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Strength and Beauty

J. R. Miller D.D.

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STRENGTH AND BEAUTY

BY

J. R. MILLER, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "SILENT TIMES," "MAKING THE MOST OF LIFE,"
"BUILDING OF CHARACTER," "THINGS TO LIVE
FOR," ETC.

Honor and majesty are before him :
Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
PSALMS.

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U V

PREFACE.

THE favor with which the author's former volumes have been received encourages him to send out another. In all these books the aim is to interpret the spiritual teachings of the Bible in the language of common life, that men and women, in paths of duty and in the stress of struggle or sorrow, may more readily get the inspiration, cheer, comfort, and help which they need.

This volume has much in it that is stimulative. It aims not at making life easy for its readers, but rather at making them brave and strong to do their best. That is the truest help one can give to others, whether it be in a personal friendship or in a book.

J. R. M.

PHILADELPHIA,
U. S. A.

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STRENGTH AND BEAUTY.

CHAPTER I.

STRENGTH AND BEAUTY.

. . . I said, I'll gaze upon my Lord
And know his face,
That so my motives in a blest accord
May, by his grace,
Fashion a life growing in every feature
Like him I love,
So that, within, without, another creature,
Taught from above,
I, copying him and growing in his grace,
May in his likeness live, then see him face to face.

J. W. M.

WE should never be content with any mark but the highest. To strive for that which is less than the best is unworthy of a child of God. It is a great thing, also, to have a measure of definiteness in one's ideal. Merely to want to be good may be a very vague longing. It is better if we know just what goodness is, if we

can analyze it and resolve it into two or three simple elements.

We read, "God is love." That is very beautiful. Love suggests all that is gracious, kindly, gentle, unselfish, merciful. But its meaning is so vast that thinking of it is like looking into the sun. The light dazzles our eyes. We understand it better when we study it in its elements.

So it is with the word "good." We wish to be good, but what does the word mean? What are some of the elements which make up goodness? Strength and beauty are such elements. Strength and beauty blend in all truly noble character. Strength alone is not always lovely; it may be stern, oppressive, unjust, cruel, or selfish. Among animals, hugeness is not itself winning; it may be very uncomely, though strong. Beauty alone may not be pleasing, being weak, lacking in firmness and truth. There are plants that are lovely in their delicacy, but so frail as to be scarcely more than a dream, so fragile are they. But when the two qualities, strength and beauty, are united, we have a character which

wins the approval of God and the commendation of men.

The Bible abounds in exhortations to be strong. God is represented as serenely strong, and those who would be like him must also be strong. Weakness is never commended. God is infinitely patient with the weak. It was said of Jesus that he would not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. In these words of inimitable beauty Christ's sympathy with weakness is depicted. His whole life was in harmony with this representation. His gentleness was infinite. All weak and weary things found in him a shelter and a friend.

One of the legends of the life of Jesus tells of a day when he was walking beside the sea, when suddenly a sea-bird, driven by a storm that had been sweeping on the farther shore, came fluttering towards him, and, panting, fell on the sand at his feet and died. Then he took the bird and laid it in his hand and breathed on it — when lo! the bird fluttered a moment and then flew aloft, its life restored. It is only a legend, and yet it was just in this gentle way

that Jesus dealt always with human weakness and failure which fled to him out of life's storms.

Yet his treatment of weakness was not that of compassion merely; he sought always to make the weak strong. He was a physician, whose mission it was not merely to nurse the sick, but to heal them. He was not satisfied to pity the feeble and the broken; he sought also to bind up and restore, to breathe life into that which was dead. In his hands the bruised reed became whole again, waving as before in graceful beauty. As he breathed upon the smoking flax, the dying spark was fanned into a flame, and the lamp burned brightly once more.

Weakness was not beautiful to the eye of Christ; it was something imperfect, faulty, lacking. It was something, too, which he sought to bring back to its true, normal state. He came not to destroy, but to fulfil, that is, to fill full. He rejected nothing because it was in ruin; he sought to build up the ruin into a temple of beauty. In most wonderful way was this the mission of Jesus Christ. He came to a lost world to be its Saviour. He came to make

the weak strong, the soiled white and clean, the outcast children of God.

Thus, always, the work of Christ on human lives is towards strength. While he is infinitely gentle with weakness it is not his desire that it shall remain weakness; he would build it up into strength. We have but to recall the character of his work upon his own disciples to find illustration of this. What were they when he first found them? Unlettered fishermen, ignorant, full of faults, dull and slow learners, stumbling continually. What were they when they had been in his school for three years? Men of marvellous power, who turned the world upside-down by their preaching. He made their weakness strength. The object of all spiritual culture is the same — to take feeble little ones and train them into heroes of faith. It is never Christ's desire that we shall remain feeble. We begin as children, but we are to grow. The work of the Church is the perfecting of the saints, that we may all attain unto full-grown men, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. God wants us to be strong.

The work of redemption is restoration. Nothing incomplete is yet perfect. There may be much that is lovely in what is still imperfect, but the best is yet to be seen. Strength is the divine ideal for every life, that towards which divine grace is ever leading us. In the new life, the risen life, when perfected, there will be no trace of infirmity or feebleness. "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." Angels in heaven are strong, and we shall be as the angels. Those who always have been captives of infirmity will be released from all weakness and weariness, and will become strong in the holy strength of God.

Beauty is another quality of character which is everywhere commended in the Scriptures. Grace is beauty. God is beautiful. Charles Kingsley, when dying, was heard by his daughter to whisper, "How beautiful God is!" An Old Testament prayer runs, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." We read of strength and beauty in God's sanctuary. St. Paul enjoins that, among other qualities, "whatsoever things are lovely" shall be in the

vision of life into which we aim to fashion our character.

Humanity was made to be beautiful. God's ideal for man was spotless loveliness — man was made at first in God's image. But sin has left its trail everywhere. We see something of its debasement wherever we go. What ruins sin has wrought!

Christ was infinitely compassionate with the sinner. We remember how he went down even among the outcast, like one searching for pearls. Respectable people sneered at his interest in the fallen as if he were himself like them. Never was there a sinner so low that Jesus would not sit down beside him and be his friend.

But it was not because sin was beautiful to him — the smallest sin was loathsome, a terrible blot in his sight. Yet he was infinitely compassionate towards the worst sinner, because he knew that the sinner might yet become a child of God. He went among the lost, not because he preferred the company of the lost, but because he would save them. He brought

from these quests many a trophy, many a gem that has been shining in his crown ever since. He found one of his apostles among outcast publicans, and the name of Matthew is bright now with heavenly radiance. All Christ's work of grace is towards the restoration in human souls of the beauty of the Lord. He sees in the rough block the imprisoned angel, and seeks to set him free.

This world is full of marvellous beauty. Everything in nature is lovely. When heaven is described the words that are used are those which suggest the most dazzling and radiant splendor. The streets are paved with gold, the walls are built of precious stones, the gates are great pearls, the sea is of glass, the light is transfiguration glory. This is the home of man that is to be — saved, restored, perfected man.

All the precepts of the Bible are towards the fashioning of beauty in every redeemed life. We are to put away all that is sinful, all marring, every blot and blemish, every unholy desire, feeling, and affection, everything that would defile, and put on whatsoever is lovely

and Christ-like. The one great work of Christ in Christian lives is the fashioning of holiness in them. We are to grow away from our deformities, our faults and infirmities, our poor, dwarfed, stunted life, into spiritual beauty. The mark set before us is the likeness of Christ, which, at last, we shall attain.

Strength and beauty are not incompatible; they are complements of each other. Perfect strength is always beautiful and perfect beauty is always strong. In every Christian life and character the two qualities should be combined. Yet not always is it so. We find sometimes the sturdy elements—integrity, justice, courage, without the beauty of grace and tenderness. Then sometimes we find the gentle qualities—sympathy, love, compassion, kindness, without the rugged virtues which are so necessary in a complete character. In both cases there is a lack. Neither strength nor beauty without the other is complete; each is but a fragment. Only when the two are united is the life really Christ-like.

Spiritual beauty is holiness. Nothing unclean

is lovely. Character is Christ-like only when it is both strong and beautiful. Sometimes there is a tendency to exalt the gentle qualities, but, if there be not strength as well, the life can only be wrecked in the world's temptations. The key to all noble character is masterly self-control. Not to be lord of one's self is to be a captive. "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls," wrote the wise man.

The life that is complete in God's sight must be a life rich in blessing to others. Uselessness never can be pleasing to the Master. Jesus said much about fruit — fruitfulness is the test of a life. Neither the strength nor the beauty of a seed is in itself. Imagine an acorn, which has been picked up by some one, carried into a beautiful room and laid on the mantel-piece, congratulating itself on its escape from the usual fate of acorns — falling into the ground to be buried away in the darkness. Imagine it saying: "How fortunate I am! Here I have a warm home in a dry and cheerful place. I lie in this quiet room all day and people see my

beauty. How I pity other acorns which have to stay out in the cold and rain and sink away into the muddy earth!" Yet we know well that this acorn's lot is by no means enviable. It is kept dry and safe, but it never can reach God's thought for it in this way. Only when it gives itself away to die in the earth does it become either truly beautiful or strong. Then it grows into a majestic oak whose strength defies the wildest storms and whose beauty wins the admiration of all who behold it.

No human life can ever truly please God by saving itself, by keeping itself from self-denial and sacrifice. No matter how magnificent its natural powers, nor how graceful its form and its accomplishments, it has neither strength nor beauty in heaven's sight until it has devoted itself to service of love. It must die to live.

All this is but following in the footsteps of our Master. He had all strength, and was altogether lovely. Yet, according to the world's standards, his visage was marred and his life was a failure. We may not copy earth's patterns; it is better that we seek to be like him who was

meek and lowly, but who yet was the strong Son
of God.

“ I were so glad to be just what himself has been,
With ne’er a home nor housel;
A beggar, save of rains and starry sky and suns
Like any other ousel;
So proud to walk that very way
Himself walked first, long nights and day,
My up-lift heart were fain to pray,
Lord, make me humble !

“ But been I King instead, just like himself is now,
With thrones and crown and stayment;
With men a-hearkened to my very breath
For keep and roof and raiment;
So proud to wear a world’s poor love
Himself wore first, here and above,
My up-lift heart cry as a dove,
Lord, make me humble ! ”

CHAPTER II.

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS RIGHTS.

Life is too short for any bitter feeling ;
Time is the best avenger if we wait.
The years speed on, and on their wings bear healing ;
We have no room for anything like hate.
This solemn truth the low mounds seem revealing,
That thick and fast about our feet are stealing —
Life is too short.

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

SOME people have a great deal of trouble in looking after their rights. They are continually on the alert, guarding them against unwarranted encroachments. It is natural and human to wish to have one's rights respected. In one sense we cannot blame the man who insists that he shall always have his place according to his rank, and that others shall accord to him the respect and honor which are his due. Yet we all admit that such a spirit is not a winning or beautiful one. We do not in our heart admire the person who is always clamoring for his

rights, and who is offended by every word or act which seems to ignore his dignity.

At least, there is a "more excellent way" — the way of Christian love. "The grandest thing in having rights," said George MacDonald, "is that, being your rights, you can give them up." That is the Christian way. "Love seeketh not its own." It is ready always to yield even that which it might justly claim.

The law of love abates nothing of the duty which we owe to each other. It requires us to show to every one all proper honor and regard. We are exhorted to render to all their dues. A noble spirit is always exceedingly careful to respect all personal rights, even in the lowliest. We may not interpret the law of Christian love, therefore, as giving us liberty to withhold from any other attention, service, or courtesy which it is our duty to render. It is not on this side that the lesson of charity touches. We should hold ourselves responsible for the payment in full, to the very last farthing, of all our debt of love or honor to others.

But in the exaction of our own rights we are

to be lenient to the last degree. The teaching of our Master on this subject is very clear and emphatic. "Blessed are the meek," he said. The meek are those who do not contend for their own rights, but submit to be ignored or wronged, taking it quietly, patiently, and sweetly when men fail to do them justice, not fuming and fretting under a sense of wrong.

Meekness is not weakness. There are those who do not assert their rights nor try to enforce them, only because they have no power to contend with the tyrannical oppression which crushes them. There may be no meekness in their quiet submission; perhaps they submit only because they cannot successfully resist. On the other hand, the Master tells us that he himself is meek and lowly in heart. We know, too, that through all his life he never resisted wrong. He complained not even when he was suffering most unjustly and most cruelly. He never demanded his rights, but cheerfully surrendered them. Yet we know that it was not in the powerlessness of weakness that he thus suffered. He had all power and could have

crushed his enemies, escaping from their hand. Or he could have summoned legions of angels to his help any moment and have been liberated. But he gave up his rights rather than lift a finger to enforce them.

Like those flowers which give out their sweetest perfume only when they are crushed, the precious life of Jesus gave out its most holy sweetness when it was suffering most unjustly. His answer to the terrible wrong of crucifixion was a prayer for those who were driving the nails. His response to the cross was redemption through the blood that flowed.

This same spirit the Master's followers are bidden to cherish, turning the other cheek when smitten on one, going two miles when compelled to go one, praying for those who despitefully use them and persecute them,—all of which means that they are to give up their rights rather than contend for them, to be silent and sweet when they have a just human right to cry out against injustice or wrong.

It is not easy to quietly allow others to do injustice to us in advancing their own interests.

Yet God knows what is ours in the work of the world, even though another has put his trade-mark on it. A delightful story is told of the boyhood of Agassiz. The family lived on the edge of a lake in Switzerland. One winter day the father was on the other side of the lake and the future scientist and his younger brother wished to cross over to him. The lake was frozen over. The mother watched the boys from her window as they set out. They got along well enough till they came to a crack in the ice, when they stopped, as if unable to advance. Then the mother became very anxious. "Louis will get over safely," she said to herself, "but the little fellow will fall in and be drowned." But the boys were too far away for the mother to do anything but fear. Presently, however, as she looked, she saw the older boy lie down on the ice, his head on one side of the crack and his feet on the other, making a bridge with his body, and the little fellow crept over him to the other side.

We say that was a beautiful thing for the older brother to do. It is always a beautiful

thing to do — to be a bridge on which another may cross over to something better. Stories are told of battles in which chasms have been filled up with bodies of the dead over which finally other brave men have passed to victory. That was what Jesus Christ did with his life — he made himself of no reputation that through his self-humiliation uncounted multitudes might cross the gulf, otherwise forever impassable, into the heavenly kingdom. This is the story, too, of all civil and religious liberty and of all advances of truth and Christian civilization. Men give their lives to holy service and to sacred causes and seem to fail and sink down into obscurity; but they have only made their work and their lives bridges over which others, coming after them, move to success and honor.

Every day we have opportunities to make of our own life a bridge on which another may pass over to something that he could not of himself have attained. By forgetting self we can prefer in honor our brother and promote his advancement. Sometimes, too, men insist on using our life or our work as a foot-

path to some goal or ambition of their own. Naturally we resent such injustice. But after all, need we vex ourselves overmuch about such treatment? If only we keep sweet, not allowing the wrong or the injustice to embitter us, cherishing ever the spirit of cheerful, patient love, we are the gainers. The man who does the mean or oppressive thing is the man who loses. He gathers a curse in his hands with the seeming gain he selfishly snatches. We need only to watch that no bitterness enter our heart, enduring the wrong as our Master endured, patiently, committing ourselves to him that judgeth righteously.

No doubt the world, even in these closing days of this nineteenth Christian century, calls this manner of life unmanly. Yet it is marvelous how the spirit of meekness has grown and diffused itself, how it has gone on permeating the lives of men and of nations. More and more are men recognizing the truth of Christ's teachings that love always wins even though it seem to perish, like the dew which loses itself in giving its blessing.

It is a wonderful promise that is given to the meek—"They shall inherit the earth." To the natural thought this seems just the reverse of the truth. Meekness is giving up the earth, not claiming even that portion of it which one has a just right to claim. How, then, can one inherit the thing one voluntarily surrenders? Yet a little thought shows us how, in the very yielding of one's rights, one becomes the possessor of a far better portion than he relinquishes. The bird that unresistingly accepts the injustice of its captivity and sings in its cage becomes the inheritor of all things in a far truer sense than the bird which tries to claim its rights, and flies frantically against the walls of its prison in unavailing efforts to be free.

Then we know well that it is not he who demands recognition among men that really receives it. He may get the husk of it,—the place in the procession, the seat at the table, the order in the official list,—but it is only empty glory which he wins. Self-assertion never plucks real honor. It gets no place in the respect or affection of men. The man only

loses in the esteem of his fellows when he gets a place by demanding it. One never gains influence by scheming for it and by doing things for the purpose of becoming influential. There are men who spend money freely with the object of making themselves popular, but they utterly fail. People take their money or their gifts, eat their lavish suppers, and then despise those who pay such a price to buy that which never can be bought.

But let a man forget himself, pay no heed to his rights, give them up rather than contend for them; and let him live a life of disinterested goodness, with no self-seeking, no purpose of glorifying his own name, and he will inherit a recognition and an influence which will shine like a halo about his head. "The really unworldly man wakes up with surprise, almost with amusement, to find the world about him at his feet." He had never wrought for this. He loved his fellow-men and was ready at every call of need to do any of them a kindly service, without regard to its cost. He never spared himself — he was lavish of his life. He never

thought of fame or recognition, and was surprised to find men wreathing chaplets for his brow.

That is, the way to get one's rights is not to care for them, but to give them up; the way to win honor among men is not to demand honor nor even to think of it; the way to achieve influence is never to plan or strive to have influence, but to think only of fulfilling love's whole duty, regardless of cost, giving out the best of one's life in self-forgetful service, in Christ's name, for others.

All life confirms the truth of our Lord's word: "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." God loves to give us power when we do not desire or seek it for ourselves; but what we strive after for our own glory he does not wish us to have. There is always a crown for humility, but there is none for pride or self-conceit.

A beautiful story is told of two great generals in the American Civil War. During General Sherman's last campaign in the South, certain changes in commanders were made. General Howard was placed at the head of a special

division. Soon after this the war closed and there was to be a grand review of the army at Washington. The night before the review, Sherman sent for Howard and said: "The political friends of the officer you succeeded are determined that he shall ride at the head of the corps, and I want you to help me out."

"It is my command," said Howard, "and I am entitled to ride at its head."

"Of course you are," replied Sherman. "You led the men through Georgia and the Carolinas; but, Howard, you are a Christian, and can stand the disappointment."

"If you put it on that ground," said Howard, "there is but one answer. Let him ride at the head of the corps."

"Yes, let him have the honor," said Sherman, "but you will report to me at nine o'clock, and will ride by my side at the head of the army."

Howard protested, but his commander's orders were positive. So, that day, in the grand review, the man who had yielded his rights had

a place of higher honor at the head of the whole army. It is ever thus—the meek inherit the earth ; those who forget themselves and serve without striving for place, in the end receive the truest honor before both God and man.

CHAPTER III.

THE VOICE OF STRANGERS.

Jan 10:5-

"Feeling the way — and all the way up hill;
But on the open summit, calm and still,
The feet of Christ are planted; and they stand
In view of all the quiet land.

"Feeling the way, — and if the way is cold,
What matter? — since upon the fields of gold
His breath is melting; and the warm winds sing
While rocking summer days for him."

It is said of sheep that they follow their own shepherd because they know his voice. It is also said that they will not follow a stranger, because they know not the voice of strangers. This ought to be as true of the flock of Christ as of sheep. They should be able to discern between the voice of the Master and the voice of any stranger. They should never respond to any call but their own Shepherd's.

Evermore other voices are calling. The solicitations are not always nor usually to gross

sins. With many people such temptations would have no power. (The voices of the stranger are seductive. They are imitative of the voice of Christ himself.) Instead of inviting the Christian to gross immoralities, to flagrant and outspoken opposition to Christ, or to any form of manifest disloyalty to him, they solicit his interest in something that seems altogether right. It is an attractive voice and winning that the Christian hears. Surely it is the Shepherd's! Yet if the heart be altogether true to Christ, it knows that it is not the Master's voice. The knowledge is instinctive — perhaps no reason can be given for the feeling, and yet the conviction is indubitable: "That is not my Shepherd's voice."

It may not be easy to give such marks of the Shepherd's voice as to enable the Christian to know infallibly whether the solicitations that come to him are indeed from Christ. But there are certain characteristics which always distinguish his calls. There is a story that once there came to the cell of a saintly monk one who knocked and asked for admittance. His mien was lordly and majestic. "Who art thou?"

asked the saint. "I am Jesus," was the answer. There was something in the voice and manner of the visitor, however, which made the monk suspect that he was not the Holy One he claimed to be. "Where is the print of the nails?" he asked. Instantly the stranger turned and fled away. It was Satan — not Christ. Nothing is Christ or of Christ which does not bear this mark.

Said another saint: "There are many hands offered to help you; how shall you know the right one? Because in the centre of the palm there is the scar of a wound received long since, but now glorious with light, according to the saying, 'He had rays coming out of his hand.' " Every one who comes, however gracious his coming may be, however friendly and winning his voice, however like Christ he may appear, must be subjected to this test: If there is no print of the nail in the hand offered to you it is not a hand you should receive — it is a stranger who is claiming the Shepherd's place.

A religion without the cross is not Christ's religion. He did not come merely to blaze the

way for us through the tangled forest, to mark out the path for our feet, or to give us an example of true living. Nor did he come merely to be a teacher, to reveal to the world the character and the will of God. He came to be a Saviour. Woven into the very fibre of the gospel, dyed into the texture of its threads, is the thought of sacrifice, of expiation. Leave out the passion, and what remains of the gospel?

There is no satisfactory solution of the mystery of the life of Christ but that which recognizes him as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He took our nature that he might do his redemption work, cleanse our lives, purge away the guilt and foulness of our sins, and restore us to our lost place.

“ He came in winter’s frost and snow
That thou shouldst warmèd be !
That heavenly light should thee enfold
In midnight shades came he !
Come, meet him here, with love sincere,
For much hath he loved thee.”

Everywhere we see the print of the nails. He bore the marks of his wounds after he arose and showed them to the disciples to prove that he was indeed the Christ. When in the Apocalypse the veil is withdrawn from the heavenly glory, we have a glimpse of him in the midst of the brightness, — a Lamb as it had been slain. A gospel without the print of the nails is not the gospel of Christ, and the voice that proclaims such a gospel is the voice of a stranger.

The same is true of the life to which we are called as Christians — if there be no cross in it, it lacks the essential marks of genuineness. One of the most remarkable incidents in the gospel narrative is the story of one of Peter's mistakes, when he so violently protested against his Master's going to a cross. "This shall never be unto thee," said the loving apostle. But the answer showed that Peter was acting the part of Satan in seeking to withhold his Master from the way of the cross. This was God's appointed way for his Son, and the voice which was even tremulous with love was yet the voice of a stranger.

Jesus then added that not for him alone, but for his followers as well, was the way of the cross the only true way of life. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." To try to keep one's friends back from sacrifice in the service of Christ is to be Satan to them, tempting them to take the easy way. The voice that invites to such self-indulgence is the voice of a stranger. To seek for one's self a life without self-denial, without costly ministry, is to turn away from that which is really the vital thing in all Christian life.

We, too, must have the print of the nails in our hands and feet if we truly belong to Christ. This is the family mark, without which none are indeed Christ's own. It is not to be understood that literally in our hands and feet the very scars of nails must be seen. We do not need to be actually crucified, as Jesus was. There would be no virtue in such crucifixion for its own sake. It is claimed of Francis of Assisi that the stigmata of Christ really appeared in his flesh. But, even if this was true, these sacred marks

were but the physical impression of an inward conformity to Christ which led the saint into the very experiences of Christ himself. It is in the life, not on the body, that the print of the nails must appear.

There is, in the midst of earthly ease, continual danger that we give way to the spirit of self-indulgence. Too many of our friends are ready to make Peter's mistake when we stand before duties which demand self denial or sacrifice, saying to us, "This shall never be unto you!" They insist that we are not really called to such costly service, and they would dissuade us from it. But such voices are not the Good Shepherd's—they are for the time the voices of strangers. We should know them by their earthly tone. That is not the way Christ speaks to us. He would never have us withhold ourselves from any service because of its cost.

Indeed, we may set it down as a principle that the print of the nails is on everything we are called to do for Christ. This does not mean that everything pleasant and agreeable is of the Evil One; nor that discomfort and suffer-

ing are always marks of Christ-likeness. In ministries which are full of gladness there may be the spirit of Christ — humility and unselfishness. In services which are hard there may not be even a trace of Christ-likeness. (The essential thing in the cross is love serving without question, without stint.) “The nails of the true cross, to-day,” says one, “are precisely those acts and decisions of ours which transfix our common selfishness. Whenever we deny ourselves willingly for the love of others who do not love us, whenever we spend pains and patience to understand those who have no sympathy with us, whenever we give up ease, profit, or reputation for the unthankful and the evil, we are beginning to receive these sacred marks of the Crucified.”

“ He took full measure of the grief
Of every separate saint,
As one by one, each on his cross,
Must tremble and grow faint.
He knew, though he had given them rest,
They first must find sore strife;
Must seek, e'en through the gates of death,
His promised gift of life.”

A Christian woman tells of her experience in making a fuller consecration to Christ. "Did you ever have a person in your home," she asks, "who acted as a perpetual rasp on the feelings of your household? I had. One day when I had nearly lost my faith and was sinking in the black waters of despair, I called on Christ to help me or I would perish. And what do you think he asked me to do? To love this woman. This was the only ladder he offered me up out of the black depths. Then I grew uglier than ever, and almost hated my Saviour. The struggle continued until I could stand it no longer. In agony I rushed to my closet and besought Jesus to help me. It seemed then as though in a most tender, loving voice, he asked, 'Can't you love her for my sake?' I said, 'Yes, Lord, I will.' At once peace filled my heart. My feelings toward her changed entirely. I had yielded my will to Christ." She had heard the Master's voice, and was following him. That to which he had called her was not easy, — it had on it the print of the nails, — but it was the way to blessing and joy.

The sum of all this teaching is that the Christian life is one of love like Christ's, poured out in service like his, in self-forgetfulness, without stint; and whatever voice calls us away from such living and serving to self-indulgence, to personal ease, to the saving of our own life, is the voice of a stranger, not of the Good Shepherd, and we should flee from it as from a luring evil.

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CHAPTER IV.

“²SWEET WILL OF GOD.”

I worship thee, sweet Will of God,
And all thy ways adore ;
And every day I live, I seem
To love thee more and more.

I love to kiss each print where thou
Hast set thine unseen feet.
I cannot fear thee, blessed Will,
Thine empire is so sweet.

I have no cares, O blessed Will,
For all my cares are thine ;
I live in triumph, Lord, for thou
Hast made thy triumph mine.

F. W. FABER.

NOT every Christian seems able to enter into Faber's adoration of the will of God. Many good people think always of this will as something painful, something hard and bitter. When they say, in the petition of The Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done," they put a shudder into the words as if a ploughshare were being

driven through their very heart. They have learned to think that God's will means always a sorrow, the death of a loved one, the loss of property, the enduring of some sore trial. The words suggest to them always a cross of some kind.

But this is a wrong interpretation of the prayer. No doubt there are times when there must be a struggle between our will and God's, and when it costs much for us to yield. But this is not the exclusive nor even the ordinary meaning of the petition. Primarily, it is a prayer, not for the suffering, but for the active doing of the will of God. This is plainly the meaning of the petition in the form of words which our Lord gave to his disciples. It is a prayer that the will of God may become the law of our life, that we may learn to do it always. This embraces all obediences, all duties, the whole of our common life. It includes all the sweet, happy experiences we have in our homes and among our friends, all the gladness of love, all the pleasures of social intercourse. It is a prayer that in all the varied conditions and cir-

cumstances of life we may do the things that will please God.

There is nothing in this that is painful or hard. There is a secret of very sweet joy which is found always in the doing of God's will. It brings the approval of conscience — the bird that sings in the heart when one does right. Then it insures to us the commendation and the companionship of God. It was Jesus himself who said, "The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him." Great gladness is found in the doing of God's will. Instead of meaning something bitter and sorrowful, it means the doing of things that should be easy and pleasant.

The standard which is set for us in the prayer, as our Lord has given it to us, indicates in a very clear and remarkable manner that it is a joyous thing to which we are summoned. We are taught to pray that the divine will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. How is the will of God done in heaven? Surely it does not there mean sorrow, loss, pain, sacrifice. The inhabitants of heaven are never called to

stand beside dying children or beside new-made graves, to give up out of their hands the treasures of love they prize more than life. There are no hard experiences to pass through, no sore struggles to endure in that happy land. There are no Gethsemanes in heaven, where amid strong cryings and tears the child of God must lie and agonize as he accepts the cup which the Father puts into his hand. There the will of God is always joyous and the doing of it always brings delight. The angels fly swiftly on the errands on which they are sent, doing with equal alacrity the most stupendous thing and the smallest ministries. It is told in the Koran that Gabriel was once sent earthward to save King Solomon from the sin of pride, and at the same time to help a toiling, weary yellow ant to get home to her people with her load of food.

So it ever is in heaven — the will of God is done always with joy. It consists in happy activities, in joyous services. It is this heavenly standard that is set for our earthly living. The will of God, as it is done there, is always sweet

—it is always a joy to do it. Evidently, therefore, the thought in our Lord's mind, when he gave this prayer to his disciples, was not primarily the suffering and enduring of the will of God, but the obedience of common life.

True, this is not always easy. Our hearts do not incline us naturally to God's will and ways. We are prone to wander from the divine commandments. It is not until we have a new heart that we begin to desire to do the will of God. A boy was greatly perplexed about the thought that heaven was so far away, and he wondered how any one in this world could ever get there. His wise mother said to him, "Heaven must come down to you — heaven must first come into your heart." This explains the whole mystery of the doing of God's will on earth as it is done in heaven. The heavenly life must come down first to us, into our heart, else we never can enter heaven. When we have heaven in us we begin to grow into God's likeness, striving to do God's will. Even then, however, it does not instantly become easy for us. It takes all

of life to train and discipline our will into happy and joyous obedience.

Still and always, however, this is the lesson set for us — the doing of God's will on earth as it is done in heaven, as we ourselves shall do it in heaven when we reach that happy home. If our heart is full of love for Christ the doing of the will of God will always be sweet, even though it be against nature and at the cost of much self-denial. It has been said very truly: "The outside world takes all its color, value, and grace from the kind of world one carries about in one's self." Heaven in us will make the hardest tasks a delight.

"Yet more and more this truth doth shine
From failure and from loss;
The will that runs traverse to thine
Doth thereby make its cross.
Thine upright will cuts straight and still
Through pride and dream of dross.

"But if in parallel with thine
My will doth meekly run,
All things in heaven and earth are mine,
My will is crossed by none.
Thou art in me, and I in thee —
Thy will and mine are done."

No doubt even angels have errands and tasks given to them which in themselves would be hard, but which become easy, a delight, because they are accepted as parts of the will of God for them. This is the great secret of joy in service. Anything that is God's will for us it should be gladness for us to do. If we love God deeply everything that he wants us to do it is a joy for us to do. If we love not God then even the commonest, simplest duties which his will requires are hard and dreary tasks for us.

While primarily it is the active doing of God's will to which we are called, we are sometimes led into the way of suffering and sacrifice. It was so in Christ's own experience. He did always the Father's will, but at last that will laid on him the burden of the Cross. Jesus said that if we would be his followers we must take up our cross and bear it after him. Sometime in every life the will of God means a cross. We are called to give up earth's dearest treasures, or to step aside from pursuits into which all our life's ambitions have gone, or to accept suffering and

pain as our lot, instead of joy, health, and activity.

How can we make God's will sweet in these cases? There is only one answer — we must love God so much that we shall always find joy in any service which he may require of us. The way to take the bitterness out of any hard experience is to acquiesce in it, to cease struggling and resisting, and to bring our will into quiet conformity with God's. Whenever we fail thus to submit we make a cross for ourselves, and earth's brightness turns to gray. But when we sink our will in God's, sure of his better wisdom and safer guidance, and of his perfect love, even the most painful things have in them secrets of joy, as the will of God grows sweet to us. The story is well told in the following lines :

“ I ran at his commands,
And sang for joy of heart;
With willing feet and hands
I wrought my earnest part —
And this my daily cry:
‘ Dear Master, here am I ! ’

"Then came this word one day —
I shrank as from a rod,
To hear that dear voice say:
'Lie still, my child, for God.'
As out from labor sweet
He called me to his feet,

"Called me to count the hours
Of many a weary night,
To bear the pain that dowers
The soul with heavenly might;
But still my daily cry:
'Dear Master, here am I!'

"His will can only bring
The choicest good to me,
So ne'er did angel wing
Its flight more joyously
Than I, his child, obey,
And wait from day to day.

"The humble offering
Of quiet, folded hands,
Costly with suffering
He only understands,
To God more dear may be
Than eager energy.

“ And he is here, my Song,
That I may learn of him.
What though the days are long?
What though the day is dim?
'T is he who says, ‘ Lie still; ’
And I adore his will.”

CHAPTER V.

FINDING ONE'S SOUL.

"Like children in a garden fair,
Who wander through each flowerful maze,
And drink from sunny founts with glee,
And look with long and lingering gaze
Upon the wondrous scene ; — yet fain
Would be at home for love and rest, —
So we, in this bright world of ours,
With strange homesickness are possess ! "

IT is a great hour for us when we become conscious of the splendor of our immortality. A very beautiful story is told of the way the young Princess Victoria bore herself when she first became aware that she might some day be Queen. One morning, when she was twelve years of age, she opened her book of English history and found a paper which had been placed there for her information by her tutor. She read it attentively, and then said to her governess: "I never saw that before. I see that I am nearer the throne than I thought." After

pondering a few moments the princess said: "Many children would boast, but they don't know the difficulty. There is much responsibility." The revelation made a deep impression on her mind. More than once she said: "I will be good."

Every one of us is born to a life of splendor and vast possibility of beauty and power. We are born to be children of God, and to live forever. We have in us a boundless nature that makes us greater than all things in this world. Yet some people never seem to become aware that they are much better than worms. They live as if they were only bodies, mere animals, made for this present earthly life alone. The aim of their existence never extends beyond what they shall eat, what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed. They seem unaware of anything in life higher or more important than these needs of their physical nature. They have no visions of life in any loftier sphere. Their pleasures are only pleasures of the senses. They know nothing of intellectual or spiritual enjoyment.

A picture without any sky in it is defective. It has no uplift — it runs along on earthly levels, with nothing of heaven to brighten and glorify it. So the life with no sky in it, no vision of God and of heaven, is unworthy of an immortal being. The best is left out of it. It is only earthly, with no influence from above, drawing it upward, or within, inspiring good and beauty in it.

Men tell us that we have souls, but the form of the statement is incorrect. It indicates that the soul is something which we possess, as one might possess a piece of property or a fine picture, something outside of one's self, not an essential part of one's being. Really, however, our soul is *ourselves*. It is the central, vital, essential thing in us, that which makes us what we are. We are not bodies with souls; rather, we are spirits with bodies. The body is not the man or the woman that we are. It is but the house in which we live. It is not that in us which thinks and chooses and wills and loves. It is not that which is capable of growing into nobleness and beauty, and wearing at length the full image of Christ.

The body is a splendid creation. The lowest and smallest of God's works are wonderful. There is a world of beauty in the tiniest flower, in the insect that creeps in the dust. The human body is the finest and most wonderful of all material creations. But there is something else in every human life that is finer, nobler, more wonderful than the body. In the story of the creation we read that "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." It was this breath of God entering into the body, this living soul which God thus breathed into the creature formed of the dust, that made Adam a man. Our body is but our home. It is only a temporary home, too, for we shall leave it by and by, and we shall live then just as really without our body as we live now with it.

Yet many people seem never to find their soul. They never think of themselves as more than a body. It is a great moment when a man wakes up to the consciousness of the fact that he is a living soul, an immortal being, that his

true home is not amid the things of the earth, but with God, in the heavenlies.

There is a beautiful legend or fancy of a company of beings from the celestial world who in disguise visited a great city one night on some errand of mercy. When their work was finished they hastily departed, but in some way one of their number, a fair young spirit, was left behind, lost in the strange town. When people began to move in the streets in the morning they found a sweet boy, with sunny hair, sitting on the steps of the temple. They spoke to him, but he could not understand nor answer them. He replied to their inquiries only with streaming tears and looks of alarm. Presently, however, a slave bearing a harp came among the crowd. The child saw the harp and eagerly reached out his hands to take it. Flinging his arms about it, he embraced it affectionately. Then he began to touch the strings, and wonderful music, pure, clear, melodious, like liquid pearls, fell upon the morning air. This was the language which the celestial stranger knew. In finding the harp he had found a way to express his feelings in language.

So it is when one finds one's soul. We are like lost children in this world, if we do not know our own truer and higher nature. If we live only on earthly lines we are beings of celestial birth strayed from our real home and environment. Everything about us is strange. We do not belong here; heaven is our home. We do not know the language of those who throng round us. When we find ourselves we begin to be at home.

It is so when a man begins to discover his mental powers. He wakes up to the consciousness that he has a mind. He can think. Beautiful visions begin to form themselves in his brain. He discovers that he has a marvellous gift of imagination. Or he has the logical faculty. Heretofore he has been plodding on at school, poring over books, wearying himself with task-work which has never ceased to be dull and distasteful, finding no delight in his studies, without interest or enthusiasm in his work. Then one day something wonderful happens. It is as if he were suddenly waked from sleep to look about upon a new world. Everything is changed.

His books begin to interest him, and as he reads on a strange light shines upon the pages. His studies are no more dreary tasks, but delightful exercises. It is as when the angel, lost and dumb until now, sees the harp, and grasping it, begins to make enrapturing music on its strings. He has found his soul.

It is so with the artist, when after years of struggling and failure he at length discovers his powers, and begins to put on the canvas or cut in the marble the lovely dreams he had sought long in vain to interpret. It is so with the musician, who, after carrying in his soul through many days and nights a burden of melody, struggling unavailingly to utter itself, at last discovers a mode of expression and begins to pour forth notes of song. Dumb until his eyes fell on the wondrous harp, his soul awoke that moment, and his fingers began to evoke harmonies which thrilled and charmed every ear that heard them.

The same is true in spiritual spheres. Men live for years an altogether worldly life. They go with their work, pursuing their earthly callings on and ambitions, in business, in study, in pleasure,

yet unconscious all the while of the splendid spiritual world that lies above them and all about them. They never see God nor hear his voice. They are unaware of the vast realm of invisible things which is theirs by inheritance. They have no eyes for the glories of the heavenly kingdom. The only world they know of is the material world.

Then one day there is an awakening, and they become aware of a life far above them, with rich possibilities of joy and blessing. It is significant that the prodigal is said to have "come to himself" when in his degradation he had a vision of his true home and his father's house, with all the possibilities of good and of blessing that were there for him. Until that moment he had been a child of God lost in the world of sin. Now he had found his soul. His fingers touched the chords of the heavenly harp and holy music was evoked.

This is the real story of all Christian life. Faith in Christ is finding one's rightful place as a child of God. Only in Christ can we find our true self. He alone can restore our soul. Peace

is the music of a life at rest in God. The whole being is full of harmony. All discord vanishes as the lessons are learned, as the image of God is imprinted on the soul, and as the Spirit of God possesses more and more fully his own place in the heart.

It is often in the hard and painful experiences of life that men find their soul. We dread pain; but in days and nights of keen suffering many people develop strength and beauty of character which had never before been revealed in them, as the photographer's picture is developed on his sensitized plate in the darkness. We shrink from sorrow; but in sorrow's dark hours many a life for the first time finds itself, as the gold discovers its richness in the fire. We hold ourselves back from costly self-denial and sacrifice; but the Master says it is *only* in the losing of our life in love's devotion that we really find it. Whenever we are divinely led in any way of struggle, cost, danger, or darkness, we may rejoice, for God is taking us on a path of self-discovery; and in the cost or trial, if we faint not, we shall find our soul.

We need not wait till we get to heaven to find ourselves at home with God. Heaven may begin here any common day — it does begin whenever we enter truly into fellowship with God, when our will is lost in his, when the life of Christ becomes indeed our life. George MacDonald puts it well in one of his sermons :

“ Never, in the midst of the good things of this lovely world, have I felt at home in it. Never has it shown me things lovely or grand enough to satisfy me. It is not all I should like for a place to live in. It may be that my unsatisfaction comes from not having eyes open enough, or keen enough, to see and understand what God has given ; but it matters little whether the cause lie in the world or in myself, both being incomplete ; God is, and all is well. All that is needed to set the world right enough for me — and no empyrean heaven could be right for me without it — is that I care for God as he cares for me ; that my will and desires keep time and harmony with his music ; that I have no thought that springs from myself apart from him ; that my individuality have the freedom that belongs

to it as born of his individuality, and be in no slavery to my body or my ancestry, or my prejudices, or any impulse whatever from region unknown; that I be free by obedience to the law of my being, the live and live-making will by which life is life, and my life is myself."

CHAPTER VI.

NOT FOR SELF BUT CHRIST.

Lord, we would fain some little palm-branch lay
 Upon thy way.
If but the foldings of thy garment's hem
 Shall shadow them,
These worthless leaves which we have brought and strewed
 Along thy road,
Shall be raised up and made divinely sweet,
 And fit to lie beneath thy feet.

SUSAN COOLIDGE.

ONE of the best tests of Christian work is in the way Christ is honored in it. When people think and say little about themselves and much about the Master the lesson of faith has been well learned. There is always a temptation to try to draw attention to ourselves, even when doing good, when engaged most seriously in Christ's service. We like to have our work commended. It is pleasant for us to receive full recognition and credit for what we do. It is natural for us to desire to have our own name

written plainly on any piece of work we make, even though it be something manifestly for Christ. It hurts us to be overlooked, not to get the honor which we think is due to us, not to have our service or our faithfulness commended.

The danger is, therefore, that we seek our own honor instead of Christ's when we are engaged in his service. The minister is tempted, at least, to think of his own reputation as well as of the glory of Christ in the building-up of the church over which he is placed. He has his name to make among ministers. He does not like to fall below neighboring pastors in the measure of success he achieves. The teacher naturally wishes to win the love of his scholars for himself, while he is winning a place in their hearts for Christ. It is easier, too, to get people to love us and honor us than it is to get them to do homage to Christ. Yet, if this is all we do we have doubly failed. We have failed to put honor upon Christ; then we have failed also to give to others anything on which they may really rest in the hour of need. No matter how truly they may love us, how confidently they

may trust us, how highly they may honor us, we can do but little for them, in life's real stress. We may bring them the help of our sympathy, the word of cheer, the word of comfort, but we cannot be to them the rock they need to stand upon, the everlasting arm whose enfolding alone can keep them. If all we do for them is to get them to love us and believe in us we have done nothing for them that will avail in time of real need. Our work will not stand the test of the day of final revealing. They build only on sand who get nothing better into their life as foundation than love for a minister, a teacher, a friend, or for any Christian. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." We do men real good only when we get them to put their trust in Christ, to rest altogether on him. To get ourselves built into the foundation is only to put in wood, hay, and stubble.

We have our place as mediators of the divine help. We are little cups in which Christ puts something of his love, that we may carry it to those who are hungry and thirsty. We are

vessels to bear his name to others. We are voices to cry in the wilderness the message of grace. But we need to make sure always that we get people to know and love Christ and not merely to know and love us.

When we turn to the Scriptures we see that it is the characteristic of all true piety to honor Christ and not to think of personal honor. John the Baptist was an ideal preacher, and one of the finest things in his life was his self-obliteration. The people were ready to accept him as the Messiah, but he quickly repelled the suggestion, saying, "I am not the Christ. I am not that Light. I am only a witness to testify of that Light. I am only a voice crying in the wilderness, telling men of the Christ to come, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose."

Thus John turned the people's eyes away from himself and fixed them upon Christ, while he remained unhonored. He said he must decrease while Jesus increased. He said he was the bridegroom's friend, and therefore rejoiced in the bridegroom's honor, even when his own

brightness was eclipsed by it. When Jesus came at last to the Jordan and was baptized, John at once began to point the people to him, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." He would have them leave him now, for his work as forerunner was done, and go after the Christ. Nothing in all the story of human life is more beautiful than John's cheerful dropping out of sight and consenting to be overlooked, forgotten, set aside, in the splendor of the Master's increasing glory.

We have a still higher example. The Holy Spirit, in his work in the world, we are told, does not call attention to himself, but turns every eye to Christ. "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." He pours forth the light of his own divine shining, but as men look, they think not of the streaming light, but of the blessed face of the Saviour which appears in all its beauty, revealed in the midst of the brightness. The Spirit works silently, caring not to be noticed or honored himself, desiring only to get men to see Christ, and to look at him in the glory of

his person and the greatness of his redeeming love.

Then the lesson is taught directly. "Let your light so shine before men," said Jesus, "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Our good works are to be seen, but they should make men think of God, not of us. Too many people like to have the honor of their good works gather about their own head, but Jesus says we should do everything for the glory of God. This teaching leaves no room among pure motives for self. We should be willing to be nothing if only Jesus Christ be exalted.

"Give me the lowest place ; not that I dare
Ask for that lowest place, but thou hast died
That I might live and share
Thy glory by thy side."

How can we train ourselves to self-forgetful living and serving? We must watch our own heart and see that Christ is truly exalted and honored there. If he is on the throne and his kingdom is really set up in us we shall think only of pleasing him in all that we do. We shall

seek always the glory of his name and the extending of his sway.

Another suggestion is that we should train ourselves to work quietly, never for notice, never to advertise our deeds or to get them mentioned or praised. It is perilous to form the habit of talking about ourselves and what we have done. Some Christian men and women allow themselves to drift into an easy way of self-reporting which soon becomes self-glorification. Even in the minds of those to whom they talk thus they defeat their own purpose, for talking of one's own fine doings detracts greatly from the fineness of the doings in the thought of those who thus hear of them.

The truest work for Christ is wrought in self-forgetfulness, without consciousness of the important part one has taken. Moses wist not that his face shone. The Christliest piety is never aware of its own divineness. The work that is done for Christ without a thought of self is the heavenliest work. Humility, though it hides its beauty and veils its shining, is the brightest of all graces. No other quality of

heart means so much to a Christian, either in beauty of character or in the peace of the heart.

“ The eagle nestles near the sun;
The dove’s low nest for me !
The eagle’s on the crag; sweet one,
The dove’s in our green tree.

“ For hearts that beat like thine and mine,
Heaven blesses humble earth;
The angels of our heaven shall shine
• The angels of our hearth.”

There is a legend of a good man whom the angels wished to have honored because of the heavenliness of his life. They asked God to give him some new power, and were sent to learn from the man himself what he would choose. He said he wished nothing more than he had; but when importuned to name some new gift which should be bestowed upon him he answered that he would like to have greater power of doing good without knowing it. So it was ordained that his shadow, when it fell behind him, should have healing influence; but when it fell before his face should produce no

such effect. It is better that we should not even be aware of the good we are doing. What we do is then unmixed with self, the only name that is honored being Christ's.

We mistake when we fancy that we are in this world to make a name for ourselves. We need not give ourselves the slightest concern upon this subject. Indeed, any thought of name or fame for ourselves always detracts from the purity of our motive and spirit as disciples of Christ. We have only one errand here—to do God's will, to fulfil the divine thought or purpose for our life, and to glorify Christ. We have nothing whatever to do with the honoring of ourselves before men, with looking after our reputation. If we honor Christ he will honor us. If we exalt his name in our life he will exalt our name before the angels and his Father.

“Of the thousand hours me meeting,
And with gladsome promise greeting,
One alone hath kept its faith,
One wherein—ah, sorely grieved!—
In my heart I first perceived
Who for us did die the death.

“ All to dust my world was beaten;
As a worm had through them eaten
Withered in me bud and flower;
All my life had sought or cherished
In the grave had sunk and perished;
Pain sat in my ruined bower.

“ While I thus, in silence sighing,
Ever wept, on death still crying,
Still to sad delusions tied,
All at once the night was cloven,
From my grave the stone was hoven,
And my inner doors thrown wide.

“ Whom I saw, and who the other,
Ask me not, or friend or brother ! —
Sight seen once, and evermore !
Lone in all life's eves and morrows,
This hour only, like my sorrows,
Ever shines my eyes before.”

CHAPTER VII.

BEING A BRANCH.

"'T is but little I can do !
Let this be my effort still,
Ever to be kind and true,
Ever watchful against ill,
Doing, Lord, thy holy will.

"'T is but little I can say ;
Let me ever keep in mind
Something true to speak each day,
Spurning every word unkind ;
So thy favor I may find."

IT is a great privilege to be a branch. It is to share the best there is in the vine. A branch is really part of the vine, not something separate and distinct, living merely in its shadow, under its influence, receiving gifts and favors from it ; it is the vine itself, with all the vine's richness and fulness of life.

When we think of this as an illustration of the relation of the believer to Christ we have a suggestion of the closeness and intimacy of that

relation. The Christian does not merely receive blessings from Christ, does not merely enjoy his friendship, have his help, and live under his protection. This would be a high privilege, even if it were all. To have the Son of God for Friend, Helper, Keeper, and Guide brings into a sinful, frail, imperilled human life unspeakable good. But the believer is a branch of Christ, one with him. Christ's life is his life. Christ's fulness flows into his heart. Christ's joy and peace and strength are his. Apart from Christ he can do nothing, but in Christ he can do all things.

There is, however, another side of this illustration of the branch. The test of true union with the vine is fruitfulness. The branch which does not bear fruit is cut off and cast away as useless. The vine itself bears no fruit — all the fruit must grow on the branches. This suggests the responsibility of being a branch. If a branch is fruitless, with nothing but leaves, it makes the vine a failure at the point where it grows. The hungry come to it seeking for fruit, but find none and are disappointed and

Christ is disappointed too. And it is not the fault of the vine, whose life is full all the while and ready to produce abundant fruit, but the fault of the branch, which for some reason does not avail itself of the rich resources of life at its disposal, that is, does not do its full duty as a branch.

The figure holds true in spiritual life. Christ is the vine and we are the branches. Christ himself does not bear the fruit with which he desires to feed the world's hunger—it must grow in the lives of his followers. Once, for a time, he was himself in the world as a Branch, and as such he was wondrously fruitful. Every possibility of his nature was developed. In him all the fruits of the Spirit grew to their ripest and best. Love reached its perfection in his life. He went about doing good. Everywhere he went he carried blessing.

We have accounts of a few miracles wrought by Christ and condensed records of many others; but besides these supernatural acts of mercy, his days and hours were crowded with deeds of common kindness which far surpassed

in sum of blessing his supernatural works. Then all the fruits of disposition and character reached their best in his life. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, were found in him in perfectness. While Jesus Christ remained on the earth in human form he was indeed a fruitful branch and thousands of hungry ones were fed with the fruits which dropped from his rich life. No one ever came to him hungry, desiring to be fed, only to be disappointed.

But when he went away into heaven he became the great Vine. All who are attached to him by faith and love are now branches of him. Through them his life flows, and they are to bear fruit in his name. We cannot put this truth too clearly nor emphasize it too strongly. It is upon our human lives that the fruit must grow with which Christ would feed the hunger of men. He is not here any more in the flesh, but we are here in his place. We represent him, and the blessings which he would give to the world must be given through us. There is no other way in which they can be

given. Angels would gladly come to earth to do our work, but they could not do it. We are the body of Christ, our hands are his hands, our feet are his feet, our lips are his lips. During his incarnation he lived in one human body; now his body is the whole company of believers.

It is Christ's will that the ministry of love which he began in person shall be continued. "The works that I do shall ye do also; and greater works than these shall ye do." The world is full of sorrow, which needs comfort; of bruised and broken lives, which need healing; of weary and heavy-laden ones, who need hope and cheer. If Jesus were here again he would himself give out blessings which should meet all these wants and cravings. He is here in the lives of his followers. And if we who bear Christ's name fail to give to men in our measure what Christ would give if he were here again in person, we fail Christ and disappoint him. His heart yearns to give out comfort, cheer, love, and strength to all who need it, and if we are not fruitful branches ministering to

earth's hungry ones what he would pass through us to them, we grieve him and those go hungry still, uncomforted, unhelped, unblest, who might have been made to rejoice if we had done our part.

This responsibility of being a branch has its application to every individual Christian. Each branch has its own place on the vine, its own space to fill. Though all the branches but one hang full of fruit, the one that is empty makes the vine a failure in the place where it hangs. Those who come to this particular branch, hungry, expecting to find fruit, are disappointed. Though a hundred Christian lives in a community are full of love, sympathy, and helpfulness, and one lacks the power or the willingness to bless and serve, that one makes the love and grace of Christ in vain to those to whom that one was sent to be the bearer of these divine gifts.

If one star among all the stars of the sky should fail to shine some night, its light would be missed and there would be a blank in the sky. If one light-house lamp on all the coasts

should not be lighted to-night, who can tell what disasters might happen before morning? This is an individual matter. The faithfulness of the multitude will not excuse the failure of one, the least and the lowliest one. When in the great orchestra the little piccolo did not do its part in the rehearsal the leader stopped everything till the lack was supplied. Not only does Christ in heaven miss the part of one of his who fails to live out his life in the world, but the hungry ones miss the food they crave, and those in darkness miss the light that is not shining, and sorrowing ones miss the comfort they should have received.

We should make this a personal matter. We are in danger of supposing that it is Christ's work alone to bless the world, to save it, to do good to those who are in need of help. We talk about the Holy Spirit who was given after Christ had made his great sacrifice, and we are in danger of concluding that the work of Christ in the world is to be done altogether by the Spirit. We fall into the habit of praying God to send comfort and blessing to those who are

in need or in sorrow, supposing that he will answer our prayers in some direct way. We do not realize that God is dependent upon us for the things we ask him to do, that with all his omnipotence he has so ordered that he needs our work and needs it well done so that his great work shall be made effective.

It would be vain and absurd for the branches to hang empty through the summer, praying the vine, meanwhile, to feed the hungry people who will come by and by, looking for fruit. The vine is dependent on the branches for the fruit which it is eager to bear. It bears no clusters itself—they all grow on the branches. No less unreasonable is it for the followers of Christ to pray their Master to send blessing to the world while they themselves, with their empty and unfruitful lives, do nothing to make others happier or better.

It is the will of Christ that each individual Christian shall be a branch full of fruit. If people turn to us in their need, sorrow, and despair, hoping to get from us a little help, and find nothing, we have not only disappointed

them, but we have also disappointed Christ, for if we were indeed living branches in full union with him we should bear fruit which would satisfy the cravings of those who turn to us.

We should see to it therefore that we are not only Christians by profession, but that we are really attached to Christ in close union, as branches are to the vine. Then Christ himself will live in us — we shall be literally and truly branches of Christ. Then our lives will abound in the fruits of righteousness and of love, and all who turn to us for sympathy, for comfort, for strength, for guidance, will find what their hearts seek.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHALLOW LIVES.

The wind that blows can never kill
The tree God plants ;
It bloweth east, it bloweth west ;
The tender leaves have little rest.
But any wind that blows is best.
The tree God plants
Strikes deeper roots, grows higher still,
Spreads wider boughs, for God's good will
Meets all its wants.

LILLIE E. BARR.

£ Math 13:5

IN one of our Lord's parables he depicts different lives as different kinds of ground, or rather ground in different conditions. One kind he describes under the figure of thin soil, too thin to bring anything to ripeness or perfection. The soil may be rich enough in its quality, — perhaps the very best in the field, — but there is too little of it. It consists of only a thin layer, and then under it lies a hard rock. The seeds are cast into the soil, which receives them eag-

erly, and nourishes them into quick life — “straightway they sprang up,” all the more quickly “because they had no deepness of earth.” For a little time they gave splendid promise of growth, but “when the sun was risen they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.”

We understand the illustration so far as the literal meaning is concerned. There are patches of soil like this in many a farmer's field. The wheat sown there is the first of all to spring up, laughing at the slower coming-up of the seed in other parts of the field. But the first hot day it withers, and that is the end of it.

It is our great Teacher himself who paints this picture for us, meaning us to get a spiritual lesson from it. He tells us plainly, also, what kind of people he has in mind — those who hear the word, at first receiving it with joy, but in whom the word, lacking root, does not abide, because it cannot bear the testings of this world, and soon droops and perishes.

That is, there are those who by reason of the thinness or shallowness of their life do not fur-

nish soil in which the good things of religious principle and character can grow. They are not unreceptive, like the life depicted under the figure of the trodden road; they receive quickly and impulsively the good teachings and holy influences which come to them. But they just as quickly let them go. Worthy intentions do not grow into fixed purposes. Impulses do not become principles. Good feelings do not ripen into fruits of noble character. Heavenly visions are not wrought into holy deeds. The green shoots lie withered and dead on the ground.

Shallowness of life is too common a fault. It is not a large proportion of beginnings of good which grows into maturity. There are too many people who are always eager to accept any new truth that is brought to them, but who do nothing with it, make nothing of it, do not assimilate it in their life, and therefore soon lose it. Many begin to build, and are not able to finish. Countless readers read part of the first volume of great books, and never get any farther. In certain popular schools and lecture-courses the first enrolment falls off fifty per

cent. before the close. If all who begin to learn music or art persevered unto the end, how full the world would be of music and of beauty! If all fine beginnings of character ripened into perfection, how good we all should be!

One of the pictures of the crucifixion of Jesus shows the scene on Calvary after the body had been taken down and laid away in the grave. All is quiet and still. The crowd is gone. No one is seen about the place. There are only the ghastly memorials of the terrible things which had happened during the day. Off to one side of the picture is seen an ass, nibbling at some withered palms that lay there. Thus the artist most graphically teaches the fickleness of human applause. Only a few days ago a great throng had followed Jesus over Olivet into the city in triumphant procession, waving their palm branches and strewing them on the road before him as they shouted their hosannas. Now Jesus is dead, crucified, and here, hard by the cross, lie those faded reminders of that glad day's rejoicing — nothing more. So fickle was men's love for Jesus in those days, and so quickly did

their hosannas change to shouts of derision! But is it different to-day? Do not men's hearts grow warm and tender with love for Christ on Sunday, in a service of devotion, and then by Monday lose all their glad, spiritual enthusiasm? The palm branches of praise and consecration, the green leaves of good resolves and eager intentions, lie withered on the ground, amid the tokens of unfaithfulness and disloyalty.

We hear stirring appeals to duty, and our hearts respond gladly and ardently. We think that we have become altogether Christ's, that our life henceforth will be devoted to him without stint or reserve. But, alas! the soil is thin. The green shoots find no place to root, and under the first hot sun they wither. What comes of all our good intentions, our fair promises, our sacred pledges, our solemn vows? Too often nothing but faded leaves. We mean to live grandly — in the glow of our devotions we sincerely intend to be apostolic in our zeal and in the beauty of our character and work; but in the end nothing but pitiful failure comes of it all.

On every church-roll there are the names of those who began well, with unusual promise, and for a little time maintained the high standard of their auspicious beginning, but by and by, in the stress and pressure of duty and responsibility, or in the face of opposition and ridicule, they lost interest and soon fell out of the ranks altogether. In every city and town there are thousands of lapsed church-members. Once they were active and enthusiastic in following Christ, but they wearied in well-doing and no longer even claim to be Christians.

Nor is it in religion only that this failure appears; we see illustrations of like fickleness in all departments of life. We see it in work, in business, in friendship, in education. Men are so impatient to get into active life, to be doing good, to be making money, to be shining as lights in the world, that they will not take time for adequate and thorough preparation. What in other men requires ten years they try to crowd into three or four. They will spend no time in laying deep foundations, they are in such haste to see the superstructure of their

dreams rising. They will not give years to apprenticeship — life is too short, they say, for such slow processes, at least for them; and they are out in the world long before the slow, plodding companions of their earlier youth. They form friendships almost at sight, and in a few days or weeks make intimacies which in persons of different mould require months or years. The seed springs up immediately.

But the end is the same in all cases. The eager student who had not patience to make thorough preparation for his profession finds himself at length facing tasks which he cannot perform, and is a failure. The man who in youth spurned the drudgery required to learn a trade or a business, at midlife or earlier discovers that he can do nothing well, and that there is no place for him in the world's crowded ways. He is pushed out of the ranks, therefore, not because men are hard or unfraternal, but because he cannot hold his place and do his work. The friendships that sprang up in a day and at once became so ardent prove short lived, and leave only emptiness and sorrow

behind. Few other causes are productive of so many failures in life as thinness, superficiality. Noble possibilities perish because there is no depth of soil in which heavenly plants can root themselves. The trouble is not with the native endowment — that may be princely; it is with the culture, the training. With depth of soil the harvest would have yielded a hundredfold; but by reason of its shallowness there is no harvest at all.

We need to give serious thought to the warning against shallowness of life. The farmer's remedy is picks and bars, and the breaking-up and removal of the rock. Then, in the deepened soil the seeds will grow, taking firm root and coming to perfection. We should seek the deepening of our spiritual life so that the words of God may find entrance, and may grow into a harvest of beauty. "It is bad to be hard, but it is bad also to be thin." No price we may have to pay should be thought too great if the result is the development of all the possibilities there are in our life.

We cannot miss sore testings. Every life will

have its trials. Our Lord in his explanation of the parable says that when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, the man with the shallow life straightway stumbleth. He cannot stand in the battle. The plants of righteousness growing in him have no deep root, and cannot endure the summer's heat.

In these modern days when Christianity is so widely in favor, and when persecution is rare, we may think that such testing will not be experienced. But never have there been days which more sorely tried believers in Christ than do our own very days. Persecution is not the only trial which tests faith. It is harder to live nobly than to die heroically. It may be easy now to profess Christ, but it is not easy to live the true Christlike life year after year. Prosperity is oftentimes sorer testing than adversity. Many a man who could endure the hardness of war as a good soldier fails utterly in the days of peace. Luxury slays more, both bodies and souls, than poverty. Only the plant that has deep root can live through heat and drought.

We must provide for both summer heats and

winter storms, if we would be ready to stand all the tests of life. We may be tried by sorest assaults of the tempter, or by the most gentle fascinations of unsuspected evil. We must be ready for either. The only preparation that will avail is a faith fixed upon Christ, a life rooted in him, a purpose which no tempest of temptation can shake. The winds and storms make the well-rooted tree stand all the more firmly. So it is with the Christian life which is truly rooted in Christ. It has its temptations, its trials, its struggles, but they only strengthen it, making it cleave to Christ the more closely and firmly, and grow into all the more beautiful character. But if our faith is feeble, if our religion is one of feeling only instead of principle, if we are ruled by the emotions instead of by the power of an inner life, then we shall not be able to endure the storms, and shall faint and fall under their sweep and strain.

CHAPTER IX.

CROWDING OUT THE GOOD.

Be not too busy with thy work and care
To look to God, to clasp thy hand in his ;
Miss thou all else, but fail thou not of this ;
Thou need'st not all alone thy burdens bear ;
Listen and wait, obey and learn his will,
His love and service all thy life shall fill.

OLIVE E. DANA.

SOME lives come to nothing because they take in too many interests. They are too crowded. One thing chokes out another, and, of course, it is always the best that is choked out. In one of our Lord's parables he illustrates the mistake of this kind of living by a bit of soil in which the good seed sown in it failed because there was too much else growing in the same piece of ground. The soil itself was good, as good as the best. The seed was of excellent quality, the same that in another part of the field yielded a hundredfold. When it was first sown it began to grow and gave fine

promise. But it soon became apparent that the soil was preoccupied. The roots of thorn bushes had been left in the ground, and when the wheat began to grow the thorns shot up too, and they grew so rapidly and so rankly that they crowded out the wheat, overshadowing it, drinking up the nourishment from the soil, so that nothing came in the end from the good seed which started so hopefully.

It is interesting to read our Lord's interpretation of this part of his parable. The thorns, he says, are the cares, riches, and pleasures of this world. These things stay in the life where the good seed has been planted, and so fill the ground that they absorb the life's strength and interest, and are so aggressive that they crowd out the gentler growths.

It is easy to understand how this can be. We all know how it is in a garden that is not well tended. The weeds spring up and choke out the flowers and vegetables. Weeding is a very important part of a gardener's duty. The ground must be kept clean. Our hearts are like gardens. We plant the seeds, but the weeds were

in the soil first, and they spring up at once, or even before our seeds have had time to send up their tender shoots. At once the battle begins. If the weeds are let alone they will soon have full possession, and all our gardening will be a failure.

Cares are thorns or weeds. Cares are worries, anxieties, distractions. They seem to grow as naturally in a heart as weeds do in a garden, or thorns in a field. Some people think worries are quite harmless. They never think of them as sins. But Jesus spoke very strongly against anxiety. He said we should never worry. It does no good. It grieves our Father, for it shows distrust of his love and goodness. It is following the example of the heathen, who do not know of the Father's love for his children. Then here Jesus says worries choke out the good which he is seeking to get to grow in us.

We should guard against worry just as we guard against any and every sinful thing. We should pick it out whenever it shows its head, just as the good gardener watches for weeds and takes out every one that comes up. We

have an illustration of the danger of worry in the story of Martha. There were many good things growing in her life, but they were all well-nigh choked out by the anxiety that she had allowed to grow up in her heart. Many other people have the same danger. Life's anxieties crowd out the beautiful things which start in their hearts, and which will grow only in a free and clean soil. Worry is thus a most harmful habit. We should weed it out of our life and let God's peace possess us. If we do not it will sorely crowd out and choke to death the good things growing in us. Then there really is no need of anxiety. If we will be true to God and trust him he will keep us always in perfect peace.

“ Let nothing make thee sad or fretful,

Or too regretful —

Be still !

What God hath ordered must be right ;

Then find it in thine own delight,

My will.

“ Why shouldst thou fill to-day with sorrow

About to-morrow,

My heart ?

One watches all with care most true;
Doubt not that he will give thee, too,
Thy part.

“Only be steadfast, never waver,
Nor seek earth’s favor,
But rest!
Thou knowest that God’s will must be
For all his creatures — so for thee —
The best.”

Riches are thorns, too, which, Jesus says, often choke the good seed and crowd it out. Money has its uses. If it is rightly possessed it may be a means of grace and of great blessing. If a man holds his money as God’s, which he is to use for God, it chokes out nothing of good in his life. Indeed, it nourishes the gentle graces which grow in the heart. But if money becomes a man’s master and rules him then it crowds out all lovely things. We remember that it crowded everything good out of the heart of Judas. Out of the life of Demas, too, it choked all that was once beautiful and holy.

We need to watch this ugly thorn lest it get a start in our heart and drive out the tender

things which the word of God has planted there. Money is not to be despised, but it is to be feared. Once the prayers of a congregation were requested for a man who was growing rich. This seemed a strange request. If the man had been very poor, in distress, it would have been natural to ask the congregation to pray for him, but for a man who was growing rich — why was he not to be envied? Was he not a favorite of heaven? Yet we remember that Jesus spoke very seriously of the peril of riches, saying that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

We would better confess frankly that money is one of the dangers with which grace always has to contend. There are many homes in which in humbler days religion flourished, but out of which it has been crowded in days of more money and greater luxury, so that now, while the semblance of godliness may remain, there is only a semblance left, with no life. There are men who once appeared to be earnest Christians, eager, interested, and active, but out of whose hearts the love of money has long

since choked the love of Christ and the fruits of the Spirit.

Contentment is true riches. That man is poor, though possessing millions, who is discontented. The true millionaire is he who is rich in himself, in his character, in his culture, in the qualities of his life. These are riches of which a man never can be robbed. St. Paul was rich because he had learned in whatsoever state he was therein to be content. Self-sufficed the word means — that is, he had in himself that which made him altogether independent of outside conditions or circumstances. Emerson says : “ I ought not to allow any man, because he has broad lands, to feel that he is rich in my presence. I ought to make him feel that I can do without his riches, that I cannot be bought, — neither by comfort, neither by pride, — and although I be utterly penniless and receiving bread from him, that he is the poor man beside me.”

True growth in life is not measured by accumulation of wealth, by advance in rank, by increase in power ; we are growing only when

passing days leave us richer hearted, nobler spirited, more Christlike in character. Ruskin puts it thus: "He only is advancing in life whose heart is growing softer, whose blood warmer, whose brain quicker, whose spirit is entering into living peace." Another writes:

"The glory of our life
Comes not from what we do or what we know,
But dwells for evermore in what we are."

Jesus said also that the world's pleasures are thorns which crowd out the good. God means us to have pleasures, and when kept in their place they should be helpers of our life in all true ways. But too often pleasures are allowed so to fill the thought and engross the interest that they crowd out all worthier things, all good and beautiful things.

One of the most serious dangers of life is this crowding out of the good. We need to give careful thought to the soil in which the sower casts the seed. We must give good things the first place, and let nothing choke them out. Forethought must not be allowed to become worry. Money must be kept under our feet,

subject to us, and not on the throne, our master. Pleasures must never be permitted to interfere with work or duty. God and his will must ever be kept first. We must never forget that we cannot serve God and mammon.

We should do thorough work in our hearts, making sure that the old evils are indeed rooted out. Many good people have much trouble with old bad habits, which so long have held mastery that it is almost impossible to altogether extirpate them. Even if they have been conquered and kept down for years, under the influence of new ways of living, the old tendencies still remain, like roots left hidden in the soil, and under favorable conditions reappear.

Sin dies hard, and there is no life in this world, however saintly it may be, however masterful the power of grace in it, in which there do not still lurk germs of evil, possibilities of sin. Oft-times, too, these remains of unholiness assert their vitality and mar the beauty of the new spiritual life.

There is a story of a woman whose little child had died, leaving emptiness and great loneliness

in the home. The mother had skill in art, and to fill her hands, also in order to preserve the image of the child's lovely features, she devoted herself for many days to touching up with her brush a photograph she had. As she wrought upon the picture the dear face seemed to live again, every charm of expression coming out under her skilled fingers. When the work was finished she laid the photograph away in a drawer. After some days she brought it out again, and was grieved to see blotches here and there on the face. She could not understand it, but she set to work once more with loving patience, and restored the marred beauty. In a few days, however, the blotches had reappeared. Then she understood that in the fabric of the paper on which the picture had been taken there were certain elements which, when chemically acted upon by the paints, had produced the blotches.

So in even the best human nature, however deeply imbued and thoroughly cleansed by divine grace, there still lurk elements of the old sinful life, and evermore these evil qualities will work up to the surface and mar and spot the

loveliest character. We should never cease to pray for cleansing and sanctifying, that God may search us and try us, casting out anything that is evil, until the last trace of corruption is gone. We are never safe while any of the old roots are allowed to remain. The thorns will come up again, and grow, and will crowd out the things that are worthy and beautiful.

CHAPTER X.

THINGS TO LEAVE UNDONE.

I am glad to think
I am not bound to make the world go right,
But only to discover and to do,
With cheerful heart, the work that God appoints.

JEAN INGELOW.

SOMETHING must be left out ; just what it shall be is the question. Many hands beckon continually. We can follow the beck of only one ; which shall it be ? There are thousands of books standing up in their place in the library, each one crying, " Read me." But one is all we can read to-day ; which shall it be ? We can think in the morning of many things we would like to do and might do — visits of courtesy and kindness, perhaps of helpfulness or sympathy, we might pay ; affairs of business, matters of pleasure or self-improvement, we might attend to — but we cannot, with our limitations of time and strength, do one in ten of

all these possible things. Which of them shall we do? There is a duty of neglecting, of leaving undone, as well as a duty of faithfulness and diligence in doing.

How shall we know what things not to do? Is there any law of selection, any principle which should guide us in deciding what we should leave undone among the many things that invite us?

We may set it down as a first rule that the duties which belong to our common vocation or calling should always have the precedence. We must not neglect these, however urgent other calls may be. If a boy is in school his school tasks must receive his thought and occupy his time, to the exclusion of every other occupation, until they have been mastered. If a young man is in a business position of any kind the duties of his position must be attended to with punctuality, promptness, and fidelity, before he has a minute for anything else. No matter how many outside interests may appeal to his sympathy or his desire, nor how eager he may be to respond to the appeals, he has no right to

listen to one of them until he is free from the allotted tasks of the day.

If a young woman is a teacher in a school her engagement binds her to perform the duties of her position during certain hours of five days every week, for a definite number of months in the year. There may come to her many opportunities of doing other things. Poor people may need care and help which she could give them. Sick neighbors may require visiting and watching with through long nights, and her heart may prompt her to undertake this ministry of mercy. Mission work may appeal for helpers and she may be eager to enter it, may almost feel that she dare not refuse to do so. It would be easy for her to be always going somewhere on some good errand, filling every moment of her time with work aside from her school duties.

But this young woman will make a serious mistake if she thinks that it is her duty to do all these good and beautiful things which make their appeal to her sympathetic heart. Her first thing, that to which God has called her for

the time, at least, that which she has covenanted to do, and for which she has been sacredly set apart, is her work as a teacher. Not only is she to devote the regular school hours to her specific duties as teacher, but, besides, she must give all the time necessary for conscientious and careful preparation for her tasks, so as to do them well, and also must secure such measures of rest as will fit her for her duties. All this work is hers by divine allotment, by divine commandment, and if she turns aside to any other task, though it be a religious service, she is robbing God. Everything else that offers must be resolutely neglected until this work has been done well enough to present to her Master.

This teaching is very important. It matters not what one's regular calling may be — the commonest daily work, or the most lowly office, or the highest duty of earth — whatever it is, it must always be the first in one's thought and in the occupation of one's time. There must be no skimping of one's daily task. Even a prayer-meeting is not so sacred as one's ordinary duty which fills the same hour, and it will

not be right to go to the prayer-meeting when in doing so tasks for that hour are left undone.

Sometimes good people get wrong opinions on this subject. They suppose that because it is a religious service or some holy task that invites, they may be excused for neglecting a common secular duty or for being late for some engagement. There have been men who failed utterly, bringing ruin upon themselves and their families, because they neglected their duties in running to prayer-meetings or looking after what they called religious interests. There have been women whose homes suffered, and whose children were left uncared for, while they were attending conventions or looking after some social, sanitary, or religious affair outside. They have made themselves believe that the importance of such outside services was so great that even the holiest duties of motherhood and wifehood might be passed by in order that these should be done.

But this is a sad misreading of the divine law. It should be set down as an invariable and inexorable rule that general appeals to interest

and sympathy are to be denied until one's own sacred work has been faithfully done. Nothing is so binding upon us as the duty we have engaged to do. No work is so sacred to us as our own, that which comes to us in our place, which no other can do for us.

After all this duty has been performed with conscientious fidelity, then we may think of doing the other things which we may find to do. Still the question waits, "What shall we do, and what shall we neglect?" There is room always for wise choosing — we cannot do all that we might find to do. There is a vast difference in the value and importance of the various opportunities or appeals which come to us, and we should choose to do those things which bring the greatest good to others, or leave the deepest permanent result.

Many of the things which offer it is not worth while to do. No good would come to the world from our doing of them. It is well for a busy man to have an avocation, something to which he turns when his day at the duties of his vocation is ended, but he should make sure that it

is an avocation which will prove a benefit not to himself only, but to others as well. If we are to give account for every idle word we must also give account for every idle hour spent in any useless occupation. Sometimes the most sacred use of a leisure hour is rest, or bright, cheerful recreation, to fit one for the serious tasks and duties which wait on the morrow.

But we should always remember that we have a duty of *not* doing, and that many calls for our time and strength must be firmly declined. Not every open door opens to a duty. The tempter opens doors, too, and we are to resist all his solicitations. Then there are calls which are not to sinful things, but to things that are inexpedient. There even come to all of us appeals for ministrations of mercy and kindness which are not to be regarded, because prior duties fill the hands that would quickly turn to these new services if they were empty. There are first things which must never be neglected nor displaced, though a thousand appeals clamor for our attention.

When Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom

of God and his righteousness," he did not mean merely prayer-meetings, sick calls, and social visits — he meant the great duties and occupations which belong in each day. For most of us these fill our waking hours. What we shall do in our leisure we shall learn if we are ready always to follow the Master's leading.

It need not even be said that all wrong and sinful things should be left undone. Part of the confession we must make every day is that we have done things which we ought not to have done. There is need for more tenderness of conscience, more careful searching of heart, that we may put out of our life firmly and remorselessly everything which ought not to be there. We are too easily satisfied with low attainments. We are fond of saying that no one can live perfectly, that, do the best we can, we sin every day.

There is a story of a good woman who said she found a great deal of comfort in the doctrine of total depravity. We seem to find a great deal of comfort in this teaching, that every one has faults and failings. It makes a fine, broad

cloak which covers many shortcomings. The result is in too many cases that we live on altogether too low a plane. As good orthodox Christians we have the privilege of denying that perfection is possible, and we self-indulgently make altogether too little effort to reach the unattainable goal.

We are too tolerant of our own failures and sins. We are not so tolerant of the failings and sins of others. We hold our neighbors to a very rigid account. We make small allowance for their infirmities and for the sharpness of their temptations. We set a high standard for them and expect them to reach it. It would be more Christlike if we would reverse this course, showing charity to others in their weakness and failure, and being intolerant of fault and shortcoming in ourselves. No discovered sin should ever be allowed to remain for an hour; to give it hospitality is disloyalty to Christ and to truth. We should keep before us continually the highest ideal, the perfect life of Christ himself, that in the beauty and whiteness of his faultless character we may ever detect the flaws in our-

selves and be stimulated toward whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are lovely.

Thus, too, our standard will ever be advancing, so that what satisfies us to-day will not satisfy us a year hence. We shall see, each new day, something hitherto tolerated, perhaps loved and cherished, which must be given up and left out. St. Paul gives us certain lists of traits, qualities, and habits belonging to the "old man," which he exhorts us to put off in the culture of the new life. Browning demands,

Get you behind the man I am now, you man that I used to be.

A true life ever reaches upward and strives toward better things. It leaves behind the things that are imperfect as it presses toward perfection. It puts away childish things as it grows toward manhood. It leaves undone the things that are not right or beautiful, the things that are not essential, and gives all its energy to the attaining and achieving of the things that are excellent, the things that belong to the imperishable and eternal life.

CHAPTER XI.

ITS FRUIT IN ITS SEASON.

He who plants a tree
Plants a hope.
Rootlets up through fibres blindly grope ;
Leaves unfold into horizons free.
So man's life must climb
From the clods of time
Unto heavens sublime.
Canst thou prophesy, thou little tree,
What the glory of thy boughs shall be ?

LUCY LARCOM.

EVERY life is sent into this world to be a blessing. God's thought for every creature he makes is beauty and usefulness. The marring and the curse we find everywhere are not divine purposes, but come from the resistance or the perversion of the holy will. The word "sin" means missing the mark; anything or any person that fails to be beautiful or to be a blessing has missed the mark.

The Bible makes it plain that fruit is the test

of the Christian life. Jesus made this very clear by saying that the branch in the vine which beareth not fruit is taken away, cut off, and cast out to be burned. It is useless, and there is no room on the great vine for any useless branch or twig. Jesus said also that the fruitful branch is pruned that it may bring forth yet more fruit. That is, even ordinary fruitfulness does not quite satisfy the husbandman; he wants every branch to do its best, and therefore he applies a system of culture which will insure increasing fruitfulness. Jesus made it clear that no one can be his follower in truth who is not willing to be a luxuriant fruit-bearer: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." We cannot be his disciples if we do not bear much fruit. All the culture of the Christian life is toward fruitfulness.

What is fruitfulness in the spiritual sense? It is more than Christian activities. There are many people who are active in Christian duty, faithful, diligent, energetic, who yet do not bear in their own life and character the fruits of the Spirit. There are some persons who are ever

busy in doing good, whose lives are useful and full of helpfulness for others, who yet lack the graces of the finest and best spiritual culture. St. Paul enumerates among the fruits of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

No doubt true fruitfulness ordinarily includes Christian activities. We are to go about doing good, as our Master did. It is necessary in order to the best life that we should use our gifts and talents in all possible forms of helpfulness, to make the world better, and to give comfort, strength, or cheer to other lives. At the same time it is essential for truest faithfulness that the life shall also bear the fruits of the Spirit. Martha was intensely active in her serving, but she lacked at least one of the qualities which belong to true fruitfulness — the quiet of God in her heart.

What is the purpose of fruit? It is not merely for ornament or decoration. The fruit of trees is for the feeding of men's hunger. The same test should be applied to Christian life. It is not enough to bear fruit merely for

the adornment of our character or the beautifying of our own life. Fruit for fruit's sake is not the motto. We are to do all things for the glory of God. The glory of God, however, embraces also the good of others. The commandments of love to God and love to our neighbor are linked together in one. He who loves God will love his neighbor also. Therefore it is no sufficient motive in fruit-bearing that it be for the honoring of God's name. We cannot honor God's name except by living for others. Hence we must bear fruit which will be a blessing to others, which will feed the hunger of human hearts.

It is one of the best tests of our life that others are helped, cheered, strengthened, or comforted by the things in us which are beautiful and good. There are some people whose lives are benedictions wherever they go. The peace, joy, and love of their hearts make others happier and better. One of the old legends tells of the visits of a goddess to ancient Thebes, and relates that the people always knew when she had been there, although no eye saw her, by the

blessings she left behind. She would pause before a lightning-blackened tree, and the tree would be covered with beautiful vines. She would sit down to rest upon a decaying log, and the decay would be hidden under lovely moss. When she stepped on the muddy shores of the sea, violets would spring up in her tracks. This is only a legend, but it illustrates the influence of the beautiful life in which the fruits of the Spirit have full and rich growth. There are lives so full of grace and goodness that every influence they give forth is toward cheer and hope and purity.

On the other hand, there are lives whose every breath is baleful. Another ancient legend tells of a maiden that was sent to Alexander from some conquered province. She was very beautiful, but the most remarkable thing about her was her breath, which was like the perfume of richest flowers. It was soon discovered, however, that she had lived all her life amid poison, breathing it, and that her body was full of poison. Flowers given to her withered on her breast. Insects on which she breathed per-

ished. A beautiful bird was brought into her room and fell dead. Fanciful as this story is, there are lives which in a moral sense are just like this maiden. They have become so corrupt that everything they touch receives harming. Nothing beautiful can live in their presence. On the other hand, the Christian life is one whose warm atmosphere is a perpetual benediction. It is like the shadow of Peter, having healing power, so that all on whom it falls are enriched and blessed by it.

In one of the Psalms a good life is compared to a tree planted by the streams of water. The emblem is very suggestive. A tree is not only one of the most beautiful objects in nature, but also one of the most useful. One puts it graphically in the following lines :

“ What does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants the friend of sun and sky;
He plants the flag of breezes free;
The shaft of beauty towering high;
He plants a home to heaven a-nigh,
For song and mother-croon of bird
In hushed and happy twilight heard —
The treble of heaven’s harmony —
These things he plants who plants a tree.

“ What does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants cool shade and tender rain,
And seed and bud of days to be,
And years that fade and flush again;
He plants the glory of the plain;
He plants the forest’s heritage;
The harvest of a coming age;
The joy that unborn eyes shall see —
These things he plants who plants a tree.”

It must be noted that each tree brings forth its own fruit. There is widest variety among trees; so also is there in Christian lives. No two are the same. It is not wise for us to try to copy the mode of fruitfulness of some other person. Imitation is one of the most common faults in Christian living. One man lives helpfully in his own way and hundreds take him as their pattern. Thus they lose their own individuality and mar both their character and their work. The true way is to get full of Christ and simply be one’s self. No tree tries to bear fruit like some other tree; each one bears its own fruit and that is best for it. Each life, too, should yield its own fruit. It may not be such fine fruit as another life bears, but it is the finest

which that life was made to produce and therefore is its best. Much of our strength lies in our individuality.

Another feature of this tree is that it brings forth fruit in its season. Different kinds of fruits ripen at different times of the year. Some come early in the summer, some late. There are those who bring forth lovely fruits even in childhood, whose lives are tender, thoughtful, unselfish, and true. But ordinarily we must not look for the fruits of ripened experience in youth-time. Child Christians should not be expected to be just like older Christians. Naturalness is one of the charms of any beautiful life.

We must not look for the ripeness of mature life in those still in the youth-time of experience. It is a fruit tree that is in the psalmist's mind. This tree brings forth its fruit in its season. There are weeks and weeks in which the fruit hangs upon the tree, and though it have all the semblance of lusciousness, it is still hard and sour. By and by, in the time of ripening, all is changed, and the fruit is mellow and sweet. It is so in life. Many excellent

people, with much promise of fruit, do not bring their fruit to perfection until the late autumn of life. St. Paul was an old man when he wrote that he had learned in whatsoever state he was therein to be content. This language intimates also that the great lesson was hard to learn. Contentment did not come naturally to him. It took him many years, well into old age, to grow into the sweet spirit. Young people, therefore, should not be discouraged if they cannot now have all the graces of gentleness, thoughtfulness, patience, and unselfishness which they see and admire so much in those who are older. The tree brings forth its fruit in its season. If only they abide in Christ, receiving from him the blessings of his love and grace, they will bring forth the ripe fruit in their season.

Some fruits do not ripen until the frosts come; some lives do not yield their richest and best character until the frosts of sorrow have fallen upon them. Many Christians go on through joyous days, amid prosperity, pure in motive, earnest in activity, yet not bringing

forth the best fruits. By and by trouble comes, adversity, sorrow, loss; and under the keen frosts the fruit is ripened. After that they have a sweeter spirit, with more love for Christ, with deeper spirituality and a larger measure of consecration.

If we would bear fruit there is a condition we must observe — we must abide in Christ. The roots of our life must go down deep into his life as the roots of the tree penetrate the earth's soil. We must live so that the blessings of God's love shall reach us through our faith and through the word and Spirit of God. No Christian can be fruitful who does not receive from Christ, through the Holy Spirit, the divine grace and blessing. The tree must be planted by the streams of water.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRUE RELIGION.

Religion 's all or nothing ; it is no mere smile
O' contentment, sigh of aspiration, sir —
No quality o' the finelier-tempered clay
Like its whiteness or its brightness ; rather stuff,
Stuff o' the very strife, life of life, and self of self !

ROBERT BROWNING.

THERE were two artists, close friends, one of whom excelled in landscape painting and the other in depicting the human figure. The former had painted a picture in which wood and rock and sky were combined in the artist's best manner. But the picture remained unsold — no one cared to buy it. It lacked something. The artist's friend came and said, " Let me take your painting." A few days later he brought it back. He had added a lovely human figure to the matchless landscape. Soon the picture was sold. It had lacked the interest of life.

There are some people whose religion seems

to have a similar lack. It is very beautiful, faultless in its creed and its worship, but it lacks the human element. It is only landscape, and it needs life to make it complete. No religion is realizing its true mission unless it touches life at its every point.

It seems to be the thought of many that the religion of Christ is only for a little corner of their life. They fence off the Sabbath and try to make it holy by itself, while they devote the other days to secular life, without much effort to make them holy. In like manner they have certain exercises of devotion each day, which they regard as religious, but which also they shut off in little closets, so that the noise from the great world outside cannot break in to disturb the quiet. These they regard as holy moments, but they do not think of the other long hours of the day as in any sense sacred.

That is, they try to get the religion of their life into little sections by itself, as if all God wants of his children is a certain amount of formal worship in between the periods of business, struggle, care, and pleasure.

But this is an altogether mistaken thought of the meaning of Christian life. Religion is not something which is merely to have its own little place among the occupations of our days, something separate from and having no relation to the other things we are doing. Religion that can thus be put into a corner of its own, large or small, and kept there, in holy isolation, is not religion at all. It was said of Jesus in his life among the people that he could not be hid. This is always true of Christ wherever he is. He cannot be hid in any heart — he will soon reveal himself in the outer life.

The figures which are used in the Scriptures to illustrate divine grace all suggest its pervasive quality. It is compared to leaven, which, hid in the heart of the dough, works its way out through the lump until the whole mass is leavened. It is compared to a seed, which, though hid in the earth, and seeming to die, yet cannot be kept beneath the ground, but comes up in the form of a tree or a plant, and grows into strength and beauty. It is compared to light, which cannot be confined, but presses its way out into the

world until all the space surrounding it is brightened. It is called life, and life cannot be kept in a corner. Indeed, grace is life—a fragment of the life of God let down from heaven and making a lodgment in a human heart, where it grows until it fills all the being.

All the illustrations of the kingdom of heaven in this world represent it as a branch of that kingdom, so to speak, set up in a man's heart. "The kingdom of heaven is within you," said the Master. It is not something that grows up by a man, alongside the man's natural life, and apart from it,—it is a new principle that is brought into his life, whose function it is to infuse itself into all parts of his nature, permeating all his being, expelling whatever is not beautiful or worthy, and itself becoming the man's real life. "Christ liveth in me," said St. Paul, "and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith."

From all this it is evident that the object of grace in a life is not merely to make one day in seven a holy day, and to hallow a few moments of each morning and evening, but to absorb and

fill the man's whole nature. The Sabbath has served its true purpose only when it has spread its calm and quiet through all the other days. We worship God, especially on that one day, in order to gather strength and grace to live for God in the six days that follow. It is not worship for worship's own sake, that we are to render, but worship to get more of God down into our life to prepare us for duty and struggle, for burden-bearing and toil, for service and sorrow.

It has been said by a distinguished English preacher that direct worship is a small part of life, and that every human office needs to be made holy. True religion will manifest itself in every phase of life. We sit down in the quiet and read our Bible and get our lesson. We know it now, but we have not as yet got it into our life, which is the thing we have really to do. Knowing that we should love our enemies is not the ultimate thing — actually loving our enemies is. Knowing that we should be patient is not all — we are to practise the lesson of patience until it has become a habit in our life. Know-

ing that we should always submit our will to God's is to have a clear mental conception of our duty in this regard ; but this is not religion. There are many who know well this cardinal duty of Christian life who yet continue to chafe whenever they cannot have their own way, and who struggle and resist and refuse to submit to the divine will whenever it appears to be opposed to their own will. They know their lesson, but they have not learned to live it. It is living it, however, that is religion.

Even the best of striving will not get all the heavenly vision wrought into life. It is not possible that we with our clumsy hands can ever put into act or word or carve into visible beauty all that we dream when we kneel before Christ or ponder his words. None of us live any day as we meant to live when we set out in the morning.

“ What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all his thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshy screen? ”

Yet it is to be the aim of our striving always

to live our religion, to get the love of our heart wrought out in a blessed ministry of kindness. Christ lives in us; and it is ours to manifest the life of Christ in our daily living.

It is evident therefore that it is in the experiences of week-day life far more than in the quiet of the Sabbath and the closet that the tests of religion come. It is easy to assent with our mind to the commandments, when we sit in the church, enjoying the services; but the assent of the life itself can be obtained only when we are out in the midst of temptation and duty, in contact with men. There it is, alone, that we can get the commandments wrought into ways of obedience and lines of character. And this is the final object of all religious teaching and worship — the transforming of our life into the beauty of Christ.

In modern days the thought of Christianity has been greatly widened. It is no longer supposed, by most Christians at least, that its sphere is confined to a small section of life. We claim all things now for Christ. Our belief is that the whole world belongs to our King.

We claim heathen lands for him, and we are pushing the conquest into the heart of every country. We claim all occupations and trades, and all lines of activity for him. The vocation of the minister of the gospel is in one sense no more holy than that of the carpenter or the merchant. We all are living unto the Lord, whatever we are doing, just as much in working at a trade as in preaching, and on Monday as on the Sabbath. Religion claims all our common life and insists on dominating it. It asserts its power over the body, which is holy because it is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

In one of St. Paul's letters is this counsel: "Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called." This would seem to teach that, as a rule, men are not to change their vocation when they acknowledge Christ as their Master, but are to be Christians where they are. The business man is not to become a minister, that he may serve Christ better, but is to serve him by being a Christian business man. The artist, when he accepts Christ, is to remain an artist, using his brush to honor Christ. The singer is

to sing, but is to sing now for Christ, using her voice to start songs in this world of sorrow and sin. We are saying now, also, that Christian men should take part in politics, infusing into this department of life the spirit and the holiness of Christ, that the kingdom of heaven may come in the state as well as in the church. They are likest Christ who go everywhere in his name.

Enough has been said to show that religion is not meant to be merely an adjunct of life, but is to enter into the life itself and to change it all into the quality of the life of Christ. We come together in our church services to give God something, to worship him; but we come also and chiefly to receive something from God, to have our strength renewed, our spirit quickened, that we may go out into the world to live more righteously and to be greater blessings to others.

Peter wished to make three tabernacles on the Mount of Transfiguration and to hold the blessed heavenly vision there. But his wish was a mistaken one. There was a ministry of love which the Master himself had yet to perform. At the foot of the mountain, at that very hour, a

poor boy was waiting to be freed from demoniacal possession. A little farther on, Gethsemane and Calvary were waiting for Jesus. Think what the world would have lost of blessing if Peter's prayer had been answered, if Jesus had remained on the mount! Then, for Peter himself, and his companions, service was waiting. Think, also, what a loss it would have been if these apostles had not come down from the Transfiguration mount to do the work which they afterwards did!

Hours of ecstasy are granted us here to fit us for richer life and better service for Christ and our fellow-men. We pray, and read our Bible, and sit at the Lord's table, that we may get new power from God to prepare us for being God's messengers to the world, and new gifts to carry in our hands to hearts that hunger.

"They who tread the path of labor follow where my feet have trod;

They who work without complaining do the holy will of God.

Where the many toil together, there am I among my own;

Where the tired workman sleepeth, there am I with him alone.

I, the Peace that passeth knowledge, dwell amid the daily strife;

I, the Bread of heaven, am broken in the sacrament of life."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BEAUTY OF THE IMPERFECT.

"Thank God for failure, shattered hopes, lost aims,
And ungained garlands, for he knoweth best.
I longed to win for God and for the truth,
To spread his kingdom over sea and shore,
Struggled — and lost, while others gained their crowns.
Baffled and sore, cast out and left behind —
' They also serve who only stand and wait ; '
Perchance they also win who seem to fail ;
God's eye sees clearer than our earth-dimmed sight."

MOST of us fret over our faults and failures. Our imperfections discourage us. Our defeats oftentimes break our spirit and cause us to give up. But this is not true living. When we look at it in the right way we see that the experiences which have been so disheartening to us really contain in them elements of hope and encouragement.

There is beauty in imperfection. Perhaps we have not thought of it, but the imperfect in a good life is really the perfect in an incomplete

state. It is a stage of progress, a phase of development. It is the picture before the artist has finished it. It is beautiful, therefore, in its time and place.

A blossom is beautiful, although compared with the ripe, luscious fruit, whose prophecy it carries in its heart, it seems very imperfect. The young shoot is graceful in its form and wins admiration, although it is but the beginning of the great tree which by and by it will become. A child is not a man. How feeble is infancy! Its powers are undeveloped, its faculties are untrained — it is yet without wisdom, without skill, without strength, without ability to do anything valiant or noble. It is a very imperfect man. Yet who blames a child for its incompleteness, its immaturity, its imperfectness? There is beauty in its imperfection.

We are all children of greater or lesser growth. Our lives are incomplete, undeveloped. But if we are living as we should there is real moral beauty in our imperfectness. It is a natural and necessary process in the unfolding of the perfect. A child's work in school may be very

faulty and yet be beautiful and full of encouragement and hope, because it shows faithful endeavor and worthy improvement. A writing-teacher praises his scholars as he inspects the page they have written. He tells them, or certain of them, that they have done excellently. You look at their work, however, and you find it very faulty indeed, the writing stiff and irregular, the letters rudely formed, and you cannot understand why the teacher should speak so approvingly of the scholars' work. Yet he sees real beauty in it because, when compared with yesterday's page, it shows marked improvement.

So it is in all learning. The child actually walked three steps alone to-day and the mother is delighted with her baby's achievement. These were its first steps. A little girl sits at the piano and plays through the simplest exercise with only a few mistakes, and all the family are enthusiastic in their praise of the performance. As music it was most meagre and faulty. If the older sister, after her ten years of music-lessons and practice, were able to play no better

than the child has done there would have been disappointment and no commendation. The imperfect playing was beautiful because, belonging in the early stages of the child's learning, it gave evidence of faithful study and practice.

A mother found her boy trying to draw. Very rude were the attempts, but to her quick eye and eager heart the figures were beautiful. They had in them the prophecies of the child's future and the mother stooped and kissed him in her gladness, praising his work. Compared with the artist's masterpiece when the boy had reached his prime, these rough sketches had no loveliness whatever. But they were beautiful in their time as the boy's first efforts.

The same is true of all faithful efforts to learn how to live. We may follow Christ very imperfectly, stumbling at every step, realizing but in the smallest measure the qualities of ideal discipleship; yet if we are doing our best, and are continually striving toward whatsoever things are lovely, our efforts and attainments are beautiful in the eye of the Master and pleasing to him.

In the New Testament a distinction is made between perfection and blamelessness. We are to be presented faultless at the end before the presence of the divine glory, but even here, with all our imperfection, we are exhorted to live so as not to be blamable. That is, we are to do our best, living sincerely and unreprobably. Then as Christ looks upon us he is pleased. He notes many faults, and our best work is full of mistakes, but he sees beauty in all the imperfection because we are striving to please him and are reaching toward perfection.

There is a home of wealth and splendor in which the most sacred and precious household treasure is a piece of puckered sewing. A little child one day picked up the mother's work — some simple thing she had been making and had laid down — and after a half hour's quiet brought it to the mother and gave it to her, saying, "Mamma, I's been helping 'ou, 'cause I love 'ou so." The stitches were long and the sewing was drawn and puckered. But the mother saw only beauty in it all, for it told of the child's love and eagerness to help her and please her.

That night the little one sickened, and in a few hours was dead. No wonder the mother calls that little piece of puckered sewing one of her rarest treasures. Nothing that the most skilful hands have wrought, nothing of greatest value among all her household possessions, means to her half so much as that piece of spoiled stitching by her child.

May not this be something like the way in which God looks at his children's humblest efforts to do things for him? We are well aware how faulty even the best Christian work done in this world must seem to our Master — how full of unwisdom, of unbeauty, how foolish much of it, how mixed with self and vanity, how untactful, how indiscreet, how without prayer and love, how ignorant, how ungentle. But he does not chide us for it, does not blame us for doing so imperfectly the sacred things he gives us to do. No doubt many of our poor blunders, our most faulty pieces of work, are held among our Master's most sacred, most cherished treasures in heaven.

Then he uses our blundering efforts, if only

love and faith be in them, to bless others, to do good, to build up his kingdom. Christ is saving the world to-day, not through faultless work of perfect angels, but through the poor, ignorant, flawed, oftentimes very tactless, foolish work of disciples who love him and want to help him.

Take another phase of the same truth. We usually think of defeat as dishonorable. Sometimes it is. It is dishonorable when it comes through cowardice or lack of effort. We ought to train ourselves to be overcomers. But when one has bravely done his best and after all has gone down in the struggle there is no disgrace in his failure. A twofold battle is going on whenever a man is fighting with hard conditions or adverse circumstances, and it is possible for him to fail in one and be victorious in the other. Too often a man succeeds in his battle with the world at the cost of truth and right. That is defeat indeed, over whose dishonor heaven grieves. But when a man fails in his struggle with circumstances, and yet comes out with his manhood untarnished, he is a conqueror indeed,

and his victory gives joy to the heart of Christ. Such failure as this is, in heaven's sight, glorious success and no dishonoring of the life.

Defeat is the school in which most of us have to be trained. In all kinds of work men learn by making mistakes. The successful business man did not begin with success. He learned by experience and the experience was very costly. The true science of living is not to make no mistakes, but not to repeat one's mistakes. Defeat when one has done one's best, and when one takes a lesson from his defeat, is not something to be ashamed of, but something to be glad for, since it sets one's feet on a little higher plane. Defeat which makes us wiser and better is a blessing to us.

An old man said that in reviewing his life he discovered to his great surprise that the best things in his character and in his career were the fruits of what he regarded as his failures and follies. These defeats had wrought in him new wisdom and had led to repentings and renewals of faith in God, and had thus proved sources of richest blessing and good. Probably the

same is true in greater or less degree of every life. We owe more to our defeats, with the humblings of the old nature, the cleansing of motive and affection, and the deepening of trust in God, than we owe to the prouder experiences which we call our successes.

When we begin to recall the names of the men who have most influenced the world for good we discover that many of them at least seemed to be defeated men and their life a failure.

“God forbid that I should do this thing and flee away from them!” said Judas Maccabæus, when with only eight hundred faithful men he was urged to retire before the Syrian army of twenty thousand. “If our time be come, let us die manfully for our brethren, and let us not stain our honor.”

“Sore was the battle,” writes the historian, “as sore as that waged by the three hundred at Thermopylæ, and the end was the same. Judas and his eight hundred were not driven from the field, but lay dead on it.”

That seemed a defeat, but there was no dishonor in it. It ranks indeed among the world's

noblest achievements. In no victory recorded is there greater glory. The eight hundred died for freedom, and untold blessings came to the nation and to the world from their work that day. Their defeat was but a mode of victory.

It would be easy to fill pages with the names of individuals who have gone down in defeat, but who in their very failure have started influences which have enriched the world. In the centre of this great host is Jesus Christ. The story of his blessed life is a story of failure and defeat according to the world's estimate. But did the cross leave a blot on his name? Is it not the very glory of his life that he died thus in the darkness that day? Was his career a failure? Christianity is the answer. He is the Captain also and leader of a great host who like him have been defeated and have failed, but have made the world richer by their sacrifice. Let no one speak of such defeats as blots on fair names; rather they are adornings of glory. In all such failure there is divine beauty.

There is another application of the same

truth. Earthly life is full of pain and sorrow. God had one Son without sin; he has none without suffering, for Christ was the prince of sufferers. The world regards adversity and sorrow of every kind as misfortune. It would never call a man blessed or happy whose life is full of trial and tears. But the gospel turns a new light, the light from heaven, upon earthly life, and in this wonderful light affliction and sorrow appear beautiful. One of our Lord's beatitudes is for the troubled life — "Blessed or happy are they that mourn." In the light of Christ's gospel it is not a favor to be without trial. Rather it is a token of God's love when we are called to endure chastening. In this darkest of all blots on life, as men would regard it, there is beauty. One writes —

"If all our life were one broad glare
Of sunlight, clear, unclouded ;
If all our paths were smooth and fair,
By no soft gloom enshrouded ;
If all life's flowers were fully blown,
Without the sweet unfolding,
And happiness were rudely thrown
On hands too weak for holding —

Should we not miss the twilight hours,
The gentle haze and sadness?
Should we not long for storms and showers,
To break the constant gladness?

“ If none were sick and none were sad,
What service could we render?
I think if we were always glad,
We scarcely could be tender;
Did our beloved never need
Our patient ministration,
Earth would grow cold and miss, indeed,
Its sweetest consolation;
If sorrow never claimed our heart,
And every wish were granted,
Patience would die and hope depart —
Life would be disenchanted.”

These are suggestions of beauty in imperfection. We may be sure that oftentimes the eye of God sees more to commend in the things we grieve over, which to human thought are marred and broken, than in the things of which we are proud. The Lord seeth not as man seeth.

Temptation

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW TO MEET TEMPTATION.

Why comes temptation but for man to meet
 And master and make crouch beneath his foot,
 And so be pedestalled in triumph? Pray
 "Lead us into no such temptations, Lord!"
 Yea, but, O thou whose servants are the bold,
 Lead such temptations by the hand and hair,
 Reluctant dragons, up to who dares fight,
 That so he may do battle and have praise.

ROBERT BROWNING.

TEMPTATION has a mission. Our Lord was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted. If he had missed being tempted he would have missed something that was necessary to the complete development of his manhood. For any man temptation is an opportunity. If the soldier never had a battle, how could he become a hero? How could he ever learn the art of war? It is foolhardy for any one to seek to be tempted, but when temptation comes to us while we are in the line of

duty, as we follow the divine guidance, we dare not shirk it, nor run away from it; we must meet it with faith and courage, and in doing so we shall take a blessing from it. This way lie crowns which can be won only by those who are victorious in temptation. It is with struggle as with pain:

“ Put pain from out the world, what room were left
For thanks to God, for love to man ? ”

Yet there is no fear that any of us may be overlooked in this matter, or may miss this opportunity. Soldiers sometimes chafe in time of war because they are kept in the camp while their comrades are in the field. They are eager to become real soldiers. But none miss struggle with temptation, excepting those who die in early childhood. No one escapes the experience. Then our foes are also real. They are not fancied or imaginary. They are of two classes — there are enemies in our own heart, and enemies fighting outside.

The enemies within complicate the struggle. In war a traitor in the camp may do great

mischief. He is unsuspected. He knows all that is going on inside, the movements that are planned, the strength or weakness of the citadel, the resources at command. Then he can open the door for the enemy and deliver the place into his hands.

So the enemies in our heart have vast power of hurting us. They may betray us in the very time of our battle with some outside foe and cause us to lose the victory; or after we have been victorious in the struggle they may cause us to fall into some other subtle sin. These hidden evils in our own heart make it easy for the assailants without to break through the gate. They parley with them over the wall and treacherously slip the bolt on some postern door and let them in. We have much to fear from the unholiness that we carry within us. If every feeling, disposition, affection, desire, and impulse in our heart were pure and altogether like Christ, if the enemy came and found nothing in us, we should be far safer in the midst of this world's wickedness.

But there are also outside foes. We are like

little forts in an enemy's country. All about us swarm those who are hostile to us, watching every opportunity to break in at some gate or to climb over the ramparts to take possession. We must never forget that this world is not a friend to grace.

We are in danger of fancying in quiet days that the antagonism around us has ceased, and that we shall no more be assailed by evil. This is always a fatal mistake for any one to make. The tempter is never better pleased than when he gets us into this kind of confidence. We are then off our guard, and it is easy for the foe to steal in. When the sentinels at our heart-doors and the outposts of the enemy get on familiar terms our danger is greatly increased. We are safest when we are fully aware of our danger. We are kept then ever watchful and on the alert. An important counsel, given over and over again in the Scriptures, is, "Watch that ye enter not into temptation." Incessant watchfulness is quite half of every Christian's defence.

We should never forget that no hand but our

own can open the door to the tempter. Every man's house is his castle, and no one can cross the threshold but by his permission. This is true of the good as well as of the evil. No angel of heaven can gain access to our heart unless we show him hospitality. Even God himself, with all his omnipotence, can enter only if we will; he will never force his way into our heart. With all the gifts of divine love in his hands for us, Christ only comes to our door and knocks, and stands and waits. We must open the door if he is to come in. The same is true of evil. No temptation can ever compel its way with us. Our quiet, persistent "No" will keep it out. If we resist the devil he will flee from us. We cannot hinder temptations flying about us like birds, but it is our fault if they build their nests in our heart.

The enemies without us are of many kinds. There are evil men who are under the control of Satan, filled with his spirit, and who come to us continually with temptations to sin. We need to be on our guard against these. They are among those whom we meet daily in our com-

mon intercourse. We cannot keep ourselves apart from them, and we need, therefore, to watch against their unholy influence. Many a young person is led away from God and into sin by a friendship which at first seems altogether harmless, and even sweet.

The upas tree which grows in Java has an acrid, milky juice which contains a virulent poison. According to the story told by a Dutch surgeon about a hundred years ago, the exhalations of this tree are fatal to both animal and vegetable life. Birds flying over the tree fall dead. No flower or plant will live near the tree. The story is probably untrue, but it illustrates human lives in this world whose influence always leaves a blight on others. They may be winning and attractive. They may come in the guise of friendship and wear the garb of innocence, but they have absorbed the poison of evil until their very breath is deadly. One cannot be with them, accepting their friendship, or coming under their influence, without being hurt by them. The sweet flowers of purity wither in their presence. There are men and

women whose merest touch is defiling, who carry moral blight for other lives wherever they go.

How can we hope to live unhurt in this world so full of evil and danger? This is one of the most serious problems of Christian living. Yet it is possible for us to do it through the grace and help of Christ. We can never do it without Christ, but we are assured that he can keep us. One inspired word tells us that he is able to keep us from stumbling, and to set us before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy. The secret of safety lies, therefore, in staying ever in the keeping of Christ.

We miss much of the comfort we should get from Christ by narrowing our thought of his redeeming work. This was not all wrought on the cross, when he there gave himself for us. Comfort should come to us from the knowledge that he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. That is, he met every form of temptation and of evil, and was victorious. This assures us, first, of his sympathy with us in all our temptations — he knows what the struggle

means. Then, having himself overcome, he is able to help us to overcome.

We should never forget that Jesus Christ is living. He is our personal friend, with us in every battle. Too often this element of faith is wanting in our experience. We look back to the cross for help, while our help is close beside us. Moses endured as seeing him who is invisible. He did not see God — no eye can see him; but it was as if he saw him. His faith made God as real to him as if God were actually visible to his sight. If we have such faith in the living Christ no temptation can ever overcome us; we shall be more than conquerors through him that loved us.

The trouble with us oftentimes is, however, that we forget Christ, and then we fall. If we would always believe that he is with us, and then always remember it, we should not fall in temptations. When Frederick Arnold was writing the life of F. W. Robertson he went to Brighton to talk with Robertson's friends, to find incidents for his biography. Among other places, he went to a bookseller's shop, and

learned that the proprietor had been a constant attendant upon Robertson's ministry and had in his parlor a picture of the great preacher. The bookseller said to Mr. Arnold, "Do you see that picture? Whenever I am tempted to do a mean thing I run back here and look at it. Then I cannot do the mean thing. Whenever I feel afraid of some difficulty or some obstacle I come and look into those eyes, and I go out strong for my struggle."

If the mere picture of the great preacher had such a power over this humble man, how much more power will a vision of the Christ have in helping us to overcome temptation! If always in the moment of danger we would run to Christ and look into his face we could not commit the sin. This is one of the great secrets of meeting and overcoming temptation.

Thus temptation may be so met as to be transformed into a help, so met at least as to be compelled to yield up a blessing to the victor. We are stronger for having overcome. Then the experience of struggle and victory prepares us to be guide, helper, and friend to others in

their desert of temptation. But we should never forget that only in Christ can we overcome. He who enters the terrible conflict without the aid of the strong Son of God can only fail and perish on the field.

CHAPTER XV.

AT THE FULL PRICE.

Only a life of barren pain
Wet with sorrowful tears for rain ;
Warmed sometimes by a wandering gleam
Of joy that seemed but a happy dream.
A life as common and brown and bare
As the box of earth in the window there ;
Yet it bore at last the precious bloom
Of a perfect soul in a narrow room —
Pure as the snowy leaves that fold
Over the flower's heart of gold.

HENRY VAN DYKE.

WE must pay the full price for all we get in the market of life. There are no auctions and bargain tables where things of real value are sold for a trifle. Of course there are cheap things offered, things sometimes, too, which seem to be very valuable ; but those who buy them discover sooner or later that they are only tinsel, tawdry things, whose brightness is gone in a moment, and that in taking them, even at so cheap a rate, they have been sadly cheated.

We cannot buy real diamonds for a mere song ; we must pay their full value to get them. That which costs nothing is worth nothing.

It is so in education. Not infrequently do we see advertisements of quick methods of reaching high attainments — a language, or a science, or an art, in twelve lessons. But only the foolish and indolent are lured to believe in such royal roads to anything worth while.

Some students try to get through school or college easily. They may succeed in a way, too, by using keys and interlinears, and by practising deceptions of various kinds. They may pass their examinations after a fashion, and get through, being graduated at length with their class. They may boast of their shrewdness in eluding the keen discernment of their teachers, but the harm of it all is done to themselves. They are the losers, not the teachers. It is themselves they have cheated. They think they have got something for nothing. No, they have got nothing for nothing. Their diploma is only a lie — there is nothing in them to correspond with its flattering statements.

And nothing worse can happen to any one than to be taken by others for what he is not. Sooner or later the truth must be known, and when it is discovered that a man's certificates are false, that there is nothing in him to justify them, the revelation is very humiliating.

We need along the years of our life every item and detail of preparation that is brought within our reach in our school and training days. He who fails to use his opportunities, to make ready in every possible way for the calling he is to pursue, is preparing mortification and failure for himself in the days when in the stress of life's duty he shall find himself wanting. "A lesson missed in boyhood is a chance for disaster in future years." A whole curriculum missed is preparation for a career of inefficiency and dishonor. It is fatal folly to chuckle over getting through college without hard study. The man who does the chuckling is to be pitied, not congratulated. A true education can be got only by paying the full price. That which is worth having we can get only by hard, patient, persistent study.

Or take knowledge, culture. Every true-hearted man desires to be intelligent. But there is only one way to win this attainment — you must pay the full price. Indolence never yet won it. You cannot pick it up as one may find a diamond lying on the street and appropriate it for his enriching. The gold must be dug out of the depths of the rock, dug out grain by grain, dug out, too, by your own hands. It is wealth one cannot get by inheritance, as men get farms and money and stocks for which they have never toiled. It is a treasure which no one can give unto us, however willing he might be to do it. We must gather it for ourselves, must pick the precious metal out of the hard rocks with our own pick.

A rich man can become possessor of many things by paying for them. Men are glad to work for him to get his gold. It is said that with money in abundance there is nothing one cannot buy. But though he were willing to pay out his millions for it, a man cannot get knowledge, intelligence, culture, wisdom, for money. These are treasures which he can make his own

only by long, diligent, unwearied, unresting study. Nothing less than the full price will buy these attainments. Nor can there be any vicariousness in this matter. No one can take upon himself the toil, the study, the patient research, the self-denying discipline, and then give us the benefits, the results. Every man must bear his own burden, must pay the price for himself.

Another prize that can be got only by paying for it its full value is character. Many people have fine dreams of moral and spiritual beauty which never become anything more than dreams, because they will not work them out in pain, struggle, and self-restraint. Here is an incident from a private letter just received :

“One day, lately, one of my little music pupils, an old-fashioned, sweet little girl about nine years old, was playing scales and octaves, when she turned to me and said, ‘Oh, Miss Graham, my hands are so tired!’

“I said, ‘Never mind, Norma ; just try to play them once or twice more. The longer you practise them, the stronger your hands will grow, so that after a while you will not feel it at all.’

"She turned the gentle little face weariedly to me as she said: 'Miss Graham, it seems as if everything that strengthens hurts!'

"I gave her something else, but I thought: 'Yes, my dear little girl, everything that strengthens hurts.'"

The child was right. It is true in music, it is true in all art, it is true in the making of character; everything that strengthens hurts, costs pain and self-denial. We must die to live. We must crucify the flesh in order that we may find spiritual gains.

Persons sometimes think that religion imparts qualities of character, traits of disposition, elements of spiritual beauty, without any cost of effort to him who receives these gifts. But it is not thus that even Christ helps us in the making of our life. He came to give life and he gives it abundantly to all who will take it. It cost him, too, to bring this blessing of life within our reach—he died that we might live. He did not merely bring heaven's gifts down to earth as one might bring flowers, and scatter them at our feet. He paid the full price for the

blessings which he bestows. Nor, while they are free gifts to us, can we pick them up as we would flowers. It costs to become a friend of Christ. His followers are transformed — old things pass away, and all things become new. Those who believe on him are fashioned into his image. But these blessings do not come easily. The heavenly graces are not put into our life as one might hang up lovely pictures on the walls to adorn a home. They can become ours only through our own experience. They must be wrought into our life in a sense by our own hands. We must work out our own salvation, although it is God that worketh in us both to will and to work.

For example, patience is not put into any one's life as one brings in a piece of new furniture. You cannot merely accept patience as a gift from God. The spirit of patience is put into your heart when you admit Christ into your life, but it is only an inspiration, a heavenly vision, a divine impulse, as yet. It is yours to accept this inspiration, and let it rule in your heart. It is yours to take this heavenly vision,

and make it a reality in your own life. This can be done only through long and watchful self-discipline. Patience is a lesson to be learned. Christ is the teacher, but you are the scholar, and it is the scholar who must learn the lesson. Not even Christ can learn it for you to spare you the effort. Nor can it be made an easy lesson for you even by the divine gentleness. It costs to grow patient, and you must pay the price yourself.

The same is true of all the elements of a noble and worthy character. They come from God — they are parts of the life of God brought down and incarnated in us. But they can enter into our life only through our own co-working with the divine Spirit.

The same principle applies to preparation for being of use to others, for being true helpers of our fellows. We must learn before we can teach, and there is only one school, the school of experience, of self-discipline, in which we can get the lessons. The only true poets are those who have learned in cost of pain and tears the songs which they sing for us. The only books

on life worth reading are those whose sentences have been spelled out word by word in the school of struggle. One writes,

“ Will you seek it? Will you brave it?
'T is a strange and solemn thing,
Learning long before your teaching,
Listening long before your preaching,
Suffering before you sing.
And the songs that echo longest,
Deepest, fullest, truest, strongest,
With your life-blood you will write.”

But we should not shrink from life's lofty attainments because it costs us so much to reach them. Rather, we should determine to live only for the best, whatever the cost. He throws his life away who is willing to take only the easy prizes, who is not ready to pay the price of the nobler, better, worthier, diviner things that are set before him. Young people should scorn ever to be satisfied with a life of self-indulgence. The great Teacher said that he who saveth his life shall lose it. He meant the man who withholds himself from hard toil, self-denial, and service, who will do only easy things. He said

further that he who loses his life, that is, who lavishes it in duty, who shrinks from no cost, no labor, no sacrifice, in obeying love's behests, saves it. The only way to make life truly worth while is to empty it out, as Christ emptied out his most precious life for God and for the world. Only the grain of wheat which falls into the ground and dies grows up into beauty and fruitfulness. The grain which is kept warm and dry and safe comes to nothing.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BLESSING OF HARDNESS.

Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go!
Be our joys three parts pain!
Strive and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge
the throe!

ROBERT BROWNING.

It is related of a New England farmer that he put all his combativeness into a rough farm in Massachusetts and made it one of the best. Once a friend said to him, "I should think that with your love of farming you would like to have a more productive soil to deal with—in some Western State, for instance."

"I should hate farming in the West," he said vigorously. "I should hate to put my spade into the ground where it did not hit against a rock."

There are many men who would find no

pleasure in life if it were only and always easy. Their chief delight is experienced in meeting obstacles and overcoming them. A hindrance in their path arouses the best that is in them in the effort to master it.

It is true in a measure of all good life that it needs antagonism or struggle to develop it. He is really not the most fortunate boy who has everything done for him, who has no hardship to endure, no difficulty to encounter, no obstacle to surmount. He is envied by those who lack what he possesses of worldly fortune. Many another boy sighs and says, "If I only had his chance I would make my life worth while. But there is no use in my trying to make anything noble of myself with my limitations and hindrances." Yet this boy of fortune is by no means to be envied. Only soft, enervated life can come from such pampering.

The boy who lacks the ease, plenty, and luxury is the one with the really fine chance in life. The necessity which sends him to his tasks and keeps him at them early and late is a most friendly condition in his life, although he

may think it just the reverse. To-day one said of her brother, "He wants a position, but he says it must be one with short hours and light duties. He would like to go to work at nine and quit at three." Yet that same fine young fellow's father has been an honest, hard-working bricklayer for forty years, with days of ten hours or longer. It was in such toiling that this good man, now growing old, built up his worthy character and provided for his family, this boy included. The son, however, has no thought of being his father's successor in such life. He must have easy work and short hours.

Time will tell what kind of manhood he will make for himself. It looks now as if he would be of small account in the world. He has not found his nine-to-three-o'clock place, and at the age of thirty is hanging about the house, idle, wearing good clothes, and smoking cigarettes, while his father, at sixty, is toiling day after day at his bricklaying, finding it hard to earn enough to support his family and keep his gentleman son in easy indolence. It needs no prophet to tell the kind of man that will be

evolved from such a life of self-indulgence as this young man has elected.

Hardness is the only true school of good life. The father who tries to save his son from struggle and work is irreparably hurting the boy's character and crippling him so that he cannot run the race of life nor fight its battles with any measure of success. The men who stand up among other men, strong, wise, victorious, are the men who have been brought up in the school of hardness. They learn in the fields of active life how to live. They knit thews of strength for themselves in doing life's tasks and bearing its burdens. They learn lessons in failures.

Said the president of one of our great universities, in addressing his students, "Show me the young man who has had failure and has now won his way to success, and I will back him." A man who has never had any failure, whose course has been one of unbroken prosperity, has not the resources of strength and endurance stored away in his life that he has who has suffered defeats and then has risen again and

pressed forward to victory. The latter has been growing manhood while he was suffering earthly defeat. A true man never can be really defeated. He may fail in business, but not in character. According to the English poet he is

“ One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, tho’ right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.”

The angels must watch with eager interest the man who is going through hard struggle which tries his spirit—they watch to see that he endures. They do not try to make the struggle less hard, but in the moment of faintness and wavering — if there be such a moment — they whisper cheer and encouragement, that the man may not faint. We have a beautiful illustration of this in our Lord’s experience in Gethsemane. Angels came — not to take the cup away, but to strengthen him that he might not sink down in the darkness.

There is a wonderful Scripture word which shows the divine interest in human struggle, and

tells us how and when the interest is shown: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." God does not promise to save us from struggle and hardship, for in no other school could he make men of us. Nor does he promise to make the hard way easier for us, for that would be to lower the standard of attainment and of character which he has set for us. But he has promised, when the stress is growing too sore, to give us strength, that we fail not.

Life is full of sudden changes in which hardness comes unexpectedly to many persons. By some rude experience they are tossed out of the cosey nest in which they had been so happily nourished, and without warning are called to endure the world's cold and hardness almost unaided by human help. There are many young women, for example, who have been brought up in luxurious circumstances, never

knowing a care, never required to give a moment's thought to the providence of their own life, as to what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or wherewithal they shall be clothed, who by the loss of their father have both shelter and support taken away. They must now leave the quiet refuge, in which they have been so gently reared, and go forth to face the storms and struggles of life for themselves. Instead of being cared for and ministered unto by strong, thoughtful love, their own hands must now find employment in which to earn bread for themselves, and perhaps for other home-loved ones as well.

There is something startling in the first experience of such a condition. No wonder that many young women are dismayed as they face the new responsibility. Well is it for them if in the happy days that are gone their hands have been trained to do something which they can now take up as a means of livelihood. No girl, however luxurious her home, however adequately provided for against misfortune she may seem to be, should fail to learn something,

some art, some handicraft, by which if adversity should ever come she may earn her own living. Such a preparation is like a life-preserver on the great ocean steamer. If disaster does come it is the one hope of safety. A woman who is conscious of her ability to provide for herself if it should become necessary is not afraid of life's vicissitudes and is not overwhelmed by calamity when it comes, leaving her with nothing.

In any case, however, it is a serious crisis in a young girl's life when she is compelled to go into the world to fight its battles for herself. What can she do? How can she keep herself gentle and sweet amid the roughness and bitterness which she must experience? How can she, with her delicate strength, fight the battles and endure the struggles amid which she must now live? Will she not beneath the tread of the relentless forces of evil be crushed like a lily in the street under trampling hoofs?

Yet one of the most wonderful triumphs of Christian life is seen just at this point in the thousands of young women who live victori-

ously in their hard condition, passing through the ordeal unhurt, with character enriched and developed into nobler beauty. Instead of falling in the battle or coming out with beauty tarnished, they emerge more than conquerors, with heaven's light in their eye. Instead of losing the sweet bloom of their womanliness in their rough encounters with the world, they pass through all the strange experiences, not only with purity and delicacy unsullied, but with transfigured loveliness.

We naturally pity those whom we see thrust out into the world to bear burdens too heavy for their frail shoulders, and to face circumstances of hardship and peril; but our pity is changed to admiration as we watch them and see with what quiet courage they pass through it all. What, it had seemed to us, must destroy all that was lovely in them has really made nobler women of them.

A thoughtful writer has said: "The great question whether we shall live to any purpose or not, whether we shall grow strong in mind and heart, or be weak and pitiable, depends on

nothing so much as our use of adverse circumstances. Outward evils are designed to school our passions and to rouse our faculties and virtues into intenser action. Sometimes they seem even to create new powers. Difficulty is the element and resistance the true work of man. Self-culture never goes on so fast as when embarrassed circumstances, the opposition of men or the elements, unexpected changes of the times, or other forms of suffering, instead of disheartening, throw us on our inward resources, turn us for strength to God, clear up to us the great purpose of life, and inspire calm resolution."

We are always at school in this world. God is teaching us the things we need to learn. He wants us to make all we can of our life. The lessons are not easy — sometimes they are very hard. But the hardest lessons are the best, for they bring out in us the finest qualities, if only we learn them well. Those, therefore, who find themselves in what may seem adverse conditions, compelled to face hardship, endure opposition, and pass through struggle, should

quietly accept the responsibility, and, trusting in Christ for guidance and strength, go firmly and courageously forward, conscious that they have now a chance to grow strong and develop in themselves the qualities of worthy and noble character.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MINISTRY OF HINDRANCES.

"O life, so full of storm and stress,
O bitter wind, Euroclydon,
That strews the shore with shipwrecked hopes,
What shall our sad hearts rest upon?
Come, blessed angel of the Lord,
Stand thou beside us, calm and strong;
Hide thou our lives with Christ in God,
And change our sorrows to a song."

SOME people are vexed and disheartened by obstacles and difficulties. They look upon them as hindrances in the way of their progress. To them the ideal life would be one without opposition or antagonism, with only favoring circumstances, with nothing to impede its movement, with no burdensome tasks, no struggles, no hardships, no disappointments.

But even if such a life were possible he would be most unfortunate who should experience it. None of us know or dream how much we owe to the resistances we meet. If learning were

easy our mental powers would never be developed. If work were not necessary our bodies would never grow into vigor and strength. If we were put into this world to do nothing, with no responsibility, with no share of the world's burdens to carry, just to be cared for as the birds are, we should never be anything but children in character and experience. If it were not necessary for us to choose between right and wrong, and good and evil, we should have only the untried inexperience of innocence, with no moral vigor, no tested and disciplined strength. In all life growth is attained through exertion, effort, struggle. The easy career makes nothing of itself. Antagonism, at which many chafe, really provides golden opportunities for development.

It is important that we understand well this law of life. There are those who always regard hindrances as evils, as real antagonisms. Some persons even begin to doubt God's love when they find themselves face to face with hard conditions, when they are called to meet losses or sore trials. They are discouraged at finding

it so hard to be faithful to God and loyal to duty. Really, however, hard things are tokens of God's favor. If our best friend is he who tries to make something of us, not he who would make things easy for us, surely God's friendship is shown in the experiences in which the man or woman in us shall be developed and trained. When God makes it necessary for us to struggle, to bear burdens, to fight battles, to put all our powers to the test, he is giving us a chance to grow.

It is worth our while, therefore, to consider the meaning of obstacles and antagonisms, as they come into our experience. They are not the work of an adversary. Certainly they are not angels of God standing in the way to turn us back, like the angel that confronted Balaam in the narrow path. We are not to regard them as meeting us to cut off our progress, to hinder our advance. At least many of the opposing things which we encounter are meant to be overcome — that is why they come to meet us. They hold in themselves secrets of blessing, of good, of strength, of experience, which we are to take

from them in our own victory over them. The best things of life are to be won on fields of struggle. In the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation the glorious honors which are offered are all prizes for victors. In every case it is "to him that overcometh" that the blessings are promised. They lie beyond battlefields, and we must fight to get them. Robert Browning asks:

Why comes temptation but for man to meet
And master and make crouch beneath his foot,
And so be pedestalled in triumph?

We should miss many of life's best things, therefore, if we regarded all the obstacles in our path as providential limits set to our progress. Instead of being limits they are intended to be passed. They hide within themselves good gifts of God for us which we shall miss if we make no struggle to master them. Nothing really worth while can be got easily. We must pay a high price for all life's best things. It is the treasures that cost us most that most enrich us. The finest, purest gold lies deepest and is

hardest to find and dig out. We must make sure, therefore, first of all, that the obstacle which seems to block our path is not one which God really means us to master, taking from it its spoil of blessing. The old story of Jacob's wrestling illustrates this. It was not an enemy who met the patriarch that night by the Jabbok, although he seemed to oppose him and soon grappled with him as in a struggle of life and death. The wrestler was God's messenger and he had a blessing for Jacob, but it could be got only in a victorious struggle. All night the contest went on. At last Jacob prevailed, not by physical strength, but really through being defeated. He went lame and limping from the place of wrestling, but there was a new light in his eyes and a new power in his heart; he had got a blessing in his struggle.

This story is a parable of all life's antagonisms. They seem to be enemies, intent on doing us harm; but really they are our friends, bearing divine gifts and blessings for us which, however, we can get only in victorious wrestlings. Ofttimes, too, we are lamed in the

fierce contest, but the shrinking of our natural strength is the mark of new power in us. Limping Jacob was Israel now, a prince with God.

But not always is our wrestling victorious. There are in every earnest life obstacles which prove impassable barriers in our course. Strive as we may, we cannot surmount them. The door is shut in our face, and we cannot open it. Human strength avails not to cut its way through the lines of environment. We are defeated, and can do nothing but submit.

Now, the question is, Are these unavailing efforts real failures? Have we sinned in not succeeding? Ought we not to have been victorious? Is there shame in our being driven back or held at bay? The answer is, that if we have done our best to win, and still come short, we may accept our failure as God's will for us. Then we shall find that the blessing which we thought to get in overcoming becomes ours in defeat. That is, God's withholding from us what we sought was a better good than the granting of the desired thing would have been. Perhaps it was some earthly favor or treasure

we craved. If we had succeeded in getting it, it might not have proved a real blessing after all. Perhaps we were meant to get the blessing in the striving and then in the discipline of submission when after all the prize was not grasped.

If we believe in Providence—that there is a Hand moving amid all life's affairs, so directing and adjusting them that for each one who loves God good is continually wrought out—we find comfort in the thought that when we fail it is our Father who suffers us not to succeed; that it is he who sets up and bars the gate in the path we sought so eagerly to enter. We may certainly believe this of hindrances which are invincible—inevitableness is clearly God's will for us. We may believe, also, that the true blessing is, then, in the not having, rather than, as we supposed, in the having.

Some flowers have poison mingled in their cup of fragrance; to pluck the flower would be to breathe death. The place we tried so hard to win, and which we imagined would have been ideal in its honor and opportunity, would have

proved a nest of thorns, with complications and perplexities which would have made our life miserable. The money we hoped to have made would have brought more luxury and ease to us, but we would have lost something of our spiritual earnestness if we had got it. With too many people the growth of worldly possessions is balanced by a corresponding loss of heavenly longings.

Life is oftentimes long enough to allow good men in later years to thank God for experiences which in earlier years they wept over as grievous disappointments and irreparable losses. The ploughshare seems to work hopeless destruction as it cuts its way across the field. But it is not long before it is seen that what seemed ruin is indeed a process in the renewal of life and beauty. By and by a golden harvest waves on the field.

We have found a great secret of peace when we have learned to see the hand of God in the withholding of what we sought and in the taking away of our cherished joys as well as in the giving of favors. Job said it was the Lord that

took away his property and his children, and in this belief he rested and sang. We may be sure that nothing can be lost in God's hands. When he takes our joys and treasures from us they are safe in his keeping.

“ God keeps a niche
In heaven to hold our idols; and albeit
He brake them to our faces and denied
That our close kisses should impair their white,
I know we shall behold them, raised, complete,
The dust swept from their beauty ” —

and that after a while he will give them back to us in a way in which we can keep them forever.

Of another thing we may be sure also, when we see God's hand in the taking from us of the things we love,—that there is compensation, some better thing in place of that which is removed. We may be poorer for what has been taken away, but what God does for his children he does in love. We need not trouble ourselves to seek reasons—it is better for us to believe so confidently in our Father's love that not a shadow of doubt or fear shall ever pass over us, whatever the disappointment or the failure of

hope may be. When God shuts a door it would better be shut — we could find no true good in forcing it open. When God takes anything from us it is better so — let us not doubt it. Some day it will all be plain to us — part of it in this world, no doubt, and all of it from the hill-tops of heaven.

We need never fear that God in his love mars any of our blessings. Sometimes we are tempted to think that he does. He gives us something very sweet, and just when we have begun to understand its value, and when it has become necessary to our happiness, almost to our very life, he takes it away. In our deep sense of loss we say we cannot see how there can be goodness or love in such taking-away of a gift. We cannot see, but we may safely trust God—who both gave and then took away. When we get the blessing again it will be all the better for having been withdrawn for a time.

“ He lends not; but gives to the end,
As he loves to the end. If it seem
That he draws back a gift, comprehend
'T is to add to it rather — amend,

And finish it up to your dream, —
Or keep—as a mother will toys
Too costly, though given by herself,
Till the room shall be stiller from noise,
And the children more fit for such joys,
Kept over their heads on a shelf. ”

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN TIME OF DEFEAT.

"Have you missed in your aim? Well, the mark is still shining;
Did you faint in the race? Well, take breath for the next;
Did the clouds drive you back? But see yonder their lining;
Were you tempted and fell? Let it serve for a text."

THE decision of the judges in any contest tells where the honor goes. Then another testing begins — a testing of character. The contestants themselves are on trial now. By the way they bear victory and defeat respectively they reveal what sort of men they are.

A young university student writes to a friend of an intercollegiate contest in oratory in which he ranked fourth instead of first, as he had hoped to rank. He had been chosen to represent his university and he feels the chagrin of defeat, not so much for himself, as because his fellow-students had intrusted to him the honor of their institution, and he had failed to win the coveted laurel for them. Yet he writes in a

manful way of the matter. There is not in his letter a syllable of complaint that any unfairness was shown, not a hint that the decision of the judges was unjust, not a word in depreciation of the merits of the successful competitor. Though disappointed himself, he shows that he can be glad in another's success even at the cost of his own, and writes in a strain that does him high honor.

We must all meet disappointment and experience defeat in some way and at some time or other. Life is full of contests in which many contend, but only one wins the prize. Both in the case of the winner and also of the loser there is a fine opportunity for noble, beautiful behavior. Sometimes the victorious contestant bears himself in such a way as to tarnish or sadly blot the honor he has won. He shows a spirit of vanity and self-conceit, he is puffed up by his success, he glories in his achievement. Thus the successful contestant, though wearing his laurels, may suffer a far worse defeat in himself than if he had failed in the competition. He has failed in manliness and in true nobility

of spirit, and that is the saddest kind of failure one can suffer.

There is a Bible word which says that he who rules his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city. Self-mastery is the finest heroism and the highest achievement in life. The winner in the race adds yet greater honor to his successes when he bears himself worthily, without boasting, with quiet modesty and humility, with delicate regard to the feelings of those he has defeated.

On the other hand, the loser in the contest robs his defeat of all humiliation or dishonor when he meets it in a manly and generous way. Too often, however, the man who fails in the contest fails yet more seriously in the enduring of his defeat. He challenges the rightfulness of the decision. He speaks disparagingly of his successful competitor and of his performance. He intimates that undue influence was brought to bear upon the judges. Or he sulks, showing hurt feelings, as if he had been deeply wronged. In these or in other ways he suffers a second defeat far more humiliating and dishonoring than that by

which he lost the prize he sought — a defeat of manliness, of character, which shows him sadly wanting in some of the finest qualities of life.

There are considerations which lessen the sting of defeat, when a man has really done his best and then has to permit another to bear away the honor which he sought to win. There are many contestants and only one can be successful. From the beginning it is known that all but one of those striving so earnestly must be disappointed. It is no harder for one to be defeated than it would be for another. A generous man rejoices in another's honoring. There is a Scripture teaching which bids us prefer one another in honor — that is, be more than willing to have the other bear the honor instead of ourself.

It is by no means an easy lesson to learn, to rejoice in another's advancement when it means that we must accept the lower place. Yet when it has been learned it brings sweet joy into the heart. The meek shall inherit the earth, said our Lord. Meekness does not lessen the earnestness of the contestant. He

does his best. He puts his whole soul into the struggle, determined to win if it is in his power. He concedes the same right, however, to his fellow-competitors. If, then, one of them surpasses him, why should he indulge in bitter thoughts or feelings? If he had been victorious, he would have expected his companions to concede the honor to him cheerfully and to rejoice in his victory. Now that another has won the prize, why should he not be magnanimous and be glad in his comrade's honor? The Golden Rule applies here.

Nothing is more beautiful than to see a man who has been fairly defeated hurrahing for his successful rival. This is immeasurably better than if he were to get angry, or to charge unfairness, or to show bitterness. One relates,

“ He lost the game: no matter for that —
He kept his temper and swung his hat
To cheer the winner. A better way
Than to lose his temper and win the day.”

Thus there is a twofold testing going on in all competitions among men — a testing of ability, strength, or skill, as the case may be, and a

testing of the man himself. In the way he meets defeat he shows what manner of man he is. Any one can sing and be cheerful when he has been successful. But to be outstript by another and still to keep sweet, saying no unseemly word, remaining glad and songful, requires far more courage and strength and is a much better proof of fine character.

We are in this world, not merely to get on, but to get upward. There are too many people, however, who think of success only as getting on in worldly ways and who have no higher standard. Yet nothing is sadder than to see a man growing richer every day, advancing in his rank, according to the world's standard, and yet in his real life becoming every day less noble, less worthy. Every experience ought to make us somewhat better, ought to bring out in our character some new shade of beauty, and develop in us some new phase of Christlikeness. The man who cannot endure defeat is not in good condition to meet life's struggles. Nothing can be better for him than defeat after defeat until he has learned his lesson.

Every pathway has its downs as well as its ups. When a man is climbing toward a mountain-top he usually begins far away to make the ascent. First come the foot-hills and the lower ranges with valleys between. The upward-rising is not continuous. Sometimes he is going upward toward the glittering summit, and then he turns downward into a valley. Again he ascends and then descends. But all the while he is really climbing upward, each succeeding hill-top being a little higher than the preceding one, until, by and by, he gains the highest, the shining peak, the goal of his long and painful journey.

So it is in a true life. The course is never a continuous ascent. We advance and then we must turn our faces downward for a time, when we seem to be losing — going backward. But if we are living as we should live, truly and victoriously, we are always really advancing. Each day finds us a little farther on in the things that are worthy and noble than we were yesterday. It is possible to seem to fail and yet to be victorious in the higher sense. A

man may lose money and yet gain in character. His business may not be successful, yet if meanwhile he has kept himself unspotted from the world and has lived righteously and honestly before God, he has been a prosperous man. .

It is not in the things one does in life that the measure of one's advancement is infallibly registered. The true registering is within, in what takes place in one's own heart. The final question is not, What have you done? but, What has been done in you? Are you, whether in failures or in successes, in defeats or in victories, in adversity or in prosperity, ever growing truer, gentler, better, more unselfish, more loving? That should be the outcome of all life's experiences. It is possible to be victorious in all competition and successful in all endeavor, to be rising steadily among men in the things by which the world rates men, and yet to be losing continually in the things which belong to moral and spiritual beauty. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control—these are the qualities in which we must grow if we would be really advancing

in life as God sees us. And it is possible for a man to be making progress in these qualities of his heart-life even in the midst of earthly failure.

Indeed, it is true that men oftentimes learn their best lessons in the school of defeat. Nature in all of us needs to be disciplined before it reaches its best and ripest, and discipline is not achieved usually without many lessons in humility. We are naturally proud, vain, and self-confident, and we need nothing so much as experiences which will reveal to us our own weakness and limitation. Continuous success and victoriousness in our own life would only inflate still more our miserable self-conceit and nourish in us qualities which would only mar the beauty of our character. The best school for us is the school of defeat, wherein we are made aware of our weaknesses and cured of our wretched vanity and self-conceit. Peter's terrible failure made a man of him. The self-confidence with which he entered his temptation was left behind in the dust where he had fallen, and he came again, sifted indeed, a smaller man in his own estimation, but a far better man.

Yet defeat does not always bring discipline. Men do not always rise from the dust the stronger. Sometimes failure leads to disheartenment which darkens into despair. All depends on the way one meets the bitter experience. Only when the spirit is unconquerable does one rise again from defeat, humbled and chastened, but not broken, ready for new struggles. But if we are even dimly conscious of the splendor and glory of the life within us, of its divine possibilities, and of the help of God that is ever within our reach, we should never for a moment despair, nor regard any failure as final. We should learn our lesson and go quietly and firmly forward to the new struggles that await us, confident that in the end we shall be more than conquerors through Christ who loves us. Some one says : " The besetting sin may become the guardian angel. Let us thank God that we can say it ! Yes, this sin that has sent me weary-hearted to bed, and desperate in heart to morning work, can be conquered. I do not say annihilated, but, better than that, conquered, captured, and transfigured into a friend ; so that

•

I, at last, shall say, ' My temptation has become my strength ; for to the very fight with it I owe my force.' "

“ Noble souls, through dust and heat,
Rise from disaster and defeat
The stronger,
And, conscious still of the divine
Within them, lie on earth supine
No longer.”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DUTY OF FAULT-FINDING.

"For this true nobleness I seek in vain,
In woman and in man I find it not;
I almost weary of my earthly lot,
My life-springs are dried up with burning pain.
Thou find'st it not? I pray thee look again,
Look inward, through the depths of thine own soul.
How is it with thee? Art thou sound and whole?
Doth narrow search show thee no earthly stain?
Be noble! and the nobleness that lies
In other men, sleeping, but never dead,
Will rise in majesty to meet thine own;
Then wilt thou see it gleam in many eyes,
Then will light around thy path be shed,
And thou wilt nevermore be sad and lone."

THERE is a duty of fault-finding. Perhaps, indeed, most persons are diligent enough in this department of duty, and yet there may be need of a word of exhortation on the subject.

No doubt there is fault-finding enough in the world, such as it is. Some people do little else. Nothing pleases them. It would seem to be a

pity they had not been consulted before the world was made, for there is nothing on which they could not have suggested some improvement. They find fault with God's works and with his providence. They criticise the wisdom that puts briers on rose bushes. They find fault with other people — with their dress, their manner, their piety, their mode of worship, their work, their speech; nothing escapes their criticism.

All this is unlovely. It is presumptuous — what right have we to question the works of the divine Creator? What surpassing wisdom have we that makes us able to sit in judgment on all the world, lightly condemning all others, even the best men of our times? Who made us a judge of our fellows?

Yet there is a duty of fault-finding. The Master himself teaches it. In the Sermon on the Mount he makes it very plain. We must note carefully, however, where the duty begins. We are to look first after our own faults. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that

is in thine own eye?" The form of this question suggests that we are naturally inclined to pay more attention to flaws and blemishes in others than in ourselves, and also that a very small fault—a mere mote of fault—in another may seem larger to us than a blemish many times greater in ourselves.

Of course, it is easier to see other people's faults than our own. Our eyes are set in our head in such a way that we can look at our neighbor better than at ourself. Yet we all have faults of our own. Most of us have quite enough of them to occupy our thought, to the exclusion of our neighbor's faults, if only we would give them our attention.

Really, too, our own faults ought to interest us more than our neighbor's because they are our own, and being our own, we are responsible for them. We do not have to answer for any other one's sins, but for our own we must answer, and the responsibility for getting rid of them is ours. "Every man must bear his own burden." No faithful friend, no wise teacher, can cure our faults for us. If ever they are

taken out of our life it must be by our own decision, our own faith, our own firm, persistent effort. The prayer of others may avail to bring divine help, and the sympathy and encouragement of others may make us stronger in our struggle, but the real work is our own.

Then before we are ready to deal in an effective way with our neighbor's sins we must get measurably right ourself. That is what Jesus tells us: "Cast out first the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." There is little use in our reproving our brother for a fault when with half an eye he can see the same or some other fault twice as large in us. This is one of the principal causes of the smallness of our influence in our witnessing for Christ. Our lips are sealed by the consciousness that our own life is not what it should be. Or if we speak men sneer and say that we need not preach to them while we live as we do. We must be holy ourselves if we would help to make others holy.

It is a fact that the faults which we usually see and criticise in others are the very faults which are the most marked in us. Tennyson said that if he had been one of the wise men of Greece, and had been asked for a wise saying, he would have given this: "Every man imputes himself." He meant that in our judgment of others we show a miniature of ourself. If this is true we should be careful in judging others, for in doing so we are only revealing our own faults. This should lead us also to close scrutiny of our own life, to get rid of the things in us which are not beautiful.

But we also owe to others the duty of fault-finding. Among the old Levitical laws was this one, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." Jesus also implied that after we had cast the beam out of our own eye, we should help our brother to get the mote out of his eye. If we see that a friend is falling into some bad habit which will impair his usefulness or perhaps in the end bring ruin upon his life, we are not faithful to him if we remain silent and allow him to go on un-

warned. If he should perish in the end, and perish because we have failed to warn him of his fault or sin, some measure of blame would rest upon us forever.

No other duty, however, is more delicate and more difficult than that of fault-finding in such cases. It often breaks a friendship, costing us our friend. There are those who will even implore us to tell them their faults, yet who, when we have yielded to their entreaty and gently mentioned to them something which we believe to be a fault, are offended. Our faithfulness has made them our enemies. It would seem that there are few friendships which will endure such a test. Usually it is better not to tell another his faults, directly at least.

In any case there is need of great wisdom. We must be sure, first of all, that it is love that prompts us to speak of the fault. Too often it is in anger and in jealousy that we do it. A man loses his temper with his friend and then tells him all the bad he knows or imagines of him. This is never the true way, and no good can come of it. Unless we can go to our brother

in sincere love, after earnest prayer, and, with a heart truly solicitous for his good, deliver our unpleasant message, telling him of his sin or fault, we would better be silent.

There are some people who habitually see only the faults of others and have no eye for the good in them. These are in no wise fitted to be fault-finders in the good sense. There is a Russian fable of a wise swine named Kavron, which found its way into the courtyard of the king's palace. It saw only the kitchen and the stable. When it came back the mother asked: "Well, Kavron, what have you seen? They say that kings' palaces are filled with wealth and beauty, that there are fine pictures, rich tapestries, and valuable gems everywhere." "Ah, this is all untrue," answered Kavron. "I saw no pictures, no tapestries, no diamonds; only dirt and offal."

This is the way some people look at others' lives. They visit only the kitchen and the stable. They see only the flaws and blemishes, and do not get even a glimpse of the noble things which are within the palace where the man himself

lives. We should train ourselves to look always for the good in others, not for the evil; for the noble things, not for the infirmities and spots. There is far more good than evil in most people, and if we are looking for the good we shall not be so apt to see the evil.

Besides, much of what to us seems fault or blemish is really only an imperfect phase of development in a life. There is an awkward age in many a boy, when it would be most unkind as well as unwise to criticise him; in due time he will pass through it, and will be self-possessed and refined in his bearing. Strength of character is usually an evolution, many of whose processes appear very uncouth and faulty. Childhood and youth are always marked at different periods by unlovely features which are really incident to certain stages of growth, and should not be treated as faults. Unripeness and immaturity are not blemishes in their place; in due time they will give place to ripeness and maturity.

But when we do see in our friends faults which are indeed faults, and which we believe

we ought to try to cure, we should go about it in love, with prayer, and with wise and gentle tact. A gentle, loving way is better than blurt-ing out the criticism, as some brusque people do, abruptly, calling it frankness, saying that they always honestly say what they believe. It may be honest and frank enough, but it is not the Christ-like way. "What did you preach about yesterday?" asked an old clergyman of a young minister, one Monday. "On the judgment," replied the young man. "Did you do it tenderly?" asked the older pastor. We should never speak to others of their sins and faults unless we can do it tenderly.

We need patience, too, and sometimes we must wait a long time for the opportunity to do our duty in this regard, to speak the right word. But the right occasion will come if we wait for it. Harm is done oftentimes by speaking too soon.

Our Master gives us another important counsel on the subject when he says that we must tell our brother his fault "between him and thee alone." If we love him we should seal our lips

to others concerning his faults and go to him with the matter alone. Then the only way we can ever have a right to tell him of his faults is in the name of Christ and as he would do it if he were in our place.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DUTY OF LAUGHTER.

"It is easy enough to be pleasant
When life flows along like a song;
But the man worth while is the man who will smile
When everything goes wrong.

"For the test of the heart is trouble,
And it always comes with the years,
And the smile which is worth the praise of the earth
Is the smile that comes through tears."

THEY tell us that laughter is dying out among men. If so, it is a pity. The Wise Man says there is a time to laugh, that is, a time when laughter is right, when it is a duty, and when it would be wrong not to laugh. Perhaps we have not been accustomed to think of laughter in this way. We regard it as an agreeable exercise, but are not apt to class it among duties, like honesty, or kindness.

It would be a sad thing, however, if laughter should be altogether crowded out of life. There

are other exercises which we could much better afford to lose. Think of a world of human beings with no laughter, men and women wearing everywhere and always grave, serious, solemn faces, with no relaxing of the sternness on any occasion. Think of the laughter of childhood departing from the world, and the laughter of youth,—how dull and dreary life would be!

Laughter has its place in every wholesome, healthy life. A man who never smiles is morbid. He has lost the joy-chords out of his life. He has trained himself to think only of unpleasant things, to look only and always at the dark side. He has accustomed himself so long to sadness that the muscles of his face have become set in hard, fixed lines and cannot relax themselves. His thoughts of life are gloomy, and the gloom has entered his soul and darkened his eyes.

All this is wrong. It is abnormal, unnatural. True, most of us are busy and burdened. Our life is full of serious tasks which fill every moment and give us little time for unbending. Yet hard work should never drive laughter out

of the soul. We should keep a happy heart amid the severest toil. We should sing at our work. We will work better and far more effectively if we keep the music always ringing within our breast. "A sad heart tires in a mile," runs the old song. "The joy of the Lord is your strength," said the Tirshatha to the people, as he urged them to rejoicing. Joy of spirit makes burdens seem lighter and tasks easier. It is probably necessary to require silence in certain establishments where people work together, but it is not the natural way. It would add much to the value of labor if the strokes of toil could be the time-beats of joyous music.

Laughter is a token of a good heart and a good conscience. Shakespeare said some quite uncomplimentary things about the man who has no music in his soul. Where there is no music, all evils nest. Demons do not laugh unless it be the laugh of wicked exultation over the mischief they have wrought, or the laughing sneer at goodness and virtue. Nothing on earth is more beautiful than the merry laugh of child-

hood. It is the bubbling-up of the fountain of innocence and simplicity in the child's heart. It tells of a spirit yet unspoiled by sin, unhurt by the world's evil. Spontaneous, happy laughter tells always of goodness, and the man who never laughs must not blame his fellows if they think there is something wrong with his life, something dark within. If the streams which flow out are only bitter the fountain cannot be sweet.

Even trouble should not quench laughter. Sorrow often rolls like a dark flood over human lives, and it may sometimes seem as if there could be no gladness in the heart thereafter. But however great the grief, joy should live through it. Christian joy does not have its source on the earth, but in heaven, in the everlasting hills. People who live in the valleys amid great mountains have water even in the driest, hottest summer, because they receive their supply from springs which flow out of the mountains and are unaffected by heat or drought. The Christian's springs of joy are perennial, because they flow from under the

throne of God. No matter what goes wrong, we should still sing and be glad.

Along the shore one sometimes comes upon fresh-water springs which bubble up on the edge of the salt sea. The tides roll over them and bury them out of sight for the time, but when the brackish floods ebb again the springs are found sweet as ever. So, after the deepest sorrow should the heart's fountains of joy be found, still pouring out their streams of gladness. Christ says much about his people having his joy, a joy which the world can neither give nor take away. He says, too, that their sorrow shall be turned into joy, meaning that the deepest joy in this world is transformed sorrow, and not the joy which has never known pain.

If, therefore, we are Christians, grief should not crush laughter out of our life. Some people seem to think that it would be disloyalty to their friends who are gone for them ever to be happy again. But this is not true. Of course, there is a sense in which we never get over sorrow. Our life is never the same after sore

bereavement. We carry the marks forever. But they should not be marks of sorrow. There is a beatitude of the Master's which pronounces those who mourn blessed or happy, because they have God's comfort. God's comfort is heaven's joy entering into the human soul. It is not a Lethe which makes men forget pain and loss; it is a benediction which transmutes pain into joy and loss into gain. Sorrow healed by God's wise, skilful treatment leaves no ugly scars, no bleeding wounds. Nothing beautiful is lost in the grief which Christ comforts. The sweetest songs sung on earth are those learned in the darkened room of trial.

The true problem of living is to pass unhurt in our real character through the greatest trials, and to have our life softened, enriched, and refined by every trouble we endure. Therefore, we have not met grief aright if we come out of it with a loss of joyousness. Our songs should be sweeter and our laughter should be gladder, if less hilarious, for a baptism of pain.

“ Why make we moan
For loss that doth enrich us, yet
With upward yearnings of regret?
 Bleaker than unmossed stone
Our lives were but for this immortal gain
Of unstilled longing and inspiring pain!
 As thrills of long-hushed tone
Live in the viol, so our souls grow fine
With keen vibrations from the touch divine
 Of noble natures gone.”

There is a mission for humor. The man who can make others laugh may be a great blessing to his fellows. There are times in one's experience when a bit of fun is better, more a means of grace, than a serious sermon would be. There are times when the best help we can give to a friend is to make him laugh. The Wise Man says:

A merry heart is a good medicine.

A hearty laugh would cure many a sickly feeling, driving away the blues, and changing the whole aspect of life for a man. The gift of bright, cheerful humor is one to be envied. The man who can keep people laughing at the

table is both a promoter of health and a dispenser of happiness.

We may set laughter down, therefore, among Christian duties. Nor is it one of the minor duties. There may be no commandment in the Decalogue, saying: "Thou shalt laugh," but Christ certainly taught that joy is a duty, one of the virtues which every Christian should cultivate. No one now believes the old tradition that Jesus never smiled, but always wept. He must have been a happy-hearted man. St. Paul also makes it very clear in his teachings that we should rejoice always, and that joy is a fruit of the Spirit, an essential quality of the complete Christian life.

It is not hard for young people to laugh; it comes naturally to them. They should cultivate laughter as a Christian grace, never losing the art, nor allowing it to fall into disuse. They should seek always to be cheerful. Living near the heart of Christ, faithfully following his commandments, and obeying conscience, their lives may be always full of gladness and song. Of course they will find thorns in their path and

the sun will not always shine. But there will be ten times more gladness than sorrow in their life, and even the clouds will bring rain with its blessing, and pain will make the song sweeter, if softer. One tells the story thus :

- “ I woke in the night; the stars were hid,
The skies were cold and gray,
My soul grew sick with a nameless fear,
And I scarce had faith to pray.
- “ I thought of the day’s mistakes with tears,
Of wrong that outmeasured right;
When lo! from a rainwashed tree near by
A bird sang in the night,
- “ So soft and so low, so fearlessly,
So full of a glad content,
Of a faith that knew the day would break
Through the wet boughs o’er her bent.
- “ I said to my heart, ‘ Behold, a sign !
Heart, let us read aright,
That faith is easy and hope is sure
To him who sings in the night ! ’ ”

CHAPTER XXI.

MINDING THE RESTS.

Thou, Lord, art the Father of music,
Sweet sounds are a whisper from thee;
Thou hast made thy creation all anthems
Though it singeth them all silently.

F. W. FABER.

SOME people think that rests in life are wasted time. They suppose that every moment should have its work, its activity, its gain, its record of good done. There is a sense in which this is true. Time is made up of golden minutes, not one of which we should suffer to be lost. The Master said that for every idle word that men speak they must give account. This can be no less true of idle minutes or hours. We are to be judged not only by the things we do but by the things we leave undone. Neglect of a duty is a sin. To pass by one who needs cheer or help, not giving him what he needs, when it is in our power to minister to him, is to sin against him.

Very strong, therefore, is the pressure of obligation to fill every moment with faithful duty-doing. No doubt there are rests that leave blanks in the records and thus become blemishes, marrings, faults. There is a story of one who always carried seeds in his pocket and when he found a bare spot, planted some of them that the place might become beautiful. So we should put into every fragment of time some seed that will make the hour or minute a bearer of blessing to other lives. We cannot afford to let a moment go unfilled.

But there are rests which add to the beauty and the completeness of every life; and there is no life which can be altogether complete without them. Ruskin wrote to a young woman these true words: "There is no music in a rest, Katie, that I know of, but there is the making of music in it. People are always missing that part of the life melody, and scrambling on without counting; not that it is easy to count, but nothing on which so much depends is very easy. People are always talking of perseverance and courage and fortitude; but patience is the finest

and worthiest part of fortitude, and the rarest, too. I have known twenty persevering girls to one patient one, but it is only the twenty-first one who can do her work, out and out, and enjoy it. For patience lies at the root of all pleasures as well as of all powers."

The illustration is very suggestive. It is indeed with life as with music. The rests on the staff in one sense are not a part of the music. They call for no sweet notes. Yet they are as important in their place as if they were notes to be struck or sung. It would spoil the harmony if a careless player or singer were to disregard the rests and fill the spaces with notes of his own improvising. There are rests in life which are quite as important in the melody of life as any notes on the staff. To overlook them or to fill them up is to mar the music. We should mind the rests.

It is not true that we are living worthily only when we are doing something. God has strewn life with quiet resting-places. Night is one of them. Sleep is a divine ordinance — to miss it mars the music. The Sabbath is another of the

rests on the staff which the great Master-composer wrote in himself. "Six days shalt thou labor" — then comes the rest, the one no more positive a command than the other. To ignore this rest and crowd into its sacred space the sounds of labor is not only to break a divine commandment, but is also to introduce discords into God's music. It takes the Sabbath quiet to complete the melody of the week. "Sunday," says Longfellow, "is like a stile between the fields of toil, where we can kneel and pray, or sit and meditate."

There are other periods in every life in which rests are written. There is a time to work and a time to rest. God never intended that we shall fill the days so full of toil as not to leave any time for fellowships of home-life, for intercourse with friends, for pleasure and amusement. There is no true music in that living under incessant pressure which hurries on from duty to duty, from task to task, allowing not a moment of leisure, not a restful heart-beat, from morning until night. Far sweeter and more beautiful is the life that goes from task to task promptly but

never hurriedly. "Unhasting yet unresting," is one of the wisest of life's mottoes. No time should be wasted, and yet there never should be any hurrying.

No other life accomplishes in the end so much as one that goes on with rhythmic movement, never loitering, never lagging, yet never in nervous haste. Hurry mars work of any kind. Music is spoiled as much by too great rapidity as by indolent dragging. An old Bible teaching says, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." The most vigorous of the New Testament writers exhorts his young friend to study to be quiet, or as it is in the stronger phrase of a revised version, to be "ambitious to be quiet." It was not idleness that St. Paul was urging upon Timothy, but the observance of the proper rests in life.

We have need of patience. We should learn to wait as well as labor, to listen as well as speak, to rest as well as toil. There are moments and hours in life when the supreme duty is to do nothing, to stand quiet and patient, waiting trustfully for God to work, or for the

time to come when we can act. Immeasurable harm has been done oftentimes by impatience which could not stand and wait.

In all our life we need to cultivate a restful spirit. No duty is enjoined in the Scriptures more frequently than the duty of peace. Worry is one of the things that are not worth while — it never brings any good ; it never adds to the happiness ; it never blesses. Worry must be left out of the ideal life. Worry rushes on unquietly and does not mind the rests. Peace, on the other hand, is an essential element in all beautiful, strong, and happy life. Peace carefully observes all the rests and produces perfect music. It knows how to be quiet and still as well as how to speak or sing.

Sometimes we are compelled to take rests in our busy life, even when we have no thought of doing so. We are in the midst of a rapid movement, hurrying on with great eagerness, when suddenly we find a rest written on the staff, and we must pause in our music. One of the most suggestive words in the Shepherd Psalm is the phrase, " He maketh me to lie

down in green pastures." Sometimes God has to make us lie down, for if he did not we would never pause for a moment. We really need these rests to make the music full and rich, and God can get them into our hurried life in no way but by compelling us to take them.

Nature teaches us the necessity for periods of inactivity. Winter arrests the growth of trees. The long months when there are no leaves and no fruits seem to be lost. But we know that winter is no mistake, and that the time is not lost or wasted when the tree is resting. It is only gathering the forces for next year's growth and fruitage. Every life, too, has its winters, when everything seems to stop; but there is no loss in the quiet waiting. One writes :

" In every life

There 's a pause that is better than onward rush,

Better than hewing or mightiest doing;

'T is the standing still at sovereign will.

" There 's a hush that is better than ardent speech,

Better than sighing or wilderness crying;

'T is the being still at sovereign will.

“The pause and the hush sing a double song
In unison low and for all time long.
O human soul, God’s working plan

“Goes on, nor needs the aid of man!
Stand still, and see!
Be still, and know!”

If only we understood it we should see that the rests which God writes into the bars of our life are necessary to make the music perfect. We think we have lost time when we have been sick for a season. No; the passive duty of the sick days, when we were shut away from the hurrying world, the duty of being quiet and patient and trustful, was quite as sacred and important as were the urgent duties of the days of health.

“How does the musician read the rest? See him beat the time in unerring count and catch up the next note true and steady as if no breaking-place had come between. Not without design does God write the music of our lives. Be it ours to learn the tune and not be dismayed at the rests. They are not to be slurred over, are not to be omitted, are not to destroy the

melody nor to change the key-note. If we look up, God himself will beat the time for us." It is not ours to write the score; it is ours only to sing or play it as God has written it. We have no right to change a note or a point, to insert a rest or to omit one. We must play it as it is given to us.

When in our life we come to rests which are written for us into the great Composer's score, we should consider them just as much part of the music as are the notes in the other bars. We need not complain of loss of time in illness, in forced leisure, in frustrated efforts, nor fret that our voice had to be silent, our part missing in the music. There was no real loss in these breaks or pauses. We do our duty best by not trying to do anything when God bids us to lie still. We need not fret that we cannot be active for God when clearly God does not want us to be active. She was a submissive Christian, and had learned well the secret of peace and the meaning of the rests, who accounted for her peaceful quiet on her sick-bed by saying, "I hear God saying to me, 'Lie here and cough.'" That was

God's will for her then instead of the bidding to active service which she used to hear and obey so gladly in the days of strength. The truest life is the one that takes the music as God writes it, without question, believing in his love and his wisdom, sure that he is right.

“In the grand oratorios of life

God writes us unexpected rests !

These break the rush, the strain, the storm, the strife,

And are our surely needful tests !

How these are kept, not reaching for the next,

Nor clinging to the former strain,

In perfect waiting, listening for the text

To make the Master's meaning plain,

Proves, or disproves, our individual skill.

“Some high, some low, some intermediate sing;

Each voice is needful in its part,

Though one, in solo, rise on peerless wing —

Lost in the chorus, one ! An art

Divinely wise, brings, here and there, a rest.

And he — I 'd tell it o'er and o'er —

Sings best, who, losing self, interprets best,

In notes, or rests, throughout the score,

The Master's grand, eternal, loving will.”

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CURE OF WEARINESS.

" If we believed, we should arise and sing,
Dropping our burdens at Christ's pierced feet ;
Sorrow would flee, and weariness take wing,
Hard things grow fair, and bitter waters sweet.

" If we believed, what room for fear or care,
Within his arms, safe sheltered on his breast ?
Peace for our pain, and hope for our despair,
Is what he meant who said, ' I give thee rest.' "

WEARINESS may be wholesome. It is wholesome when it is the natural consequence of earnest, healthful activity. Such weariness finds its renewal in rest, and in God's blessing of sleep. Blessed is the weariness of youth or of health, which is built up into joyous vigor overnight. That is a beautiful rendering of an old Psalm verse which runs: "He giveth to his beloved in sleep." An old tale tells of the young artist who from sheer weariness fell asleep before the picture over which he had also grown discour-

aged. Then, while he slept, his master came softly into the studio, and, with a few quick, skilful touches, corrected the errors in the work, and brought out the beauty which the pupil had dreamed of, and had vainly sought to put upon his canvas.

The story is a true illustration of what God is constantly doing for his children when they grow weary in their work and fall asleep over it. Many a half-wrought-out picture do his hands finish overnight. He takes away the discouragement and puts fresh hope and courage into the heart, while his children sleep. Weariness like this is full of blessing. We might frame a new beatitude, "Blessed are the weary, for they shall find God's rest."

But there is a weariness that is not wholesome. There are many people who faint under their burdens, and, finding no adequate recuperative uplift anywhere, sink down in the dark floods. Those who have much to do with the care of souls, those to whom the weary and disheartened turn for help and sympathy, know how many yield to dispiriting influences, and

how hard it is to lift up such hands that hang down. Even God's wonderful ministry of sleep fails to restore them. Laying down their tasks for a time does not bring back the old enthusiasm. Their weariness seems incurable. It is not the natural weariness of health at the close of a busy day — it is a weariness of spirit. Oftentimes it is unwholesome — at least, if one had learned the full, rich secret of God's peace, one would not have fallen under its power.

Sometimes it is the result of sorrow. We are accustomed to think that sorrow always does good, makes the sufferer better, sweetens the spirit. But there are many who faint under chastisement. Instead of getting blessing and good from their trouble, they are hurt by it. When a great affliction comes, taking out of the life its light, its joy, its inspiration, there are some who seem unable ever to lift up their head again. "There is nothing left now to live for," says one; and no pleading of love, no exhortation to duty, seems to recall our friend to the old interest in life.

There is far more of such faintness in the

ways of trial and grief than the world knows of. To many life is never the same after a great sorrow. The bereft one does not desire to taste joy again.

“ I wish that when you died last May,
Charles, there had died along with you
Three parts of Spring’s delightful things,
Aye, and for me the fourth part too.”

Yet this is not the way God wants us to meet sorrow. There is no accident in life’s bereavements as God sees them; they are all provided for in his plan for our life. They have their place among the means of grace through which we are to be fitted for duty. There is a way to find rest and renewal in such weariness, if only those who suffer thus know how and where to find it. God’s comfort is a medicine which has power to heal the heart’s deepest wounds. There is a profound meaning in the beatitude, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” It may not mean that sorrow itself is a blessing; it may not be a good thing to have the heart torn and the life bereft and darkened. Indeed, it is not a good thing in

itself. Yet there is a secret in it which will extract from pain its power to do harm and will make it a blessing. The blessing is not in the sorrow, but in the comfort; and the beatitude means that God's comfort is so full of good that it is well worth while to suffer any affliction, that one may obtain the comfort. Verily, this weariness, too, God can cure by the ministries of his love, as he cures bodily and mental weariness in sleep.

There is a weariness, also, of disappointment, in which many faint. It is very hard, for example, to be stricken down in broken health, not only in the midst of activities, but also when the heart is full of great hopes for the future. Invalidism is a heavy burden. One must sit in his room, or lie on his bed, and see the throngs of busy men, among whom yesterday he himself was a leader, move on to their successes and their victories, leaving him meanwhile unable to take any part in the work or the struggle.

There is a pathetic story from crusading annals which illustrates many an experience in common life. A crusader, returning from the

Holy Land, is seized by some nobles while crossing hostile territory, and is cast into prison. In his cell, one day, some months after the beginning of his captivity, he hears sounds of far-away martial music. As he listens eagerly, he knows that the music is drawing nearer. He looks out through the grating of his cell, and by and by the flash of spears is seen. Nearer and nearer still comes the column, and then, with wild emotion, the captive discovers that it is his own party, the same company of men with whom he had gone to war, with whom he had fought on sacred ground in Palestine. He cries out as the men ride close by his window, and cries more loudly, but the music drowns his voice. They ride on till all have passed, the banners moving out of sight. The last note of the receding music falls on his ear, and the poor captive is left alone in his hopelessness.

There are many men who, by reason of broken health or some sore misfortune, or through narrow limitations, are shut up in a dark prison, and compelled to lie there, from their dim windows seeing their former compan-

ions march by them with gay banners and cheerful music, and pass out of sight. It is not easy to keep one's spirit brave and strong in such an experience. The weariness is apt to become faintness, and the faintness to pass into the well-nigh incurable sickness of despair.

What does the religion of Christ have to say to a man in such condition? It has a message, for, as the gospel views life, there is no human hopelessness. It tells us of another sphere in life besides that in which success is measured by physical activities and material results — a sphere in which one may fail to the eyes of men, and yet be a glorious success in the sight of heaven. Activities are not the only measure of living. It is not what we do in a given time that tells what real progress we have been making, but what has been done in us. One may be accomplishing a great deal, as men look at life, and yet really be doing nothing that shall last. One may be straining every nerve in exertions which seem to produce splendid results, and yet be only beating the air. A business man, who, after years of energetic work, was

suddenly stricken down and compelled to lie for months on his bed, scarcely moving hand or foot, one day said to his pastor, "For years I have been running my soul thin by my incessant activities, but in these quiet months I have had time to think about my life, and now, for the first time in all my experience, I am growing." He was learning lessons he never could have learned in the rushing restlessness of his earlier years.

We must not think that, because we can go on no longer in our chosen course, therefore life has nothing more for us. The breaking-up and setting-aside of a plan of human ambition is oftentimes the making of the man. A young woman who had been an intense student of music for several years, studying at home and abroad, and devoting herself with great enthusiasm to her art, found it necessary to give up all her work and rest for a year. She accepted the disappointment cheerfully, and turned quietly to other occupations. The result was that her lost year proved the best year of her life. It gave her time for quiet culture, and for read-

ing and thought on lines neglected before. The influence on her character was enriching and sweetening. She was also led into new experiences which proved gateways into treasure-houses of blessing and good she never could have found in her eager, unresting life. She learned more of the sweetness of friendship than she had ever dreamed of before, more too of the reality, the tenderness, the infinite satisfaction of the divine friendship. At the end of the year her friends were conscious that she had grown in all lovely qualities. What had been regarded as a misfortune proved to have been divine leading in most gracious ways.

It is always so. There is never any real need for growing discouraged. No matter what the condition may be, we may trust God with the outcome, while we accept our lot with cheerfulness, and do the duty that comes to our hand. There are many things we never can learn in the midst of our earthly ambitions, which must be learned, if ever, as song-birds learn new songs, in darkened rooms. A Christian's rule of life should be, never to yield to discouragement.

ment, never to faint in any trouble, but always to keep his face toward the light and his heart full of song.

One of the most wonderful words of Christ is that in which he forewarns his followers that in this world they shall have tribulation, but bids them nevertheless be of good cheer, giving as a reason that he has overcome the world, and therefore in him they may have peace. One who believes on Christ is identified with him, and shares in all his blessedness, his victoriousness, his peace. There is that great Old Testament word, too, which assures us that if our mind is stayed on God he will keep us in perfect peace. The comfort is that the keeping is God's, not ours, ours being only the staying of our mind upon God.

With such divine words as these on which to hope, why should we ever faint or grow weary, however broken our life, however desolate our home, however we may seem to have failed? No life can sink away when it is held in the clasp of the everlasting arms. No sorrow can strip us bare while we have Christ, and while

heaven receives our loved ones. No work for God can ever fail, but every golden seed dropped in the furrow shall yield a harvest.

Then there is a final curing of earth's weariness for all who know Christ in this world. The promise of rest while it has precious fulfilment in the present life holds its complete fulfilment in reserve, until we reach the heavenly life. There no one ever shall know weariness. Here all growth is toward old age; there all development is toward youth. It is more than the fancy of a mystic that in heaven the oldest angels are the youngest. There will be no sickness there, no sorrow, no trouble. Heaven will be a place of noble activity, every immortal power at work, but there work will not produce weariness. All life will be joy and peace and song, and none shall ever be tired.

“No more going out forever,
No more sorrow, no more tears;
Death and pain can harm us never
Through the glad eternal years.

“In the glory of His presence,
Which now lights the jasper sea,
We will meet the long-lost dear ones,
Waiting there for you and me.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

⁴ JUDGED AS WE JUDGE.

"Not understood. We gather false impressions,
And hug them closer as the days go by,
Till virtues seem to us transgressions ;
And thus men rise and fall, and live and die,
Not understood.

"O God ! that men should see a little clearer ;
Or judge less harshly where they cannot see !
O God ! that men should draw a little nearer
To one another ; they 'd be nearer thee,
And understood."

THERE are many of our Lord's teachings which we do not take half seriously enough. For example, there is what Jesus says about judging others: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." This is more than a condemnation of uncharitable judging; it is also a revelation to us of the fact that our judgments of others come back into our own bosom. "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you."

The same teaching is found elsewhere in the Scriptures. We get back what we give out. This is true of our kindly thoughts and feelings towards others, as well as of judgments that are harsh and severe. We gather the harvest of our own sowing. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is true in every phase of its application. The merciful shall obtain mercy, runs the beatitude. A man who is generous in his opinions of others receives charitableness of opinion in return. Of course, this does not mean that if we always treat others gently, others will always treat us gently. Kindest-hearted men are sometimes used most unkindly. Jesus himself never judged others harshly, and yet he was cruelly slain by those he had come to bless. The statement is general, and in general it is true, that mercifulness in us will make others merciful towards us. What we give we shall receive.

This is true on both the divine and the human side. The unforgiving cannot get God's forgiveness. It is put in the liturgy of penitence that we must forgive before we can even ask for

forgiveness. "Forgive us our debts, for we have forgiven." If we will not show mercy we cannot even ask to have mercy shown to us. Then, with men, too, sternness finds sternness, resentment meets with resentment. He who sees no good in others must not be surprised, and must not complain, if others fail to see any good in him. The man who has only harsh words for his fellows cannot expect to hear words of love from others concerning himself.

Human lives are like those echoes that we find here and there among the hills, which send back every sound that is heard before them. You speak, and your words are echoed back to your ears. You sing, and your song returns again to you. If one talks loudly and angrily, one hears loud and angry words reverberating in the air. If one speaks gently and sweetly, the echo faithfully reports' back not the words only, but the tone as well.

Like echoes are our lives; what they hear they reflect back to the speaker's ear and heart. So it is that we may find out, in the way others treat us, just how we really treat them. They

echo into our ears in their judgments of us the very things which our lips have spoken concerning them. Hence our judgments of others are really self-revealings. If we are suspicious and distrustful of men, we are showing the world that in us are causes for suspicion and distrust. If we find selfishness wherever we go, it is an evidence that we are selfish ourselves.

This truth has a wide application. A living torch and a dead ember were sent forth into the world to find out what the world was like. The torch returned and reported that there was light everywhere. The ember reported that it was dark everywhere, with not a ray of light shining.

So do men find in the world just what is in themselves. One man says it is a world of sadness. There is nothing in it but sorrow. All its songs are songs of tears. He has not found a bit of blue, nor heard a note of gladness in all his rounds. Poor man! it is only the gloom of his own heart that he is reporting. He has in him no capacity for seeing beauty or for hearing joy notes. Another man goes out over pre-

cisely the same course, hearing the same sounds, and seeing the same sights, and he reports that he found only music and loveliness everywhere. The world was full of sweet songs. On every spot flowers bloomed; everywhere light was shining.

What made the same world so totally different to the two men? The difference was in the men themselves. In one the lamp of joy was burning, and wherever he went he found light — the light of his own life pouring out on all things. In the other the lamp had gone out, leaving darkness in his own soul. Wherever he went, even amid the rarest beauty, he saw nothing lovely, for he was as one blind. Though all about him songs of joy filled the air, he heard no sweet note, for he was as one deaf.

“ In ourselves the sunshine dwells,
In ourselves the music swells;
Everywhere the heart awake
Finds what pleasure it can make,
Everywhere the light and shade
By the gazer's eye is made.”

This is a serious teaching, and it has an in-

tensely practical side for every one of us. It is ourselves that we are discovering all the while as we go about judging others. If we seem to find all men unjust, unreasonable, proud, vain, deceitful, or false, there is enough in the discovery to startle us. It is the echoes of our own heart that we are hearing. It is the revelation of our own inner self that we are seeing reflected. We should seek instantly to find a new self, and then we shall find ourselves in a new world.

We should also train ourselves to charitable judgments of others. As the faults of our own character are corrected, our eyes will become clearer, and we shall see others in a truer light. Many of our judgments of others are unjust. Then even if the faults our eyes seem to see do exist, we have no right to pronounce sentence. We do not know what reasons there are for leniency of judgment. Some day you find a man very disagreeable, irritable, easily vexed, or unsocial, not disposed to be cordial. You are inclined to be impatient with him, perhaps even to regard his unhappy mood so seriously

as to allow it to break the friendly relations which heretofore have existed between you and him.

But does not the better self within you say to you that it is not right to make up a final judgment from the mood of any one day? You do not know what may have occurred to produce in your neighbor the spirit which has given you such annoyance. It may be ill health that has affected him — there are certain physical conditions which make it very hard for the sufferer to keep sweet. Or something may have gone wrong with his business, causing him much anxiety. Any one ought to be pleasant when all things are prosperous; but it is a much severer test of character to keep pleasant when there are reverses, when one is losing money, and when one's affairs are in discouraging condition.

Or there may be other troubles which no neighbor suspects. Not all life's pains cause outcry which men hear; not all griefs hang crape on the door. The bitterest sorrows must oftentimes be borne in silence and in secret, only

God knowing of them. We know not what burdens of personal pain and trial any life that seems sunny and glad may be bearing. Perhaps this may be the cause of the uncongeniality and the unlovableness which so much offends you in your neighbor.

Of course, we may say that none of these reasons are sufficient to excuse the man for the unpleasant and disagreeable qualities in him which so mar the beauty of his disposition, and give so much pain and discomfort to others. True, he ought to keep loving and gentle and cheerful, no matter what is wrong with him, or has gone wrong with his affairs. Yet we should be charitable, considering ourselves, lest we also lose our sweetness some day when the wind is from the east. If only we could lift the veil that covers people's inner lives, and see all that is going on within, all that makes it hard for them to keep glad-hearted and songful, we would be more charitable toward all.

“ If we knew the cares and trials,
Knew the efforts all in vain,
And the bitter disappointment,
Understood the loss and gain,

Would the grim external roughness
Seem, I wonder, just the same?
Should we help where now we hinder?
Should we pity where we blame?

“Oh! we judge each other harshly,
Knowing not life's hidden force,
Knowing not the fount of action
Is less turbid at its source;
Seeing not amid the evils
All the golden grains of good.
Oh! we 'd love each other better
If we only understood.”

It is Christlike to be patient and charitable toward all. Thus only can we help others toward anything better and truer. Severe judgment never yet brought out the good that was hidden in any life, under its mass of faults and errors. Nothing but love can save — love expects the best of every life, and helps to woo it out. If we meet other men's blemishes and sins with patience and love, we shall help to bring out all the possibilities of good and beauty in them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

EVERY DAY AN EASTER.

In Christ I touch the hand of God,
From his pure height reached down,
By blessèd ways before untrod,
To lift us to our crown;
Victory that only perfect is
Through loving sacrifice, like his.

LUCY LARCOM.

EASTER comes in the calendar only once in a year, but for the Christian every day is an Easter. Each morning we should rise to newness of life. In midwinter we do not need to wait for the coming of springtime to get the lessons of Eastertide. Christ arose once for all and the glory of his victory shines everywhere, and the power of his resurrection is felt wherever he is known and loved and followed.

Easter ought to leave in every Christian heart new inspirations, a new uplift, new revealings of hope. It ought to be easier for us to live nobly and victoriously after we have enjoyed

another Easter with its great lessons. A wave of comfort should roll over the world, as the day bears everywhere its news of resurrection. Death has been conquered. A grave is no longer a hopelessly sealed prison — its doors have been broken. This is the message which Easter carries to every home of sorrow, to every lonely, bereft heart.

But that is not the whole meaning of the Easter lesson. Perhaps we narrow it too much. We keep its comfort for the days when death is in our home, when we are standing beside the graves of our loved ones. Blessed is its message then! It tells us that what to our holden eyes seems death is life, and that the grave is but a little chamber of peace where our dear one shall sleep until the morning.

“These ashes, too, this little dust,
Our Father’s care shall keep,
Till the last angel rise and break
The long and dreary sleep.

“Then love’s soft dew o’er every eye
Shall shed its mildest rays.
And the long-silent dust shall burst
With shouts of endless praise.”

But the lesson reaches out and covers all life. It sheds a glory over every sorrow. It whispers hope in every experience of loss. It tells of victory, not only over death, but over everything in which men seem to suffer defeat, over all grief, pain, and trial. Jesus himself stated the great principle of the resurrection victory when he said, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." The dropping of the grain into the earth, to perish there, is not misfortune, not the wasting, the losing, the perishing, of the grain; it is but the way by which it reaches its full development and comes to its normal fruitfulness.

The little parable had its first interpretation in the death of Christ himself. Dying would be no misfortune for him; it was but the way to the higher, larger life into which it would introduce him. He was standing then face to face with the problem of his cross. It certainly seemed a terrible waste of precious life that was demanded. Would it not be better for him to avoid the sacrifice and live on, seeking refuge,

perhaps, in another land? Quickly came the answer. The grain of wheat might be withheld from the sowing, but it would be only one clean, whole, shining grain then, without any increase, without any unfolding of its wondrous secret of life and fruitfulness. The only way for that blessed life to reach its full beauty, and for its mystery of good and glory to be wrought out, was for it to accept the cross. "If it die, it beareth much fruit."

It is easy to understand how this came true in Christ's life after he arose. No doubt his friends grieved over his dying, thinking it a terrible mistake. If only he had lived on to old age, continuing his ministry of love through the years, what blessings he would have left in the world! But his death in the blackness of crucifixion had quenched the light of his holy life. That was the end. What a waste! But we know how mistaken were all these grievings and regrettings of love. If Jesus had withheld himself from the cross there would have been one beautiful life prolonged for a few years more of holy teaching and of loving ministry.

He gave his life — the grain of wheat fell into the ground and died, and we see the harvest to-day in Christianity, with all its blessings.

While this great law received its highest illustration in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is also the law of all spiritual life. Just after he had spoken his parable of the grain of wheat, the Master added, "He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." Thus the law is made to apply to all men and to all experiences. The way to fulness of life is through death. We may save ourselves from loss and cost and sacrifice, if we will; we may refuse to make the self-denials which love demands of us; we may indulge ourselves, and decline to do the things for others which we are called to do, and which would require toil and pain. It will seem that we are saving our life, but really we are losing it. The way to our best in character and in fruitfulness is through death. We must die to live: we must lose to gain.

This is the great lesson of Christian life. It

is not one which applies only to death and the hope of immortality: it applies to all life's experiences. It does not come in merely once a year, with its brightness and its joy; it is a lesson for every day, and it has its inspiration for us in every phase of living. We are continually coming up to graves in which we must lay away some hope, some treasure, some joy, but from which the thing laid away rises again in newness of life and beauty.

Every call for self-denial is such a grave. We come to a point where the law of love demands that we give up a pleasure on which we had set our heart. If we are not ready for the sacrifice, if we cannot make it, the grain of wheat abides alone, with no increase, no fruit. But if we, in quiet love and faith, do the hard duty, accept the self-denial, render the costly service, the golden grain falls out of our hand into the earth, and dies. Yet it does not perish. It lives again, springing up from its burial in new and richer life. We lost our coveted ease, or our cherished possession, we gave up our pleasure and spent our strength in

helping another, we forewent our evening's rest and hastened out into the storm to do good, but we have a spiritual blessing whose value to us far surpasses the little ease, comfort, enjoyment, or rest which we gave up and buried away in our garden sepulchre.

Every call to a hard or costly duty is a seed. It lies in our hand — what shall we do with it? Shall we keep our little ease, our piece of money, our pleasure, our quiet hour? Or shall we let it fall into the ground? Some one puts it thus: "I was given a seed to keep as mine. When I most loved it, I was bidden to bury it in the ground. I buried it, not knowing that I was sowing." We know what comes from sowing — the seed springs up into a plant, beautiful, fragrant; or into grain that waves in a golden harvest; or into a tree on which grow luscious fruits.

But it is not easy to drop our seed into the ground. It appears to us like wasting it, losing it, throwing it away. We want to keep it. Well, if we do, it will be nothing more than it is to-day — a pleasure, a coin, an hour of ease. But

if we give it up in answer to love's call or need, it will grow into a great harvest of blessing.

We do not like the word "duty;" it seems to mean something hard and unpleasant. But when we accept it from our Master and take it up with love in our heart, it is transformed for us into something beautiful. A traveller in South Africa tells of picking up a rough pebble. As he turned it over in his hand his trained eye saw the gleaming of a diamond. Duty may have a rough, an unattractive crust, but he who accepts it and looks at it through eyes of love sees in it a service for Christ which will yield the heavenly treasure of peace and joy.

"God placed a duty in my hand;
Before mine eyes could see
Its rightful form, that duty seemed
A bitter thing to me.
The sun of glory rose and shone;
Then duty I forgot,
And thought with what a privilege
The Lord had blessed my lot."

This is the law of unselfish living. We are apt to pity those who are called to deny them-

selves for the sake of others, but every call to self-denial is a call to a new enrichment of our own life as well as to a new service of love which shall do good to others. The lower is to be sacrificed for the sake of obtaining the higher. As in the grain of wheat is hidden a secret of value and growth which can be realized only through the dying of the grain in the earth, so in every fragment of human happiness and comfort there is covered up a secret of blessing and of good which can be brought out only through the losing of it, the giving it up.

Phillips Brooks has put this truth well in these words: "You are called on to give up a luxury, and you do it. The little piece of comfortable living is quietly buried away underground. But that is not the last of it. The small indulgence which would have made your bodily life easier for a day or two, or a year or two, undergoes some strange alteration in its burial, and comes out a spiritual quality that blesses and enriches your soul for ever and ever. You surrender some ambition that had exercised a proud power over you, in whose train and

shadow you had hoped to live with something of its glory cast on you. You send that down into its grave, and that too will not rest there. . . . You surrender a dear friend at the call of death, and out of his grave the real power of friendship rises stronger and more eternal into your life."

Thus everywhere this truth of the gospel comes to us with its divine revealing. We deceive ourselves whenever we try to save our own life, keeping it back from hard duty, from costly service, or from sacrifice. The only way to the best and the highest is through the losing of the lower. The rose-leaf must be bruised to get its fragrance. Love must suffer to reveal its richest tenderness and beauty. Life is always double. There is an outer form in which it presents itself to our senses, and there is an inner spirit which is the vital quality. But this inner, spiritual, immortal element can be found only through the dying of the outer and temporary form. The golden grain must be buried in service or sacrifice of love, that from its grave may rise that which is unseen and eternal.

“ When bursts the rose of the spirit
 From its withering calyx sheath,
And the bud has become a blossom
 Of heavenly color and breath,
Life utters its true revelation
 Through the silence that we call death.”

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SACREDNESS OF OPPORTUNITY.

The day is done, its hours have run,
And thou hast taken count of all —
The scanty triumphs grace hath won,
The broken vow, the frequent fall.
Through life's long day and death's dark night,
O gentle Jesus, be our light !

Grant us, dear Lord, from evil ways
True absolution and release,
And bless us more than in past days
With purity and inward peace.
Through life's long day and death's dark night,
O gentle Jesus, be our light !

F. W. FABER.

JESUS said, "Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not." Sometimes darkness is very welcome. It is welcome to the weary man who can scarcely wait till the sun sets to cease his toil. To him darkness means rest. It folds him in its curtains, away from the noise and strife, and restores his exhausted strength. Darkness is welcome in

many a home, for it is the signal for the home-gathering of loved ones and the joys of the evening fireside. All day the hearthstone has drawn upon the hearts of the scattered household, and the coming of night is the signal for the home-gathering.

But it is not a friendly darkness to which our Lord refers. The figure his words suggest is that of a wild beast coming upon the traveller, pursuing him, overtaking him, pouncing upon him, devouring him. Thus it was that Jesus urged his disciples to walk in the light while they had it, to be quick to use the few moments of the day that remained, before the devouring darkness should swoop down upon them.

The lesson is for us. Most of us live as if we had a thousand years to stay here. We loiter in the golden hours of our little days as if the days were never to end. We do not see how swiftly the sun is whirling toward his setting while our work is but half done, our task perhaps scarcely begun. We fritter away days, weeks, months, not noticing how our one little opportunity of living in this world is being worn

off, as the sea eats away a crumbling bank till its last shred is gone. We set slight value on time, forgetting that we have only a hand-breadth of it, and then comes eternity. What did you do yesterday that will brighten and glorify that day forever? What record of blessing in other lives did you give it to carry to God's judgment? What burden did you lift off another heart? What tear did you wipe away? On what soul did you leave a mark of beauty? Where is your yesterday?

Many of us fail to appreciate the value of single days. A day is so short a space, we say, that it cannot make much difference if one, just one, is dropped, or idled away in pleasure. Yet the days are links in a chain, and if one link is broken the chain is broken. In God's plan for our life each little day has its own burden of duty, its own record to make. Then we never know the sacredness of any particular day, what it may have amid its treasures for us. Its sunshine may be no brighter than that of other days, there may be no peculiar feature in it to mark it among a thousand common days,

and yet it may be to us a day of destiny. If we fail to receive it as God's gift we may miss and lose that without which we shall be poorer all our life and in eternity.

How often do we see afterward that the days which are gone were bearers to us of heavenly gifts which we had not the wit to recognize nor the grace to take? When they have passed beyond recall, then we see what we missed in disregarding them. How these lost days shame us as they turn their reproachful eyes upon us out of the irrevocable past!

- “ Their advent is as silent as their going;
They have no voice, nor utter any speech,
No whispered murmur passes each to each,
As on the bosom of the years' stream flowing,
They pass beyond recall, beyond our knowing,
Farther than sight can pierce or thought can reach;
Nor shall we ever hear them on Time's beach,
No matter how the winds of life are blowing.
- “ They bide their time, they wait the awful warning
Of that dread day, when, hearts and graves unsealing,
The trumpet's note shall call the sea and sod
To yield their secrets to the sun's revealing;
What voices then shall thrill the judgment morning,
As our lost days shall cry aloud to God !”

“Walk while ye have light, lest darkness come upon you.” There are many illustrations of this coming of darkness, this ending of opportunity. The lesson touches every one’s life. There is the darkness that comes as season after season of privilege closes. Here the teaching is specially for the young. “Some things God gives often; some only once. The seasons return again and again, and the flowers change with the months, but youth comes twice to none.” Youth is the time for preparation. The success of the after-life depends upon the diligence of the first years. A wasted youth is followed by the darkness of misfortune and failure.

Youth is the time to gather knowledge. It is the time, too, to form good habits. It is the time to make good friendships. It is the time to find Christ. It is the time to train the faculties for their best work in life. It is the time to prepare for life’s business. When youth closes, with its opportunities, leaving one unready for the days of stress, struggle, duty, and responsibility that must come, perilous indeed

is the darkness that wraps the life and drags it down.

Many young people are wasteful of time. They fail to realize its value. They appear to have it in such abundance that they never dream it can end. They do not know that a day lost in golden youth may mean misfortune or failure for them sometime in the future. They do not know that missed lessons, squandered hours, minutes spent in idleness, may cost them the true success of their life, bringing failure or disaster, and may even blight their destiny. Young people should walk earnestly while they have the light, redeeming the time, buying up the opportunity, lest darkness overtake them. They should not make the mistake of imagining they have so much time that they can afford to let days or hours or even minutes be wasted. They cannot afford to lose one golden minute of any day. That may be the very minute of all that day on which their destiny hangs.

Says a thoughtful writer: "One of the illusions is that the present hour is not the critical, decisive hour. Write it on your heart that

every day is the best day in the year. No man has learned anything rightly, until he knows that every day is doomsday." This is very true. We know not what momentous issues, affecting all our future, are involved in any quietest hour of any commonplace day. There is a time for everything, but the time is short, and when it is gone and the thing is not done it never can be done.

"Never comes the chance that passed;
That one moment was its last."

"Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not." While you have your eyes, use them. A young man was told by his physicians that in six months he would be blind. At once he set out to look upon the most beautiful scenes in nature and the loveliest works of art in all parts of the world, so that, before his eyes were closed forever, his memory might be stored with visions of beauty to brighten the darkness into which he was surely moving. Use your eyes while you have the light. See as many as possible of the lovely things God has

made. Read the best books you can find and store your mind with great and noble thoughts. Learn while it is easy to learn. Be a student. Be a worker, too. Fill your days full of intense activities, for it will be only a little while till darkness shall overtake you, when you can work no more. What you do you must do quickly. What you make of your life, you must make in a few years at the most, for the human span is short, and any day may be the last one.

“I was not resolute in heart and will
To rise up suddenly and seek thy face,
Leaving the swine husks in the desert place,
And crying, ‘I have sinned, receive me still!’

“I could not even at the Shepherd’s voice
Startle and thrill, with yearnings for the fold,
Till he should take me in his blessed hold,
And lay me on his shoulder and rejoice.

“But lying silent, will-less in the dark,
A little piece of silver, lost from thee,
I only knew thy hands were seeking me,
And that I bore through all thy heavenly mark.”

The lesson is for those who are in life’s prime
and for those who are advancing toward old

age, as well as for the young. Every day that passes leaves life's margin a little less for each of us. Our allotment of time is ever shortening. We must work while the day lasts. We must do good while our hearts are warm. We must speak the words of life before our lips grow dumb. We must scatter kindnesses in the world before our hands grow feeble. We must pour out love to bless the lonely before our pulses are stilled.

We must not crowd God's work out of our busy days, hoping to have time for it by and by, when leisure comes. Ah! by and by it will be too late. Those who need us now will not need us then. The deeds of love which we should do to-day we cannot do to-morrow. The neighbor who now longs for our warm sympathy and gentle ministry will not need us when our tasks have been finished and we have leisure; there will be crape on the door then, and there will be no use in our calling with our word of love.

“When I have time, the friend I love so well
Shall know no more these weary toiling days.

I'll lead her feet in pleasant paths always,
And cheer her heart with words of sweetest praise,
When I have time.

“When you have time ! The friend you hold so dear
May be beyond the reach of your sweet intent,
May never know that you so kindly meant
To fill her life with sweet content,
When you have time.”

The child needs the father's care, guidance, counsel, and loving patience — now. A few moments given each day would make indelible impressions upon the boy's soul, and bind him fast with chains of gold about the feet of God. But a little later it may be no use to try to bless his life. He will have passed beyond the period when even a father's hand can mould his life.

Never leave out of your busy days love's duties to your heart's own, whatever else you may leave out. It were better to miss almost anything else in life than what affection demands. Work while you have the light; do the things that are most important, most sacred, most vital.

Over the doorway of the Cathedral of Milan is the inscription: “Only the eternal is impor-

tant." There are a great many things it is not worth our while to do. Some of us spend our days in poor trivialities which bless no one, and which will add no lustre to our crown. "Only the eternal is important." Therefore "Walk while ye have the light, that the darkness overtake you not." Waste no opportunity. Despise no privilege. Squander no moment. There is just time enough in God's plan for you to live your life well if you spend every moment of it in earnest, faithful duty. One hour lost will leave a flaw. A life thus lived in unbroken diligence and faithfulness will have no regrets when the end comes. Its work will be completed. It will not be night that then overtakes it in the mystery which men call death, but day, rather, the morning of eternity.

"Turn thy face unto the wall,
The weary day is done;
Be thy doings great or small,
Night draweth darkly on;
Thou no more hast part in all
The work beneath the sun;
Turn thy face unto the wall,
For day is done !

“Fold thy hands to peaceful rest
And happy dreams of home;
Lay them crosswise on thy breast —
No more thy feet shall roam.
The shadows deepen in the west,
And night is come !

“Weep not thou with sorrow bowed,
Low in the dust to lie;
The sun for aye behind the cloud
With gladness fills the sky;
E’en now he lifts his banner proud,
For morning is nigh ! ”

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