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Our worst enemy

Mankind is surrounded by enemies and, in its long history, it has struggled hard against them. There are political enemies and natural enemies. The spiritual ones must, of course, be mentioned too, for if you go into the bottom of the problem, they are, perhaps, the source of all evil.

Travelling teaches you a lot about this world's opponents. If you go to Italy you will be impressed by the huge walls surrounding the ancient cities. In those days every neighbour was looked upon as a possible enemy. The citizens never knew when he would come to besiege their city in order to conquer them. When many cities and counties had been subdued, the enemy's hunger and lust for power grew bigger and far-off countries became the prey of the invading enemy. In order to justify such invasions, slogans had to be coined, material ideals created and the hordes of soldiers were ready for pushing on their campaigns to other horizons, leaving in their wake horrible destructions, famine, pestilence and fear.

In peaceful parts of our planet, where people are but few, nature has taken into its hands the baneful part of an enemy. Cold, for instance, can drive man to despair, can contrive him to lose all courage for work, all hope for better days until, exhausted, he succumbs and breaks off like a frozen branch. In other parts of the world it is heat with its sundry allies like swarms of mosquitoes, poisonous snakes, scorpions, insects, fever, that wreak havoc among the population. In privileged regions, where the climate is normal and where living should be a blessing, it is war that has brought misery and unhappiness.

This gloomy picture does not represent fully the world in which we live. There are a few blessed countries where practically none of above mentioned curses exist. Switzerland, Northern Europe and North America, can perhaps, be counted among those happy lands. Happy they are indeed if we do not look into the individual's heart! But if we do, we are horrified to come across enemies about which we hardly thought before. First there is fear in the bottom of many a soul. Nothing cripples our energy, our courage, our work like fear. Of what kind is therefore this awful and unseen enemy? It belongs to the spiritual world which has such an influence on our daily lives. Paul, in his encouraging Letter to the Ephesians, significantly says in the 6th Chapter: «For we have to struggle not with enemies of flesh and blood, but with the hierarchies, the authorities, the master-spirits of this dark world, the spirit-forces of evil on high.» In the ensuing sentences of the same chapter our readers will find the answer as to how to deal with such enemies. We therefore know one thing: that fear does not come from God. How reassuring to read in His Book that every divine message starts with «Fear not» or «Do not be frightened»! And Christ himself-did he not use the same words when walking on the waters and approaching the disciples' boat, or when appearing to them after his resurrection? If fear is a bad enemy, the worst of all is loneliness. For us, in particular, loneliness is no doubt the most terrible of all enemies. It is like a

corroding poison doing its work in silence . . . Or shall we say that it is like a drop of water that continually falls on a stone. People of our feelings have obviously many reasons for explaining their loneliness: the fear of the strange world surrounding them which is ever so eager to find out why such and such a friend is alone. «Normal» people are very often ill-inclined towards us and they would delight if they could find out that our loneliness is due to the fact that we have nobody with whom we can share our true feelings and that we must hide in silence and seclusion if we do not want to uncover what we really are. How loathsome for many of us to be compelled to wear a mask all the year round. How good, therefore, for those of us living in cities with a club to be able to show ourselves in our true light whenever we meet. It is a privilege we should like to extend to those friends living in remote places. May we hope that our Magazine may partly make up for the lack of a club? To such lonesome friends we should like to write these simple lines so that they may find ways and means of mastering their loneliness by finding first confidence in themselves and by realizing that they have the same right to live as any other of their «normal» friends. It is, of course, not easy for us to give comfort to a lonely heart . . . And yet, would we have no remedy, would we have to accept loneliness as a fact against which we can do nothing? If this were so, we would be poor helpers indeed. The solution to this question can only be found in the Bible. It is not only interesting but comforting to read in the book of Genesis that it was NOT in God's intentions to let man live alone. In the 2nd Chapter we read: «It is not good for the man to be alone. I must make a helper for him who is like him». And later on, in Luke 10, we read that Christ himself did not want his disciples to be alone, even when they were proclaiming the message of the good news, for he sent them «two by two». This shows again all the understanding of the Master for us. He knew that no useful work could be done in loneliness and that a friend by one's side is the best support against possible enemies. If, however, we are compelled by circumstances to live alone for a while, we can find a friend, a helper, in the very book referred to, and for those who try it will be like a revelation to find out that this is true indeed. Those inspired pages will instill into us the light and the salt we need and they will make us understand that, if we are alone, it is perhaps because we have never asked the Master for a friend . . . Many of us know by experience that our Heavenly Father will never give a stone if we ask him for bread and that he will surely give us what is good for us . . . if we ask him for it. Then we shall feel that the gruesome grip of loneliness is no longer so strong, that a new light is burning within our hearts and that we are no longer the ever thirsty soul for a good word from others but that we ourselves are now able to speak the kindly word and do our little part in order to comfort those surrounding us and who struggle on whilst hiding a breaking heart.

Reno.