

bitter cry of the outcast poor, "It is good for us to have the poor and needy with us, because our feelings of sympathy and compassion are called out." This statement may be true, but, given as a reason, it raises more doubts than it solves. Who are we, forsooth, that we should suppose our fellow-creatures are to groan in misery for our spiritual improvement? The sufferings of the innocent child who is doomed to be an invalid—nay, the very existence of evil in the world at all—are accounted for in the same calm, self-assured manner.

Such questions are better left unanswered altogether. It is wiser to bow in reverence in the presence of an acknowledged mystery, and wait the fuller solution; not trying to explain, because we are not in a position, as yet, to explain.

"But," you say, "my doubts and difficulties come from no such reason as this. No one has tried to solve the problems of the universe for me in a futile manner; my doubts arise from another and a deeper source."

There is a text which is very helpful to those who are thus perplexed and bewildered.

"If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching." John vii. 17 (Revised Version).

One thing in seasons of speculative doubt and difficulty is usually plain—*what to do*. What one ought to believe may be surrounded for awhile by mist and bewilderment, but right action is happily easier to discern. In doing the right, in working for others, while prayer is offered for more light, light will often come. To engage in some unselfish task, rather than to sit down and vaguely speculate, is the surest way of solving doubt and mental trouble.

A book which may be of great value to girls who have known religious doubt, or are bewildered by modern ideas—I do not recommend it indiscriminately—is a short biography, *A Record of Ellen Watson*, by Anna Buckland (Macmillan & Co.). It describes the brief career of a girl of wonderful promise. She won an exhibition at Bedford College, a Girton scholarship, and (not accepting the latter) became the first mathematical student of her year at University College, London,

gaining the Meyer de Rothschild exhibition. She was a favourite pupil of the late Professor Clifford. Of pure, unselfish aims, she nevertheless did not accept Christianity. Gradually, however, she came to receive it with deep faith and joy, through no pressure from without, but from the need of her own nature.

Her words, which we commend to thoughtful girls, are significant: "For me, in all my perplexities of belief—not that I allow myself to dwell on these; I think it is wasted energy—I am convinced that the one thing to be sought after most earnestly is a holy life, growing more and more in union with God, through utter submission and continual reliance."

Her unselfish, beautiful story, cut short so early, lends force to her words.

There is much also in Browning's poem "A Death in the Desert" that has been helpful to myself, and may be so to others.

The poem represents the Apostle John at the point of death. He lived to a great age. He is just passing away, but is roused to give words of counsel to his disciples. And, through all the obscurities of a very difficult though beautiful monologue, we arrive at something of this result:

"Many are already beginning to ask about the truth of the facts, which I have seen, have stated, of the Lord's life; and down through the ages many more will question. The best answer, you will find, is to point to Christianity itself, alive, vigorous, a redeeming, elevating power. This is my teaching: do not waste time, when time is so precious, in trying to prove over and over again each detail of what has once been accepted and woven into the fabric of Humanity.

"Start from the point at which you find yourself; be not always reverting to the foundation and searching after origins.

"How did fire come into the world? an artificer might be for ever questioning. Would not one reply to him—

"What boots it to inquire?' The great thing of importance for men is to use it now you have it.

"So with the living fire of Christianity.

Use it now you have it. Go on from the point at which you have already arrived.

"I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ

Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee All questions in the earth and out of it, And has so far advanced thee to be wise. Wouldst thou unprove this to re-prove the proved,

In life's mere minute, with power to use that proof, Leave knowledge, and revert to how it sprung? Thou hast it; use it, and forthwith, or die!"

There is much in this thought to help and enlighten. Precious time and mental energy are dissipated in the consideration of these "doubts." Instead of nursing them, act, and light will come.

As you look over the world, you can see that Christ is the Leader of the progressive part of the human race.

You can see that the lessons He taught are permeating society, and that the more closely He is obeyed, the happier are men, and the better is the world.

There is a fine passage, written by R. D. Blackmore, which is very significant. "Nothing shows more clearly that our faith is of heaven than the truth that we cannot rise to it until it raise us thither. . . . True Christianity, like hope, cheers us to continual effort, exalts us to unbounded prospect, flies in front of our best success. Let us call it a worn-out garb when we have begun to wear it; as yet the mantle is in the skies, and we have only the skirt with the name on it."

Yes; the more reverent the study, the purer the life, the more earnest the aspiration, the closer and clearer will be our vision of the Christian verity, and our perception of

"That God which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves."

LILY WATSON.

VARIETIES.

A CURIOUS NATIONAL CUSTOM.

"I was so mad," said the lively young American lady, "that I could have eaten a pound of nails."

The listening English tourist made a note in his commonplace book that evening. "Anger is so well recognised as a nervous complaint in this country that the natives are in the habit of taking iron to counteract it."

WHAT IS A PESSIMIST?

Papa, what is a pessimist?

A pessimist, my daughter, is a person who never goes out on her bicycle without expecting to puncture her tyre.

AT THE GRAVE OF CHARLES DICKENS.

A well-known author remarks somewhere that it is a melancholy fact that young people of the present day say they cannot read Dickens. This statement may be illustrated by the following dialogue heard recently in Westminster Abbey:—

He (instructively, pointing with his cane to Dickens's grave): "Charles Dickens."

She (hesitatingly): "Charles Dickens? A writer, wasn't he?"

He (rather impatiently): "Yes—he wrote some tales."

"She: "Just fancy!"

HOW TO TEACH A PARROT TO TALK.

Some people say that in order to teach a parrot to talk it is necessary to cut or split the poor thing's tongue. This is quite a mistaken idea.

When you go near Polly's cage always greet the bird with kind words, for a great part of the secret of getting a parrot to talk consists in your first winning his affection and confidence.

You should teach him just a few words to begin with—not long sentences—and you must keep repeating those until he has fairly learned them, and when you are saying them perform some little action in connection with them which will impress the words on your pupil's mind and memory.

For instance, if you wish to teach him to say, "Polly wants his dinner," repeat these words distinctly to him, at the same time giving him some food.

When you want to teach him to say "Good-night, dear," don't keep repeating the short phrase to him at all hours of the day but only at the proper time, and the same with the greeting "Good-morning."

It isn't necessary to be out of sight when teaching Polly to talk. Stand near his cage or perch, and speak distinctly and not too fast.

A SYMPATHETIC EMPLOYER.

Dear Old Gentleman: "And so that is your employer going to the funeral of one of his clerks?"

Young Clerk: "Not a clerk but a distant relation of one of the clerks."

"Indeed! I am sure that is very thoughtful."

"Yes, much too thoughtful. Whenever any of us lose a relative and tell him about it he always goes to the funeral."

"And do you object to such kindness of heart?"

"It isn't kindness of heart, sir. He goes to make sure that the funeral isn't an excuse for a day off."

WAITING.

"Serene I fold my arms and wait,
Nor care for wind, or tide, or sea;
I rave no more 'gainst time or fate,
For lo! my own shall come to me.
I stay my haste, I make delays,
For what avails this eager pace?
I stand amid the eternal ways,
And what is mine shall know my face.
The stars come nightly to the sky;
The tidal wave unto the sea;
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,
Can keep my own away from me."

John Burroughs.