

tinues, and not after the friend is well again. If we allow him to pass through his illness without showing him any attention, there is no use, when he is about again, for us to wake up and begin to lavish kindness upon him. He does not need it now, and it will do him no good.

If one of our friends is passing through some sore struggle with temptation, and is in danger of being overcome, then is the time to come up close alongside of him, and put the strength of our love under his weakness to support him. If we fail him then, we may as well let him go on alone altogether after that. Of what use is sympathy when the struggle is over? Of what use is help when the battle has been fought through, and won without us? Or, suppose the friend was *not* victorious; suppose he failed in the battle; failed because no one came to him to help him, because *we* came not with the sustaining strength of our sympathy. Suppose that, left to struggle unaided with enemies or adversities, he was defeated, and sank down crushed and hopeless. Is there any use in our hurrying up to him now to proffer our assistance? Is not the time past when help could avail him? Can our sympathy now enable him to retrieve what he has lost? Can our faithfulness to-day atone for our unfaithfulness yesterday?

Most of us are the guardians of other souls. The time to fulfill our duty of guardianship is when the dangers are imminent. There is no use for the lookout on the ship to become vigilant only after the vessel is among the rocks. There is no use for the sentinel in the time of war to arouse and begin to watch when the enemy has stolen in and captured the field.

Are you your brother's keeper? Are you set to watch against danger to his soul? Are you a parent, set to guard your own children against the perils of sin that lurk in ambush all about them? Are you a teacher, with a class entrusted to your care, to shield and keep? Are you a sister, with brothers dear to you, whom you are to protect from temptation? Are you a brother, and have you sisters tender and exposed to danger, whose defender you should be? Are you a friend, and is there one beset by perils over whom God has set you as guide or protector?

Are you watching, or are you sleeping? Remember that the time to watch is before the danger has done its deadly work. When, through your negligence, it has come and destroyed the precious life, you may as well sleep on. Watching then ever so faithfully will not undo the evil which is done.

In the preparation for duty or for struggle the same principle applies. There is a time for it, and if it is not done then it cannot be done at all. It is a rule of providential leading that opportunity is always given to every one to prepare for whatever part he is to take in life, and for whatever experience he is to meet. If only one embraces and uses his opportunities as they come to him, one by one, he will never be surprised by any sudden emergency in life, whether of duty or of trial, for which he will not be ready. For example, before life's stern, fierce conflicts which put manhood's strongest fibre to the test, we have childhood and youth as seasons for preparation. He that rightly improves these seasons is fully ready for whatever life may bring.

It is just because these opportunities for preparation come to us so quietly and without announcement that so many fail to improve them. The school-boy does not see what good it will do him to know the simple things that are set as his daily tasks, and neglects to learn them. Twenty, forty years afterwards, he fails in the position to which he is called, because he slurred his lessons in the quiet school-days. The young apprentice takes no pains to perfect himself in the trade he has chosen, and is only a third or fourth-class workman all his life. The young professional man dislikes the dry drudgery that the early years bring to him, and neglects it, waiting till some great opportunity comes to lift him into prominence. The opportunity comes at length, but he fails in it, because he has not improved the long series of preparatory steps that came before.

On the other hand, a school-boy does every task faithfully. He never slights a lesson. He goes thoroughly over every day's studies. He does not see either of what use these things will be to him when he is a man, in active life, nor does he ask; his only care is to be faithful in every duty. Years later he rises to high places which he never could have filled had he slurred his boyhood's tasks. A physician is

suddenly called to take charge of a critical case, requiring the best skill in the world. He is successful, and wins fame for himself, because in the long, quiet years of obscure practice he has been diligent. If he had not been faithful in those years of routine work, he must have failed when the great opportunity came. He could not have made preparation at the moment. The case could only be met by the instant use of knowledge and skill already acquired.

It is a secret worth knowing and remembering, that the truest, and indeed the only, preparation for life's duties or trials is made by simple fidelity in whatever each day brings. A day squandered anywhere may prove the dropped stitch from which the whole web will begin to unravel. One lesson neglected may prove to have contained the very knowledge for the want of which, far along in the course, the student may fail. One opportunity let slip may be the first step in a ladder leading to eminence or power, but no higher rounds of which can be gained because the first was not taken. We never know what is important in life. The most insignificant duty that offers may be the first lesson in preparation for a great mission. Indeed, every hour of life holds the keys of the next, and possibly of many hours more.

So the times of preparation come silently and unawares, and many neglect them, not knowing what depends upon them; but neglected, and allowed to slip away, they can never be regained. The man who finds himself in the presence of a great duty or opportunity which he cannot take up or accept, because he is not prepared for it, cannot then go back to make the needful preparation. The soldier cannot learn the art of war in the face of the battle. The Christian cannot in an unexpected emergency of temptation gather all needed spiritual power in a moment. Not to be ready in advance for great duties or great needs, is to fail.

The lesson is important, and has infinite applications. You cannot go back to-day and do the work you neglected to do yesterday. You cannot make preparation for life when the burden of life is on you. Opportunities never return. They must be taken on the wing, or they cannot be taken at all. There is a time for every duty. Done then, its issues and results may be infinite and eternal. Deferred or neglected, it may never be worth while to take it up again.—*S. S. Times.*

THE CHURCH'S STRENGTH.

O, where are kings and empires now,
Of old that went and came?
But, Lord, thy Church is praying yet,
A thousand years the same.

We mark her goodly battlements,
And her foundations strong;
We hear within the solemn voice
Of her unending song.

For not like kingdoms of the world
Thy holy Church, O God!
Though earthquake shocks are threatening her,
And tempests are abroad;

Unshaken as eternal hills,
Immovable she stands,
A mountain that shall fill the earth;
A house not made by hands.

THE WEEKS OF THE HARVEST.

"Now the air
Is rich in fragrance! fragrance exquisite!
Of new-mown hay, of wild thyme dewy washed,
And gales ambrosial, which with cooling breath
Ruffle the lake's gray surface."

So sings the poet of the harvest weeks, the weeks that so constantly and beautifully illustrate the earliest postdiluvian promise, that "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, should not cease."

Some people regard the bounty of these weeks as the mere gush of nature; but the eye of piety has always recognized them as flowing directly from the open hand of God. "Thou visitest the earth, and enrichest it; Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water; Thou preparest them corn, when Thou hast so provided for it." David, like Cowper, never failed to look up "through nature to nature's God." And Jeremiah, in the same spirit, says, "He (God) reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest." Pharaoh could *dream* about a seven-years' famine, but only God could foretell and cause it.

In special commemoration of the Divine agency

in the harvest, as well as for fit and useful seasons of national reunion, the Jews were instructed to keep two great yearly feasts—one for the "firstfruits," occurring in our May, and the other of "the ingathering," at the close of the year, in September. Then, not only Jerusalem, but the whole land also, was literally alive with religious festivity. A general flow of the nation, field-labourers, harvest-men, traders of grapes, ploughmen and shepherds, set in towards the Holy City; all "glad" to shout and sing, "Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." Or, as Thomson versifies such justifiable hilarity:

"Loose to festive joy, the whole country round
Laughs with the loud sincerity of mirth,
Shaking to the winds their cares."

To beings situated as we are, subsisting upon the fruits of the earth, it is a matter of no small importance that the renewal of these fruits should be frequent. An admirable correspondence exists between the keeping qualities of our staple fruits, and their periodical seasons of production. It might have been otherwise. Nothing lies between us and periodical famines but the goodness of God that planned it otherwise, so that new food is constantly coming forth out of the earth, as the old is decaying and ready to vanish away. It is a law of our appetite to tire of the old, and to eagerly crave the new. "Old wine" may be a luxury, but not old food. How gladly our returned seamen, home again from their long and weary voyages, leave their hermetically sealed packages, and turn to feast upon what is fresh from the soil, or the stem. That our grains are *annuals*, instead of *biennials* or *septennials*, as for aught we know they might have been, is one of the speaking mercies of the Lord towards us.

Also, the fixed general regular recurrence of the harvests is something by no means to be unnoticed. To this the husbandman looks with a reliance that controls and shapes all his ordinary purposes and projects for the year. And no one can fully describe the confusion of agriculture, as well as of the whole system of civic trade and commerce, were the weeks of the harvest to occur with large irregularity, ranging loosely, like winds and storms, from one year's end to the other. It is by this its fixed regularity that the harvest holds, as it does, the balances in which all other earthly possessions are weighed. For, as Solomon says, "The king himself is served by the field." But the harvest is such a universal regulator, because it is itself regulated by Him who "appointed its weeks."

But such utilitarian estimates of the harvest weeks need not shut off from us their more æsthetical or jubilant features. Few sights are more pleasing to the eye than that of an outstretched field, waving with the rooted grain or decorated with the standing sheaf, nodding and rustling in the wind. Nowhere is "the curve of beauty" more finely exemplified.

"The glowing landscape smiles and melts;
Green wave-like meadows here are spread;
There woodland shades are sweetly shed;
In deepening gold there glows the wheat,
And there the rye-field's vying sheet."

And then, consequently, the abounding joy and gladness! "They joy before thee," says Isaiah, "according to the joy of harvest."

"Hail! harvest-home!

To thee the muse of nature pours the song,
By instinct taught to warble! Scene sublime!
Where the rich earth presents her golden treasures,
Where balmy breathings whisper to the heart
Delights unspeakable! Where seas and skies,
And hills and valleys, colours, odours, dews,
Diversify the work of nature's God."

—*N.Y. Christian Weekly.*

A PLEA FOR MINISTERS' WIVES.

The position of the minister's wife is socially rated as a very honourable one, and is considered to be one of more than ordinary influence. It has this disadvantage, that it is not clearly defined, and its peculiar duties are not specified nor regulated by rule or custom. It is generally considered in somewhat the light of a public office. But when the public claims upon the minister's wife begin, and what are their limitations, there is nothing to determine. In this case more is usually required of her than she can possibly do. She is a human being, with the same flesh and blood as others; why should she be expected to have more power, or more grace, or be required to do more than any other Christian woman? One who