
IDEALS.

By "RUIHI."

I SUPPOSE that we all of us possess an ideal of some sort, though perhaps dimly and unconsciously. Amiel says in his journal: "To have an ideal or to have none—to have this ideal or that—this is what digs gulfs between men, even between those who live in the same family circle, under the same roof or in the same room. You must love with the same love, think with the same thought as some one else, if you are to escape solitude."

Now I believe that there are very few, if any in the world, who have *no* ideal. Even the lowest on the face of the earth has his better moments when he is conscious that good is better than bad—that true goodness is Godlike. He may shut his eyes to the fact, he may lose sight of it, but the feeling is firmly implanted in his breast all the same. The spiders of self may weave thick, murky cobwebs, until the whole face of his picture is hidden, but the pure, tender colours are still there, although the world, and even he himself, suspect it not. His picture is only hidden, not lost, and a time will assuredly come when he will realise that it is still in his possession.

And so (it seems to me) we have all our ideals, but the sad thing in this human life of ours is that so few try to *live up* to theirs. George Herbert says: "Who aimeth at the stars shoots higher far than he who *means* a tree." It is far, far better to make our ideal too high than be content with a low one. What is it that George Eliot says on this subject: "Failure after much perseverance

is much grander than never to have a striving good enough to be called a failure."

If we, however slowly and painfully, climb the mountain side, we shall reach the summit at last, and though it is given to none of us to reach the stars, yet we are nearer to them than if we had never climbed at all, and shall behold indeed with clearer eyes the Isles of Light shining above us. So it behoves us all to make our ideal a lofty one, and each strive with all his might to approach near to it, for we can never *drift upwards*."

A wise man has said that: "By the ideal that a man loves and by his persistency in cleaving to it and working for it, shall you know what he really is, for the ideal, whatever it be, seen and embraced and melting into a man, constitutes his true and essential nature, and reveals itself in all he thinks and does."

Is it not a beautiful thought that if we love the true and the pure and the good, we may in time by striving become a faint image of what we love? Often and often, when we are climbing these mountain heights, we grow weary and discouraged, and our feet have a trick of falling back, making our efforts seem futile and useless, but we must take heart again, and remember that our faltering, uncertain steps are *helping* to form a pathway by which countless millions may reach heights undreamt of in our philosophy. What if we fail, time and again, can we not remember for our comfort how Peter of old, who walked and talked