

TASSO.

Master of the melting tongue
And the soul-subduing song,
Moulded in the midst of wrong,
Sweeping soul and sight along
Over music's melting showers,
Over gardens crowned with towers,
Over water-falls and flowers,
Flourishing in haunted bowers,
Over magic mix'd with fight,
Over Tamer's dim and plight—
Conquered by the conquering might
Which had closed Clorinda's sight,
Wonder hears the hollow calls
Of the warriors in the halls,
Where they wandered magic's thrall,
Till to sorrow Fancy falls,
Sadness in thy song abides,
Like the soothing sound of tides,
Whose reverberation glides,
Sent from shores that distance hides,
The ideal world was thine;
Its inhabitants must pine
Though they may immortal shine,
Made by genius divine.
Homer, Milton, Dante, Thomson,
Each wears on his glorious brow
Garlands made by Grief to grow,
Flowers that bloom in Sorrow's snow;
Over thy immortal urn—
Conquered by concealed scorn
And from life untimely torn—
Sympathy shall ever mourn.

Montreal.

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GOING WRONG.

Deterioration is an element in the nature of material things. The flowers of the field and the leaves of the forest inevitably wither. The body of man—that shrine of the noblest of the works of creation—returns to the dust whence it came. The labor of his hands perishes. Decay is written on all that can be seen and handled, and it is that which to our senses is the most real which is truly the shadowy, the evanescent, the perishing. To know that the things that are seen are temporal, and therefore transitory, prompts us to inquire what really abides. There are some possessions which do not fade, which the iconoclast cannot profane with his touch, and which time or matter cannot affect. The acquisition of the knowledge necessary to direct us aright, and the wisdom which enables us to apply this knowledge in every circumstance of daily life with special reference to eternal verities, will prove the most lasting record of our short stay on this transitory scene, and the most enduring monument to perpetuate our memory. There is in the minds of men an inevitable and unceasing progressiveness. It remains with themselves to decide whether it will be upward or downward. To walk aright demands both effort and restraint. The taint of moral pollution in poor humanity makes going astray very easy and very pleasant, and, to our short-sighted vision, the surest and shortest way to happiness.

"To err is human." There is in our nature a disposition to go wrong. In the words of the Psalmist, "Man is prone to evil as the sparks fly upwards." There is, at the same time, an innate consciousness of a better way that is being departed from and a nobler life that is being neglected.

We pity the unfortunate; but, as a rule, the unlucky are not the valiant or the wise. We come upon the stage of being in a helpless condition, yet with such capacity for improvement, and with power to choose the course which commends itself to our inherent sense of right, as to make it evident that we must be held accountable for the result of our conduct in life. There is work for all to do. An idle man has been said to be a blank in creation and to live to no purpose; but there is no such a negative property in character. Absolute idleness is an impossibility. He who does no good will do mischief, and he who does not advance in wisdom will become the more a slave to folly.

The occupations and pleasures of life are suited to its different stages. In the morning of our days the novelty of external objects and the freshness and vividness of early impressions confer a zest on mere animal life which nothing in after years will ever yield us in the same degree. But as the inward sense is quickened, and we lose that relish for sensuous enjoyment which is no longer a necessity or a novelty, the innocent diversions of immaturity must give place to something in the exercise of the mental faculties, in a sound moral training, and in the subjection of the will. The conflict that is implied in this progressiveness is not agreeable, nor is the mastery an easy one. Nor should it be. What is acquired without cost or trouble is little esteemed. What is gained by labour and self-denial, and by the humiliation induced by repeated failures, teaches something of the value of the conquest and of the prize we have thereby wrested for ourselves. If, however, we lose sight of higher objects, and continue to seek for satisfaction from the gratifications of sense, we fail in the object and purpose of our being. We are hurried forward in spite of ourselves. We cannot, in the nature of things, stand still; and if we do not advance, urging forward the moral progress of our race by our individual influence, we must retrograde. We must be either a help or a hindrance, an example or a warning, a blessing or a curse.

Nothing exhibits more clearly the necessity of resisting the beginnings of evil than a contemplation of the ruin and misery men bring upon themselves. It is vainly imagined in youth that time and opportunity once lost may be afterwards recovered at will, and that, after having indulged in a course of folly, a man may turn to virtue and well-doing when he pleases. This fallacy leads many imperceptibly from step to step in the downward and treacherous steep

of vice, till reason and conscience are alike unheeded, and there is ultimately no effort because there is no inclination to return. We do not mean to say that there are not many with strength of mind and purpose, who resolutely abandon evil courses and live exemplary lives, but they are so rare as to offer no inducement to follow their examples, and only serve to show us how desperate is the risk they run. Giving way to sinful courses has been aptly compared to being carried forward by a current, swiftly, easily, pleasantly—it is not till we try to make headway against it that we find how hard is the task. Habitual indulgence binds its votary with a chain, the firmness of whose grasp he begins to realise when he attempts to break it. There is just this difference in the abandonment of evil habits, that the longer the effort is delayed the more difficult the task becomes. It is thus made evident that the best security for a virtuous life is to begin betimes. The inclination being led aright, early habit makes the performance of duty easy and pleasant. The most casual observation of the wrecks around us convinces us that indulgence in forbidden pleasures is the destroyer of peace and fortune, of character and self-respect; and that without a good conscience, a properly governed mind, and a well directed life, discontent and disappointment will blast every enjoyment.

The derelict is generally an object of interest and concern to some one. In how many houses is the skeleton a wayward and disobedient son? To him who "knows the right but still the wrong pursues" indulgence in forbidden pleasure does not yield the gratification which is promised. There is always more or less a feeling of degradation and of self-inflicted ostracism, which all his boisterous mirth and the boldness inspired by the presence and applause of kindred associates fail entirely to dissipate. How often is he suddenly arrested by the thought of an anxious father, a weeping mother, or distressed wife! Their prayers and tears seem to haunt him. The black sheep in the family, although his name is not often heard, is more an object of anxiety than are steady, stay-at-home, well-to-do boys and girls who nestle under the parental roof-tree.

Melancholy as it is to contemplate our criminal classes, and the vicious lives of that portion of the community who have not been brought under better influences, it is more pitiful to see a man or woman who has been carefully nurtured and well taught abandoned to the pursuits of what is debasing. We frequently find persons of this class to excel in wickedness the ordinary type of prodigal, as if desirous to show how deeply human nature can become corrupted. This preeminence in vice arises in many instances from an attempt to stifle conscience, and to silence the ever recurrent memories of the past. Many a poor wail would gladly return to the paths of industry and virtue long before he comes to the worst, but for the sense of loss of character and position which a course of wrong doing so surely entails. He loses hope; and let us be thankful that none of us know what that is. Repulsed by former friends, snubbed by relations, mistrusted and disbelieved by all to whom he applies for aid or guidance, the loss of self respect, and abandonment to his accustomed course of life, are the natural results. The longing for a better state of things is a necessary adjunct of a nature that is eternally progressive, and teaches us the importance of so living in the present as to make the retrospect of it satisfactory.

The lines of the poet,

"Vice is a monster of such frightful mien
That to be hated needs but to be seen."

are simply nonsense. The mien it presents to the susceptible and unguarded is generally attractive and ensnaring, and "to be seen" is to be at once followed and embraced. There is something in the unsanctified human heart which responds to its invitations, and which inspires no wish to penetrate the surface in order to discover that the glittering exterior is only tinsel and veneer. We wish it did appear in such hateful guise. It is the old temptation—"Ye shall not surely die, for, in the day ye eat thereof, ye shall be as gods"—knowing both sides of the question. And then the fruit is so pleasant to the eye, and so likely to minister to present gratification, that it is eagerly partaken of, leaving ulterior consequence entirely out of view. We are sure to awake to our folly at some time or other. What a pity it should so often be when too late!

The position a man attains and the character he makes for himself are no mere matters of accident; yet, looking at the various specimens of humanity around us, it seems as if some men had a natural inclination to virtue, while others, by an apparently uncontrollable impulse, gravitate towards the lower strata. They don't seem to be influenced by the same motives which actuate other people, and we cease to expect from them anything that is useful, or noble, or generous—sometimes, indeed, hardly what is honest. Reason and experience, however, contradict this fallacy, and show us clearly that falling away from rectitude is not attributable to chance or misfortune, but to the deliberate choice, the rebellious will, the unstable character. In no case is there at first any intention to go far astray; but, like a stone rolling down hill, we lose sight of the increasing impetus, of the power of confirmed habits of evil. Had the degradation to which many a poor fellow had brought himself been pointed out to him at an early period in his career, would he not have said with one of old, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this

thing?" And though he has been instructed and warned, yet will he not learn by any other experience than his own. We believe recovery from a predetermined course of wrong-doing, which says "I shall take my fill of jolly life for a year or two, and then turn over a new leaf," is much rarer than we suppose. It is just as reasonable to talk of straightening the branch which has been awkwardly bent when a twig. Many suppose they have only to resolve when they will—"Now I shall stop this folly and do right. I shall watch against this temptation, and when it presents itself I shall not yield." How bold he is! And lo, the trying moment finds him in the dust again and again, conquered and helpless, conscious only of disgraceful failure and of guilty shame. It is this class of men, however, who generally overcome in the end; every successive effort does them good. But think of the indifferent wretch, contented in the mire, and having no desire to be other than he is. Is it any wonder that we find so few middle-aged people brought into the liberty of the Gospel? Ask the experience of a man engaged in any branch of usefulness in the Church, and you will find, as a rule, that the hopeful and the useful members are those who learned "to bear the yoke in their youth."

How few of the friends of our earlier years can we now trace! How have they one by one passed out of sight! Many, we know, sleep the sleep that knows no waking; but where are the others? One went to sea, and was forgotten. Another went to the great city to make his fortune, and became similarly lost in the turbulent sea of life. Another went to the Antipodes, expecting to get gold for the gathering, and being there unknown and without restraint, sunk, by sinful indulgence, from one depth to another, and his fate remains a mystery. Scarcely a week passes that we do not read of some young man going to the dogs, or some young woman finding her way into the river. Now it is a young nobleman, who wastes his substance and ruins his constitution, who casts a stain upon his ancient house, and sinks into an early and dishonoured grave. Anon, a youth squanders a fortune in a few years, and, when about to be arrested for forgery, takes his own life. Another, in unsuccessful urging his suit to a fashionable Traviata, stains her carpets with his blood. So common are such occurrences that we almost cease to express surprise, and begin to think that the road to ruin has been made easier to travel, or that it is now on a steeper decline. *Facilis descensus.* So much so, that it seems at times as if self-immolation had become a moral epidemic.

Who are frequently the successful men? Go back to your school and apprenticeship days. Where are the bright boys who took the lead? Do you remember the clever fellows whose tact and talent were your envy and admiration when you went to business? Can you ever forget the brilliant essayists, and him who made those stirring orations in the debating society at college? Ah, they were clever fellows! Now? Why, of course you will find them leading at the Bar, or rising in the Church, or astonishing the House of Commons, or at the head of great commercial establishments. Indeed, you will do no such thing. We can't trace a tithe of them, but one we heard of lately was driving cattle in Australia; one is now working for a law stationer hard by; another we saw in seedy garments yesterday, leaning against a public-house with a pipe in his mouth; and others who survive hide their heads somewhere. Any one familiar with our working classes knows that there is scarcely a workshop in which a number of mechanics are employed where there is not at least one marvellous adept—a genius—who executes, almost by intuition, with the rarest skill and unaccountable ease and rapidity, work of a delicate and intricate nature, with such exquisite perfection as to be unapproachable by his fellows, but who is such a slave to appetite, or vice, or self-indulgence in one form or another, that he cannot be trusted out of sight of his master, attends to his duties with the greatest irregularity, and is generally retained for no other reason than that he cannot be easily replaced. And who, as a rule, have succeeded to the honourable position, the respectable business, and the remunerative practice? Why, the dull, patient, and plodding labourers, who were satisfied with the progress of the tortoise—inch by inch—slow but sure.

In youth it is natural to look forward. It seems to us then as if we should never lack the means and the power to redeem lost time and golden opportunities. As we grow in years, however, we find that there is more prolific source of regret and self-reproach than in recalling and mourning over the errors of the past. It is a natural instinct of an unaccountable being to desire to return to the days of childhood; not so much for the happiness which is a necessary accompaniment of innocence, as that he may have once again the option to choose wisely—to avoid the pitfalls which he now laments, and to perform the duties which he has neglected. We become persuaded that, had certain apparently trifling events been differently decided, our whole course of life would have been materially altered. Nor do we generally err in our conclusions, for it is impossible to tell how serious may be the consequences of the most trifling incidents, or how much of the future is bound up in ordinary every day transactions. The great mistake men make in this retrospect is in attributing their failure to circumstances instead of to character. They perceive the errors that lie on the surface, but fail to trace them to their sources, or to see that the different crises in their experiences have been

occasions for developing their moral status, and that they are tests of the man's powers and qualities rather than the causes of his want of success. Chances lost, advisers ill-chosen, speculations rashly undertaken, attachments unwisely formed, and the innumerable, headstrong, thoughtless, and deliberately blameworthy actions with which a man is chargeable have had in themselves nothing at all accidental, but wholly the results of unbalanced character, and the disposition of mind which prompted their adoption would, under any circumstances, have led to similar results.

These reflections are not of much consequence if they do not teach us something. There is precious instruction to be got by discovering that we are going wrong. It may be that we have been trained for a particular business or profession, but, from misconduct, we have got out of the groove, and have to follow an occupation foreign to our tastes and habits, accompanied, it may be, with somewhat of hardship and degradation, and which is not made any the more pleasant from the reflection that we are now so many years older, and have no time to spare for a new apprenticeship. To what is poor human nature more prone in such circumstances than to become discontented and rebellious? All our moralizing will not prevent the intrusion of the thought, "How much more happy, respectable, and independent I should have been in my chosen sphere! Now nothing remains for me but inferiority and humiliation." Yet, looked at in another spirit, with health and hope, and time for amendment, there is a good deal to be thankful for. What a silvery aspect does the cloud assume if we look forward, and not back! But for the issue which we choose to call adverse, what and where might we have been? Had Fortune favoured us, might not indulgence in forbidden pleasure have excluded all that was pure and elevating and generous? Might we not have become careless of more important matters? Let us believe that our reverses are intended to teach us lessons that nothing else in this world would have done, and see that they lead us humbly and patiently to inquire what these lessons are. A humiliating position, straitened circumstances, and the contempt of men are but temporary after all, and, wisely used, are calculated to make us as the "gold tried in the fire."

The habit of bewailing our defections and shortcomings, and charging them with the evils that afflict us, is unprofitable and injurious, and the greatest hindrance to real and lasting improvement. Experience should now confer the wisdom which will enable us to act from reason apart from mere impulse. Mourning over the past will not mend it, and we should therefore try to improve the time that is left us. In the formation of various habits, the subjection of every act to principle rather than to policy or self-seeking, the stern adherence to right in every matter, even the most trivial, we shall find the best and surest safeguards against mistakes in life.

ECHOES FROM LONDON.

LONDON, January 29.

THE parish of Marleybone is about to be enlightened—by electricity. The parish has agreed to make a provisional trial, thinking that it should be cautious, as electricity is in its infancy.

THERE is a proposal for a new line of railway between London and Bristol; the terminus in the metropolis is to be a central one. A very successful meeting has been held in Bristol in support of the undertaking.

NOW that Covent Garden Theatre is closed the alterations required by the Board of Trade for the better security of the public are being rapidly proceeded with. The habitues will find that these improvements will also add to their comfort in leaving the house.

THE electric and the steam tricycle will, we hear, be exhibited among the other hundreds of novelties at the exhibition of bicycles and tricycles which is to take place at the Albert Hall on the 29th, 30th, and 31st of this month.

THERE is not the slightest foundation for the report current at Ottawa that the Prince of Wales intended visiting Canada and part of the United States next March. It was hardly worth while telegraphing this denial, because it denies that which no one here ever heard of.

MR. GLADSTONE took to wearing a new style of collar the day after his arrival at Cannes. This would have created a sensation indeed in his native land. The only reason for the change assigned is that one of his boxes was lost en route, doubtless the one containing the stuck-up line of the Premier.

It has not been stated, while discoursing upon Mr. Siemens's method of ripening fruit by electricity, that he has conceived the very ideal notion of making electricity represent the moon, which rises at a given hour of the evening and sheds her light over all till day's warmth dispenses with her services. If Mr. Siemens could only give us all an artificial sun he might have his moon all to himself.