

THE MINOR VIRTUES.

TEXT: "WHO HATH DESPISED THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS."

VALUE IN INSIGNIFICANCES.

Seemingly Small Things May be Vital
Essential—The Watch, the Compass,
the Value of Accuracy in Them—All
Would be Well if Christ is Taken Into
Smallest Details of Your Life.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1903, by William Baily, of Toronto, at the Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Chicago, Nov. 15.—In this sermon the preacher makes a plea for the observance and practice of Christian courtesies and of the minor virtues that go very far toward making up the sum of individual human character. The text is Zechariah iv., 10, "Who hath despised the day of small things?"

The world's favorite monocle is the telescope. We admire objects for many different reasons. One of the chief is their bigness. Every tourist wants to see Niagara Falls. It is the biggest of all falls. And Mount Everest. It is the highest of all mountains. And Kilauwa, because that volcano has the largest crater in the world. The human race, conscious that it is finite, aspires to explore the infinite. Its conception of the sublime is not the dwarf, but the giant.

But, though tremendous bulk or magnitude or hugeness or immensity has for the human eye an awe inspiring fascination, yet to-day I want to point out some seemingly insignificances which are more essential for the world's peace and harmony than was the Colossus of Rhodes, or the hanging gardens of Babylon, or the temple of Diana at Ephesus, or any of the other seven wonders of the world. I find that, though my watch has its large wheels and bars and regulating hand and mainspring and adamantium jewels, yet it has also its little screws and little wheels and little cogs and little pegs, which the jeweler has to study under the clarifying eye of the magnifying glass. I also find that the absence perhaps of one of these little screws or cogs might stop the whole machinery of my watch as surely as if I should snap the mainspring.

Seemingly insignificances may be vital essentials. Some years ago, when crossing the Atlantic Ocean, the companion with whom I was traveling one day suddenly flung open my stateroom door and cried: "Come on deck! Something has happened to the ship!" When I arrived on deck I found scores and hundreds of passengers excitedly watching the strange movements of the ship's course. Instead of plowing ahead, we were slowly moving around to the right in a perfect circle. Just then an officer passed me, and I asked: "What is the matter, Lieutenant? Is the rudder broken?" "Oh, no," said he. "We are merely testing a new compass. In order to find out whether it is perfect we had to wait until we were far away from the magnetic effect of rocks and land. Those influences may not seem to be much, but they may entirely deflect the accuracy of the compass needle." Thus, my friends, I would take for my theme to-day the "Small Essentials" of life. I would try to show you that many of the seeming insignificances and the despised monads are pregnant with large broods of influences, every one of which will have large progenies. I ask the striking question which Zechariah put in times of old, "Who hath despised the day of small things?"

Small essential the first. Appropriateness and neatness of personal apparel—appropriateness and neatness in reference to the coat a man wears upon his back, and to the shoes on his feet, and especially in reference to the cleanliness of the linen he wears about his neck, and to the modesty with which he is attired in public. God would never have condemned the "cauls and the chains and the bracelets and the ruffles and bonnets and the ornaments of the legs and the headbands and the tablets and earrings and the nose jewels and the changeable suits of apparel and the mantles and the wimples and the crisping pins and the glasses and the fine linen and the hoods and the veils" of the haughty daughters of Zion, "who walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet," unless there was a direct connection between a man's inner character and his "Sartor Resartus," or "Philosophy of Clothes." Paul would never have commanded the women of the Corinthian church to veil themselves in public assemblage if he had not been convinced that a woman's disregard of the social customs of the country and the time implied a lack of modesty and purity. There is, there must be, an unbreakable spiritual link binding a man's personal apparel and his heart. The elaborate directions which God gave to the Israelites for careful and frequent ablutions of the body and the clothes show that he is not indifferent to the cleanliness of those who come into his presence. We have, therefore, a right to doubt whether a person who is in public chronically dirty in person or slovenly or immodest in apparel can offer acceptable worship.

Yet to hear some slovenly talk one might suppose it was a sign of mental degeneracy for men and women to be careful of their person in appearance. They pretend to believe that a well groomed and neat man is essentially a weak man. Therefore they practically say that one of the signs of genius is a disregard of the decencies of life. They cite the example of the Greek mathematician whose appearance in deshabille on the streets shocked all the people who saw him, and the example of Napoleon and Samuel Johnson and Horace Greeley, all notorious for their indifference to ordinary neatness of attire, but such examples are not proofs of genius, but only of the power of genius to win its way in life in spite of disgusting habits. And yet, deluded by this idea that slovenliness and uncleanness are signs of true greatness, many a lawyer, a doctor, a merchant, has ruined his financial chances in life because he would not dress as a gentleman should dress. There are more ways than one of interpreting that passage of Scripture which says in reference to the one talent man, "And I was afraid and went and hid thy talent in the earth." Some of "the earth" in which many men hide their talents of life is to be found in the filthiness and in the unkempt conditions of their wardrobes.

If it is necessary to be clean and neat in personal appearance in temporal work, how much more is this neatness essential when we are consecrating our lives to the service of Jesus Christ? The dear Saviour wants us to go out and labor in his name in the same way as he used to work. He was taunted with many reproaches during his earthly life, but those who hated him most never charged him with uncleanness or slovenliness, and we may be sure that the Pharisee who invited him to his house and the other guests who entertained him would never have welcomed him as a guest if he had been careless about his person or his dress. The quality of his robe, may

have been poor, but we may be sure there were no imputations upon it or upon him. So, Christian workers, if we go forth in Christ's name, some of us must be careful about our personal appearance. Remember, O man of God, that wherever you go your clean skin and pure linen as well as your lips preach in Christ's name.

Small essential the next: The little kindnesses and courtesies which we should extend to those with whom we come in daily contact. The little acts of deference which we should show to ladies, such as taking off the hat when we stand with them in an elevator or allowing them to precede us through an opened door. The "Thank you, sir," with which a lady should acknowledge a gentleman's action when he rises in a street car to offer her a seat. The little social calls by which we should welcome a new neighbor or her friends into our community. The little gifts of delicacies which should be sent to the invalid's room of our neighbor's house. All these little attentions and courtesies may not seem to be of much value at the time, but they are mighty in the development of the opposite end of human character. They are mighty in deciding whether a man is to live a selfish or an unselfish life.

How a selfish life? Simply enough. Here, for instance, is a man who enters a railroad car. He places his satchel in one seat and his overcoat by his side. Then he stretches out his long legs, puts his feet upon the opposite seat and begins to read a newspaper. After awhile the train fills up, but he does not remove his encumbrances. The man is an incarnation of selfishness. He cares only for his own comfort and is oblivious of the rights of others. He has paid for but one sitting. He has a right to occupy only half a seat. Yet he is monopolizing four sittings. When the poor old woman with a heavy bundle comes down the aisle, timidly looking for a place to rest and to deposit her load, he buries his face yet further in the newspaper and pretends not to see her. The old lady hesitates a little by his side, and then passes on. You say that man is not a polite man. He is not a gentleman. I say Christian courtesies mean, most of all, that man is laying the foundations of an evil future. For if he is discourteous to his fellow men, if he is willing to crowd his fellow passengers in a railroad train out of the seats which rightfully belong to them, he is developing a disposition which, if not checked, may lead him by and by to the neighbor of the dollars and cents which he has righted himself to him. When Paul said, "Be courteous," he meant more than to be merely polite. He meant "be honest, be fair, be noble in the little duties and attentions which you should show to your fellow men."

Character is not born; it is developed. It springs not up in a night, as a Jonah's gourd, it grows gradually. Every act of our present day is dependent in more or less than one upon the actions of our past. When a woman peeks out of her window to see the furniture van unload her new neighbor's furniture and then refuses to call upon that neighbor and extend to her the rightful social respect of the neighborhood, she is schooling herself to refuse to extend a welcoming hand to her humble sister when she enters her church. Christian courtesy is of the tree of righteousness, and discourtesy is of the tree of sin. Let us beware how we ignore that apostolic commandment, "Be courteous" (I. Peter iii., 8). Furthermore, my brother, remember that discourtesy toward others almost invariably has a reactionary effect. The person who complains most about the rudeness of others is generally the one who himself is rudest of all. Everywhere we can find that the people who most complain about the discourtesy of others are apt to be just as discourteous themselves. If there is this sin breeding mote of impoliteness in the eyes of our brothers, let us be sure that we have not the larger sinful beam in our own.

Small essential the next: The abstention from all appearance of evil. The taking care of your life's actions so that they may never be false lights luring your neighbors and friends upon the fatal rocks of sin. The refusal to eat meat, if by the eating you may cause your brother to offend. "All things may be lawful, but all things are not expedient," was the substance of the Pauline injunction to the Corinthian Church. "To seem" may sometimes be almost as great a sin as "to be." Mark you this: No man can afford in any way to have his audience cast upon the wrong side of any moral question. Nearly all our great religious teachers have recognized this truth.

We must abstain from all appearance of evil on account of our influence over others. We must abstain from all appearances of evil on account also of the reactionary evil influence upon ourselves. One of the greatest bulwarks against sin is the God implanted desire to be thought well of by your neighbors. A man, on account of principle, ought to be ready, if necessary, to defy the scorn and the sneer and the opprobrium and the persecution and the ridicule of the human race. But every man may desire that his neighbors and friends think well of him; that they should regard his name as the synonym of honesty and truth and probity and rectitude. And when any man comes to the dangerous condition in which he does not care what his neighbors think about him; when he intentionally and recklessly stirs up a hornet's nest of needless criticism; when he tauntingly boasts that it does not matter what others may say, as long as he is not doing wrong, then that man's feet are treading the worst kind of temptation and walking along the narrow edge of the precipice of death.

My sister, be careful about the character of your associates. My brother, you who are an officer or a member of the Christian church, I

would not attend the theatre again. You may say you saw nothing wrong. You may say you need the relaxation. But you can find that relaxation in some other way. You cannot afford the risk. Abstain from all appearances of evil. Perhaps you think this my own personal thought. It is not. Read I. Thessalonians, v. 22, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." It is the apostolic command.

Small essential the last: The inexorable duty of keeping an engagement. The necessity of doing what you promise to do. If you say to a friend, "I will meet you at such and such a place, at such and such a time," you should be there. You should be there just as certainly as you would be down at the ship's dock on time when it is about to sail for Europe, and when you have purchased a \$100 berth for the passage. If you cannot be on time, according to promise, for your engagement, then you should notify the person with whom you have the appointment. But the great trouble with many people is that they have no moral sense of the duty of keeping an engagement unless they wish to do so. They will promise anything, like a dishonest politician just before an election, and like the same dishonest politician after election they will forget all their promises if it suits their convenience to forget. The result is that the man's character and religious life will be eaten out by these little failures and sins, just as one little worm can tunnel its way into the heart of a great oak and eat out its heart until at last the monarch of the forest will have its backbone snapped by the enshrining winds.

It is the foxes, the little foxes, that most often spoil the tender vines, not the elephantine monsters. Once in awhile, however, the heavy foot of an eastern camel might crush them or the paw of a leopard might rip them apart when the midnight prowler, chased by the dogs, is rushing away after having robbed the sheepfold, but this is a rare occurrence. It is the little faults, the careless and thoughtless negligence, which do the most frequent mischief. It is the little weeds that destroy the gardens and with their bayonet thrusts of thorns stab the flowers to death, not the mighty growths of the cedars of Lebanon or of the weeping willows. So it is inevitably the small sins, the despised sins, the ignored sins, the sins of insignificance, that most frequently overthrow human character, not the heinous sins, not the monstrous sins, not the sins catalogued in the criminal codes of man and of nations. Therefore, O man, I beg and plead with you that you take Christ into the smallest details of your life. Let the Christ be with you as much in the paying back of a borrowed five cent piece as in the purchase of a store. Let him be with you as much in the cleanliness of your wardrobe as in the cleanliness of your tongue. Let him help you in the Christian courtesies which you extend to your neighbors as well as in the Christian exhortations you offer in your church. May you night and morning always be able to make this prayer: "O God, help me in the little temptations, and then I know that thou wilt make me able to bear the greater trials." With such a lesson as this for consideration, who is there who will dare "to despise the day of small things?"

Room for Bright Young Men.

The old saying that there is no room in England for bright young men is effectively disposed by the experience of Mr. Evelyn Wrench, who celebrated his coming of age on October 29, at a dinner which was given to him at the Criterion Hotel, London. Probably never before has it been that a successful business has been established by a boy who is not yet come of age, says The London Express. Three years ago Mr. Wrench, who is the son of the Right Hon. Frederick S. Wrench, one of the Irish Land and Estate Commissioners, left Eton to study in Germany for the British diplomatic service. There he became interested in the picture postcard craze, which then was at its height. Soon afterwards he returned to England and opened a small office in the Maymarket. Originality of subject, combined with boyish enthusiasm, at once made the "Wrench Series" popular. The result was that some time ago Mr. Evelyn Wrench transformed his business into a private limited company, and during the year the firm of Wrench, Limited, has now produced upwards of 50,000,000 pictorial postcards. The number of trade customers is at present over 4,000 and is rapidly increasing.

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