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VIVEKANANDA.

BY

E. F. MALCOLM SMITH,

M.A., PH. D.

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BY

E. F. MALCOLM-SMITH, M. A., Ph. D.

(Late Fellow of Newnham College, Cambridge.)

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PREFACE.

This is a companion volume to the *Life of Ramakrishna* in the same series, and, since the lives of the Paramahansa and that of his great disciple, Vivekananda, are complementary, the one cannot well be studied without the other. The Author begs to acknowledge the sources from which the present work has been written. It is based on *The Life of Ramakrishna*, published by his Disciples, on Sister Nivedita's *The Master as I saw Him* and *Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda*, on Romain Rolland's *Life of Vivekananda*, and on the *Complete Works of Vivekananda* (5 Volumes). The Author would further like to acknowledge publicly the pleasure it has given her to be brought into contact with the religious thought of India through the lives of two of her greatest sons of recent times, and through correspondence with one who is one of their torch-bearers to-day, Swami Ashokananda to whom the companion volume to this is respectfully dedicated.

Ahmedabad, }
July 1931. }

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VIVEKANANDA

CHAPTER I.

THE CALL OF NARENDRA.

SOME time in the month of November, 1080, the meeting of two men took place, a meeting that was fraught with momentous consequences, not only to the two men in question, but to India and the world at large. It happened at the house of Surendra Nath Mitra in Calcutta between Sri Ramakrishna, the Paramahansa of Dakshineswar, and a young man who was then preparing for his First Examination in Arts, Narendranath Dutt. The youth became Ramakrishna's greatest disciple, and under the name of Swami Vivekananda he spread a knowledge of his Master's teachings throughout India, in America and Western Europe, and organised the community of disciples into the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

Narendranath Dutt was a youth of extraordinary ability in many different directions. He possessed a strong body, a vigorous mind, and withal a tender heart. So great were his talents that he seemed to have the world at his feet. Nevertheless it was the life of renunciation that he chose in the end. As a mere boy he used to have the same visions night after night. "Every night," so he told his own disciples afterwards, "as I went to bed two visions floated before my mind's eye. One of them pictured me as a successful man of the world, occupying the foremost place in society, and I felt that I actually had the power to carve out such a place for myself. A moment later would come the other vision. in which I found myself a wandering monk, dressed in a loin-cloth, living on chance morsels of food and spending the night under trees, depending solely on God. I felt that I could lead this sort of life, too. Of these two visions the latter appealed to me the more, and I thought that the life of a monk was the noblest on earth, and that I would embrace it."

Narendranath Dutt was born on January

12, 1863. He belonged to the Dutt family of Simla, one of the most cultured and aristocratic in Calcutta. At the same time it was a family with a deeply religious strain running through it. His grandfather, Durga Charan Dutt, after the birth of his first child, Narendra's father, retired into the jungle and lived the life of a Sannyasin. The father, Viswanath, became a distinguished attorney of the Calcutta High Court and earned a big income. This he spent lavishly, giving much away in charity, and living in great luxury. His wife was Bhuwaneswari Dasi, a highly cultured woman, who possessed a deep influence over her son to the end of his life. In America in 1894 he paid her this tribute. "It is my mother, who has been the constant inspiration of my life and work." He was a difficult child to bring up, being possessed of his father's restless temperament. Viswanath was a man of many accomplishments, including music, a talent which he handed on to his son, but he was deeply imbued with the agnosticism of Western philosophy. Although he admired the poetry of the Persian poet, Hafiz

and the Bible, it was for their artistic merits rather than for their teachings, and he did not believe in the soul or in a future life. His outlook upon this life seemed to be one of polite and almost smiling scepticism, but in reality he suffered deeply. Once when some youthful follies of his son were reported to him, he said, 'This world is so terrible, let him forget it if he can.'

Narendra's early years were therefore spent in a luxurious and worldly atmosphere. It had this advantage, however,—that he had the leisure and the means to develop all the many sides of his nature. He was a great athlete, and excelled in boxing, swimming, rowing and riding. He danced with marvellous grace and had a beautiful voice. He possessed a sound knowledge of music on its theoretical side as well, and wrote tunes and published a learned Essay on the Science and Philosophy of Indian music. When he went to College he astonished his professors and fellow-students with the wide grasp of his brilliant intellect, which embraced the sciences, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, and Indian and

Western languages. But there was the other side of his nature. Although he was the idolised darling of the youth of Calcutta, and set the fashion for the rest to follow, he lived a life of absolute purity taking the vows of Brahmacharya and practising the habit of meditation, and studying the Vedanta and religious books, such as *the Imitation of Christ*. He delighted in discussion of every kind. In fact it was his passion for argument and criticism that gave him later the name of Vivekananda, the Discriminator. The best description of him at the time when he came under Ramakrishna's influence is from the pen of Dr. Brajendranath Seal, the great scholar and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mysore, who was then at College with him in a class above him.

“Undeniably a gifted youth, sociable, free and unconventional in manners, a sweet singer, the soul of social circles, a brilliant conversationalist, somewhat bitter and caustic piercing with shafts of keen wit the shows and mummeries of the world, sitting in the scorner's chair but hiding the tenderest of hearts under

that garb of cynicism ; altogether an inspired Bohemian but possessing what Bohemians lack, an iron will, somewhat peremptory and absolute, speaking with accents of authority and withal possessing a strange power of the eye which could hold his listeners in thrall. I saw and recognised in him a high, ardent, and pure nature, vibrant and resonant with impassioned sensibilities. He was certainly no sour or cross-grained Puritan, no moral hypochondriac ;—he would indulge cynically in unconventional language except when he would spare my innocence. He took an almost morbid delight in shocking conventionality in tabernacles, respectability in its booths ; and in the pursuit of this sport would appear other than he was, puzzling and mystifying those outside his inner circle of friends. But in the recesses of his soul he wrestled with the fierce and fell spirit of Desire, the subtle and illusive spirit of Fancy.”

Thus within the soul of the young man the struggle raged that had been foreshadowed in his earliest vision, quoted above. Between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one, that is

from 1880 to the end of 1884, he passed through a series of great mental struggles until the religious certainty he gained from contact with Ramakrishna put an end to them once and for all, so far as knowledge of God was concerned. Like many other young seekers after truth, he joined the Brahmo Samaj and went to Devendranath Tagore for religious instruction. But one day he asked him point blank, "Sir, have you seen God?." The answer he received did not satisfy him, and under the influence of John Stuart Mill's *Essays on Religion* his early belief began to crumble away. He corresponded with another Western philosopher, Herbert Spencer, but could not bring himself to subscribe to his theories. He then came under the influence of Brajendranath Seal, whose opinion of him has just been quoted. Brajendranath Seal's God was Reason—the *Parabrahman*, but Narendra once again could find no satisfaction in this conception. He next came within the orbit of Keshab Chunder Sen and joined his new Brahmo Samaj, which he considered to the end of his life to be a high form of

Hinduism. It was the social side of its crusade that attracted him more than its religious beliefs, and he joined whole-heartedly in the campaign for the education and unity of the Indian masses in Bengal, irrespective of caste, race or religion. But its reliance on Western thought outraged his pride as an Indian, and his soul could find no abiding place within its rather narrow limits. At times he tried practising the life of an ascetic, but all was in vain. Nothing could reconcile the warring elements within his nature, and he had so far failed to find a guide to show him the way although he had been the round of the great religious personalities of his day in Bengal.

At this juncture he met Ramakrishna. It was in 1880 at the house of Surendranath Mitra. The Master was deeply moved by Narendra's singing of a religious hymn, and he asked him to come and see him at Dakshineswar. At first Narendra's reactions to Ramakrishna were those of revolt, but the charm worked in spite of himself. We have the account of what took place from their own

lips. This is the account given by Ramakrishna.

“Narendra entered this room by the western door. He seemed careless about his body and dress, and unlike other people, unmindful of the external world. His eyes bespoke an introspective mind, as if some part of it were always concentrated upon something within. I was surprised to find such a spiritual man coming from the material atmosphere of Calcutta. A mat was spread on the floor, on which I asked him to sit. The friends with whom he had come appeared to be ordinary young men with the usual tendency towards enjoyment. He sang a few Bengali songs at my request. These were the spontaneous outpourings of a devout heart desiring union with the Self. He put so much pathos into the song that I could not control myself, but fell into an ecstatic mood.” Then Narendra takes up the tale :

“Well, I sang the song, but shortly after he suddenly rose, and taking me by the hand, led me to the northern verandah, shutting the door behind him. It was screened from out-

side ; so we were alone. I thought that he was going to give me some private instructions. But to my utter surprise, he began to shed profuse tears of joy as he held my hand, and addressing me most tenderly as one long familiar to him, said, 'Ah, you come so late ! How could you be so unkind as to keep me waiting so long ? My ears are well nigh burnt in listening to the profane talk of wordly people. Oh, I am panting to unburden my mind to one who can appreciate my innermost experiences.' Thus he went on amid sobs. Then he stood before me with folded palms and began to address me, 'Lord, I know you are that ancient sage, Nara — the Incarnation of Narayana — born on earth to remove the misery of mankind,' and so on ! I was altogether taken aback by his conduct. 'Who is this that I have come to see,' I thought. 'He must be stark mad ! Why, I am but the son of Viswanath Dutt, and yet he dares to address me thus !' But I kept quiet, letting him go on. Presently he went back into his room, and bringing some sweets, sugar candy and butter, began to feed me with his own hands.

In vain did I say again and again, 'Please give them to me, and I shall share them with my friends.' He simply said, 'They will have some afterwards,' and desisted only after I had finished them all. Then he seized me by the hand and said, 'Promise me that you will come alone to me at an early date.' At his importunity I had to say 'yes' and returned with him to my friends.

"I sat and watched him. There was nothing wrong in his words, movements or behaviour towards others. Rather, from his spiritual conversation and ecstatic states he seemed to be a man of genuine renunciation, and there was a marked consistency between his words and life. He said, 'God can be realised. One can see and talk to Him as I am doing with you. But who cares to do so? People shed torrents of tears for their wife and children, for wealth or property, but who does so for the sake of God? If one weeps sincerely for Him, He surely manifests Himself.' As I heard these things, I could not but believe that he was saying them not like an ordinary preacher, but from the depths of his own

realisation. But I could not reconcile his words with his strange conduct with me. So I concluded that he must be a monomaniac. But I could not help acknowledging the magnitude of his renunciation. 'He may be a madman,' I thought, 'but only the fortunate few can have such renunciation. Even if insane, this man is the holiest of the holy, a true saint, and for that alone he deserves the reverential homage of mankind.' With such conflicting thoughts I bowed before him, and begged his leave to return to Calcutta."

Narendra did not want to go back, and only promised in order to free himself from an embarrassing situation, but a month later he was drawn to make good his promise. It was Ramakrishna's intense conviction that God could be realised that brought him again ; for the realisation of God was the only thing that could satisfy his soul. Later, when he knew the Master better, he was to say, "Sir, have you seen God?" and the answer came in tones of conviction whose sincerity he could not doubt, "Yes my son, I have seen God, I do see Him, just as I see you before

me. Only I see the Lord in a much more intense sense, and I can show him too you."

The second visit has also been described by Narendra.

"I found him sitting alone on the small bedstead. He was glad to see me, and calling me affectionately to his side, made me sit beside him on the bed. But the next moment I found him overcome with a sort of emotion. Muttering something to himself, with his eyes fixed on me, he slowly drew near me. I thought he might do something queer as on the preceding occasion. But in the twinkling of an eye, he placed his right foot on my body. The touch at once gave rise to a novel experience within me. With my eyes open I saw that the walls and everything in the room whirled rapidly and vanished into naught, and the whole universe, together with my individuality was about to merge in an all-encompassing void! I was terribly frightened and thought that I was facing death, for the loss of individuality meant nothing short of that. Unable to control myself, I cried out, "What is this that you are doing to me? I

have my parents at home'. He laughed aloud at this and stroking my chest said, 'All right, let it rest now. Everything will come in time'. The wonder of it was that no sooner had he said this than that strange experience of mine vanished. I was myself again and found everything within and without the room as it had been before.

"All this happened in less time than it takes me to narrate it, but it revolutionised my mind. Amazed, I thought what it could possibly be. It came and went at the mere wish of this wonderful man! I began to question if it were mesmerism or hypnotism. But that was not likely, for these acted only on weak minds, and I prided myself on being just the reverse. I had not surrendered myself to the stronger personality of the man; rather I had taken him to be a monomaniac. So what might this sudden transformation of mine be due to? It was an enigma, I thought, which I had better not attempt to solve. I was determined, however, to be on my guard and not to give him another chance to exert a similar influence over me.

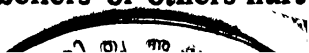
“The next moment I thought, how could a man who metamorphosed at will a strong mind like mine be dismissed as a lunatic? Yet this was just the conclusion at which one would arrive from his effusions on the occasion of our first meeting, — unless of course he was an Incarnation of God, which was indeed a far cry. So I was in a dilemma about the real nature of my experience, as well as the truth about this remarkable man, who was obviously pure and simple as a child ”

Narendra's third visit was also strangely significant, although he had sworn to himself that he would withstand Ramakrishna's influence. They walked together in the garden near the temple, and after strolling for some time they took seats in the parlour. Soon the Master fell into a trance, and as Narendra was watching him, he suddenly touched him. Narendra immediately lost all outward consciousness, and when he came to again, he found the Master stroking his chest. Later when he was talking about this incident Ramakrishna said, “I asked him several questions

while he was in that state. I asked him about his antecedents and whereabouts, his mission in this world and the duration of his mortal life. He dived deep into himself and gave fitting answers to my questions. They only confirmed what I had seen and inferred about him. Those things shall be a secret, but I came to know that he was a sage who had attained perfection, a past-master in meditation, and that the day he learned his real nature he would give up the body by an act of will, through Yoga."

What Ramakrishna had found out in this, his third interview with the young man, made him treat him as a privileged person. Moreover, there was the vision he had had of him, that has been quoted in the *Life of Ramakrishna* in this same series. But although the Master recognised that Narendra was to be his great disciple, Vivekananda, he himself had not as yet submitted to Ramakrishna's influence. For a long time he struggled against it. Vivekananda, the Discriminator, refused to take any man's experience on trust. When he first came within the Master's

credit, he was a sceptic with no faith in the Hindu Gods, and he scoffed at many of the commands of the Hindu scriptures. In particular he ridiculed two of Ramakrishna's most cherished beliefs—the cult of images and faith in the absolute Unity. Moreover, like Girish Chandra Ghosh, the Bengal dramatist, another of the Master's most devoted disciples, he at first refused to recognise that he was in need of a Guru. All men are weak and liable to err. How then could any man claim to command the implicit obedience of another? But contact with Ramakrishna taught him that here was a man whose experience of God had made him fit to guide other souls in turn to God. This conviction, however, only came gradually. He tested everything about the Master in the light of his own reason. He alone of the disciples doubted, and his keen criticism filled the Master with joy. "Do not accept anything because I say so," he told the rest. "Test everything for yourselves." But sometimes Narendra's almost brutal frankness and lack of consideration for the beliefs of others hurt



his gentle heart. Narendra went so far as to suggest that all his realisations were the creations of a diseased brain, and when this happened, Ramakrishna sought comfort of the Mother. She comforted him with the words, "Why do you listen to him? In a few days he will admit every word of it to be true." If more than a few days elapsed between Narendra's visits to Dakshineswar, the Master was disconsolate, and sometimes he would go to seek him out. Such manifestations of affection both embarrassed and irritated the young man. He also made him exceedingly angry by praising him to his face and by foretelling his future greatness when there was nothing in his life at that time to justify the statements, except the Master's extraordinary foresight and his judgment of character. One day after Keshub Chandra Sen and some other Brahmos had been meeting in his room he compared Narendra to Keshub saying that whereas in the latter the light of knowledge burned like a candle flame, in the case of the former it was like a blazing sun dispelling the last vestige of ignorance and

delusion. Narendra remonstrated with him. "Sir, what do you mean by saying such things? People will take you to be mad. How can you compare the renowned Keshub and the saintly Vijay with me, an unknown student? Please do not do so again."

But in the end the Master won Narendra for himself, and his surrender was all the more complete for the long struggle that had preceded it. Ramakrishna's handling of the young man showed great skill. It has been said already that he welcomed his criticisms, the surest way of bringing his keen intellect to an acknowledgement of the truth of his revelations. Further when he found that an outward show of affection and regard annoyed him, he altered his tactics, and received him coldly when he went to see him. He appeared not to notice his arrival, but went on talking to the others who were with him as if he were not there. At last the Master called him and said, "Tell me, how is it that though I don't speak a word to you, you still continue to come here?"

Narendra replied, "Sir, it is not your

words alone that draw me here. I love you and want to see you, therefore I come."

Ramakrishna was pleased with the answer and said, "I was only testing you to find out whether you would stay away when I did not show you love and attention. Only one of your calibre could put up with so much neglect and indifference. Anyone else would have left me long ago and would never have come back."

The master eventually made him acknowledge the Divine Mother. Narendra, as we have seen, did not believe in image worship, and one day Ramakrishna said to him, "Why do you come here if you won't acknowledge my Mother?" Narendra replied, "Must I acknowledge Her simply because I come here?" "All right," replied the Master. "Ere long you shall not only acknowledge my Blessed Mother, but weep in Her name," — and this came to pass exactly as he had said. Brajendra Nath Seal was amazed at this transformation in his fellow-student, and came to visit Dakshineswar to see what manner of man it might be who had caused

the miracle to happen, and he returned in a state of considerable mental bewilderment at what he had seen and heard. The Master's next step was to convince Narendra of the identity of the individual soul with Brahman. At first the young man would not believe it, and made fun of the idea with another disciple. "This jug is God," he said, pointing and laughing, "And this cup is God. Whatever we see is God and we too are Gods. Nothing can be more preposterous." Ramakrishna heard their laughter and came to see what it was all about. He touched Narendra and plunged into Samadhi. Narendra has described the effect of the touch.

That magic touch of the Master immediately brought a change over my mind. I was stupefied to find that really there was nothing in the universe but God! I saw it quite clearly but kept silent, to see if the idea would last. But that influence did not abate in the course of day. I returned home, but there, too, everything I saw appeared to be Brahman. I sat down to take my meal, but found that everything — the food, the plate,

the person who served and even myself — was nothing but That. I ate a morsel or two and sat still. I was startled by my mother's words, 'Why do you sit still? Finish your meal,' and began to eat again. But all the while, whether eating or lying down, or going to college, I had the same experience and felt myself always in a sort of comatose state. While walking in the streets, I noticed cabs plying, but I did not feel inclined to move out of the way, for I felt that the cabs and myself were of one stuff. There was no sensation in my limbs, which, I thought, were becoming paralysed. I had no satisfaction from eating, and felt as if somebody else were eating. Sometimes I lay down during a meal and after a few minutes got up and began to eat again. The result would be that on some days I would take too much, but it seemed to do me no harm. My mother became alarmed and said that there must be something wrong with me. She was afraid that I would not live long. When this state altered a little, the world began to appear to me as a dream. While walking in Cornwallis Square, I would

strike my head against the iron railings to see if they were real or only a dream. This state of things continued for some days. When I became normal again, I realised that I much have had a glimpse of the Advaita state. Then it struck me that the words of the scriptures were not false. Thenceforth I could not deny the conclusions of the Advaita philosophy." Thus the Master gradually captured the heart and mind of this, his greatest disciple.

But it is doubtful whether Narendra would have made the final surrender if he had not been brought face to face with the tragic problem of existence. In 1884 his father, who was the support of the family, died of heart-failure, leaving behind him many creditors, and six or seven dependants. Instead of helping him to bear the burden thus thrust suddenly upon him, Narendra's relatives threatened to turn the destitute family out of doors. He had to try to find work, but his own words can best paint the moving picture of his struggles at this time. "Even before the period of mourning was

over, I had to look about in search of a job. Starving and barefooted, I wandered from office to office under the scorching noönday sun with an application in hand, one or two intimate friends accompanying me sometimes. But everywhere the door was slammed in my face. This first contact with the reality of life convinced me that unselfish sympathy was a rarity in the world— there was no place in it for the weak, the poor and the destitute. Those who only a few days before would have been proud to help me, now turned their face against me, though they had enough means at their disposal. Seeing all this, the world sometimes seemed to me the handiwork of the devil. One day, weary and footsore, I sat down in the shade of the Ochterlony Monument in the Maidan. Some friends of mine happening to be there, one of them sang a song about the overflowing grace of God, perhaps to comfort me. It was like a blow on my head. I remembered the helpless condition of my mother and brothers, and exclaimed in bitter anguish and despondency. 'Will you please stop that song? Such

fancies may be pleasing to those who are born with a silver spoon in their mouth and have no starving relatives at home. Yes, there was a time when I too thought like that. But to-day, before the hard facts of life, it sounds like grim mockery'.

"My friend must have been wounded. How could he fathom the dire misery that had forced these words out of my lips? Sometimes, when I found that there were not enough provisions for the family and my purse was empty, I would pretend to my mother that I had an invitation to dine out, and remain practically without food. Out of self-respect I could not disclose the facts to others. My rich friends sometimes requested me to come to their homes or gardens to sing and I had to comply. But I always kept my woes to myself. They were not particularly inquisitive except one or two. Only one perceived my real condition and put me under a deep debt of gratitude by sending anonymous donations to my mother."

"Some of my old friends, who earned their livelihood by unfair means, asked me

to join them. Only one or two, who had learnt by bitter experience, sympathised with me. There were other troubles too. A rich woman suggested an ugly means, which I rejected with scorn, of ending my days of penury. I refused another woman who came to me with similar overtures."

"In spite of all these troubles, I never lost faith in the mercy of God. Every morning, taking His name, I got up and went out in search of a job. One day my mother overheard me and said, 'Hush, you fool, you are crying yourself hoarse for God from your childhood, and what has He done for you?' I was stung to the quick. 'Does God really exist,' I thought, 'and, if so, does He really hear the fervent prayers of man? Then why is there no response to my passionate appeals? Why is there so much woe in His benign kingdom?' Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar's words — 'If God is good and gracious, why then do millions of people die for want of a few morsels of food?'—rang in my years with bitter irony. I was exceedingly

cross with God. It was a fit moment for doubt also to creep into my heart.'

"It was ever against my nature to do anything secretly. So it was quite natural now for me to try to prove to the world that God was a myth, or — if He existed—to call upon Him was fruitless. Soon the report gained currency that I was an atheist and did not scruple to drink or even frequent houses of ill-fame. This unmerited calumny hardened my stubborn heart still more. I openly declared that in this miserable world there was nothing reprehensible in a man who, seeking for a brief respite, would resort to anything. Not only that, but if I was once convinced of the efficacy of such a course I would not shrink from following it through fear of anybody."

"A garbled report of the situation soon reached the ears of the Master and his devotees in Calcutta. Some of those came to me for first hand information and hinted that they believed in some of the rumours at least. A sense of wounded pride filled my heart on finding that they could so think me

low. In an exasperated mood I gave them to understand plainly that it was cowardice to believe in God through fear of hell, and argued with them as to His existence or non-existence. I thought that perhaps Sri Ramakrishna would also believe that I was hopelessly lost. "Never mind," I said to myself, "If the good or bad opinion of a man rests upon such flimsy foundations, I don't care." But I was amazed to hear later that the Master had received the reports coldly, without expressing an opinion one way or the other. And when one of his favourite disciples, Bhavanath, said to him with tears in his eyes, 'Sir, I could not even dream that Narendra could stoop so low,'—he was furious and said,—Hush, you fool! The Mother has told me that it can never be so. I shaln't be able to look at you if you speak to me again like that."

"But notwithstanding these forced atheistic views, the vivid memory of the divine visions, I had experienced since my boyhood, and specially after my contact with Sri Ramakrishna, led me to think that God must exist,

and that there must be some way to realise Him."

"The summer was over, and the rains set in. The search for a job still went on. One day after a whole day's fast and exposure to rain, I was returning home with tired limbs and a jaded mind; overpowered with exhaustion and unable to move a step further, I sank down on the outer plinth of a house on the roadside. I can't say whether I was insensible or not for a time. Various thoughts crowded in on my mind, but I was too weak to drive them off and fix my attention on any particular thing. Suddenly I felt as if by some divine power the coverings of my soul were removed one after the other. All my former doubts regarding the co-existence of divine justice and mercy, and the presence of misery in the creation of a Blissful Providence, were automatically solved. By a deep introspection I found the meaning of it all and was satisfied. As I proceeded homewards I found there was no trace of fatigue in the body, the mind was refreshed

with wonderful strength and peace. The night was well-nigh spent.’

“Henceforth I became deaf to the praise and blame of worldly people. I was convinced that I was not born like humdrum people to earn money and maintain my family, much less to strive for sense-pleasures. I began secretly to prepare myself to renounce the world like my grandfather. I fixed a day for the purpose and was glad to hear that the Master was to come to Calcutta that very day. As soon as I met the Master, he pressed me hard to spend that night with him at Dakshineswar. I made various excuses, but to no purpose. I had to accompany him Presently he drew near me and touching me with great tenderness, began to sing a song, with tears in his eyes..... He knew of my intentions..... and.....said. ‘I know you have come for the Mother’s work, and will not be able to remain in the world. But for my sake, stay as long as I live.’ Saying this he burst into tears again. The next day with his permission I returned home. A thousand thoughts about the maintenance of the family

assailed me. I began to look again for a living. By working in an attorney's office and translating a few books, I got just enough means to live from hand to mouth, but it was not permanent and there was no fixed income to maintain my mother and brothers."

In his extremity he bethought himself that God listened to Ramakrishna's prayers. Narendra therefore begged him to intercede on behalf of his starving family. But the Master told him that he could not do so, because all his misfortunes were because he would not accept the Mother. He continued, "All right, it is Tuesday—go to the Kali temple to-night, prostrate yourself before the Mother and ask Her any boon you like. It shall be granted. She is Knowledge Absolute, the Inscrutable Power of Brahman, and by Her mere will has given birth to this world. Everthing is in Her power to give!" He went to the temple about nine o'clock, but let him tell what befell in his own words:

"As I went I was filled with divine intoxication. My feet were unsteady. My heart was leaping in anticipation of the joy

of beholding the Living Goddess and hearing Her words. I was full of the idea. Reaching the temple, as I cast my eyes upon the image, I actually found that the Divine Mother was living and conscious, the Perennial Fountain of Divine Love and Beauty. I was caught in a surging wave of devotion and love. In an ecstasy of joy I prostrated myself again and again before the Mother, and prayed, 'Mother, give me discrimination! Give me renunciation! Give unto me knowledge and devotion! Grant that I may have an uninterrupted vision of Thee!' A serene peace reigned in my soul. The world was forgotten. Only the Divine Mother shone within my heart."

The world was forgotten and with it the need Narendra had expressed for help in his worldly difficulties of caring for his family and earning enough to keep them from starvation. Three times Ramakrishna sent him back to make the necessary petitions and three times he came back having found it impossible to formulate the request he had previously thought to be of such supreme



Swami Ramakrishna.

importance. At last Ramakrishna himself granted the prayer, and said, "All right, they will never be in want of plain food and clothing." Thus Narendra discovered the secret of the worship of the Personal God, whereas before he had nothing but contempt for worship through images and symbols.

From that time his body and soul were at rest, and all his past doubts were solved in the light of divine truth. "Ramakrishna for the future had no more submissive son than the great Kshatrya who was born to command." But Narendra's impetuous nature still needed restrain. He longed for the highest revelation of all and begged the Master again and again during the last months of his life to allow him to taste the bliss of the Nirvikalpa Samadhi. One day shortly before the end of Ramakrishna's life he attained it, as has been told in the *Life of Ramakrishna*. But the Master would not allow him to remain there as he himself desired. He said to him, "This revelation will become so natural to you, thanks to the Mother, that in your normal state you will

realise the Unique Divinity in all beings; you will do great things in the world; you will bring spiritual consciousness to men, and assuage the misery of the humble and the poor." § He had seen what Narendra's mission was to be in the world. "Ordinary souls," he said "fear to assume the responsibility of instructing the world. A worthless piece of wood can only just manage to float and if a bird settles on it immediately it sinks. But Naren is different. He is like the giant tree trunks, bearing men and beasts upon the bosom of the Ganges." ¶

† From Romain Rolland, *Prophets of the New India*. The rest of the quotations in Chapter I are from *the Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, published by the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, 1929. Unless otherwise stated the rest of the quotations in the book are from *Prophets of the New India*, published in India in two volumes under the title of *Lives of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda*.

CHAPTER II.

THE SEARCH FOR A MISSION.

Thus Narendra came to make the final surrender of his fiery spirit to the gentle Master of Dakshineswar. What he felt for him can best be seen in one of his later lectures, entitled *My Master*, wherein he declared, "If there has been anything achieved by me, by thoughts or words or deeds, if from my lips has ever fallen one word that has helped anyone in the world, I lay no claim to it, it was his. But if there have been curses falling from my lips, if there has been hatred coming out of me, it is all mine and not his. All that has been weak has been mine, and all that has been life-giving, strengthening, pure and holy, has been his inspiration, his words, and he himself."

The story of the Master's last days and the part played by Narendra in them, how he became the acknowledged leader of the chosen band of disciples, and how the Master shortly

before his death divested himself of all the special powers he had won by a life of ceaseless devotion and gave them to Narendra, has been told in the *Life of Ramakrishna*. As soon as he had trained Narendra to be his successor, Ramakrishna's work was done. A man of different calibre was necessary to spread his teaching in the world and to direct the Order he founded – a warrior, a Kshatrya, with commanding presence and penetrating mind, and yet illuminated with love and compassion for suffering humanity. And just such an one was the beloved disciple, whom the world was so soon to know as the Swami Vivekananda. Even in appearance they were absolute contrasts. “He was tall (five feet, eight and a half inches), square shouldered, broad chested, stout, rather heavily built ; his arms were muscular and trained to all kinds of sport. He had an olive complexion, a full face, vast forehead, strong jaw, a pair of magnificent eyes, large, dark and rather prominent, with heavy lids, whose shape recalled the classic comparison to a lotus leaf. Nothing escaped the magic of his glance,

capable equally of embracing in its irresistible charm or of sparkling with wit, irony or kindness, of losing itself in ecstasy, or of plunging imperiously to the very depths of consciousness and of withering with its fury. But his pre-eminent characteristic was kingliness. He was a born king, and nobody, ever came near him either in India or America without paying homage to his majesty''. There were also great difference in temperament. Whereas, his years of stress ended final union with Brahman achieved, Ramakrishna spent the rest of his days in a serene fulness of joy such as few mortal men have achieved. Vivekananda's life was one long struggle, so that with him battle and life were the same thing. The struggle was partly to bring the conflicting forces of his own nature into harmony, and partly against outside phenomena, the sufferings of his country and of humanity as a whole. He lived only sixteen years after his beloved Master, for he was less than forty when he died.

Although Ramakrishna had been certain of his disciple's destiny, Narendra himself was

by no means so certain. Indeed his mission only became clear to him after several years of wandering. Those years of wandering taught him to know his motherland as nothing else could have done, for he went from end to end of the Peninsula, and they showed him what were her peculiar needs. He learnt more than that. He learnt wherein lay her greatness as well as her weakness, and thus he became the voice of his people.

The inauguration of the Ramakrishna Order at Baranagore on Christmas Eve, 1886, has been described in a preceding volume. But months and years were needed to bring it to full fruition. Only one man, Narendra, could do it, and he, as we have seen, was still uncertain of himself. The struggle between his two selves, foreshadowed in the constantly recurring dream of his boyhood, the self that wanted to rule the world, to be another Napoleon, and the self that longed to renounce all earthly things in order to possess God, was not yet at an end. The Master had never doubted the outcome of the fight, for he knew that the scales were

weighted by another side of his disciple's complex character. There was the compassionate Narendra, who could not turn a deaf ear to any cry for help, and the Master with prophetic vision had said, "The day that Narendra comes in contact with suffering and misery, the pride of his character will melt into a mood of infinite compassion. His strong faith in himself will be an instrument to re-establish in discouraged souls the confidence they have lost. And the freedom of his conduct, based on mighty self-mastery, will shine brightly in the eyes of others, as a manifestation of the true liberty of the Ego". And it was this which came to pass during the years of wandering, so that all his conflicting desires were fused into a burning zeal for human service which found expression in the words, "If you want to find God, serve man !"

For the first two years after the Master's death Narendra stayed at Baranagore in spite of an intense longing to go out into the world as a nameless and homeless Sannyasin. The whole community was never there during

that period in its entirety. Some followed the Holy Mother, Ramakrishna's widow, to Brindaban. Others answered the call of the Forest and left without taking farewell, but a nucleus always remained. Soshi never left the place and became the faithful guardian of the Math and of the sacred relics of the Master, and the others always came back to it as to a loved home. It was in fact arranged that some should always stay behind while others led a wandering life. And to those who were in the Math at Baranagore Narendra acted as the elder brother, the leader, the guide of their hesitating footsteps. From the first he refused to allow the members of this young seminary to indulge in the luxury of grief or in the blissful idleness of a purely contemplative life. His superior knowledge made him a worthy teacher and he led them to study all the great books of human thought, and discuss all the great philosophical and religious problems that trouble the mind of man;

At last Narendra himself could bear it no longer ; the call of the wild was too strong,

for him. For another two and a half years, although he was usually absent from Baranagore, he was always with a companion and within call of the Math and his brethren in case of need. Very little is known about his wanderings, except from others of the Order or from disciples he made on the way, for he himself never revealed the secret of his religious experiences. In 1888 he went from Calcutta through Benares, Ayodhya, Lucknow, Agra, Brindaban, Hathras and the Himalayas. It was at Hathras that he made his first disciple. He was dying of hunger when he arrived at the small railway station. Sarat Chandra Gupta, who afterwards took the name of Sadananda, the young station master, saw him, and took him into his house for some food. He fell immediately under the spell of the other's personality, and when Narendra left, he left with him to follow him until the end of his life. "I followed two diabolical eyes," he used to say afterwards." For some time they wandered together, mutually helping each other, Sadananda became dangerously ill and Narendra carried

him through long stretches of jungle. Then he fell ill himself and Sadananda took him to Calcutta until he recovered. Two short journeys followed in 1889 and 1890 to Allahabad and Ghazipur. But these were only a prelude to the great wandering which began in 1891 and which was to crystallise his belief and to teach him what his mission was to be in the world.

In 1891 then Narendra disappeared. Nameless or under different names to conceal his identity, without a companion, staff and begging bowl in hand, he was swallowed up among the countless thousands passing to and fro along the roads of India. When he returned to the world of men it was as Vivekananda. In spite of his Master's teaching and still more the testimony of his Master's life, he had to reconcile one or two conceptions that would appear to be irreconcilable at first sight. And yet the religion of the future must come from the reconciliation of these opposing ideas—the Hindu faith and the teachings of modern science, the idea of the Vedanta and the social upheavals of the

present day, the pure spirit and the innumerable gods of common belief. He had, it is true, seen the synthesis of them all in Ramakrishna, but he had to make it for himself. Vivekananda, the great "discriminator" would take nothing on trust. That is why, when he had passed through the years of uncertainty, he was able to speak as a man having authority. He said at Benares before his departure: "I am going away; but I shall never come back until I can burst on society like a bomb, and make it follow me like a dog."

Before he left he went to ask the blessing of the Holy Mother, and then sought a retreat in the Himalayas. But it was some time before he could rid himself of his brother monks. The love they bore him was too great for them to let him go, and in the end he was forced to drive them from him with hard words. The death of a sister, who fell a victim to the cruel demands of society, was a great grief to him, but it hardened his determination to do something

to alleviate the lot of helpless Hindu womanhood. Twice he almost died, once of diptheria at Hrishikesh at the foot of the Himalayas on the Ganges, but in spite of his friends, and events such as these that called him back to the world he made his final escape, leaving Delhi alone in February 1891.

Five years of wandering followed—two through India, and three round the world. During those years the conception of his mission hardened and took form. Now that Ramakrishna was dead, there seemed to be no living soul who could enlighten him; only God Himself could do that. He had made one attempt to find a Guru in the person of Pavhari Baba of Ghazipur. Pavhari Baba was a great hermit, a Brahmin of the district of Benares by birth, who was also a very learned man. After years of wandering he had retired into solitude and practised the strictest asceticism. After the Master's death Narendra visited him daily and was on the verge of becoming his follower and of being initiated by him. He would, it is true, have satisfied the side of Narendra's nature that hankered

after Divine realisation to the exclusion of all other considerations, and to some extent he would have quieted the conscience that never slept within the young man with regard to his duty towards the suffering and helpless in the world. Pavhari Baba believed that the spirit can help others even without the help of the body. For twenty-one days he struggled with the temptation to hand his life over to the guidance of the teacher whose beliefs coincided with his secret longings, and twenty-one nights the vision of Ramakrishna prevented him. And so he set out to find the revelation of God for himself, becoming a nameless Sannyasin, one among a thousand others, except that the magic of his personality made a deep impression upon those with whom he came in contact, although in some cases it was years before they discovered who had crossed their path.

In the course of his wandering Narendra met with all sorts and conditions of men, and traversed the length and breadth of the great Peninsula. First he visited Rajputana, spending two months in Alwar, and then going to

Jaipur, Ajmere and Khetri. The Maharajah of Khetri became one of his most devoted friends, who supplied the means to take him to America, and who gave him the name of Vivekananda, by which he was to be known from the time of his landing in America. Next he went to Ahmedabad and Kathiawar. At the former place, he studied Mohammedan and Jain culture, and then at Porbandar, where he stayed nine months, he perfected his knowledge of Sanskrit and Hindu philosophy from certain learned pandits in the state. He also travelled through Junagad, Dwaraka, Palitana, the city of temples close to the Gulf of Cambay, thence to Baroda, Khandwa, Bombay, Poona and Belgaum, which he reached in October 1892. Then the South called him, and he went by Bangalore, Cochin, Malabar, Travancore, and to the holy places of the south, Madura with its wonderful temples, Rameswaram, and finally Kanyakumari, on the southmost point, the sanctuary of the Great Goddess. And as he went certain great truths were revealed to him ; first, the unity of the countless idols he

saw as he passed by. He came to realise that they were the different manifestations of the One God. Next he realised the essential unity of mankind despite the divisions of race, caste, and language. Gradually his prejudices disappeared. "At twenty years of age," so he said of himself, "I was the most unsympathetic, uncompromising fanatic ; I would not walk on the footpath on the theatre side of the street in Calcutta," but he added, "at thirty-three I can live in the same house with prostitutes. His fierce purity received a lesson from a little dancer belonging to the Maharajah of of Khetri. When she appeared to sing and dance to them, Narendra got up to go out, but the Maharajah asked him to stay. She sang a poem of Suradas, a vaishnavite saint.

"O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities ! Thy name, O Lord, is same-sightedness. Make of us both the same Brahman ! One piece of iron is in the image in the temple, and another is the knife in the hand of the butcher. But when they touch the philosopher's stone both alike turn into gold. So

Lord, look not upon my evil qualities. Thy name, is Same-sightedness”.

Narendra was overwhelmed, and never forgot the lesson it taught him.

In the Himalayas he lived with Thibetan tribes who practised polyandry. He stayed in the house of a family of six brothers, who shared the same wife. He remonstrated with them for what he considered a sin, but was met with a reply that showed quite a different point of view. “What selfishness,” said one of the brothers, “to wish to keep one woman all to oneself.” In Central India he lived with a family of outcast sweepers, and at another time with a most degraded criminal tribe, and he learnt that there is often real nobility of character among those whom society treats as beyond the pale. The poverty and misery that he saw everywhere on his wanderings obsessed him. He could think of nothing else, and at last he made the great decision. At the end of 1892 he found himself at Cape Comorin, the extremity of the Indian Peninsula. He climbed a tower and looked northwards where lay the rest

of the great land with its teeming millions. And there, with it spread before him like a map in his mind's eye he dedicated himself to its service. No longer were men to seek for personal salvation, the salvation of their mother-land was to be their goal. Her spiritual forces, long dormant, were to be re-awakened and then shed throughout the world. "The time is ripe, he cried shortly afterwards, "the faith of the Rishis must become dynamic. It must come out of itself.

But Narendra believed what Ramakrishna had said—that religion is not for empty bellies and so he conceived the plan of going to America, where a Parliament of Religions was to be held at Chicago in 1893. There he would appeal to the West "for the means to ameliorate the material condition of India." In return he was to spread a knowledge of the Vedanta in the West. It was in Madras in the opening months of 1893 that he gave public utterance to the plan. There too he founded his first group of disciples with whom he kept up a vital correspondence while he was away. Although many rulers and rich

men offered him funds for the journey, he preferred to appeal to the middle classes, and his disciples were sent to collect funds. He does not seem to have consulted his brethren of Baranagore, but he asked and obtained the blessing of the Holy Mother, and she gave him Ramakrishna's, as well, having received it in a dream for the beloved disciple. Just before he left for Bombay he met Brahmananda and Turiyanda at Abu Road Station, and told them of his intention and the reasons that had led him to take so momentous a step."

"I have now travelled all over India," he said, "But alas, it was agony to me, my brothers, to see with my own eyes the terrible poverty and misery of the masses, and I could not restrain my tears! It is now my firm conviction that it is futile to preach religion amongst them without first trying to remove their poverty and their sufferings. It is for this reason—to find more means for the salvation of the poor of India—that I am now going to America."

• An account of this chance meeting was

told to the world by Turiyananda. "Hari Bhai," he cried, his face suffused with blood, "I cannot understand your so-called religion." For the two monks were in retreat in Mount Abu. Then he pressed a trembling hand upon his heart and added, "But my heart has grown much, much larger, and have learnt to feel. Believe me, I feel it very sadly."

His voice was choked with tears, and Turyananda describes the effect of his word.

"You can imagine what went through my spirit when I heard these pathetic words and saw the majestic sadness of the Swamiji. 'Are these not,' I thought, 'the very words, and feelings of the Buddha?' And I remembered that a long time before, when he had gone to Bodh Gaya to meditate under the Bodhi tree, he had a vision of the Lord Buddha, who entered into his body. I could clearly see that the whole suffering of humanity had penetrated his palpitating heart. Nobody could understand Vivekananda unless he saw at least a fraction of the volcanic feelings which were in him."

The two who had met him at Abu Road

told the other brethren, but only one of them, Akhandananda, was so moved by his message that he forthwith devoted his life to social service by opening schools in Khetri, and working at the education of the masses.

Narendra finally visited his friend, the Maharajah of Khetri. The latter gave him his Dewan to escort him to Bombay and to see him on board his ship, together with his ticket to America. As a parting gift he gave him a gorgeous robe of red silk in which he afterwards appeared at the Parliament of Religions. Moreover, he bestowed on him the name of Vivekananda, the Discriminator, whereby he was to be known for the future. Narendra was no more. Phoenixlike, Vivekananda arose from the ashes of the sacrifice in which he had burned his old longings and aspirations for the service of mankind.

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW WORLD.

The opportunity Vivekananda sought in America was provided by a Parliament of Religions that was about to be held in Chicago in September 1893. He heard of it quite by chance and made up his mind to be present. But this decision was taken without any foresight. He determined to go and he went "taking no thought for the morrow." He did not even know the exact date of its opening nor the conditions of admission. He took no credentials with him, and little else besides his ticket, provided, as we have said, by the Maharajah of Khetri, and a beautiful robe of red silk. This last was no sufficient protection against the cold he encountered on some parts of his journey, but neither he nor anybody else had thought of that. He left Bombay on May 31, 1893 and went by way of Ceylon, Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Canton to Nagasaki. From the last place he went overland to Yokohama,

seeing Osaka, Kyoto, and Tokyo. He was much impressed by seeing the remains of Indian religious influences in the Chinese and Japanese temples. In China he found Sanskrit manuscripts, and in Japan Sanskrit Mantras written in ancient Bengali script. From Yokohama he went to Vancouver, thence by train to Chicago, which city he reached in the middle of July.

A World's Fair was being held and for a fortnight Vivekananda wandered about in it and in the street of Chicago in open-mouthed wonder and astonishment at the powers the riches, the inventive genius of the West. His warrior spirit rejoined in the noise and the movement around him. But troubles awaited him. He had never travelled out of his own country before, and all along the way he had come those, who lie in wait for the unwary traveller, had despoiled him. Hence his funds were running low. At this juncture he found to his dismay that the Parliament of Religions did not open until September, that it was too late to register as a delegate to it, and that in any case nobody was accepted as

a delegate without official references. He had not enough money to keep him until the Congress opened, and he cabled to his friends in Madras for funds, and applied to an official religious society to make him a grant, and to appoint him as one of its delegates. The answer was not encouraging. 'Let the devil die of cold,' was the reply of the head of the society. Vivekananda then took the only possible course and threw himself into the arms of Providence. "Heaven helps those who help themselves" is a proverb that many a man of faith has proved to be true. Instead of hoarding his remaining dollars, Vivekananda went to Boston, and on his way there in the train he made his first American friend. A rich lady from Massachusetts was so struck by his appearance and conversation that she asked him to stay in her house and introduced him to Professor J. H. Wright of Harvard. Professor Wright smoothed away all difficulties from his path. He wrote to the President of the Committee of the Parliament of Religions, introducing Vivekananda as a representative of Hinduism, gave him a

railway ticket back to Chicago, and letters of recommendation to the Committee for finding lodgings.

One last untoward incident took place. The train was late in arriving at Chicago, and Vivekananda, the improvident one, had lost the address of the Committee, so that he did not know where to go. He asked several people, but they were not sufficiently educated to realise the difference in race between an Indian and a Hindu. His brown skin was enough, and they refused to answer him. He accordingly slept in a big empty box in a corner of the station, and in the morning wandered from door to door Sannyasin fashion. But he was in a city that knew not Sannyasin, and he was rudely turned away from the doors, or had them shut in his face. On and on he went, until, completely exhausted, he sat down on the pavement and wondered what to do next. He was, however, observed from a window opposite, and a servant was sent to enquire if he were a delegate to the Parliament of Religions. He was thereupon brought into the house and

treated with great courtesy and kindness by one who was later one of his most faithful American followers, Mrs. G. W. Hale. She took him to the office of the Committee, where he was forthwith accepted as a delegate to the Parliament, and lodged with the other Oriental delegates. The most important of them were Pratap Chunder Mozoomdar, the chief of the Brahmo Samaj, who with Nagarkar of Bombay represented the Indian theists; Gandhi (not the Mahatma, it goes without saying) who represented the Jains; and Chakravarti who with Mrs. Besant represented the Theosophists.

But it was Vivekananda who drew all eyes when the Parliament opened, Vivekananda in his gorgeous robe of red silk drawn in at the waist by an orange cord, Vivekananda the unknown, who had never before had to speak in front of such an Assembly. Each delegate had to say who he was, and what he represented in a brief speech; but Vivekananda, overwhelmed with emotion, let his turn go by again and again until almost the end of the day. Then at last he rose,

and as his wonderful voice thrilled through the vast hall in the opening words—‘Sisters and brothers of America’—hundreds rose from their seats in excitement and cheered him. When all was quiet again he greeted the youngest of the nations in the name of the oldest monastic order in the world—the Vedic order of Sannyasin. His text consisted of two passages from the sacred books, and it was always on the same theme that he spoke during the ensuing days :

“Whoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form I reach him.”

“All men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me.”

Each time he opened his lips it was to preach a universal religion, a universal Being, embracing in Himself all the diverse sects and religions of the world. Each religion was to grow and flourish to the utmost pitch of which it was capable, and the only doctrine he laid down was the divinity inherent in man. To quote from his address on *Hinduism*, delivered on September 19.

“Unity in variety is the plan of nature,

and the Hindu has recognised it. To the Hindu, then, the whole world of religions is only a travelling, a coming up, of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal. Every religion is only an evolving of God out of the material man, and the same God is the inspirer of all of them. Why, then, are there so many contradictions? They are only apparent, says the Hindu. It is the same light coming through glasses of different colours. But in the heart of everything the same truth reigns. The Lord has declared to the Hindu in his incarnation as Krishna, 'I am in every religion as the thread through a string of pearls. Wherever thou seest extraordinary holiness and extraordinary power raising and purifying humanity, know thou, that I am there. The Buddhists and the Jains do not depend upon God; but the whole force of their religion is directed to the great central truth in every religion, to evolve a God out of man. They have not seen the Father, but they have seen the Son. And he that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father also.

“This, brethren, is a short sketch of the religious ideas of the Hindus. The Hindu may have failed to carry out all his plans, but if there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time ; which will be infinite, like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and Christ, on saints and sinners alike ; which will not be Brahmanic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development ; which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being, from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from the brute to the highest man towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity, making society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature. It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognise divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be

centred in aiding humanity to realise its own true, divine nature.

“Offer such a religion and all the nations will follow you.

“May He who is the Brahman of the Hindus, the Ahura-Mazda of the Zorastrians, the Buddha of the Buddhists, the Jehovah of the Jews, the Father in Heaven of the Christians, give strength to you to carry out your noble idea. Hail Columbia, motherland of liberty! It has been given to thee, who never dipped her hand in her neighbour's blood, who never found out that the shortest way of becoming rich was by robbing one's neighbours, it has been given to thee to march in the vanguard of civilisation with the flag of harmony.”

But the most significant passage was in the middle of the address :

“To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth. To him all the religions, from the lowest fetichism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp the Infinite, each

determined by the conditions of its birth and association, and each of these marks a stage of progress ; and every soul is a young eagle soaring higher and higher, gathering more and more strength till it reaches the Glorious Sun.”

The effect of his words was tremendous, and his fame spread far beyond the bounds of the Parliament of Religions. The American Press described him “as a great favourite of the Parliament”, and as “undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions”. Often the only way to keep up the interest in the meetings was an announcement that Vivekananda would speak at the end, and he had only to cross the platform to be received with cheers by the audience. Thus in a few short weeks his fame became world-wide, and the name of Vivekananda remained for all time.

But he himself knew that this sudden fame was the death blow to his secret desire to withdraw from the world and to lead a free, solitary life with God. He could never satisfy both sides of his nature, and hence the recurring periods of storm and stress through

which his spirit was doomed to pass. Moreover, his renown raised up enemies, small-minded or bigoted people, who were jealous of him personally, or jealous on behalf of their own narrower faiths. There was a further difficulty. From the depths of poverty he was in danger of being submerged in spite of himself in luxury. He became the man of the hour and was feted and lionised until he could hardly bear the contrast between the riches that encompassed him, and the thought of his starving countrymen. "Oh, Mother," he prayed "what have I to do with fame, when my people are lying in misery."

After the closing of the Parliament of Religions Vivekananda undertook a tour of the United States for a Lecture Bureau. He did so in order to raise funds for the poor of India, and to get rid of those rich friends who were almost killing him with kindness. But his early enthusiasm for American culture had evaporated as he saw some of the misery beneath the vast money making machine that was American society, and he did not hesitate to express his loathing of it in no measured

terms. At Boston he thundered against its material civilisation so that hundreds left the hall, and a bitter attack upon those who called themselves Christians raised a storm of anger.

“With all your brag and boasting,” he cried, “where has your Christianity succeeded without the sword? Yours is a religion preached in the name of luxury. It is all hypocrisy that I have heard in this country. All this prosperity, all this from Christ! Those who call upon Christ care for nothing but to amass riches! Christ would not find a stone on which to lay his head among you. You are not Christians. Return to Christ!”

Some clergymen showed themselves so unworthy of Him Whose name they bore that they joined with those Hindus who were jealous of Vivekananda's fame in spreading wicked scandals about him. They attacked his private life, accusing him of seducing a servant girl, and more dangerous, since the first charge could be, and was, met by a denial from the girl's mistress; they tried to stir up orthodox Hindus in his own country by saying

that he no longer kept the rules and regulations laid down for the strict Hindu. That indeed was true in a measure. Vivekananda held that apart from the two vows which could never be broken, those of poverty and chastity, a man should follow as far as possible the customs of the country in which he was living. The rumours even reached the ears of some of his followers in India, who were horrified to hear that their Swami had eaten beef, and that he ate impure food with unbelievers. To their timid remonstrances he replied in a letter from Paris of September 9, 1895.

“I am surprised you take so seriously the missionaries’ nonsense. If the people in India want me to keep strictly to my Hindu diet, tell them to send me a cook and money enough to keep him. As for me, mind you, I stand at nobody’s dictation, I know my mission in life, and no charivarism about me; I belong as much to India as to the world, no humbug about that. I have helped you all I could. You must now help yourselves. What country has any special claim upon me? Am I any nation’s slave? Don’t

talk any more silly nonsense, you faithless atheists.

“Do you mean to say I am born to live and die one of those caste-ridden, superstitious, merciless, hypocritical, atheistic *cowards* that you find only among the educated Hindus? I hate cowardice, I will have nothing to do with cowards or political nonsense. I do not believe in any politics. God and the truth are the only politics in the world, everything else is trash.”

For such disregard of orthodoxy he had the Master's own sanction. He had told the other disciples before his death that Narendra's spiritual force was so great that it purified everything he touched, and that he was therefore permitted to do many things forbidden to the ordinary man.

But although Vivekananda condemned the lack of spirituality he found in America, he had nothing but praise for her works of social service, contrasting her treatment of the unfortunate and the vast sums spent upon public welfare to the general apathy of his own countrymen at the time. In a letter

written on August 20, 1893 he described a visit he had made to a women's reformatory, and the thoughts it had conjured up in his mind.

“How my heart ached to think of what we think of the poor, the low, in India. They have no chance, no escape, no way to climb up. Thoughtful people within the last few years have seen it, but unfortunately laid it at the door of the Hindu religion, and to them the only way of bettering it is by crushing the grandest religion of the world. Hear me, my friend, I have discovered the secret through the grace of the Lord. Religion is not at fault. On the other hand, your religion teaches you that every being is only your own self multiplied. But it was the want of practical application, the want of sympathy, the want of heart. A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the down-trodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of social raising-up, the gospel of Equality. No

religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hínduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism."

Here Vivekananda laid down what he considered to be the way of salvation. It was to train individuals who would be fired with an all-consuming zeal for God and humanity, and this he began to do in America. For if India needed to learn America's ideals of social service, America needed in return to learn spirituality from India. India needed the money and goods—and by goods he meant social and mental as well as material ones—of Western civilisation, and the West needed the spiritual treasures of India in return. "In spirituality the Americans are very inferior to us," he wrote, "but their society is very superior to ours." Especially was he struck with the freedom of American women, and compared it to the seclusion in which the women of India lived. And so part of the proceeds of his first lecture tour were sent home for the foundation of an institution for

Indian widows at Baranagore, and he began to look for Western teachers who would go to India and devote their lives to building up a new generation of educated Hindu women. He decided, however, that he was wasting his time by given lecture tours, and altered his methods of spreading the vedantic seed over the vast stretches of this new and eager land. He first of all shook himself free from the lecturing organisations at Detroit in 1894, and he then returned to New York at the beginning of the winter of the same year. Here he was monopolised by a group of rich friends, but he discovered that they were more interested in him as the man of the day than in what he had to teach, so he shook himself free from them as well. With the help of a few poor students, who were really anxious to learn, he took some cheap rooms in a most unfashionable neighbourhood. But the numbers who came to listen to his teaching grew so great that larger quarters had to be found, since they overflowed out of the room, across the landing and down the stairs. His first course lasted from February to June, 1895, and in

it he explained the Upanishads. At the same time he instructed a few chosen disciples in Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga. His famous treatise on Raja Yoga must have been finished by June, and it brought him into touch with many learned Americans, like William James.

The next stage was at the Thousand Islands Park, a lovely retreat above the river St. Lawrence. There he further instructed a small and select band of disciples. There were twelve of them in all, but he lacked his Master's amazing sureness of choice. He made a mistake in the choice of some of them and they afterwards fell away, but the group included two who were faithful unto death, Miss Greenstidel who became Sister Christine, and a young Englishman, called J. J. Goodwin, who had been Vivekananda's secretary and right hand from the end of 1895. His purpose was to train individuals to carry out his teachings and the work that was to be done. Two of his sayings illustrate his reason for so doing. "One single man contains within himself the whole universe," and "If I succeed in my life to help one single man to attain

freedom, my labours will not be in vain." Although he became the head of a great order, at heart he was a Sannyasin, and it was his purpose to train free and individual Sannyasin. Life in this beautiful place has been revealed mainly by Sister Christine, whose hitherto unpublished Memoirs are in process of being published month by month in the *Prabuddha Bharata*. He began his meditations by a reading from the Gospel according to St. John, and then expounded the sacred books of India. Afterwards he talked with his pupils, giving them just the instruction each one needed. It was always his purpose to train individual souls by awakening the courage of his hearers, so that they might be able to face the tasks that awaited them, and he showed them the means whereby their souls might become strong. During this summer he initiated certain chosen disciples, who, after his departure were to spread his message in America. To this retreat at the Thousand Islands Park belongs his beautiful *Song of the Sannyasin*, for Vivekananda was a poet of considerable merit. It

will be found at the end of the present chapter.

The Swami visited England in the latter part of 1895, returning to America in December and staying there until the middle of April, when he went to Europe. During that period he gave two series of lectures in New York, the first on Karma Yoga and the second on Bhakti Yoga, and also continued his private classes to his special followers. Among their number should be mentioned Marie-Louise, who became Abhayananda, a temperamental Frenchwoman and an ardent socialist; Leon Lansberg, who became Krip-ananda; a Russian Jew, then a journalist in New York; Stella, an old actress; Dr. Wight and Miss Ruth Ellis, both gentle and spiritual souls. Then there were those who were his most devoted American followers — Miss Josephine Mac-Leod; Mrs. Ole Bull, the wife of a Norwegian artist; Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggatt of New York; Professor Wright of Harvard, the same who had helped Vivekananda to go to the Parliament of Religions, in addition to the two already

mentioned, Sister Christine and the Englishman, J. J. Goodwin.

Besides his work in New York, Vivekananda lectured in other places, in Boston and Detroit, and before learned societies like the philosophical school of Harvard. He also organised the Vedanta Society in New York under the presidency of Mr. Francis Leggatt. But his manifold activities seriously injured his health, for he did not know how to spare himself. The secret of his success with men and of his wonderful influence over them was just this faculty for pouring out his whole soul on their behalf. Everything he did, said, or wrote was at white heat, and this undoubtedly undermined even his strong constitution, so that he died a comparatively young man in the full flush of his powers. At times when he came out of his crowded meetings he longed for nothing but a quiet corner into which to crawl and die. He even said about this time, "My day is done," but the thought of his work recalled him, and in Europe he found the chance to rest for a short space. Just before he left America he wrote in a

letter from Boston on March 23, 1896, "I am going to England next month. I am afraid I have worked too much ; my nerves are almost shattered by this long-continued work. I don't want you to sympathise, but I only write this so that you may not expect much from me now."

THE SONG OF THE SANNYASIN.

Wake up the note ! the song that had its birth
Far off, where worldly taint could never reach ;
In mountain caves, and glades of forest deep,
Whose calm no sign for lust or wealth or fame
Could ever dare to break ; where rolled the stream
Of knowledge, truth and bliss that follows both.
Sing high that note, Sannyasin bold ! Say-

"Om tat sat, Om !"

Strike off thy fetters ! Bonds that bind thee down,
Of shining gold, or darker, baser ore,
Love, hate - good, bad - and all the dual throng.
Know, slave is slave, caressed or whipped not free ;
For fetters though of gold, are not less strong to
bind,

Then off with them, Sannyasin bold ! Say-

"Om tat sat, Om !"

Let darkness go ; the will - o' - the - wisp that leads
 With blinking light to pile more gloom on gloom.
 This thirst for life, for ever quench ; it drags
 From birth to death, and death to birth, the soul.
 He conquers all who conquers self. Know this
 And never yield, Sannyasin bold ! Say-

“Om tat sat, Om!”

“Who sows must reap,” they say, “and cause must
 bring

The sure effect: good, good; bad, bad; and none
 Escape the law. But whoso wears a form
 Must wear the chain.” Too true; but far beyond
 Both name and form is Atman, ever free.
 Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold ! Say-

“Om tat sat, Om!”

They know not truth, who dream such vacant
 dreams

As father, mother, children, wife or friend.
 The sexless Self ! whose father He ? whose child ?
 Whose friend, whose foe is He who is but one ?
 The Self is all in all, none else exists ;
 And thou art That, Sannyasin bold ! Say-

“Om tat sat, Om!”

There is but One - The Free - The Knower - Self !
 Without a name, without a form or stain.
 In Him is Maya, dreaming all this dream.

The Witness, He appears as nature, soul.

Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold ! Say-

“Om tat sat, Om!”

Where seekest thou ? That freedom, friend, this
world

Nor that, can give. In books and temples vain
Thy search. Thine only is the hand that holds
The rope that drags thee on. Then cease lament,
Let go thy hold, Sannyasin bold ! Say-

“Om tat sat, Om!”

Say, “Peace to all; from me no danger be
To aught that lives : in those that dwell on high,
In those that lowly creep, I am the Self in all !
All life both here and there do I renounce,
All heavens, and earths and hells, all hopes and fears.”
Thus cut thy bond, Sannyasin bold ! Say-

“Om tat sat, Om!”

Heed then no more how body lives or goes,
Its task is done. Let Karma float it down ;
Let one put garlands on, another kick
This frame ; say naught. No praise or blame can be
Where praiser, praised and blamer, blamed are - one.
Thus be thou calm, Sannyasin bold ! Say-

“Om tat sat, Om!”

Truth never comes where lust and fame and greed
Of gain reside. No man who thinks of woman

As his wife can perfect be ;
Nor he who owns the least of things, nor he
Whom anger chains, can ever pass thro' Maya's gates.
So, give these up, Sannyasin bold ! Say-

"Om tat sat, Om !"

Have thou no home. What home can hold thee,
friend ?

The sky thy roof ; the grass thy bed and food
What chance may bring, well cooked or ill, judge not.
No food or drink can taint that noble Self
Which knows itself. Like rolling river free
Thou ever be, Sannyasin bold ! Say-

"Om tat sat, Om !"

Few only know the truth. The rest will hate
And laugh at thee, great one ; but pay no heed.
Go thou, the free, from place to place and help
Them out of darkness, Maya's veil. Without
The fear of pain or search for pleasure, go
Beyond them both, Sannyasin bold ! Say-

"Om tat sat, Om"

Thus, day by day, till Karma's powers spent
Release thy soul for ever. No more is birth,
Nor I, nor thou, nor God, nor man. The "I"
Has All become, the All is "I" and Bliss.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold ! Say-

"Om tat sat, Om !"

CHAPTER IV.

EUROPE AND THE RETURN TO INDIA.

Vivekananda's first visit to England was in the middle of his stay in America from September to the end of November 1895. He was there again from April to the end of July and from October to December 16, 1896. On his way to London after he left America, he passed through Paris, but only for a round of sight-seeing, visiting such places as museums, the Cathedral and the Tomb of Napoleon. In Europe he found more of a resting place for his soul than in America. The older continent lacked the feverish excitement of the new. It had a thousand years of thought behind it, and so he was able to preach Jnana Yoga, the highest form of Yoga, without previous preparation. For the first time he found men soaked in the knowledge of the ancient languages of his country and its philosophy. Scholars like Max Mullar and Paul Deussen, and the discovery of the careful and precise

learning of these great thinkers was a revelation to him, one which he never tired of passing on to Indian scholars when he returned to his own country.

England itself was another revelation. On his return to India, Vivekananda said, "No one ever landed on English soil with more hatred in his heart for a race than I did for the English. There is none among you, who loves the English people more than I do now." He meant to use her to spread his thought throughout the world. He wrote to Mr. Francis Legatt on July 6, 1896. "The British Empire with all its drawbacks is the greatest machine that ever existed for the dissemination of ideas. I mean to put my ideas in the centre of this machine and they will spread all over the world. And again in an interview given in London, "It is worthwhile to plant an idea in the heart of this great London, surely the greatest governing machine that has ever been set in motion, and with all the rest, it distributes thought. It would be worth a man's while to place some ideas in the heart of this great machine so

that they might circulate to the remotest part."

His success was assured from the beginning. He first explained his purpose and thought, through the medium of the Press, and then during his second visit, as in America, he started regular classes of Vedantic instruction, and in addition he gave several courses of lectures, not only in public places, but to groups who came together in private houses, to hear him. He wrote to a friend on November 18, 1895, a letter which not only describes his work in England, but his bodily health as well. "In England my work is really splendid. I am astonished myself at it. The English people do not talk much in the newspapers, but they work silently. I am sure of more work in England than in America. Bands and bands come and I have no room for so many; so they squat on the floor, ladies and all. I tell them to imagine that they are under the sky of India, under a spreading banyan, and they like the idea. I shall have to go away next week, and they are so sorry. Some think my work here will be hurt a

little if I go away so soon. I do not think so. I do not depend on men or things. The Lord alone I depend on—and He works through me. I have no time even to die, as the Bengalis say. I work, work, work, and earn my own bread and help my country, and this all alone, and then get only criticism from friends and foes for all that. I am really tired from incessant work. Any Hindu would have died if he had to work as hard as I have to. I want to go to India for a long rest." In this more sympathetic atmosphere he spoke of his Master. He told Max Muller all that he could about him, and the substance of what he said was the basis of Max Muller's little book on Ramakrishna. He visited him at Oxford, and hailed the old scholar as a spirit of his own race, the incarnation of an ancient Rishi. It was, too, England that gave him what were perhaps the most beautiful friendships of his life. First there was the young Englishman, already mentioned, J. J. Goodwin. In New York Vivekananda had been trying to find a reliable stenographer to take down his words, and it was not easy to find one who was suffi-

ciently well-educated. Finally young Goodwin applied, almost immediately after his arrival from England. He was taken on at first for a fortnight's trial, but he never left the Swami again. He refused to accept payment for his work, and went with Vivekananda wherever he went, looking after his welfare in every possible way. He took the vow of Brahmacharya, and followed the man to whom he had given his life to India, where he was to die while still very young. Then there were the Seviars, a retired captain and his wife, both of them deeply interested in things of the spirit. Miss MacLeod tells how they came out of one of his lectures, and Mr. Sevier asked her, "You know this young man? Is he what he seems?" When she said that he was all and more than he seemed, he said, "In that case one must follow him and with him find God." Then he turned to his wife and asked, "Will you let me be the Swami's disciple?" She replied, "Yes, will you let me be the Swami's disciple?" And so they also became two of his most devoted followers, giving him themselves and offering him everything they possessed.

Vivekananda, however, made them keep a part of their small fortune for themselves. They looked upon him as their own son, and when he returned to India, they went with him, and were mainly responsible for the building of the Advaita Ashrama in the Himalayas—one destined for the worship of the Impersonal God. Mr. Sevier died there in 1901 in the monastery he had built. Mrs. Sevier outlived both him and her beloved Master, but continued to busy herself in this remote retreat with the education of the children of the neighbourhood.

Lastly there was the woman whose name will always be linked with that of Vivekananda's—Margaret Noble, who became Sister Nivedita. She was the head-mistress of a school in the outskirts of London when she came under the influence of the Master. She has described their first meeting in *The Master as I saw Him*.

“The time was a cold Sunday afternoon in November, and the place—a West End drawing room. But he was seated, facing a half-circle of listeners, with the fire on the

hearth behind him, and as he answered question after question, breaking now and then into the chanting of some Sanskrit text in illustration of his reply, the scene must have appeared to him, while twilight passed into darkness, only as a curious variant upon the Indian garden, or on the group of hearers gathered at sundown round the Sadhu who sits beside the well, or under the tree outside the village bounds. Never again in England did I see the Swami, as a teacher, in such simple fashion. Later, he was always lecturing, or the questions he answered were put with formality by members of larger audiences. Only this first time we were but fifteen or sixteen guests, intimate friends many of us, and he sat amongst us, in his crimson robe and girdle, as one bringing us news out of a far land, with a curious habit of saying now and again, 'Shiva! Shiva!' and wearing that look of mingled gentleness and loftiness that one sees on the faces of those who live much in meditation, that look perhaps, that Raphael has painted for us on the brow of the Sistine Child. That afternoon is now ten years ago,

and fragments only of the talk come back to me. But never to be forgotten are the Sanskrit verses that he chanted for us, in those wonderful Eastern tones, at once so reminiscent of, and yet so different from, the Gregorian music of our own Churches."

But she did not yield to him at once, being a soul to resist domination; once overcome however, she was faithful unto death, and devoted her life to teaching Indian girls.

Vivekananda did not found any society in England as he had done in America. This was perhaps due to his exhausted condition. The disease of which he died - diabetes - was already undermining his splendid constitution and sapping his energy. He longed for rest, and wrote on August 23, 1890, "I have begun the work; let others work it out! So you see, to set the work going I had to touch money and property for a time. Now I am sure my part of the work is done, and I have no more interest in Vedānta, or in any philosophy in the world, or in the work itself. Even its religious utility is beginning to pall upon me. I am getting ready to depart to

return no more to this hell, this world." He was in fact growing more and more detached, and the urgent need for a rest made his friends take him away to Switzerland during the summer of 1896. He lived in a village between Mont Blanc and the Little St. Bernard, and his health soon benefitted considerably from the cessation of strain and the pure air of the snows. While there, he received a letter from Professor Paul Deussen inviting him to come and stay with him at Kiel. So he left Switzerland, and went through Germany, visiting Heidelberg, Coblenz, Cologne and Berlin on his way. His visit was one of pure delight to both host and guest, and when Vivekananda left, Deussen rejoined him at Hamburg; they travelled through Holland together, spending three days at Amsterdam, and then the Professor came for a fortnight to London, spending a day during that time with Max Muller at Oxford. Vivekananda spent two months in London, during which time he met many religious leaders, like Canon Ailberforce. He also delivered another set of lectures on the Vedanta, winding up with

an exposition of the Advaita Vedanta, the final goal of Vedantic teaching. But it was time for him to return to his own country. She was calling him back, and in spite of his weariness and longing to be free of all ties, he answered the call. As he took leave of his English friends, he said, "I may even find it good to get out of this body, to throw it off like a disused garment. But I shall never cease helping humanity."

He left England on December 16, 1896, but before he embarked he went for a short tour in Italy, spending Christmas in Rome. There was much in the simple devotion of the Italians that appealed to him. He saw the children laying their tiny offerings at the feet of the child Christ on Christmas Eve, and he loved the gracious figures he saw everywhere of the Madonna and Child. Once when he was in Switzerland he came upon a tiny chapel up in the mountains. He picked some flowers and gave them to Mrs. Sevier to lay at the feet of the Madonna, with the words, "She too is the Mother." To him Christ seemed to belong equally to the East and the West, for

did He not come out of the East ? Vivekananda regarded Him as the greatest link between the East and the West. And he had discovered others during his journeys in America and Europe. One was the link formed by the great Oriental scholars of the West, who had studied the most ancient knowledge of India more thoroughly than even Indians had done. There was too the sympathy he had found wherever he went, and, finally, there were those friends, some of whom had left home and country behind them to follow him. The Seviars were actually with him on the boat, and J. J. Goodwin, his Secretary. Margaret Noble and Sister Christine were to follow later.

What then did he bring back with him to his native land ? Not the three hundred million rupees he had set out for, in order to realise his dream of a material regeneration of India. He had learnt on the other hand that salvation would have to come from within not from without. But he brought spiritual treasures with him from his long wanderings in far countries. He brought fame, and more

than that authority ; for his long pilgrimage had shown him clearly the path he was to tread. All the uncertainty of the days following the Master's death was a thing of the past. He faced the task that awaited him with supreme courage, though he himself knew the disease that was in him and that his days on earth were numbered.

Vivekananda's reception in India was a stupendous one. The news of his success at the Parliament of Religions and his subsequent fame had gradually spread in his own land, and produced a feeling of intense pride and joy. So when it was known that he would land at Colombo on January 15, 1897, the quays were thronged with those who had come to meet him, many of them from vast distances. A procession was formed, with flags at the head, which marched along, singing religious hymns as it went. Flowers were strewn before his feet, rose water and sacred water from the Ganges was sprinkled, and incense burned before the houses. The same scenes were repeated wherever he went. Hundreds laid themselves down on the rail-

way lines and stopped his train in order to see him. But enthusiasm reached its height at Madras. There, as we have seen, he had left behind him a group of disciples, whom he had encouraged and exhorted in a series of letters from the time of his departure until his return. He meant them to form the nucleus of a branch of his organisation in the South. He intended to found three others, at Calcutta, Bombay and Allahabad, all four to be grouped round one central organisation, the future Ramakrishna Math and Mission. Madras, then, welcomed him amid scenes of indescribable enthusiasm, and for nine days kept public holiday. During the course of his journey Vivekananda delivered a series of magnificent lectures, veritable "trumpet calls rousing the nation out of its apathy. At Colombo his subjects were *India, the Holy Land*, and the *Vedanta Philosophy*. At Madras he explained his purpose to India in *My Plan of Campaign*, *The Mission of the Vedanta*, and *The future of India*.

The following extract is from *My Plan of Campaign*:

“What is my plan then? My plan is to follow the ideas of the great ancient Masters. In India religious life forms the centre, the keynote of the whole music of national life; and if any nation attempts to throw off its national vitality, the direction which has become its own through the transmission of centuries — that nation dies, if it succeeds in the attempt. And therefore if you succeed in the attempt to throw off your religion and take up either politics or society, or any other thing as your centre, as the vitality of your national life, the result will be that you will become extinct. To prevent this you must make all and everything work through that vitality of your religion. Let all your nerves vibrate through the backbone of your religion. So every improvement in India requires first of all an up-heaval in religion. Before flooding India with socialistic or political ideas, first deluge the land with spiritual ideas. The first work that demands our attention is that the most wonderful truths, confined in our Upanishads, in our Scriptures in our Puranas — must be brought out from

the books, brought out from the monasteries, brought out from the forests, and scattered broadcast over the land, so that these truths may run like fire all over the country, from north to south, and east to west, from the Himalayas to Comorin, from Sind to the Brahmaputra. In this land of charity, let us take up the energy of the first charity, the diffusion of spiritual knowledge. And that diffusion should not be confined within the bounds of India, it must go out all over the world. This has been the gift of India to the world again and again. Whenever there has been a great conquering race, bringing the nations of the world together, making roads and transit possible, immediately India arose and gave her quota of spiritual power to the sum total of the progress of the world. Now the same opportunity has come again; the power of England has linked the nations of the world together as was never done before. English roads and channels of communication rush from one end of the world to the other. Owing to English genius the world to-day has been linked in such a

fashion as has never before been done. You must go out and preach your religion, preach it to every nation under the sun, preach it to every people. This is the first thing to do. And after preaching spiritual knowledge, along with it will come that secular knowledge and every other knowledge that you want ; but if you attempt to get the secular knowledge without religion, I tell you plainly, vain is your attempt in India, it will never have a hold on the people.

Therefore, my friends, my plan is to start institutions in India, to train our young men as preachers of the truths of our scriptures in India and outside India. Men, men, these are wanted: everything else will be ready, but strong, vigorous, believing young men sincere to the backbone, are wanted. A hundred such and the world becomes revolutionised. The will is stronger than anything else. Everything must go down before the will, for that comes of God Himself ; a pure and a strong will is omnipotent. Do you not believe in it ? Preach, preach unto the world the great truths of your religion ; the world

waits for them. For centuries people have been taught theories of degradation. They have been told that they are nothing. The masses have been told all over the world that they are not human beings. They have been so frightened for centuries, till they have nearly become animals. Never were they allowed to hear of the Atman. Let them hear of the Atman — that even the lowest of the low have the Atman within, which never dies and never is worn — Him whom the sword cannot pierce, nor the fire burn, nor the air dry, immortal, without beginning or end, the All-pure, Omnipotent and Omnipresent Atman! Let them have faith in themselves. What we want is strength, so believe in yourselves. Make your nerves strong. What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel. We have wept long enough. No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be men. It is a man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want. And here is the test of truth — anything that makes you weak physically,

intellectually and spiritually, reject as poison, there is no life in it, it cannot be true. Truth is strengthening, truth is purity, truth is all-knowledge ; truth must be strengthening, must be enlightening, must be invigorating. Go back to your Upanishads, the shining strengthening, the bright philosophy, and part from all these mysterious things, all these weakening things. Take up this philosophy ; the greatest truths are the simplest things in the world, simple as your own existence. The truths of the Upanishads are before you. Take them up, live up to them, and the salvation of India will be at hand.

“One word more and I have finished. They talk of Patriotism. I believe in patriotism, and I also have my own ideal of patriotism. Three things are necessary for great achievements. First, feel from the heart, but instead of spending your energies in frothy talk, have you found any way out, any practical solution, some help instead of condemnation, some sweet words to bring them out of this living death ? Yet that is not all. Have you got the will to surmount

mountain-high obstructions? If the whole world stands against you sword in hand, would you still dare to do what you think is right? Have you got that steadfastness? If you have these three things, each one of you will work miracles."

Vivekananda's call to India then was a purely spiritual one, but it had much to do with her national awakening in the political sense. It had a double appeal, a national and a universal one, and it was inevitable that the national should gain the upper hand for it coincided with the moment when nationalism became a force in politics, not only in Asia, but in Europe. To Vivekananda the awakening of India was the first stage before she could fulfil her destiny of service to humanity, and he absolutely refused to have anything to do with politics or to allow the Ramakrishna Order to mingle in the political movements of the time. "I will have nothing to do with the nonsense of politics," he exclaimed. But there was a struggle even within himself between the national and the wider ideal, and this struggle did not come to

an end until October 1898, when he was in retreat in Kashmir in a sanctuary of Kali. When he came out, he said to Sister Nivedita, "All my patriotism is gone. I have been wrong. Mother said to me, 'What even if unbelievers should enter My temples and defile My images? What is that to you? Do *you* protect me? Or do *I* protect you?' So there is no more patriotism. I am only a little child!"

CHAPTER V.

THE FOUNDING OF THE RAMAKRISHNA ORDER.

Men, ever more men, were needed to carry out Vivekananda's work in the world. How was he to find them, and, having found them, how was he to prepare them for the work they had to do? Such was the magic of his personality and the effect of his burning words as he proceeded on his triumphal way from Colombo to Calcutta that men came to him in as large numbers as he could deal with them. In order to train them he turned to the nucleus of the Order of Ramakrishna that had remained behind while he was travelling in Europe and America. He had not to create the means, he had to develop and organise them.

In 1892 Ramakrishna's monks had moved from Baranagore to A'lumbazar, near Dakshineswar. Several of them went to meet Vivekananda at Colombo, as also had Sadananda, his first disciple. And so the Swami first turned his attention to this

monastery of Alumbazar. He had a certain amount of difficulty with his brother monks at first, in spite of their affection and veneration for him. His new ideal of national and social service troubled them, entailing, as it did, the sacrifice of their free and quiet life of peaceful meditation. They quoted the example of the Master, but Vivekananda claimed to be his voice still speaking upon earth, and denied that there was anything new in his teaching. He merely spoke in the name of Ramakrishna, and was simply carrying out the thought of the Master. They appealed to custom, to the ideal of the free wandering life with personal salvation as its be-all and end-all. He countered this argument by the one that to think of his liberation is unworthy of the disciple of an Avatara; for their liberation was secured by the very fact that they were disciples of a Divine Incarnation. In the end they were forced to obey his orders, even though they might be still unconvinced in their hearts, by the love they bore him, apart from the authority with which he spoke.

Vivekananda accordingly made them accept the European disciples into their community, and band themselves together for a crusade of service and social help, forbidding them to be concerned selfishly for the future with the welfare of their own souls. He declared that he intended to create a new order of Sannyasin, who, if need arose, would go down to hell to save others. At the initiation of four young disciples, he said that there had been enough of the barren God of solitary prayers. Let them worship the Living God, the *Virat* dwelling in all human souls, and let them awake the lion of Brahman sleeping in each individual heart. The first to sacrifice himself after his return to the urge of Vivekananda's words was Ramakrishnananda, who had never left the monastery for twelve years. He went to be the head of the Madras organisation for teaching the Vedanta in Southern India. Akhandananda went next to organise famine relief at Murshidabad. It was he who had spent some time at Khetri in educational work for the masses, and two others had previously gone at

Vivekananda's call to the West to carry on his work there before he came back to India, Swamis Saradananda and Abhedananda. But the work needed to be organised and the need was urgent. Vivekananda had two bad attacks of diabetes following the strain of the first months after his return, and twice during the summer of 1897 he had been obliged to go to the Himalayas for rest, first to Darjeeling and later from May 6 to the end of July to Almora. But in the interval between these two periods he founded the Ramakrishna Mission.

On May 1, 1897 he summoned all Ramakrishna's disciples, monks and lay brethren as well, to the house of Balaram in Calcutta, and there explained what he had in mind. For the time being the community needed a dictator, the time for a really democratic organisation was not yet ripe. He repeated once more that all that he was doing or proposing to do in the future, and the position of leadership he had assumed was all in the name of Ramakrishna, and according to the Master's own will and choice. The

following resolutions were accordingly passed at his suggestion :—

1. An association was to be founded under the name of the Ramakrishna Mission.
2. Its aim was to preach the truths which Ramakrishna, for the good of humanity, had preached and taught in his own life, and to help others to put them into practice in their lives for their temporal, mental and spiritual progress
3. Its duty was to direct in a fitting spirit the activities of this movement inaugurated by Ramakrishna "for the establishment of fellowship among the followers of different religions, knowing them all to be only so many forms of the one undying Eternal Religion.
4. Its methods of action were: 1. "to train men so as to make them competent to teach such knowledge or sciences as are conducive to the material and spiritual welfare of the masses;

2. to promote and encourage arts and industries," 3. to introduce and spread among the people in general Vedantic and other religious ideas as elucidated in the life of Ramakrishna.
5. It was to have two branches of action, the first to be Indian; Maths and Ashramas were to be established in different parts of India for the education of Sannyasins and lay brethren, who were to be willing to devote their lives to the teaching of others. The second, foreign: it was to send members of the order outside India for the foundation of spiritual centres, and "for creating a close relationship and a spirit of mutual help and sympathy between the foreign and the Indian centres."
6. "The aims and ideals of the Mission being purely spiritual and humanitarian, it would have no connection with politics."

A study of these articles will bring out one or two points, which show clearly what

were the aims and aspirations of Vivekananda. The real object of the Mission was the good of the masses. Moreover, there was here no clash between religion and progress. Religion and science alike were to be used for the purposes of social uplift. The basis of its faith was brotherhood between the different races of mankind, since only so could the Universal and Eternal Religion be established.

The next step was to elect the heads of the Order. Vivekananda was to be the General President, and he chose Brahmananda and Yogananda to be the President and Vice-President of the Calcutta centre, and they were to meet every Sunday at Balaram's house. This lasted for two years, and then certain changes took place. A central Math for the Order was begun at Belur near Calcutta, whence Dakshineswar could be seen with the domes and minarets of Rani Rasmani's temples hallowed to the brethren by sacred associations with their beloved Master. It was dedicated on December 9, 1898 and the final occupation took place on January 2, 1899. The legal status of the

Ramakrishna Math was established during the latter year, and a further development took place after Vivekananda's death whereby the Order split into two branches, of which the second is called the Ramakrishna Mission. Particulars of this may be found at the end of the book together with a brief account of its growth from that time to the present day.

The brethren then, inspired by Vivekananda dedicated themselves to human service in all its branches, as he pointed out the way to them. During 1897 two more disciples went to Murshidabad to join Akhandananda at the famine centre. Abandoned children were collected and placed in an orphanage, where Akhandananda devoted himself when the famine was over, teaching them the trades of weaving, tailoring, joinery and silk-culture, and reading, writing, arithmetic and English. Famine centres were also established during the year at Dinajpur, Deoghur, Dakshineswar, and Calcutta.

During April and May of the following year, and again in 1899, the Ramakrishna

Mission mobilised against outbreaks of plague in Calcutta. Vivekananda was away ill in the Himalayas when the first epidemic broke out, but he came back at once to organise the work. They were hampered by lack of funds; so he unhesitatingly told the works to use the money that had been set aside to buy the land for the new monastery, if it could not be raised in any other way. Sanitary camps were set up on a piece of rented ground, and the work entrusted to Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble), who had just arrived from England, and two Swamis Sadananda and Shivananda. Four of the poorest quarters of the city were disinfected and cleansed, and Vivekananda enlisted the students to help in the work. They inspected poor houses, distributed pamphlets on hygiene, and set a fine example as scavengers.

Side by side with all this work of social service went the teaching of the Vedanta. Ramakrishnananda went to Madras and during 1897 he lectured in the neighbourhood and opened eleven classes in different parts of the city, he fed the starving and did educa-

tional work at the same time. The same year Shivananda was sent to Ceylon to preach the Vedanta. And so, although Vivekananda himself was obliged to undergo a course of treatment at Almora he was able to say in July, "The movement is begun. It will never stop." After his health was somewhat restored he toured through Northern India, the Punjab and Kashmir from August to December of the same year, preaching his twofold message wherever he went. His object was always the development of individual character, and he constantly taught that passive faith was useless. All faith must be tested in action. In Lahore he founded an association among the students of that city, open to all sects and creeds and having as its social welfare and the education of the people. He sought also to spread the knowledge of Sanskrit and western science side by side, being convinced that the Hindu religion and modern scientific knowledge were not enemies but allies. He also preached against the social injustices of the Hindu system, urging the intermarriage of castes and sub-castes.

the betterment of conditions for the outcasts, and he sought to improve the lot of unmarried women and widows. In his own words, "Only one idea was burning in my brain — to start the machine for elevating the Indian masses, and that I have succeeded in doing to a certain extent. It would have made your heart glad to see how my boys are working in the midst of famine and disease and misery—nursing by the mat-bed of the cholera-stricken pariah, and feeding the starving Chandala, and the Lord sends help to me and to them all. He is with me, the Beloved, as he was when I was in America, in England, when I was roaming about unknown from place to place in India. I feel my task is done - at most three or four years more of life is left. I have lost all wish for my salvation. I never wanted earthly enjoyments. I must see my machine in strong working order, and then, knowing for certain that I have put in a lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can drive back, I will sleep without caring what will be next. And may I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries, so

that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls.''

The year 1898 saw further organisation for the smooth working of the Ramakrishna Math, and the founding of journals and reviews for spreading the teaching of the Order and to be an additional means for the education of India. *Prabuddha Bharata* was already in existence, but it had been temporarily suspended owing to the death of its young editor. Mr. Sevier took it over and transferred it from Madras to Almora, where Swami Swarupananda, who was afterwards the President of the Advaita Ashrama, became its new editor. At the beginning of 1899 *Udbodhan*, another monthly review was started, edited by Swami Trigunatita. Its guiding principles were never to attack any other faith but to present Vedic doctrine in its simplest form, to discuss matters of health and education, and the physical and spiritual uplift of the race, and to spread ideas of moral purity, mutual aid and universal harmony. In August 1898 Vivekananda wrote his beauti-

ful poem, *To the Awakened India*, for the *Prabuddha Bharata*.

Once more awake !

For sleep it was, not death, to bring thee life
Anew, and rest to lotus-eyes, for visions
Daring yet. The world in need awaits, O Truth !
No death for thee !

Resume thy march,

With gentle feet that would not break the
Peaceful rest, even of the road-side dust
'That lies so low. Yet strong and steady,
Blissful, bold and free. Awakener, ever
Forward ! Speak thy stirring words.

Thy home is gone,

Where loving hearts had brought thee up, and
Watched with joy thy growth. But Fate is
strong
This the low,—all things come back to the source
They sprung, their strength to renew.

Then start afresh

From the land of thy birth, where vast cloud-
belted
Snows do bless and put their strength in thee,
For working wonders new. The heavenly river
Tune thy voice to her own immortal song ;
Deodar shades give thee eternal peace.

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And all above,

Himalaya's daughter, Uma, gentle, pure,
The Mother that resides in all as power
And Life, who works all works, and
Makes of One the world, whose mercy
Opes the gate to Truth, and shows
The One in All, give thee untiring
Strength, which is Infinite Love.

They bless thee all,

The seers great, whom age nor clime
Can claim their own, the fathers of the
Race, who felt the heart of Truth the same,
And bravely taught to man ill-voiced or
Well. Their servant, thou hast got
The secret, — 'tis but One.

Then speak, O love !

Before thy gentle voice serene, behold how
Visions melt, and fold on fold of dreams
Departs to void, till Truth and Truth alone,
In all its glory shines :—

And tell the world

Awake, arise, and dream no more !
This is the land of dreams, where Karma
Weaves unthreaded garlands with our thoughts,
Of flowers sweet or noxious, — and none
Has root or stem, being born in naught, which

The softest breath of Truth drives back to
Primal nothingness. Behold, and face
The truth ! Be one with it ! Let visions cease
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free.

During the same year Vivekananda undertook the training of his Western disciples. Margaret Noble came out at the end of January in order, to run with the help of Miss. Maller model institutions for the education of Indian Women, a task to which she devoted the rest of her life. Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss. Josephine MacLeod arrived from America in February. In March Margaret Noble took the vow of Brahmacharya, and the name of Nivedita, meaning the Consecrated One. During the following months Vivekananda took them with him through places of historic interest into Kashmir. A full account of this journey together with many precious details of the Swami's life and teaching have been preserved in Sister Nivedita's *The Master As I Saw Him*, and *Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda*. She describes their life in a cottage at Belur on their first

arrival in India near the plot of ground that had been bought as the site of the new monastery, and how the Swami used to visit them daily at sunrise, either alone or with some of the brethren. "And here under the trees long after our early breakfast was ended, we might still be found seatead, listening to that inexhaustible flow of interpretation, broken but rarely by question and answer, in which he would reveal to us some of the deepest secrets of the Indian world. Amongst brilliant conversationalists, the Swami was peculiar in one respect. He was never known to show the slightest impatience at interruption. He was by no means indifferent to the minds he was addressing. His deepest utterances were heard only in the presence of such listeners as brought a subtle sympathy and reverence into the circle about him. It was here that we learnt the great outstanding watchwords and ideals of the Indian striving. This was a world in which concentration of mind was the object of more deliberate cultivation than even the instincts of benevolence could require. The attainment of the impersonal

standpoint was boldly proposed in matters personal. 'Be the witness !' was a command heard oftener than that which bids us pray for our enemies. The idea of recognising an enemy would have seemed to this mind a proof of hatred. Love, was not love, it was insisted, unless it was 'without a reason'. Purity and renunciation were analysed untiringly. We were even called upon to understand a thought immeasurably foreign to all our past conceptions of religion, in which saint-hood finds expression in an unconsciousness of the body so profound that the saint is unaware that he goes naked. There was one aspiration, however, which was held to be of the same sovereign and universal application in the religious life as that of the concentration of the mind. There was the freedom of the individual soul, including all the minor rights of thought, opinion and action." A charming touch is that the whole monastery treated this stranger as their guest. She continues, "So back and forth would toil the hospitable monks as errands of kindness and service for us.

They milked the cow that gave us our supply, and when the servant, whose duty it was at nightfall to carry the milk, was frightened by the sight of a cobra in the path and refused to go again, it was one of the monks themselves who took his place in this humble office. Some novice would be deputed daily to deal with the strange problems of our Indian house-keeping. Another was appointed to give Bengali lessons. Visits of ceremony and kindness were frequently paid us by the older members of the community. And finally, when the Swami Vivekananda himself was absent for some weeks on a journey, his place was always duly taken at the morning tea-table by some one or another who felt responsible for the happiness and entertainment of his guests. In these and a thousand similar ways, we came in touch with those who could reveal to us the shining memory that formed the warp, on which, as woof, were woven all these lives of renunciation. For they had only one theme, these monastic visitants of ours, and that was their Master Sri Ramakrishna and his great disciple.

When this happy life had lasted a few months they set out with Vivekananda for the journey mentioned above. As they journeyed the Swami told them not only the points of historical interest they passed by, but all about the life of the peasants and the simple hospitality they never failed to offer to the wandering Sadhu. But, delightful as this aspect of their travels was, the relationship of the Swami to his spiritual daughter was one of storm and stress at this time. She speaks of herself as "a rebellious child," and he appears to have subjected her to the sternest moral discipline, whose subject was to root out all her pre-conceived prejudices as a Westerner. So severe was he that one of the older ladies of the party remonstrated with him on her behalf. He said nothing, but when he came back that night it was with the confession, "You are right. There must be a change. I am going away into the forests to be alone, and when I come back I shall bring peace." From that time Nivedita's heart was enlightened and she found her happiness in submitting to her Master's rules of thought.

Two striking incidents took place in the Swami's own life during these wanderings in Kashmir. The two most holy places are Kshir Bhawani, a spring at which the Divine Motherhood is worshipped, and Amarnath, the cave, far in the mountains where is an ice *lingam*, the emblem of Shiva. It was while they were staying in the Mogul gardens of Achhabal that Vivekananda announced that he was about to undertake the pilgrimage to Amarnath and that he would take Sister Nivedita with him. They started at the end of July in the company of two or three thousand other pilgrims. The Swami became one of this host, and scrupulously observed all the practices demanded by custom. After leaving Pahlgam there was an end of all signs of human habitation. "Through scenes of indescribable beauty," so the way is described by Sister Nivedita, "three thousand of us ascended valleys that opened before us as we went. The first day we camped in a pine wood ; the next, we have passed the snow line, and pitched our tents beside a frozen river. That night the great camp fire was made of juniper,

and the next evening, at still greater heights, the servants had to wander many miles in search of the scanty fuel. At last the regular pathway came to an end, and we had to scramble up and down, along goat-paths, on the face of steep declivities, till we reached the boulder-strew gorge in which the Cave of Amarnath is situated. As we ascended this, we had before us the snow peaks covered with the white veil, newly fallen; and in the Cave itself in a niche never reached by sunlight, shone the great ice-lingam, that must have seemed to the awestruck peasants who first came upon it like the waiting Presence of God."

And so, as the Swami entered the Cave, it seemed as if he saw Shiva made visible before him. The shock of the revelation was tremendous. His heart never regained its normal condition, and for days he saw Shiva everywhere with the snowy Himalayas as his throne. Sister Nivedita adds the following exquisite touch. "The Swami was full of the place. He felt that he had never before been to anything so beautiful. He sat long silent,

Then he said dreamily, 'I can well imagine how this Cave was first discovered. A party of shepherds one summer day must have lost their flocks and wandered in here in search of them. Then when they came home to the valleys, they told how they had suddenly come upon Mahadev ! Of my Master himself, in any case, a like story was true. The purity and whiteness of the ice-lingam had startled and enwrapt him. And for the rest of his life, he cherished the memory of how he had entered a mountain cave and come face to face there with the Lord Himself.'

During the month of August Vivekananda, having been possessed with God, the Supreme and Infinite Being, after his experience at Amarnath, was possessed by Kali, the Mother, the manifestation of Divine Power. For days he was obsessed with the worship of the Terrible. In a fever of inspiration he wrote the poem on *Kali, the Mother*,

The stars are blotted out,
The clouds are covering clouds,
It is darkness vibrant, sonant,
In the roaring, whirling wind.

Are the souls of a million lunatics,
Just loosed from the prison house,
Wrenching trees by the roots,
Sweeping all from the path.

The sea has joined the fray
And swirls up mountain waves
To reach the pitchy sky.
The flash of lurid light
Reveals on every side
A thousand, thousand shades
Of death, begrimed and black.

Scattering plagues and sorrows,
Dancing mad with joy,
Come, Mother, come !
For terror is Thy name.

Death is in Thy breath,
And every shaking step
Destroys a world for e'er.
Thou "Time", the All-Destroyer !
Come, Mother come !

Who dares misery love.
Dance in destructions' dance,
And hug the form of death
To him the Mother comes.

Then on September 30 he went alone to Kshir Bhawani, returning on October 6. "In the afternoon of that day," wrote Sister Nivedita "we saw him coming back to us up the river. He stood in front of the *dunga*, grasping with one hand the bamboo roof-pole, and with the other holding yellow flowers. He entered our house-boat, a transfigured presence, and silently passed from one to another, blessing us, and putting the marigolds on our heads. 'I offered them to Mother,' he said at last, as he ended by handing the garland to each one of us. Then he sat down. 'All my patriotism is gone. Everything is gone. Now it's only, 'Mother, Mother !' A few days later he told them the great lesson he had learned. There was no way but love. If people sinned against us, we must love them till it was impossible for them to resist it. That was all. This embracing of the Terrible aspect of God may have had some connection with a great personal grief that befell him at this time, the deaths of J. J. Goodwin, and of Pavhari Baba, the ascetic whom he had almost accepted as his Guru some time after Ramakrishna's death.

His tribute, written in August to the young Englishman who had been his devoted secretary is a moving one.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE.

Speed forth, O Soul ! upon thy star-strew path ;
Speed, blissful one ! where thought is ever free,
Where time and space no longer mist the view,
Eternal peace and blessing go with thee !

Thy service true, complete thy sacrifice,
Thy home the heart of love transcendant find ;
Remembrance sweet, that kills all space and time,
Like altar roses fill thy place behind !

Thy bonds are broke, thy quest in bliss is found,
And one with That which comes as death and life;
Thou helpful one ! unselfish e'er on earth,
Ahead ! still help with love this world of strife !

The strain of these experiences had a terrible effect on Vivekananda's health. When he returned to them, his monks were horrified at the change they saw in him. But in spite of the state of his health—and he was

suffering from terrible attacks of asthma in addition to diabetes—he consecrated the new Math at Belur on December 9, 1898, and pushed on the work of his organisation. His life was a veritable hymn of work, and some of his sayings taken from this period of his life show how he regarded it.

“Only a great monk can be a great worker, for he is without attachments. There were no greater workers than Buddha and Christ. No work is secular. All work is adoration and worship.”

“If my Gurubhais told me that I was to pass the rest of my life cleaning the drains of the Math, assuredly I should do it. He alone is a great leader who knows how to obey for the public good.”

“The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the Divinity within. You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. As soon as a man or a nation loses faith in

himself, death comes. Believe first in yourself, and then in God. A handful of strong men will move the world."

So, although he knew he was dying, he could say, "Life is a battle. Two years of physical suffering have taken from me twenty years of life. But the soul is unchanged. It is always here, the same fool, the fool with a single idea—Atman."

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAST JOURNEY AND THE PARTING.

Before his death Vivekananda once more visited the west, so that he might see how his work was progressing. He left Calcutta with Turiyananda, one of the most learned of the monks, and Sister Nivedita, and travelling by Madras, he embarked at Colombo for Marseilles. He reached London on July 31, and stayed until the middle of August, when he sailed from Glasgow for New York. He spent nearly a year in the United States, mainly in California, and then in August 1900 he went to France, where he remained until October. After a tour through Vienna, the Balkans, Constantinople, Greece and Egypt, he returned to India, arriving at the beginning of December. Throughout this, his second journey to the West, he was practically a dying man, but in his wasted frame burned an inexhaustible flame of spiritual energy. As he travelled from place to place he became more and more

convinced that India and Europe were complementary. The East and the West were "two organisms in full youth — two great experiments neither of which is yet complete." India needed the virile energy of the West, the West needed that deep inner peace which the spirituality of the East could bestow. For, on this journey the scales fell from his eyes, and he saw the hatred and greed smouldering beneath the surface, which were to burst into the conflagration of the Great War in fourteen short years. He said to Nivedita, "Social life in the West is like a peal of laughter, but underneath it is a wail. It dies in a sob. The fun and frivolity are all on the surface ; really it is full of tragic intensity. Here (in India) it is sad and gloomy on the surface, but underneath are carelessness and merriment."

When he arrived in the United States Vivekananda found Abhedananda with his Vedantic work in full swing. He left Turiyananda near New York for a time, and he himself went to California, partly for the sake of its wonderful climate, which, it was hoped, would benefit his health. He gave a good

many lectures there, but this time there was no J. J. Goodwin to take them down, so that only a few have been preserved. He was presented with one hundred and sixty acres of forest land in the district of Santa Clara, and there he established an Ashrama, recalling Turiyananda to be the head of it. Thus the work grew and prospered. Sister Nivedita was with him from time to time, finally saying good-bye to him in Brittany in September, 1900. She was then returning to London to raise friends and money to carry on her work in India. She did not see her beloved Master again until her return to India during the first half of 1902. Then she was just in time to receive his final blessing and to take a last farewell. During a great deal of his stay in California he was content to drift, and his hold on life seemed to be gradually relaxing. A letter to Miss MacLeod describes his attitude towards life and its problems during this period. "Pray for me that my work stops for ever, and my whole soul be absorbed in the Mother. I am well, very well mentally. I feel the rest of the soul more than that of

the body. The battles are lost and won ! I have bundled my things, and am waiting for the Great Deliverer. Shiva, O Shiva, carry my boat to the other shore ! I am only the young boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the Banyan at Dakshineswar. That is my true nature ; works and activities, doing good and so forth are all super-impositions. Now I again hear his voice, the same old voice thrilling my soul. Bonds are breaking, love dying, work becoming tasteless ; the glamour is off life. Now only the voice of the Master calling : 'Let the dead bury the dead. Follow thou Me.' 'I come, my Beloved Lord, I come !' Nirvana is before me, the same Ocean of peace, without a ripple, without a breath. I am glad I was born, glad I suffered so, glad I did make big blunders, glad to enter Peace. I leave none bound ; I take no bonds. The old man is gone for ever. The guide, the Guru, the leader, has passed away. I dare not make a splash with my hands or feet for fear of hurting the wonderful stillness — stillness that makes you feel

sure it is an illusion ! Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my guidance the thirst for power ! Now they are vanishing and I drift. I come, Mother, I come in Thy warm bosom - floating wheresoever Thou takest me — in the voiceless, the strange, in the wonderland. I come, a spectator, no more an actor. Oh, it is so calm ! My thoughts seem to come from a great, great distance in the interior of my heart. They seem like faint distant whispers, and Peace is upon everything — sweet, sweet peace, like that one feels for a few moments just before falling asleep, when things are felt and seen like shadows, without fear, without love, without emotion. I come, Lord ! The world *is*, but not beautiful or ugly, but as sensations without exciting any emotion. Oh ! the blessedness of it ! Everything is good and beautiful, for they are all losing their relative properties to me — my body among the first. Om — That Existence !”

In Paris he was invited to a Congress on the History of Religions that was being held at the Universal Exhibition. It was a purely

historical and scientific Congress, and Vivekananda's share in it was to argue the question whether the Vedic religion came from Nature Worship. But most of his time was given to a study of French culture, for which he expressed a deep admiration, saying that Paris was the centre and the source of European culture. From Paris he went to a small place called Lannion in Brittany with Mrs. Ole Bull and Sister Nivedita, and then travelled through Europe to Constantinople. But after Paris other cities did not interest him, and he seemed to smell war in the air. "Europe," he said, "is a vast military camp." He went to Constantinople to visit some Sufi monks, then to Greece and finally to Egypt. But he became more and more detached from his surroundings and plunged in meditation. Sister Nivedita has said that during his last months in the West he sometimes gave the impression of being quite indifferent to all that was going on round him. Suddenly he decided to return to India and sailed from Egypt at the beginning of December, 1900.

As he landed in India, he was met with

news of the death in October of Mr. Sevier at the Ashrama he had built in the Himalayas. Instead of going to Belur, Vivekananda accordingly went straight to Mayavati. At that time of the year it was a difficult journey, and a dangerous one for anybody in his state of health, for it included a four days march through the snow. Without even waiting until coolies could be collected, he set out on the trek with two of his monks. As they struggled through the snow, mist and clouds he could hardly walk and seemed to be suffocating. An escort met him from the Ashrama, and it and his two monks carried him thither with great difficulty. In spite of his joy at seeing the building finished, he could only stay a fortnight, so terrible were the attacks of asthma from which he suffered. "My body is done for," he said, and yet while he was there he celebrated his thirty-eighth birthday. He left on January 18 and reached Belur on January 24. He made two more journeys, one during the same cold weather, a pilgrimage to certain places in Assam, and then in the following year, 1902, he went first to

Bodh-Gaya and thence to Benares. Otherwise the last months of his life, from January 1901 to July 1902 were spent directing his monastery and leading a simple, happy country life, working in the garden and the stables, surrounded by a collection of pet animals. There was Bagha the dog, Hansi the she-goat, Matru the kid, an antelope, a stork, ducks and geese, cows and sheep. His room was a big airy one on the second floor with three doors and four windows, which is still preserved just as he left it. In a letter of this time he wrote, "In front the broad river is dancing in the bright sunshine, only now and then an occasional cargo boat breaking the silence with the splashing of the oars. Everything is green and gold, and the grass is like velvet."

The ordinary life of the monastery followed a fixed routine. The monks were aroused by a bell at four. Half an hour afterwards they had to be in the chapel for meditation, but they always found Vivekananda there before them. He got up at three and went to the hall of worship, where he sat facing the north meditating for more

than two hours. Nobody left his place until he set the example with the words, "Shiva, Shiva." Each monk had his own allotted task of service for the monastery. Daily Vivekananda held classes for the novices in the methods of meditation, and instructed all the monks from the details of their daily life to the great teachings of the Vedanta. But his illness grew steadily worse. Hydropsy set in, his feet and legs swelled, and he could scarcely sleep. He submitted to a course of very drastic treatment during April, May and June of 1902. He was not allowed to swallow any water at all. But though his body was impaired, his mind and will were untouched. "The body is only a mask of the mind," he said, "What the mind dictates, the body *will* have to obey. Now I do not even *think* of water, I do not miss it at all. I see I can do anything." And above and beyond the way he bore his bodily sufferings, the monks felt in him more strongly than ever the living presence of God. One day when they were going to worship, he was sitting under a tree in the middle of the courtyard. "Where shall

you go to seek Brahman ?” he asked. “He is immanent in all beings. *Here, here* is the visible Brahman ! Shame to those who, neglecting the visible Brahman, set their minds on other things. Here is the Brahman before you, as tangible as the fruit in one’s hand. Can’t you see ? Here, here is the Brahman !” And the monks were so overcome by his words that they remained for nearly quarter of an hour glued to the spot, until he released them with the words, “Now, go to worship !” Moreover, in spite of the illness of the head, the monastery kept the great festivals with much pomp and circumstance. In October 1901 that of Durga Puja was celebrated with great magnificence, and in February 1902 on the festival of Ramakrishna, more than thirty thousand pilgrims visited Belur. During these last months he received a visit which gave him much pleasure, that of the learned Okakura, who came with the Japanese abbot of a Buddhist convent, and it was with them that he visited Bodh-Gaya and Benares. “We are” said Vivekananda, “two brothers who meet again having come from the ends of the earth.”

Constantly during these last months he was pre-occupied with the regeneration of India and with poverty and suffering wherever he found it. There were also two schemes that were very near his heart, the foundation of a Vedic College at Calcutta, and a monastery for women under the direction of the Holy Mother, Ramakrishna's widow, somewhere nearby on the Ganges.

An incident took place shortly before his death, which, perhaps more clearly than anything else, shows what his ultimate conclusions were, and illustrates the very core of all his teaching. Some Santal workmen were employed in the monastery, and they became especially dear to Vivekananda, who used to go among them, listening to the story of their simple cares, sorrows and pleasures. One day he made a feast for them, saying, "You are Narayanas; to-day I have entertained Narayana Himself." Then he turned to his disciples, and said, "See how simple-hearted these poor illiterate people are! Will you be able to relieve their miseries to some extent at least? Otherwise

of what use is our wearing of the *gerua*? Sometimes I think within myself: 'What is the good of building monasteries and so forth? Why not sell them and distribute the money among the poor, indigent Narayanas? What homes should we care for, we, who have made the tree our shelter? Alas! How can we have the heart to put a morsel into our mouths, when our countrymen have not enough wherewith to feed or clothe themselves?' Mother, shall there be no redress for them? One of the purposes of my going out to preach religion to the West, as you know, was to see if I could find any means of providing for the people of my country. Seeing their poverty and distress, I think sometimes, "Let us throw away all this paraphernalia of worship—blowing the conch and ringing the bell and waving the lights before the Image. Let us throw away all pride of learning and study of the Shastras and all Sadhanas for the attainment of personal Mukti—and going from village to village devote our lives to the service of the poor, and by convincing the rich men about their duties to the masses,

through the force of our character and our spirituality and our austere living, get money and the means wherewith to serve the poor and distressed." Alas! nobody in our country thinks for the low, the poor and the miserable. Those that are the backbone of the nation, whose labour produces food, those whose one day's strike from work raises a cry of general distress in the city - where is the man in our country who sympathises with them, who shares in their joys and sorrows? Look how for want of sympathy on the part of Hindus, thousands of Pariahs are becoming Christians in the Madras Presidency! Don't think that it is merely the pinch of hunger that drives them to embrace Christianity. It is simply because they do not get your sympathy. You are continually telling them, "Don't touch me!" "Don't touch this or that!" Is there any fellow-feeling or sense of Dharma left in the country? There is only "Don't-touchism" now! Kick out all such degrading usages! How I wish to demolish the barriers of 'Don't-touchism' and go out and bring them together one and all, crying: 'Come, all ye that are

poor and destitute, fallen and down trodden ! We are all one in the name of Ramakrishna ! Unless they are elevated the Great Mother will never awake. What are we good for, if we cannot provide facilities for their food and clothing ? Alas, they are ignorant of the ways of the world and hence fail to eke out a living though labouring hard day and night for it. Gather all your forces together to remove the veil from their eyes. What I see clear as daylight is that the same Brahman, the same Shakti is in them as in me ! Only there is a difference of manifestation – that is all. Have you ever seen a country in the whole history of the world rise unless there was a uniform circulation of the national blood all over its body ? Know this for certain, that no great work can be done by that body one limb of which is paralysed.’ Just before his death he preached in this striking way once more the equality of all men, all sons of God, and all bearing God within them. He who wishes to serve God must serve man, and the more unhappy and degraded the better.

But the end, though his disciples did not realise it, was fast approaching. As June drew on he said, "I am making ready for death." Ordinary happenings met with no response. If he were asked about them, he replied, "You may be right, but I cannot enter any more into these matters. I am going down into death." Sister Nivedita maintains that in spite of his own warnings to his monks, they refused to believe that death was so near on account of two prophecies. After the Swami's experiences at Amarnath, he said that Shiva had promised that he should not die until he himself should *will* to do so. The other was that after the Swami had first tasted the bliss of Nirvikalpa Samadhi while Ramakrishna was yet alive, the Master had said that he should not be allowed to taste it again until his death. Perhaps Vivekananda thought himself that he had been with his disciples long enough, and that the time had come for them to stand upon their feet; for he said, "How often does a man ruin his disciples, by remaining always with them! When men are once trained, it is essential

that their leader leave them, for without his absence they cannot develop themselves." The only thing left that had the power to move him was the thought of that, which was dearer than life itself, his work. He said to his disciples the Sunday before he died, "You know the 'work' is always my weak point. When I think *that* might come to an end, I am all undone."

On Wednesday of the same week, the fast of Ekadasi, he in person served the morning meal to one of his disciples. After each dish had been offered he poured the water over his hands and dried them with a towel. The disciple protested that it was he who should do it for his Master, not his Master for him, but he was silenced by the solemn reply, "Jesus washed the *feet* of His disciples." The disciple checked himself from saying, "But that was for the *last* time." But here also the time had come. Two days later, on Friday, July 4, "his spirit soared whence there could be no return, and the body was left, like a folded vesture, on the earth."

On that, the last day, the Swami had seemed stronger and better than he had been for months. He rose very early, and spent from eight to eleven o'clock in formal meditation, which he brought to an end by singing a beautiful hymn to Kali. After taking his meal in the midst of the disciples, he gave a Sanskrit lesson lasting three hours. Then he went for a walk along the Belur road for almost two miles with Premananda, talking eagerly about his plan for a Vedic College; for he trusted to Vedic study to kill superstition. During the evening he had a last intimate talk with the disciples, the subject being the Rise and Fall of Nations. At 7 o'clock the convent bell sounded for Arati. He went to his room, telling the novice with him that he did not wish to be disturbed. After three quarters of an hour he called him in again, and told him to open all the windows. Then he lay down quietly on the floor on his left side and remained motionless, apparently in meditation. At the end of an hour he turned round and sighed. He gave another sigh a few seconds later, and then silence fell for

ever. It seemed as if he had gone away voluntarily in the Kundalini Shakti — in the final great ecstasy, as Ramakrishna had promised, when his work was finished. The next day, amid shouts of victory, the great warrior was born to the pyre on the shoulders of his brethren.

Vivekananda, the man, at the age of thirty-nine, was no more, but what of his work and teaching? His death did not bring the Ramakrishna Mission to an end. Rather it has grown and prospered on the firm foundations he laid for it. He was succeeded by Brahmananda, who secured for it a regular constitution. By an act of 1899 the Order of Sannyasins of Ramakrishna, domiciled in the Beulr Math, Calcutta, became possessed of a legal statute. But further action was necessary, if it was to receive gifts for its charitable work. Hence on May 4, 1909 under Act XXI of 1860 of the Governor General of India in Council the original foundation was doubled, into a Math and a Mission. These are really the two sides, monastic and philanthropic, of the institution, the whole being known popularly as

the Ramakrishna Mission, whereas its correct title is the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. Its aims are to carry out charitable, educational and missionary work, the last by means of organisation and the Press. It possesses permanent institutions such as Ashramas, orphanages and schools, and also undertakes charitable work to meet sudden need, such as comes from plague, famine, flood and fire. In the Maths there are regular monks, some five hundred in all, who are moved from place to place as they are needed for different branches of the work, but wherever they are, they are under the control of the General Council of the Order at Belur. In addition there are laymen who come from time to time to retreat in the Maths and receive spiritual instruction, although they are house-holders living in the world. There are twenty-five thousand of these. Finally there are those who are in sympathy with the principles and the work of the Mission, but do not formally belong to it.

In April 1926, when the Mission held a great general Reunion at the Math of Belur,

it was found that it possessed about one hundred and twenty institutions, half in Bengal, a dozen in Behar and Orissa, fourteen in the United Provinces, thirteen in the Madras Presidency, and one in Bombay. Outside India there are three centres in Ceylon controlling nine schools ; in Burma a monastic centre and large free hospital ; one in Singapore and six in the United States of America. The Order further publishes a dozen Reviews in English and the different vernaculars having a wide circulation. In the monasteries education follows the lines laid down by Vivekananda. "Equal importance should be given to the triple culture of the head, the heart and the hands," said the present Abbot of the Order, Swami Shivananda ; and so the initiates pass without a break from spiritual exercises to manual work : heusehold duties, baking, gardening and sewage farming, bridges and roads, farms and agriculture, the care of animals as well as the double ministry of religion and medicine. Although within the Order some are in authority over the rest, they all, including the head, obey

the common rule. The Mission has further followed the great Swami in having nothing to do with politics. Its name in troublous times has been used nevertheless by some who have enjoyed its hospitality, but to the suspicion of the Government and to the reproaches levelled at it by patriots for not taking a more active part in the national political movement, it has replied with Vivekananda's own words. "The national ideals of India are Renunciation and Service. Intensify her in those channels and the rest will take care of itself." Rather than non-co-operation it preaches peaceful but irresistible universal co-operation. Instead of conducting campaigns against such evils as Untouchability, it takes it for granted that they do not exist so far as it is concerned. For instance at Trivandrum, a haunt of orthodoxy, at the opening of a new monastery all castes, Brahmin and non-Brahmin, sat down together to take their meals as a matter of course. This attitude has enabled it to remain within the folds of orthodox Hinduism, and from that stronghold to carry out reforms for the benefit of all. It has done the same with

regard to the condition of women and to service of the lower classes. It has consistently tried to wed the new to the old, and so has preserved all that is best in the culture, art, philosophy and religion of ancient India. It declared publicly at the meeting of the Extraordinary General Convention of the Mission in 1926 that "Its sole object is to bring about harmony and co-operation between the beliefs and doctrines of the whole of humanity" — to reconcile religions among themselves and to free reason — to reconcile classes and nations — to found the brotherhood of all men and all peoples.

The brotherhood of all men and all peoples indeed lay at the very heart of Vivekananda's belief. Perhaps it is most clearly stated in the answer he gave just before his death to a lay brother, who had pointed out the difficulty of establishing unity and harmony in India. "Don't come here any more," he cried, "If you think any task too difficult. Through the grace of the Lord, everything becomes easy of achievement. Your duty is to serve the poor and the

distressed without distinction of caste and creed. What business have you to consider the fruits of your action ? Your duty is to go on working, and everything will set itself right in time and work by itself. You are all intelligent boys and profess to be my disciples, — tell me *what* you have done. Couldn't you give away one life for the sake of others ? Let the reading of the Vedanta and the practising of meditation and the like be left to be done in the next life ! Let this body go in the service of others, and then I shall know you have not come to me in vain."

A little later he said, "After so much *tapasya*, I have known that the highest truth is this ! 'He is present in every being ! These are all the manifold forms of Him. There is no other God to seek for ! He alone is worshipping God who serves all beings.'"

Sister Nivedita gives three great influences as having shaped his thought and his life : his education in Sanskrit and English literature ; the great personality of Ramakrishna which illustrated and proved the truth of the life

described in all the sacred writings; and his personal knowledge of India and the Indian peoples as an immense religious organism, personified and made articulate in his Master. And she sums up the achievements of her own beloved Master in the words — He was indeed the voice of his people, for the great impulse moulding all his life was his love of the people. It overcame his yearnings after a life of retirement from the world and of contemplation. To it he sacrificed his personal desires, his energy and his life itself. But his love passed beyond the bounds of his own country and embraced the whole of humanity. His religion is universal. God exists in every single man and woman, in every creature, and the service of a fellow man is therefore the same as the service of God. And in this great doctrine of service his brethren followed him implicitly before his death, as implicitly as they approved the way he broke the rules laid down by strict orthodoxy. Even the most orthodox among them would eat with the Europeans ~~their~~ Swami had accepted. And

just as there would have been no Ramakrishna Order without Vivekananda, it could not have existed if behind him he had not had his brethren of the Order. To quote Sister Nivedita again, "It was said to me lately by one of the older generation that 'Ramakrishna had lived for the making of Vivekananda.' Is it indeed so? Or is it not rather impossible to distinguish with such fixity between one part and another, in a single mighty utterance of the Divine Mother-heart? Often it appears to me in studying all these lives that there has been with us a soul name Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, and that in the penumbra of his being appear many forms, some of which are with us still, and of none of whom it could be said with entire truth that here ends, in relation to him, the sphere of those others, or that there begins his own." They are indeed one great body still working for the good of mankind.

Vivekananda's life was a great religious life of the ancient order, living itself out amidst the torturing complexities and problems of this Modern Age. He had received that

revelation of the misery and struggle of humanity as a whole which springs from the spread of knowledge in these days of ours. But unlike most men in his own life he found an answer to all these questions and knew without a shadow of doubt wherein lay the things which belong to our peace, and that service is the only key to unlock the door of happiness, not only for ourselves, but for the whole world.

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