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THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE AND CHARACTER.

BY PROFESSOR WILLIAM CLARK, D.C.L., F.R.S.C.

PART III.

WE hope that, to some extent, we have realized the importance of the subject before us, as well as its extent and complexity. We must now address ourselves to a consideration of the means by which the character may be purified, elevated, confirmed.

As regards the factors by which character is constituted we have seen that they are diverse and mutually determining. Our original nature as it comes from our parents is the foundation of all, and must always have considerable influence in colouring our lives. We can never, for example, change our temperaments, and in different ways they will show their respective qualities, yet we may discipline them, and of whatever character they may be, we may bring them under the control of the same principle. Hence we can think of good men who are quick and of other good men who are slow, who are phlegmatic and who are sensitive. We are not responsible for the natural qualities of disposition and character: We are responsible for its moral qualities.

As a starting point the religious teacher must needs insist upon a point already noted, the relation of the soul to God and the Spiritual

world. He will not deny that much may be done, or that much has been done by a merely human discipline. In this way men have been taught self-control, the sense of duty, and other noble qualities. But we must hold that life will not find its true unity, or advance towards the realization of its completeness, unless we recognize our place in a spiritual order, unless we are consciously subjects of the Kingdom of God, members of the Divine family. This can be done only in Christ and by the life of faith.

Now faith, from one point of view, is the gift of God—the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and one might even truly say that it has its origin, its development, and its perfection by the working of Divine grace. But it is also an exercise of our powers of thought and feeling and will, an exercise which is the product of our own voluntary actions, and which like all states and habits is confirmed by successive actings. Granting, as we must do if we are Christians, that faith is the great power of life, the source of energy, duty, devotion, patience—granting that faith is the gift of God, and that it is faith in God reconciled to us in Jesus Christ, and coming to