

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

LIFE'S SLUGGARDS AND TRIFLERS.

No sensible person can fancy that race of beings known as *sluggards*, whether male or female, old or young, in high life or low life. They have come to the wrong world; and the sooner they get out of it the sooner society will be relieved of a burdensome and expensive nuisance. Eating and drinking and sleeping are their chief employment. Give them their provender, and they are quite satisfied. Habits of industry they have not; business in the useful sense they have not; and, moreover, they never expect to do anything that is of practical value for either world. Fortunately for themselves, breathing is spontaneous and animal nutrition goes forward by a self-impelling law of Nature. Were it otherwise, they would either die for the want of breath or speedily become ghastly skeletons. Occasionally they relieve the *ennui* of doing nothing by making a business in the shape of hunting, fishing, playing cards, going to the theatre, whiling away their hours at the grog-shop, attending after-race, and perhaps visiting the dens of nocturnal infamy. Such men are the sluggards of human society, having no purpose in their hearts or practice in their lives that lifts them above the low level of the animal.

Woman, in her way, generally more delicate and less offensive, is sometimes amenable to the same charge. There are too many women—far too many for the credit of the sex—whose lives are practically as useless as they are aimless. They can manipulate the little punctilios of what they regard as elegant life; they understand the fashions and know how to spend money; no one can beat them in using an opera-glass or laying plans for empty and profitless amusement. In the matter of mere *show* they are finished experts; and this is about all that they are good for—indeed, all that they propose. To life they productively contribute nothing. They never did anything, and they never expect to do anything that has the value of a dollar to humanity. The world is in no sense richer, or wiser, or better for their presence in it. They were born with a free ticket of exemption from all the practical responsibilities of an earthly existence. Splendid *deceivers* they are, and just as poor producers.

Such persons are not really worth the garments they wear or the bread that it takes to feed them. The wonder is that the sun will consent to shine upon them. They are mere mockeries of a rational human life—guilty abusers of their own powers and as guilty misusers and wasters of time, as indifferent about its value, its improvement, its duties, the claims of the world present and the world future, as they could be if no such ideas had ever been heard of on the globe. Their violation of the two great principles of *utility* and moral *obligation* they seem to regard as one of the fine arts. Their idleness they present as their letter of credit to the first class of human society. They do not belong to the vulgar crowd that must practically work in order to live. When one of these profligates of time dies, society loses nothing by burying them, since it has just one pauper the less to support.

God never made any man or any woman thus to spend the hours of his or her sojourn on earth. It is a false and abnormal mode of life. The very least that one can consistently think of doing is to return to the world as much as it takes to carry him through it. He ought to pay the expenses of his passage through life. If he does less than this, he will then die an insolvent debtor to mankind by all the difference between his consumption and his production. Children falling victims in their early years, congenial imbeciles, and persons without the ordinary normal abilities of our nature are the only ones excusable from the obligation. Society is really a compact of mutual dependences and services; it lives and thrives upon the toil of its members. From it all receive something; and, hence, all are bound to give back to it at least as much as they take from it. The law of useful labour binds all, and condemns the system of helplessness in all, whether it be genteel or vulgar.

The *triflers* with time form a class of beings not far removed in moral estimate from the sluggard. The first thing is to identify them. Here is one of them; and as we look at him we see a light, frivolous, empty-headed specimen of humanity, just skimming along

the surface of existence and generally leaning upon the errands of a fool. He has no solid thoughts and no solid enjoyments. The books that he reads, if he reads at all, are, like himself, sensational, superficial, and trashy—quite often worse than this—indeed, not worth the paper on which they are printed. His pleasures have his own specific gravity. To banish care; to work but little and play a great deal; to drive away all serious meditation and keep life on a sportive jump to flit about hither and thither, and chase all the amusements and perhaps dissipations that can be found; to have a gay time in the winter and, if possible, a gayer one in the summer, to make and receive fashionable calls and always talk nonsense, to think and chat about fine feathers, beautiful colours, graceful attitudes, the newest fashion, and the latest opera; to spend one's midnight hours in revelry, at the theatre or in parties of pleasure, jading his powers with the fatigues of nocturnal diversion and perhaps crime—these and the like things are the well-known characteristics of the trifler. They form the staple articles of his existence, and with them he manages to keep life in a meaningless buzz.

Now, to a sensible eye such a character appears positively ridiculous, and to a Christian eye appalling. Is this, indeed, the life of a man, a moral being, whose mission on earth is the grandest imaginable and on whose every breath the mighty future is waiting with its solemn warning? Is this all that the man has to show? Is life in reality nothing but a joke, that this jester laughs so loudly? God is serious, if he is not. That which so infatuates him now will ere long more afflict him than it ever pleased him. In death it will appear to him as a miserable farce, having no dignity and no utility here and certainly none hereafter.

Life, yes the *moral* life appointed to man as a denizen of earth is always an intense and exciting emergency, full of interest, full of duty, full of opportunity, ringing with the call to action, brief in its period yet everlasting in its results. It is a succession of emphatic words, every one of which should impress the heart. The things that are to be done in life, that *may* be done and *should* be done, with the consequences ensuing for both worlds, from providential oratory by which God loudest calls and which earth should be most anxious to hear. Life morally photographs eternity upon time. In productive power time is eternity. It is really a more solemn thing to live than to die. Some people reserve their anxieties and tears for death. It would be wiser to spend them on life, and then they would have less occasion for them in death.

A moment's glance at these views of life rebukes time's sluggards and trifles with a withering frown, which even they would not be able to bear. As compared with the men of diligent and earnest action connected with high and noble aims—the men who see what life is and for what it was given, and who load its fleeting hours with the strongest and purest displays of human vigour, and then retire to sing its triumphant psalm in other and brighter realms—these sluggards and triflers really seem to belong to another race, untouched by the inspirations that make life sublime. They have so little in common with true men, think so little and feel so little as true men think and feel, and that one almost hesitates to call them men. They burlesque the idea of a man, and whether most to pity or despise them it is difficult to determine.—*Dr. S. T. Spear in N. Y. Independent.*

AGREEING WITH EVERYBODY.

It is a source of pride to many people to feel that they "have not an enemy in the world;" and to the utterance of this bit of praise after their death, they look forward as to their noblest monument. An editor of an inoffensive American newspaper is said to have remarked: "I'm sure we *ought* to make money, for we never said anything against anybody." Mere amiability seemed to him the surest method of money-making; and to others it has seemed as certain a key to popularity, personal advancement, or even moral triumph. Even in school-day years one is sure to see some scholar striving to be liked by everybody, in consequence of a uniform treatment of all, good and bad alike; and all through the various stages of life the same unruffled, nerveless, sycophantic creature is ever to be found, in society, in politics, in business, in literature, in professional life.

In point of fact, it is utterly impossible for a man to agree with everybody, or to avoid making enemies, in some sense. If he has no opponents, it necessarily follows that he is either a hypocrite or a cipher. Some persons are so destitute of any real strength of character that no one cares what they think, and so no one takes the trouble to disagree with them. A person of strong convictions and sound moral sense *must* arouse opposition in a world not yet in a millennial condition. Such is the variety of tastes and opinions; such is the sincere difference of belief, even on the most fundamental subjects, such as the nature of God and the distinctions between right and wrong; such is the heterogeneous character of even the smallest social world, that no sincere person can avoid disagreement with a large number of those with whom he associates. If he seems always to agree with all, he is in the nature of things guilty of falsehood toward some. That constant courtesy which is always a duty need never be hypocritical. Servility and deceit are not courteous; they are in reality gross insults. He who professes agreement with opinions utterly divergent, practises deceit, throws a large share of his influence on the side of error, and weakens his own character. As George Eliot says, "his mind is furnished as hotels are, with everything for occasional and transient use."

It is evident that such a man must become more and more incapacitated for the performance of any sound reformatory work in the world. His moral force, and even his intellectual ability, becomes hopelessly weakened. He must be measured rather by the lowest level to which he sinks, than by the highest summit to which some more powerful spirit occasionally drags him. He is merely a member of society, which, according to the author just quoted, is "chiefly made up of human beings whose daily acts are all performed either in unreflecting obedience to custom and routine, or from immediate promptings of thought or feeling to execute an immediate purpose." Their immediate purpose is simply to be thought agreeable by the person with whom they have to do at the moment; and hence they have no kinship with the real helpers of the world, by whom every separate act is subordinated to a deliberate plan and a sound moral method.

Because we must deplorably fail if we attempt to agree with everybody, it by no means follows that we ought to show our independence by disagreeing with everybody. The perpetual cynic is as repulsive and injurious as the perpetual sycophant; for if the latter flatters the bad, the former denounces the good. The right method is to pursue a course of personal independence, remembering the old maxim which reminds us that Christ's service is true liberty. His is the only approbation we need. If we agree with him and his laws, we must agree or disagree with men and measures just as they seem to us right or wrong. We should praise what we can, and blame what we must. If we are honest men, those who disagree with us will give us their respect, which is better than their liking. If we are dishonest, in order that we may say we have not an enemy in the world, we shall be likely to make good men our enemies, and to cause bad men to despise us.—*S. S. Times.*

THE TRANSFERRED BURDEN.

"If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?"—Ezek. xxxiii. 10.

If they are upon us, how can we live? For "mine iniquities are . . . as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me." "The burden of them is intolerable." It is not the sense, but the burden itself which cannot be borne; no one *could* bear his own iniquities without being sunk lower and lower, and at last to hell by it. It is only not felt when the very elasticity of sin within us keeps us from feeling the weight of the sin upon us; as the very air in our bodies prevents our feeling the otherwise crushing weight of the atmosphere with its tons upon every inch. Or (thank God for the alternative!) when the whole burden, our absolutely intolerable burden, is known to be laid upon another.

If this burden is upon us, we cannot walk in newness of life, we cannot run in the way of His commandments, we cannot arise and shine. The burden is "too heavy" for these manifestations of life; we do but "pine away" in our sins, whether consciously or unconsciously; and the sentence is upon us, They