

### The Habit of Holiness.

In the region of common morality, where religion meets the daily problems of an honest life, we all assign habit a large place and recognize its necessity and power. But the same principles reach up into what men call the higher religious life as well. The habit of veracity toward men is not more a habit than the habit of tenderness toward God. And if in the realm of righteousness, which Mr. Matthew Arnold calls "but a heightened conduct," habit thus plays its part as truly as in simple conduct, so also in holiness, which Mr. Arnold calls "but a heightened righteousness," may we expect to find it at work too.

Indeed, holiness is not holiness at all, but only a sporadic effort thereafter, until it has become a habit; that is "a mode of action so established by us as to be entirely natural, involuntary, instinctive, unconscious and uncontrollable." Holiness is not an occasional triumph over all struggle and the extirpation of all that is imperfect and weak. It is the love of righteousness grown into a passion, refusing to accept defeat of effort toward ideals, and touched with piercing love of the God of holiness and right, plus, among us, the tender apprehension and inward vital acceptance of Jesus. Holiness is more than the mere purpose of right behaviour. It is this kindled into light and heat by living contact with God in Christ.

Such holiness must itself become the habit of our life. Not a few are willing to rise at intervals into the consciousness of Christ, and to behold as in his presence, and to be for the moment interpenetrated with his power. But their holiness is occasional, not habitual; and is therefore not holiness at all, but only impulse. When St. Paul, however, declares: "To me to live is Christ," or, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," he is describing an ideal of experience, whether he had himself yet realized it or not, which is holiness grained into habits, and thus become effective and real.—Robert E. Speer.

### God's Work and Ours.

God wants us to keep ourselves without blame, that he may make us without blemish. A child brings us his copy-book; we see that the child's writing is without blame, or, rather, that he has tried hard, and is deserving of praise; but we see, too, that his work is not without blemish. It is by the child's faithful diligence, which keeps it without blame, that the teacher will finally bring the child's skill to a place where he shall write a page without blemish. Just so, when we keep our hearts blameless, God will be working with us as Jude wrote: "To set you before the presence of his glory without blemish." God does not ask of us that we be without faults, but that we be without blame in trying to overcome those faults. Our first striving with a character, or with a pen, may be black with blots, but, if it is faithful striving, it will be the way by which in the end, God will make us faultless.—S. S. Times.

Religion comes through men to make man perfect. Since it does not come to man as already perfect, it falls necessarily under the law of human progress. You cannot create a perfect moral character. A perfect physical creature may be created, but a perfect moral character is incapable of creation. He must act, he must be disciplined, he must be taught; he is made perfect by the things which he suffers.—A. M. Fairbairn.

## Our Young People

### Jan. 3. The Growth I Need.

#### Some Bible Hints.

Not all are to grow in the same way (v. 11). Do not imitate; it is as necessary that you should grow into what God wants you to become as that Paul should grow into what God wanted him to become.

"The fulness of Christ" (v. 13), in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily? Yes; for we, in our smaller capacity, are to be just as full of God as He was.

"A full-grown man" (v. 13). We pity physical dwarfs, but their lot is bliss compared with the wretchedness of spiritual dwarfs: and how few shrink from that!

"Grow up into Christ" (v. 15). Christ is to be the end and aim of all growth, and if we are trying to accomplish anything that tends in any other direction, it is not progress but retrogression.

#### Suggestive Thoughts.

Our subject is not "the kind of growth I want in 1904," but "the kind of growth I need"—often a very different thing!

It is the *spirit* of growth that is needed more than the *amount* of growth. We have all eternity to grow in.

Christianity does not permit stagnation. Its word is Forward! In this it is different from all other religions.

Nothing grows so fast that we can see it grow. Learn to be patient with yourselves.

#### A Few Illustrations.

Some systems of exercise are dangerous, because they make muscle faster than the heart can take care of it. In all your growth, grow first in the chief thing, in love of God. Many plants lose in the fall whatever they have grown during the summer, and in the spring must start all over. The growth of the soul is like a tree, ever upward and outward.

Set some stint for yourself this new year. A runner can always do his best when he has a goal ahead.

What are called "growing pains" in a child are entirely wrong and unnecessary. So also there should be no pain in our spiritual growth, but only happiness.

#### To Think About.

What progress did I make last year?

What was the cause of my chief failures last year?

Am I entering the New Year in the right spirit?

#### A Cluster of Quotations.

The sooner we wretched braggarts drop out of our vocabulary the word "mine," and substitute the word "Thine," the sooner may we expect to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.—Charles M. Sheldon.

Nature never stands still, nor souls either; they ever go up or go down.—Julia C. R. Dorr.

#### Executive Committees That Execute.

They meet often, and thus maintain interest.

They meet regularly, and thus maintain habit.

They discuss at every meeting the work of each committee, and thus get broad views.

They pray much over the society work, and thus get deep views.

They are the central life of their societies, and as they are weak or strong, the society is flabby or victorious.

They consult much with the pastor, and thus get experienced views.

They make it a rule always to be working at some definite object till it is attained, and thus secure progress.

### Choice Thoughts.

The only safe way of drinking is—to leave off before you begin.—Canon Farrar.

We are in the world for one purpose—to find Christ and remind men of Him.—Henry Drummond.

God doeth all things well; and he doeth them all the right time and in the right way and to the right people.—Alexander Whyte.

We think of the truth as a thing that is spoken or taught; Jesus Christ thought of the truth as a thing that is lived.—Mark Guy Pearse.

The smallest things become great when God requires them of us; they are small only in themselves; they are always great when they are done for God, and when they serve to unite us with Him eternally.—Fenelon.

Let the Christ, who is not only wise, but wisdom, choose your path, and be sure that by the submission of your will all your paths are His, and not only yours. Make His paths yours by following His steps, and do in your place what you think Christ would have done if He had been there.—MacLaren.

Are we not daily, all through life's journey, trusting ourselves to bridges whose supporting piers are away down beneath the water, believing in their strength without doubt, neither wondering or complaining when by chance one of them trembles or swerves a hair's breadth in the storm? We walk the bridge of life. Can we not trust its safety on the great resting places of God's wisdom that are hid from us in the depth of the two eternities?—Phillips Brooks.

### Daily Reading.

- Mon., Dec. 28.—Birth before growth. John 3: 1-8  
Tues., Dec. 29.—Growth by feeding. 1 Pet. 2: 1-5  
Wed., Dec. 30.—Growth by exercise. Phil. 2: 12-16  
Thurs., Dec. 31.—Growth by trust. Matt. 6: 27-34  
Fri., Jan. 1.—Growth in grace. 2 Pet. 3: 14-18  
Sat., Jan. 2.—Growth in His likeness. Ps. 17: 1-15  
Sun., Jan. 3.—Topic—The kind of growth I need in 1904. Eph. 4: 11-16.

There are friends who are to us like a great rock in a weary land. We flee to them in the heat of parching days and rest in their shadow. A friend in whom we can confide with ut fear of disappointment; who, we are sure, will never fail us, will never stint his love in serving us, who always has healing tenderness for the hurt of our heart, comfort for our sorrows, and cheer for our discouragement—such a friend is not only a rock of shelter for us in time of danger but is also as rivers of water in a thirsty land, when our heart cries out for life and love.—Exchange.

It is better to be a good failure than a bad success.