love and Reason, of racial unity and brotherhood, of the catholicity that is in Christ, of social morality, national nobility and human welfare. Indeed, it is doubtful if in any age or country they have even been surpassed in their vocation and class.

But Swing was set apart even from his two fellow-workers, not more by the quality of his mind than by the methods of his ministry. Among masters of the pulpit he has a place of his own, as he had a gift of his own, for it was not his varied learning, or his rich culture, or his simple faith, that could explain his peculiar persuasiveness. He was no more like Robertson, of whom he reminded us, than Stanley, with whom he shared a lack of the speculative faculty; no nearer Maclaren than Joseph Parker. He had, indeed, much in common with these teachers, and with all the fruitful and upward-looking prophesy of his age — a faith in the Divine order of the world, a reverence for human nature, a respect for reason, and a concern for the real and practical in religion. Yet in his own distinction and power, in his character as a helper of those who recoiled from the formal and arbitrary in religion, there was no one like him, there was no one near him.

Like all such men he had his imitators, but his genius was his own and his mantle was his shroud.

If an ideal sermon be a religious stump speech, as it was once defined by John A. Broadus — who taught preachers by precept and by shining example — then Swing was not a preacher at all. By this test he was more of an essayist than a preacher, as he was more of a sage than a seer: an essayist, I may add, at once genial, facile and prolific, with a double gift of personality and style, and a felicity of simplicity without commonness very rare indeed. But I prefer to regard him as a preacher of a type all his own, unique in the wealth and range of his ideas, and by far the most perfect master of the graces and refinements of language that has stood in any American pulpit. As such his work — especially those mellow, meditative sermons of his later years — is one of our most precious possessions. This at least is true, that in the pages of Swing we have a body of writing unlike anything else in the literature of the pulpit.

Ever memorable are the words of the Puritan Robinson, exhorting his flock, at his parting from them, not to come, like other sects, to "a period in religion," but to be willing to embrace further light. In his day he recognized only the further light which should break out of the written word of God. But upon the period in which David Swing labored further light from the Unwritten had broken. To say that it was a period of transition would be to repeat what has been true of every age, time out of mind and from whatever beginning. It was an age of science, of social unrest, of theological chaos, almost of panic, as witness its cloud-shadows as they are reflected in the lives of men who lived through it — of Arnold, say, or of Tennyson.

Skepticism took every form that genius could devise, even that of inventing substitutes for the religion it had cast aside, and the gusts of the age carried its seeds hither and yon. The pulpit was busy, for the most part, spinning gossamer-like bridges wherewith to reconcile the old theology to the new knowledge. Multitudes sought refuge in indifference, while others retreated into the dreamy mazes of the occult — that strange mysticism which gives to the harder facts of life that solemn apartness which moonlight in nature adds to the most ungainly objects. Few now know the profound unsettlement of soul, the alarm, which marked those years when it was feared that Christian faith would not live out the century. It is in the frame of that era that the sermons of Swing must be read, and by his leadership of faith in an age of doubt that he must be judged.

As has been said, Swing shared with Stanley a lack of the speculative faculty, and this is the clue to his ministry on its theological side. He had those limits of mind which made common sense his reigning gift, but in him common sense was lifted into genius and glorified by the soul of an artist. Old systems of dogma he made to be of little account, not by attacking them in detail, or at all — save now and then with a polished satire sheathed, always, in a scabbard of velvet — but by quietly passing them by. They lay so far outside his own way of thinking that he had no relation to them, hardly even that of opposition. Debate about them was a "dim battle in a doubtful land," far away from the plane of life — crowded with human figures, and crowned with divine achievement — where all his interest lay. Ideas which did not touch life or affect conduct, which lost themselves in abstractions

without a moral, he was apt to regard as mere matters of argument or definition which, after all, did not define or settle anything. Having prevailed for so long, and having done so little for either the peace or usefulness of faith, he was disposed, perhaps too summarily, to cast them aside in behalf of that eternal religion which cleaves everywhere to the life and soul of man. One may agree with him in this or not; but, at least, it shows the path in which his mind moved. And to follow that path was to be led to a new point of view in religion, but it was chiefly the point of view that was new.

It was this genius of common sense, so to name it, which made him so wise a mentor in the age of theological break-up in which his life was cast. In his day the time was not ripe for a reshaping of dogma such as is now proceeding, and for that task Swing had not the genius — though his work was singularly rich in suggestions to that end. The movement inspired by Coleridge — a renaissance of the Greek spirit in theology — which had response in Maurice, Kingsley and Stanley, and in less profound form in Beecher and Brooks, met a congenial genius in Swing, whose Greek soul hastened to give voice to its hidden and forgotten beauty. He saw that the doubt of the age was but the shadow of an out-grown theology projected upon the scene by the dawning of a sweeter, saner, more inspiring faith, which, as a fact, was the old faith in new form and force, with newer applications and realizations. Christian truth, he saw, needed not only a restatement, but a resetting; needed, that is, to be so reated to actual life and to the humanities of the world, as not to be shaken by the last found fact of science. In thus seeking to bring theology down to the earth, he failed, it may be, to unveil that hidden truth whereof

no man knoweth, and which the impulses of a natural piety do not reach. But he did make luminous the human side of religion, its social meaning, and the myriad points of its contact with the common lot.

A man of this order, by nature a dealer in the most universal of ideas, catholic in temper and practical in aim, could not be a theologian, least of all a sectary. No sect or party within a sect, no cult, is called after his name; no scheme of dogma takes date from his career as a thinker. He was a Commoner in religion, as he once happily described Phillips Brooks, neither orthodox nor radical, and in no wise concerned with those dogmas which toil not nor spin in the service of life. At a time when men in large numbers were turning away from the altar, Swing tried to do the one thing worth doing, the only thing left to do. He sought to take the great truths — the truths which underlie all sects and overarch all creeds — out of the mist of the abstract, out of the din of debate, out of the bog of negation and dogmatism, and set them in a real world of beauty, right reason, and tender human life. Always his effort was to show that the truth most needful for man is in the near-by facts of life, if we fly low enough to see it, and that the basis of faith is as solid as the earth. If not a genetic thinker, like Emerson or Bushnell, he was a novel thinker, giving beauty, color, and wonder to facts and ideas already so familiar as to have lost all power to stir the mind. Old truths, seen through the prism of his genius, seemed new, and real, and close to the life of man — sometimes very close. Men rejoiced to discover that, despite their fears, the great truths were still true, and for simple obvious reasons hitherto overlooked. God, Duty, and the Eter-

nal Life were felt to be the sure possessions of man, and all noble living was seen to lead to Christ.

But this bare statement of the purpose of his ministry gives no inkling of how he led men of all faiths, and men of no faith, to the larger outlook; with what abundant wisdom and sympathy, with what catholicity and tenderness of mind, with what chaste and moving eloquence. His themes were lofty and noble, not speculative but moral and spiritual, and in marked contrast with not a little pulpit discourse upon dogmas in which busy men shared no interest. Only the universal truths inspired his heart and engaged his thought, and upon these his essays were so many variations and improvisions of melodious speech. In some of his sermons the name of Christ was not so much as mentioned, but He was always there, like a diffused essence coloring the whole — sometimes, indeed, so rarified as to be only an exquisite perfume. Despite his vagueness of thought, perhaps because of it, he inspired faith, and if his common sense knew little of ecstasy it knew less of despair. Oddly as it may at first seem, his essay-like sermons were in effect a form of evangelistic address, appealing as they did to vexed and bewildered minds, and to those who had gone out into the arid wastes of a half belief. As if by divine ordination Swing was wonderfully endowed with the faculty of reaching that class, to whom few could speak, and to whom the church did not minister. He combined, attractively, the wide survey of a publicist with the sincere and calm optimism of a Christian; religiousness with literary refinement; unshaken faith with freedom of thought; the lucid sanity of a sage with the pensive, dream-like soul of a poet. Never was culture more opulent, more modest, more practi-

cal, and never was it brought to the service of faith in more forms of beauty.

Who that heard the vanished preacher in the now vanished Music Hall can ever forget the curious richness of his physique, and his awkward gestures; the great sad face so full of kindness, which lighted up like an aurora when he spoke; the voice with its peculiar intonations; the pervasive aroma of ripe culture; the ever present hero-worship, and the great names with which he conjured; the wide outlook which swept the whole field of history and of life; the sage-like simplicity of homely wisdom, touched with poetic beauty and fancy; the quaint, sly, half-pathetic humor, kindly and contagous; and above all, the sweet-toned, melting pathos, as of one who had pity and hope for man — pity for his past, and hope for his future? It was the enchantment of pure genius, a voice that one hears once in a lifetime and never forgets.

Gentle, deliberate, homely, eloquent — one knows not how to convey an exact impression of that unique orator. He lacked every grace of elocution, and yet he produced such effects as only a great orator may produce. By a kind of human electricity Henry Ward Beecher swayed men as the wind sways the clouds, his glorious body made incandescent by spiritual passion. Swing had not that magnetic fire, being much too frail a man to kindle so vital and consuming a flame. Nor was he of the order of Phillips Brooks, whose sermons were, at times, rapt and lofty soliloquies, uttered before his audience rather than to it. His eloquence reminded one, remotely, of that of Emerson, devoid as it was of the element of intense expression and highly wrought feeling. It was an oratory of subdued tones, a serene music of the mind, though there were signs of

high tension in the speaker. Touch was added to touch, beauty to beauty, and it seemed as though all were done so easily, and in his moments of supreme power the lavishness of his resources was amazing. But more amazing was the clairvoyant sympathy by which he entered — a dear, familiar friend — into the hearts of men, as if he knew what all had felt, what all had suffered, the lonely sorrows and the long lost ideals of each soul. Genius of this order has in it a fascination more compelling than literature, more direct than architecture, and more vivid than music.

Some men prevail by what they know, others by what they do. Swing prevailed by what he was — a man simple and straightforward, wise by his very guilelessness, and always effective because he was such an unveneered human being. It is with a feeling almost of futility that one undertakes to portray the subdued strength, the gentle sympathy, and the appealing grace of that wonderful man. The charm of his nature was a blended composure, gentleness and benignity. In the great temple of religion his vocation was the ministry of beauty, culture and charity. His character, his personality, the cast of his mind, the quality of his view of life, and, it must be admitted, the flowing robes with which he invested the truth as he saw it, gave him his sway over his fellow men. My task here is to describe David Swing, his personal and intellectual charm, the methods of his ministry, and the ruling ideas of his life. And that, it need hardly be said, no one can adequately do.

The art of a great preacher — and it is at once an art and an incarnation — is much like that of the actor, and unlike that of the poet, the painter or the statesman. It dies with him. Draw his picture how you

will, something ineffable and uncapturable is lost beyond recall. His monument, as has been well said, is an hiatus, a vacancy, even a vacancy that is vacated with the passing of the generation to whom he ministered. The more reason, then, that we should remember him, that as little as possible may be lost of the precious treasure of mankind. What if the picture of him be bathed somewhat in the rose-glow cast upon it by our own emotions — that is just his glory; that he evoked those emotions in us and made us, for a brief time, better than ourselves.

CHAPTER I

The Clermont Boy

David Swing was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 23, 1830. His parents, David Swing and Kerenda Gazley, were at that time living in a two-story brick house at the foot of Elm street, on the river front; the father a prosperous man of the river, the mother a woman of rare grace of mind and piety of heart. The first floor of the house was a store-room in which Samuel Swing, David's uncle, sold groceries, while the upper story was used for residence — a quite pretentious home for that day. An older son, Alfred Swing, born in 1828, made up the little family.

The details of ancestry need not long detain us. It is enough to say that Swing grew, as every such man grows, where for generations there had been striving intelligence and quiet virtue. His foresires, on both sides of the house, were simple sturdy folk, healthy of body, wholesome of mind, thrifty, patriotic and deeply if somewhat sternly pious. In one of his essays he refers to the French as the language of his birth and soul — an allusion, no doubt, to the former home of his family, which was in Alsace, near Strasburg, on the Rhine. But, as the name was originally spelled Schwing, we may infer that his forefathers were more German than French, or else a blend of the slow, heavy power of the one with the light and nimble grace of the other. His friends, who were more in-

terested in these matters than he was, loved to trace in him the best qualities of both types; which was more a tribute of love than a statement of fact, for many rivulets mingled in the stream of his blood. More than this is not known, except that the Schwings were of the faith of Calvin, and that some of them fled, with others of their sect, to the south of France in quest of liberty of worship.

An old family Bible, "printed in London in the year 1728, in the Dutch language," records that Samuel Schwing, born September 15, 1729, emigrated to the New World when in his twenty-third year — 1752 — accompanied by one brother named Jeremiah. These two young men, with good Bible names, settled first on Long Island, nearly opposite the town of New York. Later — in 1760 — we find them living in the western part of New Jersey, where, in course of time, there was a family community at "Swing's Corner," in Salem county. Thence the new generation journeyed to the West and South, some going to Pennsylvania, some to Ohio, and some as far west as Illinois. Samuel Swing the second, David's grandfather, settled at what is now Newport, Kentucky, as early as 1799, just across the river from Cincinnati, which was then only a straggling line of huts under the shadow of wooded hills. This hardy pioneer seems to have been a builder of barges and keel-boats for the river traffic, and to have acquired some wealth; but he is only a name and a shadow. His wife — "Aunt Polly," as she was called — survived him many years, and is remembered as a stately and gracious figure.

Of Swing's father, whose name he bore, not much is known, for he was just striking his stride when death overtook him. He was the pilot of a steamboat making

long trips to the gulf, in the days when the rivers flowed through a wilderness dented here and there by a clearing and a cabin. By dint of thrift and industry he was able, in 1824, to own the boat which he piloted, and also the brick house on Elm street. Such glimpses of him as remain seem to lend color to the picture of a robust, energetic, tender-hearted man, behind whose jovial manner lay a kind of brooding pensiveness which at touch of sorrow darkened into melancholy. Swing recalled the hushed awe with which this story of his father was told in the family circle. On one of his journeys the young boatman was haunted by a dream that his little sister Julia, whom he idolized, had met her death by falling into a well. The vision so pursued him that he hastened home, and at the landing told his dream, only to find that it was true. In 1825 he married Miss Kerenda Gazley — she of the bright brown eyes, the auburn hair and the sunny heart — and made his home in the Elm street house. And it was there, over the grocery store — long since vanished — that their two boys were born.

The Gazleys were a family of remark, the first of the name, John Gazley, having come to this country from England in 1715 — to Dutchess county, New York, where he died, leaving one son to bear his name. One of his grandsons, James Gazley, and family — twelve in number — some of whom had preceded him, came to Cincinnati in 1816, when Kerenda was a girl of sixteen. They were folk of refined taste, lovers of music, readers of polite literature, and some of them had that talent which is hard to know from genius. James W. Gazley, the oldest son, was a leader and orator of great ability, and the first representative in Congress for the Cincinnati district, having defeated

William Henry Harrison in the race for that honor. Sayers was a Presbyterian minister, eccentric to a degree, but withal a man of some learning and the author of several books. Theodore won fame and fortune at the bar. Kerenda, the mother of David Swing, was a woman of great strength and beauty of character, and one of the most gifted of the family. She had a serene temper, a quiet humor, fine common sense, and above all a pervasive cheerfulness which made her one of those elect women whose mission it is to keep others in good heart about life. Her temperament was poetic, and from her David inherited many of the delicacies of his nature — his love of the beautiful, his literary tendency, and somewhat of the silken fineness of his mind. Much, indeed, that was genius in the son existed as talent in the mother. "My bright little mother," he used to say, "how patient and kind she was! It was well to know her, and of great good to be her child." Her child he was, and it was through her that the angels of ancestry appeared unto him and made him a minister.

The elder David Swing — for so we must refer to him — died in 1832, that fateful year when flood, fire and plague conspired to destroy Cincinnati. His death left his wife in dire plight, with a boat to run, a store to keep, and two boys to train and educate. The shadow hides her for a time, but the Cicninnati Directory for 1833 — a tiny, faded book — gives her name as the owner and keeper of the grocery store on Front street; from which I infer that she managed her own affairs. Two years later she was married to James Hageman, of Reading, Ohio, a widower with two children. The new family lived at Reading, where the father worked at his anvil — for he was a blacksmith —

until the early months of 1840, when removal was made to a farm near Williamsburg, Clermont county, Ohio. In that rural community, far off the highways of the world, David Swing spent the years of his boyhood, a child of simple life and country ways.

The Hageman home lay one mile and a half to the southeast of Williamsburg, on a high table-land. Cedar trees grew in the front yard; a never failing spring near by supplied water for family and flocks; a barn, a granary and an ash-hopper completed the picture. The house, Swing tells us, was an evolution from a rather primitive loghood, and after this manner. His mother began to plant flowers in front of the cabin, and the cabin itself became doomed. The old rail fence had to give place to something that could be painted white, and the floor made of slabs, hewn with an ax, was followed by ash boards; and the ladder which led to the upper story or attic gave way to stairs. Later a parlor was added to the front, and a shanty-like kitchen was annexed to one side; but these luxuries came after David's time. He could not remember when the snow did not sift through the board roof upon his bed in the loft on bleak winter nights.

Here was poverty indeed — but it was the hopeful, inspiring poverty common to the older West, where there was no luxury, no squalor and no caste; that dreaming and drudging which grew strong men when the original fiber of their make-up was good. Many such homes dotted the country round about in the days when all wore home-spun, ate plain fare, and worked hard on the farm. The life of the family was simple to austerity, but rich in faith, in morals, and in the essence of things that were real — as Swing would say, "in the music of holy voices and the ministry of

loving hands." Memories of those years of privation and toil, with pictures of the scenery which he carried in his heart, floated into his sermons, but they were nearly always hidden behind some other name. It was in his moods of reverie, in his off-watch talk, that one caught glimpses of the farmer boy. Thus:

"I never swore but once, and the oath made so loud a report that it frightened me. It was on the Fourth of July, and I was walking to a big celebration in a neighboring town. There had been a rain the night before and the road was muddy. I fell into a puddle and was obliged to return home and have my trousers dried. I did not have but one pair. . . . I had no overcoat till I was a member of the senior class in college. Was I cold? No, I went without one and did not get cold. Nobody got cold then. . . . I knew the knack of swinging the cradle, and while yet a boy did the work of a man in the fields of yellow grain. When the harvest was over at home I would hire out to the neighbors — for 30 cents a day. And I did a good day's work when I used to do that on our neighbor's farms. The best I ever did was a full hand's work for ten consecutive days, omitting Sunday. . . . Plowing and hoeing, sowing and reaping, mending fences and going to mill, filled the year with toil and only a few months in the winter were left for school. But I studied nights, kept my own grade, and voted myself the honors."

Down a winding woodland path Alfred and David went to the village school in the winter, crossing the East fork on the ice when it permitted. At other times they rode an old white horse and crossed on the bridge below, the faithful animal returning home alone leaving the boys at play under the sycamores. A school-mate, A. S. Dudley, writes:

"The pages of my memory contain no more delightful records than those made by David Swing — 'Dave,' as we called him — when we both attended the district school at Williamsburg. The buds of promise made early appearance in his life. Those who were intimate with him in boyhood can trace the beginnings of his worth and eminence to his lovable disposition and bright intellectual traits as they appeared in his youthful sports and earliest occupations. Even

then we were somehow impressed with the distinction, or, at any rate, with the sweetness of his nature. He was strangely tender-hearted, and would burst into tears if any boy or girl suffered injury in the games on the playground. He could run and skate and swim with any of his set, but he could not bear to take the life of any breathing thing. There was a vein of silliness in him, a droll, dry humor, made the more comical by a slow, drawling voice, which always caused a titter from the long reading class which wound all around the old log schoolhouse. I have often thought that for one born, as David was, to feel the hardness of the world, his humor was a saving grace. He was eager to know and quick to learn, excelling in mathematics, history and composition — and, I must add, in every kind of innocent prankishness. One day, left to act as monitor of the school, he solemnly called the roll in rhyme, using all the nicknames and inventing others to fit his jingle. Some of the names coined by him that day were such apt characterizations that they followed their wearers far into the years. He was a good story-teller, and there was no end to his making of puns. When the teacher's back was turned David would make the school roar by mimicry of some expression or gesture of some odd character in the neighborhood. Everybody loved him, the victims of his puns and jokes no less than the rest."

As a boy Swing was short and rather slim, awkward, loose-hung and slow of movement. His face was of an odd cast, dark and quite homely, with prominent front teeth and thick lips, the heavy chin and jaws suggesting that in him which might have led him far astray but for the high forehead. His hair was a rich brown, his eyes hazel, and his expression earnest, if not intense, as of one born a little way over on the shadowy side of life. Few ever guessed what manner of boy he was — delicate and pensive of soul, beauty-loving, wistful, sensitive, shy — a boy whom the death of a bird set musing of the meaning of a world wherein life was woven of beauty, mystery and sorrow. "When I was a boy," he once said, "I knew Gray's 'Elegy' by heart, and used to go about quoting it to myself, but

I had to give it up — had to keep myself away from it. It drew me into a world of shadows, and I needed to walk forth in the sunlight among living men and women.'' He observed nature with the nice minuteness of a susceptible mind, and her ministry to his meditative spirit was of a kind not easily put into words. Often he could be seen walking alone in the woods or fields, his fists dug deep into his pockets, his hat tilted back on his head, and his face aglow with simple delight in the beauty and wonder of the scene. He felt the pathos of animal life, and the dumb friendship of his dog filled him with a kind of awe. So he was born, and so he lived all his life through, a blend of mirth and melancholy.

In gifts and aptitudes, as in disposition and character, the boy was father to the man. His love of reading showed itself early, though there were not many books to be had in the log cabin home. The family library consisted of the Bible, which Swing knew as few lads ever knew it; Calvin's ''Institutes'' — a relic handed down from no one knew how far back; Fox's ''Book of Martyrs,'' and the McGuffey readers; to which was added the county Democratic paper, *The Clermont Sun.* He read, besides these, ''The Pilgrim's Progress,'' which his mother secured for him, and some of the stories of Scott, borrowed from the village tanner. The ''Institutes'' were ''rather large reading for a boy,'' as he was wont to say, but to the end of his life he held that McGuffey's Sixth Reader was a great book; and indeed it was. For Swing, as for many a boy in the older West, its varied and wise selections from the best English authors were the very gates of literature ajar. The two brothers had the same spirit in common, the same fineness of mind and

the same love of beauty. While Alfred was making violins, braiding bright straw into hats of unique design, and drawing nature scenes, David was answering his favorite writers with his own thoughts woven into verse and prose. Some of these boyish writings, of a humorous sort, were read before the village literary society, and those who heard them say that he had an individual style.

The light of history, romance and poetry lies warm on the southern Ohio counties; on none, perhaps, so warmly as on old Clermont. Almost every hamlet in Clermont county is linked in history with some name great in church or state, in peace or in war. "Old" Jesse Grant — and all men over fifty years were old in those days — was a familiar figure in Williamsburg when Swing was a boy. But the fame of U. S. Grant, while it overshadows all others, was only one growth, albeit a noble growth, in that obscure nursery of citizenship. There lived the Lytles, kinsmen of Mary Todd Lincoln, the father an orator to match Tom Corwin on the stump, the son a soldier and a poet. At Bethel sleeps Thomas Morris, he who withstood Webster and Calhoun in the Senate, and of whom Whittier, at that time an editor, said in his paper, "He is the lion of his day." Nor must we forget Dowty Utter, the "Democratic Meat-Ax," much of whose kindness to fugitive slaves found its way, anonymously, into "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Something in the soil of Clermont, or in the soul of its people, grew a race of sweet-toned preachers — Wm. Christie, who equalled Clay for eloquence, Sargent, Raper, Collins, and, not to prolong the list, Randolph Foster, Bishop of Ohio. They were men of the Spirit, mighty in the scriptures, and their tradition is a precious legacy. In this enshrinement of patriotic

memory and religious grace our Clermont boy grew to manhood.

Surroundings shape the man, but now and then there comes a boy with a tendency to pick out half-hidden surroundings — influences not felt by others. Across the Ohio lay Kentucky — and slavery! At the time of which I write, and in fact much earlier, the great question was astir, and ill omens were in the sky. Nothing was done to entice slaves from Kentucky; only as they came were they secreted till the hunt swept by, and then sped on their way. Vague rumors of these things reached the boy David on the wings of gossip, in the rude wood-cuts of runaway negroes in the weekly paper, and in the conversation about the evening fire. But the sentiment of his home was pro-slavery, intensely so, and he was led to believe that Abolitionists were men to avoid. Chief among such offenders in the neighborhood was "Boss" Huber, the tanner. He was a bold man, outspoken, and fearless to rashness, which, no doubt, saved him much trouble, for it needed a brave man to face him. He it was who opened the eyes of Swing to the evils of slavery and drew him into the current of anti-slavery feeling. Long afterwards Swing told the story thus:

"In the village, which lay a mile or two from our farm, there lived and tanned leather a man called Boss Huber. He was the first one of those fearful creatures called abolitionists I ever saw, and to which all our large family looked with abhorrence. One summer morning it devolved upon me to make an early trip through the woods to the village, with the intent to lay in for some harvest hands a few pounds of sugar and a half-gallon of molasses, and lo! in a ravine, shady and cool and dark, I came upon Boss Huber and a large negro man. Boss was just shaking hands with the African, and giving him some money and some parting words. To my young and verdant mind it seemed that Boss was sending the

colored man on an errand, for the fact and manner of the Underground Railroad had not fully penetrated my soul.

"The fearful Boss then joined me, and we emerged at length from the woods and approached the village together. He began saying something about having told that negro of a town North in which he could find work; and from this introduction he glided off into a regular eloquent discourse about the wrongs and sufferings of the black man in the South. He wound up by taking from his coat-pocket a much-worn copy of *The National Era*, if my memory is perfectly correct. At least the paper contained several immense speeches from such men as Salmon P. Chase and Birney and Garrison, and when in one of those addresses I found a passage, 'We must in this country rear a temple of liberty whose shaft will pierce the skies!' it seemed to me a large remark. I memorized a part of that speech, and when, next winter, I joined a debating 'club,' I took the abolition side of the question, and as a climax quoted all about that temple with such an ambitious shaft.

"Today, among things to be glad of, I am rather glad that I once saw a slave make a summer morning sacred to him and to me by tripping along through the dense forests away from Ohio and towards freedom."

Always modest, he does not tell us, but it was true, that he won the debate, much to the joy of his friend the tanner. A boy like David, who could not sleep if a horse or a dog lay sick or hurt on the farm, only needed to know the evils of slavery to have his soul set on fire with indignation against it. He walked seven miles to Bethel to see Thomas Morris laid to rest in 1844, and the memory of that day never left him. The old tanner had dropped a seed into fertile soil and, as we shall see, it brought forth a rich harvest.

Swing was by nature deeply religious, and by grace also after one night in his fifteenth year. At that age he was converted, in the good old fashion, at a Methodist revival meeting. It was on a still summer evening, and the preacher was one of those great native orators who rode the Methodist circuits in the

olden time. His name is lost, but he stirred the soul of one boy as it had never been stirred before; the chariot of fire drew near and David was lifted out of himself. For days, he said, he felt as if he were walking on air, upheld by tides of ecstasy. Thereafter, though his gifts were of another kind, he was a lover of evangelical fervor and a believer in its cleansing and exalting efficacy. Also, in that tender hour an impression was laid upon him, which he could never quite shake off, that his vocation was that of a Christian minister. There followed, what always follows, a period of stress, such as comes to every boy when his voice changes from a boyish treble to a manly bass, and is, like the boy, for a time uncertain of itself. But his inner life was otherwise singularly serene, and hidden in the folds of a life-long modesty. In truth we know of it at all only from stray hints let fall in his later years.

Of his theological opinions we know more. In those days the papers brought little news of the doings of the big world outside, and, apart from local gossip — which then as now traveled in occult ways — theology was the topic of talk. Questions of the nature of Deity, of the elect and non-elect, of baptism, and related issues, were themes of table chat and fireside conversation. Every lad knew the "five points of Calvinism" and the "doctrines of free grace" as he knew the multiplication table and the "rule of three." The preaching of the day was decidedly doctrinal, and even babes in Christ were fed on the strongest meat of the gospel. Each pulpit was measured by its ability to make an exhaustive analysis of some other pulpit, and thus to show the utter falseness of the latter. A boy who grew up at that time knew as much theology

as geography, and perhaps more. David's step-father was of New England stock and thoroughly grounded in the old theology, as it was before the riddle of Samson repeated itself in the history of Puritan faith — that is, before the days of Emerson and Bushnell. Strangely enough, David could not accept that theology, though he had been trained in it. He felt that it was too severe, too narrow, and much too exact in its information concerning ultimate things. He felt this, I say, for he was guided all his life more by a large and tender reason than by formal logic. So it was that the good man [1] and the gawky boy had many a discussion, all in good temper, about the winter evening fire, or at the end of the rows as they plowed corn together in the summer. A man who was a neighbor boy, writes:

"In his later youth, when David began to think and form opinions for himself, it is remarkable that in some of the most important matters he chose the opposite, if not the extreme, of some of the austere tenets in which he had been so carefully instructed. He was always religious in spirit, but never quite orthodox in thought; some doctrines he could not believe. It is interesting to note that his attitude as a boy in these matters was not unlike that which so puzzled the church in after time. His faith as a youth, as I recall it, was much the same in spirit and substance as that which he set to so many keys in Music Hall. I watched his long career, and the glory of the man was but the unfolding of the boy as I knew him. He was born with a mysterious largeness and tenderness of mind."

[1] Mr. Hageman was a man of unusual native ability, which made him equal to many who had enjoyed greater educational advantages. He was keenly observant of nature, skillful in mathematics and mechanics, and his knowledge of the Bible was remarkable. He was of robust strength, of fine character, of genuine worth, his seeming austerity masking a big, gentle heart. One day, so runs the story, he started to flog David for some misdemeanor. Whereupon Alfred caught his brother in his arms and ran away with him. This act of heroism so amused the good man that he sat down and laughed — and all boys know that in laughter there is safety.

About this time David's uncle, the Rev. Sayers Gazley, once pastor of the village Presbyterian church, came to live in the Hageman home. He was a man of some attainments, especially in theology, but very eccentric, dogmatic and intolerant. His faith was a sombre Calvinism darkened into fatalism, in which a few elect were to be rescued from the general collapse and failure of creation. He held the dogma of the divine origin and right of human slavery in the same manner, proving it the while with Bible texts, and no one dared to doubt his exegesis. Riding fast horses was his passion, but whistling was his pet abomination, and he kept a ledger in which to record the names of all boys who practiced the vice. If a boy felt moved to bird-like music he looked about him before puckering his lips to begin, but after nightfall the theologian heard many a warbled tune with variations. David's religious views were explained by his boyhood friends as, in part at least, a reaction from the radical and too violent views of his uncle. Doubtless that strange man served him as a kind of negative pole of thought, but he seems to have been endowed, from the first, with a mind at once judicial and humane.

The man who more than all others touched the boy David was the Rev. Ludwig Gaines, who succeeded Dr. Gazley in the Williamsburg pulpit in the early forties. In connection with his labors as pastor, Mr. Gaines taught classes of boys who looked forward to college studies. He was a man of ripe culture and a born teacher, having not only the art of communication, but the gift of getting hold of a boy and finding what was in him. He loved Swing and discovered behind his shyness a fine mind, the instinct of a student, and an eagerness for knowledge which knew no weariness.

David had special aptitude for languages, and it was Mr. Gaines who started him across the years towards the beautiful vanished world of Greek and Latin culture. A vague dream of scholarship began to take shape for the boy; his teacher saw it and rejoiced. A man of the spirit, orthodox but not radical, Mr. Gaines was a wise mentor in matters of faith. By the ties of friendship he held David to a warm heart of faith, and perhaps saved him from a too violent break with his past.

It was at the home of his teacher that Swing made his first acquaintance with a well-chosen library, which opened a new heaven to his aspiration. Out under a tree at the noon hour, by the glow of the fire, or, if the night was mild, by the aid of a dim tallow dip in the attic, he pored over books. With great rapidity he became familiar with the masters — Addison's "Spectator," Spencer's "Faerie Queen," Hume's "History of England," and the richly appareled eloquence of Edmund Burke. Owing to the absence of diaries we cannot follow in detail his early wanderings among books, but some of his likes and dislikes are known. After Gray, whose "Elegy" was attuned to the soul of sweet sadness that was in him, Cowper was his best beloved poet. And there was much in common between Cowper and Swing: an exquisiteness of taste, a gift of language, a sensitive shrinking from the hardness of the world, a love of nature in her quiet moods, and above all a fineness of feeling, a pity, for every living thing. Byron he held in little esteem, dismissing him with the remark that it would have been better if he had never been born. Be that as it may, the farmer-boy made good use of his teacher's library.

In 1847 Professor Gaines moved to Goshen, some seven miles away, to be pastor and teacher in that community. David followed him, riding to and fro on horseback, and was a pupil in the famous "Quailtrap Academy" — so named for its peculiar architecture. One day in the summer of 1848, while digging potatoes, David told Mr. Hageman that he wanted to go to college. They sat down at the end of the row and talked it over in that subdued and tender way in which men talk of matters of large import. David learned that his father's property had been sold and the money held in trust for Alfred and himself, and that there was enough, if wisely used, to pay their way through college — an erroneous calculation as time proved. In the autumn of that year the two boys, always inseparable, entered the Miami University at Oxford, Ohio.

CHAPTER II

Miami University

Oxford was only a village in 1848, and it is not much more than a village today. A walk of a few squares brings one to its eastern limit and to the University campus. Wide gravelled walks sweep through a magnificent academic grove, where the trees planted years ago by graduating classes are so venerable in appearance as hardly to be distinguished from the primeval growth. Near the center of the campus stands the University building, altered and enlarged from what it once was, from which a sward of blue-grass slopes away in all directions. The background is a dense wood, a great green one, fretted with a thousand aisles.

Of course Miami was not in 1848 a university in the sense in which that word is now used. It was one of a number of small colleges which dotted the state of Ohio, the policy of the early days being to distribute institutions of learning, instead of attempting to build up a central university; one of the earliest, and for a long while decidedly the leading college west of the Alleghanies. The historic tradition of Miami has ever been one of high intellect, of thorough scholarship, and of warm-hearted religious life. Though a state school, it was presided over almost from the beginning by men of the Presbyterian faith — some of the Old School, some of the New School, and still others of the United

branch of that church; and such a mingling of schools implied a certain catholicity of thought respecting the minor controversies of theology. The curriculum, modelled originally after that of Yale, was freely changed to adapt it to the needs of the practical West and South, for students came in those days from the Carolinas, from the bayous of Louisiana, and from the prairies of Illinois. The long list of Miami sons who have risen to distinction attests at once the wisdom of her policy and the validity of her ideals.

David Swing entered Miami, as I have said, in the autumn of 1848, and was graduated in the class of 1852. As a student he was unassuming and earnest, never seeking to attract attention to him, albeit credited with his due quota of college pranks — such as tampering with the weather vane on the steeple, taking down zig-zag rail fences and building them across the road, and writing puns and rhymes on the blackboards in the class rooms. During his first two years his interests were somewhat too wide for marked success; in fact, not until the last year did he display the unusual ability that was in him. His meager means required of him the utmost frugality, and in trying to do his own cooking he almost ruined his health, the penalty for which he paid in later life as a semi-invalid. After that he sought a better table, and took care to have more open-air interludes in the midst of his studies. The college library, of which he was for a time the keeper, tempted him to indulge the luxury of reading; too much so, perhaps, for proper concentration upon his work, as was natural in a boy to whom poverty had denied the blessing of books. He was a member of the Miami Union Literary Society, but from the records he seems to have taken little part in the routine work of the

society. He was not, except when deeply stirred, a ready debater, and his interest in college politics was slight. In 1852 he was selected, with Benjamin Harrison and others, to represent the society in the annual "exhibition," or oratorical event. His theme was "The Importance of a Well Defined Profession," and he is said to have treated it with more than ordinary earnestness — for it was a subject which had begun to trouble him. The death of Henry Clay called forth from him an impromptu speech in the society which is remembered to this day for its aptness and beauty.

In one of his little essays in the *Chicago Journal*, entitled "Sons of Miami," Swing once gave reminiscences of some of his fellow students, and, quite incidentally, a few glimpses of the lighter side of his own college days. Among those recalled were Whitelaw Reid — "a long-haired, graceful youth, nervous, ambitious and industrious;" Calvin S. Brice, Senator from Ohio, "whose wardrobe could have been duplicated for twenty-five dollars, to which pecuniary humility he added not less than a million freckles, and about these little islands in the facial archipelago there was a halo of red hair;" and Benjamin Harrison, of whom he wrote:

"One morning there appeared a pale-faced addition to our regular group. We soon found that the annex was named Benjamin Harrison, and that he was the grandson of the dead President of the name of Harrison. To us, Ohio boys, only a day's ride from the tomb at North Bend, the accession to our class was quite an event. The president of the college put on a very wise and serene look and told over, as though for the benefit of the newcomer, some anecdotes which had been told the rest of us upon previous mornings of recitation and conference. For two years Ben did his duty in all directions. He was an earnest, grave fellow and had no time or taste for mischief or for joining in any moonlight serenades. I was out with a dozen or so many a night, singing 'Nellie Bly' or

'Annie Laurie' under the window of some professor or sweet girl, without distinction of person; but Ben was never along. He was either reading or making a weekly call on Carrie Scott. Ben did well enough in Latin or Greek, but his taste ran to history, government, law and oratory. He was an eloquent speaker, not fond of hurling Poe's 'Raven' in our faces, but fond of debate in the halls. He had no vanity, no sense of superiority, but a lofty mind and a pure heart.

"It was a beautiful June day when he graduated. His commencement oration (for there were no 'addresses' or 'remarks,' in a grove so sacred to Demosthenes and Cicero) was upon 'England's Poor.' Thirty-six years have not erased from memory the general drift of that speech — the picture of beggars at each rich man's gate, beggars by the thousand around each palace and made by the palace. His face was long, white and attractive, and when he sat down and the band began to play, all the men and maidens out in the grove said to each other, 'A fine effort,' 'An honor to Miami.' "

When Mr. Harrison read these words he denied, positively, that he had ever been so grave and sedate as Swing made him to appear. He also expressed doubts about no distinction having been made as to the windows under which said serenades were said to have been given. He furthermore charged that the said David Swing, so far from forming said moonlight parties, spent all his spare hours at the home of Dr. Porter — where lived a lovely girl named Lizzie. However it was, and they were both telling tales out of school, we know that they were life-long and dear friends.

The class of 1852, known as "President Harrison's Class," stands out in the history of Miami for the number of its members who won fame in public life. The late L. W. Ross, Dean of Law in the University of Iowa, wrote of that class:

"In worldly goods and available brains the class of 1852 was about like other classes, but it had in it some bright minds. Harrison, in class ranking and merit, was above the average, but was not regarded as an exceptionally brilliant

student. Milton Sayler, afterwards Speaker of the lower House of Congress, though lacking in application, was a highly gifted man in many ways, and took first honors. David Swing was the class essayist, and confessedly its best philologist and mathematician. He won second honors, which meant, according to the custom of the time, that he should deliver the Latin salutatory on commencement day. As a youth he was full of friendship, intellectual curiosity, love of beauty and moral earnestness. He was the most enthusiastic classicist I ever met. He knew his Virgil by heart and the Iliad was as familiar to him as the spelling book. All thought him a master of exquisite English, as well as that most attractive and indefinable of college personages, 'a good fellow.' ''

On leaving college Swing found himself at the parting of ways, knowing not which way to turn. He was in debt, he was in love, and, worse still, he was divided in his mind as to what his life work should be, and that weighed upon him heavily. Native born to religion, in the love of God as in the love of his mother, he nevertheless hesitated to enter the pulpit, fearing that he could not be true to his own soul and take upon himself the vows required of a minister. Not that he was a skeptic; he never was; the great truths of faith were to him as the points of the compass. It was in the details of dogma that he felt himself out of accord with the reigning theology — not so much out of accord with it, perhaps, as indifferent to it; and the emphasis laid upon those details deterred him. Just as, at a later time, Jonah and the Whale outranked the Sermon on the Mount, so in that day the foothills of religion seemed more important than its mountains. It was an age of fierce polemics. Whether a man should be put under the water or the water be sprinkled or poured upon the man in baptism, was a question to settle which men girded up their lithe and sinewy intellects and met in debate. Swing felt that such debates about rites and isms was a waste of time and a

sin against religion. So we find him turning away from the pulpit in sadness, unwilling to become another factor in a world of factional feud.

This state of mind will doubtless be set down as a weakness by many, especially by those who entered the pulpit under the compulsion of a vivid experience. Indeed, there were those who regarded it as such at the time. But they did not know David Swing, the temper of his mind and the ideal of his life. There was none of the evangelist in him, no burning passion to save souls, no urgent "woe is me if I preach not the gospel." Nor was he of those who were set for the defence of the Faith, knowing that the Faith needs no defence, but, rather, that it defends us from the besieging vanities of life, from the lusts of the flesh and the fear of the grave. His ambition, the dream by which his life was lighted and led, was to inspire in men a love of truth, beauty and the things of the spirit, to refine and exalt their faith, to turn them from the semblance of life to homage for character. Nothing else seemed worth while; nothing else was worthy of the pulpit. But the outlook for such a ministry was not alluring in 1852, least of all in an environment of sectarian rancor. Swing went home from Miami utterly cast down of heart, determined to be a farmer, a lawyer, a teacher, anything, rather than become a molecule in the mass of sectarian agglomeration. That which more than all else, more than the counsels of teachers or the urgings of friends, held him to the path marked out for his soul, was his mother, whose wisdom and piety softened for him the hardness of dogmatic theology. Her faith was a pillar of fire to the youth who was sorely perplexed in mind. At last he made

the venture, but timidly, and as a New School preacher in the Old School church.

Accordingly, in the autumn of 1852 he went to Cincinnati to study theology in the Old School Seminary which was held in the First Presbyterian church, and of which Dr. N. L. Rice, pastor of the church, was president. Dr. Rice was an orator, a scholar, and a polemic of rare acumen, whose classes were an attraction to young theologues of that section. There Swing met the same old theology, with its knowledge of things as they were in the beginning, are now, and ever shall be — the scheme of dogma familiar to him from his earliest days. The deep, sad doubt of a later time had not yet arrived, nor the simpler and greater faith. Much of the teaching was narrow, dogmatic and technical, and had to be left behind; but he was fortunate to have lived in an era when theology, although in no way progressive, was yet in the hands of the masters, of whom Dr. Rice was one. The advance afterwards made was due, in no small degree, to the intensity of that heroic drill. His studies were interrupted, however, in the spring of 1853 by the removal of the seminary to Danville, Ky., and by the call of Dr. Rice to the editorship of a church paper in St. Louis. About the same time Swing himself was offered the chair of Latin and Greek at Miami, together with the principalship of the Preparatory Department; and from the alacrity with which he accepted we may infer that he was not unwilling to escape the bewilderments of theology. For pecuniary reasons, also, he felt that he could not neglect the opportunity. Then, too, there was at Oxford a certain young lady with whom his heart had become entangled, and the arrangement was thus all the more satisfactory. So, at

the age of twenty-four, he entered upon his duties as professor of the classics in Miami University.

Swing made Miami interests his own from the first, and found them abundant and satisfying. He felt that he had attained the summit of human ambition. His salary, $550, was raised until it approached $1,000 a year — enough, he thought, to make it prudent to marry. He married Miss Elizabeth Porter, the daughter of a physician of Oxford, a woman domestic in her tastes, sweetly pious, and almost excessively modest. It was an exceedingly happy marriage, as the years proved, and he settled with his young wife in lodgings at the college. As a trainer of boys for college, Swing, like Phillips Brooks, was a failure.[1] He was much too indulgent, using the recitation hour to teach the lesson as often as to hear it recited. He taught, besides Latin and Greek, English literature and some mathematics, but it was in literary studies that he was most at home as a teacher. There was at one time a movement afoot to endow a chair of English to be taught by him and called after his name, but the plan did not mature, owing to financial embarrassments. His enthusiasm for learning was infectious, and the classics were never so popular at Miami as during those years. His chapel talks were largely attended by stu-

[1] Swing used to tell a story of his days when a teacher in Oxford. One of its wealthiest citizens had an only son, of defective mentality. It seemed impossible to make an impression upon his muddled brain. The father finally came to Professor Swing and offered to pay most liberally if he would undertake the foundation of the boy's education, to see if the rudiments of a mind could be developed. After several weeks of patient effort some slight progress seemed evident, greatly to the delight of the father. So he called at Swing's home with a friend and suggested that the professor ask the boy some questions to show that he could answer them. Swing had been working just before he called for an hour or two endeavoring to give the boy some idea of the elements of grammar. So he asked him, as the freshest and simplest point he could recall, to tell what were the articles. Said the boy, after some reflection: "A, an, the, and sometimes w and y."

PROFESSOR SWING IN 1875

dents and town folk, for he always had something to say and a characteristic mode of expression. Indeed, there was no part of college or village life that he did not brighten with his good-fellowship, his droll humor, and his inveterate prankishness. The early years of his professorship were, as he once said, the happiest of his life.

So far Swing had not preached a single sermon; the farewell lecture of Dr. Rice, enjoining sound doctrine, had discouraged him. Also, a sermon by an eminent preacher in the same vein had almost taken the heart out of him. The form of doctrine set forth was perhaps sound, but it was hard, bitter hard, with never a softening touch of pity or of hope, picturing God as an Avenging Fury sending curses hurtling along the path of sinful man. Earth was a ship just ready to sink amidst angry waters, while the heavens above, black with wrath, parted only now and then to receive an elect soul snatched from the wreck. Swing never forgot that sermon and the horror of his grim, forbidding pessimism. Shortly afterward his own assembly expelled one pastor for permitting a woman to speak in his church, and another for advocating Christian union. A Presbyterian church near Oxford turned a young man out of its fellowship for the sin of listening to the gospel of "free grace" in a Methodist chapel. As a result, Swing seems to have resolved to give up all idea of preaching and to devote himself to teaching Latin and Greek. But those who loved him and knew his power would not let it be so. Quite imperceptibly, by the strategy of his friends, he was finally drawn into the pulpit. The way of it was this, as he told it:

"All through southern Ohio when some pastor was absent a Sunday, I was asked to fill his pulpit. So, in

this way, almost without knowing it, I found myself in the harness. I preached for Methodists, Baptists, New and Old School Presbyterians, and hence wrote sermons that would do for any church or chapel. I was not thought sound always, but no complaint was raised, except on the score that I mingled too freely with sects other than my own. I had my doubts about orthodoxy, but avoided committing myself in regard to dogmatic beliefs. Not that I was fearful — the school was a state school — or a sceptic, but such discussions seemed to me utterly profitless. I loved best those truths which had to do with the making of character and the conduct of life."

Once actually in the pulpit, he was engaged to preach every second Sunday at "Harmony Church," five miles from Oxford. This was his first pastorate, a church made up of farmer folk whom he loved and among whom he felt at home. His sermons were as carefully prepared as they would have been for a city audience, and Miami students went out in large numbers to hear him. Many of the traits of his later ministry appeared in those sermons in the country meeting-house — the breadth of view, the mastery of language, the pervasive, sweet reasonableness, and the rich, poetic fancy which clothed the most familiar truths in robes of beauty. All the oddities of the quaint orator were there — the awkward bending forward, the angular gestures, and the strange voice. Whatever theme he took, his thought was always simple, sky-clear and full of beauty, and the country people heard him gladly. He was happy in his work and seemed to cherish no higher ambition.

After his return to Oxford Swing had finished his theological training in an improvised seminary con-

ducted by Dr. Claybeau in one of the village churches. But he soon cast dogmatics aside and betook himself to the great books of the world, especially to the classics, which were the favorite haunts of his mind. His study of them was no word anatomy, no grinding at grammar, but a living fellowship with the soul of a race — its worship of the god of bounds, its respect for reason, its sanity and love of life, its vision of the holiness of beauty. Many subjects interested him, notably Dante. He mastered Italian, thinking that he could better interpret the "Divine Comedy" if he read it in the tongue wherein it was born. History he studied to its bypaths, tracing the remote ramifications of laws, ideas and events, and the slow growth in man of liberty, justice and pity; and this is one of the secrets of that unfevered optimism which made his ministry an oasis to baffled or defeated idealists. He was an assiduous reader of biography, as one to whom genius was a mystery and a revelation. He seemed to read everything and to forget nothing, his capacious nature claiming its own wherever large and vital ideas were to be found. It was during this time that he gathered much of that wealth of truth and beauty with which, in after years, he lured men along the paths of meditation. It was here that he perfected his literary style, that harp of ten strings with notes limpid, lucid and simply majestic. One cannot overestimate the worth and charm of those years of high toil and humble service. They were a precious preparation for his larger ministry, glorified as they were by the peace of great thoughts and the chastening force of pure motives.

To be a young man and to have an open mind in that day was to hear many rich-toned voices. Emerson, speaking from the center of serene light, was

touching men as with a wand. Swing heard that fresh, clear voice and it thrilled him, but he felt that it lacked sympathy, pity and pathos. Besides being so remote from the warm springs of Christian faith, transcendentalism rested upon insecure foundations for him. He always regarded Emerson as a kind of ethereal Sphinx uttering most inspiring riddles. It caused some shaking of heads when Swing introduced to his pupils "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," as it came out in the *Atlantic Monthly*; for in that section Dr. Holmes was looked upon as the sum of all that was bad, theologically. Some deemed it a grave fault in the young professor that he was so fond of Theodore Parker, but this was excused on the plea that it was Parker's politics more than his theology, or lack of theology, that attracted him. So, indeed, it was, Swing being among the many young men of the day who turned from Emerson to the more red-veined Parker.

Other voices than these, voices from within the church, found response in Swing. He was quick to divine that the movement of Coleridge, which had begun to put on garments of poetry in the lines of Tennyson and Browning, was a re-uttering of the Greek spirit. Browning was too bold a rider for Swing, but the seer-like quality of Tennyson's "In Memoriam" held him as by a spell. And well it might, for when we recall that it was published in 1850, and written in part much earlier, the fact that it reflected as in a prophetic mirror all the clouds of doubt and the blue depths of faith that filled the sky from 1860 to our own day, awes one. Swing was fortunate, also, to have lived through the Bushnell controversies, which began in 1849, as time has shown that death and life lay in those debates. Maurice he found a little foggy, but

his plea for a free quest of truth in a truly religious spirit appealed to Swing, as did his "transformation of Calvinism from the partialism of a sovereign to the universal saving grace of a Father." Those were great voices to which our young professor listened, as he sat keen-eyed and brooding in his Miami study, and there is no blessing like really great teachers in plastic, formative years.

In the meantime, the clouds were thickening in the national sky, a blaze of eloquence such as had not been seen in this land since the days of Patrick Henry making the shadows seem all the more dark. The Lincoln-Douglas debates had stirred the Middle West to fever heat, and men everywhere felt the fear, the hope and the dread of impending upheaval. In the campaign of 1856 Swing made speeches for Fremont at Williamsburg, Batavia and other points in southern Ohio — "the South Carolina of the North" — to the profound disgust of his step-father, Mr. Hageman. Politics supplied the deficiency of athletics at Miami in those years. The student body was made up of boys from the West and South, and it registered the excited pulse of the nation. There were hot debates in the halls which sometimes ended in fist encounters on the campus. Swing, born with the editorial habit, wrote the "leaders" for the *Oxford Citizen* during that stormy period, and his lines had no uncertain sound. It shows the temper of the hour that one of his sermons in the village church was the occasion of a bitter tirade from the *Cincinnati Inquirer*, in which it was denounced as a bit of "dirty pulpit politics." A specimen of his anti-slavery oratory may not be out of place:

"Christianity weeps today. Need I pronounce the name of slavery? It has advanced from the South. It came with the frightfulness and stealth of a serpent, coil upon coil,

anxious to crush, hungry for a glutton's feast. Missouri was thrown to it and was mangled and poisoned within its folds. Texas, a whole nation in itself, was cast to the monster, and the crushing and poisoning went on. And yet the reptile wormed its way northward and sought new victims. It charmed great senators as the common serpent charms little birds, and they bade the beautiful creature go whithersoever it would, and towards Kansas it dragged its foul length. . . . Is this world a place of repose? Do we eat, drink and be merry since tomorrow we die? Have nations no honor, no pride? Has Christianity gone away from earth? Has it bathed all our temples in the river Lethe that we might forget Christ, his truth and his cross? But slavery does not only consume states. It ruins the souls of men. It changes the halls of Congress into a convention of pugilists and duelists. There Brooks beat with dreadful blows the senator from Massachusetts. There Pryor sent his challenges. There Wigfall raved through intoxication. . . . But slavery did not pause with territory nor with congressmen; its influence was felt in millions of hearts. It prevented southern literature from rising into vigorous life, and often cursed it with sad blemishes so far as it has any existence. The letters of a Stuart Robinson or a Parson Brownlow are all vulgarity. . . . Slavery, however, is not satisfied. There has never yet been found a point at which slavery has cried enough; 'to the lowest depth it finds a lower deep.' Oh, why has God hesitated so long to sweep from existence a nation so infamous that dared not even check the progress of such a destroyer. He spared the nation that the lovers of truth might combat here! God knows the mission of man, and leaves him to struggle onward. Thus for generations the Netherlands fought the Roman bigots; thus the patriot hearts of England toiled on; thus the patriots of America toil upward today, carrying truth's great cross."

Clay had gone to his tomb, and in the hands of madcaps and hotspurs on both sides war was inevitable. Compromise would only remove the date a few years into the future. At last it came, when an old man named Edmund Ruffin begged permission to fire the first gun on Fort Sumter—

"Ah, then and there was hurrying to and fro
And gathering tears and tremblings and distress.

There was mounting in hot haste: the steed,
The mustering squadron, and the clattering car
Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,
And swiftly forming in the ranks of war."

Swing was too frail to be a soldier, and long afterward in a sermon on "Memories of the War," we find him quoting with deep pathos the lines of Lowell, ending with the words,

"To the saner minds
We rather seem the dead who stayed behind."

But he saw the whole vast tragedy, and it was as if the soul of the nation had passed into his own. It was pitiful to see him then — this man whose eyes filled with tears at sight of a bird with broken wing — as a box came home bringing the remains of some boy whom he had taught or with whom he had studied. The awful hush which fell over the land before a great battle sent him to his knees, and there were nights when sleep fled at thought of Miami boys stretched on far away fields, their white faces turned to the sky. The college was almost deserted, and the salaries of teachers were reduced to bare living expenses. Alfred Swing [1] had joined the army and was wounded at Shiloh. While he was in the hospital his baby died, and David hurried to the beshadowed home and took the absent father's place beside the little grave. After his re-

[1] After the war Alfred Swing engaged in business in Cincinnati. In later life he made his home in Dayton, Ky., and was for many years the only officer of the Humane Society in his city. He wrote two stories entitled "Desmoius" and "My Three Neighbors," both of which betrayed unusual skill in writing. Journalism claimed much of his time, but his passion was for painting. By the aid of maps and charts he painted Cincinnati as it was in 1800, for which he received $1,000. That painting may be seen in the Chamber of Commerce in that city. His paintings, which are chiefly landscapes, show a delicate feeling for nature, especially for the dreamy vistas of her winding waters. In religious faith he adhered to the old church, of which he was an elder, though with some reservations as to the darker aspects of its theology. He was an interesting and lovable man, full of friendship, and overflowing with kindness and humor. He died in 1898.

covery Alfred served the Cincinnati Times as correspondent and field artist until the end of the war.

Peace dawned, but Lincoln fell. Swing preached the memorial sermon at Oxford with face wet and a voice choked with emotion. The sermon was published in a pamphlet by request, but no copy remains. He was always a hero-worshiper, for all his calm poise of mind, and the strange, sad, glad, heroic, pathetic genius of Lincoln led him captive from the first, and he remained his follower to the end.

It was a felicity of the ministry of Swing that its obscure part came first. He had settled in his professorship at Oxford expecting to remain there permanently. He enjoyed an enviable fame as a preacher in the community, and as a man he was greatly beloved. In 1862 he had received an invitation to a Chicago church and had accepted it, but a few days later he withdrew his acceptance, stating that he felt himself unqualified permanently to interest a city audience. He declined two other invitations for the same reason. At last Mr. Abram Pence, a former pupil of his at Miami who lived in Chicago, tried strategy, by telling him that it was hinted that he was to lose his position as teacher at Miami. This was a bit of exaggeration, though the trustees had talked of putting the Preparatory Department into other hands, for Swing, as I have said, was too gentle to train boys for college. "He is a teacher of teachers," as one of the trustees put it, "not a drill master for a village brass band." His work in the higher branches left nothing to be desired. But the ruse worked, and Swing was induced "to take the risk," as he called it; but he did so with much reluctance, saying that he would preach all he had to say

in six months "and run dry." He actually took up the study of law to have something to fall back upon when he ran dry.

It was so all his life long. There never was a man less sensible of his own power, and this without any inverted egotism or loss of true dignity. "He was a man whom his friends carried along," as one of them said, and in every crisis the decisions were forced upon him. Honors sought him, he did not seek them. He came to Chicago in the autumn of 1866, to the little Westminster Presbyterian church, and that city became the scene of his trials and triumphs.

CHAPTER III

Early Chicago Years

Chicago, in 1866, was a city of more than two hundred thousand people, a three-sided city spread out fanwise around the lake. By act of God and the energy of man it was destined to be a metropolis of the new, uprising West. As Robert Collyer once said, in a mood of fancy, when "Nature called the lakes, the forests and the prairies together in convention, they decided that on this spot a great city should be built." Then, as now, there was a Chicago spirit — free, generous, practical, and intensely energetic — the ideal realism of the West mixed with the crude stuff of a city in the making.

The men of Chicago asked that their religious teachers be, first of all, good citizens. After that, that their teachings, recommended by whatever intellectual beauty and virility, should be simple, noble, and usable. The spirit of the city was actively democratic on all sides, and hospitable to every form of faith that promised good to man. But each faith had to make its way along the rough unpaved roads of human need and struggle, and to such as proved sane, rational and uplifting, there was an eager welcome and a fair field. In this city of "the large and liberal air" David Swing felt at home, its very genius being a spirit to match his

own. Of that genius he wrote, in the *Lakeside Monthly*:

"It appears that, not only in Arabian dream but that in reality, there is a genius of each place holding an invisible wand that touches every heart. A Quaker influence presides over Philadelphia; a Calvinistic Hercules holds Pittsburg in great subjection; and thus onward until each city may be seen to lie under a powerful enchantment peculiar to itself. *Chicago is an attempt at evangelism.* All the details of the creeds between Jerusalem and Geneva seem forgotten. It has been driven to what is called a practical gospel — driven by its multitudes, that need virtue more than theology, and driven by the failure of didactic theology elsewhere. It enjoys the advantage of past public experience. . . . The Episcopal churches here are full of Calvinists whose heads never received the Bishop's benediction in regular line; and the common meeting houses are full of those who were once confirmed in the Apostolic church. Roman Catholic children crowd our free schools here. All the way from Robert Collyer to Robert Patterson the preaching is practical, free from sectarianism, full of persuasion through love. The city being the halting place of a great army of business men, not of pilgrims seeking a blinking Madonna, the local gospel was compelled to become a mode of virtue, rather than a jumble of doctrines."

Swing lived on Cass avenue when he first came to the city, and the Westminster Church — a wooden structure — stood on the corner of Dearborn and Ontario streets, nearby. Two little daughters, Mamie and Helen, had come to bless his fireside, making his home a picture of joy. Mrs. Swing was a woman of whom there is not much to tell to the outside world. She was skilled in all the arts of the home, a devoted wife and mother, gentle-hearted and full of kindly hospitality. The Professor — the title followed him to the end — was ever a countryman come to town, free and simple in his ways. He was an engaging talker when the spirit moved or the occasion permitted, having a rich fund of apposite stories inevitably pertinent

in their application. At such times his humor was wonderfully sweet and bright, and always stingless. That, like all his gifts, was under control, and was displayed only at fit time and place. He loved the informalities of life, that is, this side of the unconventionality which affronts good taste. But he *preached* only on Sunday. He neither mentioned his sermons in advance nor warmed them over in conversation after they were delivered. "What do you intend to preach about next Sunday?" said a lady whose discretion was not obvious. "O, even my wife never knows that," was the reply. One night each week he kept open house for the young people of the church, and they came and brought their friends. At time of parting all would gather about the piano and sing some old-time hymns for good night. Miss Sophia Kimball writes:

"Professor Swing entered our home the year of his arrival in Chicago, a neighbor. My father was an elder in the old Westminster church. The writer, a young girl, did not fare the same at his hands as later in Rome when Bishop Chatard, now of Vincennes, passed evenings with the parents, of being a disregarded presence. The Professor had the country custom of 'running in.' Caught in the music room on one occasion, he carelessly said, 'Play for me.' What a slow, ponderous bearing he had — how solemn. Among loose sheets of music lay Chopin's Funeral March, surely there would be no mistake with that selection. It proved a red letter day, for he remarked at the close, 'That is not a funeral march, but the march of humanity. I love it more than anything in music. You might repeat it again and again to me and I would not tire.' My first interpreter had come. We knew each other forever."

But it was in the pulpit that he shone. There were revealed his thoughts moving in large orbit, the exquisite tenderness of his poetry, his delicate sentiment, his humor, his pathos, his satire keen and polished, his philosophy, his charity, and his learning wide as all

good literature. His powers were so finely poised that one knew not which quality was the most attractive. Those who heard him then did not regard him as a coming man, but as one who had come in grace and power. One who listened to him in the old wooden church left this memory, which appeared, anonymously, in the *Chicago Pulpit*:

"'Come,' said a friend, 'and I will show you the homeliest preacher I ever saw, and the most interesting.' I went — to the Westminster church on the North Side — and I went again, and again. I was not prepared for such a powerful essay with so little show of power; for essay it was, though there was a text tacked on. I better understood the magic of an oratory of subdued tones, greater than the most showy rhetoric or the stormiest bluster. He was indeed homely and awkward, but one soon forgot that. It was a new kind of preaching, so comprehensive, so tender, so close to life, and withal so effortless. There was nothing in excess, not a line overshaded, and it was all in a strain of noble humility of spirit. His modesty, his serenity, his insight, reminded me of Emerson, whom I had heard in Boston, though there was a vein of sadness in him which Emerson did not have — a proneness to delicate, dreamy, twilight thoughts. No sermon went far without a touch of this gentle, wistful pathos, or a faint gleam of humor. Much of his charm lay in the unaffectedness of his faith; he was too sure of the great truths to argue about them. His aim seemed to be to lift the doctrines of faith out of their old settings, and bathe them in that light of nature and revelation which is universal. His sermons, while at times unusually striking in single periods, were more effective in their cumulative impression as a whole. He created an atmosphere of faith in which Christian truth seemed not only more attractive, but more real. He made me feel that life was worth while and moving on to a higher destiny, and that the finer things were near me."

Such a preacher was not long in being found out, and the wooden edifice was soon too small to hold his audiences. In 1868 came the union of the Old and New Schools of Presbyterianism, and the Westminster was united with the North Church under the present

name of the Fourth Church. The two ministers became associate pastors of the new body, Swing taking the evening service and his colleague the morning service. This was not a happy arrangement and there was some friction, owing to the jealousy of the older man. As an inspirer of direction in the growing life of the young Swing was singularly gifted, and his services were largely attended. But they were not sufficiently evangelistic to suit his co-worker. One day the good man came into the study to talk the matter over with Swing, and to remind him of some of his shortcomings. Finally, in behalf of a better understanding, he drew forth from a cavernous pocket the draft of an agreement which he wished Swing to sign, it being a kind of shorter catechism of their joint tenets. Swing took his pencil in his left hand — he was left-handed — and drew a mark across the document, saying, "Dr. —, if you attempt to put me in your overcoat pocket, I will kick the lining out!" The Doctor was very angry and it was not long before he sought other fields of labor, leaving Swing in charge of the new church. [1]

The sermons of this period, such as have come down to us, betray many of the characteristics of his maturer work. Beauty was always there, sometimes as a decoration, but more often as a grace inwrought

[1] To this period belongs that story which Dr. Collyer used to tell with such zest and glee. His two daughters, then quite young, went to hear Prof. Swing preach and came home all in a maze about the sermon. The theme was predestination, which was interpreted to mean a large and kindly destiny hovering about our mortal life. At the table next day this question was heard: "Does predestination mean, father, that we must go where God sends us, to heaven or to hell?" But before her father could frame an answer her younger sister offered an explanation which was entirely satisfactory: "No, that is not true, sister. That is not what Dr. Swing meant. It is not predestination, it is *pedestrianation*. You can go where you will." She took for her proof a famous pedestrian who had walked from Portland in Maine to Chicago. It was this haziness of Swing's views respecting certain doctrines of which the associate pastor complained.

and native as tints to the rose. As to style, all he attempted to do was to say what was in his mind, and have done with it, but his language was the natural speech of a mind full of beauty and benign light. A few passages from a sermon on the "Defects of Liberal Christianity," which created a flurry of discussion at the time — 1869 — may serve as an example and an incident:

"Whether it is necessary, we do not say; but it is, as a simple fact, the misfortune of Liberal Christianity that it severs the ties of religious feelings between the present and the long past. It breaks away, not simply from the creed of Fenelon and Wesley, but from their sharply-defined religious states and acts. Turning aside from these, it becomes criticism of religion, or esthetics, or culture; but religion it is not. Feeling called upon to battle against some of the dogmas of by-gone days, it went too far, and broke fellowship with the spirit of devotion that is in the world. It is hard to limit or hold within bounds the critical method. Lord Jeffrey learned how to review poetry, but he forgot how to produce it. It has, in some such manner, come to pass that Liberalism has not only attacked doctrines, but has severed the bonds of the spirit. . . . Old orthodoxy may have been associated with errors, and may be full of them still, but it has been grandly religious all the way from Christ and John to Edwards and Wesley. It comes to us like the vernal wind which Dante felt touching his temples as he entered the middle Paradise — a wind that 'never intermitted, never veered,' but swept along gently, forever bringing perfume and bird-song from the forest of Chiassi. Through the old church, dear to Augustine, and Whitefield, and Chalmers, has been wafted without intermission the perfume and melody of holy worship. It touches the temples of men today just as it did when Massillon or Guyon bowed in prayer. We fear to enter the new antagonism called Liberalism, lest along the new path the sacred wind, starting up from Patmos, might not be felt upon the face nor whispering about the heart.

"One thing we know, that there is a spirit, a genius of religion, as distinctly featured as a statue by Phidias or Angelo. . . . The Quakers never cast themselves into a mere critical inquiry. To them God is everything. Their religion is not love of music, nor pageantry, nor art. It is religion

in its last analysis; a golden chain, hanging, day and night, between God and man; a Jacob's ladder of the soul. The Unitarian rallies around an intellectual standpoint; the Quaker around an affectionate tie to God. The one is logic, the other is love. . . . An elegant writer says that lawyers, and other intellectual men, should read much in the best poetry to soften their life. Upon reading this we remember that Cicero pleaded, for that reason, for the poet Archias, and that Burke and Pitt and Curran were lovers of great poetry. Oh, it must be that out of this corner of their heaven fell the sunshine that made their eloquence so rich and warm. But if such is the influence of the poetic spirit, how can human life dare step aside when the sweet tide of worship swells in the world! Stepping aside from this, we are suddenly separate, not more from theology than from the dearest associations of piety. When the air is full of voices and angelic forms, step aside?''

The sermon tempts to quotation, but this is enough to reveal the temper of his mind and the attitude of his thought. It explains, also, why he always held somewhat aloof from the liberal movement, despite the fact that he had much in common with it. Here was the old criticism that Liberalism is more intellectual than spiritual, more negative than positive, all sunlight and no twilight; though a deeper insight would have disclosed that Liberalism is, at bottom, a mysticism. Robert Collyer, of Unity Church, replied to this sermon under the title, ''The Mistakes of David Swing.'' But Dr. Collyer was not, in fact, a fair test of what Swing had in mind, for his faith, like Swing's, was kindled never to go out at an old-time Methodist altar. The tone of Collyer's reply led Swing to feel that he had wounded that lovable man, and this grieved him deeply. Dr. Collyer tells how it ended: ''My sermon was also printed, and on the Monday morning following I met Swing on the street. He held out his hand with a smile, and said, 'I will not do that again.' I laughed also and said, 'All right, old man,' or words to that

effect. He was more cut up about it than I was, and I just had to forgive him. He was a dear man, sweet of heart and full of reason, and after he got free, the most eminent preacher in our city barring none."

But that did not end the matter for Swing, who carried in his heart a regret that he had said anything to mar Christian fellowship. Nearly twenty years later, in an anniversary sermon, we find him recalling that sermon as an unhappy memory. "The sermon which I regret most of all in this long ministry was born of the midnight lamp and the theological notes taken in a seminary before the practical had fully come, and its burden was to prove that Robert Collyer, with his Unitarians, could not achieve as much good in the world as they could did he say along with us Presbyterians that 'there are three persons in the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and these three are one, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.' What proofs were in the sermon have passed from memory; all is gone except the general unwavering conviction that it was a bad sermon aimed at a good man."

In 1871 came the great fire which left Chicago a charred and blackened ruin, as if the fires of Inferno had been permitted for a night and a day to devastate a city of this planet. Swing lost everything — his church, his home, and his library. Mr. Donald Fletcher writes: "On Monday morning of the big fire I overtook Professor Swing, his wife and two daughters, going up North Clark street ahead of the fire, and took them to my rooms in the school on North Halsted street. Professor Swing had the baby's hand in his left and with his right hand pulled a child's express wagon with a few pieces of table silver. 'Hello, Donald!' he said;

'these are all I have left. Gold (pointing to his wife and children), silver, and hope.' '' A young divinity student, a guest in his home, had undertaken to save his papers and old sermons by carrying them in a trunk on his shoulder. He tripped and fell, the trunk flew open, and a gust of wind filled the street with flying papers. This, Swing said, was a bit of good fortune, for it put his old sermons out of reach so they could not tempt him in an idle hour.

The spirits of the city quickly revived, and Swing went east to raise funds to rebuild his church. While in Brooklyn he met Beecher for the first time, which was the beginning of a friendship which lasted, through good and evil days, to the end. On his return, the Fourth Church resumed its services in Standard Hall, in the residence portion of South Division, that being the only available auditorium. Soon the hall was too small, and when the McVicker's Theater reappeared in the burnt district the church worshiped there, as it was more centrally located. There the papers discovered Swing, and his sermons were printed every Monday morning and widely read. Taking advantage of the fire, the churches were moving away from the center of the city, and Swing was urged to remain at McVicker's Theater, on the ground that such a down-town meeting place was needed; the more so since he had attracted new hearers from all parts of the city. These overtures, however, he put aside and returned to his newly built temple, and his new friends followed him.

It has been said, even by friends, that it was his trial for heresy that lifted David Swing into public notice. Far from it. As early as 1872 he had won national repute as a preacher of rare gifts both of thought and of literary style, and his growing influence

and fame made him a shining target for the heresy-hunter. His sermons were published weekly, in part, and, after the *Inter Ocean* was founded, in full; they attracted attention immediately — the poet Whittier being the first wise man of the East to hail the new star in the West. *The Alliance* was started in 1873, with Swing as chief editorial writer, assisted by Drs. Thomas, Powers, Helmer, and others; and it was a bright and interesting paper. Then, as always, Swing was a watcher of life who never left the roadside, and his editorials, written with Addisonian elegance and ease, covered a vast range of current opinion and event. They were thoughtful and well-considered, with now and then a glint of quiet humor which played over the human scene with sympathy and delight. He measured men shrewdly, yet kindly, and his summarizations of character were always definitive. *The Alliance* stood for much the same way of thinking as is now called "the new orthodoxy," and as such it became the organ of liberal minds in all the sects — for it was undenominational — and of those who walked alone of the scattered friends of a better faith in far places. It was known as "Professor Swing's paper," and his name, with those of his associates, gave it a large following.

Swing had now come to his own, and the people in large numbers had come to him. He was a man among men, of the world as well as in it, a student of men and things as well as of books, though to his fame as a preacher he added a parallel fame as a scholar. He never fell into that pessimistic, denunciatory tone which was then, as now, so often a besetting sin of the pulpit. Even in laying bare public evils, which he did with surgeon-like insight, he spoke more in sorrow than in anger, and over all was the mantle of charity

and brotherly regard. Nor was he of those who judged the battle from afar by the din and smoke thereof. He knew men in all ranks and walks of life, men of affairs, men of the bench and the bar, journalists, writers, stage folk, and the rest. Edwin Booth and Lawrence Barrett were among his dear friends, as were Garfield, Custer and Hayes. Swing carried into his life and manner very little of that atmosphere we call clerical; men knew him for a full-orbed, genuine man, a minister who needed not to advertise his presence. The following pen-picture of him in these years was drawn by Dr. C. L. Thompson:

"If you happen into the Fourth Presbyterian church any Sunday morning you will see on the pulpit platform a very quiet, unassuming man, of medium height, weight and age, with smooth face, brown hair combed back, friendly eyes, well-molded forehead, large mouth, and heavy jaws — that is Professor Swing. When he begins the service you perceive that he is not a graceful man. His voice has a singular drawl, yet not wholly unpleasant. Its tones are persuasive, and suggest a gentle spirit. He does not stand erect, but half leans upon the desk, and reads the Bible, or engages in prayer in subdued and measured tones. You will not listen long till you conclude there is not much self-consciousness there. As the sermon proceeds you become interested. An uncouth manner, awkward gestures, and poetic thought have a fitness about them that makes an attractive *tout ensemble*. You become aware as you are quietly borne on from sentence to sentence of a mind that sees things in large and general relations. A certain indefiniteness suggests a long perspective. There is no clank of the surveyor's chain, but only the sliding in and out of an object glass that adjusts the vision now to one focus, now to another, but always to a beautiful picture. When he closes you perceive that he has lured you through a very pleasant land, shown you some stimulating truths, and perhaps grounded you in certain broad principles which underlie the separate forms of church life and doctrine. He has not analyzed much, but he has created a good deal, and left you to make your own application. As you leave the sanctuary you will probably carry some such impressions as these:

That man has not striven after any effect, but his thoughts run in his own mold, and have been before me in a form unhackneyed. He has not clearly asserted any new proposition, but he has been climbing to a broader view that holds within its picture-lines many propositions. . . . In a word, he has not exactly preached to me, but he and I have had a ramble in fields that hold within them the possibilities of a good harvest. And, especially, I think the vital force of that sermon was in a tender, earnest sentiment, a kind of implied friendship between us, and an implied aspiration in his heart and mine towards a higher life. And if you should thus judge you would not greatly misjudge the preacher of Fourth Church."

Such was the charm of David Swing in those far off years, as it was felt by the men who sat in the pews. One thing was clear. He had caught the ear of that large class of thoughtful people — men in particular, for they formed the majority of his audiences — to whom the statement of faith by the established theologies was unsatisfactory. Once a very few, this class who preferred to live out of doors, so to speak, had become a multitude. They were tinged, some of them, with the current scepticism, but they showed in their lives the essential Christian virtues — sometimes to a degree which put churchmen to shame. If not devotional, they were devoted. Having made no professions, they made no pretensions. These unsatisfied souls, this church outside of the church, recognized in Swing a teacher who was making the Christian faith reasonable and credible to his age. Men who had long been estranged from faith returned, at his invitation, to learn it anew.

The sermons of this period — 1872-1874 — show that the preacher was closely in touch with the thought of his age and was trying to meet the real needs of men. Like all his earlier work they were resplendent in imagery, marred, indeed, at times, by a too exuber-

ant fancy. But they were as oases to those who were weary of the stereotyped forms of evangelical preaching, with its argument and exhortation, and the reason for this was not far to seek. There was no rattling of logic, no air of dogmatism or infallibility, no effort to impose upon others a private scheme of the universe. By some art he seemed to be aware of what was passing in the minds of men, their difficulties, their doubts, their secret longing for a more satisfying faith, and he spoke to them of the truths most needful to life; spoke to them frankly and freely as man to man. The general conception of religion set forth in these sermons was that it is natural, human, and reasonable, with the emphasis upon those truths of Jesus which are laws of life and that life of the spirit which can be reproduced by men in every age. And as truth came to him, so he sought to give it to others in a form worthy of its essence, never forgetting that the worst heresy is to clothe the truths of faith in the tattered rags of cant.

How clearly Swing saw the new religious situation, and the need of a change of emphasis in the pulpit, may be seen in a striking sermon on "The Influence of Democracy on Christian Doctrines." We read:

"Coming to a land of gigantic human industry, where the motto is, each one is a builder of his own fortune; where a farmer boy of Kentucky climbs to the place of chief orator, and a penniless youth lifts himself up to be a noble citizen, our Christianity must stand forth in a new light. That no changes would be wrought might be the opinion of men who give no thought to the influence of state and climate and race over the faiths of mankind. The surrender of all things to God, the resolution of life into a waiting on fate, was a faith suitable to an age when men had no liberty as to their state, and no industry as to their fortune and happiness. An oppressed people always overestimates the divine interference. The doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty is just as true as it was in the days of King Œdipus or of Calvin. It will

always remain a confessed fact, yet we perceive that our age passes over the great absolutism in silence, and God's love and sweet fatherhood become more visible. In this casting off of old garments, our age no more cheerfully throws away the inconceivable in Christianity, than the inconceivable in Kant and Spinoza. There is no charge of falsehood cast upon the old mysteries; there is only a passing them by as not being in line with the current wish or taste. To pass by a truth, is not to contradict it, any more than to sail by England is to despise it when our destination is France. It is not a condemnation, but a selection, since one age cannot make use of all truths equally and at once. Here and there a fatalist remains to remind us of the stupor and palsy of the past. Types of belief, like types of birds and beasts, pass away slowly, as sometimes an individual specimen is found after science has declared the species to have become entirely extinct. . . . This revolution of religious thought is not by accident, but by the command of a land of vast spirit and destiny. The whole drift of our country is toward a sifting of thoughts, and the church bows justly to the genius of the republic.

"The themes of the pulpit will always be assigned afresh by each new generation. When our catechisms were being written, the chief enemy upon the horizon was the Romanists, and hence many are darts aimed by the Westminster soldiers at the papal hosts. New arrows and new armor are now demanded for new foes. The field of battle shifts from Paul to Genesis. The mass and prayers for the dead are not so alarming as the crucible of the chemist. It is not Aruis and Arminius now that we fear. It is Darwin and Buckle. New methods also arise. Once it was enough if the pulpit brought to the multitudes the statements found in holy Scriptures, but now the multitude asks us to prove that the Scriptures are holy. To unfold the text was the easy task of the fathers; to find warrant for the text is the more difficult task of their children. A new method divested of authority and weighed down with rationalism and doubt has gradually displaced the authoritative declaration and warning of yesterday. Christ comes not announced by a simple herald, but led by a spiritual and intellectual philosophy. The banner of the cross is borne by the impulse of its own fitness and beauty, rather than by the command of Butler and Paley. Hence the pulpit is compelled to discuss themes that were foreign to its office a few years since. With the growth of rationalism, it

must more carefully separate the true from the false, to meet the new love of the real truth and the new ridicule of all superstition and folly."

Above the red fields of the Civil War another battle was being fought, in the invisible realm of ideas, even as around the walls of Ilium, as Homer saw them, two battles were raging — one between Greeks and Trojans on the ensanguined earth; another in the viewless air, waged by gods and goddesses. "My Poems," Arnold wrote to his mother in 1869, "represent, on the whole, the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century, and thus they will probably have their day." That period, "the last quarter of a century," began with the retreat of Newman, and included, among other things, the "Essays and Reviews," Renan's "Life of Jesus," and the advent of Darwin — the most radical upheaval of religious thought, perhaps, in the history of man; a period when men were

> "Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born,"

or, at least, in the throes of birth. On the surface a perpetual skirmish about particular dogmas was going on, while from beneath a restless spirit was prying into the foundations of faith. The old apologetic had become suddenly helpless in the presence of a new critical method which called in question its premises and authorities. Along with this doubt of the sterner sort, which wrought with a "sad sincerity," and was much nearer faith than it knew, had come another doubt; not a landscape but a mist, a vague, drifting, elusive and strangely contented doubt. It was held to be a mark of superior intelligence to say "I do not know," and in a tone implying that no one can know, in regard to all matters religious. This mood ranged all the way from the dignified modesty of Spencer and Huxley to

the supercilious blush of young men at the audacity of their fathers, a fashionable ignorance, and a fad. In this air the old homilies, however fervent, were as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Swing followed this revolution of thought and its accompanying agitation, but he was singularly unshaken by it. He was too sure-footed to be swept away by the currents of the age, too calm to be confused by its voices. He knew that periods of doubt must needs come, and he was not of those who heaped anathemas upon the men of the negative mood. He saw that the passing cloud of scepticism was in reality the shadow of a mighty, oncoming faith, a movement of essential affirmation — an age in quest of faith. When others feared that religion was declining, he saw it emerging from a chrysalis of dogma into the warm and sunny air of a larger confidence. The eclipse of faith was only seeming, he urged; from remote regions of rosy haze, from chasing the spectres of the abstract, it was coming down to earth, taking shape in a new sense of justice, a new pity for the poor, a new social feeling, a new faith which affirmed that poverty, crime, disease, and numberless other ills, spawn of ignorance, need not and must not be. The tide of interest had indeed ebbed from the shores of another life, but tides ebb and flow. How sorely this serene and wise optimism was needed in that age few now know or realize. Of the scene of panic in which he stood, he said:

"As in times of great epidemics the death scenes are so numerous that those in perfect health lose confidence in life and go about bewildered, as though already doomed to the grave, so in the great critical period around us so widespread has been the destruction of old church notions that many are acting and

feeling as though God and heaven had come to an end. My young friends, the earth is old. It may have seen on its surface six or ten or fifty thousand years of that human existence which you see to-day. In all that long period the heart has knelt by some altar, and has come to the grave in some kind of hope and trust. Many religions have come bringing what of virtue and joy they knew, but no mortal in the long gone centuries has prayed or acted or died in the name of any spiritual philosophy which can equal that worship out of whose broad bosom rises the Cross of Christ."

It is interesting to note his attitude toward the dogma of Evolution, which came in with much noise and bluster and beating of the bass drum. His mental habit was that of an evolutionist, but he hesitated to accept the dogma of Darwin, not that he was unfriendly to it as such, but he held that the naturalist had not proved his theory. Moreover, having purchased at a great cost his liberty from the Calvinistic dogma of Supernatural Election, he was slow to submit to the same despotism in the form of the Scientific dogma of Natural Selection. Later he discussed the question with great sympathy and care, interposing objections which he never withdrew as long as he lived. He held that the dogmatism of the scientist was of a kind with that of the theologian, and should be valued in the same way. The terms of the one were but little less lucid than the terms of the other, both sets of names being apparent efforts of the mind to find points where its knowledge could fade away into ignorance in a manner elegant and gentle. When found in a fog, he said, man names the fog and it becomes a part of his science. It is surely no myth that there is a human race, and that there was a first pair, and, since the

witnesses of its beginnings are all dead, the names of Adam and Eve are as good as any others. Here his humor, never far away, came upon the scene:

"It is indeed strange that once religion spent much of her time in attempting to show that man was only a vile worm of the dust, and that now when religion has ceased from its doleful strain science should have taken up the castaway ditty, and is singing the worm-like origin and destiny of the race. Between the recent theories of evolution and the self-reproaches of the old fathers, man has not been injured by flattery. Poor mortal! destined always to live with a millstone about his neck, fastened on him either by a monk or a materialist."

Of the sermons of this period this is not the place to speak in detail, except to mark the path of his mind. Under new phrases and modes of thought lay in fresh clearness wide expanses of important truth, with now and then a keen satire aimed at old dogmas. "Christianity as a Life" was typical, and a sermon more fundamentally true and beautiful it would be difficult to imagine. The old saints grasped the idea that religion is a life, but they failed in their interpretation of what life is: so also the Puritans. Against a narrowing repression of the human impulses to beauty, joy and love of the life that now is, the preacher protested as a Greek might have done in a Christian pulpit. "A spiritual life may underlie all pursuits and pleasures; a judge on the bench, or a young heart in the open fields, may be wholly within the spiritual life introduced to us by the Savior. The law of the spirit of the life in Christ is nothing more than a grand, broad human life all pervaded by righteousness, and a certain elevated sentiment toward God and man. Before we

can preach Christ as a new life, a life of the Spirit, we must declare to men that the spiritual life is wide and deep and beautiful." To the same import ran his plea for a "Broad Orthodoxy," an orthodoxy which should rise above the tumult of sects to meet the immense scope and variety of life, and of the Bible. Theology must not rest upon a few passages of Scripture and the Bible be turned into a hunting-ground for proof texts. Truth is infinite, and a "Confession of Faith" can be only an imperfect index to the volume. Such digests are valuable as histories of opinion in a former time, but useless as monitors; landmarks jutting out from the headlands of the past, not paths into the future. The creeds of the fathers should be written by their sons, not the creeds of the sons by their fathers.

With the idea that good works are of no significance Swing took issue in a sermon on "Salvation and Morality" — a unique blending of logic, humor, satire and pathos. He regretted that the word salvation had been used in an unhappy way and that it must have always the suggestion of its former verbal associations about it. As we cannot agree what literature is, what poetry is, so we may not presume to define salvation in terms of exactness. A definition, "when exact, is so far false; for in order to define a saved soul, it would be necessary for man to read the judgment of God." To say that we are saved by faith in Christ is to leave us still in the mist; "for faith in Christ is a phrase made of words that are like the bits of colored glass in the kaleidoscope, forming many pictures, according to the hand that turns the glass." This vagueness ought to make us the more unwilling

to separate salvation from good works. As to the alarm of the pulpit that many were relying too much upon morality, he held that it jarred not only with the teachings of Christ, but with the events of the age. In an era when the Credit Mobilier scheme was flourishing, when men were getting their salvation by simple faith and their fortunes by intricate rascality, overcaution against salvation by good works seemed to him premature. "If we are to cast contempt upon any righteousness let it be upon an imputed one. This is not a salvation without Christ. The difficulty will be found that it has too much of Christ in it. To the teachings of Calvin and Luther it adds the teachings of Christ as an important supplement. Christianity is not only a faith, but a morality as essential as its faith."

Hints of heresy must have reached him, as witness these words from an exquisite sermon on "Soul-Culture:" "It has easily come to pass that the most useless and forlorn men on earth have been the professional heresy-hunters. Living for a certain assemblage of words, as a miser lives for his labeled bags of gold, they have always left their souls to go dressed in rags and to die of famine in sight of the land of milk and honey." Continuing, he quoted the words of Dr. Duncan to the "suspicious zealots" of his day: "There is a progressive element in religion. It is a mistake to look upon our fathers as our seniors. They are our juniors. The church has advanced wonderfully since its foundations were laid. I am first a Christian, next a broad Christian, thirdly a Calvinist, and fourthly a Presbyterian." But he was soon to discover, to his sorrow, that this was an inversion of the order of things as seen by church politicians and censors.

At last a sermon [1] on "Old Testament Inspiration" brought on the skirmish which ended in the heresy trial. By inspiration Swing meant a certain divine assistance which enabled men to think wiser thoughts and better; differing, we may infer, only in degree, and perhaps in theme, from that ascent of the soul which sets a great poem in the literary sky. It did not, in his view, take the form of perfection, but of great help. In harmony with this presumption we should not expect to find a pure and lofty morality in the far off age of Moses. Revelation is progressive. The Mosaic age was a beginning, but its inspiration began and ended in a single sublime idea, the unity of God. The instant you left that idea, you touched humanity. The people fought and cheated, and held and sold slaves, just as the Greeks and Romans did, and acquired land after the fashion of a barbaric period. Holding the true idea of God, they claimed a plurality of wives; appointed to bear religion a step onward, they falsified like the heathens on all sides. "There is, it seems to me, no other conceivable method of treating the Old Testament than that found in the word *electicism*," said the sermon in closing.

Dr. Francis L. Patton, editor of *The Interior*, a local Presbyterian paper, took issue with this doctrine of electicism, and made lengthy reply. He charged Swing with a tacit denial of the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible, and opened the columns of *The Interior* for debate. An impeachment of the Almighty

[1] This famous sermon was delivered originally in McVicker's Theater, November 11, 1872, and was repeated by request two years later. All along Professor Swing's congregation had received his utterances most enthusiastically, so much so that they refused to believe that he was heretical. He himself did not seem to realize how far he had drifted from the exacting formularies of his church. He interpreted the response to his preaching as a sign that the older doctrines were obselete in the public mind.

or a denial of the accuracy of the Bible was the dilemma on which he impaled Swing. But there are many dark corners in theology, and Swing declined the corner which he said had been "fixed up" for him. As a larger theory he suggested that in rude ages and among barbaric peoples God accepted a temporary morality, and that the same God who passed a bad divorce law and inspired a savage war-song, made the crudeness of both obsolete when that which was perfect had come. This theory had at least the merit of being ingenious, and it showed a desire to meet intellectual difficulties. The spirit was willing even if the logic was weak. But Dr. Patton would not permit his victim to escape by such an easy, vaulting movement: "If you condemn the Israelites, you must either condemn God or discredit the Bible." To which Swing replied: "I *do* believe the Bible and *condemn* the Israelites. Your theory seems too defective and too timid to be considered as the undisputed theory of the great Presbyterian church." But in this he was manifestly mistaken, for that theory was the keystone in the arch of Westminster theology.

Swing realized this later and in reply to Dr. Patton said, speaking of the 109th Psalm: "It is barely possible that my discourse may have contained words that should not have fallen upon the ears of a Presbyterian audience. But it contained no words that made God appear as a general in battles that surpassed in cruelty those of Julius Cæsar, and no words that bind those battles up in the world's *infallible* rule of faith and practice." As a final argument Dr. Patton said that, holding such views as Professor Swing defended, a minister with the obligations of the Presbyterian church upon him, could not consistently remain in

her communion. This "bull of a paper pope," as the *Chicago Tribune* called it, amused Swing, but it greatly exasperated his friends. Dr. Patton was a young man and had but recently come to the city, and it was felt that he was too officious and pugnacious. Swing replied in his gentle, semi-humorous way, that if the church could endure Dr. Patton as a theologian, it ought to be able to "put up" with him as an humble worker. Meanwhile, the *Tribune* remarked, with a twinkle in its eye: "The theological market may be quoted as fairly active, with brisk inquiries as to futures."

CHAPTER IV

"Truths for To-Day"

In the midst of the skirmish with Dr. Patton, and the accompanying flurry, there appeared a volume of sermons by Prof. Swing, under the title of "Truths for To-day." It was the first book from his pen, except a few sermons in pamphlet form, and one which revealed the spirit and aim of his entire ministry, no less than the grace and charm of his literary art. Very reluctantly, and not without some urging on the part of his friends, Swing let the book go forth. To his native modesty was added his view of the office of the sermon — that it was manna for a day, a message for the passing hour; a view betrayed in the title of the book. He had no love of debate, and he knew that the ideas of the book would be as red rags to the suspicious zealots who were watching his words for hints of heresy. Nevertheless, the book made its advent early in 1874.

The volume consisted of fifteen sermons spoken during the previous winter, not as a set series, but at various and sundry times in the regular course of his labors. They touched upon topics uppermost in the mind of the age, and had to do with the very meaning of religion, faith in God and in the eternal life, the laws of human brotherhood, the memories of good men, saints and heroes in church and nation, and the immutable duty of doing right. To say that they were

thoughtful sermons, scholarly, winning, inspiring, would be to fall below what even a judicial critic might admit. No one could read them without recognizing their catholicity of spirit, their gracious aim, their fertility of matter, and their helpfulness to minds caught in the whirling eddies of the age. They were addressed, primarily, to a multitude of vexed but essentially believing men who were torn between the new knowledge and the old faith. To this end they were logical without any show of argument, scholarly but not pedantic, positive but not dogmatic, liberal but not radical, and poetical without any sacrifice of directness. Reason was respected and appealed to all through, but the language of the appeal came up all fragrant with the heart. And this, perhaps — this union of common sense and spiritual beauty — was the secret of their power and charm.

Coming when the rumor of a heresy trial was rife, the book was eagerly read and passed through many editions. It opened the eyes of men to the fact that a teacher had appeared whose genius united rare spiritual tenderness with great intellectual force, poetic grace with logical power, and broad Christian sympathy with solid sense and holy motive. The reviews were many, ranging from that of Beecher in *The Christian Union*, who hailed the book as a literary and a religious event, to certain of the church papers who had this to object to and that to find fault with. It was said, for example, that his scholarship, like Emerson's, was of the scrap-book variety; that he was a facile essayist who knew nothing of theology; that he lacked the one thing essential to greatness — divine fire; that his catholicity was but a thinly veiled evasion of debated dogmas. By far the most striking account of the

book appeared, anonymously, in *The North American Review*, which, while warmly appreciative, was so keenly searching that some of its sayings should be preserved.

"It certainly involves a change of atmosphere to pass from the Westminster Assembly's Catechism to sermons such as these. But it is chiefly the *atmosphere* which is new. The fundamental state of mind upon which he lays his new knowledge is Calvinistic. He is not a Unitarian. His case is another sign that the passionate rebellion of the last generation against orthodoxy is now giving way to mild and gradual transition within orthodoxy. Theology is not his forte, but he is far from being guilty of that popular flippancy of which H. W. Beecher is a spokesman. But his feeling is more transparent and persuasive than his thought is convincing and clear. His main strength is in his sympathy. He belongs to that admirable class of religious teachers who, separated from the Episcopal broad churchmen by ecclesiastical polity and from the Free Religionists by a healthy old-fashioned theological spirit, are really the common friends of people in every state of mind. This is a rare character to maintain, and peculiar faults easily beset it. . . . His danger lay in the excess of 'the homiletical mood,' which, instead of coming at once to the point of religion, is fond of coming religiously to every point. Yet he uses the mood with that happy effect which is peculiar to a spontaneous and naturally eloquent utterance of religious sentiment. These sermons were aimed to attract a large class of doubters, and the influence of his hearers may have helped to lead one so susceptible as the author was to lay his preaching open to the charge of being 'too exclusively human.' But this trait may have rendered him exceptionally engaging to his hearers, for an audience of that kind, however well informed, is apt to be in the theological state of a clever witness at the trial, who when questioned about the Calvinism of the accused, asked, 'Will any gentleman name the five points to me?' . . . Common sense is his favorite line. He has not such remarkable religious fervor as Beecher, nor such winning pathos as Collyer, but common sense rules him as it does not rule them. It is his savior. But even common sense can be spread out too thin, especially when one lies under the professional obligation of preaching every Sunday. In the sermon on Charles Sumner, the recollection of Sumner's style was a temptation which the preacher did not sufficiently re-

sist. The sermon on St. Paul is an example of both the strength and weakness to which I have pointed, while that on St. John shows him at his best in matter and style. His imagination finds here a congenial and legitimate place. His poetic temper lends a charm to the whole volume; but while he is happy in finding expression in natural eloquence, it still needs restraint here and there. The celestial mechanics appear in occasional purple patches."

The real attraction of the book was that it had a man in it. Gracious, serene, tolerant, sympathetic, he met one at every turn of the page. Something of the soul of the preacher, his life-secret, his contagiousness of faith, his optimism, got into the book, and this it was that won men. The comparative worth of individual sermons varied, but from first to last the attitude was the same, the outlook upon life the same, the conception of God and man, of the world and nature, always the same. This attitude, the result less of philosophical thought than of native bent of mind, gave the book a unity. Analysis of a thing so elusive cannot take the form of precision, but serenity, I think, was the chief spell. A certain benignity and calmness pervaded the book, as of one who had mastered by anticipation the problems which were shaking the minds of reflecting men. It was not a theory, but an attitude of confidence, the fruit of a fortunate capacity for reconciliation with the order of the world, with never a touch of "that mysterious gloom of the spirit which beats against the bars of life and is mad with impatience for the solution of its mysteries." Where others saw only a hard, pitiless Fate, to Swing it was given to see Eternal Love and Reason sweetly and sanely disposing all things; a Reason transcending man, indeed, but by immensity, not by contradiction. This serenity rested upon a union of various qualities, and was the result of all the rest.

Another quality of these sermons was their nobly catholic temper. The preacher appeared to have neither part nor lot in the theological strife. He had an unshaken faith in the truth, and in the certainty of its triumph, but he was not a believer in his own infallibility, or in the infallibility of any one else. He came forth as a dweller of a larger world, as one who moved familiarly in many fields of thought, as one to whom the contentions of the hour were incredibly trifling. The "truths for to-day" were no other than our common Christian faith — which was not new and grows not old — whereon all systems are but the embroideries of human imaginings and speculatings. These truths he taught with every art he knew in an era which Tennyson, in "Despair," called "the new dark ages." His style, while neither luscious nor cloying, was replete with all manner of felicitous linkings of figure and idea, and always inimitable in that it was his own. Being so like the man, it could not be odd or affected, but moved by steps visible to all, and it must be counted among the charms of the book.

It was in accord with the fitness of things that the first sermon in the volume should be a plea for a wider charity in religion, under the title "Toleration of Religious Opinion." This sermon was the key-note of his life, and advocated a unity of spirit in the search for truth. Abstract dogmas are, in the nature of things, insoluble, and not worth a breach of fellowship. Modesty, no less than charity, should make us tolerant, for truth is so great that all men are one in their littleness. A subtle, unconfessed scepticism lurks at the heart of bigotry. Intolerance has always been inversely to the value of the doctrine, the most insolence gathering around the least useful idea. Linked thus with

the petty and useless, intolerance has the visible curse of God upon it. Truth is so self-evident that it needs no thumb-screw or fagot to make the lips whisper assent; only doubtful ideas need external influence to brace up the logical faculty. Revelation does not secure unity of belief, and so the necessity of tolerance remains. There should be diversity without sorrow or surprise, a variety as of wild flowers, with a charity as omnipresent as the mysteries and shadows of human life. If the heretic is to be reclaimed, it must be by friendship. The vocabulary of abuse should be banished from the pulpit, so that Thomas Paine, were he now living, might enjoy the undreamed of pleasure of hearing his arguments refuted by men of reason, rather than by the hisses of an age full, equally, of vanity and revenge. History shows that intolerance is misplaced. Tenets for which men were burned alive were too feeble to outlive the fire which destroyed the heretic. Heretic and fire and idea are all gone together. Let us open the list of the humanities and insert in it that "religion whose love surpasses all measurement, and whose tears for man fall like dew from the Manger to the Cross."

Such was the trend of the sermon; and such was the spirit of the preacher, in whom love of truth had dwarfed all other passions, as the shrubs die when the oak overshadows them. He had principles, but no envy, no partisanism, no malice, no prejudice. Knowing how truth comes to be — that it owns as its oracle not the solitary mind, nor the separate faction, but the experience of humanity — it was not difficult for him to keep an open mind and a kind heart toward his fellow-workers. He was sometimes grieved — as when Renan, in his "London Lectures," took Christianity

upon his knee, as it were a little girl, and said in his suave and bland way, that it was a "beautiful Galilean vision" and nothing more. So also at the rude iconoclasm of Bradlaugh, as if one should strike a harp with a hammer. A test of his tolerance may be seen in the sermon on the death of David Strauss — Strauss, the gnostic of his age, in whose dreamy mind historic Christianity turned to allegory, myth and symbol; to whom Christ was an Æaon, a ghost of prophecy, a glittering abstraction. The passing of Strauss suggested his theme, "The Great Debate," which in some form has followed the footsteps of faith from Socrates to Emerson. History knows of no period when that debate stood adjourned. Man has been quarrelsome along all paths — in science, politics and philosophy, as in theology; for there can be no fixed conclusions, and hence no end of debate, in realms where the evidence is not mathematical, but only approximative. There is an element of uncertainty in faith, else it were knowledge and not faith. Still, there is need of "Positiveness in Religion," or men will conclude that nothing is certain but uncertainty. The critical mood is useful and cleansing, but it passes easily into reckless iconoclasm, emptying the heart of faith and leaving a moral vacuum. Scepticism is uncertain of its data. Therefore let "us clasp to our hearts the grand things we possess, and, Christ-like, live not to destroy, but to fulfill." Amid much that is open to debate, veiled in clouds and darkness, one corner of the sky is clear. Turning thither, we may always see the moral law and its duties, and the serene unharmed Christ in the midst of the doctors.

Midway between an unreasoning credulity and an unbelieving rationalism, equally wingless and alien to

the sky, there is a path of "Reasonable Orthodoxy," in which a man of faith may walk reverently and circumspectly. Assuming that Christianity is divine, that fact imposes upon it the obligation of being reasonable; "for we dare not deduce a religion of nonsense from a Being of perfect intelligence." We must abjure that contempt for reason, that mania for the incredible, which men mistake for faith. In Christianity, as in life,

> "There will be mysteries, but also there will evidently be a great amount of common sense. There is, perhaps, nothing which so retards evangelical Christianity as the common habit of its pulpit and pew to cry mystery more than is really necessary, and to blind the eyes of reason, as though in confessing reason they were denying the supernatural, and were opening the floodgates of rationalism. It is not rationalism that the world asks for. The human soul the world over loves the mysterious, and bows in humility before the throne of the Invisible. No! Mankind does not ask for a pure rationalism, that shall reduce all life to chemical action and heaven to a dream. Mankind will never object to what is sublimely above reason; but what man will never tolerate is that his reason should be contradicted and torn to atoms in his sight. The human mind knows the difference between a mystery and an absurdity."

"Christianity and Dogma," one of the most remarkable sermons in the volume, was an appeal from speculation to experience. But the experience by which faith is to be tried is no mystical ecstasy, no emotional frenzy, but that every-day account which life gives of itself; life being the test of truth, as serviceableness is of any instrument. Swing divided religious truths into two classes — those that cannot be reached by the wit of man, and those that can. Of the former class were such strict mysteries as the Trinity, where the premises are not given and the conclusions are not capable of exact statement. To the latter class belonged the vital truths of Faith, God, Duty, the Divin-

ity of Christ, and the Hope of Immortal Life. The dogmas of the former class were thus excluded from the category of essentials, and stood as facts, or alleged facts, and not among the laws of life and salvation. Speculative theology was thus put aside in favor of the truths which are "holier in usefulness," and which are not only facts but laws and principles verifiable in life. He sincerely regarded speculative divinity as a dark and tangled path, wherein if a man walk he comes out just where he went in, and no whit the wiser. As has been said, this was at once a strength and a weakness of his entire ministry. Rich gifts in one direction are seldom found without limitations in other directions. To each his gifts, and to each his exceeding great reward.

After a perfect theology, however hopelessly, man is forever doomed to aspire. Not as a mere gymnastic for our wits are we thus driven to woo the sphinx; the desire to inquire has its roots in the sense that the unknown is none the less the actual, and that our fortunes lie at the mercy of its hidden play. That our theories chase each other like phantoms proves only the infinite scope and variety of the problems. The mysteries are still there, and we desire to look into the shadows, and rightly so, if only we look with faith in our hearts, and not with definitions on our lips. Even a pragmatist like Schiller saw that, "the stream of Truth which waters the fertile fields of Conduct, has its sources in the remote and lonely uplands *inter apices philosophae*, where the cloud capped crags and slowly grinding glaciers of metaphysics soar into an air chill and rare." The depths of faith, as every thinker knows, are not sounded by any mere analysis of moral motive, or "The Variatons of Moral Motive,"

about which Swing wrote so engagingly. But he was right in his position that the pulpit is not the place to conduct the polar expeditions of philosophy.

That the religion of Christ is an outgoing, overflowing, democratic culture, was the thought of a notable sermon on "Christianity as a Civilization." To Swing our religion was divine, not because it is an ideal philosophy which it were blasphemy to assail, but because it is a Nile overflowing its banks in June, and making the whole empire of society to pass from a desert to a garden. Even in its perversions it puts to shame all other gospels whatsoever. Thus:

"It is not Comte or Tyndall who must plead with the begrimed miners of England; it is Moody and Sankey. Hence upon these last names must gather all the associations of the ragged clothes, the superstition and fanaticism of the crowd. From Gibbon to Huxley rationalism has never stirred up the untaught multitude, but has enjoyed the better association of the porch of philosophy and shelves of walnut in the library. The rational methods have received greetings in the temples of learning and art, and we behold the whiteness of their vesture, and their calmness of face, and on the other side we see the Christian idea with its forehead marked with care and brown in the sun; but we forgive its marred beauty, for we know in what wide fields of time and eternity she has toiled since Bethlehem, and upon us bursts the vision of One 'whose visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.' So far as rationalistic reforms have escaped the historic association of fanaticism and bloody persecution, so far as they have burned no Servetus and banished no Quakers, the desirable results must be attributed in part to the fact that they are a theory more than a life; the opposite of Christianity, for the moment it learns of its Master and its Heaven, it rushes forth and permits the beggar to associate his rags with this Jesus, the Methodist to pierce the sky with his shouts, the temperance woman to kneel in the streets, and the African slave to sing rude hymns all night long in a strange ecstasy around this Cross. Christ has stood so near to the people that they have wreathed His Cross with their infirmities at the very hour when they crowded around it to

find their salvation. It is not ideas alone that transform the world, but ideas with the inspiration in them, crowding them from dream into life."

This, greatly said, is the final answer to that debonair rationalism which, clad in

> "Red morocco's gilded gleam
> And vellum rich as country cream,"

looks down with a condescending smile of smug satisfaction, and aristocratic vanity, upon Christianity toiling in the brown fields where men live, and pray, and die, or under the grey smoke-cloud of the city where

> "Life treads on life, heart on heart."

As in "Salvation and Morality," so here, in the sermon on Faith, Swing argues that redemption is by righteousness, and that faith saves only in so far as it helps men to righteousness. Christianity is a great friendship. Christ abolished the Divinity of Distance and made fellowship the way of the blessed life. But the faith that saves is not a mere assent to a list of dogmas, nor yet a form of equivalents or compensation, but a force of life, an impulse of the soul; at once a vision and an attachment to a Being. "*It is God in a law*," a natural, elemental power, the secret of secular enterprise and Christian expectation. Unbelief damns society, or the individual, not by arbitrary fiat, but by arresting the flow of the best life. Faith saves us, indeed, but by perpetually elaborating a new order of manhood and of society. Running through the book was a desire to show that religion is natural, reasonable, and verifiable. So, in the sermon on "Righteousness," he says that the Bible did not create religion, but that religion and righteousness created the Bible. Christianity did not come by divine fiat, but grew up out of the deep need and nature of man, as the hidden music of the old fabulous statue became vocal each

morning when the sun smote it. Even so, Christ only awakened to its noblest strains a music whose origin was far back of Bethlehem and the Cross. Here the question was no longer of the inspiration of a book, but of the inspiration of the human soul, which dictates all books. Other sermons we shall find keyed to this note, such as "Man the Inspired," and "The Inspiration of Greatness."

Swing felt that his age lacked spiritual tenderness — pathos. Science was passionless, decrying emotion as an evil mentor which leads man away from truth or beyond it. Against this Puritan science Swing protested in a sermon on "Emotion and Evidence," in which the value of sentiment in the search for truth was set forth with rare delicacy and insight. One can be indifferent while dealing with salts and acids, but not in the study of faiths and hopes. Religion strikes a great, sweet, almighty note in human life, as deep as the home and the family, as deep as infancy and old age, as deep as love and death, and he who studies it must bring a human heart with him to the grand investigation. The fact that the feelings carry men beyond truth, he argued, only shows the almost divine power of the feelings. Thus:

"If there be an attribute of the soul which can make a shadow seem a substance, that is what we all need to guard a substance from becoming a shadow. Art is life seen through the prism of emotion, but its beauty fades in the cold air of logic. It is possible that the poverty of evidence, confessed to exist as to spiritual truths, comes from the fact that we destroy the evidence by destroying the light in which it is made visible. In order for truth to rise up and repeat to us all its evidence, it is essential that it stand forth in the world of our sympathy. The indifference of what we call reason will not do. Truth will not hang her pictures in such a cold, feeble light. . . . Not only must the books of the theologians be read for, and the books of the sceptics be read against, the

doctrines of faith, but the genius of earth, its little children, its joys, its laughter, its cradle, its marriage altar, its deep love crushed often in its budding, its final white hair, its mighty sorrow embracing all at last from its Christ to its humblest child, in its black mantle, must be confessed in its inmost heart; then, when to such a mind the common arguments of religion are only whispered, the sanctuary of God will seem to be founded in eternity."

This passage, in its melodious pathos, recalls the sentence of Thackeray: "It seems to me like the sound of country bells, provoking I do not know what vein of music and meditation, and falling sweetly and sadly on the ear." The sermon was the meditation of a man who had followed the footsteps of men, women and little children to their sanctuary, and found in their voices and rapt, upturned faces, a feeling within that shaped and adorned and redoubled the evidences of religion.

Such a review as this cannot do more than reflect the ruling ideas, and, if it may be, something of the elusive spirit of this noble book. I have dwelt upon it to show the trend of Swing's thought and the grace of his style in the early years of his fame, and also because it was the basis of the charges of heresy against him. They were truly great sermons, judged by any test, and they belong on the shelves of the best pulpit literature. Many of the ideas of the book he left behind as his mind moved on, and all of its homiletical method, for his sermons assumed more and more the essay form; but from its spirit and its ruling ideas he never departed. I venture to reproduce a passage from the sermon on "St. John," in which he anticipated the literary interpretation of the Bible, as he did so many other things, in vogue of recent years.

"As Dante by his own peculiar genius and limitations could not treat of Italy, her religion, her pleasures, her sins,

her heaven and hell, except in the exalted form of a poem, rolling like alternate music and thunder, so John by his very education and nature could not walk with his Savior, except upon the borders of cloud, and could not state the doctrines of Christianity except in the symbols of the Apocalypse. John argued little; he simply gazed. He looked up and saw the Holy City coming down from God out of heaven. There are no prophesies of literal events in the Apocalypse any more than there are in Tasso or in Tennyson. There is, though, a poetic soul educated in the Greek school, that school which gave mankind the most intense poetry and the deepest thought. Such a soul is seen in every verse of the Apocalypse, smiting upon the facts of Christianity and making them send forth music like a lyre swept by a skillful hand. What Dante was to Italy John was to Christianity, only in John the divine assisted the human. The difference between the Gospel of Matthew and the Apocalypse of John is the difference between a history and a gallery of art — the difference between a simple sound and a symphony. For us to inquire the meaning of the Seven Seals, or to inquire whether Rome be not Babylon, would be for us to seek the 'Deserted Village' of Goldsmith or the 'Beulah Land' of John Bunyan."

Opulence of learning, intellectual alertness, a tender poetic temperament, a cultured imagination, a close acquaintance with the currents of his day, and an enviable gift, not only of the Spirit, but "of the Word," were revealed in these sermons. The preacher made no display of his rich resources, but all felt that he was a man of beauty, of deep religiousness, and of true humanity. Turning from the religious writings of the seventies to these sermons, one is lifted above the fret and jar of sects, above the crass materialism of science and the crude literalism of theology, into an atmosphere of entire sanity and serenity. We are in the presence of a faith which both satisfies and comforts, unites inquiry and reverence, trust and reason, urging men toward the higher life.

CHAPTER V

The Heresy Trial

The appearance of "Truths for To-day" was a signal for a renewed attack on Prof. Swing by Dr. Patton, and this time it was more than a skirmish. The book furnished, as Dr. Patton thought, many examples of loose and dangerous thinking, and revealed a mind moving away from the authorized standards of the church. Charges of heresy were therefore filed against Swing with the Chicago Presbytery, in April of 1874. The die was now cast, the issue drawn, and there was nothing for it but a fight to the end.

There were two principal charges: first, that David Swing had not been "zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel," nor "diligent in the exercise of the duties of his office as a minister;" and second, that he "does not sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures." Not only his public ministry was thus impeached, but his private faith and motives. The first charge was supported by twenty-four specifications, drawn from his writings and actions; the second by four. The specifications were ingeniously arranged, with many repetitions, so as to make a formidable list.

It was charged, for instance, that in sundry sermons printed in *The Chicago Pulpit*, in *The Alliance*,

and in the volume entitled "Truths for To-day," Prof. Swing had used language so vague as to lead many to think that he took Unitarian ground on the Trinity, Salvation by Works, Eternal Punishment, the Person of Christ, the Personality of the Holy Spirit, Depravity, and the Inspiration of the Old Testament. That in private interviews, and by letter, he had confessed to Robert Laird Collier and Minot Savage, prominent Unitarian ministers, that he was in substantial accord with them. That he had gone so far as to lecture for the benefit of a Unitarian chapel,[1] thereby showing favor to error. That he had said that Chicago Theology must be "a mode of virtue" and not a "jumble of doctrines." That he had denied, by insinuation, the dogmas of Predestination, the Vicarious Atonement, Justification by Faith alone, and, indeed, all the "Five Points of Calvinism." That he had spoken disparagingly of the special, miraculous call of men to the Christian ministry, by saying that ministers have no monopoly of calls. That he had intimated, if not affirmed, that it would be more tolerable for Socrates and Penelope in the day of judgment than for Catherine II, of

[1] The chapel in behalf of which Prof. Swing had lectured was built in memory of his sweet friend, Mary Price Collier, the wife of Robert Laird Collier, pastor of the Church of the Messiah and author of that exquisite book, "Meditations on the Essence of Christianity." (Roberts Brothers, Boston, 1876.) What Swing's feelings were at being charged with a denial of Christ for thus helping to raise a monument to one of the loveliest women Chicago ever saw, may be seen in these verses from a poem he wrote at the time, entitled "Mary Price Collier":

> "Upon thy grave adorned with flowers sweet,
> Whose leaves are bursting in the vernal air,
> The stranger comes and drags inhuman feet
> Across the tears and lilies mingled there.
>
> The heart that moulders in that lowly bed
> Shames the rude mortal on the clay above;
> She followed only where her Savior led,
> Her life no jarring discord, but a Love."

The truth is that Dr. Patton was new to the city and was groping his way through a fog of strangers.

Russia. That he had asserted that unbelievers are damned not by divine fiat, but by natural law. That he did not know where heaven or hell was, and had been mystifying in his references to those places. That he was a follower of Sabellius, thereby advocating a Modal Trinity. That he used the words *repentance, conversion, Divine, salvation, justification*, in ambiguous and unwarranted ways. That he had spoken too kindly of John Stuart Mill, "the well-known Atheist," holding him up as an example instead of consigning him to future, endless torment. He actually produced "the impression," said Dr. Patton, "that it was not such a bad thing to be a John Stuart Mill after all."

As grounds for procedure against a highly gifted and influential preacher, these charges were incredibly trivial. Swing was widely known and greatly beloved in Chicago. Many of his sermons were public tracts carrying home to the young the principles of citizenship, character and social welfare. His preaching was, indeed, liable to misconstruction in the matter of theology, owing to his habit of treating one truth, even one facet of a truth, at a time, instead of conning a system of theology in each sermon. Nor is it strange that when his words were seen in cold type, the persuasive religiousness of the preacher withdrawn, they seemed to an exact and exacting theologian to be the words of a man masquerading under false colors. But his sermons had a vital quality all their own, and they could not fail to suggest to ministers a new method of evangelism, and a great enrichment of powers. Many who could not follow him in all his ideas rejoiced that he was reaching a multitude who had been estranged from all other pulpits. It was, therefore, a matter of regret that his ministry should be marred in any way.

The feeling in the city against Dr. Patton was intense and widespread. The papers were full of open letters taking one side or the other, but the majority were with Prof. Swing. As an example, one writer said: "When some soul kindled into beatific vision, proclaims his revelation for the comfort of his fellows, what a sight for gods and men is that, when some starved, prosaic dogmatist puts his finger on the letter of the creed, and demands an inquisition for heresy. It requires neither insight nor industry to seat yourself upon a dogma and swear that you will never know anything more than you now know and that no one else shall, if you can help it." A brother minister — Dr. Powers, of St. John's church — wrote of Swing: "It is just as absurd to criticise Prof. Swing for not writing in the Pattonian vein, as to complain of a meadow-lark for not being a hand-organ, or a clear, free, mountain streamlet, singing among ferns and mosses, for not sounding like a coffee-mill." One of the papers had a cartoon in which Swing was shown meekly bound to a stake, the fagots piled about his feet. Nearby stood Dr. Patton, all robed and bespectacled, holding in one hand a torch and in the other a scroll on which was written, in large letters, "INFANT DAMNATION," and signed "Calvin Patton." In the background were seen two long-bearded, bald-headed, sour-faced personages, one of whom had a pitchfork with "five points," but the "points" were either broken, battered or twisted. As the artist saw it, Swing had to accept the hideous dogma or suffer his fate.

Somewhat apart stood *The Catholic Vindicator*, looking down upon the scene and quite unable to repress its laughter. At last it bubbled over: — "Prof. Swing is one of the modern class of Presbyterian di-

vines who possesses a long-legged intellect that scorns the flimsy obstructions of sectarian dogmatism, and nimbly glides over hobnailed orthodox fences, to browse in the pastures of any sect containing fodder congenial to his epicurean taste. Dr. Patton is a straight-laced, perpendicular-faced brother who has planted himself within the Presbyterian enclosure, and insists that the walls are perfectly air-tight, in face of a breach large enough to permit the passage of a tourist-elephant with baggage."

So it went, pro and con, the tension of public feeling tightening the while. To his foes Swing was a traitor in the church, a Presbyterian under false pretenses, and they even charged him with that ultimate vulgarity of "taking pay" for preaching one thing and then preaching something else. For one so delicately sensitive, so transparently honorable as Swing was, a thrust of this kind would have been a deep stab, had he taken it seriously. One of the church papers — the *Observer*, I believe — in an article matchless for the bitterness of its withering scorn, classed him "with Josh Billings, Mark Twain, and other clowns." Of Prof. Swing's attitude and spirit during that ordeal, Mr. Wm. E. Curtis, at that time one of the Professor's young friends — now of the Chicago *Record-Herald* — writes: "I was very close to him in the preparations for his trial for heresy, and although he regarded the serious side of the matter as fully as any man of his disposition could do, the humorous side was always uppermost in his mind. I wish I could recall the details of a scene which took place one day when Dr. Patterson, his stanchest friend and defender, came to consult him in the study where I was reading. Dr.

Patterson was intensely serious, but Professor Swing was in a joyous humor, and for a time it was uncertain which would prevail. But finally Swing's great heart enveloped and carried away the noble and venerable divine so completely that he forgot his errand." In point of fact, it is not easy to deal with a heretic who has the saving grace of humor, as Dr. Patton learned during the trial.

In Chicago the general feeling was that motives of personal ambition mingled in Dr. Patton with an evidently earnest desire to rescue the faith once delivered to the saints of Westminster. He was a young man, a new comer in the West, and the temptation to win his first spurs was, doubtless, great. His manner was exasperating in the extreme, whereupon Mr. Medill, of the *Tribune*, lectured him rather sharply. For all that, it must be admitted that, technically, Dr. Patton was right. Ill-advised as his attack was, and somewhat ill-mannered, it was in behalf of the strict standards of his church. He held, and rightly so, that the church had a creed, and that until the creed was revised it should be maintained. To him the sermons of Professor Swing seemed the language of skepticism, as always does to a man of his type the large and flowing thought of a poet. He therefore persisted in his self-appointed task of prosecution. Called at last to account, Swing entered a plea of "Not guilty" — the church papers said, "on advice of counsel" — and submitted a paper defining his position and defending himself from the charges. His defense was a model of clear, concise statement and of Christian courtesy, in which he took account (1) of his relations to the liberal churches, and (2) of his place in the Presby-

terian church. His statement may be summarized thus:

"There is no valuable theory of life except that of good-will toward all men. It is only on a basis of wide friendship that one can live well the few years of this existence, and hence to decline to lecture for the benefit of a Unitarian chapel would do more harm to the mutual good-will upon which society is founded than it would do good to an orthodox theology, or harm to a liberal creed. If the object of the evangelical pulpit is to promulge its better truth, it can do so only so far as its ministry reveal a deep friendship toward all mankind. The sin of the lecture, as charged, must be based upon the assumption that the Unitarian sects are outcasts from God, having no hope in the life to come. The names of Channing, and Eliott, and Peabody, in the pulpits of that sect, . . . utterly exclude from my mind the most remote idea that I am offering indirect approval to persons outside the pale of the Christian religion and hope. . . . They each and all know that I differ widely from them, but they and I know that only the most gentlemanly treatment in public and private will we all receive always from each other. Much as I love Presbyterianism — a love inherited from my ancestors — if, on account of it, it were necessary to abate in the least my good-will toward all sects, I should refuse to purchase the Presbyterian name at so dear a price.

"A creed is only the highest wisdom of a particular time and place. As in states, there is always a quiet slipping away from old laws without any waiting for a formal repeal, as some of the old statutes of Connecticut are lying dead, not by any legal death, but by long emaciation and final neglect of friend and foe; so in all formulated creeds, Catholic or Protestant, there is a gradual, but constant, decay of some article or word which was once promulgated amid great pomp and circumstance. And yet no church is willing to confess its past folly and repeal the injurious or untrue. All simply agree to remain silent. . . . Meanwhile individual minds cannot be slaves; they cannot suspend the use of their best judgment and common sense. Hence, unable to revoke a dangerous idea or law, the Presbyterian church permits its clergy to distinguish the *actual* from the church *historic*. To the Presbyterian church *actual* I have thus far devoted my life.

"Chief among the doctrines which our church has passed as being incorrect . . . are all those formulas which look

toward a dark fatalism. . . . In my peculiar ministry a simple silence has not been sufficient. I have, therefore, at many times, declared our denomination to be simply a church of the common evangelical doctrines. . . . Against the doctrine of fatalism, against the ultra form of human inability, it has been my constant duty, as it seemed, to protest and defend our church. Next comes the overstatement of the idea of salvation by faith alone all along through Presbyterian history. In my ministry I have toiled harder to unite faith and holiness, because of this dreadful page of history. . . . The church has become a source of actual infidelity by its terrific doctrine of hell. Even to the day of Edwards, and since, the pictures of perdition have been such as at first, indeed, to frighten the multitude, but such as afterwards to destroy the idea of God. . . . It is an ominous fact that the liberal creed, which the charges of this case attack, has come chiefly from that land which once lay wholly subject to the tenets of the Puritans. . . . It seems to me that the world is now fully ready for an orthodoxy that shall firmly, yet tenderly, preach all of the creed, except its plain errors and dark views of God and man. Not one of you, my brethren, has preached the dark theology of Jonathan Edwards in your whole life. Confess, with me, that our beloved church has slipped away from the religion of despair, and has come to Mount Zion, into the atmosphere of Jesus, as he was, in his life, full of love and forgiveness.

"Holding the general creed as rendered by the former New School Theologians, I will, in addition to such a general statement, repeat to you articles of belief, upon which I am willing to meet the educated world, the skeptical world, and the sinful world, *using my words in the evangelical sense*: The inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the office of Christ as Mediator when grasped by an obedient faith, conversion by God's Spirit, man's natural sinfulness, and the final separation of the righteous and the wicked. . . . I have now read to you an outline of my public method and my Christian creed. It is for you to decide whether there is in me orthodox belief sufficient to retain me in your brotherhood. Having confessed everywhere that the value of a single life does not depend upon sectarian relations, but upon evangelical or Christian relations, I am perfectly willing to cross a boundary which I have often shown to be narrow; but, going from you, if such be your order at last, it is the evangelical gospel I shall

still preach, unless my mind should pass through undreamed of changes in the future."

The trial then proceeded, Dr. George C. Noyes acting as counsel for Prof. Swing. Witnesses were examined as to the alleged confession of Swing to Collier and Savage that he was a Unitarian. The charge fell flat, and was cast aside. The case was thus narrowed to the writings of Swing, and as he had said that he used his words in the evangelical sense, the prosecution found itself in dilemma. So much so, in fact, that the case seemed entirely lost, and there was talk of quashing the indictment. Always keenly alert, Dr. Patton denied that Swing had used his words in an evangelical sense. It was a bold stroke of strategy, but, alas, it was executed in a spirit so ugly and un-Christian that it defeated its purpose. He intimated that Prof. Swing was guilty of an artful double-dealing with his hearers and with the gospel; that is, of balancing his words on a compromise line between the Liberal and Evangelical positions. These insinuations were covert, but none the less real. It became, in this way, a question of the honor of David Swing in the hidden depths of his soul, which no one impugned. Such a thrust was deemed, and justly so, a sacrilege.

As a matter of fact, Dr. Patton was as right in his position as he was wrong in his spirit. There is an evangelical spirit. Call it a faith, a feeling, a cast of mind, say that it is a matter of temperament, or of grace, it is a thing distinctly defined, or at least distinctly felt. One may be liberal, even radical, in thought, and still be evangelical in spirit, as Bushnell was, as Beecher was in his later years. This evangelical genius is profound, intense, often turbulent, and full of spiritual pain and struggle, intimate in its

relations with divine things, and vivid in its sense of the horror of sin, or of the love or terror of God. Two men may use precisely the same words, and the evangelical accent can be quickly detected in one and missed in the other. This evangelical accent Swing did not have. The uplands which were the haunts of his benign spirit were far away from the *profundus* of evangelical experience. This Dr. Patton saw, or felt, and his insight went to the core of the debate. But a thing so definite, and yet so delicate and elusive withal, cannot be argued in the heated air of a heresy trial. Certainly Dr. Patton failed to do it, and his lack of a sweet spirit lost him the case.

Stated thus, it was a trial not so much of doctrines as of temperaments. It is unfortunate that religion should be narrowed to one type of mind or experience, into a kind of psychological sectarianism; but such was the fact. The burden borne by Luther in his cell at Erfurt, when he cried, "My sins, O my sins!" or the agony of St. Augustine, as he passed from death to life, was an unknown tongue to David Swing; as it was to Stanley, as it was to Erasmus or Colet. His own life, though shaken by sorrow, was strangely serene. It did not, as so many lives do, touch tragedy except through sympathy. He had, like Emerson, a natural difficulty in realizing the depths of human sin, which other natures know only too well. He was deeply, warmly religious in thought and sentiment, but he was not evangelical in the strict, perhaps narrow, sense.

For the rest, the chief interest of the trial centered in a speech delivered by Swing in his own behalf. Unexpected, it was entirely impromptu, owing to the illness of his counsel. It was a masterpiece of sarcasm

and irony, with good humor enough to keep the keen edges from cutting too unmercifully, but the blades flashed everywhither. There was no bitterness in it, but it was barbed to have results which the bolder attacks of passion cannot have; unique for the politeness of its contempt and unequalled for the dignity of its scorn. "You should have heard the rascal deliver it," said a friend who heard it, quoting Aeschines. The temptation is to reproduce it, but a few passages must suffice.

"I know not what may be the etiquette of the case. I do not know the exact duties of the prisoner at the bar. I thought it would be my pleasure to fulfill the words of Lucretius, 'that it is the province of some to sit upon the calm mountain summit and see the poor sailors struggling and toiling in the storm and waves beneath;' but the illness of my counsel has disturbed my repose, and has compelled me to go down into the battle-field. I shall, I hope, not be compelled to go beyond the skirmish line, for the sound of war always frightens me, especially when the war is waged for conquest, or for the extension of slavery beyond its present limits. . . . Xenophon says of Clearchus that, notwithstanding his bright armor and royal robes, yet, when the baggage wagons got tangled or stalled, he would put his own shoulder to the wheel, going himself into the mud. The theological baggage wagons upon my side of the house are blockaded today, and like the old general, willingly I descend into the mud.

"Let me ask your attention to Stuart Mill. Greeley and Chase had both died over lost honors, and in such an hour I thought it a piece of good fortune that I could hold up before the public a name that found sufficient honor and sufficient object in life in greatness of personal character. . . . God has not connected human greatness with a ballot-box. A human soul may be something to which no office can add anything, and from which no political defeat can take anything away. . . . Such a mind and such a philosophy as Mill possessed came to him through Christianity; for though he was not a Christian, yet Christianity had always been around him; had given him the entire character of the nineteenth century; just as Lady Stanhope, flying to the southland to escape England, carried with her everywhere English customs and Eng-

lish thought. So Mill, though an atheist, carried, in all his life, every germ of Christianity except personal belief. . . . Let us pass to the second offense: 'We know not what nor where is our God, our heaven.' The sermon was to show that moral ideas have no such definiteness as is enjoyed by mathematical ideas, and hence the debates and discords, just such as have gathered us here today. . . . The prosecutor has not arraigned me only. It is intimated in Job that no one by searching can find out God, and I shall insist upon making Job and the 97th Psalm *particeps criminis* in this case. . . . In the revised editions of the Bible, when readers shall come to my text, 'Clouds and darkness are round about him,' they will no doubt see a marginal reference, 'for refutation of this idea see Professor [1] Patton's charges and specifications.' A young man asked a clergyman if it was possible to know all about God. The clergyman, who was a droll fellow, replied that personally he had no such knowledge, but that there was a man out in Minnesota who knew all about him. . . . My brethren, you must excuse me for treating this case with something like levity, for it has not in it to me one particle of solemnity.

"The prosecutor says I endorse Froude. This is simply nonsense. What I plead for is, that men of learning shall elaborate some theory of revelation that a young man can take to his heart, and not say when some one asks him, 'What about the 109th Psalm?' 'You go and mind your business; that is inspired.' That is what I call the theory of admiration. That makes infidels. . . . The theology of my friend is nothing but the picture of an enormous power rushing into a moral world. You dare not subject his deity to any question whatever. His theology does nothing but look down to earth and say, God! God! As though God could not be thought about, or prayed to. But who this God is, how he acts, upon what basis, he dare not inquire, because it would be 'rationalism,' if he did — he so fears rationalism. . . . So with salvation by faith. You dare not ask what faith is, whether it is a natural moral excellence that has induced God to crown it with such glory. Any inquiry on that point is rationalism. . . . His theology all proceeds from God as a simple despot; mine from God as a reasonable Being.

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[1] Dr. Patton was professor of theology in the McCormick Theological Seminary, as well as editor of the *Interior*; hence the reference to him as "Professor Patton."

"Although the prosecutor has made the 'accused' out to be an infidel, a Brahmin, an Evolutionist, and a Sabellian, and a Unitarian, yet the 'accused,' with all his faults upon him, can show the court a better view of providence, a more universal, a more careful and delightful Heavenly Father than the prosecutor can present. The God of my friend seems only to come to this world once in a while, and then as a clap of thunder strikes it, and then withdraws again for a thousand years. Thus he is separated from all those four thousand years between Adam and Christ, and is waked up, at last, from a long neglect, and concludes to found a religious ministry. He has limited God's special providence still more yet, to only the orthodox clergy. And then he excludes all elders as having never been called — such men as George Stuart and J. V. Farwell, and all women . . . and all revivalists, such as Moody, for I believe he is not an ordained minister. . . . My friends, when I look upon such men as Sumner and Burke and Wilberforce, and feel that they came into being only by ordinary providence or else by God's neglect— he does not know whether Lincoln was called or not; he came, perhaps, by God's neglect — and when I look upon some clergymen, and am told that these clergymen came by some miraculous method, let us pray that God may return to an *ordinary* providence hereafter.

"Again, he proved to you, by a long argument, that a Sabellian is a man who fully identifies Christ with God. The truth is, a Sabellian is, *par excellence*, a believer in the Deity of Christ. In the theology of Sabellians Christ is nothing else than the Great Father, having for the moment become the Mediator, and for the moment having become the Holy Spirit. Having toiled all that day to show that I was a Sabellian, he toiled all the next day to show that I was a Unitarian — that religion which of all others separates Jesus Christ from God. Now, brethren, I want you, when you come to make up your verdict, not to make me both of these characters. I could bear to be either, perhaps, but I could not bear to be both."

The charges against Prof. Swing were definite; the evidence was essentially indefinite. The result was an entire acquittal, for the Presbytery was sitting as a court, and was restricted to the evidence. The proof was so inferential that the verdict, "Not Proved," was

judicial and justified. He was heretical, plainly so, but not so much in his actual words as in their natural implications. He felt that he was within the margin of permitted freedom of thought, but he did not realize how far he had drifted from the creed of his church. His hold upon the great truths was so firm that he passed into the larger faith, as it were, without knowing it. In simple truth, the jury was *particeps criminis* in the case, else acquittal would have been impossible. Some surpassed others in the gift of reticence, but the leaders had themselves slipped away from the old, dark Calvinism, perhaps unawares. Friendship, too, and the dictatorial manner of Dr. Patton had much to do with the result.

Dr. Patton asked for an appeal from the decision of the Presbytery to the Synod of Illinois North, and in an able paper set forth his reasons. Swing foresaw endless litigation, harrassing his own soul and disturbing the peace of the church, and his heart sank. The church papers were bitter against him, almost brutal in their partisan rancor. He himself was weary, sick of heart and of body, and utterly discouraged. He, therefore, wrote a letter to the Presbytery asking that his name be erased from its rolls. Among other things, he said:

"Dear Brethren: I have always looked upon church relations as being not simply those of theology, but those of Christian brotherhood; and when, by degrees, under the repeated attacks of a new enemy, the feeling of brotherhood has rapidly faded away from my heart, the desire has daily increased to terminate relations which not only confer no happiness upon me, but confer power upon another to arraign me, from time to time, on some dead dogma, or over the middle of a sentence, or over some Sabellian or Mohammedan word. It can easily be seen, from the eagerness with which this adjoining synod reaches out after the battle and the nervousness which the assembly has already betrayed over the recent ac-

tion of your body, that it would be only a mania for war to the knife that could induce any one to carry to those bodies a debate so radical, so sudden and so clouded by personal friendships and animosities. What the church needs now is peace, that it may think in some hours, and work for the Master in all hours. In this act I hope I do not withdraw from your gospel mission, but only from a strife forced upon you and me to our deep regret. In all your Christian labors, if there be any moment at which I can help you, count me with you as a fellow-laborer; but, when any 'accuser' looks around for a subject to be used for military purposes, will you not join me in blessing God that such a peculiar passion must at last languish for want of a victim?"

For such a man, sensitive and refined to the last degree, and held to the past by tender ties, leaving the church of his fathers was not like leaving a hotel. It was, as Beecher said at the time, like leaving the old homestead. His friends begged him not to do it, but to stand and fight not only for himself but for others. He replied: "I will not fight a battle for those things which do not interest me. I will not fight for a name; I care nothing for it. If I have a message, it will somehow reach the multitude." Temperament is a great factor in such matters. Swing was not of the stuff of which reformers are made, and he shrank from a conflict into which a less worthy man would have leaped exultingly. The liberal element in the church deplored his leaving it, as witness these words from *The Independent*: "Above all others he was the man to make the fight. His reputation is unblemished. No man was ever placed for such a struggle upon such a vantage ground. A decision affirming his good standing would have been 'light all around the sky,' and thousands who are chafing in the bonds of old-time creeds would have rejoiced in the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free."

Heresy-hunters may have their place in the world, set as they are for the defense of the Faith — though the Faith needs no body-guard. But they often inflict life-injury, if not death-wounds, upon some of the finest minds of the church, when they do not drive them from it. The trial of David Swing for heresy, if it did not break his heart, it saddened his life, and left him largely without that intellectual and spiritual companionship which association with the best men of the church had given him. It sometimes seemed to those who met him that he was half apologetic for his temerity in dissidence from a thing so uniformly respectable as orthodox theology; but that was only seeming. It was due to that sensitiveness which such an experience induces in a refined mind. Had he remained in the church and made the fight, as he was urged to do, his name would now be in its temple of fame. By a rare fortune, in leaving the old church he entered a greater field of influence and power, and did a work which, otherwise, he could not have done. Few realize how much we owe to Swing, and others like him, for the larger evangelical liberty we now enjoy.

CHAPTER VI

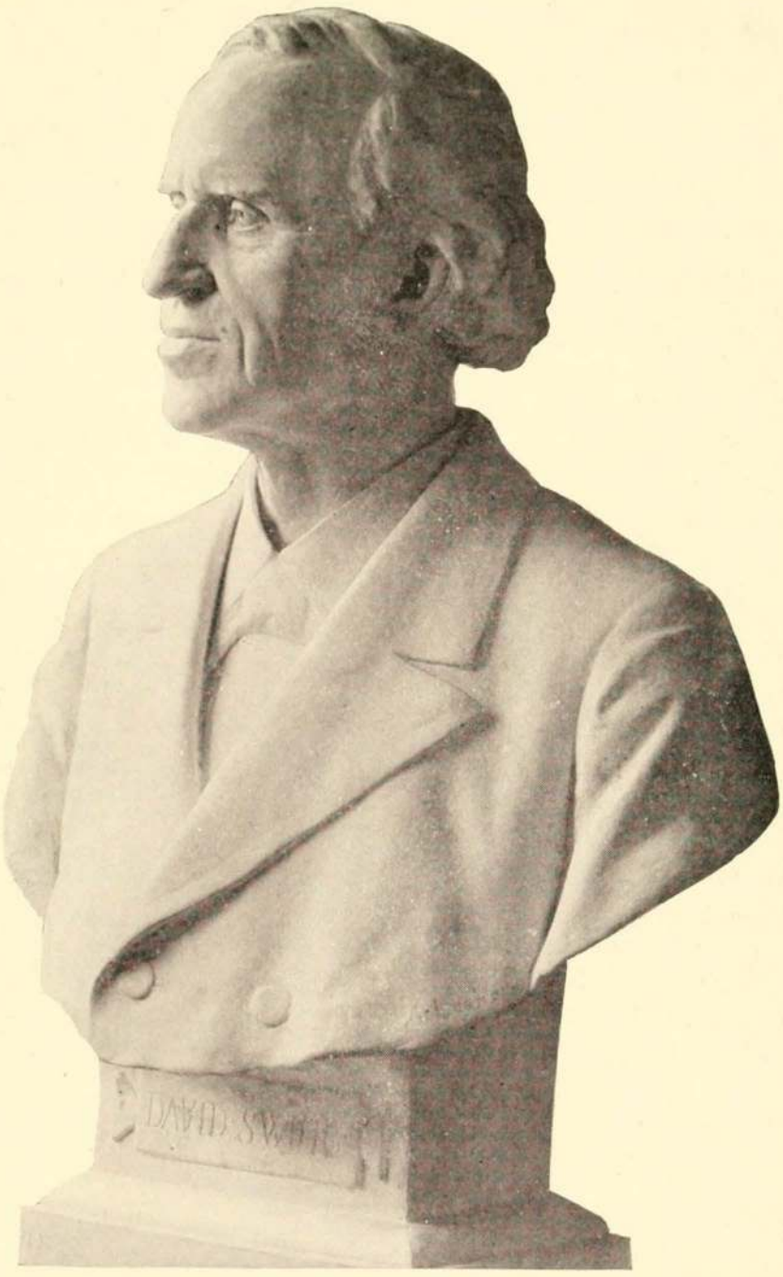
Central Church

After the heresy trial Prof. Swing left the city to rest and to find his bearings, writing notes of his journeyings to *The Alliance*. Everywhere he was received with fraternal greetings, especially in Southern Ohio, and this Christian sympathy did much to heal the wounds of his foes. He was glad to be far away from all warrings and to find repose of mind amid scenes of peace and beauty. At Oxford, Ohio, he spoke to a gathering of Universalists, and this gave rise to a rumor that he intended to unite with that sect. This, however, was only a rumor, set afloat by certain church papers who were watching his movements. Swing held the Universalist faith in high esteem for its humane genius, but he felt that it was too daring a dogmatism for our twilight world. But it is much easier to label a man than to understand him, hence the winged rumor. Sectarian walls were so high in those days that one who was tall enough of soul to see over them was regarded as an anomaly.

In no sense was David Swing an extremist. The heresy trial and the attacks of the church papers, while they made him sick and sad of heart, did not, as such tactics so often do, make him more radical; though one notes a change of emphasis in his preaching after this period, as may be seen by contrasting the sermon on "The World's Great Need," delivered in Standard

Hall in 1872, with the whole tone of his ministry after the trial. Some latitude must be allowed for the occasion of the Oxford address. He was speaking in the presence of old friends and, as was his way, with the freedom of Christian sympathy and love for all the followers of Christ. The Universalists themselves did not claim him, from that utterance, as one of them; but it was evident that, in turning his back upon a dark Calvinism, the future was brighter to him for all souls, and that a larger and more benign hope had come to him.

During his summer outing Prof. Swing visited Henry Ward Beecher, in Brooklyn, who welcomed him with open arms, the more so since his ordination to the apostolic succession had been confirmed by the laying of hands of some of his brethren, not in benediction but in wrath. Beecher himself was at that time walking through a valley of shadows much darker than that of heresy, and the fact that Swing came with a heart full of sympathy and fraternal love touched the great preacher deeply. They sat up far into the night, and Swing learned the whole truth about that unhappy scandal — the truth which, when told, will show that Henry Ward Beecher went to his reward with hands stainless before God's high altar. The strength and calmness of Beecher in that awful ordeal amazed Swing, as witness these words from a letter to *The Alliance*: "Notwithstanding the load of daily cares that must rest upon Henry Ward, and notwithstanding the hidden sorrow such a long conflict must bring him, he yet goes on, from week to week, in his life-work of unrolling the rich web of his fertile soul. His brain seems, like the vitals of Prometheus, to grow by night as rapidly as the vultures consume it by day." But it



BUST OF PROFESSOR SWING
By Aloys Loeher, 1894

was in vain that Beecher begged him to spend a Sunday and preach in Plymouth Church; he was too timid. As he afterwards said, with his usual modesty: "I could not think of lighting my tallow candle in the presence of so glorious a sun."

The hot days sped by and Prof. Swing returned to Chicago, and to the pulpit of the Fourth Church. Throughout the skirmish, the debate and the heresy trial, Fourth Church had stood by him to a man, and they were loath to take his withdrawal from the Presbytery as final. Indeed, he did not actually resign his pulpit until October, 1875, more than a year after the trial. As the months ran along, however, Swing saw that he must take leave of his people, if not of the ministry itself. To avoid any appearance of the spectacular, which he abhorred, he quietly withdrew and left the city. Once more he thought of the law and seems to have set about preparing to enter that profession; but the men of Chicago would not have it so. Recalling the experiment of a downtown service in McVicker's Theater just after the fire, while the Fourth Church was rebuilding, they determined to bring Swing back to the city. The growth of Chicago, its shape, together with the fact that so many churches had moved further out, made the need of such a central society more keenly felt than in 1872. Steps were taken to form a new church, with Prof. Swing as pastor. To this end a meeting of citizens was called — all of them Swing's friends, though not all of his faith — and an agreement was executed as follows:

"We, the undersigned, believing it to be desirable that David Swing shall remain in the city of Chicago and continue his public teachings in some central and commodious place, and having been informed that the

annual expenses of such an arrangement can be brought within the sum of $15,000, including an acceptable salary to Professor Swing, do hereby severally agree to pay the deficit, if any there shall be, arising from the conduct of such services, to the amount above named, for the term of two years."

This document was signed by fifty of the leading citizens of Chicago, including such names as N. K. Fairbank, G. B. Carpenter, Leonard Swett, Franklin MacVeagh, C. B. Holmes, O. F. Fuller, Jos. Medill, A. M. Pence, H. W. Wilmarth, Ferd. W. Peck, F. L. Blair, and others. Each of the fifty men subscribed $1,000, making a fund of $50,000 for the new religious enterprise — fifty thousand dollars to be invested in a man, in a teacher of faith! It is a matter of doubt whether this fact can be paralleled in the history of any other city upon the earth. This movement was not a rebuke to Dr. Patton nor a personal vindication of Professor Swing. Nor was it a rallying about a man, as such movements often are, out of sympathy for him as a supposed martyr or an unhappy outcast. The genius of the enterprise was positive, not negative. It was in the nature of a public enterprise to meet an obvious need in the higher life of the city; a need which David Swing had done much to provoke, and to which it was agreed that he was the man best fitted to minister. Chicago needed David Swing, and her citizens were willing to invest fifty thousand dollars in his genius.

It was further agreed that Prof. Swing should be left free as to the details of organization, creed and name, on the ground that he could do his best work unhandicapped. An opportunity of this kind comes but once in the life of a man or in the life of a city, and

David Swing met it with a profound sense of his responsibility, the only thing that marred his joy being the fact that his church would have to be independent. Independence of thought was, indeed, his ideal, but isolation from fellowship was foreign to his whole nature and spirit. But, as he could not have one without the other, he accepted the alternative. There was much curiosity, particularly in church circles, as to what form the new movement would take, what name it would wear, and what creed, if any, it would adopt. Swing suggested that the society be called "Central Church," by virtue of its location and purpose; that it be congregational in organization and government; that its basis of fellowship be simple, comprehensive, and Christian. He drew up a covenant and statement of faith, which was adopted:

"We, desiring to promote our own spiritual welfare and to take some part in helping others to lead the Christian life, do form ourselves into a Christian society to be known as the Central Church of Chicago. We found our church upon the great doctrines of the New Testament. We believe in the divine character and mission of Christ; that he is the Savior that man in his ignorance and sinfulness needs; that all accepting and obeying this Christ as their Way, Truth and Life are fully entitled to the name and hope of the Christian."

That was all; and that was enough. Of this basis of faith the pastor said in a memorable sermon, which, in any true accounting of things, should be one of the landmarks of American Christianity:

"The objection to 'creeds' as written by the orthodox denominations lay not in the fact that they were written, but in the fact that they contained hundreds of useless articles and many articles not true; much extraneous matter, much unintelligible matter. If a creed should state that he who imitates Christ is worthy of all good, it is not objectionable; but if it goes on to write that he must have been decreed to imitate Christ, must have been immersed or sprinkled, must have been

miraculously regenerated, must believe in the flood of Noah and in the creation of woman out of man's rib, must accept of a Trinity, of the idea of total depravity, of the fact and omnipotence of the Devil, the creed dies of impertinence; not because it was written down, but because it possessed neither truth nor utility nor logical sequence. But because creeds were once thus burdensome, and even injurious, we cannot infer that a modern church imperils its liberty if it writes down two or three simple articles of belief. The reaction from the long prayers of the Pharisees was not found in the total extinction of worship, but in the simplicity of the Lord's Prayer, offered far away from the market place.

"Our little statement assumes Theism and expresses only the Christian addition to the natural religion of mankind. . . . It offers an abundant liberty as to the import of the word 'divine,' and removes wholly from notice hundreds of definitions which were once deemed important; but it narrows down at last to an imitation of Christ and belief in Him so that none but a Christian in his attachments and philosophy would wish to join the organization. We do not denounce the Jew; we do not declare his religion inadequate; we simply announce a difference of thought and prefer our phase of religious doctrine to his. . . . These doctrines are few, but they are very great, and make no diverging and intricate paths leading out to a desert, or, like the halls in a labyrinth, leading to no outcome, but a highway which leads to usefulness and character. . . . A prolix creed was the blunder of the past, because it hid from the people the central import of our religion. Men often believed so ardently in the Trinity that they forgot to believe in virtue. Hence, when creeds were longest the lives of Christians were the worst. The mind was dissipated, incompact, and could prove its piety by affirming the story of Jonah or Samson, or by repeating a long rosary. It is the simpler creed, that which asks us to make Christ our standard, which admits of the least wandering from the main aims of society and worship. . . . All must confess that this church is founded upon Christ as its chief corner stone. We may indeed be poor followers of our Captain, but in this particular we resemble all Protestants and Catholics which surround us. . . . Should this society live here for generations while this city is passing its line of a million and hurrying onward, it will be what it is today, because its little creed determines its incoming people, and discloses before it a definite path. It need never wander nor be lost. Christ

as a Guide and Savior is unchangeable, and the church which follows Him need never make approach to a life without God and a death without hope."

On this basis Central Church was organized, with some five hundred members, in December, 1875. It was a triumph from the beginning, and not one of the guarantors of the reserve fund was called upon to make up any deficit. It was not an orthodox society, nor yet a "liberal" movement, still less a band of those men whom Bacon describes as "so sensible to every kind of restraint as they will go near to think their girdles and garters to be bonds and shackles." In temper, spirit and atmosphere it was a Christian church, but unsectarian in its affiliations. It toiled always within the name of Jesus, and its pulpit was a throne of those "doctrines which lie upon human life like a child upon its mother's bosom, dear and inseparable." Of course it was, in a way, a personal movement, for Prof. Swing was at once its leader and its inspiration; and there must have been a potent charm in a man who could achieve such a conquest, maintain such a gentle sovereignty, and diffuse an influence so compelling.

As we have seen, it had been known to the people of Chicago for some years that a great preacher was growing up among them, and quietly advancing into public favor and national fame. Even in those early days there was a special charm in his periods, a winning sweetness and music in his ideas, a mystery and poetry in his presence; and many were accustomed to steal away from the ordinary pulpit ministrations to sit under his pleasing spell. At length, by means of the heresy trial, the diffident Professor was lifted into exciting notice, and the largest audience room in the

city would not suffice to hold the multitude who wished to hear him. It was at this point, where only one in a thousand is master of the situation, that Swing turned an accidental *eclat* into a permanent fame. If curiosity invited many, a genuine admiration held them, and the broad spirit and tendency that had long waited outside the church found in him a man whom nature, culture and trials had endowed for leadership. He had genius, poise, learning, sympathy, insight, humor, common sense, and above all — religion! His attraction lay not alone in the grace with which an ever-busy imagination invested his thought, but in the fitness of his thought to the spirit and need of the age. He gave the larger, sweeter faith of his day appropriate and beautiful form.

Such a preacher was naturally a magnet for men, especially for young and strong men, [1] who were weary

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[1] It would be easy to give a long list of men now influential in many walks of life who were once proud to be called "Swing's Boys." They read with him, and often traveled with him on his vacations, and he was their guide, teacher and friend. Mr. W. E. Curtis, of the *Chicago Record-Herald*, writes:

"I do not know of any person except my own father who exercised a stronger influence on my life at the time my tastes were maturing and my habits were forming than David Swing. I went to Chicago in May, 1872, to take a position as musical critic on the *Inter-Ocean*, which had been started two months before by Jonathan Young Scammon. I was translated to Chicago, as I felt at the time, through the influence of Theodore Thomas, who recommended me as musical critic for the new paper. George B. Carpenter and Eli L. Sheldon were partners in lecture and concert management, and were agents for the Thomas Orchestra and other musical organizations. A warm friendship grew up between us and Mr. Sheldon and I became room-mates in a boarding house on the North Side. My father was a Presbyterian minister in Cleveland and it was natural that I should attend services at the nearest church of that faith. Mr. Sheldon also worshiped there and had an intimate relation with the pastor, Professor Swing. That relationship was promptly extended to me. Almost every Sunday evening for a year or two was spent at Swing's house, and we saw him more or less frequently through the week. He was interested in young men by habit acquired at Miami University and by choice; for his heart was always young and his soul was bubbling over with the spirit of youth. We read together and discussed books. We debated current events and gossiped. There was a literary society then, of which we were all members and which met at his

of the old speculative theology and who longed for a faith more in tune with an advancing world. Early in his ministry Swing had seen that men of affairs, the makers of cities, though nominally attached to the churches, were largely untouched by the spirit of humanism. Deliberately and of set purpose, and with every art at his command, he appealed to men of power and brains in behalf of the higher things. He sought to influence influential men, and through them to touch the creative forces of the city. In this character he was an evangelist of beauty, of culture, of idealism, of Christianity, and of social service. His work was with minds and hearts, not with brick and mortar, much less with the externals of candles, robes and altars. By the simple power of his thought and the beauty of his soul, unaided by denominational spirit, ecclesiastical millinery, or sectarian loyalty, he drew strong men to him, and made Central Church a force in the life of the metropolis. Happily he was not made to feel the aloofness and venom of the orthodox, as men in his position usually are. In a sermon on "The Amenities of Christianity" we have a glimpse of his submarine fellowship:

"Our church here, our Central Church, a spiritual island cut off from the great continents and washed all around by the lonely, mourning sea, is nevertheless reached by submarine wires of friendship, and messages of good will come

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home. That also was a source of a great deal of satisfaction, as well as a refining influence. These relations remained unchanged until I married in 1874, and then my wife was admitted to the coterie. . . . He was a man of singularly pure and simple nature. He attracted people to him by some mysterious influence that was entirely unconscious, but never failed to find men of his own sort. He thought well of everybody; he found good in everything. The world to him was full of light and beauty, and he could not see the evil and ugliness that was so apparent to some other people. He kept my thoughts clean; he encouraged lofty aspirations and set a pace and a standard that I have always tried to maintain. Whatever good there is in me; whatever I have done that is a credit to my race; is largely due to the influence of David Swing."

and go between our spot and the mainland. Members come and join us from all the denominations which ever grant letters of dismissal to persons desiring to join another church. These men come to our church not by written law, but by the force of a large and growing amenity of Christianity. Even if a tolerable argument might possibly be made to the effect that our church is not 'regular,' not 'evangelical,' the clergy have no heart for making such use of their critical faculties. They are like the soldiers of Wellington and Napoleon. As soon as the theological guns cease firing and the peace of evening has come, the evening of reflection and of the nearer presence of God, down into the intervening valley come these ministers quite willing to give away, and to receive; and to do this not under a flag of truce sent by those in authority, but under a flag of truce which every heart waves for itself."

Swing remained with *The Alliance*, and his editorials were never more interesting than in these years. Late in 1874 a serial story began to appear under the title of "Recollections of Dr. Heinrich: A Story of Brown Bread, by Theophilus Jones," a fantastic tale of an old German doctor who had discovered how "to make a poet out of a historian, a philosopher out of a geologist, a thinker out of a clergyman, and a rational being out of an editor," by the magic of food. Traits of style so betrayed the writer that Swing had to own this child of his fancy, though he declined to let it appear in book form. Bits of humor, pathos and homely philosophy were embowered in the most delicate traceries of nature scenes, through which trickled a rivulet of romance. The story was charmingly simple while touching surely if seemingly lightly on some very important things in life. But the story itself had a story. Owing to gastric ills Swing had been sentenced, as early as 1869, to a diet of "brown bread," and he took this method of twitting his physician — humor being his savior from the tyranny of things petty and from the fret and jar of life. Of his ser-

mons a critic once said: "They are characterized by grace rather than by forcefulness, and by a certain languor of manner, a lack of virility, equally characteristic of their author as a public speaker." This was true, in a measure, even in 1875, and more true, at times, in later years, when "that strange power called weakness" became more despotic. One cannot be a dynamo of virility and live on "brown bread," though a "Dr. Heinrich" assert for it the virtues of a panacea.

The second series of "Truths for Today" appeared soon after the founding of Central Church, and the book was widely read by people who did not ordinarily read sermons. Of the fifteen sermons five had to do with Christ, His "Minor Qualities" — simplicity, sympathy, catholicity; His "Surroundings" — a brief but brilliant sketch of the age into which His life was cast; His "Influence" on Art, on Letters, and on the Human Spirit. Such themes gave play to the best and sweetest thought of the preacher, and if printed by themselves these five sermons would be among our religious classics. The first charm of the book was its language. It was a language with an aroma, fulfilled of the beauty that woos the mind, and of the deeper beauty that fills the heart, yet is never seen of the eyes. Formalism and convention were abjured. Old themes were handled freshly, deftly, and with an aptness and richness of illustration which betrayed a remarkable range of reading and meditation. Of the other ten sermons, each notable of his kind, three may be noticed as showing in as many ways his level-headedness, his hospitable intellect, and his leadership of faith.

"The Empire of Law" was a frank and grateful acceptance of the revelations of science in its unveiling

of the unity, sublimity and infinity of the universe. It made no difference that this vision had come in a variety of ways. Gone forever was the lawless universe of a whimsical God, and with it the unworthy notions which made God an arbitrary, capricious Almightiness. Hitherto man had moved chiefly in the domain of the marvelous, the victim of a logic which reasoned from a basis of divine caprice or satanic whim. But at last, year by year, visions of miracles and witches and ghosts were fading from the only place where they ever existed — the brain of man. A new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelt righteousness and law, had come. Mystery remained, in matter as it filed its solitary way up the stairway of life, and trembled back again to death and dust, no less than on the frontiers of that night which barricaded the advance of knowledge. But it was the mystery of the unknown natural, of the superhuman, not of the supernatural or the unnatural. Faith, he saw, had thus a new field, a new reason, a universe of lengthening vistas and lifting skies.

Never has "True Liberalism" been more perfectly defined than in a sermon of that title. Liberalism may sometimes fade into unbelief, but all thinking is perilous; it may build up a love of proof which at last religion may fail to satisfy. But for every soul ruined by too much breadth, there are myriads rendered frightful by their assumption that the little ideas in their hands are the eternal wish of God. From vanity of this kind proceed cruelty, persecution, and all uncharitableness. True liberalism is that large result obtained for faith by the free exercise of all the faculties by which men obtain truth. It is a spirit, not a dogma. Rationalism is as much a system of dogma as

Romanism; once in that ship you are limited, and you are also anchored. Hume was called a bigoted anti-bigot. No man is more narrow than Calvin except the man who fancies that he is too liberal to take the truths for which Calvin stood. Calvin, than he, is more liberal by far. To be liberal one must believe more than others, not more things, but more deeply, more hopefully, more nobly. Radicalism means rootedness. This it was — this quality of nobility — that made the liberalism of Swing true and worthy of the name. It was no rude iconoclasm, no loquacious protesting, but a deep and sunny confidence moving out radius-length in all directions. It was not isolation, but coöperation in the enterprise of society.

Coming at a time when philanthropy toward the "masses," the "submerged tenth," and the like, was becoming sentimentalism and incipient class hatred, his "Plea for the Better Classes" was timely and brave. Having grown up a farmer boy, used to the humblest poverty, he could not be accused of aristocratic pretensions, but he declined to join in the prevailing abuse of the rich as such. He said:

"A hundred times at least in my life I have spoken in behalf of the slave of the cotton field, the Indian in the forest, the masses of India and China, and the swarms of wretched ones in our streets. Hence you will grant me a swift forgiveness today if for once I shall enter a plea in behalf of people who, gifted with good sense by fate, have, by reading, and hearing, and reflection, added a little to the original moral momentum of their souls. This multitude is not large, but it is immensely powerful, and their power for good or ill is daily expanding. . . . The genius of our country turns the attention of publicists (and the preacher too is a publicist) toward what is called the masses. It has come to pass that we weep over nothing but a ragged orphan or a slave. The pulpit upbraids the rich, defies the educated, and ridicules the scientific, and fanatically declares for the outcast, the ig-

norant, the chimney-sweep, and the newsboy. It is not probable that the church will overdo any shape of benevolence. We would not abate its work or its prayer along any of these paths. But let us not forget that there is another class of human beings, educated, moral, often rich, and always powerful, who need some thought and some love from those who pretend to be carrying the ark of the Lord through the wilderness. If any one will look into the churches of the land of a Sunday he will find a wonderful scarcity of the intellectually great. . . . The time has come for a new phase of Christianity. I believe the church has long erred by daring to decide upon the manner by which, or the person to whom, the new life comes. A righteous man must be confessed to be a converted man. The church possesses no analysis by which it can open a heart and find that morality is not regeneration, and that the prayers and hymns of a 'moralist' do not issue from the Holy Spirit, who, imaged as a dove, flies back and forth over the ocean of soul. In so doing the church has done injustice to some of the noblest members of society. . . . As things now are, there are hundreds of agents busy reducing Christianity down to a weak superstition. This picture, to me at least, assures me that the church has come to a crisis. A mighty throng of statesmen, of lawyers, of doctors, of scientific men, of readers and thinkers, have quite deserted the church, a throng mighty in their power not only over the present, but over the future. This large and valuable company may be seen going away from the church. Not in the least should the zeal of the pulpit be abated toward the multitude, but toward the educated class it is high time there were flung out some kind of invitation that might touch their intellects and their souls."

To a degree unequalled, perhaps, by any other teacher in his city or in his land, Swing reached not only the educated but the rich, even the very rich — always the most difficult class to reach. It was a saying in Chicago in those years that one could not shoot a pop-gun in Central Church without hitting a millionaire. Of course there were those to say that McVicker's Theater — the home of Central Church at that time — was a splendid auditorium where the fashionable, the rich and the cultivated gathered, of a Sun-

day, to listen to an exquisite essay, and that Swing himself was only a literary soothsayer administering a spiritual anodyne to restless men seeking solace. Later, when the class struggle became more intense and bitter, he was pictured, as we shall see, as a dilettante, a lover of books, of art, of all the soft, luxuriant, flower-petaled, gem-carved deliciousnesses of life, a semi-recluse *exquisite*. All of which was utterly false to the facts and foreign to the spirit and life-motive of the man. Those who knew Swing know that, while he loved beauty and hated dinginess, he was a man of simple ways, democratic in thought and spirit. It is true that he stood, from the first, four-square against the gushing tide of sentimental, semi-socialistic tendencies of his day, but he was not the retained advocate of any class. No one ever uncovered political corruption, "The False Balance" in business, heedless frivolity and wanton luxury, more searchingly than he did. But he held the same mirror up to the lives of the "masses," showing them to be envious, often thriftless and indigent, or rum-befogged — a mirror framed in pity and held in a tender hand. He was a Christian humanist, and his gospel was no respecter of classes.

Much ado was made in these years over Robert Ingersoll and his philippics against religion. As usual, public opinion was divided. Some regarded him as a philosopher, a brave reformer, an emancipator, and a transcendent orator. Others held that he was a superficial pretender to learning, an artful sophist in logic, a flippant scoffer at sacred things, if not a spectacular purveyor of tawdry plagiarisms. Of course neither party was right, since Ingersoll was only a witty critic and satirist, at once an attorney and a prose-poet; a positive mind on the negative side of

faith. In one of his lectures in Chicago he referred to Swing and the heresy trial. Walking to and fro on the platform — one of his delightful tricks — he stopped suddenly, as if a thought had just occurred to him, tapped the desk, and said with his melodious voice and a twinkling eye: "*Had such a man as David Swing been present at the burning of Servetus, he would have extinguished the flames with his tears. Had the Presbytery of Chicago been there, they would have quietly turned their backs, solemnly divided their coat-tails, and warmed themselves.*" Applause like unto thunder greeted this striking sentence from pit to dome of the theater. Lifting his graceful hand as a signal for silence, the orator went on to say that Swing was as much out of place in the Chicago Presbytery as a dove would be among vultures, and more of the same sort. In cold type, next day, these words seemed brutally harsh, but as a fact they were uttered with the most winning of smiles — a quality in Ingersoll with which his critics, especially the clergy, did not reckon. The facile orator had made it appear that David Swing was in reality of his way of thinking, only Swing by preference used a harp instead of a hammer. It was a clever stroke, but never was there a more complete misinterpretation of Prof. Swing, or, I need hardly say, a greater injustice to the Chicago Presbytery.

The following winter, 1878, Swing delivered two sermons on "The Good and the Bad in the Addresses of Robert Ingersoll," in which, while never once stooping to cheap abuse, he read the inconoclast perfectly. That is, as a clever critic though not a great orator — since he lacked a great theme; as a "Juvenal rather than a Cicero; a Francis Jeffrey rather than an Edmund Burke; one who can lampoon his age without

being able to inspire it." Profound scepticism, he said, does not manifest itself in ridicule. It is more often deeply sad. It was so in the classic poets; in Voltaire, even, and in Heine. And besides, such iconoclasm is an anachronism in a humane and advancing age. Continuing, he said:

"But why should such oratory for or against religion in the least surprise us? Do we not know that the whole progress of man has been only by means of one unbroken debate? Birds fly, deer run and serpents crawl, but society talks itself forward. Men talk a hundred years, and then by resolution or war or a reformation they mark how far they have got; and the mark having been made, they at once reopen the infinite conversation. When one looks over the outspread life of humanity and marks what good results have come of the wars of differing minds, and marks that without this free, purifying process there has been no good progress in any field of thought, one cannot but feel that the addresses of such an iconoclast as Mr. Ingersoll are not by any means an unmixed evil.

"Men of intense emotional power like Ingersoll, and men who like him have hearts as full of colors as a painter's shops, are wont beyond common to pour their passion upon one object rather than diffuse it all over the world. These men can awaken, and entertain, and shake, and unsettle, but then, after it is over, we all must seek for final guides men who are calmer and who spread gentler tints with their brushes. . . . His eloquence is much like the art of Hogarth — an acute and witty and interesting art but limited in its range. Hogarth was without a rival in his ability to picture the 'mistakes' of marriage, of a 'Rake's Progress,' the peculiarity of 'Beer Lane' and 'Gin Lane'; and his art was legitimate in its field, but its field was narrow, and took no notice of the beauty of things as painted by Rubens and Raphael. After Hogarth had said all he could see, and believe, about marriage, there stood the holy relation in all its historic greatness, filling millions of homes with its peace and friendship, notwithstanding the mirth provoking pencil. Thus the ideas of 'Moses,' and 'Church,' and 'Heaven,' and 'God,' lie before Ingersoll to be pictured by his skillful derision, but after the artist has drawn his little Puritan Hebrew, and his absurd heaven, and has painted his little gods, another scene opens, and there, un-

tarnished, are the deep things of right and wrong, the immortal hopes of man, and the Heavenly Father, which cannot be placed upon a jester's canvas.

"These addresses under notice are wonderful concentrations of wit and fun, and tears, and logic, but concentrations upon minor points. They are severe upon a little group of men, upon old literalists, and old Calvinists and old Popes, and old monks, but they do not weigh or measure fully the religion of such a Being as Jesus Christ, nor touch the ideas and actions of the human race away from these fading forms of human life. . . . If you will suppose these orations to be delivered in court where the Calvinists have applied for the power to govern some island and subdue it to their form of piety, and that Mr. Ingersoll has a home and estates on that island, and sees the new dynasty coming along, then their eloquence and point can be understood, and they are philippics worthy of the ancient Greeks. But when we remember how imaginary are those Calvinists and their island, and what a vast world there is that does not desire to enforce religion, and that would not disturb the fireside of even the most bold infidel, then the basis of his eloquence disappears, and his speeches become only the anger of one who has had bad dreams about his fellow man."

This, or something like it, will probably be the final estimate of Ingersoll by the best minds of the age. Swing saw that the iconoclast was a sign of the times, especially fitted to cater to the prevailing taste for irreverence and levity that lay dormant but easily accessible in the popular mind. In protest against this general vulgarity he preached one of the noblest, tenderest, most pathetic sermons in our language, on "The Pathos of Christianity" — a sermon which for haunting beauty and melting gentleness has no equal anywhere. Our faith, he said, may not be perfect; no faith is; but it is the most far-reaching and profound meditation on life and death yet composed in the midst of the years. The last lines of the sermon had in them something of the slow, measured movement of a funeral hymn. Indeed, it grew out of a grave — the grave of

his wife in which he had so lately buried the fellowship of years. Mrs Swing [1] died August 2, 1879, in Oxford, Ohio, after a lingering illness, a victim of the great white plague. Her passing deepened and made permanent in Swing that shadow of melancholy that had always been lurking about him. Thereafter, to the end, he gave, as a totality of impression, more of a sense of beauty and pity than of aught else. The note of pathos was heard more often, and all too often there fell over his spacious mind, in hours however trivial or merry or tragic, a thought of death. The tender, terrible stroke bowed him low, and his sympathy went out, a never failing stream, to all who walked the shadowy way.

In the same year appeared his little book of essays — that is, sermons with the texts taken off — entitled "Motives of Life," one of the best known of his volumes. Home, A Good Name, The Pursuit of Happiness, Benevolence, Religion, Beauty, The Christ-Motive, made up the volume, to which was added, in a later edition, "The New Imagination;" motives more lasting than Karnac or the pyramids. No one may ever hope to

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1 Events are but a small part of the life of a good woman. As a girl Mrs. Swing was beautiful, vivacious, and of superior mental power — a graduate with high honors from the Oxford Seminary. To those who did not know her it seemed that her modesty checked both the flow of her mind and heart. But in the home or in the warm circle of friendship she disclosed a nature "all dipped in angel instincts." Her temperament was quiet and gentle, with great courage and conscientiousness. She was a perfect mother and an ideal companion for her husband. In the early days she was wont to beg Prof. Swing to stand by the old creed more carefully, lest a trial for heresy might come. Later her mind underwent great changes, and from a fear of what were called liberal ideas she passed to an ardent love of them. One can recall the slight figure, the beautiful eyes that were "homes of silent prayer," the face that had so much of kindness in it, but no one can reproduce the tender strength, the rich beauty and the ineffable charm of this good wife, mother and friend. She did not wish to be carried back to Chicago to be buried, but preferred to sleep in the neighborhood of her childhood, where immense groves furnished her not only with a beautiful scene, but with seclusion and silence.

write of subjects like these in language more lucid or melodious, or to clothe the great facts and feeling of life in more exquisite imagery. As much may be said, indeed, of all the sermons of this period — 1875 to 1880. They were not only thoughtful and beautiful but sensitive to the slightest variation in the intellectual and spiritual atmosphere. Several series of discourses belong to these years. One was an outlook upon "The Relation of Literary Men to Christianity," wherein it was shown, with abundant illustration, that "the present unrest in the world of theological thought is due largely to the fact that the teachings of literature have prevailed over the teachings of the systems of theology." He urged ministers to get out of the old homiletical ruts and to speak in a form natural, unhackneyed and simple of the truths that make us men. Read a literary masterpiece, he said, and then read a volume of sermons, and note the difference in style. He held it to be the duty of the man who speaks of the high themes of faith to clothe them in language befitting their beauty, if so be that such words come to his aid. Emerson, Carlyle and Stephen came to the sacred desk but found the old discourse too narrow for a full mind, and turned away. As a remedy for this Swing suggested that the range of the sermon be enlarged so as to touch every field of thought and life.

Another series discussed "The Influence of Material Science on Religious Doctrine," which tended, he said, to make religion more real, more reasonable, and more spiritual. "The Bible," its political reign, its literary reign, its spiritual reign, was the theme of one such series; and, while he did not concern himself with the problems of Criticism, he wrote as one aware of all that had been said in that field. He saw

as from a watch-tower "The Religious Situation," the "Decay of Theology," and the late course of sceptical criticism, the results of his survey being summed up in a discourse entitled, "Our Age Not an Age of Faith." In this sermon we read:

"Upon the whole our age is not an age of faith. It is an age of doubt or indifference. I cannot indeed prove this assertion, but it seems to me a simple fact. Are we therefore on the highway to atheism and ruin? Not necessarily so, for what our age may want of that warm religious love and zeal which marked former times, it may partly atone for by possessing clearer intellectual views of morals and all duty. The religion of Christ is a grand intellectual system for this world as well as a plan for reaching the next, and the present in its grasp of the relations between Christ and the present humanity, Christ and the poor, Christ and the slave, Christ and the drunkard, Christ and the woman, may be rivaling in greatness the ages which looked only up and saw angels instead of men, and heard heaven's harps rather than the lamentings of man, woman and child. Cold as our world may now be, fond of home as it is, unwilling to die, not having any desire to depart, yet in its intellectual coldness it has surpassed all its predecessors in digging up from the Bible and reason the most holy laws of God. As individuals differ, so ages differ. Beatrice and Madonna are painted as looking up, their faces bathed in the light of the skies. The earth is only a pedestal to hold up their sublime forms. Their figures are emblems of the Christianity around them. Coming to our period the figures change. They look around over earth. Wilberforce, Duff, Channing, and the grand group of modern Christians, loving heaven not a little, survey the scene below and make up in humane Christian Philosophy what they lack in rapture. The old faces were radiant, the modern faces are furrowed with thought."

Some critic accused Swing of trimming his sails to catch the popular breeze, hence a sermon on "Pulpit Sensationalism." After deploring the methods of Talmage, who "meets rationalism with ridicule and brings the dignity of religion into the dust," he took occasion to state his own view of the relation of the

pulpit to the age; which may well detain us here on the eve of his larger ministry. One form of preaching, he said, may be called timeless, for that it has to do with truths which hold dominion over our fragile human life in all times. But there is also a timely preaching. The preacher must know his age, and love it, and interpret to men the play of the Divine Spirit over it. No one ever surpassed Professor Swing in this role, and no part of his ministry was more helpful. He explains:

"The voice of an age is much like the din of a city which you have all heard. In days, in mornings and evenings, when the air is dense with the moisture of a coming storm, all the noises of the street are picked up by the heavy medium, and are all blended together in its great organ-pipe into one low murmur like the voice of many waters, like the distant tumult of a battle field. By a similar melting of many things into one, the voice of a century is made. Great men are only the souls in which that mighty voice becomes articulate. . . . Once the poets sang of war, being modified by the world around them. After a long time had passed we see Horace singing little lyric pieces and songs of literary criticism; and Lucretius songs of philosophy, showing that a more scholarly age had dawned. In far later times we behold Dante and Milton coming to the world with church songs, and with marvelous imaginations reared amid old miracles and legends. Then we see Shakespeare coming with the scenery of monarchy, because that was the largest spectacle of his lifetime; then Coleridge, and Byron, and Tennyson appear in the name of the material world and social life, and individual sorrow or happiness. They spoke not in a dead language, but in living thought for living men around them. They did not do this deliberately. Real art is not self-conscious. They simply permitted the new era to hand them subjects and manner, and even poetic feet. In the same way preaching is an art, not in the sense of a trick, or in the sense that it is a study of the ways and means of exciting langhter or tears. But it is an art in the sense in which the poet possesses an art, and, like all other toilers, we must study the best way of placing truth before our fellow men. Unconsciously the lawyer has changed his manner of speech towards Bench and jury. The

literary men have all changed their style since the days of the *Spectator*, and so have all the army of thinkers and writers, and the pulpit must join the march. The preacher's art must be carried along by the moving world, and must be to-day and to-morrow what it never yet has been. The idea that the ministry is commanded by inspiration to make the preaching of Christ foolishness and a stumbling block, or a rattling of dry bones, would be laughable had not it brought to the church so much injury. So far as my ministry is concerned, I feel that my preaching must be limited to the truths that underlie all sects, the inculcation of a life of love, a divine Christ, and the hope of immortality."

And so we leave him, at the close of this period of his ministry, fulfilling the mission of a minister to his age with the insight and art of a poet. Central Church was growing in usefulness and power, and in labors abundant, confining its ministries to Chicago — but Chicago is a world in itself.

CHAPTER VII

Central Music Hall

The year of grace 1880 was a notable one in the life of David Swing and of Central Church. That year, on the 4th of January, Central Music Hall was dedicated with simple but impressive ceremonies. It was a day of triumph. There stood the gentle preacher, serene, radiant, modest, his character lighting up like an altar lamp the teachings of his words, a gracious figure in the midst of a scene of his own enchantment. His genius, his spirit, his faith, were in perfect harmony with the place and the setting. In many a heart he stands today, as he stood that day, ruggedly simple, gently wise, refusing to say farewell!

Music Hall stood at the corner of Randolph and State streets, in the very heart of the city. It was a stone structure, six stories high, with store-rooms and offices fronting on State street, and a small music room in which the mid-week meetings of Central Church were held. The hall proper lay further back, in the form of an amphitheater, with a skylight of stained glass of pleasing design and soft tints. In the rear and on the south side, facing Randolph street, were rich cathedral windows, enshrining medallion busts of great composers — Mozart, Beethoven, Handel, Hayden, Bach, and others. This stately hall, the pride of the city and one of the most spacious auditoriums in

the West, at once a temple and a civic forum, was a spiritual as well as a financial investment. The moving spirit in the enterprise was the late George B. Carpenter, to whom the modest preacher was a dear friend and "the St. John of a new era in theology." It was built by the men of Chicago primarily as a platform for David Swing, and as such it will be forever associated with his name. Visitors to the city flocked to Music Hall much as they did to Plymouth Church in the days of Beecher, or to Trinity Temple when its dim recesses were made luminous by the genius of Phillips Brooks.

The dedicatory audience is not yet dismissed, and all who remain remember that day as one of uplifting solemnity. Everything was true to one spirit, one keynote. Exquisite was the word to be applied to everything. The preacher himself, tranquil and low-voiced, won all hearts as, standing behind the walnut desk, beside a floral harp — fit emblem of his genius and faith — he asked all to join in singing his favorite hymn —

> "They who seek the Father's face,
> Find He dwells in every place.
> If we live a life of prayer,
> God is present everywhere."

His prayer that morning was strangely tender, as if offered in mingled gratitude and regret — gratitude for the beauty and joy of the scene, blended with a subdued regret that the lips whose softly smiled blessing would have been dearer than the blessing of all others had been sealed in death. But the cloud passed, and the prayer mounted aloft from the shadowed earth to the shadowless heavens. He began his sermon — which he read, as was his wont — slowly, and in a voice so low that it was hard to hear him. But as he

moved along the volume of tone increased until in his climaxes it rang out like a trumpet. His gestures were few, quite awkward, and nearly always with the left hand. The more tender passages were preceded by a lifting of the chin which seemed, somehow, to add to their power. It was a unique eloquence, but it was eloquence, and all the more attractive for its touch of quaintness.

"Is Protestantism a Failure?" was the theme of the sermon, and no theme could have been more appropriate, for Central Church was in its genius and form the ultimate logic of Protestantism. Not uniformity, not conformity, but unity was its ideal — a unity, that is, not of belief but of faith, not of opinion but of spirit and aim. The sermon took note of many objections from Bossuet's "Variations of Protestantism" down, and argued that the fierce rancor of the sects is better than a dead, despotic peace which drives thinkers and seekers after truth away from the altar. Toleration of many forms of thought, of absurdities even, renders those who hold them less positive and less bitter. Catholics and Protestants have both erred in exacting unity of opinion and rite. Admitting that their aim was good, they have often violated the very soul of Christianity in seeking such a desirable result. It is better to begin with a unity of righteousness and piety — things the most needful and about which there is no debate — and on this common ground move toward that unity of vision which is the grand destiny of the church. Eternity will give us ample time to settle the unsolvable problems of theology. There, like children with our lettered blocks of wisdom, all unfettered, we may see who can build the most perfect creed. Until then, let there be varieties of opinion, but one spirit of

fellowship and love, as we journey towards the higher unity of things which differ. In the meantime:

"The religious life is affected by only three or four doctrines. All other ideas are perfectly harmless. They may be enumerated in a printed volume, but they cannot be counted in the human heart. What St. John's religion was in detail no one knows, but all know what it is to be in the Spirit. This was known to Jesus, John and Paul; it was known to Fenelon and Chalmers and Pere Marquette, known to Cardinal Newman and the poet Cowper. The vital power of religion is all stored away in a few joyous or solemn thoughts. All these widely scattered worshipers meet in one spirit. Whatever differences of idea may exist down in the schools of theology, all men agree if only they are able to get into the upper air. . . . To what better ideas can we dedicate this new place of worship today than to these two thoughts — the simple words of Jesus and his disciples and to the private right of each mind to weigh for himself all those words of hope and alarm. In those words we shall find creed enough, and what beauty perfect accord may fail to bring may perhaps come by the path of intellectual freedom. . . . If with ease our city of a half million can furnish such an audience, what may it not do in the years not far away when these streets shall have doubled their throngs, which, like you and me, will wish to study the duties and problems of this passing life. To the simple text of the Bible let us dedicate our temple today. A new year and a new building cannot indeed bring us a new religion, for the truths of our Master know nothing of the notations of times. If there were angels or men living a million years ago, they had no more perfect law of conduct than that moral law we find in Christ, and should there be men on earth a million years from this day, they will not be able to announce a creed truer than the lessons of the Son of God. The new spiritual riches which alone we can bring to these new scenes are a new love of God, a new love of man, and a new devotion to all the duties and hopes of the Christian pilgrimage."

Of the sermons of this fruitful year not even so much as a list can be given. There was one on "Music" — after which $10,000 was forthcoming to pay for the temple organ — and as an interpretation of the

spiritual meaning and ministry of that heavenly art there is not another like it. Another had to do with "The Intellectual Pursuits," and another with the doctrine of "Mediation," a principle of social life lifted aloft to divine beauty in Christ, as of old the Parthenon "sprang out of the limestone terraces of the Acropolis, carrying the natural lines of the rock by gradations scarce perceptible into the finished beauty of frieze and pediment;" another, imbued at once with religious and patriotic faith, was entitled, "The Religion of George Washington." Dip into these characteristic sermons anywhere by hazard, and one finds a smoothly flowing series of inspiring epigrams, uniting the beautiful in thought and spirit with the practical in modern life. Of the preacher, the editor of the *Boston Herald*, after a visit to Chicago and a Sunday in Music Hall, wrote:

"Though far below Mr. Beecher in magnetic power, he is the great preacher of the West, and counts the most cultivated people of that city in his audience. He is a thin, spare, intellectual-looking man, all brain and nerves, full of vitality; not the man to lead hosts to battle, but a ruler of the realm of reason, and no idle observer of the movements of the world. His personality is the least part of him, though, in times of excitement, when mind and heart are aroused to their utmost, it might be said of him, as Dr. Channing once said when he was reminded of his small stature, 'When I am mad I weigh a ton.' Yet there is something in this man, quite below the surface, which explains his power and which enables him to sustain the intellectual enthusiasm with which he is followed. In the strict interpretation of oratory he is not great, and yet he is an attractive speaker. He has a rare discernment of the kind of teaching that thoughtful people stand in need of. He never treats a text exegetically, never speaks with the emphasis of a man who has nothing to say. This does not mean that he is free from mannerisms. He is apt to be slow in starting. There is a shaking of the head, a wriggling of the body, and the sentences are often cut up by emphasis upon the wrong words. But when he is aroused the defects of his

voice disappear directly, and there is a force, a fervor, in what he says. His gestures, though, are bad, and his enunciation is, at times, indistinct. These are his negative qualities. His sermons have the essay form, and their strength seems to lie very largely in the thought which inspires them. They abound in fresh, original, vital thinking. There are few finer utterances of the American pulpit than his weekly sermons printed in *The Alliance*, and the remarkable thing about them is that they will be as interesting years hence as they are today. If Mr. Beecher has taken the American sermon out of its conventional methods and taught the preachers freedom, Swing has taught them after the manner of his great Master, how to make the sermon as inclusive in its range and as constructive in its methods as is the large, free life through which we are passing. In some respects he preaches Christianity in a wider, stronger, freer way than any of his peers in America. He has come to understand supremely well what is wanted in a modern sermon. If not a great orator, he is certainly one of the few preachers who knows what to say, and his remarkable insight into the spiritual contents of life is the secret of his unique, subtle power over the lives of his fellow men."

Every minister should have a field of study, a kind of recreation ground, apart from his labor of making sermons, and the more remote the better. Else he will find himself "going to seed," as Swing called it, and all his reading running to sermons. For the ministry, like every profession, limits one's power, and the rattling of sermon skeletons tends, imperceptibly, to narrow the mind; not only to narrow it, but to drain it dry of inspiration and enthusiasm. So it befell that Swing betook himself to the classics, as Beecher studied horticulture, as Emerson fell back on Hindoo philosophy, which he called his "mental gymnasium." Many subjects engaged him, but the classics were "his city of the mind built against outward distraction for inward consolation and shelter;" and it was his habit to read every day several pages of that rich lore in the original language. Out of these studies grew his

essays on various aspects and personalities of classic literature and life, which, besides adding to his own pleasure, were a source of delight to his friends. The first volume of these studies, and perhaps the best known of all his writings, was published in the autumn days of 1880.[1] It was entitled "Club Essays," and was dedicated to the Chicago Literary Club — organized in 1874, with Robert Collyer as president and Swing as one of the vice presidents. All of his essays, except two, were read before this club which, in intellect and scholarship, rivalled any club in America. The essay on "Cordelia and Antigone," and that on "Romeo and Juliet," were read to the Chicago Shakespeare Club. Two volumes of his essays were published after his death, edited by his friend Franklin H. Head, under the felicitous title of "Old Pictures of Life."

The "Club Essays" live and are read to this day, having passed through many editions. They revealed Swing as one of the brightest essayists of his day, a scholar with the subtle wisdom of a humorist and the insight of a social philosopher. His style was plain, perfect English, without ruffles or frills. He was a man first and a writer afterwards, and the man kept the writer in the background. He wrote as one who loved to tell what was interesting and familiar to himself, rather than one following a profession or practicing an art; wrote in a leisurely, loitering fashion, as one descended from the race whose triumph was in architecture and its myriad windings rather than in

[1] It was in the same year, 1880, that Mr. Francis Browne founded *The Dial*. He had been associated with Prof. Swing on *The Alliance*, and Prof. Swing lent his hand to *The Dial*, contributing, besides frequent book reviews, an occasional essay, notably the essay on "Dante." *The Dial* still lives, and as a journal of literary criticism, discussion and information has none to surpass it.

sculpture and its oneness of impression. In every page one felt the pervasive charm of a clear, sane, wholesome feeling flowing from the springs of life in a pure and sound nature. "Augustine and His Mother" opened the volume, which closed with a brilliant sketch of the Renaissance, in which we are shown, framed in beauty, culture and sorrow, the delicate but striking figure of Olympia Morata. "Parlez Vous Francais?" was a satire on the linguistic mania which would end, he said, in our having many dialects and few ideas, whereas it is better to have many ideas and one rich-toned language. "A Roman Home" was "a letter to his friend Ximines, from Tiro, a slave of Cicero," describing the family life and habits of the great orator. Here we see the orator at home, and the essayist also, for Swing's knowledge of that old, far-off Roman home was intimate and complete. One of the best essays in the volume, after the sketch of "Pliny the Younger," was the "History of Love," pointing out the fact, noted later by Vernon Lee and others, that since the days of the Greeks and even the Troubadours, there has been a spiritualization of the physical passion of love; that Dante, in his "Vita Nuova," gave love a soul, and that it has had a soul ever since, with those who have a soul for anything else. One can easily imagine the delight which these essays gave to the Chicago Literary Club.

It has always been a regret of his friends that Swing did not write a story dealing with life in ancient Greece and Rome. He knew those epic scenes and epochal minds, and it was believed that he could have made them live again. This, however, is open to doubt. There is in English one great novel of life in what are called classic times — Cardinal Wiseman's "Fabiola"

— and perhaps Swing could not have written such a book. Attempts in this line have been many, but as reproductions of Greek or Roman life they are largely pseudo, despite some evidences of painstaking archæology. The names and places are, indeed, ancient, but the life portrayed is that of this later day in masquerade. Had Swing undertaken such a task he would have been true to life in the fair, lost days of song and story, but he was essentially an essayist, not a storyteller. He had many of the gifts of a popular author, but of ambition in that field he had none. As of fiction — with which he dallied more than once, but never attempted seriously — so of poetry. His poetical gifts were real within a range which did not mark great height or width, but even in the exercise of his modest muse he was rarely serious. The following lines were written in memory of his dear friend, James A. Garfield, and were sung by the Apollo Club at the memorial service in Chicago, September, 1881. They speak for themselves:

"Now all ye flowers make room,
Hither we come in gloom
To make a mighty tomb,
  Sighing and weeping.
Grand was the life he led,
Wise was each word he said,
But with the mighty dead
  We leave him sleeping.

Soft may his body rest,
As on his mother's breast,
Whose love stands all confessed,
  'Mid blinding tears.
But may his soul so white,
Rise in triumphant flight,
And in God's land of light
  Spend endless years."

It was a custom of his ministry, as we have seen in the cases of Sumner and Mill, to take note of great men as one by one they passed off the mortal stage. Of Longfellow he spoke under the title "Great Associations," using for a text the words of the disciples on the way to Emmaus: "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us?" He classed Longfellow with Tennyson, not as of equal genius, but as a great outside preacher of faith, of morals, of beauty, who "sought to change the theological deserts into gardens." In a mid-week lecture, and also in an editorial, he frankly confessed: "Emerson, I do not understand. He is an American Sphinx. Not only was his poetry full of things hard to understand, but upon his prose something of the same shadow fell. When about forty years old he was seen to be powerful in simple narrative; but sitting down to place on record his own creations, he preferred twilight to noonday, and cast his forms in shadows." This utterance so astonished Beecher that he devoted one of his *Christian Union* editorials to it. Swing, he said, had been away so much and so long visiting the old classic times and places that he had failed to recognize the two great poets of the future — Emerson and Browning. Unless we accept some such explanation as this, Swing himself was the enigma.

"Welcome, Oscar Wilde!" was the title of an *Alliance* editorial in January, 1882. The Englishman who had reduced dandyism to a fine art was coming to Chicago, heralded as an apostle of beauty. "If he is a high priest of decency," Swing said, "he must come West and be a second Marquette of the lake region. He ought to stay a month in Chicago. On State street alone, at the fish market, one odorous salmon kept two

months on ice will surpass all the lily-essence he can soak up in a square yard of his handkerchief." Such a missionary movement should have popular songs, he urged. All aids would be needed by any man who preached beauty on the classic banks of Chicago river. All of which meant that he did not take Wilde seriously. He hailed with joy every ray of white light falling from afar into our dark human world, but the doctrine of salvation by decoration he was unable to accept. Beauty, he argued, is a helper of the higher life, but it is not an Atlas to carry a big dirty world on its back. Wilde came, with his knee breeches, his big sunflower, his old-gold hair brushing his shoulders, and other carefully prepared eccentricities. He came, he saw, but he did not conquer. Begging pardon for his first editorial as "a hasty piece of boldness, which would best be recalled," Swing wrote another entitled "Oscar Wilde, the Small," which was one of the severest things he ever wrote. He said: "Wilde is a perfect specimen of man the little. A woman with a blonde wig kissing a poodle comes near expressing the unmanliness of this peacockism. He is her masculine rival to declare such æsthetics to be 'the secret of life.' He adds to the definition of a philosopher the application of a clown. He is to John Ruskin what a shoe-buckle is to a statue by Canova, or a crimson cravat to a landscape in soft colors. He is a peddler of childish jimcracks, and his domain is not the world but the show-case in some notion store."

In the summer of 1881 Professor Swing wrote to a friend: "Can I ever resume my work again? I should love to quit and rest. I have worked hard and seen nothing of our blessed planet. I should love to see Italy and Palestine. Before such dreams, my coming

labors in the city seem more heavy than of yore." The secret of this letter was that he had planned a trip to Europe and the Holy Land for the following summer, and he was impatient for the time to come. At last the slow months passed, and the tired preacher and a party of friends — including his daughter, Miss Helen, Thomas Chard and wife, and Thomas Hoyne — were off for the old country. They sailed on the steamer "Servia" in the last days of July, bound for Liverpool. All the way over the sea was like a mirror. No winds vexed it by day, and each night brought a sky full of stars and a sea bright with phosphorescent light. Of his journeyings Swing wrote letters to *The Weekly Magazine* [1] — *The Alliance* having in the meantime passed into the hands of religious radicals, led by the brilliant, erratic Geo. C. Miln, who had left the pulpit of Unity Church for the stage. Some letters of travel take you with them; others come back and tell you what they saw. Swing's were of the latter kind, and are interesting only as records of his impressions of his first and only trip abroad.

They landed at Liverpool and went to London the same day. There the party was broken up, and the Swings went to Paris — a "city built by many crowned heads acting with one vanity and one culture also, a realization of all the visions of the Arabian nights." But for Swing the shadow of history lay dark over the scene, and the shadow of illness also. He fell sick

[1] *The Weekly Magazine*, edited by Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Starrett, was one of the most brilliant periodicals ever published in Chicago. Prof. Swing was one of its valued contributors, furnishing a sermon each week — which more often appeared in the form of an essay — and also a little essay on current happenings for the first page. These little essays, rich in gentle wit and playful wisdom, deserve a better fate than to lie in the dusty files of a magazine. One of them, on "The Peculiarities of Man," was rescued and included in the posthumous volumes of his essays edited by Mr. Head. *The Weekly Magazine* ran for three years and died of too much excellence.

in Paris and had to abandon his dream of seeing Rome, Athens, and the land where Jesus walked. In the last days of August he returned to London, taking with him a fine contempt for French railway cars. London he found endlessly interesting, its historic spots, its literary shrines, and even its streets, veiled in whitey-brown fog, where all vehicles turned to the left, like the pilgrims in Dante's Inferno. He could not tell which was the more fascinating, the London of History or the London of Fiction; the London of Whittington and his cat, and Goody Two-Shoes, and the jolly Canterbury shades, of Marlowe and Chatterton, of Dick Steele and poor Goldsmith, or the London of the Tower and the Abbey. But after visiting the Abbey he decided in favor of the London of Fiction. It was a warm day and the marbles were so covered with dust and smut that the glamor with which he had invested the old shrine melted away. "Dust unto dust" it was in very truth. It was a church, he said, ruined to make a grave-yard, and a grave-yard spoiled to keep up a church, with the result that it was neither a temple nor a cemetery, but a chaos of art. After this, one feels that it was a kind fate which kept him from going to the east, where —

> "The glory that was Greece
> And the grandeur that was Rome,"

are of a ghostly and reminiscential sort.

He visited the tomb of Gray at Stoke Pogis, also Warwick Castle and Kenilworth. Thence he went to Stratford on the Avon and saw in one day "a little hut and a mighty grave, which only a lifetime can estimate aright." Of all cities he held Edinburgh to be the most beautiful. It was a scene to stir one who had a soul for beauty, that melting beauty which dims the eyes

and fills the heart, a magical combination of hill, wood, lawn and ocean, with a picturesque city bathed in autumnal sunlight. Added to this was the charm of legend, romance and religion — the pulpit of Knox, the house of Queen Mary, the church of Chalmers, the memorial of Walter Scott, with the pinnacles of Holyrood Palace in the background. October found Swing back in Chicago, and, in spite of his illness, he had enjoyed his trip. But the greatest thing that he saw, greater than London or Paris, than castles and temples, was — "the sea, lying wide and grand as a measuring line for the soul!" Ever and again we hear echoes of the sea in his words, as witness that wonderful sermon suggested by the text: "There is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be still." Witness also his pathetic picture of his friends, the Staffords, lost in the English Channel — "Clasped in each other's arms, they sank, not into the sea, but beyond it."

Matthew Arnold visited Chicago in October, 1883, and like so many visitors worshiped in Music Hall. The sermon, which he greatly enjoyed, was entitled "A Temporary Creed," and was a plea for a working faith in an age of criticism and doubt. That afternoon Arnold was Swing's guest, and they went for a drive to see the city. In the evening Swing gave a dinner in honor of his guest, inviting some friends to meet "the big gun," to use his phrase. By way of twitting Arnold for his English castism, he introduced Franklin McVeagh as a grocer, Potter Palmer as a tavern-keeper, and N. K. Fairbanks as a soap-maker, much to the amusement of all. He then explained that McVeagh was a graduate of Yale, a life-long student, and that his grocery had no more to do with his intellectual life than Gladstone's ax had to do with his statesmanship

— a lesson for Arnold in the virtues of democracy. The prank put every one at his ease, as it was meant to do, and smoothed the way for a delightful evening. But when the story began its journey in the picturesque world of journalism it took other forms, and in radical papers Swing was held up to scorn as a "cultured noodle, a toady," and the like — a lesson for Arnold in the vices of democracy. So easily, so quickly, does a joke lose its savor and become fit for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of men.

The last volume of Swing's writings published during his lifetime appeared in the autumn of the same year, wearing the prosaic title of "Sermons." They were without homiletical form, but not therefore void of grace and power, and the spirit which brooded over them was none other than that spirit of "sweetness and light" and reason which was in him from the beginning. By this time he had lost much of his former patience with Ingersoll, who had turned all his batteries upon the follies of eccentric and sensational pulpiteers; as if one should organize the heavy artillery to bombard a choir of mosquitoes — "He passes from city to city and from town to town, not with Gough's eloquence against intemperance, not with the old eloquence of Everett upon the character of Washington, not with the silvery speech of Wendell Phillips upon the arts or the heroism of L'Ouverture, not with the useful lessons of Greeley upon the economies of life, but with interminable complaints against all the tenets and teachers of religion. He moves along only one path, that one marked out by Thersites of the Greek army, and is less kind than Thomas Paine and less broad and less learned than Voltaire. He has none of the outreachings of mind and sentiment which

helped to ornament Bolingbroke and Hume and Gibbon. He masses all his forces into one purpose, that of being an enemy of the common preacher."

Agnosticism,[1] he pointed out in a sermon on "Reason and Imagination," is, for all its boastings, as much a bondage as dogmatism. It is a Shylock invading the sanctuary, exacting the last penny of truth. Lacking both reason and imagination, it mistakes faith for knowledge. If you suggest to it that faith is not sight, it smiles a sickly smile of victory and demands the exact proof. It asks us to exchange the infinite for the finite, a sublime poetry for a few facts, and a great summer-time of the soul for a long, cold night. It rushes into the theater of man and puts out the lights in the first act, because of inadequate proof that the piece is going to be a success. In short, it is destitute of that buoyancy of soul, that spirit of adventure, which has made humanity what it is, and which will shape the future. By common consent all are now dwellers in a new era, in a new world, but no one should live shelterless or exposed. Let each one construct "A Temporary Creed," as pioneers in a new country build shanties. Some few great truths may be found with which to begin to rear at least a tent, if nothing more. The new land of critics is an improvement on the old country of fagots and racks, and the wild skeptics are kinder than the intolerant Calvin.

[1] Early and easily Prof. Swing learned the lesson of Christian Agnosticism — the lesson, that is, not of negation, but of humility, of pause before ultimate mystery. As a new marking of the familiar limits of human thought — known to the Greeks in their proverb, "Think as a mortal," — he saw that it was a wise and salutary modesty. So far he was willing to join in the general blush at thought of what the older theologians knew. But for that agnosticism which said that man is finite in all things except his ignorance of God, and in that infinite, he had only a smile. Modesty, he said, is one thing, but spiritual idiocy is another and a different thing.

It may be that we must dwell in tents all our days, like the chosen people of old. Let it so be. Pitch a white tent of faith on hilltop or by a placid stream. By the door raise a flag of hope, its emblem a cross and a crown, and sing the songs of Zion. The earthly tent of encampment will be supplanted by something better in the future, or else by a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.

In this volume the preacher appeared as an apostle of Beauty, and his doctrine of Beauty was deeper than that of Wilde and more practical than that of Ruskin. No one, he said, can define beauty or give any reason for it. It is, as Shelley said, its own excuse for being. It is one of the forms of God's spirit, a friend of religion and a companion of Christ. It is more than mere decoration, more than the frosting on the cake, more than the veneer upon the wood, more than Horace's purple patch upon an humble garment. It is ripeness, soundness, maturity, perfection. Knowledge carried up into beauty is wisdom, culture and refinement; life in full bloom is the beauty of holiness. Religion must be beautiful, and the beauty must be incarnate in the soul as red is in the rose, its native color and form. So also of society, it should be a kingdom of moral taste. The ruin of Greece came not from the bad influence of beauty, but from the absence of all else. A poem is as useful as a plow, for if man have no love of beauty he needs no clothes but a shroud, no home but a hut. Beauty is utility in full bloom. In such sermons as Moral Esthetics, An Inwrought Life, A Symmetrical Life, and The Beautiful is the Useful, this doctrine was elaborated and illustrated. An English reviewer said of the book: "Other sermons are logical or in-

structive or inspiring, but Swing's always add the element of beauty that turns language into literature." A Divine Philosophy, Eighteen Missing Years, The Coming Aristocracy, and Faithful Unto Death, were sermons wherein truth had wedded beauty.

Beecher had become a convert to the theory of evolution, and was stating his new faith in a series of memorable sermons. And such sermons! Some one said truly, it was like bringing a laboratory into a Gothic cathedral. The sermons were luminous with flashes of insight and radiant with multi-colored beauty, but, as Swing read them, they were inexact in fact and bizarre in effect. He did not share the alarm felt by many, but he did feel that Beecher was premature and much too facile in his readjustment of faith. Night, which increases the vagueness of objects and the natural timidity of the mind, can turn a sheep, a white cow, or a belated tippler or traveler, into a visitor from another world. To older minds there come ghosts of a different species but of equal frightfulness; for example, the Darwinian ghost. At last, to one going up close to this ghost, and even touching it, it proves to be only a common object made mysterious by an intellectual night and the natural timidity of the human soul. So far as it had any reality in it, it was only Aristotle's "perfecting principle in Nature" walking in its sleep.

In a series of sermons, only one of which appeared in the volume here noticed, he gave his reasons for not accepting the Darwinian theory. He was much calmer than Beecher in his discussion, and much better informed as to the findings of science. In "The Moral Element in Creation" the ground was taken that the forces of nature could not prefer a survival of the fit-

test, for they possess no moral taste, and "the potency of life" could not make a man love the perfume of a rose or a red sunset. The question was not one of power, but of *guided power*. A gulf exists between the highest animal and the lowest man which no chain of "missing links" can span. They cannot come to us, nor can we go to them, though we may fall, seemingly, below them. The cave-men are no nearer the ape than we are. His "Objections to Evolution" were many, but the crux of it all was that the theory had not been, and in the nature of things could not be, proven. So no one need fling away faith and wander, like Romanes, in "the lonely mystery of existence." What "soul of loneliness" the universe ever had, it possesses yet. Life always was a mysterious flower with hidden roots and with colors and perfumes from unseen urns, but what it was in the years far gone it is in the years that are still unfolding.

Orthodox critics found the book unsatisfactory. One of them dismissed it on this wise: "Swing preaches like a man whose heart is in the heavens, but who has no other hope of getting us there than his own strong love. He may have a kind of faith, but it is without form and void." It fared even worse at the hands of the radicals, who mistook freedom of faith for freedom from faith. Said the *Radical Review*:

> "Once again comes David Swing with his blessed saints, Plato, Zeno and Marcus Aurelius. They are the trinity of Music Hall. Without them his preaching is vain, and his faith is vain also. A man who says what he does could say more if he were not afraid. Lacking the courage of his lack of convictions, he is only a purveyor of sentimental platitudes and rose-water ethics. As sacred compositions his sermons stand quite apart from the current homilies of the pulpit. They are the work of a scholar, a student of humanity as well as of books; they are refined, and his culture gives them an

elevating tone. The book shows his usual 'aimlessness,' and the theology of it flutters about like a weather vane on a steeple. But, for all that, its general direction is towards rationalism, albeit clothed in the fine literary style with which he chloroforms the innocents of Music Hall. But Music Hall is a recruiting station for Weber Hall, which, in turn, is the last station before we reach the bright and shining tents of the Liberal League. Men tire of a diet that is neither fish, flesh now fowl."

The way of a moderate, like the way of a transgressor, is hard. He must endure from both sides the cross-fire of extremists whose labels he cannot wear and whose parties he cannot join. Swing kept to his middle path with patient wisdom, not only in theology but in the social debates which engaged his attention with increading frequency as the years passed. To these problems he brought the same clear-eyed, unbiased right-reason, baptized in a humane spirit, which had guided him through the mazes of theology. A tendency to dally with Socialism, perhaps as a diversion from Scepticism, was visible in clerical quarters. He held, and rightly so, that it was no time for dallying, least of all for denunciation, and that the future of the nation would be gravely imperilled if great issues were left to be fought over between a wild passion for change and a stupid opposition to change. Without dreams, even without extreme opinions, he knew the world would hardly wag, and socialism, as he saw it, was an extreme opinion, if not altogether a dream. Under the Owens at New Harmony Socialism was an inspiration purely good in its object; but it had gotten into bad company, had become identified with a malignant class hate, and with much else that would fill Sir Thomas More and the founders of New Harmony with horror. It had joined forces with the foes of faith in a vandalism that would pull down the altars of man's

prayer and hope. Of this unsocial Socialism he said, in a sermon on "The Church the People's Friend:"

"Science first came to cover the sky of faith with a deep cloud. Doubts about the truths of religious philosophy came as though to prepare the millions to listen to some new story of life and death. Upon hearts smitten of doubt the communists and socialists and all the malcontents of whatever name poured words of ill-will toward the church and the clergy, and have thus induced the belief in many minds that the church is a group of aristocrats who hate the multitude, and that the clergy are mere sycophants bending around men of influence and wealth. There is in the books and speeches of these leaders and followers a whole literature of complaint and irony against all that wears the name of God. . . . It is a common accusation made by the socialists that the houses of worship are built along fashionable streets, and that the church bells are to call only the rich to prayer. They fail to see that when Christianity, with its philosophy of God and of the divine origin of man, lays the foundation of a city, that city reveals all the taste of an art, for there is an everlasting affiliation between religion and beauty. If out of its high ideals of purity, industry and economy in part there comes the wide village street, with its white cottages and long lanes of maples and elms, the spires of God's house should rise up and its bells ring in the midst of its own work of enchantment. . . . It may be said that Christianity fails: so does Socialism. It failed under Plato. It so failed in the first Christian century that it did not breathe for a thousand years. It failed again under Owen, than whom it could not have had a better chief. Christianity is costly? So is Socialism. Owen spent three hundred thousand dollars on one little spot, and his only return was a half-broken heart. . . . The faults of the church are the faults of humanity. Socialism will meet and be marred by the same faults. . . . But Christ has not failed. . . . The indolent must work, the drunkard must become temperate, the wasteful economical, the ignorant educated, the wicked righteous — that is the Bible plan for a new heaven and a new earth."

Of course Socialism has made some advance toward a more spiritual philosophy since those days, but Swing seems never to have had any sympathy with it.

He was an individualist of the old school, along with Beecher, and the dreamy Utopia of Socialism seemed vague and unreal — "a kind of mirage which leaves certain rude facts about human nature in the dust below, as being too ugly to be lifted up in the white arms of the radiant light." He had, however, a vivid social sense, and knew that "to provide for the excellence of a privileged class at the expense of the rest of the community, is increasingly impossible in fact and intolerable in idea." Not private property but special privilege, he said, is the menace of the republic. In politics he was a Republican, firm in adherence to the old, untarnished, inspiring ideals of his party, though never at any time a bigoted partisan. It was still to him the party of Lincoln, of Sumner, of Grant, the party of ideals, not of interests — nor was he oblivious to the fact that its humanitarian idealism had suffered somewhat in an era of material growth. In an *Alliance* editorial in 1880 he gave his views of the policy of high tariff, which he held had long outlived its usefulness. He was tolerant of tradition, patient of progress, and hopeful of outlook, but the conservative without courage and the reformer without conscience evoked his satire.

In November, 1883, Professor Swing spent a week in Boston. New England scenery was in rich autumn dress, a symbol of multicolored, magnificent death. He took time to call on James Freeman Clarke and to hear Phillips Brooks preach. Of Brooks he wrote: "He read his text, and then, raising his chin to about the degree of a canary bird in its best song, he let loose the words of a rapid sermon, and the audience began the task of catching what coin they could from the most generous flinger. The sermon was all one sen-

tence, but we caught enough to pay for going to Trinity Church." The following winter Brooks was a worshiper in Music Hall, and it would be interesting to have his opinion of the deliberate preacher. The same year came Beecher, the old man eloquent and the old man radical. He was Swing's guest, and their talk journeyed over all the world and the rest of mankind. Beecher was of opinion that any one who believed in a hell of fire ought to go there, and many indeed were on their way, since all were chasing the pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow. He inclined to the theory of conditional immortality, on the ground that so many have failed so entirely and have made such poor use of life that there is no reason why the experiment should be continued. Swing's optimism, indeed, held out better than Beecher's; but then he was a younger man and escaped the temptation to despair of the world which comes with too great weight of years. But Beecher's faith in Christ was not dimmed, but more intense and brightly burning. In that light he was walking down to death, like a traveler toward the sunset, with radiant face.

The twentieth anniversary of Professor Swing's ministry in Chicago was celebrated in February, 1886. His sermon that day was "A Talk Over the Past Twenty Years," sketching the progress of the city and its changes, the changes in its church life, its pulpits and its spirit. The following evening, Washington's birthday, his friends gave him a banquet at the Palmer House. It was a brilliant evening of music, flowers, poetry and oratory. Three hundred and eighty guests sat down with him, folk of all pursuits and almost every tint of creed. Dr. John Henry Barrows, in a

graceful address, brought greetings to Professor Swing from his Presbyterian friends, in these words: "Let me close these remarks, Professor Swing, with an expression of the kindly feelings of that group of your friends which I represent. Our differences have not estranged us, and you will allow me to give you this benediction: 'May the light of the True, the Fair and the Good ever shine along your brightening pathway, until, returning late into Heaven, you shall see the King in His beauty!' " In response Professor Swing said, telling the story of a London gentleman to whom a banquet had been given:

"It does not seem possible that all this disturbance of the peace is made over me. I cannot accept all these kind words and kind deeds. I must now tear the bouquet to pieces, and fling a rose to each of you, that we may be like the Greeks, who, when they gave a banquet, made each one wear a chaplet of leaves, men and women alike. To respond to the sentiments offered this evening is impossible. . . . Mr. Froude passed through this city a year ago, and, having spent an hour in a carriage or a railway station, repeated the customary conclusion of a certain kind of Englishman, that Chicago was remarkable for its pig-killing. We wish there could be some manner by which the information could be conveyed to such foreigners that the grains and meats shipped by Chicago have no more to do with her moral and intellectual standing than the beer manufactured in London has to do with her students and writers, the members of her parliament, her pulpit, and of Temple Bar. . . . The traveling Froudes who can find something at home besides beer, ought to be able to find something in Chicago besides bacon. Our city, like all great cities, contains two lives; its business life and its intellectual life, and Chicago will soon be as great in the latter as she is in the former. . . . I thank you deeply for the honor of this banquet. To me this assemblage is one of peculiar worth, because, being outside of the denominations, I am much like Selkirk on his island, and have much needed this fraternal greeting from brethren in the pulpit and from members of other and all pursuits. I shall more than ever feel the presence of that brotherhood which has this night been made vis-

ible. Happy city to live in where its friendships can, by a banquet, convert twenty almost lost years into a delightful memory."

Among the regrets sent by those unable to attend was the following letter, which so struck the keynote not only of the twenty years then recalled but of the whole ministry of David Swing, that it may fittingly close this chapter of his life-story:

"Fifth Avenue Hotel, New York City, Feb. 15, 1886.

"Dear Friend: Let me intrude upon your festival to wish you joy, but chiefly to wish all the religious world joy that you have lived so long to make your influence felt from one end of the land to the other — an influence which has kept frank minds within the faith through its breadth and health, which has comforted the doubting through a liberal interpretation, and has resisted above all the spread of infidelity, by the clear exposition of a faith that knows no narrowness, no bigotry. In the name of all the arts which you have so lovingly cherished and sustained, I wish you long life and health and many imitators. Your faithful friend,

"Lawrence Barrett."

CHAPTER VIII

The Lake Shore Homes

As has been said, Professor Swing lived on Cass avenue when he first came to Chicago, not far from the little wooden Westminster church. Later he built a home on Superior street, and when his oldest daughter, Mary, became Mrs. Jewett E. Ricker — October 22, 1874 — still another house was built nearby. Many of the tenderest memories of his personal and family life cluster about that old Superior street home, and we may pause to look back at those years. Swing had many friends, but only a few intimates who really knew him and with whom he could talk or remain silent. Among these were three men — the late Abram Pence, Franklin H. Head, and Thomas Chard — who were closer to him, perhaps, than any others outside of his own family circle. Of his private life Mr. Chard writes:

"Prof. Swing, in private life, was controlled by a delicate sense of duty and by strong affections. As a son he was tenderly devoted, thoughtful of everything that could soothe the declining years of an aged mother, provident of blessings, and tireless in deeds of kindness. Regularly every year he visited his mother, who lived to the great age of ninety. His reverence for the memory of his wife remained a ruling emotion. 'Nothing,' he once said, 'but the meeting in immortality can end the long pensive remembrance.' . . . He shunned conspicuous positions, but it pleased his gentle spirit to have a few friends who could sit by his hearth in the name of a natural affection, and who loved him well enough to let

him alone. Perhaps an incident will illustrate. We crossed the Atlantic together and one calm evening sat side by side on the deck of the steamer until a late hour, neither saying a word. At last, in a tone that always drawled a little when he was comfortable, he said: 'Chard, this is what I call real friendship. We don't have to keep up a conversation; we understand each other perfectly without it.' I am far from meaning that he was a silent or moody man. He could talk charmingly when the spirit moved him, and after an evening spent with him one could say, with Dr. Johnson: 'We had most excellent discourse.' . . . His home life was quiet and beautiful. In the evening there was generally a little group of friends around the piano in that Superior street home. Songs of the old fashion were sung, for the 'Professor,' as his friends loved to call him, dearly loved music. One evening at prayer meeting, about the time of that wretched heresy trial, the professor seemed to be depressed in spirit, and read that Psalm, 'By the rivers of Babylon,' and there was a note of sadness in his comment on the cry of the old captives, 'How shall we sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land?' When his remarks were finished I quoted aloud the lines:

> 'They who seek a Throne of Grace,
> Find that Throne in *every* place.'

It was his favorite hymn, and the look that he gave me was reward enough. . . . Prof. Swing wrote his sermons easily, though they were not composed hastily. When some great book or marked event stirred strongly the current of public thought, a thousand orators and writers would declare instantly their hastily formed opinions. Then last of all, Swing, in some memorable discourse, would sound the depths and shoals of the subject and say the best and final word. It was this judicial deliberateness that made his conclusions so weighty. . . . I said that he wrote easily. I remember once being with him while he was finishing a sermon in his study. He whistled while he wrote, one foot doubled up under him, Indian fashion, to 'distribute the pain,' he said, for he was never well. Once in a while he would turn to me to get my theory as to the spelling of some word.''

Any shape of self-display was to Professor Swing an abhorrence, so much so that he concealed much that his friends, especially young ministers, would like to

know. He deemed it a form of vanity to exhibit his methods of sermon preparation, or his habits of study. He even twitted Beecher for "turning himself wrong side out and showing how a son of Boanerges fashions his thunderbolts," referring to the "Yale Lectures on Preaching." Still, we have a legitimate curiosity to know how he did his work, and by what method. A glimpse of Professor Swing in his study was given me by Mr. Abram Pence, who belongs now to the time that is gone and to the people who are no more. He wrote:

"In preparing his sermons Prof. Swing left nothing to chance — he so feared saying a foolish or an ill-considered thing. He had his time for writing and his sermon was always done by Friday night. He gathered his subjects from all quarters and would then look up an appropriate text, which he sometimes referred to after he started, but not always. He wrote upon subjects and not upon texts. He had a little book in which he jotted down the various subjects as they occurred to him, but he frequently would not preach upon them for months, but would let them grow in his mind, watering them and now and then adding some fresh soil, as his reading and reflection suggested. He never made up a sermon from the book which he might be reading. He thoroughly digested the subject before he wrote, and he could always look into that little book and put his finger upon that which was ripe for treatment. The stream of his thought flowed along unruffled by any 'firstly, secondly or finally,' the skeletons of his sermons being clothed with warm flesh and garments of beauty, cut and trimmed after the fashion of the essay. He wrote with the inevitable ease of one familiar with the best that had been thought and said in the world, and he always knew where to find what he wanted. . . . What he wished to say was clearly in his mind before he put pen to paper, so that he rarely interlined and never rewrote anything. He simply lived and spoke according to the sweet, Christ-like spirit that was in him.

'He spoke, and words more soft than rain
Brought the age of gold again.' "

Along in the mid-eighties Professor Swing built a spacious home at No. 66 Lake Shore Drive, near the Potter Palmer mansion. There he lived with his youngest daughter, Miss Helen — who, October 27, 1886, became Mrs. Mason B. Starring — until the end of his life. It was a home built around a library, that being the room of honor in the house — a great, light, long room full of books and beauty. The master of the house was fond of quaint and curious clocks, and at the striking of an hour all manner of sounds were heard from as many timepieces. This hobby greatly amused Joseph Parker, who was a guest in the Lake Shore home the evening after he delivered his famous lecture on "Clocks." A party who wished to see the preacher in his negligee, so to speak, found him sitting in his library looking out over the gray lake. Asked as to his health, he assured us that he was quite well and happy, though a little worn after the labors of the Sabbath.

"Some people cannot live near the lake," he said, reflectively, letting his eyes rest on the gray-white of the still scene before him. "When I left Southern Ohio for Chicago my physician said that I would be able to endure the climate for about six months; that I might visit Chicago, but could not live there. I always had a throat trouble of some kind or other. But the lake air is good for me. It is fresh air — which has come blowing over three hundred miles of clean water instead of some dirty town. Since I have lived on the Lake Shore Drive I have had no throat trouble at all. Nothing but liver complaint, and that," he added, his eyes twinkling, "is not local."

A nearer view showed that he was not in truth a homely man, though, as he once facetiously confessed,

no artist had ever asked him to sit as a model of beauty. In stature he was rather short and apparently solidly formed. The head was large, square and nobly shaped; the hair was gray and worn quite long; the nose not large and slightly Roman; the lips thick, and the chin unusually heavy. It was a face that one could study like a map for its apocalypse of character, and as thought and feeling played over it one forgot its irregular features. In repose it assumed a thoughtfulness, if not a pensiveness, "caught at that point when it stops short of sadness," and there were lines where smiles fell asleep when they were weary. His smile came slowly, but it illuminated the whole man. He had read books and loved them deeply, and he had opinions that were as firm as they should have been after years of quiet mental rumination. His talk was not bookish, but bright with flashes of fancy, wit and analysis, uniting the quaint and homely with the higher paths of culture. One of the party asked him to show us his library.

"Why, it is only a reference library," he said. "Just the books I have been obliged to have, for I have never been able to afford myself the luxury of buying books for the pure love of them. I recently added the Bohn collection, as you see, and as a result my pocketbook is so thin that I can almost read Greek through it."

When a man becomes famous his library is apt to lose character. So many presentation books are sent to him that his shelves cease to be a reflection of his own preferences and tastes. This had evidently happened, in a measure, to Professor Swing, but there were other books which told their own story of loving usage. Six old volumes of travel, dated 1703-4, were

among his treasures. They contained the diary of a slaver on his voyage from Liverpool to South Africa and back; accounts of how the slaves were found and captured; of how many of them jumped into the sea, choosing death rather than be torn from their homes; of how they were herded together in the ship, and were full of woe and lamentation. After a few days they would brighten up and begin to sing their strange, melancholy songs, and as the weird melody floated out over the sea the captain soliloquized of why the black man should not have the same rights as the white man. There were, also, some superb examples of Japanese chromolithography, showing the process — the first few wavy outlines, the fillings in, the rich, smooth color, and afterward the fretwork of ornamentation, until the twenty-second impression was reached and perfection attained. The library was marked by variety. Law, religion, art, science, music, poetry — none failed or was overlooked. Deeply pious books were seen alongside of the most radical sceptics. There were many lives and letters of the saints — Madame Guyon's "Autobiography," Eugenie De Guerin, Francis of Assisi, the letters of Fenelon and of Francis De Sales — which he valued for "their delicate perfume of piety." Histories abounded. Goethe, Richter and Schiller seemed to be his favorites among the Germans. Frenchmen were numerous, owing to their exquisite artistry of words, especially Chateaubriand, Victor Cousin and Guizot, but more especially the poets and dramatists, and Racine above all others for his long, silvery, soft violin tones. Homer, Plato, Livy, and the rest of the classic writers, looked gravely down upon us from a corner of their own, in a garb that told more of use

than of ornament. In that corner he paused and took down a volume of Pliny's letters:

"Does it ever seem to you," he said, whimsically, "that the same sun could not have shone on these old people so many ages ago? It does to me. I cannot, somehow, adjust myself to thinking that they lived in just the same world as we do, and that it could possibly have been the same appearing. It is only when I read of Pliny writing verses, and his wife setting them to music and singing them to him when he came home at night, that I can make myself understand that these people really existed and enjoyed themselves and suffered as we do."

"Do you not think, professor," asked one of the party, "that Homer is full of needless and tiresome repetitions? Jupiter is always cloud-compelling Jupiter; the dawn is always the rosy-fingered dawn."

"Yes," he said, "Homer wrote in the infancy of the nations, and today our children delight in repetitions. Take 'The House That Jack Built.' Do our children object to the eternal return of the rat that ate the malt, or the cow with the crumpled horn? To be sure, we might avoid this and say: This is the cat which ate the rat, to which allusion has been made, or, this is the dog that killed the cat, of which mention has occurred earlier in our narrative, or this is the maiden all forlorn, concerning whom our readers will recall her marriage by the priest all shaven and shorn. But will these modernizations dethrone from its honored and secure position the delightful old-time legend of 'The House That Jack Built?' "

"Suppose, professor," said another, asking a time-worn question, "that you were sentenced to life imprisonment, and were, by some relenting grace of your

judge, allowed to select, say, half a dozen volumes to amuse you for life, what books would you select?''

He drew his hand across his chin thoughtfully, but did not immediately answer, and the questioner went on:

''I suppose two out of the half dozen would be the Bible and Shakespeare in the choice of every one. And then, for my part, I should add Omar Khayyam, but after that so many books crowd one. It is not easy to make a list.''

The professor smiled slowly and said: ''If I were condemned to lead the life of a Selkirk for the remainder of my days and could have a half dozen books wherewith to solace myself, I think I should not choose either Shakespeare or the Bible. I should take instead some modern books — some histories, some good romances, Eber's novels, perhaps, something which was in touch with the beautiful world as I left it. And if I were going to purchase a barrel organ — an instrument I myself can play, since it works simply with a crank — I should choose three sets, the Largo, Schubert's Serenade, and Beethoven's Sonatas, and then I should not care about any more or any other. These are my three musical fads. I can listen to this music over and over, and never tire. And the rest — why, the rest does not matter.

''Talking of favorite books,'' he continued, reaching up for a thin, green-bound volume on a high shelf, ''I think you said you'd choose Omar Khayyam. Does he not have a depressing influence upon you? No? Well, I thought it inevitable. His 'Rubaiyat' is a blend of stoicism and epicureanism, transformed by the magic of the East into something rich and strange. The 'Kasidah' of Burton is hard, bitter, grinding on

heart and mind, but it is an agnosticism that, at least, does not drug itself with wine and roses and the scent and sheen of the flesh, as Omar's does. Do you think Fitzgerald caught the exact Persian flavor? You do, eh? Well, so do I. Oh, this wonderfully bold verse." He adjusted his glasses and read in his peculiar vibrant tones —

> "Open then the door!
> You know how little while we have to stay,
> And, once departed, may return no more."

"May return no more," he repeated, dreamily, and then opening upon the last quatrain, he recited rather than read:

> "And when Thyself with shining Foot shall pass
> Among the Guests, Star-scattered on the Grass,
> And in thy joyous Errand reach the Spot
> Where I made one — turn down an Empty Glass."

"Ah," he mused, with a strange tenderness in his voice, as he looked unseeingly through the long, lovely room where was spread the feast he so greatly enjoyed — "Turn down an empty glass." And then a merry party burst into the room, radiant and in high spirits, and ready for the usual Monday game of whist. I may add, on the authority of Mr. Abram Pence, that Professor Swing was a poor player at whist, for that he was such a good story-teller.

Swing enjoyed a certain reputation, albeit a slender one, as a man of letters. But he was too good-natured to be a critic, too fond of what Swinburne calls "the noble pleasure of praising," and he sometimes scattered his praises of men and books in a way to make the judicious grieve; as when he said that Cowper's "Task" was a greater work than Goethe's "Faust;" as when he preferred Alcott to Emerson, and said that it would be just as well to forget Carlyle.

He was, perhaps, more of a book-taster than a critic, and his judgments of writers, while exceedingly interesting, have little value except as sidelights upon his own mental processes. If in theology he was a heretic, in regard to literary standards and forms he was somewhat rigidly orthodox, and a little afraid, it seemed, of all who ventured upon "skittles and beer." Hence his dislike of the early Swinburne with his carnal mysticism and bowings at the portal of that shrine where sin is a prayer, and that sort of thing. He loved beauty, but saw it always in what Hume called "the dry light." His divinity in art was calmly chaste, Diana not Venus, Tennyson's not Byron's. A Greek he was indeed, but a partisan of Apollo and a foe of Dionysus. His face was set against the morbidity of the decadents, as we have seen in the case of Wilde, despite their undeniable putrescent, phosphorescent brilliancy. Zola formed his nadir of comparison — a standard dweller in the bottomless pit — and Whitman, for other reasons than form, was also an aversion. The uncanny, equally with the fleshly, he abjured, as tending to blur our clear vision of life as it is. Even Poe, for all his incantations with words, was not to his taste, being a denizen of that misty mid-region where imps, hags and ghosts have their hidings. Poe was hypnotized by the horrific, and his lines had in them a savor as of grave damp. So also Hawthorne, whose "Marble Faun," although "written in a matchless style and with an accompaniment of all the fine arts, has for its central figure a monster." Life is the material for the artist, and, like Sophocles of old, he must see it steadily and see it whole. If there are to be dark scenes, Swing said, let them be taken from the shadowy side of real life, such pictures as Tolstoy — whom he,

after Howells, was one of the first to hail — had drawn; pictures, that is, from the human inferno. To live a book must have life in it, human life. Homer lives, he argued, not for his gods, but for his pictures of old life. But the artist must select, and, since a rose is as much a part of life as a toad, and far more lovely, he thought it better to paint the rose.

His views of fiction, as set forth in his famous lecture on "The Novel," are most interesting and worthy of note. He had been much in request as a lecturer all along — or, to be exact, from 1873 on — until his health would no longer permit such exhausting labors. His earliest lecture was on "Michael Angelo," and its successor was "The Useful and the Beautiful," the central thought of which has been given in the sketches of his sermons on the utility and moral influence of beauty. "Overdoing" was a humorous survey of the human propensity to excess, and is preserved in the form of an essay in one of the posthumous volumes edited by Mr. Franklin Head. But as it there appears it has more satire than humor, whereas in its original form its warp was satire indeed, but its woof was humor. No excess escaped his notice, not even the too great surplus of preaching, the preacher being so overworked that if he is lucky enough to find two ideas during the week, we must use one for the morning and save the other for the evening service; and if only one, he must split it in two. "The Novel," however, was the best and by far the most popular of his lectures, and was, I believe, the only one of his addresses which he gave without manuscript or notes. The manuscript was given to a friend, so that only a fragment of the lecture remains.

The novel, he said, is that part of literature which is decorated, for the most part, by the beauty of woman. It is woman in literature, and so appears in only those lands where woman is held in honor. The Hindoos have no novels. By this he did not mean that woman is the whole subject matter. She cannot be, but she is at once its inspiration and its decoration. Her beauty is the flag under which thoughts and sentiments assemble, much as men of arts and arms convened and conversed in the parlors of Madame Recamier. Thus Richter gathered his meditations on life, nature and education about the winsome form of Linda. And yet the more the novel gets away from woman, the greater it is; the more she is made the priestess of the religion without herself becoming the religion, the greater the book. Who should read novels? Everybody, when woman decorates the great truths of life; but when the novel is only a postponed funeral or wedding, nobody. And especially those should read the novel who the most don't want to — they the most need it. Preachers, in particular, and dry-as-dust theologians should read novels, lest they become like pools of water in August — stationary, scum-covered, or dry. But here, as always, his motto was "Nothing too much." To be too near any one thing — that is fanaticism, an eclipse of life by a tallow candle.

Of Professor Swing's reviews of fiction, that of "Robert Elsmere" is typical of all. Gladstone had created a furore by saying that this story was an attack upon Christianity. Not so, said Swing; the statesman is not a little at fault. The story does not mean that orthodox faith "cannot transform men or perform works of benevolence, but rather that a Unitari-

anism of the Elsmere type can accomplish the same task, and that a clergyman may part company with the miraculous in the church without parting company with a religious zeal as great as that of Madame Guyon and a philanthropy as noble as that of a Wilberforce." Grey and Elsmere are proofs that Christianity is not churchism or Calvinism, but a holy and humane sentiment. In short, that the church has no monopoly of either salvation or philanthropy, and that a man without positive orthodox faith may develop the sort of character we call saintly. The tempest in a teapot, he said, had obscured the high art of the book. He himself was unaffectedly delighted with the people in the book and with their story, and had no excessive concern for the theological snakes dug up in the plot. He thought the author most skillful in her handling of the relations of Elsmere and Madame De Netteville, and that no scene in recent fiction surpassed that episode.

When it came to poetry, Professor Swing was a stickler for forms. He held that the musical element could not be omitted without serious loss, and that for the highest effects the settled rhymical forms must be observed. He was a great admirer of Virgil, and said that his thorough training in mathematics gave him precision, and that in hexameter verse he did not place side by side lines of six feet and lines of four or seven or eight, and mistake them for rhymical equals. While admitting the greatness of Browning in many ways, he could not forgive his neglect of precision in the mathematics of verse. He said that with Browning a supposed equilateral triangle would have unequal sides, his circles were often oblong, and his square seemed an attempt to find an average between a semi-circle and a trapezoid. Strangely enough, almost every stanza of

poetry quoted in his sermons, and some of his paragraphs were mosaics of quotations, was from the minor poets. A little poem of his own, entitled "Too Late," is here appended, which, if read in the light of his hard lot in boyhood and the beauty which surrounded him in later life, has in it a touch of pathos which many another man has felt:

When long the feast had waited, long and sweet
The harp had sounded with its richest strain,
At last, but late, the richly sandaled feet
Of all the Pleasures came with royal train.

Nature and Love and Charity and Art
Came filing through the ivy-covered gate,
All gay with plumes and music, but the heart
Is sad and silent, for they came too late.

When life was flowing with its deep clear tide
Of youthful zeal and youthful powers, too,
Why came no hand to open portals wide
And send these troops of beauty marching through?

Nature and Love and Art will thus conceal
From youth and manhood half their pictured page,
To come at last and to the full reveal
Their realm of splendor to declining age.

We see earth's beauty and her greatness now
And by her sea of glory loving stand;
But marks of age are graven on our brow
And we are sinking toward the shadow-land.

Swing had always a charm for women. His dignity of manner impressed them, and his frank avowal of his need of sympathy retained their admiration. Miss Sophia Burt Kimball writes of his relations with women with a delicacy and insight which only a true woman possesses, and her interpretation of this aspect of his life is final:

"He encouraged Euripides' 'overflow of woman everywhere.' With gratitude for his need of woman, she mothered him. A prodigious letter writer, he surrendered an entire

confidence to his friends, and in this he was sometimes misunderstood. His letters to women were not a personal expression of individual feeling, but were written idealistic of the entire world of sweetness, purity and moral beauty, independent of marriage. All his letters, to whomsoever written, were love letters. He was a lover — a world's lover of God's children. We note in the retrospect that those who thought they knew him best, women, his devoted companions, often failed to comprehend him. . . . Would you meet David Swing? Enter the chamber of my mother, where death was disclosed among the flowers. He 'ran in' to chat 'by friend Charissa's couch,' to pass light words over her 'nightingale wrap,' and like trifles. That the pastor offered no prayer became a regret. 'Prof. Swing, this one led a life of prayer, — is no voice to be raised now?' 'I cannot,' he said. Then the daughter of the house cried, 'She shall never know how near heaven is. I will sing, until the harbor is gained with full sail set.' What a transformation in him. Music brought a glory over his rugged face, a radiance as though the soul would break its confines. Before the call came to the waiting one, he himself had been summoned."

Socially Professor Swing was amiable, humorous and delightfully witty when with his near friends, but when strangers were about he was dignified and said little. People often thought him distant, when he was only constrained by excess of modesty. As the years ran along, however, he lost some of this shyness, and became not only a favorite but an adept in extricating himself from any tangle whatsoever. After all, one does not know but that it was a greater accomplishment of his than that he knew many books in their native tongue, than that he was master of ancient lore, than that he could weave literary lacework, that he knew just the trick of talk to set a girl aglowing in her first party dress; that he was master of the graces that smooth the grind out of life; that he could weld the "little links that make up the chain of happiness." He cared little for the glitter and show of life. A

rather fashionable friend teased him one evening about the cut of his coat, which was indeed open to criticism. "Go to my tailor," said the gentleman; "he will set you up in good form." Swing looked at his friend and then at his own attire, and said: "No; I think I better not. There is an old German who has made my clothes for many years. I don't suppose they do have style, but if I should transfer my patronage from the old man it would hurt his feelings deeply, and I would not enjoy the new coat." After that the well-dressed friend had no more to say.

But it was in the circle of his intimates that one saw him at his best. How delightful he was in "the parole of literary men the world over," and how fertile and apt in classical quotation. He could find something in the old Greek sages to fit every possible phase of modern social or civic life, from a model for a civil service examination to a plea for woman suffrage. He never did a coarse thing, but he could unbend for a little nonsense, and in the warm, free atmosphere of friendship his fun sometimes took the form of a rollicking prankishness. A rustic poet sent him a poem entitled "The Weird," explaining that if the lines were read in a dim light and with a certain intonation "the weird" would appear. To see Swing turn down the lights and read that piece, waiting for "the weird" to come forth, were enough to make a wooden man laugh. Yet if that poor writer had come to Professor Swing with the poem he would never have had cause to feel sad. It need hardly be said that such a player of pranks was himself often the victim of pranks, as when Eugene Field — master of pranks — solemnly announced that Professor Swing had sung a duet with Madame Modjeska.

Once indeed Professor Swing was caught outright in a Eugene Field trap. Field wrote his poem entitled "The Wanderer," and, as was his way, credited it to some one else — this time to Madame Modjeska. In an editorial in the *Weekly Magazine* Swing took note of the lines, proving by internal evidence that Madame Modjeska wrote them. Thus: "The conversation and tone of her thoughts as expressed among her friends betrays a mind that at least loves the poetic. The child-like simplicity of this little song is so like Modjeska that no demand arises for any outside help in the matter." Having bagged such big game, Field proceeded to remark: "It will, perhaps, pain the Professor to learn that Madame Modjeska now denies ever having seen the verses until they appeared in print." It need hardly be said that this experience did not increase the Professor's confidence in the methods of the Higher Criticism. He was the victim of another prank on the occasion of Matthew Arnold's visit to Chicago in 1884. After Arnold left a newspaper man — Field was accused, but was not guilty — took some criticisms of Swing's sermons, which had appeared in the *Radical Review*, and wrought them into a bogus interview, which was attributed to Arnold. This interview Charles A. Dana, of the New York *Sun*, caused to be wired as a "Special cabal" from the *Pall Mall Journal* — there was no such paper — to the Chicago *Tribune*. The *Tribune* printed the article with some scathing remarks about the propriety of a guest criticising a host. At this juncture the jester sprung his trap, and Professor Swing and the *Tribune* were both on the inside.

Professor Swing was especially gracious and brotherly in his attitude toward young ministers, as

many can testify. The least in the world of an egotist, he was incapable of patronizing. The fumes of popularity and success never mounted to his brain, and if asked why throngs came to hear him he would explain that he had lived in Chicago many years and had enough personal friends to fill Music Hall. His cup of joy was full on finding a young man who promised well in the pulpit. All such he regarded with tender solicitude and affection. He gave them valuable suggestions in his frank, innocent way, and talked to them as if they were his equals or superiors. His own method he knew, like his ministry, was peculiar, and he discouraged young men from taking himself as a pattern. One such wrote to him complaining that he had tried the essay form of sermons, conjuring with the classics, everything, in fact, without bringing the desired result. Whereupon Swing wrote to him briefly in this fashion: "Try religion." But to all who were thinkers, and not mere reflectors, he was a guide, philosopher and friend.

"A compound of poet and cynic," some one called Prof. Swing; and that was not far from true — only, there must be added humor which tempered what cynicism there was in him. In point of fact, his nature was complex and not easy to understand, owing to a temperamental and usually impenetrable reserve. Often he seemed at his brilliant best when his liver was at its worst — and it was sometimes bad. But when we recall that pain was his yoke-fellow, the wonder is that his mood was not more often awry than it was, especially since his admirers insisted on putting him upon a pedestal and approaching him with censer in hand. He was not always a good judge of character, and this defect frequently made trouble for him, and for

PROFESSOR SWING'S HOME
66 Lake Shore Drive, Chicago

others. He had a deadly irony and a withering satire, and to say that he was always master of these gifts would be an exaggeration. He could be sarcastic, too, and could apply phrases that cut like a lash. Generally speaking, it was only in his private conversation that he made use of these dangerous gifts, though they occasionally flashed out in his sermons. Only those who found the key to his inner self knew the real man, who carried a vast pity in his heart. No man was ever more tenderly loved, and I know of no one whose life, if scrutinized, would show so many minute kindnesses, thoughtful attentions, and unobtrusive consolations. Life seemed to present itself to him as an opportunity for doing little acts of human service.

In 1886 Professor Swing built another lake shore home, a cottage at Geneva Lake, Wisconsin, where he went for his midsummer rest. He superintended the building of it, and the Chicago papers always referred to his cottage as "the House that Swing built." It stood in a three-acre plot of woodland overlooking the lake, and formed an ideal retreat from the din and dirt of the city. There he could be found dressed like a rustic, browned by the sun, his dog Chihuahua [1] by his side, and it is no wonder that he was sometimes mistaken for a farmer. It was his morning habit to row, or slowly drift and dream and muse, along the

[1] Prof. Swing told this story of his dog, Chihuahua, of whom he was very fond: "When Canon Farrar visited Chicago I had him at dinner with me. I was a little fearful that being so 'big a gun' he might be shocked when he saw my dog sauntering around the dining room. Now, it has always been my habit to pass little bits of meat down to my dog as I sit at the table. What was my surprise and pleasure to catch the great Canon Farrar handing Chihuahua a sliver of turkey before his Eminence had been waited upon three minutes. 'Each one of my ten children,' he said, 'has a pet of some kind at home, and like your dog the pets have the freedom of the house. And you may believe that I feel at home.' Those words told me more of England's great preacher than I could have learned from many an able lecture."

shore of the lake, watching the changing shadows of trees and clouds reflected in the mirror-like waters. The secrets of the wild life of the field and forest absorbed him. He knew the ways of birds and the habits of insects, and the workings of their tiny minds amazed him — as when he taught a spider to come at call and to eat out of his hand. He made friends with the squirrels in his grove and left generous provisions of corn for them in the winter; but his ardor was chilled somewhat by "catching them in the very act of murdering a brood of young robins" in one of the nearby nests. He loved his trees, his favorite being a noble hickory, which in dry seasons he fed with the moisture the clouds denied. There was a fine health and sanity in his life blended with a wistful, humorous, never-wearying interest in nature and her ways. To a certain extent, but to a certain extent only, one sees this in his sermons, for there is an outdoor feeling about all that he wrote. More of his simple, homely ways, his child-like joyousness, his naive delight in the doings of nature, were betrayed in his Saturday evening essays to the Chicago *Journal*. He mused among his trees and flowers until the scene became almost personal in its fellowship and appeal. Quitting it was like parting from a friend, and he was always eager to return. His plan was to retire from the pulpit and spend the late afternoon of life in the country, but that dream did not come true.

Like Browning, he nowhere tells us in what ways nature wrought upon him when he was alone with her. Bird song, the lisp of quiet waters, the gray lake at dawn, cloud shapes, star-crowned trees, the charm of blended colors — these filled him with musing wonder, until the simplest fact asked of him a long and deep

pondering. The classic spell fell over him at times, and one catches a note of that old sadness in joy, a flitting shadow of the Greek twilight; joy that life is so fair and full of beauty, mingled with regret that it is "pent up in the kingdoms of Pity and Death." He never fell into the oversoft sentimentalizing, much less into the riotous pantheism, so much in habit of late years. In "Nature and Man" and "Our Outdoor Age," to mention only two of many such sermons, he rejoiced in the modern nature movement, and saw beneficent results for faith in the new love and study of the world in which we live. He thought it probable, for this reason, that the works of Thoreau, whom he called a literary wild man, would outlive those of Emerson. An Atlantis, peopled with harpies, and elfs, and imps, and satyrs — a land where "Queen Mab" rode in a chariot made of a nutshell,

> "Made by the joiner, squirrel, or old grub" —

had indeed sunk, but in sinking it had pressed upward for the study of man a continent more real and more full of wonder. He held that if the words of Jesus were studied, as they were first uttered, on the mountain side, by the lake, and amid the flowers, they would reveal a reality unseen by the flickering lamp of the theologian, and a beauty hidden even to the mystic. If men take the Bible to the woods, he said, they will be amazed to find that prayer is as natural to man as songs are to birds, and faith will trail, like a vine rich in blossom and fruit, over all our mortal years from the cradle to the tomb. Nature will revise our petty creeds, shame our unworldly envies, and speak peace to our bitter sectarian rancors, by teaching us sanity, simplicity and fraternity. Let Christ and the lilies meet once more and there will come a "New Natural-

ism," yea, "A Higher Realism," and dust and spirit will be seen to mingle in the Easter lilies, even as they are mingled in our mysterious life. Such, as I gather it, was his feeling for nature and his hope for the modern passion for nature.

But, unlike Byron, he loved not nature less but man more. The human soul was his Westminster Abbey, and God was in the midst of it. Greater than mountains or seas was the human multitude — "those strange heirs of two worlds" — greater despite their sordid sin and struggle, greater because of these seeming blots on the austere beauty of the world. To his dear friends, the Talcotts, he wrote:

"Lake Geneva, Wis., Aug. 20, 1886.

"Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Talcott, Rockford, Ill.

"Dear Friends: My vacation is nearing its close, and when with more than half sad thought my heart was wondering whether these woods are not the better place for me all the year through henceforth, your letter came. I opened it while out under the trees. Instantly all the beauties of nature faded before the higher beauty of man, and I felt willing to go back to my duties among my fellow souls. What are the associations with waters, land, flowers, grass, the perfumes of the air, compared with those ties which bind us to minds which can think and weep and love and hope! I should rather sit for an hour with you both than be in a paradise which should have all things except the human heart.

"I have just returned from a visit to my mother. She is in her eighty-eighth year, but does not feel their weight. Her mind is clear, and differs from our minds only in having found infinite peace. Life and death are alike to her. Ever and ever yours, David Swing."

The conditions of his life were indeed fortunate, even enviable. He had lived much, loved much, read much, pondered much, and the years had distilled into his heart a great peace. Great sorrows had shaken

him, but he remained firm in his faith, sweet of heart and full of hope. He had seen his daughters married and had embraced their children. His heart desired Beauty and his mind Truth, and he had found both in large measure. Above all, he had kept faith with himself, with his fellow man, and he had not been disobedient to the heavenly vision.

CHAPTER IX

The Theologian

It is perhaps quite impossible to eradicate the belief that Emerson had no scheme of thought, but was only a maker of maxims, a kind of Poor Richard of our higher economies. As we have seen, Professor Swing suffered from a similar hasty estimate, and was held to be not a careful thinker, but a facile stylist weaving lovely lengths of haunting prose. At the time of his death, *The Dial* remarked: "His mental processes remotely suggest those of Emerson, and in his sermons, dogmas, which most theologians offer to their public in solid lumps, had gone completely into solution. It was his instinct rather than his logical faculty that placed him in the van of religious thought, for he was more of a rhetorician than a thinker." Men who embower their thought in a rich foliage of language rarely receive their due meed of honor as thinkers.

As a fact, David Swing was one of the wisest and most careful thinkers of his day, and one of the most suggestive. He weighed the imponderable propositions of theology with judicial care, and often, as one has truly said, with the whole statement before him, carefully written out, he paused and seemed to brood wistfully, hesitating to handle truth which had cost so much and was so dear. Such a man could not flippantly disparage theology, as the manner of some is,

though he knew its systems to their remotest crannies. "To attempt to separate Christianity from its own announced doctrines," he said, "is as pitiable a weakness as it would be to invite engineers to bridge a vast river by emotional action, wholly separate from any creed of mechanics." The flowers of his own thought toiled not, neither did they spin, and their rich colors often hid the solid structure of his faith. Gradually, however, the outlines of his scheme appear and are quite easily traced, revealing the cast of his mind and the personal equation of his thought. He was, it need hardly be said, far from orthodox on some points, and one doubts the likelihood of his signing any but the slightest creed or confession. But he had always the orthodoxy of the heart, he was always reverent and religious, he was always true to life and close to life.

Indeed, one may say that the whole tendency of his thought, like the burden of his message, was an appeal from dogma to life, from speculation to experience. His criterion of religious truth, as set forth in his early sermon on "Christianity and Dogma," was life; not the life of piety alone, but the social, intellectual and moral life of the race. One who looks into his pages sees at once how human was his conception of all high truth, and how constant was his effort to draw theology, as Socrates is said to have done philosophy, from heaven down to earth. He made distinctive ecclesiastical teaching, and what in Divinity Schools is specially meant by theology, of little account. If sometimes he lost the Divine side in the human, it must be said that nothing was more needed in his age than just this re-humanizing of the truths of faith. Sacred thought had wandered so far into the region of the ab-

stract that it was almost powerless to help the men who toiled in the shop, at the desk, or on the farm. It had become lifeless in the pulpit; dry-as-dust in the schools; a fetish to conjure with rather than a light to guide the life of man. To a mind so simple, direct and practical as Swing's, this was intolerable; and the aim of his ministry was to counteract this result. He did not deny abstract dogmas, nor essay the role of iconoclast to break them to pieces. His method was to lead men away from the narrow enclosures where "half truths horn and hoof" each other into the open fields of life, where truth is known by its service to the soul of man and of society. The best way to study theology, he held, is to pass outside of the old systems built by the fathers and see it as its truths lie confirmed or rejected in the experience of humanity. The vision of religion as the life of man in God and of God in man, the skyward side of all things, the spirit of all thought, all art, all science, all high endeavor, all noble living, was a ruling insight of his life. He scorned to separate the sacred from the secular, as he scorned to separate faith from reason, such a schism being in his view a retreat and not a victory, if not a subtle form of atheism. Turning to his pages at random, one finds this conception of religion stated with all manner of picturesque variations.

"It would be better to expand the term religion so as to make it include that host of thoughts and feelings and duties which are wont to spring up in the heart that thinks about its origin, and passing life and destiny. God is indeed the central figure of these meditations, but the meditations may wander widely and may keep the Deity only to cast over all this mortal life His strange and solemn beauty. Dante's great poem is most religious, and yet in it we find painted the green wood of Chiassi, and allusion made to liberty and love, and wisdom, and sorrow, and the friendship of human

life. In the midst of the poem stand God and the Son of Man, but only to determine the tone of the long song. The term religion must therefore rest upon us loosely. It must not be hard or heavy, like an old knight's coat of mail, but more like a flowing robe restrained a little by a girdle. Thus defined, religion was in the soul of Moses and Job; it marked the life of Aurelius and Augustine; it was present in Pascal the Catholic, and Knox the Protestant. It has wandered all over the globe and has fallen in grace and salvation where the old kings worshiped lovingly, and where the galley-slave said his broken-hearted prayer. . . . Our Christianity has thus far been too transcendental. It has failed to see the ever-present God moving to and fro in our midst, in all the forms that life and beauty take. Coming from whatever causes the general drift of past religious thought was all wrong. Its immortality stole from this earth; its heaven was built up by plundering this world. Man was fed upon the doctrines of eternity when what he needed was the wisdom of this life, more education, more social science, more temperance, more justice. The day for a full repentance and a full reform of the church has come, and for confessing that man in the street, in the shop, and at home, is as important as man at the altar. The church will open its book of doctrines, and will there find that the home of every poor man is a part of the sanctuary and the smoke of every cottage chimney the sweet or bitter incense which reaches soonest the throne of God. The church burns incense in vain when the people have no philosophy except that of the Trinity, the atonement, and the inspiration of the Bible. There must be a full philosophy of daily human life. The means and habits of industry are a part of the means of grace. . . . When a young man begins to abandon expensive vices and puts some money in the bank he has met with a change of heart in which a revivalist should rejoice; for the grace of God is as much seen in the glory of temperance, industry and economy as it is seen in the rapture of psalm and prayer. The church must widen its survey of things, and must make the paths of the workingman, of the scientist, of the statesman, paths in the domain of religion.

Faith, thus changing its basis, and to some degree its dogmas, draws all human workers toward the house of prayer, because around the word 'God' there springs up a troop of thoughts fundamental, deep, and solemn, in which alone our human life has meaning and dignity. Thither morality,

science, the family of the fine arts, and all the pursuits, will repair, with the wedding march and the funeral procession, to be blessed. God moves underneath the ideas of the common life as truly as beneath the cross and the judgment day. The Father, Son and Spirit underlie all moral endeavor, all scientific inquiry, all strivings for liberty, all virtue and charity, as the earth lies beneath all vegetation of wood or field. Religion is now seen to be the spirit of all thought, the inmost soul of all our music, our art, and our great literature. What the church calls salvation the outer world calls the civilization of man; what the church calls heaven science designates as the triumph of the human spirit. Both hands point and lead the same way. What is best for man here is best for man forever, for eternity is but the lengthening of our human night or day. . . . This is our modern faith, a Christianity that is a full, free, rich human life. It is the optimism of the earth. It shakes the poison out of all our wild flowers. Happy the young people who are just entering this arena of a free and vast faith, where many creeds mingle into one, and where many sects meet in one love of mankind and God."

One may agree with him in this or not; but, at least, it marks the trend of his thinking and the methods of his ministry. Hence his fondness, as every one knows, for identifying all our higher literature, having any spiritual import, with theology, as when he spoke of the gospel of Browning, of Ruskin, of Emerson. It made his patriotism religious, as may be seen in his noble sermon on "Charles Sumner," in which he discussed the spiritual meaning of the state; that "gospel of nations" at whose altar Penn and Burke and Lincoln were ministers. Hence also his habit, seen in almost every sermon, of tracing truths hitherto held to be distinctly church truths out into the highways and byways of human life, and finding them toiling under other names. It is, all must admit, an illuminating and inspiring conception, linking the humblest duty with the highest truth and marking the

foot-steps of God along the dusty paths of our common life.

The interpreter of "The Greater Side of Life," that which estimates the verity and value of religion as it stands in the service of life, is Reason. But by Reason Professor Swing meant more than any single faculty, more than logic, more than the argumentative power. Reason, in his use, summed up all the resources of man and was the ineffable distillation of all the faculties, having moral and spiritual as well as rational elements. This large and tender Reason, which he called Common Sense, was no other than the ideal angel who spoke in the proverbs of Solomon, who acted as the indwelling voice of Socrates, and who reappeared in the sweet sagacity of Jesus — that sense of values, of limits, of uses, of humor even, which has been the wise Mentor of our humanity. The church must bring its dogmas to a high tribunal composed of the Bible and Reason, seated side by side on one bench — the one an inflamed zealot, an impassioned prophet or rhapsodist, the other a calm mediator between rhapsody and reality. Not long does this associate judge sit upon that bench, held for so long by the Bible alone, before it is seen that great errors have been made by decisions which came from the emotions of the worshipers and not from the intellectual processes of seekers after truth. Again and again Swing chided the church for asking men to bow to some old authority,[1] when they ought to be studying the im-

[1] An example was the sermon on "The Retreat of St. George Mivart," the English Catholic essayist who recanted his advanced ideas at the command of the Pope. Swing held that Mivart had made himself absurd not by recanting, but by giving a reason for abandoning reason. His reason was that the age and geographical extent of the Catholic church made it more apt to be the repository of divine truth. "We are thus placed in some dilemmas," said Swing. "When the Christian church was very young and numbered only twelve members

mense world of truth and duty, going forward instead of looking backward. The real enemy of faith, he said, is not the mind in which reason has done its perfect work, but rather the mind where reason began a task it was not able or permitted to finish. If reason will impartially study all the data of the spiritual life and deduce from them all the high inferences the facts will bear, faith has nothing to fear.

No intuitionalist have we here. Intuition, which can give no account of itself, and which rises up out of the mystic depths of religious feeling, Swing, like Stuart Mill, regarded as —

> "A dark lantern of the spirit,
> Which none see but those who bear it."

It has so often made faith a mere trick of preference and taste, he pointed out in his sermon on "Emotion and Evidence;" has been made to sanction so many freakish philosophies, so many absurd infallibilities, that it is discredited. Only on the basis of experience — race-experience — interpreted by reason, can the temple of faith be rebuilt, and by using blocks hewn by many hands. Human and imperfect it is bound to be, but it will outlast us if we be in any sense true workmen. Let us not beg the question by saying, *a priori*, what we feel or fancy truth ought to be — that were to make theology a private diary. The facts of life gathered from the wide field of the actual must go, *a posteriori*, into the making of any faith in which

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it was too small to possess any truth. Also, the church of Buddha, having more members and covering more territory than the Catholic church, must know more of God and eternity. As if God told His secrets only to a certain number of square miles!" Still, he thought Swinburne too severe on the theology of Newman — "A radically and essentially Pyrrhonistic system of theosophy, hiding at once and revealing the bottomless pit of ethical unbelief and spiritual nihilism, bridged and vaulted by ecumenical architects with an artificial firmament of clouds and creeds."

men can find peace. In discussing "Reason and Intuition," he said:

"It is more probable that the reasoning powers compose the only real basis of faith, and that as man has not evolved his agriculture and geometry from his intuition, so not from his intuition has come or can come his belief in God. . . . It will be necessary to pity religion when it shall say that the proof of a God is very defective, and that man must flee reason and go to Him with his heart. . . . Reason has made great errors, but it has been the universal guide of humanity from Socrates to Spencer. That reason cannot attain to a perfect demonstration does not imply the existence of some other path to faith; for the way to God without reason will need a reason to support it. That man sees God intuitively will need proof. Thus, the part which reason plays in religion is central, vast and unavoidable. . . . To say, 'I know it because I feel it,' is safe when some pure-minded Emerson or Tauler utters the thought, but when Rousseau asked his heart to define society, marriage and home, he reached something worse than the occasional doubt of a deist. . . . All the eccentric cults of history represent aberrations of the individual, based upon nothing more than an *ipse dixit*. The philosophy that I am conscious of God is only a philosophy of egotism, and if your friend says, 'I am not conscious of a God,' that ends the circle of thought and duty, and his atheism is as valid as your theism. The appeal to intuition is thus a two-edged sword. . . . Conscience herself has never known right from wrong until Reason has brought her the verdict. Not being demonstrative, Reason permits some thinkers to doubt, but the doubters are few. Though the shallow may wrangle, the wisest always concur at the end in the same great and profound truths, and this ultimatum of reason is the religion of the reasonable. If this were not true we could not hope to win the doubter to faith on a basis of intuition, for such a faith is not transferable, it is not missionary. It cannot, like Euclid, assail the far-off ages and make a highway of common belief and peace. Pure reason is indeed often a failure, but it fails not because God must be seen intuitively or because reason is inadequate, but because reason fails everywhere unless it works by love."

Our task here is not to argue with Professor Swing, but to state the basis of his thought and faith.

To those who said that there are truths, like the Trinity, which are incapable of experience, he replied that such truths, if such there be, belong to the religion of fact, and that the very fact that they are beyond the ken of man shows that they are of no use at all. He used this method, like another Occam's razor, to prune the theology of his day and cut away what he deemed useless dogmas. Thus: "The Trinity, as formally stated, cannot be experienced. It is not conceivable that any one will pretend to have experienced three persons as being one person, the same in substance. This truth, or alleged truth, therefore, belongs to a simple religion of fact, and not among the laws of life and salvation. It is not the doctrine of the Trinity that moulds human life, but the doctrine of God. It is not the procession of the Holy Spirit that may shape the human soul, but the fact of an ever-present Spirit. That Christ was eternally begotten of the Father is a doctrine that cannot be appreciated by man's heart, but the Christ of the New Testament can be grasped and loved. And so the success and beauty of life will be related to the latter of these statements, and wholly discharged from the former, without penalty or costs." This was his way of leaving speculative divinity to float away like a cloud-castle in the air, to build and unbuild itself in myriad shapes. Philosophy, as the art of living according to reason, he loved, and his pages are full of it; but as a theory of ultimate reality he regarded each system as a vain effort of man to add a cubit to his stature. His sole concern was with that truth in the Bible, and most of all in the life of Jesus, which is verifiable and usable by man in every age.

Deep and genuine was his faith in God, which found voice in many a rich-toned sermon. It was much more than the sentimental awe which usually passes for this faith, but which is neither faith nor unfaith, but a kind of stimulus which helps men to miss the absence of faith less. No one can read his sermons on this theme without being enlarged and enriched by them, and to listen to them was one of the great inspirations of life. The Lord his God was "A Great God," too great to be a party to our petty warfare of creeds; so great that we dare not ask whether he loves better the robe of the priest or the plain attire of a citizen; so great that St. Peter's cathedral and Westminster Abbey seem like places where the children of religion play around the altar of a God for whom they have no measurement. He held in perfect balance the Old Testament idea of the contrast between God and man, and the New Testament idea of the kinship of man and God, emphasizing the former, perhaps, more than the latter. At least, he did not dissolve the truth of a Divine Father into a confection of sentiment and rose-water mysticism, as so many have done. As to agnosticism, he held, as we have seen, that it was a general reaction from what Arnold called "a blasphemous familiarity with God," extreme unbelief following extreme credulity. Some great minds were smitten mute by a sense of the infinite, but among the masses the agnostic mood was used as a labor-saving device to escape the toil of high thinking — "an intellectual languor fevered over with a craze for enjoyment and the money that will purchase it." Modern studies, he saw, have deeply affected, not the fact of God, but the quality of our idea of God, and have thus been a help and not an injury to faith. Time has shaken the bottle of

knowledge and we are all of nearly one color of ignorance and wisdom, and thus we should be tolerant. But Science has made the universe too vast and too amazing not to have come from God.

In an age when pantheism trailed like a luminous mist over the hills of thought, Swing held firmly to his faith in a personal God. He chanced to read Elisha Mulford's "The Republic of God" on shipboard, and the stately periods of the book seemed to swing in perfect harmony with the great metronome of the deep sea swell. The passage showing that personality is the highest thing we can know seemed to him the longest reach of thought on that theme. The Trinity, in so far as he accepted it at all, was only a symbol of a truth too great for the mind of man, though he cast aside the crude Tritheism which more often marches under that name. In his view the triune manifestation of God was not so much a numerical revelation of His interior nature as an unfolding of His intimate and manifold relation to the human soul. And the fact of the manifestation was to him a truth "holier in usefulness" than its mathematics. His thought as to the relation of God to the material and human world was as lucid as sunlight, as may be seen in such sermons as "A Baptized World" and "An Outpouring God." We read:

"Nature is unable to care for man. The hills in spring or autumn will not speak to us; the flowers are beautiful but heartless. They would as soon decorate man's grave as his cradle. This the student of nature perceives — that while nature has no sympathy for man, while the ocean would as soon drown a child as float a log, yet *through this same nature there beams a solicitude not its own.* The summer does not wish to come; the oranges do not wish to ripen; the air does not wish to change into music. Some mind wishes the fruits to ripen for men, the birds to sing for him, and the great

scenes of utility and beauty to pass along before him. The situation of man is peculiar in this, that all the surrounding air pities his misfortunes. Not the air, indeed, *but something that works in and through it.* . . . What a mass of insensate stuff this globe is. A dirt-ball twenty-five thousand miles in circumference! But it is a baptized world and the lilies of the field sparkle with strange, spiritual dewdrops. The clouds are simply matter, cold bodies of fog. The sunbeams, too, are some form of material; but when these two meet in the west, at sunset, they form a picture which makes the human heart bow in prayer. The violin string and the air are both material, but the string and the air together make music — something much more spiritual than either. The material world shows its alliance with the realm of thought and spirit. . . . Saul seemed to meet with God at the Damascus gate, and thus reads the chronicle; but what was that sudden light which streamed out of some hidden window but the place where a long-continued loving kindness became visible? God did not change and come; Paul changed and saw. In unexpected moments the heart becomes aware of the presence of God and bows in sudden silence while the great form is passing along.

The scholars who recently revised the English Bible removed from many places the term Holy Ghost, but did not rise to the more real truth, that of the outgoing and wandering soul of the Almighty. From fear lest they might disturb the dogma of the Trinity they permitted the term ghost to stand in all its former haunts. Thus a human theology was saved, but a great truth is lost. That old want of the heart, that there should be always help within reach, and which in polytheism made hundreds of gods, was met in Christianity by that Spirit of God which sweeps like a gentle wind over all lands and seas, and is as truly present where a child is playing or a bird is singing as at a battle of Waterloo; as visible where slaves are shouting in a new liberty as where the farmer turns his furrow or the lonely woodman swings his ax. . . . There is only one word in the Greek Testament for spirit, and that is *pneuma* — air, breath, wind. The term in the Greek never implies a rapid wind, much less a storm. The term *animos* stands for the air in rapid motion, but this one word stands for that outgoing air which seems to have something of soul in it. As a wind it blew where it pleased, coming none knew whence, going none knew whither. In the Old Testament it was God moving in the tops of the mulberry

trees, the journeying air being a symbol of the ever-present God. Polytheism was thus destroyed by omnipresence. God envelopes us like an atmosphere moving to and fro in our hearts. . . . The Trinity, as held by the old church — that Louvre of religious conceptions — should perhaps never have been formulated, or else should have been esteemed as only one of the poetic figures of religion. *The Holy Spirit is only the personal influence of God.* It is sometimes called the Spirit of Truth, or the Spirit of Wisdom, but call it by any of these names it is only the presence of God, as though the alabaster box of Deity had been broken that its perfume might fall upon a waiting and sorrowing humanity."

Holding this interpretation of God, it is interesting to note his view of miracles. In the olden time men were full of a love of the marvellous, and the amazing was always miraculous. Reacting from this mania for the miraculous, students of science had gone to the other extreme and set up a narrow, low-vaulted, ungracious naturalism, which reminded one of the Kipling version of woman —

"A rag and a bone and a hank of hair."

Swing avoided both of those tangents and walked, as usual, in the middle path — walked upon a globe made of "divine dust," under a sky which was a whispering gallery. His own faith was not founded upon miracle, as that word is ordinarily used, but he insisted that in the empire of uniform cause and effect room must be made for two immense deviations from the iron-like rule — the miracle of Creation and the miracle of Christ. He lived to see "A New Naturalism" and a larger recognition of the "Naturalism in Christianity," in which he rejoiced. His general view of "The Supernatural" may be thus sketched:

"A miracle, in the old sense, was an instance in which an event was supposed to spring up without any attendants. It was a harp playing of its own accord, without a touch of finger or wind; light without a sun, and education without

any study — of which wonders earth has many rumors, but the facts of life always come in quite other garb. Such miracles of God would be the ruin of man. . . . When we have passed away from such miracles we have not passed away from God, but have rather come into his grandest empire. Modern faith reposes upon a better conception of God. But we are not to suppose that God has been caught and fettered in a net of his own laws. What has injured the church has been, not its supernatural but its superstition. The supernatural does not interfere with physical laws, but it believes in a God who went before these laws, and who comes after them — a power beyond the falling tower of Siloam and the forms that may be caught in its debris. It believes that what we call natural laws may be in some way transcended to create a Christ, that such a Being is fed by that part of the universe which lies beyond the sciences. That vast unstudied country, whose ways are unknown to our books and wise men, that outer land which we call the infinite — that mighty fact underlies the idea of miracle and keeps it alive. Call it the supernatural, or the super-physical, or the spiritual, call it by what name you will, faith will not smother if we keep that window open towards the Infinite. It is to religion what expanse is to art and what the measureless is to music. The human soul must have freedom. By a gateway of wonder man came upon this earth; by the same gateway he passes out. The supernaturalism in Jesus is the best wisdom for our life in this world and in the world to come. He is the place where the earth blends with heaven — the line where sea and sky meet. He is the only miracle we need, but our need of him is infinite."

First, indeed, comes the natural; afterward the spiritual; but the natural may be so refined as to become very beautiful. So wonderful is the office of the natural in our world, so inseparable is it from human need and experience, that much of the miraculous and amazing of the past is now seen to have been only the high language of poetry; the real being so vast that the unreal was borrowed to express it. The ravens that fed Elijah fly away now to their own fields and trees, and the prophet is seen in the beauty of a realism which asks nothing from fancy — a lofty herald of

righteousness. Our age discovers the long hidden charm of the natural, and can disrobe it not until it becomes ugly, but until it becomes more divine. This being the reigning insight of the day, the preacher felt that it was unwise to ask men to rest faith upon the miraculous, much less to despise the revelations of science. To do so is to leave the impression that the laboratory is the enemy of the sanctuary, whereas a true faith need not fear but may glory in the advent of natural law. As science has unveiled the infinite delicacy of the material universe it has made easily possible a new harmony of faith and fact, and a new era in which naturalism will be the truest friend of spiritual beauty.

My one regret is that Professor Swing did not leave us a treatise, or a Life of Jesus, setting forth his interpretation of Christ, for that was one of the most distinctive and valuable parts of his teaching. A selection of his sermons on this theme [1] — and it engaged him more frequently than any other — would be a religious classic, along with those of Bushnell and Channing. For five and twenty years, he tells us, he studied the development of the controversy raised by Bauer, and continued by Strauss and Renan, and next to the question "Is There a God?" was the question, "Who is this Carpenter Prophet?" He himself held always to the uniqueness and divinity of Jesus, though he did not attempt to measure, as a chemist analyzes an ore, the quantity of Humanity and Divinity in

[1] Among many such sermons are these: The Surroundings of Christ, The Minor Qualities of Christ, The Christ Motive, The Philosophy of Christ, The Influence of Christ — on Literature, Art, and the Human Spirit, The Ethics of Jesus, Christ and Paganism, Naturalism in the Life of Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, The Christ Ideals, The Inevitable Christ. It is a pity that the best of his work did not appear in book form, but floated away on the daily press.

Christ — did not cast lots for His seamless robe. Since no one knows the nature of Deity, or His ways, he thought it rash for any one to dogmatize as to the presence or absence of Deity in Jesus. No one knew better than he the attacks of scepticism, and the more subtle assaults of idealism, on the fact of Christ. He knew all the thin theories and the loom of bias on which they were woven, but none of these veils obscured for him the Life of Jesus, the one spot on all the landscape of time where the beauty of the Lord was seen without cloud. That Christ was Divine he held to be a truth attested not only by history, but by its service to the life of man in religion, in society, in science, even, and in art. And, for a practical mind like his, it was difficult to see why a fact is not worth saving, and worth using, especially if that fact is Jesus.

One finds it difficult to portray the figure of Christ drawn in the sermons of David Swing. It is a Christ of exceeding beauty, not a third person in a mystical trinity, nor a scape-goat ladened with the sins of man, but a Teacher of heavenly truth, a sorrowful Light-bringer and a wise Way-shower of humanity. This it was that Swing loved in Renan's "Life of Jesus" — that gospel according to Thomas Didymus — its living, vibrating atmosphere of the East, its sense of the human life of Jesus. If, instead of writing the biography of a dead divinity, and in the half-sad mood of one convinced that there was no resurrection, Renan had seen that inviting figure walking up and down in the hearts of men, a thousand times more alive than during the days of His flesh, he would have approached to Swing's conception of Christ. As a guide is better than a guide-book, a friend better than a Bacon essay on friendship, so Christ lives, and will live while human

nature is the same. It is better to let Professor Swing state his own faith:

"If Christ be not divine, every impulse of the Christian world falls to a lower octave, and light and love and hope alike decline. If He is left a mortal only, the human heart, robbed of the place where the glory of the Lord was once seen without cloud, is emptied. The doctrine which makes the Son of Man the place in the universe where the presence of God became visible, like the colors at sunset, and even the doctrine of the mystical pantheists, that Christ overflows like a cup of wine too full, will always be holier in usefulness than any being coming up in only the garments of a poor hermit, of common poverty and common frailty. . . . But in pondering of the Savior, it is not necessary, it is perhaps not possible, to think of Him as God the Creator. However orthodox a mind may desire to be, it will find itself attaching God to the entire universe and Christ to the human race. His words and works are all within the field of human experience. It is enough to think of Him as a Divine Mediator between God and man, making the unknown, voiceless Eternal eloquent to men. As a sighing wind pauses among the pine trees to make its psalm audible to men, so the universal Deity asked the life and lips of Jesus to proclaim the passing chariot of the Invisible. Not all of God was in Him, but all that was in Him was Godlike. Heaven and earth meeting could not but give us the Man of Sorrows and sympathy. The upper purity and the lower sin, meeting, could not but give us the Cross. The immortal life wedding a mortal form could not but give us the resurrection. . . . Go where you will over the earth, in every land you will find a mysterious temple, half-ruined if not wholly defiled, which yet seems to have been built for Christ. There is indeed a God-spirit in man, a redeeming, prophetic grace, hence the vague, fore-shadowing dreams of the old faiths. In Christ that spirit was embodied once for all in a form dross-drained and perfect, and he became the fulfillment of the desire of all nations. Hence the appealingness of his life, and the long, far-sounding melody of his words. . . . Compared with a modern biography the life of Jesus in the gospels is only a dim outline. The whole scene is cast in deep shadow, in which valuable details, beautiful or sad, are forever lost. To restore the picture of Jesus you must select some modern leader of the people, some one in a fresh but historic grave, and having seen how some one sentiment ruled all his life, multiply that

power by a thousand, and you have the Leader of Galilee. Jesus did not give an account of His birth, and is not responsible for the story as we have it. The Cross stands for only one day in His life, though it was an epitome and symbol of the whole. . . . Time is a great light-bearer, and it should not surprise us if Christ is more clearly seen by the nineteenth century than by the first. In entering our era the journeying Master comes into a new world, into an era largely of his own making. Much, though not all, of the amelioration of human life in our age descends from the indefinable genius of Christ; the impetus given by his spirit to the latent nobilities of man. He is a part of the life of us all, whether we admit it or not; He shapes even the literature of doubt. Of all world-forces making for the higher life, He is the most gentle, the most refined, the most persuasive."

A certain beautiful vagueness thus attended all his thinking about Christ, due not to the dimness of his vision but to the vastness of his theme. One can measure a sea or a mountain, he said, but not a Christ. He saw the Master moving on the borderland where the Infinite woos the finite into its mystery, and he approached Him not with definitions on his lips, but with wonder in his heart. So far from measuring Christ, he found in Him a measuring line for human life and thought, at once a trysting place for the soul and a testing place for theology. Into that light he lifted the old dogmas one by one, until men saw how far removed they were from the snow-white theology of Jesus. To lead men into that upper air and detain them there was the aim of his ministry — that the spirit of Christ might thence find its way into all the life and labors of men.

Long before Arnold's "Literature and Dogma" Professor Swing was interpreting the Bible as literature, and not as an atlas of eternity. He seems never to have held the old ideas of verbal inspiration and infallibility. An early sermon, entitled "A Religion of

Words," was a satire on the iron reign of sentences and the worship of vowels and consonants. The least of a literalist, he was true to the spirit of the Bible, and its cadences unlocked in him, as in Lowell, a chamber accessible to no other speech. His theory of inspiration, so far as he had any theory at all, resembled that of Rothe: that God treated the minds of the writers as the keys of a piano, composed at the instrument, so to say, evoking a new melody of truth, which they did not shape, but which shaped and used them, a genetic product indeed but of a higher order, and by the aid of the Master Spirit. The result of this collaboration was "a record of God's will as touching the life and salvation of his children." Having grown out of a rich religious life, when rightly used the Bible will produce, infallibly, that life of the Spirit which produced it; and this, he said, is the only kind of infallibility we need. He loved the Bible not only for its heavenly wisdom, but for its all-embracing sympathy, its solicitude for human welfare, its passion for righteousness, and its melodious pathos. He knew that in that wise, tender-hearted old Book there is a spirit, a faith, a power, which, when it gets into men, makes them broad of mind and tall of soul, and his one concern was to bring that power in touch with the real needs of human life.

As for most of the Higher Criticism, Swing was content to quote the saying of Balzac: — "A German scholar is a man who finds a little hole in the ground, which he proceeds to convert into an abyss, at the bottom of which is to be found not the truth — but one German." For genuine scholarship he had deep reverence, but for clever guessing under the guise of showy pedantry he had only scorn. It seemed to him the last

limit of audacity for a man who could not write a line of poetry to dismember the sublime poetry of the Bible, where the human heart is swept by the winds of God. Biblical science was very arrogant when it first appeared, and very dogmatic. It assumed a monopoly of scholarship, and issued its dicta with the infallibility of an oracle. It could tell without a doubt, and to the ninth part of a hair, the dates and authorship of old documents. This, with its bias against the spiritual, and its discord of conjecture, made it a target for the satire of Swing. All such studies, while interesting and curious, he held to be of little worth and perhaps an injury to many minds. Thus:

"De Wette says the psalms were written long after the time of David. Ewald says Isaiah is a book made up of flying leaves, and that it is the work of perhaps twenty authors. Others detect only two authors. Kopp says that of the sixty-six chapters of Isaiah twenty-seven are not genuine. Froude thinks that all the part of Elihu was inserted into the book of Job by some one who desired to improve the first form of the story. Luther rejected some of the Old Testament and New Testament books. Thus criticism gives us scores of authors more than are necessary for the production of these sacred writings. We see twenty men employed composing the prophecy of Isaiah, of which one man were cause adequate enough, and the different periods of his life explanation enough of the variety of style. . . . The doctors of the German world may gather around the stately old poems and quarrel over the honors they should award to Moses or David, but the human family heeds not these questions when it reads that 'the Lord is its Shepherd,' that 'from everlasting to everlasting he is its God,' that 'as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord will pity those who trust in him.' As when Dante drew near the blessed country he heard various verses of many psalms chanted by angels as they passed by on joyous wing, and yet he felt no care from what earthly poet the words first sprang into being; so in the streets of our world the essential truths of the Bible pass along detatched from the hand that first traced them upon parchment. They possess a power which scholastic criticism cannot affect.

"Our age is called upon to make a distinction between the criticisms of religion and religion itself. A large part of the work of modern critics is interesting, but not valuable in any high sense. Although these studies into authorship are lawful, yet it is well that little depends upon them or what conclusions they reach. The point which should rise up boldly before our age is this, that there is a truth apart from and above that sought by scholarly criticism, that the art or the science of criticism must not conceal from us the great subject matter itself. If the books came from a serious and prayerful age they are none the less divine. We do not indeed wish to confess an equal value to the genuine and the spurious book, but we will never feel that to be false which stands for some great and sincere soul, or for some great and religious age. Let the critics stand for the doctors, but let this be the old scene of the many disputing doctors and of the serene, unharmed Christ in the midst of the group — simple, definite and grand. . . . Should it ever be discovered that the inspiration of Paul and John was the play of secondary causes upon their minds, still their lessons of religion would be like the rainbow, which is as glorious in our evening sky as it was when made by miracle in the sunset, in the evening after the flood. The definition of inspiration is a variable something, the lessons of Paul and John are full of perpetual truth."

Once the Bible was the mother of the house, he said, and all other books were little children about her feet. It is still supreme, but its children have grown up. Belonging thus to the family of literature, it submits gracefully to the rules of literary interpretation. In our age the Bible is like a rod passing from the air into the water — it seems bent by the change of surroundings. An undercurrent of rationalism is flowing all through the church, through pulpit and aisle, and is causing a general silence, at least over tenets and texts over which all were talkative in a former generation. But the Bible will rise up in a new power and a new beauty, with the great public heart as its interpreter, all glorious in kindness and light. This will be more

visible, Swing argued, when the people become more familiar with great literature. Parables will be seen to be parables, poetry will be poetry, and spiritual truth will be all the more inviting when men learn "The Language of Religion." They will then class the stories of Joshua and Jonah with the fables of Æsop, which, to be useful, must be spiritualized and accepted as lessons inculcating great truths. In an article in *The Forum* he wrote:

"In all those lands which created the Old and New Testaments to be a writer was to be an artist, a painter. To find the meaning of those Scriptures the student must make external phenomena to be those creations which art employs for conveying some spiritual idea to the mind and heart. The great mistake of the older churches was that they invaded the Bible, having on their flag the advice of Aristophanes, 'Call pigs pigs and spades spades,' a law valuable in science and bookkeeping, but of little value in literature. . . . It is wonderful how many of the realisms of the Bible stand now as great spiritual and moral truths. The turning back of Lot's wife and her turning to a pillar of salt are in our age the turning away of any good woman from her duty and task, and then the petrification of her heart. The flood symbols the awful destruction which has followed the vices and crimes of nations. History gives the names of many over which some deluge of injustice has rolled, and only a few have escaped, to rebuild, perhaps, elsewhere, a second empire or republic. The Jacob who slept on a pillow of stones and dreamed of God's good angels has been taken away from the plains of Paddan-aram and placed in one of the great hymns of the race. . . . There is a softness and beauty about the spiritual which the intellect does not reveal. No one would affirm any spirituality in Cæsar, but we can see traces of it in Marcus Aurelius. When we read the annals of Tacitus, or even Homer, and then pass to the Psalms and the words of Jesus, we seem to have passed over an immensity of space, like an angel flying from an abyss towards a star of happy life. The time will come when men will not look for inspiration in the geology or astronomy of the Bible, nor in the machine-like exactness of part to part, but will seek for it

in that vast religion of time and eternity that lies on the sacred page like a continent upon the bosom of an ocean."

It was always so in whatever studies he undertook. Whether he read the pages of the gospels, or the tangled records of the history of the early church, or the "Confessions" of Augustine, and heard him pray for the dead, or the tomes of higher critical research, he emerged from the study infatuated with only those ideas which seemed most needful for character and the conduct of life. So, also, in the interpretation of single passages of the Bible, it was the usable truths, the kernel, that he sought. Though a topical preacher by habit and taste, he would sometimes pause to set a lighted candle beside a Bible text, especially when the meaning of the text lay in some fold of a Greek word. In a sermon on the beatitude of meekness, for example, he traced the word "meek" through the classics and found it used by Plato to describe a mild-mannered, gentle man, or the softening of spirit which comes with age, and by Xenophon to describe music when it sinks to its lowest and most appealing tones. He used Paul's *agapa* — translated charity, or love — as only a scholar familiar with the finest shades of meaning would know how to use it, deducing the subject of one of his noblest sermons, "The Modern *Respect* for Mankind." One regrets that he did not do more of this, for he was not only sensitive in high degree to the charms of literary form, but an expert in his knowledge of the most delicate tints and tones of words. [1]

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[1] One of his most interesting sermons, repeated twice by request, was "The History of Man Contained in Words." It told of the origin and vicissitudes of words, how some of them have fallen from high estate, while others have risen from the dregs of slang to an aristocratic position in the dictionary. Each age, he said, pours a new and deeper meaning into the great words of the race, as the human heart becomes more tender and human thought more profound. History is thus stored away in words.

But greater than all books, greater than mountains and seas, was the Soul of man — its doors thrown wide open by Shakespeare, its depths explored by Dante, its heights illumined by Jesus. It need hardly be said that Prof. Swing repudiated with scorn the old theology which made man a worm of the dust, and its dogma of total depravity, which he said was at least total in its absurdity and failure. Not less so that science which sees the soul as only a silvery vapor rising from the ferment of gastric juices or the gyrations of cells in the brain. To hear him discourse of the delicate mystery of the mind, caught in a silken web of soft flesh, thinking, longing, hoping, loving beauty, aglow with dreams of God and Eternity, flinging out filmy threads of thought, facing death and prophesying life, was to feel that an incarnate God is only a little more wonderful than an incarnate man; death no deeper mystery than life. Then it might be seen how he did not dare, did not seem tempted, to invade the secret of Being, and how cautiously he held aloof from a too curious gaze. He did not claim that man is a part of God, as the pantheists are wont to do, on the ground that such a view, besides going beyond what we know, tends to a subtle form of vanity and a blurring of moral lines. No one, he argued, is able so to define the Eternal Essence as to identify man with it, or, indeed, to exclude him from it. He therefore deemed it wiser to turn from a vain quest after a divine genealogy to the culture of the soul in sympathy, reason and hope. He was eminently successful on themes [1] of this order,

[1] Sermons, for example, like these: The Soul Against Dust, The Education of the Soul, The Descent of Man, What Man Is, What Man Has, What Man Does, Christianity a Eulogy on Man, Human Thoughts, God's Spirit in Man, The Immortal Life. There are no other sermons like these in our language, and one regrets that they were not given permanent form.

which he would expand and illustrate in a manner which not only sustained them to the high level of their dignity, but which gave them an absorbing interest. Such lines as follow are typical, disclosing as they do his inspiring faith in the future of man in the world that now is, and the basis of his hope of a life to come:

"In all writings, holy or common, there has been confessed a kind of royal nature in man, which, though intangible and mysterious, is nevertheless the chief reason for his being; something that towers above even creative genius; something almost divine. In the Bible it is this part of man that is thought so worthy of salvation; and it should never be forgotten in our earlier and later education. There is no education so grand as the culture of the soul. To be able to detect a false accent in Latin or Greek is a virtue much less desirable than that sensibility which can detect a discord in human life and can find for society a way out of suffering. We are thankful for the inspired men of the Bible, but we wish to live among inspired men now — men so sensitive and intellectual that the world thrills them. The soul of Scotland advanced more under the influence of Burns than it advanced under the intellectual philosophy of Locke, Reid and Stuart. Scholars were made by the universities, but what that people needed was a great soul to love and bless the poor. The German sentimentalists have a new word: Weltschmerz — world-grief; and, with musicians, poets and religionists to expound it, the cold winter of metaphysics dissolves into the springtime of sympathy. The summer which now seems near to mankind is woven out of the heart of society, rather than out of its intellectual powers. No treasure of the mind is omitted; every truth is a pearl; but with truth must go that soul of sympathy which perceives the world-joy and the world-grief. When one of Virgil's oxen fell dead in the furrow, the poet pitied that one that fell, and also the one left standing alone. It had lost its companion at work and in the leisure of the farm. This was the *sympatheia* of all the great classic times, and which reappears in our times, so far as they, too, are great. We need no more logical nobility, but a fineness of soul that can feel for man and beast, and can toil amid life's beautiful causes; a logic to reason from richer premises to grander conclusions. Only a few tears fell on the first human graves. It required as

long a time to make a grave and plant flowers on it and wet it with tears as was required for reaching the architecture and poetry of Athens. The education of the soul has made audible a sigh which past ages did not hear, and has detected the sparkle of tears which once fell in the dark. Those first tears were the scattered drops preceding that heart-cloud which burst into its final storm of world-grief. In our age the human heart is almost infinite; and the greatest missionary on earth is this pity of man for man. All this sympathy with man, and bird, and beast, all this sensibility, this delicate justice, this pathos, this gratitude, of today, will be found in the civilization of the morrow when it comes to gather up its jewels. The greatness of the soul is the best reason and the best hope of its immortality."

Without going into the details of dogma, it is enough to say that Professor Swing renounced the older Calvinism entirely, as "the most perfect misunderstanding of God and man published to the world in times not barbaric." Its dark fatalism became in his thought the kindly providence of God, working by law, "The Inevitable Good" — a sermon which in scope and clarity of insight, no less than in dignity and beauty of language, belongs with the great sermons of the modern pulpit. The old dualism which saw the universe as a house divided against itself, in which Satan seemed to share divinity with God, was utterly foreign to his thought. His faith looked out upon a universe pervaded by Divine Order and moving toward the one far-off Divine Event. Stoicism, he said, was defective in that it looked upon death as the only certainty, whereas a philosophy as broad as the fact must see that truth, right and beauty are as resistless as death. Against this marching order it is vain for men to fight. The situation is such as to justify the faith that, after ages of failures and defeat, man will come to the belief that he lives in the midst of a gentle but inevitable Power, and that to find its channel and current

and fall in with it is the chief end of his being. There is nothing in human history, dark as much of it is, to check the confidence that in this silent and perpetual argument the Divine Love and Logic will conquer. Slowly man is learning to keep step with the Inevitable Good, not full of dogmatism but full of faith.

Such an outlook upon life led, naturally, to a more hopeful view of moral evil than that held by the orthodox creeds. To Swing the pessimistic view of sin, and of nature and man as involved in some primal disaster, was not only unreal but untrue, though he was not so oblivious to the tragedy of sin as Emerson seems to have been. Sin, he held, is the arrest and abuse by man of the inherent benevolence of Nature, due more to folly and stupidity than to any innate perversity. It never puts out the light of God, it only darkens the windows of the soul, while "Repentance" opens the windows and lets the healing light stream in. The New Birth, he pointed out in a sermon of that title, is only the beginning of the new life, its infancy and prophecy, not its fulfillment; for salvation is not the event of a minute, it is the moral drift of the earthly life. The debate as to whether we are saved into character or by character, he said, is a play upon words, since both agree that it is character at last that saves. But Swing did not stop with a worship of the moral law, as Emerson did. The faith that saves, in his view, is less an act of the mind grasping truth than a fellowship of the soul with Christ, in whose radiance buds of virtue open, seemingly of themselves, and unripe purposes grow golden.

So far, indeed, from belittling the ministry of the Spirit in the new birth of the soul, he saw that Spirit moving in all the higher influences of life — a heavenly

wind, going and coming unseen, and touching men to spiritual fineness everywhere; as much present in the quiet genius of James Martineau as in the eloquence of Spurgeon. In such sermons[1] as "The Potter's Wheel" and "The General Regeneration" he seems to trust more to the silent, invisible Spirit of God, the pervasive religion of society, than to the churches. This, in fact, was the tendency of much of his thinking in his later years, as more and more the world of Spirit rose to absolute sway over his mind, and the worlds of industry, wealth, science, literature and human fellowship yielded up their meaning in that awful yet gracious light. So, and naturally so, the atonement, repentance, conversion, faith, and the new birth, found in his thought larger meanings and relations, making them more universal, more natural, and more real. The church, so long injured by narrowness, must enlarge its doctrine of the ministry of the Spirit, and must abandon the pretense to a monopoly of the means of grace. We read:

"There is a larger doctrine of regeneration, and a more Scriptural one, than that proclaimed by the revivalists. It is less miraculous and more in accord with natural processes of cause and effect, though it need not contradict the teaching of the church except in so far as the church limits the methods of Divine Grace. When there rises some man of spotless name, of active and high moral nature, whose life becomes an emblem of human uprightness, may we not claim that he was transformed by the great regeneration? If we select the name of Emerson we shall have before us an example of that class of men whose lives are essentially Christian, but who are reckoned as 'unconverted.' Of similar moral dignity and worth were Horace Mann, Longfellow, Lincoln, and Charles Sumner. If 'conversion' implies some higher form of man-

[1] Other sermons in this vein were: One Half of the Story, The Growing Arena of God's Grace, The New Elect, Terrestrial Saints, The Modern Will of God, The Spirit of Religion, The Moral World, The Momentum of Religion.

hood, we may well wish it would hasten to show us specimens of its work. If, as we are told, the church holds superior causes it should show superior results. There should be a philosophy of conversion that might enable us to enroll such names among the children of Christ. Not that some theory ought to be invented upon their behalf. They need no protection from theology. It is the theology of the church that needs help. We need only say that a regeneration is a high and pure life, find it where we may, in Emerson, Epictetus or Aurelius. To say that these noble minds do not reach their virtue in the right way, is to make heaven itself unable to recognize the substance of things, or that it is wedded, like a fashionable resort, to the etiquette of religion. They err who try to localize and closely time the birth of the soul into a new life, by attempting to know too much of the winds of heaven, their source, their velocity, and their path. Those winds may indeed roar in revivals like those of Wesley and Whitfield and Finney, but they may also whisper in the room where a sceptic is reading, with a new emotion, the story of Jesus, or is for the first time offering a simple and silent prayer. . . . It adds to the glory of Christ if His life and words throw around mankind an environment of such power as to shape anew character and inspire men to a new excellence. His virtue was not limited to those who touched the hem of His garment. His seamless robe passed away, but His spirit left the paths of Galilee to become a perpetual and redeeming quality of the world."

If ever of any one, it can be said of Professor Swing, that it was the theology of civilization that he preached. Out of the tumult and activity of his age he saw emerging a simpler and greater Christianity, as large and free as the life of this modern world. The decline of small dogmas in the church, he said, is caused by the uprising of great truths, "Love Invading the World" in "An Age of Common Sense." On the surface there were many things to discourage, but a deeper insight detected a quiet march of world-forces making for "A New Era." No part of his ministry was more inspiring than these outlooks upon the religious sky and its signs and portents. For example, in a

sermon on "A Great Age at Work at its Religion," we read:

"Such an age cannot make changes many and vast without making changes in its religion. A large politics and a small Christianity cannot journey onward together. The intellectual life of the people cannot widen and deepen in all fields except theology and worship. Reason will not be thus confined, ascribing to God laws and actions which it dare not ascribe to man. Upon a new religion the age is now at work. Having elaborated a great republic, a great science, a great social life, it is certain that our age will steadily elaborate a great religion. Out of this tumult of inquirity and activity something new is coming — a simpler and more reasonable Christianity, a social piety that shall regenerate the nation. It is not afraid of any books or facts; it is winnowing the chaff from the wheat; it omits nothing of duty, of culture, of hope. The old will not be rudely slain. Nature does not beat off dead leaves with iron rods; she pushes them off with new buds. Each church is immersed in the task of building a great religion, and the church outside of the church is also elaborating new doctrines. Magic has flung its old crown at the feet of science, and men are learning to let go of the unnatural, to hold fast to faith, to admit the limitations of knowledge, and to be content with an indefinite theology. The falling away of multitudes of dogmas discloses, not the ruin of faith, but a universal religion. What ushered in the new religious broadness was the scientific spirit acquired by a wider study of nature. A broad church is not some novelty, some freak of individualism, but is only the light of our better age trying to shine into the temple. As the quantity of dogma diminishes its quality improves, for the apparent is dissolving to make room for the real. Never had man a more spiritual religion than that of this period. While the students of science were raising up a material world, which many feared would become a tower, from whose summit the sky could be invaded and pulled down, behold! there arose silently a spiritual world whose height is above all heights, and whose shafts sparkle in infinity! The old icebergs of theology have drifted into a southern sea, and are melting away. Dante, could he return, would erase the awful legend from over the door of his Inferno and give hope to man, or, better still, remain silent. All now feel that where God is there the Golden Rule must be, and that if he inhab-

its eternity, so do his equity and his love. . . . It was Voltaire who said that Christianity succeeded because its Gospels were only a pamphlet, which a man could read in a few hours. The church must simplify its message and unify its forces. It is essential that the pulpit study the economics of human life, for if religion sweetens life so life must sweeten religion, and make faith in God and man more possible. In the bosom of thousands of our toiling men lie many of the noblest virtues of human nature. Much of their drinking comes from their loneliness, and their desire to express and enjoy the friendship of their friends — often the only boon accessible to their lives. Multitudes come hither with their hearts full of woe, which Europe planted and deepened and blackened. If we can break up this sense of forlornness and degredation and plant the thought of a rising manhood, a sunlit future, we shall be saviors of our brothers as Christ is the savior of the world. . . . After the battle of Austerlitz a British statesman is reported to have said with a broken heart: 'Put away the map of Europe.' Napoleon was erasing all the old lines and was making all states mingle in one gigantic despotism. Not with broken heart, but with joy, may we cry out: 'Put away the map of Christendom!' A greater than Napoleon — an omnipotent Christianity is coming. Soon the petty districts will find their borders erased and themselves members of a wide and sweeping religion under whose flag men will live as Christ lived, with all rights secure, all men as brothers, and with death not a defeat, but a triumph."

As to the life to come, Professor Swing was confident but neither dogmatic nor curious. In early days he had been wont to brood wistfully, almost anxiously, over the fate of the soul, but in later life he was strangely calm, as if he had seen the end and was happy. The old views of Heaven and Hell he cast aside as being unworthy of God — ideas so horrible that they should have died in a whisper the hour they were first uttered; so that the parable of the rich man and Lazarus suggested only "The Alarming in Christianity." While not affirming that all men will be saved, he saw no conceivable motive for God's transferring the human race

to a world less favorable to morals and happiness than this. In a sermon on "The Eternal Hope" his attitude was clearly stated:

"Canon Farrar follows every soul into another life and beautifully waves for it a flag of eternal hope. But it is better to let that unknown future lie unmeasured, better to shorten the time and double the effort. But this we do know, that the right of the soul is one and the same here and yonder and forever. If there is one God there is one ethics, and death, instead of shutting up the pagans in the pit of despair, flings wide open the pearly gates, which open into the kingdom of equity. The deep principles of right do not end at the grave; they begin there. . . . 'Conditional Immortality' comes not crowned with light and progress, but draped with the solemnity of death. Given such a picture of destiny as that drawn for the wicked by all the old pencils, and endless sleep becomes a mercy. Oblivion is a dark fate, but not one full of malice and revenge. . . . Universalism, Conditional Immortality and the Eternal Hope lie before us. Which one the Christian world will at last accept is unknown; only this is certain, it will reject the old picture of a burning pit. Of the three theories I should prefer to espouse the one set forth by Canon Farrar and Lord Tennyson, if it were necessary for me to adopt any one of the group. But it is not in any way necessary for me to seek, or reach, or profess faith in any definite dogma about the future life, either respecting the good or the wicked. I know only this, that the being we call by the name of the Heavenly Father does not hold in reserve for mankind any such realm of torments as that described to you and me when we were young; but what form the happiness of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked will assume are unknown and unknowable. Not having known the earth before I came into it, I presume not to know what will be the nature of the second life. The only facts well attested by reason and experience are that those who follow the law of right and love in this world will reach a far better destiny than will be reached by those who break those laws of right and love. . . . Amid theories so complex, amid evidence so vague and so akin to conjecture, separated from eternity by a heavy veil through which no sight can penetrate however much we may gaze and ponder, I can affirm or deny any of these three theories, but must say that above the term *Univer-*

salism, or *Conditional Immortality*, or *Eternal Hope*, I prefer the term *Goodness and Wisdom of God*, and in these words I take refuge."

Let it be kept in mind that this meager outline of the theology of Professor Swing is taken from the flying leaves of his sermons, and not from any treatise carefully planned. Many great issues do not come naturally into the pulpit, and upon such issues his views are not known. But enough has been given to show at least the trend of his thinking, his attitude toward vexed problems, and his keen interest in the noble and fruitful agitations of his age. His visions of truth were not larger or profounder than those of other great men of the pulpit, but the union in him of lucid sagacity and delicate poetry was unique. He lacked the fervor of Beecher and the abounding rapture of Brooks, but his intellectual world was more thoroughly ordered than theirs, and as a master of style he has had no peer among us. I venture to say that every problem which confronted the men of his day was faced and answered in one or other of his buried sermons. Nor do I know better and truer answers.

CHAPTER X

The Poet-Preacher

In the public mind David Swing was always the Poet-Preacher, an apostle of beauty and culture. But that title, as he wore it, while not accurately descriptive of his genius, had none of the dubious associations of mere flowery emptiness which it so often carries. There was in him a skyey quality of mind that made every sermon he wrote a chamber of imagery, full of loving and pitying fancies. Some of his pages are little canvases evoking beauty from the gray facts of life, as De Hooge lets the sunlight fall on the rubbish of a back yard and wakens in us a thrill of joy. But, as was said of another, he was too wise to be wholly a poet, yet too truly a poet to be implacably wise. He was more of a sage than a poet, as he was more of an essayist than a preacher. Still, all felt that poetry was in the fiber of his soul, no less than in the form of his thought, a poetry made up of beauty, pity and pathos.

The ideality of Swing was grand. He seemed to live and move in a soft, celestial atmosphere of the good, the beautiful and the true — that realm which all men feel vaguely, mayhap, but which many see dimly as through dull eyes, which Carlyle said seem made of horn. Such a man inspires a kind of awe, and it was inevitable that he should dwell much alone. But he did not, like Emerson, build him a little ideal world of

his own, a sky-tent from which the tragedies and sins of life were excluded. Living not wholly in the busy world, nor yet quite beyond it, he "saw life steadily and saw it whole," and nothing human was foreign to him. Quite apart from what he said, apart even from the way in which he said it, men divined in him a tenderness, a human pity, as of one who had eaten his bread in sorrow — the beat of a heart touched to tears by the grave of a child, the cry of a bird startled in the night, or a bud crushed before its blooming. Skeptics felt that, while he was not one of them, he knew how hard a thing faith is to men who live in a world of griefs and graves, beset by doubts and beshadowed by fears. One who looked out upon life with such clear, charitable eyes, and with such high and tender wisdom, cannot be forgotten.

By nature Professor Swing was deeply, quietly, exquisitely religious, though he did not attain to such happiness as the hagiologists tell us is found in the lives of the saints. A sweet sadness was ever-present with him, and even when the trumpets were at their loudest he heard always the low sob of the organ, in its solemn undertone of pathos. But his religiousness was genuine, not the talent for creating an effect of mysticism which is often mistaken for spirituality. No one ever attended a service in Music Hall without feeling that the preacher was more a leading worshiper than a leader of worship. The subtle odor of the jassamine was not more pervasive than the spirit of worship which he diffused as he opened, each Sabbath morning, his alabaster box of prayer. For him there was no spot like the secret place of the Most High, no covering like the shadow of the Almighty. Two prayers may illustrate what cannot be defined, though

they cannot recall his artless simplicity, the unaffectedness of his faith, or the grave and tender pathos of his voice:

"Thou eternal, unchanging, loving Father, always powerful, always wise, always near — out of whose blessed bosom we dropped into life — help us to come into Thy presence gladly. Bless this Thy holy day; a day sacred to a life to come; sacred to the dead. May all the days of the past week make this seem more to us the house of God. May the tumult of the world, its noise, its sadness, its business, its necessities, lead us to enjoy the peace of worship. All days are sacred — all days come from Thy hand — and are full of blessedness and happiness, yet help us to realize that the day of worship is greater than all days. This day, we pronounce Thy holy name; here our hearts melt in song; in this place we read to each other the words of Divine truth. Thou art everything to each one of us. Thy loving kindness is better than life. All of us come to life through Thee; all go from it to Thee; therefore we worship Thee who art the resurrection and the life. May each passing day, each passing scene, reveal more of Thy presence. May we mark the life of Christ, noting his acts, his trust, his love, and so live, doing good as he did, that he may become to each of us a perfect Savior. Send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead us, even unto the life everlasting. Amen."

"We, who have so often been worshipers, again assemble. New obligations have sprung up, new sorrows have come upon us. Make more visible Thy presence in the world, more visible Thy relations to us. To other hours and days Thou hast led us along, and hast permitted us once more to meet each other in this house of prayer. Thy goodness that gave us being, Thy power that has been near us and kept us with such mindful care, is with us still. And we meet to bless Thee. Though we bring many sins, sins committed against each other (but thus we must come), we come with our penitence and ask for forgiveness. We know we pronounce Thy name with unworthy lips, but we know that we come to One full of mercy; infinite in love. Come with Thy blessing and forgiveness, the blessing each heart needs. Fill all Thy sanctuary this hour, and all Thy courts this day. Remember those who are bowed low with great sorrows — parted from loved ones. May this life not seem all of life. May we look

forward to a better land — the fatherland; look forward to the greatest of parents, most loving, most kind, most wise. Give us faith for today to know Thou art near, and hope for the morrow. Hear us and graciously accept us, for Christ's sake. Amen." [1]

It was said of Phillips Brooks that he was an artist-preacher; that the note of his intellect was beauty; that its depth, its proportions, were the depths and proportions that go with beauty. But this was far more true of David Swing than it was of Brooks, much as we may hesitate to set the one in any way apart from the other. Rabbi Hirsch said truly that all the thinking of Swing took form and color and character from the poet-soul within him, and that his conception of Christ belonged to the domain of the arts. The sense of beauty in him was indeed the highest peak of his mind, and the first to catch the glow of the dawn; the golden bridge across which in troops new truths passed into his mind. His literary style, free from oddity, devoid of pretense, was a picture of the man, not alone for the felicity of its periods, its perfect lucidity, its limpid grace and ease, its happy poise and balance, but for its poetic temper that was rather felt than observed. It was the native speech of an artist, informed of that good taste which Lowell called the conscience of the mind, now playful in its humor, now barbed with wit and irony, rising to sublimity when the tides of faith ran high, and sinking to an almost

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1 One notes a silence in Prof. Swing's pages concerning prayer, as if he shrank from a formal treatment of a thing so intimate and inward. He did not discuss prayer or argue about it; he simply prayed. His faith must be inferred almost wholly from his prayers, which for many were the chief feature of the service — a cry of bereavement blended with a shout of victory. Still, one wishes that he had left a sermon on Prayer, like the one on "Piety" — a quiet walk up the mountain path. There is, however, good reason for not following with a note-book the delicate movements of the soul. As St. Francis of Assisi said, "God is always courteous."

piercing pathos when the frail tenure of mortal hopes oppressed him.

But Swing was more than an artist; he was a philosopher of the beautiful, inquiring not only into the value of beauty to ethics, but also into its meaning as a witness for God. To him the existence of beauty bespoke an ineffable refinement, a spirituality, at the heart of life, a hallowing presence in the world. Elusive it is and fleeting, so that we cannot tell what it is, whence it comes or whither it goes. But this he perceived, a beauty-loving God is in the world and man sees His foot-prints. Our love of beauty, he held, betrays that life is more than meat, that earth is not a stable, nor its food fodder, but that man is a citizen of the City of God. Thus beauty was to him a gate of pearl, that opened into the Good and the True. He meditated much on the mystery of beauty and its ministry to the soul of man, as witness such sermons as "The Beautiful is the Useful," "Moral Esthetics," "Applied Poetry," and "An Inwrought Life." But we can mark here only the path of his musings:

"How wonderful is the enchantment of God. For lo! His fields are carpeted with grass, His flowers bloom, and not only reveal beauty but send forth perfume; His dewdrops sparkle like gems; His lily stems are graceful; His vines are festoons, and His trees make Gothic arches in a woodland temple. His beauty is persuasive, not despotic. It silently invites. Nature never drives us if she can avoid it, she prefers to allure us. She makes all things charming. . . . Beauty is gentle, and yet it has a strange power. It touches the soul of man and his rude speech turns into poetry, wild sounds are melted into songs, and a rough stone becomes the statue of a god. Whence comes that form of beauty called music, and whither does it tend? The best descent that reason can find for that art is a descent from an all wise God. It is a spiritual language. No other art tells us so many secrets of the soul, so many memories of heaven. Listening

to the risings and fallings of a sacred hymn, we say in our hearts,

'O! what is this that knows the road I came?'

If we could not answer atheism with an argument we could smother it with a song. . . . All art is life seen through a prism of beauty. Art lifts man out of a pit and reveals to him the world in which he lives. Literature is that part of thought wrought out in the name of the beautiful. A poem like that of Homer, or an essay by a Taine or a Froude, is nothing else than thought ornamented. When truth, in its outward flow, joins beauty, the two rivers make a new stream called 'letters.' Poetry is not fiction; it is truth too great for prose. A novel is human thought, ornamented by the beauty of a woman in love. . . . Nothing is religious that is not beautiful. As the red is in the rose, so beauty was in Christ, his form and color of being. All around his words there hangs, by a strange literary mystery, the quality of him who spoke them — a quality bright as the halo on the forehead of a saint. . . . It must be inferred from this study that there is a moral esthetics which outranks the physical forms of beauty. The moral kingdom does not destroy the other empire. It is the old story of 'empire within empire;' but with this caution that moral beauty is the greater of the two kingdoms. Moral esthetics is what our age now needs. Long ago the ugly vices ought to have been in their grave, and true beauty on her throne. Genius may well sit down and take a long rest. Our task is to fulfill its abundant and varied prophesies, and make its dreams come true. If no Dante now sings of a divine Beatrice, the curtain has fallen on the poet only to rise again upon the vision of a real woman, greater than his dream girl. What Dante saw in a vision our age creates. This is an era of applied thought. Beauty, poetry, religion must be applied to life. Let us attempt to make humanity become what genius has painted it, that there may no longer be a discord between art and life. . . . But it is said that this is poetry. The charge is true. But this also is true: Our world is founded upon poetry. Poetry is not an overstatement of truth, it is an effort of the soul to reach reality.''

As a thinker Professor Swing was of the contemplative sort, meditative rather than speculative, and somewhat of a brooder by habit. He was not of those

restless, audacious minds that seek to make the scheme of things over on their own plan and desire. The strange and solemn beauty of the world subdued him, and its mystery touched him with a sense of his own littleness. He was content to wonder, and ponder, where others dared to doubt, to deny, or worse still, to dogmatize. After his love of beauty, perhaps it was a mysterious largeness and tenderness of mind that impressed one more than all else. This it was — this sense of the vastness of the universe, of the fleetingness of beauty, of the evanescence of all things mortal — that led one to say of him that he was Marcus Aurelius turned Christian. The impression was that of one who saw things in large relations and long perspectives, as from some high watch-tower of outlook. His imagination followed the pilgrim human host along all the winding ways of its earth-journey, marking its temples and its tombs, its trials, its struggles, and its slow stumblings forward. The scene awed him, made him tender and pensive of heart, but it also gave him that lucid and calm optimism which was one of the charms of his ministry. He knew too much of the past to despair of the future, and he trusted to the soft pressure upon man of an unseen world. This musing, meditative genius, with his wise idealism that did not disdain the real, made him attractive to men, especially to men of action and affairs. His largeness of view corrected their narrow outlook, and his optimism was as light from above on a dusty road.

One knows not how to exhibit a quality which was never absent from his thought, and which ripened with the years. Often his sermon, like "The Lamp of Obedience," or "The History of Love," was the biography of a single sentiment or virtue, its birth and

childhood and its growth to such maturity as it has attained in the human heart. Then again, as in "The World, the Orator," it was the portrayal of some vast, diffused influence making for human betterment. In sermons like "The Moral River," "The Value of Yesterday," "The Historical Scene," "Theology and Time," "The Solitude of the Earth," one sees this tendency at its best. Typical of all was the sermon on "The Idealists," — over which hung the beautifully sustained suggestion of God working with and in and for man. We read:

"Our world is pervaded and deeply moved by the power of ideals. There is no perfect statesman, or poet, or artist; but the virtues of many persons in each one of these great pursuits become detatched, and, like star-dust, they form a new and perfect star in the expanse of thought. The orator that stands before us in our moments of reflection and dream is not Cicero, or Burke, or Webster, but always some nameless one with a wisdom, a language, and a presence better than were found in those actual incarnations. Our statesman is not Alfred, nor Napoleon, nor even Washington, but he is some yet mightier being with an infinite power and unknown name, his features not yet fully visible, as though he had not yet emerged from the shadows of old forums and the lonely columns of ruined states. All around our hearts stand these final shapes of the powerful, and perfect and the sublime — the aggregations of long ages of thought and admiration. Our earth is great not only because of what it has, but also because of what lies within its reach. . . . The quest after ideals is the central reason of life. This pursuit abandoned, life need not run along any longer. The pitcher is broken at the fountain. The idealists are creating a human world after the pattern shown them in the mount. Each art stands as a monument to a host of idealists who in their own day perhaps toiled hopelessly and amid the sneers of those who were only the children of dust. Music, now so infinite in extent and sweetness, is such a monument. The first rude harps are broken and lost; dead the hands that smote them; but the art is here with no enchantment lost. We do not know the names of those singers. Like us they were pilgrims. They had to

pass into the beyond, but they left an art which the world loves. It was so of liberty, of temperance, of justice, of all the higher forms of human life. . . . Some speak of ideals as being only girl's dreams. On the opposite, high ideals are life-like portraits seen in advance. Only the greatest minds living in an age of tyranny could see in prophecy the portrait of a free people. Instead of being a romantic dream an ideal is often a long mathematical calculation by an intellect as logical as that of Euclid. Idealism is not the ravings of a maniac, but it is the calm geometry of life. . . . Ideals try our faith, as though to show us that nothing is too good to be true. In noble ideals there is something aggressive. They are not aggressive like an army with gun and spear, but aggressive like the sun which coaxes a June out of a winter. All great truths are persistent. Each form of right is a growing form. All high ideals will be realized. This one perceives who takes a long view — the triumph of ideality over apathy, indolence and dust. There is nothing in history, dark as much of it is, to check the belief that man will at last be overcome by his highest ideals."

As a scholar Professor Swing had none to surpass him in the pulpit of his day. Not merely in palpable allusion, but in the temper of his mind, the method of his approach to truth, his judgments of men and things, his tolerance, his catholicity, were to be discerned the most perfect fruits of learning. The indefinable atmosphere of great books was upon him — their intellectual message, their human interest, and the grace and charm of their art — as if whole literatures had distilled their essence into his mind. The passage of Matthew Arnold, in "Sohrab Rustum," telling of the composing and steadying effect which a commerce with the ancients has upon the minds of those who practice it, might have been written of him. He united in an unusual way the classical simplicity of the antique world with the alert and alive intelligence of our modern day. The same hand that drew "An Old Picture of Life," "A Roman Home," and "A

Greek Orator,'' wrote the essay on ''The Enlarged Church,'' and the sermons on ''The Breadth of Man's Life,'' ''The Advancing Beauty of Society,'' and ''The Greater To-Morrow.'' He who explored ''The Submerged Centuries'' also looked out upon his own age and beheld A New Naturalism, A New Positivism, The Advent of Woman, and A Scientific Christianity. He knew what had been the achievements of human thought in Egypt and India. He knew the art of Italy, and the music of the great Germans. He knew the triumphs and problems of modern research. He knew what the great writers of romance had said and taught. In a single sermon one often noted contributions of facts, of reference, of incidents, brought from many lands and from almost every field of study. This is ever the mission of the genuine scholar, to see the reality beneath the appearance, to reveal the sky above and the river bed below the flow of years, to focus the light of his comprehensive studentship upon the immediate path of man. He is the mediator of truth to men who are in the midst of the hard realities, and who need the leadership of light.

One despairs of giving more than a passing glimpse of the wealth and range of his thought. Visiting a great forest in June, one cannot bring home all the trees, but only a few twigs from oak or elm. A difficult thought set in a perfect phrase, an old familiar truth touched with a new beauty, or the glint of an exquisite fancy, meets one at every turn of the page. He was apt and happy in allusion, especially to the classics, and all through his lines one feels a tonic of enthusiasm, keen satire on shams, and faith in life.

''Literature proper is a gallery of spiritual ideals. There we meet Antigone and Hypatia and Evangeline; there we

meet all the dream faces that ever stood before the soul of genius; there we meet Christ himself. It is that sacred mountain top upon which humanity becomes transfigured and passes a few hours in shining garments for the body and in rapture for the soul. Man should expand those hours into days."

"All literature is one and the same thing — the utterance of the human heart. Let its name be Greek or German or English, it abounds in religion, pathos, sypmpathy, loving kindness. It has always been the portrait of man's inmost feelings. It is the beauty and wisdom of God attempting to reappear in the life of man."

"The strings of the harp called 'letters' are attached to the heart. Touch literature anywhere and the human face flushes. At the mention of the word human life in sadness or joy comes before us; Helen of Troy poses in gracefulness; Andromache and her child part from Hector; the plumed Achilles hurries along in his chariot; the woods whisper; the nightingale sings; Dante and Beatrice appear; Hamlet acts; Ophelia dies; Paul and Virginia make of Mauritius a paradise and a grave; 'Little Dorrit' is the beautiful dove of the prison; Fantine sleeps in a hillock which soft rain levels and flowers conceal. Literature is not learning. It is man's holiest passion."

"The Greek language is still almost an unsurpassed tongue. Eighteen hundred years have added only a small area to the scope of that vast speech. There is scarcely a question of the present day that was not reviewed by the Greek thinkers and stowed away in their manuscripts. Their essays on education, upon health, upon art, upon amusements, upon war, read almost as though they were written yesterday. Even that question which seems our own, the creation and property of this generation, Whether woman shall vote and follow many pursuits, is fully discussed in Plato's 'Ideal Republic.'"

"Literature is running in advance of the pulpit. There are three reasons for this leadership. The literary mind has all the world to draw from. If you will read Carlyle or Hugo or Motley and then read a volume of sermons you will note the great difference between the breadth of the two forms of reflection and speech. Literary men are released from the authority that dominates the fields of theology. Their style and subject matter are as flexible as silk. Their harp not only plays many tunes but it is permitted to learn all the

new pieces of music. High literature speaks for mankind, not for a sect or a party. What was the gospel of Browning? What that of Tennyson? What that of Emerson or Whittier? All are soldiers of Christ indeed, but of Christ incarnate in human character and human deeds."

"Education is the awakening of the heart, it is life, vitality, the arousing of the spirit. It is not the amassing of truth, like pouring water into a cistern; it is opening a spring. Education must not ruin itself by making the heart so sensitive that it faints at the sight of a criminal or a fool, or sits down and sulks, refusing to march any longer to the optimistic music. Christ-like is the culture which, seeing the griefs of the world, runs toward them with healing in its heart, not away from them as Goethe did."

"One of the most attractive passages of Virgil is where, at the prayers of Juno, Æolus smote the hollow mountain with his spear and let loose the winds, that they might sweep over the deep. With a shout they leave the mountain and soon they are rolling along before them great waves and are tossing the ships at sea. Darkness and thunder hasten to mingle in the tumult. Not in such terror but in such beauty are to be seen great intellectual forces rushing forth from the mountain of learning. Influences cross and recross our world wider and deeper and more powerful than the winds of Æolus."

"The classics tell of a lake called Avernus. Avernus means birdless. Located in the crater of an extinct volcano a poisonous air, issuing from the infernal depths, hung over the dark water and stupefied the sense of any bird that tried to pass from shore to shore. Suddenly the wing became powerless and the eagle with his pride and the nightingale with its song fell into the waters of death. There is a lake of pleasure, of folly, of sin, lying near the homes of the young. A deadly air hangs over it. Forgetful or ignorant of its fatal vapors, the young spread their wings upon its hither shore — those wings that were made in heaven and good enough for angels. But at last their flight is checked and they fall into the dark flood."

"The vast marble quarries near old Athens were useless until Greek culture came. Mount Pentelicus was composed wholly of white marble, the best on our globe. Happy world when Greek genius touched it, spiritualizing it, and made it tell the story of beauty and piety and progress. Emblem, this, of our new mountain of marble — not Pentelicus, but America — our liberty, our religion; a rich quarry, but wait-

ing for the touch of new genius. What a land were this, could it only be spiritualized."

"Washington came up from Virginia, Lincoln down from Illinois; both came in one spotless honor, in one self-denial, in one patience and labor, in one love of man; both came in the name of one simple Christianity; both came breathing daily prayers to God, as though to picture a time when Virginia and Illinois, all the South and all the North, would be alike in love, in works, in religion, and in national fame. 'The flag is still there' more glorious over the school-house, the church, the home, and the farm, than over a red field of war."

"Let us learn to be content with what we have. Let us get rid of false estimates, set up all the higher ideals — a quiet home; vines of our own planting; a few books full of the inspiration of genius; a few friends worthy of being loved, and able to love us in return; a hundred innocent pleasures that bring no pain or remorse; a devotion to the right that will never swerve; a simple religion empty of all bigotry, full of trust and hope and love — and to such a philosophy this world will give up all the joy it has."

The young men who read with Professor Swing can never forget those high and luminous hours. To hear him read "The Grammarian's Funeral" of Robert Browning was to see a flash of the victorious spirit of the Renaissance, and to feel that had he lived in that day he would have found such a grave himself. His brief sayings about books, like his characterizations of men, were pithy and picturesque, and one enjoyed them even when one could in no wise agree with them. Some examples are these:

"Browning's thoughts are indeed silk, but it is difficult to pull quickly out of his tangled style a long needle full of good thread."

"Matthew Arnold was fully capable of taking in all the landscapes of life, but something turned him aside and made him gaze at only a little gallery of ideals. His genius needed only one thing — kindness."

"Thomas Carlyle had tremendous intellectual power, but his conclusions came not from pure logic but from impatience.

He would have made a good sculptor if a Venus or a Minerva could have been blown out of a marble by means of gunpowder."

"In Dante there is large amount of filling in, literary stuffing. The Inferno is great in paragraphs. The whole book is like a railway journey through a wide country which offers a beautiful scene once in each ten miles, but which much of the time passes through a tame landscape."

"Sumner and Phillips were broad in all the meanings of that word, but their fame came at last from their narrowness. A saint is a soul so condensed as to become a power. Men become great not by their learning and wide sentiments but by their limitations."

"In George MacDonald our religion was reinstated. In his works the gates of hell are made a little narrower, so that not quite so many are forced through them. There was much of the mystic in him and somewhat of the angel."

"The ethics of Bronson Alcott was that of Benjamin Franklin, highly spiritualized and richly adorned, but still the ethics of simplicity, economy, honesty and humanity. The vagaries of his mysticism did no harm; they were only the uncertain horizon which always distinguishes the ocean from a frog pond."

"'The Light of Asia' is moonlight rather than sunlight, gentle rather than powerful. In it man strolled as a dreamer, not as a thinker. It is eastern philosophy magnified by the lucid genius of the west, as Hiawatha or the Greek slave are many times more divine than the originals."

"Saint Augustine came nearest of all the great men of history to having lived and died in a glass house. Each soul dwells in the dark and dies alone, but his 'Confessions' show us a soul living in a transparent tenement. Great as is the public aversion to an egotist, such self-exhibitors are useful. They mirror not only themselves but their age."

"All that Tolstoi brings us is new. He is a new spectator and delineator of the endless human scene. He has no page like a page of Hugo or Dickens, no sentence like an antithesis of Macaulay, no details of nature like that of the 'Stonemason' of Lamartine. He is a great creative genius — marred, as it now seems, by a touch of the monstrosity of asceticism which once inhabited Asia and the edges of the Christian world."

"To pass through the pages of Ernest Renan is like walking through a field or wood in October. One is surrounded

by color, by a dreamy air, by fruits already ripe, by leaves that are dying, and by birds that are going South. Few pens have ever written more delicately, few intellects have been more acute and at the same time more tender."

"Walt Whitman does not merit anything as a student of principles. Philosophy is reasoned thought, Whitman's book is simply uttered thought. His moral taste was as untrammeled as his verse."

"From the mind of Emerson came as pure a stream of thought as ever flowed, away from the times of Christ. At times mysterious, his style was as stainless as fresh snow, and his style was the picture of his life. His soul was as a city set upon a hill, and it was a city of God."

"Newman must be counted among the great English classics. The 'Apologia pro Vita Sua' is one of the masterpieces. After all the years his sermons can be read, for their lucid English, their delicate brief touches of pathos, and their incommunicable simplicity. The epigram of Dean Stanley is famous: 'How different the fortunes of the Church of England, if Newman had been able to read German!' How different the fortunes of that church had not Newman held the scepter of English style!"

"The spirit of Henry James is not that of Mephistopheles, who called himself the spirit which denies. It is the spirit which ignores; he ignores the large things for the sake of the small."

No less than six volumes were compiled, all except one after his death, in the effort to make the book of the wisdom of David Swing. It was this wealth of simple, homely common sense in his pages that led Whittier to refer to him, not inaptly, as "our later Franklin" — though that title clearly belongs to Emerson, some of whose vagrant insights flash light as far into the mystery of life as the human mind can go. The wisdom of Swing was diffuse and pervasive and did not easily crystallize into proverbs. His sayings, while striking enough, lose some of their lustre when taken from the context, as a flower wilts when plucked. He was not a maxim-monger, least of all a maker of smart paradoxes, nor did he say things backwards in order to

puzzle. Still, many of his aphorisms are unforgettable:

"It is easy to be either of two things when neither of the things can be understood."

"He who travels much will soon have nothing to carry."

"Men must be kind to young ideas; each truth is the presence of God."

"Wealth is valuable only when it is a partner of the soul. Only the soul can be rich."

"The baneful power of superstition lies in the fact that man is religious."

"There is no competition in culture. The fine arts travel in a group. No art can endure isolation."

"The wooden plow has not grown any more rapidly than the wooden god."

"Each great false dogma acting in long time makes the kind of heart it needs."

"The newspaper hauls the rough marble out of which the historian builds an eternal temple."

"Egotism is the nomination and election and coronation of self."

"Many repetitions and much time do not confer truthfulness upon a remark."

"If there is anything sweeter than honey it is the study of the bee."

"Of a deep and difficult problem we must, all things being equal, take the richer, sweeter side. It is always best to believe the best."

"In ignorance minds may unite, but as they think they move towards variety. Thought opens like a fan, but it never closes again."

"Much is said about thought transferrence, but the more important question is the quality of the thought to be exchanged."

"Truth, once uttered, strikes a vast sounding board, and echoes forever."

"There is a poverty which makes great men, hence the proverb, 'the rot of riches and the push of poverty.' But there is also a poverty out of whose sunless bog not even genius can climb."

"Great fortunes are like the clouds which the sun lifts from the sea to be poured out in rain and sent back to the

sea. Wealth finally becomes commonwealth by a law of gravitation."

"Extremists are valuable, because they render a truth conspicuous. They are the guides of the race."

"Permanency is joined to change; antiquity seems a full partner of youth!"

"One cannot see much until he has behind his eyes a cultured mind."

"Capital is the storehouse of seeds, but labor is their field, their rain, and their summertime."

"The flag of union labor is too sacred to be carried by a fanatic, a criminal or a fool."

"As Kidd was not a merchant, but a pirate, so much of our industry is not labor — it is martyrdom."

"It is often necessary to endure evil in public affairs but it is disastrous to pretend that it is good."

"The more an age seeks the one aim of amusement the less happy it will become."

"Curious world — if a man does not work for pay he will starve; if he does his profession will starve."

"Deer run, birds fly, and serpents crawl, but man talks himself forward."

"It is better to express ten ideas in one language than to utter one idea in ten languages."

"A materialist is a soul domesticated out of its immortality."

"The radicalism of a man is more often the eccentricity of doing a thing instead of talking about it."

"The highest ideals are best reached from the humble home."

"To be too near any one thing — that is fanaticism."

"Zululand is full of conservatives."

Of the church Professor Swing was a keen observer, and he had the advantage of other watchers in that he stood somewhat apart from the wilderness of temple spires. The pulpit in particular was an object of his solicitude, as may be seen from his many sermons on that theme — such as, "The Vineyard of the Clergy," "The Present State of the Sermon," "The New Pulpit," "The Great Brotherhood," and "The

Ministry of the Word." The foibles of the clergy he interpreted as the foibles of our human nature, and he saw them by the inner light of a laughing brain and a kind heart. Nor did he deem it improper to employ humor in the pulpit, for humor is sanity, a sense of distances, of proportions, of values; and whoso recognizes values is not to be deluded in this valley of illusions where the petty imposes itself to hide the real. Many of his best and brightest sayings had to do with religious matters, and, while always reverent, they were not without their point. Hear him:

"The sermon is the poppy of literature."

"The whole duty of the pulpit is the creation of public opinion."

"Nothing was absent from the old theology except religion."

"An unwritten creed may be as bloody as a written creed. The danger is not in the writing but in the creed."

"Modern studies have deeply affected, not the fact of God, but the quality of our idea of God."

"Time has shaken the bottle of knowledge and we are all of nearly one color of ignorance and wisdom."

"Aaron wanted a God who could make a walking stick bud and bloom. We are content with a God who can make a peach tree bloom."

"It was the custom of the old theologians not to be ignorant of anything, but always to know the whole reason. They knew many things that were not so."

"The more gently the Bible comes into the home, the more divine the book will appear."

"Rash minds throw away faith at the bidding of some facile orator, as Polonius saw in the one cloud the whole menagerie which Hamlet suggested."

"No expense is involved in the making of new dogmas, and there has always been an over-production."

"The world-doctrines are gradually coming into sight, not like a meteor, but like an epoch. Little dogmas are being crowded out."

"A deep attachment to ritual may be taken as a good-by bidden by a young preacher to the height and depth of

thought which belongs to the pulpit in all the great ages of the church."

"A church may lose all its religion by the endless ill-humor of the man in the pulpit. If a man cannot speak words of cheer let him throw away his unstrung harp."

"In our age the public soon feels the difference between a true pulpit and a meddling pulpit."

"The past was accustomed to burn men for opinion's sake; now we burn the opinions and let the men live."

"Outdoor life will bring us a new philosophy and a more natural religion. There is sun, and wind, and rain, in the words of Jesus."

"To science the soul is like a rainbow, beautiful as long as the drops of water fall between it and the sun. Withdraw the rain drops and the bow vanishes."

"In my intercourse with my fellow men I have found the best friends of the immortal hope among those who are students of justice — persons living in the presence of the soul."

"As all the darker texts of the Bible are like the Sibylline oracles, and have a double meaning, we are safe in following the holiest prompting of the human heart. Nothing is too good to be true."

"Mystery is the shadow of truth — the great night-scene of the land of the soul."

"By a common law of logic that ought to live longest which contains the most reason for being."

"Each heart should read its own mass over its own dead."

And, with this, Swing had the incomparable gift of being humorous without allowing himself to become a humorist. Good humor it was, spontaneous and gentle, having the two ingredients which Meredith — master of humor — said all true humor has, "salt and soul;" a quick perception of incongruity and the power of loving and forgiving while it mocked at human foibles. Sometimes, indeed, it was that sweet, subtle, half-pathetic humor which is close akin to tears, like sunlight seen through a summer shower. No gleam of eye, no tone of voice prepared his hearers for anything funny in his slow, quiet words, and when

one or two of the quickest minds saw the glint, it still took a little while for comprehension to percolate all layers of the audience. Then the fun, which was at first only a ripple, swelled into a wave of laughter. But with all his benignity there was an occasional flash of a slumbering lightning which he rarely used. So pervasive a quality as his humor needs but a few lines of illustration:

"Human nature has not much changed since man became acquainted with it."

"There is scarcely a folly of modern times that was not laughed at in the fables of Æsop."

"A lawyer will say as much over a case involving twenty-five dollars as Cicero said in defense of the poet Archais."

"Music is the most universal of the arts. Put a king in disguise and he will follow a brass band like a boy."

"As a plunderer Pollio had acquired wealth, as a stealer of statues he had cultivated art, and as a failure in war he had leisure."

"Jephthah offered up his daughter, and Agammemnon offered up Iphigenia. Those old oracles bore down heavily upon a religious man's relatives."

"The stupid animals who live in shells, the snail, the clam, the oyster, close their pearly gates and go into retirement the instant anything except soft water touches them. Some men mistake touchiness for refinement."

"When a youth comes back from college bringing with him a rare assortment of walking sticks, and an extreme attachment to the articles of his toilet, he has evidently met with education in only its gentlest form."

"The clergymen who went to the last General Assembly traveled in rapid cars, but the cars did not impart any swiftness to their intellect. The intellect of the church always travels in an oxen's cart."

"As a doctor adds to his labels and definitions his patrons add to their infirmities, by a law of sympathy. The discovery of a cure has often come in advance of the disease."

"The appetite of a pig attached to the mind of a philosopher displays a lack of symmetry."

"It ought to be a difficult question with a cultivated man how to go back and become an idiot gracefully."

"More things are overdone in the parlor than in the kitchen."

"Where there is laughter a heretic may feel perfectly safe."

Since Newman there has not been another such master of wistful, brooding pathos as David Swing. His view of life was pensive — that of a brave, sweet, smiling sadness — the outlook of one whom experience had taken below the surface of things, some way down into the mystery and sorrow of things mortal. His normal mood was delicately poised between mirth and melancholy, and it was sometimes difficult to know whether it was "humor just ready to sadden into pathos or pathos about to gleam into humor." It was his humor that saved him from that shadowy gloom which seemed to lurk near him, and which a keener insight did not justify. In sermons like "The Dim Glass," "The Strange Path of the Soul," "The Night of Time," "The Solitude of the Earth," "Gone Beyond the Veil," and "God Cares for Our Dead" — this last one of the noblest utterances in any tongue — we see him musing in the twilight. To follow him in these musings is to walk down along lanes of leafy prose, as night draws her curtain of shadow over the earthly scene. The wonder of it is the delicate and suggestive vesture of language with which simple thoughts were clothed; the remote and haunting echoes which were gathered and bidden to linger in his words. In fact, the appeal of these sermons to meditative natures was mainly that all such could recognize their own thoughts moving through the dusky veils of his style, and hardly know them, so strangely were they glorified.

One missed in Swing the joyous note heard in Beecher and Brooks, the lyric glee as of a bird singing among the boughs. But we must never forget that to

all but a few the top notes of the music come nearer screaming than singing, and that to the great majority of our fellow mortals the rapture of the saint is a fourth dimension — something which you may argue exists, but which they can never realize. To Swing death had a majesty, a white marble calm, and a solemn half-beauty, but its shadows were deep. His music fell to a lower octave, more in the key of Tennyson than of Browning:

"Man is not foolishly attached to his life; he is divinely bound. Great friendships, great duties, great purposes chain his foot to this earthly shore. He does not willingly go away; he is taken. It is not that man goes, but that God comes. . . . The ponderous and silent machinery of nature carries forward the entire human race, and, without fail, drops them into one final sleep. Our world is remarkable not only for those who live in it, but on account of those who have gone from it. What a pageant of human excellence could the past be reassembled once more upon the earth. The immensity of the human race far back of us awes one. Its absence now makes every head bow low and repeat softly the words, 'I know that I, too, must go the way of all the earth and return no more.' And in the inevitable there is peace. . . . It is a dim and shadowy path, but its breadth amounts to a grandeur. The isolated soul need not shrink from obeying a call to journey along a road so full of human footprints and so bordered with altars erected to God. Many in the last year moved along this strange path of the soul. In what loneliness they went! The father without the child, the wife without the husband, the judge without the court, the statesman unattended, the little child with no arm about it. In what silent dignity they go, their faces all turned in one direction, toward the infinite. We who are compelled to watch their moving figures have no power to detain, and can only say farewell and then weep. The silence of the death chamber comes from the powerlessness of the living and the dying. Nothing can be said or done. The path of the soul leads away from the earth, to One who made the race come in silence and who makes it in silence go away — One too invisible to be seen or heard and too spiritual to be approached by man's earthly body. But to go hence is really no more won-

derful than to come hither. Your grave in the grass is more tearful than the universe only because it is your own — the fact that it is your mystery. . . . In these moments of sad reverie we take refuge with Christ."

But it was in his letters of comfort to the sorrowing that one saw the depths of his wise and tender heart, as when he wrote to his friends, the Talcotts, who had lost a sweet child:

"DEAR FRIENDS: It is the mistake often of those who have lost some loved one to think that they must attempt to recover from the awful shock and separation. No educated mind ought ever to recover fully from such wounds of the spirit. Are we to suppose that Edmund Burke ever forgot for a day the death of his son? Did Hallam feel for a few months only the absence of his idolized boy? The tears must last while the absence continues. The sad memories which death brings are a part of our education. Under the influence of an absent soul the heart softens, and man goes forth each day more a friend of his race and more of a worshiper of God. The death of a friend exalts those who remain to weep. But sorrow must ennoble duty, not end it. We must so feel that death is a part of God's plan and God's love, that the grave of a lost one must seem attached to the work we are to do. These tombs and these duties are entangled. We cannot separate them. We cannot put asunder what God has joined together. May all who mourn have such a faith in the teachings of our common religion that each absent one may make duty more sacred, happiness higher and deeper, and heaven nearer. Yours as ever, DAVID SWING."

Faith in the highest and best facts of his native land was an element of the religion of David Swing. Next to the saints of religion he ranked the heroes of his country; because a nation is not a soulless corporation, but a spiritual passion, a sacramental friendship, a family. Franklin taught economy, Greeley industry, Sumner eloquence and peace, Lincoln justice and mercy, but they all taught him the lesson of faith in the Republic. As a young man he had felt the spell of Henry Clay, and later the vast tragedy of the Civil

War passed before his eyes — an invocation of Humanity against inhumanity, at once a Nemesis of national sin and the awful birth-throes of a new era. Some day there will be gleaned from his pages one of the richest volumes of patriotic lore in our language. It will include, besides his sermons on Lincoln, his memorial tributes to Sumner, Phillips, Beecher, Logan, Hayes, and Garfield, his "Memories of the War," his meditations beside "A Soldier's Grave," and his rapt prophecy of a sublime senate of nations which will make war forever impossible. He believed in "American Ideas," in "An American Religion," with a faith to whose forefancy no destiny was too fair for our republic. If to this we add his vision of Christianity as a civilization, we strike one of the ringing, inspiring notes of his ministry. His patriotic faith was thus a kind of political theology, and like his religious faith it was broad, idealistic and full of hope.

Such a sketch of the genius of David Swing is necessarily imperfect, as indeed any account of him must be. It is easy to mark the orbit of his mind and note its ruling qualities, but he was a man of such high and tender humanity, of such unique and persuasive beauty of soul, of personality so opulent, engaging and lovable, that one finds it difficult to form a deliberate and calm estimate of him. If one seeks for that in him which hallowed his intellect, making it potent to beguile men of equal wonder and love, it is found, perhaps, in a blend of Beauty, Reason and Pity. He moved men as almost no one else ever moved them, but he seemed unaware of his power. This modesty was native to the man, the fruit of a finely tempered spirit, and a wise humor which kept everything in its place — including himself. It gave him an incompar-

able charm, and assigned a limit within which he had no equal. He was content to live his life, as a rose lives, quietly yielding the best there was in him, and pass on. It remains for us to trace the stream of his thought through the rich harvest years of his later life, until it emptied into his grave.

CHAPTER XI

The Harvest Years

The death of Beecher, in 1887, touched Professor Swing with a keen sense of personal sorrow as well as of national loss. They had long been friends, and, in a sort, fellow-workers, each the pride and glory of his city. To a friend he wrote: "His death does not sadden us by only its own single, dark shadow, but also by its reminder that a great troop of these mighty ones is marching into the shadows. Beecher's passing seems the passing of a generation. Parker, Phillips, Sumner, Chase, Grant, are hurrying away, leaving to new hands interests the greatest ever committed to mind and heart. There must be a Fatherland to which these great citizens repair when they have finished their labors on earth." One knows not where to find a better brief estimate of a notable pulpit career than in Swing's memorial tribute to the Man of Plymouth Church, unless it be in his appreciation of Phillips Brooks eight years later. A few lines from that tribute are worth while:

> "As Goethe absorbed all the sweet odors and bewildering fancy of Germany, as Shakespeare caught all of his age in his wide mental dragnet, thus Henry Ward Beecher became Americanized, and under his ministry there grew up a new form both of politics and religion. The rationalism and humanity which led slaves up out of bondage could not do otherwise than lead God's children out of old Puritanism, with its election, its predestination and literal and eternal fire.

For many years, without any intermission, rolled forth his eloquence about justice as between man and man and as between God and man. . . . Having descended by lineage and having ascended by his mind and soul from an old and quite iron-like shape of Christianity, Beecher stands in a significant sense for our Christian period. Reason and kindness combined in this one priest at the altar. Imagination, fancy, wit, humor, pathos, language, originality, great enthusiasm, great happiness and great physical power, were some of the virtues and blessings which heaven bestowed upon this most gifted child. Coming into the work of the ministry over forty years ago, he has from the beginning of his active service been a new interpreter of the words, and laws, and dreams of Christ. He has been revivalist, and philosopher, and philanthropist, and poet, and politician, and theologian quite judiciously mingled, and thus has moved along, not as a cannon-ball, but as a gulf-stream. . . . It is difficult to make a survey of such a career without ceasing to be a calm critic and becoming a worshiper. I stand by a stream of eloquence which all through these many summers has never once gone dry, or fallen low, but which has run bank-full of waters sweet and bright. The coldness and deadness of style which long marked and palsied the pulpit are not seen in the sermons of Stanley, Farrar and Beecher. They recall a eulogy of an ancient: 'What they touch they ornament.' . . . Beecher was amazingly fertile. He seldom, perhaps never, quoted poetry; his words did not come down from memory, but up from a heart which could not repeat any former hour. To the benevolence of a Wilberforce he joined the eloquence of a Webster or a Clay; he did not have an eloquence that could express history, but an eloquence that could make it. . . . He was himself so bold and tolerant that he makes it easy for his age to reject many of his own opinions. But after these rejections have all been made, and justly made, there will remain abundant reason for a nation's gratitude and the gratitude of the church."

It was not generally known, perhaps, even by his friends, that Professor Swing was asked if he would consider an invitation to succeed Beecher as pastor of Plymouth Church. A letter to that effect reached him, but he declined the honor on the ground that he could not leave Central Church, and on the further ground

that he could not, at his time of life, uproot himself and expect fruitful growth in a new field. One can imagine the slow, dreamy, drawling voice of Swing, full of strange stops, ringing out where Beecher had played his harp of gold, but he was wise in not yielding to the lure of the East, which had attracted Collyer, Savage, Lorimer, and so many other rich personalities, from the West. At any rate, it had long been a saying of his that in the pulpit, as in the home, three removals are equal to a fire, and upon that theory he was not slow to act.

In 1887 there appeared in the *Inter Ocean* an anonymous critique of Professor Swing which, while emphasizing too much his oddities as an orator, is not without its value as helping to mark more clearly the misconception which he suffered in many minds in the later part of his life. Incidentally, it gives a glimpse of Central Church, which had grown to be one of the great Protestant congregations of the world. We read:

"David Swing is, without doubt, the most accomplished essayist in Chicago. He is not, in any proper sense of the term, a preacher. He is a stranger to the exhortative method. He deals in metaphor, and utters a mild mixture of modern philosophy and diluted scripture in a style in which a rhythmic rhetoric and a barbarous elocution are constantly at strife. The result is a singular and most admirable kaleidoscope. He has no system. He belongs to no school. He is eminently Pauline. He is all things to all men — some say to all rich men. But what of that? After all, the rich are human if not humane. . . . He may be all things to all men but an orator. That he can never be to any man. Swing's continued success excites surprise. The church-going element in America is easily enamored of oratory. The fluent and impassioned orator, like the late pastor of Plymouth church, fascinates thousands, where the exquisite rhetoric, the ingenious structure, and the humane spirit of the Chicago essayist would quietly charm the esthetic few. The former

issued his words of instruction and love from lips which quivered with magnetic fire, while the latter utters everything in that same woe-begone, nasal whine which can be heard nowhere on earth but in Music Hall. The most astonishing tribute to Swing's grace and power as a writer is seen in the willingness of more than three thousand suffering mortals to listen to him as a speaker once a week. Added to a personal presence singularly unattractive — a face, the lower half of which is suggestive of frozen sensuousness, while the upper half indicates anxious thought — and a physique without form, is the elocutionary manner of a country undertaker inviting the cousins of the corpse to take the last look. And yet he holds and sways three thousand people every Sunday.

"Is this a sufficient explanation of Swing's power? Scarcely. Prof. Swing is the *via media* between two extremes, the sooth-sayer of a religious transition. One can always go to Music Hall sure of two things: first, a literary treat; second, the deft administration of a mental anodyne. A sensuous and delightful haze pervades the scene and all asperities of language and creed are softened thereby. The single object about which there are no curved lines and nothing but angles is the physique of Swing himself. Yet for twenty-two years he has read his essays to a congregation which has constantly grown in size and in admiration. It is unfair to attribute his success to an attractive, perspicuous literary style. There is something more. . . . Wrapped up in his movement there is a splendid ethical zeal and a noble philanthropic enterprise. The Music Hall following carries on what is probably the largest Sunday School in the world, at 245 Clybourn avenue. It is a school of four thousand pupils, led by C. B. Holmes. Attached to it are a sewing school, a kindergarten and an industrial school for boys. On the corner of Twelfth and Halsted streets a mission school is conducted. The funds are raised in Music Hall, and at the Eastertide the financial question is settled for the year. [1]

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[1] It would require a volume to recount the activities of Central Church, and such labors hardly result from a mental anodyne. Its enterprises were due, however, more to the inspiration of Prof. Swing than to his direction. From his Lake Geneva home he wrote: "What delight would be mine in church work could I command the strength which is mine here." But it was not to be so, nor was that his work. Like all men he had his moods of depression, as when he said: "I know of no soul saved by my ministry" — not knowing that all over the land there were men who owed to him their souls, what faith they had for the day and what hope for the morrow.

"Personally, Prof. Swing is the best of good fellows, though slightly restrained and self-conscious before strangers. With his familiar companions, however, he is amiable, humorous and wonderfully entertaining. Among his friends he numbers Lawrence Barrett, Eugene Field, Ben King, Opie Read and many others of the Bohemian circle which has no church affiliation, but which does not hesitate to clasp hands with a man with cultivated tastes and noble purposes, who is at the same time a stranger to the stupid prejudices which make righteousness repugnant and form a commercial trust for the dispensation of salvation. He stands before the community in a unique light. Free from all restraints save those of reason and good taste; exercising an influence through the intellect and tastes of society; respected as a citizen, loved as a friend; if he were only a preacher he might be termed 'the sweet singer of Israel.'"

Many were the attempts to account for the triumph and long ascendency of David Swing, though none of them explained it. An early critic said that he was to the pulpit what Howells was to literature — a realist in religion, a prophet of the natural pieties, of the quiet emotions of undaring souls — gracious, cultured and wise, but lacking the Divine Fire. Another pointed out that, while his faith was large, liberal, kindly and tolerate, he was the kind of a man who was content to dwell on the outside of religion, never once seeking to reach that which is furthest within — though that would seem to be an arbitrary judgment of one whose inner life was hidden within so many folds of modesty and reserve. Some, as we have just seen, thought it sufficient to say that he was a soothsayer of a transition, a priest of the Church of Holy Ambiguity, and that men were glad to escape from the toil of exact thinking into the poetic haze of his theology. Others found his secret in the personal graciousness of the man, whose personality lent itself easily to legend, his very oddities endearing him to all

who heard him, whether casually, as did the thousands, or often and intimately, as did the few. But this did not explain the devotion of those who lived in far places and who never saw his face, except as it was reflected in the stream of his thought. All agreed, however, that his spirit was lofty and that the one aim of his life was to lift the men of Chicago, and the strangers within her gates, out of the mire of materialism into the higher air of God.

One may admit that he had an instinctive perception of the moods and currents of his age; that his thought was a movement rather than a system or a statement; and that he blended, attractively, the allurements of humor, pathos and beauty. But none of these qualities, nor all of them together, much as they enhanced his power, explained his continued success. His character was a factor in his appeal, and character tells. Men bowed to it, thought wistfully of their own sometimes sordid lives, and were touched by a sense of wonder and regret, as they are in the presence of surpassing beauty anywhere. All men knew that religion was the one mastering idea of his life, and that whoever else might let go of faith, or betray the ideal, or bow down to the Golden Calf, that would Swing never. Scholarship, too, exerted its right to be heard, and when joined with a rich and tender humanity its authority was not disputed. His mission was not to exhort or to command, but to lead men to a larger point of view, to sway by the magnetism of beauty and the might of victorious ideas. The breadth of his appeal, no less than the delicate sculpture of his thought, won men, as did his sanity, his serenity, his sagacity, and his charity. He was a poet, and therefore a priest to men of "the wonder and bloom of the world," making

the truths of faith and the facts of life stand out from the drab canvas of the commonplace. Wherever such a soul goes there goes light, idealism and hope. But more than all, perhaps, it was his spirituality — a spirituality that was human rather than ecclesiastical, and a mysticism that was all sunlight — that held men as by a spell; that quality which the world denies, yet instinctively loves, even while not understanding. One could not hear Professor Swing, or see him walking abstractedly along the street, without feeling that he was a citizen of that city of ideality and beauty which we who live in the valleys or on the slopes see but vaguely, and at brief intervals, as a vision in the midst of grey hours. By the magic of his genius he invested the kingdom of heaven with reality, and made it something more than a visionary scene suspended in the sky.

A man of this order was properly placed in a great city, a magnet to men [1] who had ears to hear such a voice as his, and to whom his culture and the quality of his thought appealed. David Swing found his audi-

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[1] Of Swing's power over men, Mr. Lyman Gage writes: "After his death a great banker said: 'Swing is gone. This is a lonesome old town now. I do not know what I shall do. I am a hard sort of man, an unbeliever perhaps, but I never missed my place in Music Hall. He got hold of me and made me want to be good, and I came to look forward to Sunday and to Swing's discourses as a thirsty traveler looks for a refreshing spring along the dusty road.' "

Young men, especially — even those at a distance — were touched and awakened by the gentle preacher. In an interview Dr. Hillis, of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, once said:

"Fortunately I got hold of a volume of Swing's sermons. The sublimity of his thought and the beauty of his style entranced me. Believing that I could understand him better if I knew Greek, I gave up my work and entered college. But for David Swing I might not have read Greek. Without Greek I might still be a talking layman. Others have inspired and directed my life, but he came first. Good old David Swing! The one mighty preacher of beauty, he came to Chicago like an ancient Greek, built his altar near the Board of Trade, kindled his fire, read his essays, and disappeared. But he wrought in wonders. He called and Aphrodite arose from the dregs and ugliness of slaughter-houses and the gross materialism of business. More than a teacher; he was an inspiration and a prophecy."

ence in multitude, and kept it through a period which should be held an adequate proof of his power, the more so as his lot was cast in a great commercial metropolis. But Chicago, be it said to her lasting glory, gave during his lifetime an eager hearing to her sage who was an apostle of beauty, an evangelist of refinement, and a Christian publicist; "the most poetic of the prophets who has not left his life in verse; the most genial and philosophical of American essayists, who was always a priest of goodness." Freed from all restraints, his genius followed its own path, drawing from nature, literature and life those lessons of culture and duty which he taught with Addisonian simplicity and grace, seeking by every art of eloquence and love to make men patriots and Christians, himself a type and emblem of the higher human life. Such a ministry is easily underestimated, because it was so large, so fundamental and so great.

An example at once of the sanity and the charity of Professor Swing may be seen in his attitude toward the Christian Science cult, to which he was repeatedly importuned, and as often declined, to lend his name. As a cult of negation, denying the bad, he thought it an improvement on the older negation which denied the good; but its optimism seemed to him too roseate and its fatalism a little fatuous. He saw no harm in its vagaries of mysticism, since they were only the clouds which hang upon the uncertain horizons of all human life. "Prayers are offered," he said, "each day as the hours reach mid-day, that light may come to me through the teaching of Christian Science. There is helpfulness, no doubt, in the power of mind over matter, but the foundation stone, belief in the vicarious suffering of Jesus, is wanting. Madame Guyon stood

by the grave of her child without a tear; but Jesus wept. Out of the heart are the issues of life. The Quietists commit a fatal mistake. There is no evil? That is the ultimate sloth; it is surrender, it is death. Evermore the Cross of Christ rises up to refute it." Never was his power of soft and calm penetration, like that of serene light, more sure and wise than here.

The same serene sagacity he brought to the study of social problems, which, after the Haymarket tragedy in 1887, and its accompanying hysteria of public madness, more and more absorbed his thought; the serenity of one who could modify the impatience of reformers with a wiser estimate of values, a calmer mood, and a power of seeing things in perspective. Like Emerson before him, he warned men not to expect from sociology what sociology can never give, and that to hope to satisfy men with earthly things is to forget "the awful souls that dwell in flesh." But he did not, as such preachers are wont to do, abate by one jot or tittle his zeal for wiser, juster and more merciful laws. In a sermon on "The Dream of Henry George" he took issue, reluctantly, with a theory whose warp was idealism and whose woof was human sympathy, advocated, as has been aptly said, by a pen of pain dipped in the tears of the human race. Later on he saw things more clearly, and, while never joining any of the economic cults, he left behind the old social and political economy, so fatal to that fundamental reform which consists of securing not alone the right of each, but an equal opportunity for all. So, in a sermon on "The Search After Truth," we read:

"It is said that there are many thousands of men in our land who cannot secure work. Having families and having health and skill and industry, yet each day they see the bread disappear, the coal heap diminish, the children's shoes fall to

pieces, the face of the mother grow sorrowful, and the home lose its games and laughter. We do not want magic. We do not expect the sky to rain down manna and quails. But we all know that there is a divine philosophy that would bring happiness to the home of every industrious mortal upon earth. The surface of the earth would yield bread and clothing for hundreds of millions more of people than are now here. The unplowed fields are so large and rich that our hunger comes, it is certain, from man and not from God. All hunger and poverty are, therefore, needless, and to find the way to a universal welfare is the problem of problems. It ought to be clear that old sociologies are not more infallible than old theologies, though a new capitalist may be as bigoted as an old Calvinist. But men who deplore bigotry in religion must not be bigots in sociology and politics. We must listen to all who speak in the name of humanity. The forerunners of an age need not be its greatest minds; they need be only its most sensitive minds, the most studious of the absolute right and wrong. The Booths, the Steads, the Georges, the McGlynns, may reach some mighty principle which a Gladstone may overlook. All minds should be alert, for laurels green and unfading await him who shall find some wider highway to a greater human prosperity. The most peace is found in the old dogma, *laisser-faire*, let it alone. But education has created a universal moving day, and all things must be better fixed. 'Let things go' has made the past a heap of ruins. Volumes could not tell the folly of that. If the time has come for enlightened pulpits and for broader church views, why has not the time come for enlightened statesmanship and for broad social wisdom? All must be troubled with new dreams of justice, new visions of happiness, and must overturn and overturn until the right shall come. In the meantime, while theorists and lawmakers are thinking and dreaming of justice, love must do her work. When wisdom is in the minority philanthropy must take the throne. It will not do to quote a proverb and pass the problem by. What are these old maxims but the dark shells of cocoons in which our wisdom is waiting in the grub state for a warmer day to come which shall invite it out into the open air of action, not to dream a dream, but to go about doing good? Since the days of Æsop men have been spinning these little silken nests in which to keep some egg of wisdom from the storm, and it is high time for the Chrysalides to hatch out and fill the air with beautiful deeds."

In such sermons — and they were many — he was at once publicist and preacher, statesmanlike in his scope and grasp and insight. So also in his survey of the war against corporations, which even in those days was becoming bitter. Roman law created the corporation, he pointed out — a feat of legal acumen which excited the wonder of Lord Coke. It grew out of the fact that society has forms of business much too large for one man's life or means; hence the legal man, "a mind without decline, a body without death." Corporations are the wisdom of man defying the grave. The evil comes when the law makes presents to one set of men, whereas it should give gifts to all or to none. He saw that the ethics of individual honesty did not, as fact, cover the relations involved in the workings of corporations. There must be a larger outlook, a more delicate social sense, for our most serious struggle is to keep the law from becoming, in Solon's terrible phrase, like the net which holds the little fish, while the big fish break through. No preacher of this land ever dealt with such problems with a more searching insight, and at the same time with a more catholic spirit or a more humane and hopeful wisdom. Hear him:

"One of the most visible and painful instances of a false balance is furnished us, not by the shop of some salesman, but by society itself. No abomination can be greater than that in which a man who steals a hundred thousand dollars has less guilt than a negro who steals a melon from a field. . . . When the Lord sees a single mortal making five millions into ten, and ten into twenty, by a press which simply prints more stock for the market, and then sees a railway laborer go to his hovel at night with only a dollar between his family and want, the abomination must seem as large as eternity and as black as the abyss of perdition. Out of the security of great offenders is now swarming a large army of small imitators, and thus our society will soon be infested by a new form of piracy. Our government has no

perception of this injury to honor and business, and is still pursuing bad Indians instead of turning half the army after bad white men. Mankind can exist without music, without painting, without poetry; but it cannot exist without justice. . . . Man completes his destiny only by giving his heart to two worlds — the world of self and the world of humanity. If our age of scholars and thinkers and humanists is happier than the olden times it comes largely from the new care of the multitude which has sprung up to divert the mind from self. The world of the race thus gives back a rich reward to the world of self, and both are blessed. The time is coming near, its dawn is even now upon us, when the maxim, born of ignorance and vice, that 'corporations have no souls' will be buried under the overwhelming truth that a corporation of five men has five souls, and a corporation of ten men has ten souls, each one touched, like Jesus, with compassion for the multitude; and in that day such political corporations as we now possess will have to be digged for in the cold ground by men who will excavate for the evidences of the vices of half civilized peoples. A corporation expresses the men who compose it. Be the men in the railway service, or in any other business, their acts are the picture of the men in a body. Men in corporations were once like the fabled, silly ostrich, which hid from an enemy by thrusting its head into the sand; but the world laughs now to see the great body of the bird sticking out, and the ostrich has at last heard the laugh. The earth is becoming dotted over with business firms which study the welfare not only of their bank account but of the swarms of human life which live under their business flag. As rapidly as men shall learn that self is the arena of early life and the world the arena of Christ-manhood, so rapidly will corporations become bodies with souls beating in them. Commerce is not a jungle, it is a friendship."

It was an agitated world upon which Professor Swing looked in his last years, turbulent like the tumbling lake near his window. He watched its heaving restlessness and heard its passionate outcries, as it toiled, and joked, and cursed, and prayed, under the grey smoke-cloud of its puffing industrialism. He saw its fads, its cults, its mysticisms mixed with its materialisms, class arrayed against class in social war — fiat

money in finance, sex obsession in literature, heresy trials in the church, bossism in politics, Pickwickianism in the pulpit. He saw it all with clear eyes, but he did not let faith or hope drop out of his heart. Tokens of progress, of the increasing kindness and justice of man, of the advancing beauty of society, of the growing reasonableness of religion, [1] he saw everywhere. Art, instead of painting saints and angels, had learned how to pencil the beauty of the earth and the hard lot of the poor. Once Philosophy spent its time looking out upon the heavens from an ivory tower, much too great a lady to take note of humble folk. All now was changed, and the lady of the tower had exchanged her robe of fur for a simple garb. Science had become more refined, more reverent, in the presence of the spiritual, and education more democratic. "The Advent of Woman" meant a new force in the world, "because her life is of a higher quality and potency, and it is she who uplifts the ideals in whose light the multitudes walk." Such movements as that of Jane Addams at Hull House he watched with keen sympathy and hope, as witness a sermon in the course of which he gave it as his view that, owing to her genius for social detail, the application of beauty and

[1] It was natural that Prof. Swing should watch with keen interest the repeated efforts of the Presbyterian church to revise its Confession of Faith. But the suggestion of Dr. John Hall that the creed needed only a footnote expressing the Mercy of God was too much for him. "The Mercy of God in a footnote," he exclaimed. "The Sermon on the Mount might also be added as an appendix! Logic will follow that church until it has nothing left but its Christ, and then for the first time in its history it will be rich!" News that Dr. Patton — he of the heresy trial — had said in a talk to his students that the fate of the pagans might not be so dark as formally pictured, called out a spicy essay from Swing in the Chicago *Journal*. "At last," he said, "Socrates, Plato and dear Penelope have permission to assemble at the gates of heaven and listen to some good music! Happy the man who revised his creed years ago." There was a rumor that he would return to the church of his fathers, but it was never anything more than a rumor.

of social ideals would rest largely in the hands of woman. He rejoiced in "The Fading of Names," sectarian names, as a prophecy of the end of the petty war of words and the advent of a wider friendship of faiths. He believed in the present, in the brotherhood of man, in the coming of a better day, a larger church, and a nobler humanity — and he had the patience of hope.

Much of his later preaching was in this key of solemn optimism and prophecy, like the enchanted bird in the fable, who, running toward the west, lured by the sunset glory, and seeing that the skyey beauty could not be overtaken afoot, took to its wings. Looking back he saw all time on the march. Afar off he perceived the defeat of ignorance and sin, and the triumphal procession of the victors who have fought for the right. It was like a benediction to hear him in this rapt and exalted mood of expectation. A few lines may illustrate how, amidst many trials, some of which were unknown to all but an inner circle, he kept his life and teaching keyed to a divine faith. Some of them are from sermons, some from letters, while others show what pearls he dissolved in the wine of his conversation.

"Why should one judge life by its lower phases, or measure faith by its low water mark of depression? I may lose confidence in humanity for one hour of the twenty-four, but it is the other twenty-three hours of faith in humanity in which I will do any work for it."

"I see Eternal Goodness beaming in all nature and feel it pulsating in all human struggle. I see the certainty of righteousness directing the march of life, guiding the course of good and bad alike. I know that love is the one sweet energy that has made the world worth living in, and that he who has forgiveness in his heart is born to eternal life."

"Evil is unnatural — goodness the natural state of man. Earth has no hopeless islands or continents. We live in a redemptive world. Poverty will end; sin will die; love will triumph, and hope will plant flowers on every grave."

"Worship will not decline; it will grow with the growing reasons for worship; but the worshiper will be improved. The Christian Church bows to the law of our planet and slowly changes and advances."

"The church is the agent of heaven as art is the agent of beauty. Art carries no whip. It does not drive slaves, it leads lovers. The church possesses no authority. It cannot decree like a state. It rules only as a vast wisdom joined to a vast friendship."

"Heaven has suddenly annexed earth. Theology has expanded until it admits social questions and doctrines, and men who once needed only to apply texts of Scripture to a careless sinner or a trusting saint find themselves compelled to study the whole history and need of mankind."

"In thus studying man as man the church indirectly acts upon its clergy and prepares them for a wider intellectual career. The pulpit will have in the future a place and power unknown in the past, even in the great ages of the church."

"In the empire of faith Phillips Brooks was a great Commoner, by nature a dealer in the most universal of ideas. He never possessed the power to turn a little incident into a great doctrine. He stood at that point where all sects meet. No one could go to Christ without meeting that giant form along the way."

"Capital is condensed labor. It is nothing until labor takes hold of it. The living laborer sets free the condensed labor and makes it assume some form of utility or beauty. Capital and labor are one, and they will draw nearer to each other as the world advances in intellect and goodness."

"If education is valuable, the age must double it; if art is sweet and high, we must double its richness; if justice is divine, we must double its quantity and tenderness; if religion is saving, we must hasten with it to more firesides; if life is great, let us count more precious all its winters and summers."

"War is the blood-mark on the white hand of Lady Macbeth — a stain which keeps her name from nobleness. Among civilized nations war is as absurd as the old dueling was between two fools. All nations must combine to form a sublime

senate of the world to which each nation can go and find the right.''

''The religion of the future is the religion of the present among those whose minds are the largest, the clearest, and the most tender. It will be simple and reasonable. It must make no false pretentious claims. It must be touched with idealism, or the artistic soul cannot endure it. It must be practical, and must always include Faith and Hope as well as Morals. The religion of Jesus answers all these tests — a religion of trust in God and good will to men.''

''The tenderest of the love-songs of the Greeks closes with a sob. It is an autumn wind that rustles in their bowers of spring. But we live not without Hope. 'Let us give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for his mercy endureth forever.' ''

In 1891 Professor Swing made note of the twenty-fifth year of his Chicago ministry, in a brief preface to a sermon on ''The Pastorate.'' The sermon was a sketch of the changes he had seen in church life and thought and was a way-mark in a great career. In public influence and esteem Swing held in his last years a position such as few men have ever held in any metropolis. Demands upon his time were innumerable, and often too exacting for his frail strength. He was a pastor to many hundreds who had no claim upon him other than that they had read his sermons or knew his name. His correspondence was huge. Men at a distance, men in doubt or distress, wrote to him asking his counsel, and to each he sent a word of good cheer. Lovers deemed it an honor to have him bless their vows, and parents wished him to christen their little ones. Far and near he went, sometimes weak and weary, to lay wreaths of hope upon the graves of the dead, as he knew so well how to do. No one who heard it can ever forget his tribute to Emma Abbott as she lay in Music Hall, clad in the lilac robe worn in the first

act of "Ernani," with a rose in her white hand.[1] At such times his words were touched with a tender pathos which, proceeding from a melted heart, melted all who came under their spell. He thought kindly of all, and his gentle judgments were the outcome of his charitable views of life and man.

Apart from his own work the chief interest of Professor Swing was in the Humane Society, though he belonged to various societies and clubs for the advancement of learning and art. All his life, as we have seen, he walked with the companions of the sorrowful way, his humanistic temperament making him an heir of the woes of man and beast. He left off fishing in his late years, "because life now seems too sacred and sweet for me to rob even the meanest creature of it." Cruelty in any form hurt him deeply, and if a cab-driver lashed his horse he would stop the cab, get out, pay his fare, and walk the rest of the way. In his later years he overcame much of the feeling of sensitiveness

[1] Of another kind, and having a touch of grim humor, was the incident, typical of many others, which Dr. J. H. Barrows relates:

"A famous Chicago lawyer died in the house next to my own. He had been a man of exceedingly vicious life, notoriously successful in saving thieves and murderers from justice. The landlady of the house where he died wished to make the funeral a great occasion. She wanted sermons, both from Prof. Swing and myself. The professor called at my house before the service and said, 'Barrows, we have a rather tough job on hand.' I assented, but told him that he could pull the case through if anybody could. He kindly offered to furnish me with appropriate scripture selections. We entered the house of death together. The rooms were crowded with ex-convicts and escaped criminals. I sat next to one of the most famous murderers in Chicago. The landlady started the hymn, 'Nearer my God to Thee,' expecting the congregation to join in, but the words were not familiar to the assembly, and soon the music died out. The professor began his remarks in a low, quiet voice. The landlady stepped up to him and asked him to speak louder. He quietly declined. His sermon was a model of generalization, closing with an expressed hope that the deceased had attained unto faith. As we came out I said to the professor, 'I must confess that you are equal to such an occasion.' Several months later Prof. Swing, meeting me, said, 'We seem to meet usually at funerals; what a pity we cannot attend each other's obsequies.' I certainly could not ask for a gentler critic of my faults than the eulogist of that lawyer."

which the heresy trial induced in him, and mingled more freely with his brother ministers. He frequently attended church on Sunday evenings, and always at the St. Paul's Universalist church. One evening after the service he laid his hand on Dr. Canfield's shoulder, and said, "I love you. I love this church and its work. It is the only church I ever attend." Of his fraternal fellowships Bishop Fallows gives these memories:

"A course of lectures was given in my church during one of the stormiest winters I have known in Chicago. Prof. Swing was engaged to give his lecture on 'The Novel.' A blizzard raged during the evening of his coming and the snow drifts were almost breast high. But he was present at the hour announced. The audience was a small one, and in my introduction I referred to the weather and the consequent meager attendance in some words of regret. On rising, he said, 'Bishop Fallows, you and I have lived too long to make any apology for the weather and what may result from it. I am glad to greet these friends who have braved the elements to hear me, and congratulate myself that I am a sufficiently powerful magnet to draw them together under such conditions.' . . . Prof. Swing was a member of 'The Round Table,' a ministerial association consisting of twenty-four clergymen of the city, including the late Rabbi Felsenthal, Dr. Hirsch, Dr. Thomas, with leading pastors of the various churches. The exercises were always opened with the Lord's Prayer, in which all joined. Social, philanthropic, psychical and other topics were fully and frankly discussed. Prof. Swing was one of the choice spirits of that circle. We all felt the benediction of his presence and enjoyed greatly the literary taste and wide knowledge with the enlivening humor he brought to the consideration of every theme. . . . When a series of sermons was being preached by leading divines, in St. Paul's church, on the distinctive tenets of their various denominations, I requested Prof. Swing to preach on the subject of 'Independency.' Kindly, but with great earnestness, he replied, 'I do not believe in independency and, therefore, cannot defend it. I am an independent not of my own choosing. I would much prefer to be in harmonious affiliation with others in a church organization.' The longer I knew him the deeper and stronger grew my love for him. Outside

of the pulpit he was a fine, discriminating critic, and an accomplished litterateur. He was a man of contemplation rather than of action, a Melancthon and not a Luther."

The Columbian Exposition was indeed a dream-city, rising as at the touch of magic into sculptured vistas and palaces of human enterprise and beauty. It was an epitome, a living encyclopedic array of the age, and as such Professor Swing interpreted it in his sermons on "Things and Men" and "The Higher Meaning of the Fair." He felt that it would unite men, educate them, and, merged in great impersonal ends, they would grow in unity and nobility of aim, in heart and mind. Youth would be led around the world; manhood would be taught great lessons; while womanhood would see more clearly the sweep of its mission. Religion and politics would lose sight of petty dogmas in the presence of the world-truths. He was vice-chairman, under Dr. Barrows, of the committee which arranged the Parliament of Religions, though he did not take any part in its proceedings except to read a paper before the Congress of Humane Societies. With the great peace-bell of the Fair tolling, as all hoped, the death-knell of intolerance, the Parliament opened September 11, 1893, and it was an unforgetable experience as the men of many tribes and faiths joined with one fervor in repeating the Lord's Prayer. The Brahman forgot his caste and the Catholic was chiefly conscious of his catholicity as all met in the name of freedom and friendship, and the scenes were at times Pentecostal in their enthusiasm and prophecy. If one may not say, with Ameer Ali, that it was "the greatest event of the century," all must admit that it was at least impressive and unique, and that it did much to call a truce to theological strife.

"I did not take any part in the parliament of religions," said Professor Swing. "I was invited, and even urged, but not belonging to any particular sect I declined. I thought the congress had better be left to the creeds." But this was over-modest, and many have always felt that the parliament was incomplete without some utterance from him. He looked upon the spectacle with lively interest and joy, seeing everything, even a glint of humor now and then — as when a pastor of some rural parish was conducting the devotional exercises, and, seeing all about him the gifted heathen in their picturesque robes, and feeling that God had brought them to our very doors, prayed fervently that they might see the utter sinfulness of their ways and come to the one true and abiding faith. He was especially gratified with the Catholic Congress and its friendly and liberal views on the subject of public schools.[1] He held Cardinal Gibbons and Bishops Spaulding and Ireland, all of whom he knew, in high esteem. Many of the men of the far East he met, particularly Mozoomdar, of Calcutta, whom he loved as "a soul perfumed by the winds and flowers in heavenly places; a strange shadow of those early disciples who followed Christ in Judea, with shouts and palm branches." But for some others — "the parlor magi," as he called them — he had no love and but slight respect. As may be seen in his sermon on "Building a Great Religion," in which the significance of the parliament

[1] The problem of religious training in the public schools had long been a matter of solicitude to Prof. Swing. Several of his sermons were devoted entirely to that subject. He thought a selection of Scripture passages, approved by leading men of the various sects, would be advisable. Out of this suggestion grew that famous little book, "Readings From the Bible, Selected for Schools," edited by W. J. Onaham, J. H. Barrows, and C. C. Bonney, and endorsed by Archbishop Feehan, Monsignor Satolli, Rabbis Kohler, Mendez and Felsenthal, Dr. Harper, Dr. P. S. Henson, M. M. Mangasarian, Dr. Thomas and others. It was a Bible flower garden, but unhappily the book was never widely used.

distilled itself in his mind, he felt that the way had been paved for the working together of many faiths in a unity of spirit and the bonds of peace. To this end he lent his aid to the Congress of Religion which grew out of the parliament, though his precarious health did not permit him to attend many of its meetings.

Old age was coming on apace, with many infirmities, but his heart was young and full of bird-song. To one offering birth-day greetings he wrote: "We must be young even in old age, because, when a man is ninety, his church and state and city are still young. Each day they begin a new life. A new socialism is here, a new orthodoxy is here, new books are here, new art, new songs, new prayers, new beauty. The man of white hair must live and die in a new world. As age comes upon us let us obey the words of Browning:

> " 'Grow old along with me,
> The best is yet to be,
> The last of life for which the first was made.
> Our times are in His hand.' "

In tune with these lines he wrote to his old and dear friend, Dr. Thomas Kerr,[1] as that good man passed his seventieth year: "Do you know why the snow settles on the head at last? I will tell you. It is because the summer then goes to the heart. The beautiful world of nature and humanity draws all the blood-red roses down to the bosom, and the old theolo-

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[1] Dr. Kerr was the founder of "The Church of the Christian Union," at Rockford, Ill., perhaps the first society of its kind in this country, if not in the world. It was absolutely unsectarian, having neither a creedal nor a ceremonial test of fellowship. The pastor was a native of Aberdeen, Scotland, and came to America in 1845, a practicing physician. Later he entered the Baptist ministry, but left that church and established a church of the larger faith in September, 1870. He died in 1902, leaving no book save a pamphlet entitled "Pick and Shovel," five Sunday evening lectures on explorations in Bible lands. He was a stately, grave and gentle soul, and "the remembrance of him is like music."

gical and critical department grows white with frost. You have come to the tranquil waters. I am so near you that I can shout to you and ask you if you can see the halcyon making her nest on the waters? May the days of that bird be many to you. Through what troubles have you and your people come to this peace! Thought has caught up with you, but it cannot outrun you. Your people have for many years had a leader. To count your years is to measure their happiness."

His last years were his best years, made luminous by that clearing of the inner vision which comes to those who live the life of the spirit. It was good to see him in the glow of his sunset. His large and living scholarship had ripened into a rich, old-gold mellowness of culture, than which nothing more exquisite has been seen in this land. The classic past was as vivid to him as the life of his own day, and his talk of Cicero, Plato and Homer was like a reminiscence of old friends. He seemed of kin to Æsop, Solon and stout old Socrates; perhaps, because they were — the mighty ones — so full of peace. Nor was it far from Attica to Judea, from Parnassus to Olivet, from choral ode and fiery philippic to the parables and the sermons by the lake; only a short sail over soft seas. Deliciously poetical, fascinatingly philosophical, his last sermons were increasingly spiritual in tone, more serious, more devout, more tender. A seer-like quality added solemnity and made them the richest sermons of his whole life. Quiet, dreamy repose, and what Carlyle says of Chalmers, a kind of serene sadness, as of the "oncoming evening and of star-crowned night," became the central charm of his spirit. As the outward shows of things mortal parted away on this side and on that, the living Truth

was unveiled, and faith was not afraid to reason nor reason ashamed to adore.

The Professor was quite worn out when he went on his summer holidays in 1894, but his rest soon restored him. During his vacation he visited his boyhood home for the last time, but time and death had left only the hills and the glancing vistas of winding waters unchanged. The unseen world had become so thronged with faces that it seemed less strange than the world in which he walked. All one day he sat under the old tree in the yard with the family Bible on his knee, and at eventide he read the twenty-third Psalm and prayed, and the pathos of his petition melted the little circle to tears. The next day his brother Alfred came, and for a few hours they lived in the years agone, with the mingled laughter and tears which such memories evoke. On his way home he spent an hour at the grave of his father, and left forever the scenes of those years which a man least regrets when he comes to the end.

In his last years a certain sense of loneliness had come upon him, and upon his return to his Lake Geneva home he planned to associate with him a few young ministers, during the coming winter, for reading and study. His invitation was gladly accepted, and all looked forward to a profitable industry among great books. "I feel completely rested, as if I could whip an Irishman," he wrote to Abram Pence toward the end of his holiday. In this mood he returned to the altar, in an hour of national panic, unrest and threatening chaos. His opening sermon had to do with "The Duty of the Pulpit in an Hour of Social Unrest," and the scene so shook his soul that he cried out at the end: "Oh, that God, by his mighty power, may hold back

our nation from destruction for a few more perilous years, that it may learn where lie the paths in which, as brothers and loving, all may walk to the most excellence and the most happiness.'' It was his last sermon. That week his old gastric malady fell upon him, and his persuasive voice was hushed. While the shadow was upon him, the *Tribune* quoted the lines of Wordsworth written when the poet heard that Fox was dying:

''A Power is passing from the earth
To breathless Nature's dark abyss;
But when the great and good depart,
What is it more than this,

That Man, who is from God sent forth,
Doth yet again to God return?
Such ebb and flow must ever be,
Then wherefore should we mourn?''

David Swing died October 4, 1894, and his passing evoked a chorus of eulogy from one end of the land to the other. This, when we think of it, was not strange, despite his heresy, for his was a ministry unparalleled in the whole history of the Christian pulpit. Then there was the amazing fact that his sermons had been printed from the beginning and read all over the country, and beyond the seas. The heretic of yesterday had become the saint of to-day, and his character and genius had won the reverence of all men of whatsoever faith. All felt that though in the course of nature he might well have had another twenty years of labor, he had fought his fight for peace, kept his faith, and finished his course. He ceased his labors in the plenitude of his power and in the midst of the love of his people and confidence of his city. No death, perhaps, ever so touched Chicago, where his pulpit had been for so many years a chief ornament and distinction. On

his desk was found an unfinished sermon entitled "The Redemption of a City," which Lyman J. Gage read in Music Hall the following Sunday. The manuscript closed with these words — the key-note of his prophetic life — "*We must all hope much from the gradual progress of brotherly love.*"

Few more impressive scenes have been witnessed in Chicago than that on the occasion of the funeral of David Swing. The body lay in Music Hall, where his face had shone and his voice vibrated with the truths most often on the lips of Jesus. About him were gathered the friends and flowers he loved so well, while the streets were filled with mourning thousands. On the platform within sat men of every sect finding a home in that city of many faiths — orthodox and liberal, Jew and Gentile — the lines of whose creeds the great preacher had lovingly sought to obliterate. All were met together, drawn by a common grief, to testify their love for him who was a friend of all. The church of his fathers came to his grave, and one of her noblest orators, Dr. John Henry Barrows, paid tribute to the poet, preacher, citizen and friend:

"We covet his skill and his temper in speaking our thoughts today. No man in our city was more esteemed by all classes of men for his humanity, which reached not only to the poor of his kind, but to the dumb animals. He was one of our three most famous citizens. It was to this place that other men of fame, coming to our city, flocked on Sunday, as they used to go to Plymouth church in Brooklyn, or as they are now found in Westminster Abbey. Our friend, your pastor and teacher, will be mourned beyond the seas, by good men in London and in other lands, and even in far-off Calcutta the tears will fall in Peace Cottage when Mozoomdar learns that his friend has gone before him. . . . It is natural for us, in comparing him with other men, to say that he ranks with Frederick W. Robertson and Dean Stanley, with Bushnell and Beecher, in the temper of his mind and the

quality of his thought; but I prefer, without any comparison, to think of David Swing as a genius, unique, original, doing faithfully the work to which he believed he was called. . . . He will be remembered as a preacher of a new type. He stood before you luminous with a heavenly light, his features made lovely by his thought, discoursing of the life of man, 'the life of love, the divine Jesus, the blissful immortality,' He found in the Bible, to use his own words, 'the record of God's will as to the life and salvation of his children.' He did not preach like others, but according to the bent of his own genius. His discourse might not harmonize with Prof. Phelps' definition of a sermon; it was not always a popular speech on truth derived directly from the scriptures, elaborately treated with a view to persuasion, but there was a quiet power which moved many minds, as fiery exhortation or elaborate exegesis does not always move them. . . . His intellectual refinement was extraordinary, and it seems almost an irony of fate that this rude city of the West should have held the most cultured and esthetic of American preachers. . . . As he felt deeply that men are to be aided best through hope and generous praise, he would not fix his mind on the evil only. He said: 'If we come to think that all are worshiping gold, we, too, despairing of all else, will soon degrade ourselves by bowing at the same altar.' He called our thoughts away to the better aspects of the age. Who else in our time has preached more continuously and persuasively the gospel of the kingdom of God on earth? Why should not men and women read for generations the thoughts of David Swing? Why should they not read him as they do Sir Thomas Browne and Jeremy Taylor or Emerson? Who can hope to clothe in more beautiful garments the sweetest forms of heavenly truth? A leader of thought, a prophet of the gentle humanities of Jesus, has fallen, and the old places which he loved here are desolate."

Old Music Hall held many a rich memory not only as a forum and a temple, but as a shrine where shone the bright face of genius. There sounded the heavenly voice of Patti. There glided the winsome figure of Emma Abbott, her soul like a perfume and her throat full of song. There Matthew Arnold spoke in his low, quiet tones, and Lowell read an essay. There stood

Oscar Wilde, with his knee breeches, his big sunflower, and his old-gold hair brushing his shoulders, discoursing of salvation by decoration. Beecher and Father Tom Burke were wholly unlike, but in Music Hall they were equally welcome and equally free. There stood Sir Conan Doyle, with a smile on his cheery, boyish countenance; the stoop-shouldered, hollow-eyed Hall Caine, with his Shakespeare-like face; and the straight, agile form of Israel Zangwill. On that platform was seen the pain-drawn visage of John P. Altgeld, speaking with the ultimate grace of simplicity, but with a sad heart and a soul of fire. Richard Storrs and Robert Ingersoll agreed in nothing, except in politics, yet Music Hall held memories of both. But all those faces fade and there returns the rugged figure of David Swing, who made the old temple of melody famed wherever doubt confronted faith, or bigotry combatted charity. There he stood, serene, radiant, and benignant, using here a stop of history, there a stop of science, and yonder a stop of poetry, uttering his melodious message. He, too, vanishes, and we hear only the sweet voices singing, on that long-ago funeral Sunday, of the Kindly Light which leads us "o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night is gone," and the morning faces smile. And now Music Hall itself has vanished, and all that is memory only, albeit a cherished and notable memory.

It remains for Chicago to erect an appropriate memorial, a temple of Beauty, Culture and Religion, in memory of the gentle, humane, meditative David Swing — that gracious, refined, cosmopolitan soul who came to the new, uprising city prophesying of riches more valuable than gold, and of a Christianity which is also a City of God. Better is it, as Beecher said in

1874, in any true accounting of things, than a swifter way of building up houses, or a surer way of preventing them from burning down, that a great city should have given to it an authentic teacher of wise, and good, and beautiful truth. For the poet, the scholar, the seer, has his part, and no small part, in the making of a metropolis.

DAVID SWING

AUTUMN, 1894.

I.

There's not a glory of these autumn days;
There's not a tender mist the sunset weaves,
Purple and amethyst, among the leaves;
There's not a vista through the woodland maze
Where gold and crimson meet in tangled maze
Of gorgeous coloring these frosty eves;
There's not a glimpse of gathered harvest sheaves,
Nor flash of bird that trills its parting lays,
Winging its southward way; there's not a sight
Of late, stray violet in the sunny nook,
Nor scarlet lichen in the emerald moss,
But brings to those who knew the pure delight
Of following thee in thy great soul's uplook
A sense of deep, irreparable loss.

II.

For thou wert Nature's sweet interpreter,
Cheering our hearts with hope that not in vain
Was life, but good and fair despite its pain
And grief and loss; and thy high vision clear
Discerned with eye of Heaven-inspired seer
The love that at the heart of things hath lain;
And sun and cloud and flower and dew and rain
Were each to thee Love's Heavenly Messenger.

Oh, missing thee from life's familiar ways,
From the loved, sacred desk whence thou are gone,
From all the daily paths thy footsteps trod,
Be ours to hallow all these mournful days
With high resolve thy steps to follow on,
And make thy faith our faith, thy God our God!

—HELEN EKIN STARRETT.

INDEX

INDEX

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