

THE NEW COURAGE

THE virtue of courage is generally referred to in its physical manifestation, and it is significant in this particular—that its symbol is a beast of prey, namely, the lion. The dictionary rendering adheres to this physical aspect of courage, for on turning up the word I find its meanings are given as “bravery, fearlessness, intrepidity;” no other rendering being given. The soldier is the human type of courage, and the current sayings concerning courage are: “As courageous as a lion” and “As brave as a soldier.”

The lion and the soldier are alike fearless in attack and defence, and both will forfeit life rather than yield; but it is an entirely animal physical attack and defence. Courage, however, cannot be confined to this phase—indeed, this is its lowest manifestation—for it has many aspects, many modes of action, and as man rises in the moral and spiritual scale, his courage becomes transmuted, taking a newer and higher form; but before proceeding to the highest form of courage, which is the subject of this article, it is necessary that the lower forms should be first considered.

With the physical form of courage already referred to all are familiar. It is common both to animals and men. It arises in fearlessness. Its two-fold mode of action is attack and defence. It will be seen, however, that this kind of courage is inevitably associated with suffering, even with destruction and death, as daily manifested both in the animal and human spheres of life; self-protection being its dominant motive, whether in attack or defence.

But man is not only and merely an animal, a physical being: he is also a moral and intellectual being; and along with his moral evolution he began to develop a higher kind of courage—not the highest, or the **New Courage** herein referred to; but yet a great advance on the purely animal courage—namely, moral courage. In physical courage the other person's body or property is attacked, while one's own body and property are defended. In moral courage the other person's ideas, opinions, or principles are attacked, one's own ideas, opinions, and principles being defended. There is the same fearlessness, the same attack and defence so far as the spirit of courage is concerned, but as regards its letter, these conditions have undergone a change; their physical aspect has disappeared, and, having undergone a process of transmutation, has reappeared in a new form, for moral courage is concerned, not with

persons as persons, but with their principles; it is, indeed, purely mental, and while it is still concerned with destruction and is associated with suffering, the destruction is a bloodless and intellectual one, namely, the destruction of other men's opinions, and its suffering is mental and not physical.

This form of courage is now generally recognised, and is always referred to as moral courage, to distinguish it from common or physical courage. It is, without doubt, a comparatively recent development in the evolution of the race, and is entirely absent from animals. A few thousand years ago it was, in all probability, an exceedingly rare and new faculty, and it is still in process of development, large numbers of the race not yet having evolved it; for while it is probable that at least 75 per cent. of the race possess a considerable development of physical courage, it is doubtful whether 20 per cent. possess any marked degree of moral courage; so much so, that those in full possession of it are marked off from their fellows as men of a higher grade of character, and generally—though not necessarily and always—as leaders of men in their particular sphere of action.

But the New Courage, up to a consideration of which the preceding remarks have been leading, is a still higher form of courage; is, indeed, as much above and beyond moral courage as moral courage is above and beyond physical courage; and is as separate and distinct from it as that is from its precedent form. I have called it the New Courage because it is now new in the race; its manifestation being at present very rare, and, therefore, but little understood. Though very different from moral courage, it results from it, just as moral courage, though very different from physical courage, results from it. Physical courage is of the animal; moral courage is of the human; the New Courage is of the Divine. The New Courage is, therefore, Divine fearlessness as distinguished from animal or human fearlessness.

This Divine fearlessness has a two-fold aspect. It at first consists in fearlessly attacking and overcoming the enemies within one's own mind—instead of the enemies without, as in the other two forms of courage—and is afterwards characterised by an entirely new method of conduct towards others, especially where external enmity and opposition have to be met. It is its latter and perfected stage with which we are here concerned—that is, with its outward manifestation.

We have seen how a man having physical courage acts in defence of his life and property; also how a man having moral courage acts in defence of his opinions; and now, how does one act who has Divine courage?

He who has the New Courage does not attack other men or defend himself; does not attack their opinions or defend his own; he is the defender of all men, and that from which he defends them is their own folly, their own ungoverned passions. While never seeking to protect himself, he so acts as to shield others from their deadliest enemy, namely, the evil within themselves.

Both physical and moral courage make much noise. In the one there is the clash of arms and the roar of artillery, along with the shouts of the victorious and the groans of the dying; in the other, there is the fierce war of opinions and the clamour of conflicting tongues. But in the New Courage there is a profound silence; yet this silence has more influence and enduring power in one man than that noise has in entire humanity. The New Courage may, indeed, be described as the courage to be silent. Thus, when the man of Divine courage is attacked, abused, or slandered, he remains serenely silent. Yet this is not a proud and selfish silence. It is a silence based upon a right knowledge of life, and having a profound and beneficent purpose; that purpose being the good of the attacking person (and through him, of all mankind) by protecting him from the evil passion by which he is so injuriously influenced.

To remain silent, calm, and compassionate in the midst of a seething sea of human passions externally pressing upon one—to achieve this requires a lofty courage such as is yet almost unknown to men; so much so that the few men who have it, although misunderstood and persecuted during life, are afterwards worshipped by mankind as Divine and miraculous beings. And here we see how this courage continues to operate even after its possessor is gone from mortal vision. The physically courageous man conquers another in fight; the morally courageous man conquers the opinions of many men, and wins thousands to his cause; but the divinely courageous man conquers the world, and his conquest is one of blessedness and peace, and not of bloodshed or party strife.

In the New Courage, attack and defence, as they obtain in the two lower kinds of courage, have entirely disappeared; nevertheless, they have not been destroyed; they still exist in the spirit, but have become blended into one, have been transmuted into a sublime and

universal kindness; for when the Divine man refrains from engaging in combat with his adversary, and lets him go feeling that he has all the victory, it is because his thought is all for his mistaken enemy, and not for his own defence. He is prompted by a profound compassion for his enemy, a compassion based on Divine and perfect knowledge; and if his silent act does not always subdue the passions of his adversary at the time being, it subdues the passions of thousands of men through hundreds of future generations, merely by its recital: so great and far-reaching is the power of one deed of truth.

In the New Courage, then, silent kindness (and by this is meant something vastly different from that human impulse commonly called kindness) is both attack and defence. Instead of attempting to conquer passion by fiercer passion—which is the human way—it conquers it, and far more successfully, by its opposite, namely, gentleness, which is the Divine way. In the human sense, passion is not opposed at all, but is left alone; yet, in reality, it is opposed by something far more powerful than passion, for in all combats between Divine gentleness and human passion gentleness is the supreme victor. Thus, the man of Divine courage, while viewed from the lower standards of bravery, is not protecting or defending himself, and may for the time being be regarded as a coward, is, in reality, defending himself far more perfectly and successfully than the passionate fighters and partisans; for he who protects his enemy with love, and shields all men with acts of Divine gentleness, is throwing around himself an eternal shield and protection.

For instances of this New Courage one has to go to the Great Spiritual Leaders of the race, so rare is it. The most striking instance is that of Jesus, who, when mocked, smitten, and crucified, did not retaliate, or offer the least resistance, or speak a word in self-defence; and the fact that the rabble taunted Him with the accusation: "He saved others, Himself He cannot save," seems to show that they regarded Him both as an impostor and a coward. Think of the sublime courage required to pass through such an ordeal, and you will have some conception as to how far the New Courage transcends the ordinary human forms of bravery. That transcendent act of courage, too, is to-day universally recognised as Divine, and it still continues to lift men above their warring, selfish passions.

Theosophy in New Zealand, January 7, 1914.

When Buddha was abused and falsely accused by his enemies he always remained silent, and it not infrequently happened that those who came as accusing enemies went away as worshipping friends and disciples, so powerful was his silent gentleness.

It will be long, as we count time, before such courage becomes general in the race; but everything is making towards it. Other men will come who possess it, and then more and more, until at last the race will stand at this Divine level; then selfishness and sorrow will be ended, and the painful conflict of human passions will no more be heard upon earth.—JAMES ALLEN, in "Bibby's Annual."