

in all creatures
 so that you are ready to serve Him
 in those in which it is His most Holy Will that you should
 so that your true attitude to all creatures
 within and without
 is something conditioned,
 one attitude alone of your soul
 being unconditioned—
 your will to serve in all things
 His Divine Majesty;
 so that for this reason “ no attraction holds you
 enslaved
 by the desire to possess or to retain or to reject ”
 but all is done
 as “ God our Lord gives us to will
 and as appears better for the service and praise
 of His Divine Majesty; ”
 so that one thing only
 is present in your spirit
 “ the praise of God our Lord
 in which is our well-being;
 but for the rest
 no inordinate attraction fetters your freedom
 making you any more inclined or determined
 to accept or to reject
 to reject or to accept
 anything; ”
 so that in the deeps of your soul
 you remain “ like a balance
 in equilibrium
 ready to dip according as we are impelled
 by the honour and glory of God
 in which is our well-being. ”

(To be Continued)

THE HIDDEN LIFE

BY

H. C. GRAEF.

For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

The Christian life is pre-eminently a hidden life. This is a commonplace, but it seems difficult to grasp in our noisy time, which worships publicity and confuses activities with action. Yet God Himself has set before us the beauty and power of the hidden life when he chose to be born in a stable in an unknown town of

an obscure province of the Roman Empire, and to live in a carpenter's family for thirty years. The devil, too, knew the strength of hiddenness, when he tempted our Lord with the prospect of spectacular success, the miraculous flight from the pinnacle of the Temple, the possession of all the kingdoms of the earth. But our Lord chose to hide himself on the Cross between two thieves, and thenceforth has remained hidden even more deeply and impenetrably under a little Bread and Wine: *In Cruce latebat sola Deitas, At hic latet simul et humanitas*. . . .

Yet, what power on earth has ever equalled the power of the Figure hidden and lifted upon the Cross and in the Mass? It is one of the scandals of Christianity, this mysterious hiddenness which the world ever derides: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his Mother called Mary? . . . Whence therefore hath he all these things? And they were scandalized in him." And he shares this hiddenness with his friends, and the nearer they are to him, the more they love to hide their lives with him in God. There had been no life more hidden than Mary's, even for centuries, until one day in the fifth century Ephesus was ringing with the exultant shouts of 'Theotokos,' Mother of God, and the Church discovered in the all-powerful intercession of Mary, the hidden Virgin of Nazareth, one of her most glorious possessions.

For our Lady knew more clearly than any other creature that the soul who loves needs to be hidden and to seek to please only the Beloved. But when it desires to be known and applauded by the world it no longer loves him: "If I yet pleased men I should not be the servant of Christ." This love of hiddenness seems to be part of the lives of all the Saints, most of whom had to go through long periods of obscurity or failure, and however conspicuous many of them may have become, they never wished to be so and often suffered from their very popularity and success. The Church herself had her time of hiddenness in the centuries of persecution, when her members left their unknown existence only to go forth a spectacle to men and angels in the glory of martyrdom. And when at last the city was set on the hill to be seen by all, the life of voluntary obscurity celebrated its triumphs in the Fathers of the Desert and the men and women who left the many-coloured civilization of the dying Roman Empire to follow St. Anthony in the East, and St. Benedict in the West, into the hiddenness of the cloister.

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and lead her into the wilderness; and I will speak to her heart." For in the desert

the voices of man fade away, and the coveted limelight of fame reveals its darkness beneath the white and merciless sun that illumines the deepest recesses of the soul, burning out all its false ambitions and desires until it is wholly consumed by the love of God alone. In the wilderness he speaks to the hearts of men and prepares his chosen ones to be instruments of the Holy Ghost, dead to themselves, living by the supernatural life of the Spirit and His Divine inspirations. It was in the desert of Citeaux and Clairvaux that St. Bernard was prepared to be the counsellor of Popes and kings, the spiritual guide of Europe; in the nine years of solitude at Osma St. Dominic was fashioned to found his Order to destroy error by the light of truth and the fire of the word; and in the hidden years of penance and ecstasies in a little house at Siena St. Catherine received her mission to bring back the Pope to Rome and to be a peacemaker to the warring cities of her country.

Again, when the storms of the "Reformation" swept Europe, the penitent knight of Manresa spent long years hidden among the schoolboys of Barcelona and the students of Salamanca and Paris, learning Latin and philosophy, waiting patiently for the time when he should found the Society of Jesus; a little later Teresa of Avila buried herself for twenty years in a Carmelite convent desiring only to be more deeply hidden—though God did not grant her desire and made her a Reformer and foundress almost against her will. And while Ignatius and Teresa fought for the faith in lives of superhuman activity, the little friar John of the Cross asked of his Lord only the favour to be despised and forgotten, and so well was he heard that St. Teresa wrote in consternation that everybody seemed to forget this Father. Yet the humble friar whom men threw away "like an old kitchen cloth" became a Saint and Doctor of the Church, for "there is nothing hid which shall not be made manifest."

What the Reformation did not achieve the materialism of the 19th century set itself to accomplish, and the wise men of the world prophesied the impending death of the Church. It seems to have been for this our own time that God reserved the most hidden souls and set them in the midst of an ever more vociferous world of clamour and bustle. An apparently stupid little country priest, a rather backward village girl, and an entirely unknown and commonplace young nun, such is the strange triad of the greatest spiritual forces to have appeared in the century of Darwin, Marx and Nietzsche. Their lives are all three miracles of the at-

traction of Divine grace hidden in a human soul, which, to the natural eye, seems to be in no way different from a multitude of others that pass unnoticed every day. But St. John Vianney, that odd little curé of a completely unknown village, made Ars one of the most famous places in France by sheer force of sanctity—or, rather, it was made that in spite of him, whose greatest temptation was to leave the crowds of pilgrims, who day by day stormed his confessional, and bury himself in the Chartreuse. A few years later Bernadette, the most unlikely girl for fame, was singled out by our Lady to discover the miraculous spring that made of her obscure little village the most celebrated sanctuary of modern times—only to be hidden again and to disappear behind the work begun through her as completely as Mary herself had once disappeared behind her Son. And, lastly, there was, most hidden of them all, whose very name was hardly known outside her family and whose sanctity was not even revealed to her sisters in religion, Teresa of the Child Jesus, in whom our Lord's words, "And thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee," were fulfilled to the letter. This utterly hidden life of a Carmelite nun, finished at 24, almost worse than useless in the eyes of the world, was so precious to God that he sanctioned it, as it were, with an outpouring of miracles and graces on an unheard-of scale. When men ask: "What did she do?" one is tempted to answer, "Nothing"; nothing, save to love and suffer in complete hiddenness. Though in her humility she calls this way of loving self-denial, her 'Little Way,' it is, in truth, a great way—the greatest way—for it is the Way of the Cross, and she was herself conscious of her mission to show to our world just this way, made manifest in her hidden life. The way of small sacrifices, of mortified ambitions and of conquered desires for outward and purely natural activities, this is truly a crucified life; to many it appears, indeed, to be a life of failure.

But was not the Cross a failure, the supreme failure? It is the divine paradox that what seems folly in the natural order is wisdom in the supernatural dispensation, and that the means which ordinarily lead to worldly success become ridiculously inadequate if applied to spiritual ends. Our world is full of devils, and we are agitating ourselves like the disciples of old to drive them out and we cannot. Is it because we, like the disciples, have too little faith, relying on human means rather than trusting in that unseen power of prayer and fasting? Amid the inhuman forces which have been let loose in our world, our own insignificance and help-

lessness are brought home to us almost every hour. But, in despair, we seem to see only these, and not their corollary, the omnipotence of God which reveals itself in this very human helplessness. We are Christians, and therefore sons by grace and heirs of the omnipotent God. Shall then the children of this world always be wiser than the children of light? And are we groping in the paltry dispensary of wordly prudence for remedies of our ills, when we have the whole treasure house of Divine wisdom at our disposal?

The Life of our Lord and the lives of our Lady and the Saints point a different way. "Amen, amen, I say unto you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The natural life of our ambitions, our ideas, our strivings for recognition, must die in order that the work of grace may live and bring forth fruit in the soul. This does not mean that our natural faculties must be destroyed—grace does not destroy, but perfects nature. But it does mean that our motives must be purged of self-will and self-love which intrude themselves so easily even into our best intentions. Yet torrents of grace are forever flowing out from God, and we need only to open the gates and let it flow into us. That is the difficulty, to open the gates which would bar grace entrance to our souls. A life lived in the turmoil of purely natural activities is incapable of receiving the whole stream—a drop here and there penetrates through the whirl of desires and ambitions which keep the soul centred in itself, however varied its outside interests may appear to be. When it is centred no longer in the world and in itself, but in God, it will often appear colourless and good for nothing from outside, wrapped in hiddenness like the chrysalis in its cocoon—but *omnis gloria ejus filiae Regis ab intus*.

In the Divine folly of lives hidden and buried at Nazareth, or in the desert, in a French village or behind a Carmelite grille, grace flows abundantly, and overflows even into the bustle of the world, while the innumerable lives lived in the full blaze of worldly success remain barren, for "they have received their reward." For God is a hidden God; *Vere tu es Deus absconditus, Deus Israel, Salvator*; and the more hidden a soul is from the world and the world from it, the more it is manifest to the hidden God and he to the soul. For at midnight, when the world and its clamour are asleep, the King comes to the faithful soul who has kept herself for him and for him alone; and when he comes he brings with him his omnipotence, his all-embracing charity, his

creative power, which he gives to the soul whom he finds crucified and empty of her own will. Then he will make her act no longer teebly of herself, but strongly of him, bringing forth fruit a hundred-fold. This, it seems, is the secret of the immense and lasting fecundity of the action of the Saints, besides which the transitory successes of the great ones appear like coloured bubbles bursting in the air. For as a tree is the stronger the more deeply its roots are buried in the earth, so a soul is more powerful the more profoundly its life is hidden and buried in God. The powers of this world are noisy and very much on the surface—but the saints are silent and very hidden, speaking “wisdom among the perfect . . . which is hidden . . . which none of the princes of this world know. . . . But we have the mind of Christ.”

A TREATISE ON THE INEFFABLE MYSTERY OF OUR REDEMPTION

BY

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(Translated by a Nun of Stanbrook Abbey.)

I

THE DISPOSITION REQUIRED FOR TREATING OF THIS MYSTERY

When Moses saw that the bush was on fire and yet not burnt, and went to look at this marvel, God told him to put off his shoes, for the place on which he stood was holy ground. (Exod. III). This must be done by those who would gaze on God within this lowly bush of our humanity amid the thorns of his wounds and afflictions. For in order to contemplate this sublime Mystery, so far above our power of reason, a man must put off all that is human: his faults, his weaknesses and human affections, with the judgements, surmises and laws of human prudence, in order that he may contemplate this mystery with greater purity. For to seek to measure God's works by the same measure as our own, with the rod of reason, especially his work of the Redemption, which is that of his infinite goodness and charity, with the goodness and charity to be found in men, however perfect and holy, would be utter folly. It would be to cheapen and depreciate the works of this infinite Grandeur and to set them on a level with our pettiness; for as it is certain that his Being infinitely surpasses ours, so do his actions surpass our own. Hence there could be no greater error than for a man to seek to judge and investigate God by what he sees in himself. These, then, are “the shoes” he must put off, these the human weaknesses from which we must free ourselves when we wish to consider the works of sovereign Goodness and