

a great extent upon its financial condition—but the life that makes mercenary gain the paramount issue of its existence can be, but superficial and barren.

The principal element of success, I believe, is happiness; for if a person be happy, though possessing little, he has all things, and if unhappy, though owning much, what has he? Now, as Pope truly writes, "Virtue alone is happiness below," disclosing in these few words the secret of a noble life and happy death. Therefore, a successful life must have for a foundation, virtue; for a support, virtue; for a triumphant ending, virtue. Solomon in his writings declares the most divine quality of man to be wisdom, and states that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," thus again proving virtue to be the foremost principle of life. And, in truth, how very little else there is in life, for at best our lives are but for the moment, and any one soul may accomplish but little? As a bursting bubble or a breaking wave, we catch the gleam of the sun for an instant and disappear forever; our fame forgotten, be it ever so great, our virtue alone standing through eternity as a monument of our achievement and an emblem of our success. Therefore, in conclusion, I consider that man who has lived by such light as he has had, and who has conducted his life to the greatest mutual benefit of his God, his fellow and himself, to have attained true success.

JUSTUS MILLER, JR.
Oxford County, Ont.

OUR NEXT COMPETITION.

Our next competition will be a short-story contest, in regard to which the following rules must be observed: (1) Stories may be true or fictitious, but must be "Canadian." (2) They should not be over 2,000 words in length. (3) They must be received at this office not later than the last day of March.

As this is the last competition for this season, we look forward to a strong representation of the members of the society in response to it—also to the addition of many new names to our list of members. The subjects for this winter have been chiefly such as must call forth the reasoning powers; the short-story tournament may appeal to those who are especially interested also in the development of the imaginative faculties, in picturesque description, and musical language. . . . We are pleased to note that many new members have been enrolled during the past few weeks, and are especially glad to welcome our young invalid friend, McA. R.

[Miss L. E. H. will be interested in hearing that the above was written before her letter arrived. "A case of 'great minds'"]

CONVERSATION AS ENTERTAINMENT.

Has the art of conversation become a thing of the past? Verily one would think so, if the strenuous efforts at entertainment resorted to by the present generation be any clue to the answer. Out of one hundred "evenings" that you spend among your friends how many are given up to conversation, or even to conversation and music? In town, after a very short time, the suggestion almost invariably is, "Have a game of cards." Where cards are not in order, whether in town or country, many and wonderful are the devices to keep people "going," especially if the number of guests is such as to constitute a "party"; and in all too many cases, it is to be feared, the sort of entertainment provided is by no means flattering to the mental capacity of the guests.

A writer in "Nation" has recently held up to the bare light of facts the sort of twaddle worked in with "teas" in England. Were he speaking of this country he might draw ninety-nine per cent. of other home entertainments into the arraignment.

"The provincial 'tea,'" he says,

"represents some of the most singular efforts to find a substitute for an intelligent human interest that it would be possible to imagine. Its attraction would seem to spring essentially from childhood and from the more mechanical and less vivid exercises of the schoolroom. The modern origin of this entertainment lay in the 'Spelling Bee,' which some years ago raged through England. But the 'Spelling Bee' had some relation to practice, even if it be the eccentric practice of the English dictionary, and this is more than can be said for the kind of diversion we have in view. All that can be urged in its favor is that it sets in motion much the same sort of barren ingenuity that is expended in the rhyming of 'Limericks,' and in wrestling with the innumerable variety of word-puzzles on which the popular weeklies depend to build up their circulations.

"For example, there are 'Book Teas,' and 'Label Teas,' and 'Hidden Treasure Teas.' The guest at a 'Label Tea' has a luggage label pinned on his, or rather her, back, and has to guess, by a series of regulated questions, what is the writing or the name on the label. In 'Book Teas,' you describe the name of a book by some punning device attached to the bosom of your dress. 'Hidden Treasure Teas' need no material adornment. You dive merely into the pure depths of your mind.

"But the most remarkable tea which we have ever heard of was that described as a 'Courtship Tea.' To the entertainment which we have in mind, fifty or sixty people were invited, including (need I say?) several clergymen and the bishop of the diocese, and indeed the essence of this curious function was that men as well as women should be included in the list of guests. To each person was handed, on his or her arrival, a printed form containing a list of questions, with spaces for the answers. All the questions turned on love or marriage; all the answers were to be given in the name of a flower. Thus, to the question, 'Who was the best man at the marriage?' the answer would be 'Sweet William.' Finally, the two prizewinners were hailed as bride and bridegroom, the lady being given a wreath of orange blossoms and the gentleman a favor for his button-hole, and the two paraded the reception rooms in triumph, arm-in-arm, acclaimed by the applause of their fellow-guests. These were not the freaks of the inhabitants of what is now politely described as a 'rest-cure establishment.' They were the recreations of citizens and citizenesses of some credit and renown in a southern town. The affair was much talked of, the prizewinners were warmly congratulated, the idea was thought to be rather deep, and to reflect much credit on the intellectual sprightliness and inventiveness of the host and hostess. The scene was gay, even to wildness; the breathless excitement when the numbers were being counted up, and the prize was awarded, bordered on delirium. We are not sure the occasion was not described in the local newspapers.

"The childishness of mind and temper which underlies these quaint devices is rooted, no doubt, in the surroundings of the lives that are attracted by it. It is the mark of people with little character and little to do. Religion is no stronger a force in such lives than is art, or adventure, or passion, or philanthropy; the child's habit of make-believe, of using his mind for a form of conjuring, persists and combines with the prim, conventional atmosphere of steeple, southern England. Such soil favors few vigorous human growths among women."

We confess that our heart went out to the writer of this article. He too had been "through it." He too had got up with a silly little forced smile on his face, and gone through performances in which he felt about as sensible as a Cheshire cat, although (alas!) unable, like the Cheshire cat, to vanish, leaving only his grin behind. He too had stifled yawns behind his handkerchief, and vowed in his heart that by all the stars he would make some excuse to "cut out" parties in future. And he had played his part like a little man, as we had, scores of times, and had departed at last with a genuine smile—a smile of glad relief on his countenance—and the fib on his lips, that he had "had a very pleasant evening."

It seems a pity that young men and women should be put through such facings—and by such well-meaning hostesses too. Such entertainment may be delightful for young folk in their 'teens, but should not fully-developed men and women be able to spend an occasional evening without such makeshifts? Might it not be well to introduce the good old fashion of conversation—or of conversation enlivened by a little music? Everyone enjoys a good talk, and surely a good talk is not so hard to bring about, provided each is willing to do his part in keeping it up. In these days of newspapers and books, and live municipal and other topics, there should be no lack of subjects—quite outside of gossip too. Think over the question, at least, before the long winter evenings with their opportunity for entertaining have passed: The habit of conversation—of good, enjoyable, profitable conversation, not gossip or mere chatter—develops with practice, as other things develop. It is at least worth a trial.

COUREUR-DE-BOIS.

The Quiet Hour.

THOUGHTS MADE VISIBLE.

As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.—Prov. xxiii. 7.

Your manners will depend very much upon the quality of what you frequently think on; for the soul is tinged and colored with the complexion of thought.—Marcus Aurelius.

And if the soul is tinged and colored with the complexion of thought, so also is the body. God still seals His servants in their foreheads, it is plainly written on their faces, for all the world to see, that they are His. And Satan seals his slaves too, brands them with an unmistakable mark, as Cain was marked. People sometimes indulge in secret thoughts which they would shrink from in horror if they thought their friends and acquaintances could look into their minds. They have little faith in God's presence, and perhaps care little for His opinion of them, but they would make a real attempt to control the thoughts of the heart if they knew that even one person in the room could really do mind-reading. Some men and women are not in the least ashamed of untruthfulness or petty meanness—if only they feel sure that no one knows about these things, though they would feel terribly disgraced if they were found out and publicly exposed. And yet, the real disgrace lies in sinning, not in being found out. Just as when the body is diseased, the evil lies in the disease being there, not in having people know about it.

We are all aware that every secret thing is known to God, then how is it that we feel more disgraced when we have to face not alone His disapproval, but the disapproval of our friends and neighbors? We all care a great deal for the good opinion of others. Perhaps we may not know how much we care, but if we should find that everyone was shrinking away from us as though we were lepers, it would be very hard to bear. But we cannot avoid the certainty that our thoughts will make themselves visible. The soul is constantly moulding the body, and we can never safely indulge in secret sins without danger of exposure. Thoughts affect the whole body—not only altering the expression of the face. There is an article in the December "Atlantic Monthly" on "The Children's Educational Theatre," which exemplifies this. The writer says that many boys, cramped, dulled, uninterested in the barren round of school and work, find no stimulus sufficient to bring home to the will a necessity for standing straight, squaring the chest, or holding up the head. Set such a boy to "play a part," and the body at once responds to the thoughts. "The lover, the soldier, the hero with whose being his nature claims kinship, demands by divine

authority the gallant bearing, the high head, the clear eye, the ringing voice which, in divine acquiescence, the boy recognizes as a fitting expression for his ideal." Then the writer goes on to describe how, if the part he is presenting is low and base, the body instinctively shows its automatic reflection of the thoughts. "The crouched body, the lowered eye, the shuffling gait, the loose-mouthed, sloven speech, all announce themselves as signals and shapings of the debased soul." The boy himself makes this translation from spirit into flesh, and never again can his body speak that tongue misunderstood by him."

If this is so when the thoughts are only "acting" and are not really a part of the soul, how much more certainly will the thoughts which are habitual write themselves visibly in face and manner, in gesture and tones of the voice. It may be possible to successfully act the part of a hero for an hour or two—not only on the stage, but in an exciting crisis—but it is not possible to pretend to have a beautiful soul, freely indulging all the time in debasing thoughts, without having the real nature of those thoughts pretty well known to associates. Even if it were possible for a man to be always on guard, his true character would still be felt in some mysterious way. Yesterday, at a neighborhood party, where only neighbors of 16 years and upwards are admitted, a lad was challenged with the question: "Are you really 16?" He was small and looked about 14, but his face spoke for him, when he looked quietly up with a smile into his questioner's face, and said: "Yes." I was sure that he was speaking the truth, even before an older relative was asked, who answered: "He is just 16."

A person may be very charming in manner and conversation, but we generally know instinctively whether the friendliness is really genuine or whether it is only a thin veneer. The face is a great tell-tale, and no one has the power to prevent his character being written pretty correctly in that most conspicuous place. Those who indulge in secret sins may heed Isaiah's warning: "The shew of their countenance doth witness against them, and they declare their sins as Sodom, they hide it not. Our Lord was not speaking only of the Judgment Day when he said: 'There is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested, neither was anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad.'"

Emerson tells us that human nature will not be concealed, but it is constantly publishing itself, and character is expressed in everything we do or say. Even when we say nothing we need not expect to keep our opinions secret, for "silence answers very loud." A few weeks ago I wrote a letter which I showed to a friend before posting it. She read it over and handed it back to me without a word, beginning to talk about other things immediately after. The next day I sent her a line: "Thank you for your wise counsel, I am sure you are right, and I put the letter in the fire."

She wrote back: "How did you know I did not approve?"

Why, I knew it as well as if she had talked for an hour. Possibly, if she had talked for an hour, I might not have seen so plainly that she was right and I was wrong.

Thoughts are generally easily read. Emerson says: "If you would not be known to do anything, never do it. A man may play the fool in the drifts of a desert, but every grain of sand shall seem to see. He may be a solitary eater, but he cannot keep his foolish counsel. A broken complexion, a swinish look, ungenerous acts, and the want of due knowledge—all blab."

A pure-hearted woman will shrink instinctively from a bad man. She may not know any facts against his character, but she feels a natural repulsion, which cannot be reasoned away. It is far easier to deceive ourselves than to deceive other people.

"Oh! wad some power the giftie gie us To see ourselves as ithers see us! It wad frae mony a blunder free us An' foolish notion!"

Joseph might be falsely accused and thrown into prison, but probably his master knew all the time that the young