

HALF A TONE LOWER.

Mrs. Mulock-Craig tells us how the great vocalist, Braham, at the age of seventy five, sang most acceptably "The Bay of Biscay," and receiving thunders of encores, how he whispered to the accompanist, "Play it half a tone lower." Again it was given, and again encored. "Half a tone lower still; they'll never find us out," whispered the singer. And the applause after the third effort was loudest of all.

The wisdom of this old musician is worthy of imitation. Suppose he, flattered by applause, had disregarded the weakness of failing nature, and had "made a spurt" to half a tone higher, or even repeated the song in the same key with a little triumphant quaver of vocal gymnastics at the end? With what freedom from anxiety must he have responded to the call! Confident of success, he could throw his whole soul into the expressive rendering of the music.

It would be well for the old and the middle-aged to heed the lesson here taught—to take life "half a tone lower," to come down from the concert pitch to which they were tuned when the young, hot blood throbbed through the veins, impelling to feats attainable only now by effort. Let the middle-aged man of business attempt less; let the man of law, of medicine or theology lessen the tension; let all who are "looking towards sunset" imitate this wise musician, and the encores will call forth more satisfactory results. He who attempts to fill a position for which he is not fitted, is like the musician essaying to reach tones beyond the compass of his voice. The half-tone lower will bring him satisfaction and relief. To the woman of fashion who courts society for which she is fitted neither by wealth or education, this subject has significance. At "half a tone lower" the world will never discover the defects she struggles to conceal. Content to sing only within the compass of her voice, she will win the applause she covets, and encores will bring no misgivings.

To no one does this lesson appeal more strongly than to the busy mother and housekeeper whose years are sapping the vitality of the system. The encores are so frequent, and the demands so oft repeated, that, unless wisely husbanded, health and strength must soon fail. A little less hurry in the morning, an hour or two of rest in the afternoon, and a quiet evening will do much towards making sunny and healthful the evening of life.

"Will you be good enough to feel my pulse as I stand here?" asked a well-known physician of a young man for whose benefit the lesson was given.

"Count it carefully; what does it say?"

"Seventy-four," answered the young man.

"Now please count it while I am seated," he requested.

"Your pulse has gone down to seventy," reported the other.

"Once more," asked the physician, as he stretched himself upon a lounge.

"Only sixty-four!" exclaimed the young man.

Nature has provided means of rest; we ignore her teachings. The world has no compassion; again and yet again it calls for feats of strength, and taxes to the utmost power of endurance. The old musician was wise. Thrice he was encored; twice his voice responded at "half a tone lower."

SIN'S FATAL FASCINATION.

When once a man has done a wrong thing it has an awful power of attracting him and making him hunger to do it again. Every evil that I do may, indeed, for a moment creates in me a revulsion of conscience; but, stronger than that revulsion of conscience, it exercises a fascination over me which it is hard to resist. It is a great deal easier to find a man that has never done a wrong thing than to find a man that has only done it once. If the wall of the dyke is sound it will keep the water out, but if there is the tiniest hole in it, it will all come in. So the evil that you do asserts its power over you—it has a fierce, longing desire after you, and it gets you in its clutches.

Beware of the first evils, for, so sure as you are living, the first step taken will make the second

seem to become necessary. The first drop will be followed by a bigger second, and the second, at a shorter interval, by a more copious third, until the drops become a shower, and the shower becomes a deluge. The course of evil is ever wider and deeper and more tumultuous. The little sins get in at the window, and open the front door for the big house-breakers. One smooths the path for the other. All sin has an awful power of perpetuating and increasing itself. As the prophet says in his awful vision of the doleful creatures that make their sport in the desolate city "None of them shall want her mate. The wild beasts of the desert shall meet with the wild beasts of the islands." Every sin tells upon character, and makes the repetition of itself more and more easy. "None is barren among them." And all sin is linked together in a slimy tangle, like a field of seaweed, so that the man once caught in its oozy fingers is almost sure to drown.

A WONDERFUL TREE.

There is a tree in Madagascar of which the natives make their houses. What of that? Well, it is not anything extraordinary, is it? We have several kinds of trees in this country any one of which can be used for making houses too.

But then it is principally of the leaves of this Madagascar tree that the houses are built, and that is odd. Indeed, before we have told all about this tree it will be seen that there are few trees in the world half so wonderful.

When it is growing it looks like a gigantic palm-leaf fan. The trunk is bare to the top, from which the enormous leaves all spring. These leaves do not branch out in every direction, but stand up side by side, so that they form a half-circle, and give the fan-like appearance.

It is the middle rib of the great leaf that is used for making walls and partitions of. The ribs are twined together very much as willow is with us in basket-making. The part of the leaf that is left after taking the rib out is used for thatching the roof. Of course such a house is not a very grand one.

The good tree has not yet done all it can, however. The native of Madagascar likes to have his house carpeted, and so he applies to his tree. He strips off the bark in one great piece, stretches it out, beats it with round stones, and dries it, and behold! a thick, soft carpet, as wide as four breadths of Brussels carpet, and from twenty to thirty feet long.

Still the good work of the tree is not exhausted. There comes a long, hot, and very dry season every year in that part of the world, and the wells refuse to give any water. Then the tree is ready, and the thankful man goes to it. With his knife he makes a hole at the base of one of the great leaves, and out spouts a stream of fresh, pure, and almost ice-cold water! Each leaf has about a quart of water to yield up; and no matter how hot or dry the weather, it never fails.

But even yet the good tree has a service to perform. When the dry season comes around, the houses very naturally become dry too, and then they take fire very easily. Of course there are no fire-engines there, nor any pumps even, and so a fire might easily spread and burn down a whole village if there were not always at hand an extinguisher of some sort. There stands the tree, with its leaves charged with water, and when a fire occurs the men run and tear off the leaves, and with them beat the burning house. The water runs out, and the fire yields.

There, then, is a tree which gives to man his house, his carpet, his fountain of pure water, and his fire-extinguisher. The name of this friend of man is *Traveler's Tree*.

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SECRET FAULTS.

That wonderful 19th Psalm contains, among the petitions of David, one that he may be cleansed "from secret faults." The revisers translated the line, "Clear Thou me from hidden faults," and Dr. Murphy explains the phrase "hidden faults," or "secret sins," as meaning "those sins which escape the notice of the soul which is earnestly endeavoring after holiness of life."

Secret faults—secret to the man himself! Who is self-scanned and self-poised that he has them not? "What 'outs' has he?" the other day asked a friend concerning a certain minister whom his church were thinking a little of inviting to be their pastor: "What 'outs' has he? For, as a matter of course, there must be some *per contras* to his many excellencies; some things that his best friends sometimes talk about after he has left the room, saying, 'Ah! if he himself could only see two or three little things about himself as others do, how easy it would be for him to correct them, and then how much better and more useful a man he would be!'" Those are such a man's "secret faults"—faults of his character which are "secret" to him, and of whose existence he evidently has no suspicion.

"I made a discovery the other day about myself," once said a well known minister, "which was wholly new to me; I discovered that I am irritable, when I always supposed that I was one of the placidest, and meekest, and patientest of men. I suddenly got so enraged at a very little thing, that, if I had been a profane person, I certainly should have said a very bad word." "Ah, my dear," responded his wife, who had lived with him forty years from his youth, "ah, my dear, I could have told you that long, long ago!"

INCOMPLETENESS.

If none were sick, and none were sad,
What service could we render?
I think, if we were always glad,
We scarcely could be tender.
Did our beloved never need
Our patient ministrations,
Earth would grow cold, and miss indeed
Its sweetest consolation.
If sorrow never claimed our heart,
And every wish were granted,
Patience would die, and hope depart—
Life would be disenchanting.—ANON.

GEN. LORD WOLSELEY, who took part in the siege and relief of Lucknow, and was severely wounded at Sebastopol, and who has been at the head of the British army in Ashantee and Zululand, has written a paper on "Young Men in Battle," for the *Youth's Companion*, giving instances of daring and fidelity which he has seen among youthful soldiers in his various campaigns. The article is full of thrilling incidents.

ENGLISH OR ROMISH?

Jones. I think I have heard you say, Smith, that the Church before the Reformation was not Romish, but English?

Smith. Certainly. It was the "Church of England" then, as now.

Jones. But wasn't it founded by Augustine, who was sent by the Pope of Rome?

Smith. Partly; but, as a matter of fact, it had existed for centuries before St. Augustine came, and he found the old Church still flourishing in Cornwall and Cumberland, in Wales, Ireland, and other places.

Jones. But I believe a large part of England was Christianised by Augustine and his followers?

Smith. Yes, that was so. The older Church had been driven into the West by the heathen invaders called Saxons and Angles. These heathen tribes, having settled in the country, were in their turn Christianised by Augustine's missionaries, but the change was not a lasting one, and in a few years all—with the exception of Kent—relapsed into heathenism again. They were afterwards reconverted by missionaries coming, not from Rome, but from Scotland and Ireland, and indirectly