

MISCELLANIES

THE SERVICE: QUALITIES OF THE RECRUIT

THE brave man is the elder son of creation who has stepped buoyantly into his inheritance, while the coward, who is the younger, waiteth patiently for his decease. He rides as wide of this earth's gravity as a star, and by yielding incessantly to all impulses of the soul is drawn upward and becomes a fixed star. His bravery consists not so much in resolute action as healthy and assured rest. Its palmy state is a staying at home, compelling alliance in all directions. So stands his life to heaven as some fair sunlit tree against the western horizon, and by sunrise is planted on some eastern hill to glisten in the first rays of the dawn. The brave man braves nothing, nor knows he of his bravery. . . . He does not present the gleaming edge to ward off harm, for that will oftenest attract the lightning, but rather is the all-pervading ether, which the lightning does not strike, but purifies. It is the profanity of his companion, as a flash across the face of his sky, which lights up and reveals its serene depth.

A pyramid some artisan may measure with his line, but if he give you the dimensions of the Parthenon in feet and inches, the figures will not embrace it like a cord, but dangle from its entablature like an elastic drapery.

The golden mean in ethics, as in physics, is the centre of the system and that about which all revolve, and though to a distant and plodding planet it be an uttermost extreme, yet one day, when that planet's year is completed, it will be found to be central.

The coward wants resolution, which the brave man can do without. He recognizes no faith above a creed, thinking this straw by which he is moored does him good service, because his sheet anchor does not drag.

The divinity in man is the true vestal fire of the temple which is never permitted to go out, but burns as steadily and with as pure a flame on the obscure provincial altar as in Numa's temple at Rome. In the meanest are all the materials of manhood, only they are not rightly disposed.

We say justly that the weak person is flat, for, like all flat substances, he does not stand in the direction of his strength, that is, on his edge, but affords a convenient surface to put upon. He slides all the way through life. Most things are strong in one direction, a straw longitudinally, a board in the direction of its edge, but the brave man is a perfect sphere, which cannot fall on its flat side and is equally strong every way. The coward is wretchedly spheroidal at best, too much educated or drawn out on one side and depressed on the other, or may be likened to a hollow sphere, whose disposition of matter is least where the greatest bulk is intended. We shall not attain to be spherical by lying on one or the other side for an eternity, but only by resigning ourselves implicitly to the law of gravity in us shall we find our axis coincident with the celestial axis, and by re-

volving incessantly through all circles acquire a perfect sphericity.

It is not enough that our life is an easy one. We must live on the stretch, retiring to our rest like soldiers on the eve of a battle, looking forward with ardor to the strenuous sortie of the morrow.