

This may take place at once. But the appropriation in experience is gradual. Our thoughts and feelings, our very manners and conversation, have been so long under the dominion of the old self, that it takes time to imbue and permeate and transfigure them with the heavenly light of Christ's humility. At first the conscience is not perfectly enlightened, the spiritual taste and the power of discernment have not yet been exercised. But with each believing renewal of the consecration in the depth of the soul: 'I have surrendered myself to be humble like Jesus,' power will go out from Him, to fill the whole being, until in face, and voice, and action the sanctification of the Spirit will be observable, and the Christian will truly be clothed with humility.

The blessedness of a Christlike humility is unspeakable. It is of great worth in the sight of God: 'He giveth grace to the humble.' In the spiritual life it is the source of rest and joy. To the humble all God does is right and good. Humility is always ready to praise God for the least of His mercies. Humility does not find it difficult to trust. It submits unconditionally to all that God says. The two whom Jesus praises for their great faith, are just those who thought least of themselves. The centurion had said, 'I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof;' the Syrophenician woman was content to be numbered with the dogs. In intercourse with men it was the secret of blessing and love. The humble man does not take offence, and is very careful not to give it. He is ever ready to serve his neighbor, because he has learnt from Jesus the Divine beauty of being a servant. He finds favour with God and man.

Oh what a glorious calling for the followers of Christ! To be sent into the world by God to prove that there is nothing more divine than self-humiliation. The humble glorifies God, he leads others to glorify Him, he will at last be glorified with Him. Who would not be humble like Jesus?

[We commend to the thoughtful attention of our readers the following article, as well as the book from which it is taken, "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," by Henry Drummond, F.R.S.E., F.G.S.]

GROWTH.

"Consider the lilies how they grow."

What gives the peculiar point to this object lesson from the lips of Jesus is, that He not only made the illustration, but made the lilies. It is like an inventor describing his own machine. He made the lilies and He made me—both on the same broad principle. Both together, man and flower, He planted deep in the providence of God; but as men are dull at studying themselves, He points to this companion phenomenon to teach us how to live a free and natural life, a life which God will unfold for us, without our anxiety, as He unfolds the flower. For Christ's words are not a general appeal to consider nature. Men are not to consider the lilies simply to admire their beauty to dream over the delicate strength and grace of stem and leaf. The point they were to consider was, *how they grow*—how without anxiety or care the flower woke into loveliness; how, without weaving, these leaves were woven; how, without toiling, these complex tissues spun themselves; and how, without any effort or friction, the whole slowly came ready-made from the loom of God in its more than Solomon-like glory. "So," He says, making the application beyond dispute, "you careworn, anxious men must grow. You, too, need take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or what ye shall put on. For if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven,

shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

This nature-lesson was a great novelty in its day; but all men now who have even a "little faith" have learned this Christian secret of a composed life. Apart even from the parable of the lily, the failures of the past have taught most of us the folly of disquieting ourselves in vain, and we have given up the idea that by taking thought we can add a cubit to our stature.

But no sooner has our life settled down to this calm trust in God than a new and graver anxiety begins. This time it is not for the body we are in travail, but for the soul. For the temporal life we have considered the lilies, but how is the spiritual life to grow? How are we to become better men? How are we to grow in grace? And, because we know ill how to do this, the old anxiety comes back again, and our inner life is once more an agony of conflict and remorse. After all, we have but transferred our anxious thoughts from the body to the soul. Our efforts after Christian growth seem only a succession of failures, and instead of rising into the beauty of holiness, our life is a daily heartbreak and humiliation. Now the reason of this is very plain. We have forgotten the parable of the lily. Violent efforts to grow are right in earnest, but wholly wrong in principle. . . . No man by taking thought has ever added a cubit to his stature; nor has any man by mere working at his soul ever approached nearer to the stature of the Lord Jesus. The stature of the Lord Jesus was not itself reached by work, and he who thinks to approach its mystical height by anxious effort, is really receding from it. Christ's life unfolded itself from a divine germ, planted centrally in His nature, which grew as naturally as a flower from a bud. . . . Spiritual growth is a process maintained and secured by a spontaneous and mysterious inward principle. The whole power therefore transcends us. We do not work, we are taken in hand—"it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure." We do not plan—we are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them."

Now, let us consider how lilies grow, in order to discover the attitude of mind which the Christian should preserve regarding his spiritual growth. That attitude, primarily, is to be free from care. We are not lodging a plea for inactivity of the spiritual energies, but for the tranquility of the spiritual mind. Christ's protest is not against work, but against anxious thought.

What is the relation between growth and work in a boy? Consciously, there is no relation at all. The boy never thinks of connecting his work with his growth. Work, in fact, is one thing and growth is another, and it is so in the spiritual life. If it be asked, therefore, is the Christian wrong in these ceaseless and agonizing efforts after growth? the answer is, Yes, he is quite wrong, or, at least, he is quite mistaken. When a boy takes a meal, or denies himself indigestible things, he does not say, "All this will minister to my growth;" or when he runs a race he does not say, "This will help the next cubit of my stature." It may or it may not be true that these things will help his stature, but if he thinks of this, his idea of growth is morbid. His anxiety here is altogether irrelevant and superfluous. Nature is far more bountiful than we think. When she gives us energy, she asks none of it back to expend on our growth. *She* will attend to that. "Give your work," she says, "and your anxiety to others; trust me to add the cubits to your stature." If God is adding to our spiritual stature, unfolding the new nature within us, it is a mistake to keep twitching at the

petals with our coarse fingers. We must seek to let the Creative Hand alone. "It is God which giveth the increase." Yet we never know how little we have learned of the fundamental principle of Christianity till we discover how much we are all bent on supplementing God's free grace. If God is spending work upon a Christian, let him be still and know that it is God. And if he wants work, he will find it there—in the being still.

Not that there is no work for him who would grow, to do. There is work, and severe work—work so great that the worker deserves to have himself relieved of all that is superfluous during his task. If the amount of energy lost in trying to grow were spent in fulfilling rather the conditions of growth, we should have many more cubits to show for our stature. It is with these conditions that the personal work of the Christian is chiefly concerned. Observe for a moment what they are, and their exact relation. For its growth the plant needs heat, light, air, and moisture. Must a man, therefore, go in search of these, or their spiritual equivalents? Is this his work? By no means. Does the plant go in search of its conditions? Nay, the conditions come to the plant. It no more manufactures the heat, light, air, and moisture, than it manufactures its own stem. It finds them all around it in nature. It simply stands still with its leaves spread out in unconscious prayer, and nature lavishes upon it these and all other bounties, bathing it in sunshine, pouring the nourishing air over and over it, reviving it graciously with its nightly dew. Grace, too, is as free as the air. The Lord God is a sun. He is as the dew to Israel. A man has no more to manufacture these than he has to manufacture his own soul. He stands surrounded by them, bathed in them, beset behind and before by them. He lives and moves and has his being in them. How, then, shall he go in search of them? Do not they rather go in search of him? Does he not know how unweariedly they appeal to him? Has he not heard how they are sorrowful when he will not have them? His work, therefore, is not yet. The voice still says, "Be still."

The conditions of growth, then, and the inward principle of growth being both supplied by nature, the thing man has to do, the little junction left for him to complete, is to apply the one to the other. He manufactures nothing; he earns nothing; he need be anxious for nothing; his duty is to *be* in these conditions, to abide in them, to allow grace to play over him, to be still therein and know that this is God.

The conflict begins and prevails in all its lifelong agony the moment a man forgets this. He struggles to grow himself instead of struggling to get back again into position. He makes the church into a workshop when God meant it to be a beautiful garden. And even in his closet, where only should reign silence—a silence as of the mountains whereon the lilies grow—is heard the roar and tumult of machinery. True, a man will often have to wrestle with his God—but not for growth. The Christian life is a composed life. The Gospel is peace. Yet the most anxious people in the world are Christians—Christians who misunderstand the nature of growth. Life is a perpetual self-condemning because they are not growing. And the effect is not only the loss of tranquility to the individual. The energies which are meant to be spent on the work of Christ are consumed in the soul's own fever. So long as the Church's activities are spent on growing, there is nothing to spare for the world. A soldier's time is not spent in earning the money to buy his armour, in finding food and raiment, in seeking shelter. His king provides these things that he may be the

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