

air of romance to the simplest surroundings. Out of over-laden nurseries, loads—I speak literally—of toys and appliances for amusement are gathered before Christmas arrives, and sent to various charitable places; satiate and the supervised use of all these complicated and expensive playthings have made them distasteful, and their owners are glad to see them go. Our "Alice" has no "Wonderland" and Tom will never emulate the "White Knight's" inventiveness.

The mind of a clever child is naturally poetic; it takes cognizance of and revels in the supernatural, the wonderful and the unknown. Shakespeare's boyhood fed his mind and soul with things he learned in silence, with only his keen eyes and listening ears to convey to the large brain the majesty and wonder of the world he lived in. It seems a necessity not to be denied without injury, that every human being who would live healthfully and do justice to his soul should, at some time in his waking hours, be alone with his own thoughts, and for a child, just absorbing the wonders of physical and mental life as they develop before his dilating eyes, it is beyond question that he should have time and incentive to think.

A modern child's day is as carefully divided and allotted as if he were born only to catch up with the times. Now sing, now dance, now play this, now that, now walk, now run, but not too far; now language, now numbers, now physics. It is all a great drill, and like all drills it effaces the individual man and makes him only a unit in a vast crowd.

Leave two children in a garden, or a flock of little sisters and brothers in a large safe room and see how they will show their training. I know of boys and girls of eight and ten who are wholly helpless to evolve anything for themselves. In the garden they are listless, and, if they may not pick the flowers and fruit, are discontented; in the room they have nothing to express. They want something real and material to appeal to their senses before they can find anything to do.

The happiest children, who in freer use of their own thoughts and imaginations are trusted to find delights in the garden, will make of it a place of enchantment. The arbor is a castle to be both defended and besieged; there are enemies ambushed in the lilacs and friendly knights riding up on canes with dahlia sticks for lances in their hands. Such gallant deeds of chivalry as I have seen performed in garden paths! And these explorations, in which Livingstone and Kane are far outdone? And great natural discoveries about bees and ants and grasshoppers! "did you ever see, mother; did you ever see how the ants help each other? Do come and see, it takes six of them to carry one big bit." Three absorbed children lying near an ant-hill, leaning on their elbows and utterly lost to everything else about them, could learn more of the mystery of instinct and imbibe more stimulating interest in the miracles of nature than by a winter's course of study of natural history.

Let there be room for inquiry. Where curiosity asks, the mind receives in a different fashion than if things are endlessly and without homogeneity told to a young mind. This hour the positive, the next the negative end of the pole; no current of affinity running through the day's work. The child's mind is like his body—neither can assimilate everything which is given it for food.

I do not mean that children do not need help to learn self-restraint and conquer their natural tendency to infringe law, but I do emphatically mean that neither mind nor soul is educated when the child does not attain individual development of those powers which are the basis of character. His hand has to be held that he may learn to walk, but he cannot be kept within a "go-cart" without crippling his limbs. That development is the noblest and truest, and makes the greatest attainment possible, which engenders the greatest self-preservative power in the child's own nature.

That instilled knowledge through books and instructors shall not overran the capacity for thorough assimilation, and that there shall be free hours in every day of a child's life, in which he shall draw his own conclusions, think his own thoughts, and use his faculties of perception and imagination, are most important to the highest development of his intellect. After all, it is but giving nature a chance. And we shall continue to receive our best gifts from the men whose childhood was but slenderly endowed with the luxury and ever-present care which are bestowed upon the rich, until we learn that a large nature needs large room, and that the power to think great things is better than providing vehicles of expression for those whose thoughts are dormant for want of exercise.

To serve themselves is a priceless thing to teach children; where they need help and supervision, to give it with judicious care as a physician prescribes a crutch or a support, is a blessing, but even where wealth permits the dedication of trained service to their comfort, it should be accounted a higher good to have them educated to be self-reliant and self-helpful. To be taught how properly and thoroughly to care for their own bodies, to respect and not abuse their beautiful personal possessions, to run upon their own childish errands and carry their own small burdens, are things in no way hurtful to

the dignity of the heirs of any fortune, however great.

Leave to the children times and opportunities to dream and hope and learn to sing uplifting songs to their fellows; let them think how and where they would achieve love and life's honors, and do not measure their future with a carpenter's square and train them to think with other men's minds and achieve with other men's hands.—C., in New York Evening Post.

Growing in Grace.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

"Tell me something that will help me towards a higher Christian life." To this sincere enquirer (and there are many others who have the same desire,) I would say—turn to the closing verse of the first chapter of John. In that verse Christ tells Nathanael that he would "see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." The allusion here is very clear to Jacob's vision at Bethel. Jesus describes himself as a sort of connecting ladder between heaven and earth. By his divine nature he reaches to the throne of the Godhead; by his human nature he reaches down to our weakness and guilt. His atonement for sin opens a way upward by which we can find pardon, peace and power—by which we can climb from a lower into a higher and holier life. By Jesus Christ, and by him alone, we can attain fellowship with God; and Jesus may become to us "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption."

You may say this is too theological in language, and rather savors of mysticism. You want it translated into the language of every-day life, and to know just how you can become a better, stronger, happier and more useful man or woman. It is a good symptom that you desire spiritual improvement; for self-satisfaction is always a curse. The mere desire, however, will not produce the change any more than my desire to get the view from the top of the East River Bridge tower will carry me up there. I must make the ascent, and by one step at a time.

Sin of some kind—or of many kinds—is the real trouble with you. Sin holds down and hinders advancement. Repentance is not a thing to be done at the outset of the Christian life, and then to be done with forever after. It is not a mere feeling bad; it is a doing better. Faith also is not the single act of accepting Christ at the time of conversion; it is continual clinging to him, and the continual resting your whole weight on him as you trust yourself to every step of stone in the bridge tower. Your religious life began when you gained your first victory over sin; you gained it by Christ's help. Your grasp on the Saviour for help, for forgiveness, for strength to serve him, was an act of faith. When Bartimeus cast away his garment and arose and came to Jesus, he gave a good illustration of what you did when you first became a Christian; and what Jesus did for him is an illustration of what he did for you at the time of your conversion.

What you experienced at the outset of a Christian life must be repeated to a certain degree continually. You began with a decisive step—a step Christward. Now don't begin to dream about a prodigious jump or a sudden hoist into a higher life. I have heard some people pray for a sudden advance into holiness, which seemed to me very much as if my little grandson were to expect to read a whole chapter of the Bible fluently before he had learned to spell out syllables. No mere vague desire to be stronger and holier ever adds one cubit to your spiritual stature. A Christian character is built as my dear old church yonder was built—by laying one stone upon another. A mountain is ascended by setting one footstep after another up its steep face; if there be an occasional slip backward, then a new lesson of a weakness is learned, just as you have been learning your own weakness, and the need of a fresh grasp on Christ. Penitence and faith lay at the starting point with you; penitence and faith must accompany every upward step. You have not yet outgrown, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

My friend, if you really long for a genuine growth in grace, in vigor, and in effective usefulness, then be done with vague aspiration, and lay hold of what the negro preacher called his "upsetten" sins. Pat the knife to that bad habit before it becomes an ulcer. Take hold of that neglected duty and perform it. One step on the ladder was taken by my neighbor A—when he gave up his inordinate appetite for novels (some of them very poisonous) and determined to feed on solid food and to go back to his Bible. Deacon B—pitched out of doors his Sunday morning newspaper; he found it was killing his Sabbath spirit. Brother C—has stopped putting his club in the place of his prayer meeting. Brother D—, who said that after a hard week's work he needed a Sunday afternoon nap on his sofa, has become a different man since he enlisted for his Master in our Mission chapel. Mrs. E—was sorely tempted to buy that seal-skin sacque, but she said, "No, no; not that luxury while that missionary is freezing for want of an overcoat out in Dakota."

And so I could go on through the whole alphabet of

taking steps upward in obedience to the voice of conscience and to honor Christ. Don't be all the time feeling your pulse in order to grow better. Don't rely on attending meetings for the "promotion of holiness." The higher life is reached by steady climbing—making Christ your spiritual ladder—and by one step at a time.

"Heaven is not reached by a single bound,
Christ is the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies;
And we mount to the summit round by round."

Cleave closely to the stairway; a single step to the one side or the other brings a fall. Nearly all the catastrophes in Alpine climbing result from wandering from the guides, or from venturing on forbidden ground; Jesus never promises his aid except in the path of obedience. Every redeemed soul is bound to strive for the highest holiest, and most fruitful life that grace can impart. The angels of prayer will ascend upon that Divine Ladder which links earth to heaven.—The Presbyterian.

Breathing and Praying.

If we do not get breath it matters very little what else we get. Food, warmth, sleep, are of no avail if we cannot breathe. The entering into the presence of God and communing with him is the renewal of our spiritual atmosphere.

Set before your mind the case of the diver who has to go down to work in the depths under the sea. The water is the breath of the fish, but it is death to him. The condition of his life is that the air of this upper world be pumped down to him. Then he goes down without fear, careful beforehand to see that all is right with the atmosphere above him, and careful, however deep he goes, or however busy he is, to keep the communication with that upper world to which he belongs. He is not always thinking about his breathing, but he cannot do without it for a moment, and he knows better than to suffer any trifling with the apparatus that secures his safety.

So are we in this world; the atmosphere is too dense for our new life. And yet our duty lies down here. Well, fear not, go down; only, first of all, be sure about the communication with that higher life to which we belong. If that be broken off or neglected, we die. Take not the Holy Spirit from me! is a cry for every life, and this hiding of ourselves with God in prayer is the adjusting of the apparatus with that source whence comes the breath of life to us.

Nothing can take the place of this quiet walking with God. It were a mad folly to try to live without sleep or food; but what of the man who tries to live without breath? That is what you are doing if you suffer payer to dry up into a mere set of phrases, which are repeated without any thought or heart.

Prayer is more than the kneeling and asking something from God—much more. What we need is to get into the presence of God. We want the hallowing touch of God's own hand and the light of his countenance. Tarrying in his presence we must have the breath of God breathed into us again, renewing the life which he breathed at the first. This is the first, the great need of the life of holiness.—Rev. Mark Guy Pearse.

Autumn Late.

Autumn Late has come, with skies of grey,
And winds that are frosty and cold,
The leaves have turned yellow, and fluttered away,
And the trees stand out naked and bold.

The crisp brown turf crumbles under our feet;
The brook is a frozen mass,
The rumble of wheels echo far and wide
And the lake is a sea of glass.

The birds with wiled and plaintive cry
Have fled to the south away,
The sun forgets to arise in the morn
And retires e'er close of day.

But we wrap in our furs so cozy and warm
And fasten our skates so handy,
While the friends within door stir the blazing fire
To the tune of nuts, pop-corn, and candy.

And we glide away o'er the moon-lit lake
As swift as the skimming swallow,
Then who would not have the seasons change?
And autumn the summer follow?

Marysville, N. B.

E. A. M. F.

Through Virtue Free.

The days are long and filled with toil,
And sorrow pours a bitter cup,
And who is living free from soul?
And who can wake his spirit up?

Ah, not in vain we press the sod
In sorrow, for we'll rise with song;
We labor up the hills of God,
And struggle till our souls are strong.

The sacred flame of sorrow burns
To purify the heart of man;
And unto God the spirit turns
Obedient to His glorious plan.

The spirit cries for very pain
Of longing for it knows not what—
The hills of God are there to gain,
O climb until the pain is nought.

The strength was given us to do,
So ever climb and faithful be;
The message is forever new,
The soul through virtue will be free.

ARTHUR D. WILMOT.