

'cise. The feeble limb, the debilitated body must gain strength by exercise; and so must the feeble conscience, and the debilitated soul. Nature must work with the physician, or all is in vain; and so must nature work with the spiritual Restorer, even though that restorer be the Saviour of men, or all is equally in vain.

This point cannot be too much insisted on. He who would be a good man must—pardon the freedom of the phrase—must set about it. He has talked long enough about what he would be; let him do something. Let him do the first thing that presents itself as a duty—and the second thing—and every thing that his conscience bids him do. I repeat it, let him do something. I leave the subject with this direction, for none more weighty can be given; the whole burden of scripture exhortation lies upon it—*let him do something.*

THE POWER OF EXAMPLE.

There is in every soul a consciousness of its capacity for godliness,—a consciousness which can hardly be repressed and silenced even by the authority of the Church. The mere description of conceivable goodness, even though it be in a work of fiction, enkindles our aspirations. How much more, then, is an actual example of a perfectly pure, un sullied, godly life adapted to incite us to holy living. "Not theory, but life, produces life." Not by embracing any theories respecting the nature of Jesus shall we be redeemed from sin; but by attaining a vivid apprehension of his moral excellence. It is by enabling us to form a clear conception of true moral perfectness, that Jesus enkindles in us the aspiration for perfection. And this he has done by his life more than by his preaching. The most peculiar, the deepest moral influences of Christianity, I believe, flow from the character of its author. No influence is so quickening as example. It is a noiseless power, like all the other mightiest energies of nature, like attraction or gravitation; but it works directly on the springs of action, on the issues of life. It is powerful for evil as well as for good. Few are so steadfast, so firm in virtue, that they may safely expose themselves to the corrupting influences of bad examples. "Lead us not into temptation," is the prayer which Jesus has enjoined upon all to use. "Enter not into the path of the wicked; go not in the way of evil men; avoid it; pass not by it; turn from it and flee away," is the advice of Solomon; and it is not deemed overcautious by the truly wise of our day.

On the other hand, few are so brutish, few so dead, as to resist altogether, and forever, the influence of unfeigned, persevering, earnest goodness. "Let your light so shine before men," said Jesus to his Apostles, "that they may see your good works, and" (as if it were a matter of course) "glorify your Father which is in heaven." Undoubtedly it was the obvious piety, benevolence, self-devotion of the first disciples, that made converts to Christianity, as well as their preaching. And in all ages since, it has been the fidelity of the true-hearted men and women, who have embraced some higher principles of godliness than those generally received in their day, and adhered to them through good report and evil report, at any expense, at any sacrifice of present prosperity or ease,—it has been the fidelity of such, that has carried onward the work of the Lord, the redemption of the world. There have been instances in ancient and modern times of the mighty effects produced by the example of individuals, which I would gladly adduce, if time permitted. The Apostle has given us, in the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, a list of the faithful ones of old, who did so much in the cause of God and humanity. But in later days, we have Oberlin, the pastor of a rude, illiterate, half-civilized people among the Alps, who, by his untiring perseverance in a life of active and passive godliness, succeeded by himself in greatly changing their characters, and in diffusing amongst them the blessings of knowledge and religion. There, too, was Felix Neff, who, in a very similar situation, by the same means,—his own example,—produced a like signal effect.

But there can be no need that I should multiply instances in proof or illustration of the power of a holy example. It is felt more or less, it is acknowledged, by all men, and ever has been. Why, we are assured in Holy Writ, that if there had been ten, ay, only five righteous men in Sodom, that wicked city would not have been destroyed, for there would have been a reasonable hope that the influence of their example might have reclaimed even that profigate people. You may go now into the

most immoral community on earth, and if there be a truly good man there, you shall see that his life and character are not without influence. It may not be sufficiently powerful to redeem that community, but it will check some in their mad career. And you shall see that the upright man has the confidence of even the most licentious. In the hour of their utmost need, they will look to him for counsel and assistance. Such is the tribute that the human soul everywhere pays to goodness. Where the character of the holy man fails to produce a visible effect while he lives, its influence may be seen after his death. His virtues, perhaps, administer a reproof, which a wicked and perverse generation at first will not bear. They may hate him because he tells them the truth. They may gnash their teeth at him, persecute him in many ways, put him to death. But, after all, there is a witness in his favor even in their own bosoms. They cannot quench the light of his life. They cannot obscure the excellence of his character. And when they have glutted their malice, and spent their rage, the conviction will return to their hearts, that the fault was not in their victim, but in themselves. They will smite their breasts in self-reproach. The confession will rise irrepressibly to their lips,—"Truly, he was a righteous man." They will feel that it were better for them to become like him.

Converts to Christianity were greatly multiplied by the martyrdom of Stephen. Saul of Tarsus, while standing by and holding the garments of those who were stoning the holy man to death, beheld the power of his faith, saw the joy of heaven—the peace of God—in his angelic countenance; and that young, furious Hebrew zealot, received into his heart the conviction which was the beginning of his own conversion. So it was with others in that day. So it has been since. We all attribute the successive advances that the Gospel has made in subsequent times to the example of those holy men, who have embraced its principles "in all godliness and honesty," and maintained them at any expense of suffering,—even death. Indeed, it has passed into a proverb, that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." True goodness is imperishable. Fidelity to truth and duty is never lost. Prophecies may fail. Tongues may cease. Knowledge may vanish away. But true goodness is never lost. Now, the history of Jesus of Nazareth is the most signal illustration of this great fact in the economy of the moral world.—*Rev. Samuel J. May.*

CONTEMPLATION OF VIRTUE BENEFICIAL.

All degrading views of our nature are certainly very debasing to the mind. It is a natural law that we are apt to assimilate most thoroughly with those things which we contemplate most frequently. The contemplation of virtue, is calculated to inspire the love of virtue, and to prompt to virtuous deeds; while he who, even speculatively, becomes familiar with vice, is in danger of contamination and practical debasement. I believe no one will deny that this is a fundamental law of the mind; while some even go so far as to apply this law to our physical nature, and assert that the contemplation of the beautiful will produce beauty.

Taking, however, for granted, the existence of this mental law, I remark, that he who is constantly on the watch for evidence of human depravity, does himself a serious injury. In his anxiety to establish the truth of a theory, he may become, in his own person, its most conspicuous example. His theory may be, in himself, reduced to practice. But he who gladly hails every trait of God's image in his brother man—who feels a thrill of joy when he hears of any action of generous self-sacrifice for the good of another—whose pulses throb at the recital of noble deeds; he who most watches for, and most gladly hails such delightful developments of human sympathy in others, is most sure to glow with sympathy himself, and to reflect the image of his benevolent God and Father. Such a person illumines and rejoices all around him.

And how comes it that there is always such a general burst of generous human feelings at the news of any great act of virtue, even if it comes to us from the remotest corners of the earth? The first shout of joy and triumph is ever swelling higher and higher, and waxing louder and louder, as it rolls onward towards the most distant lands. Through raging oceans, over rugged mountains, the tide of human feeling rolls, a pure and undivided stream, gathering tribute and swelling as it goes. Thus, the world over, heart meets heart; and virtue receives, sooner or later, a sure reward. But, if men were totally depraved, they would naturally rejoice only in the triumph of vice.

What a pealing anthem of joy resounded through every land when the tidings came that for conscience' sake, the ministers and people of the Free Church of Scotland had given up their beloved altars, and gone forth, poor and unsheltered, beneath the broad canopy of heaven! What meant that universal shout? Of what was it a sign? Why did the heart beat quicker than was its wont, and the tear of emotion suffuse the eye? It was because the motive which impelled those men—let it even have been, as some suppose, a mistaken one—found a glad response in every human breast. It was because they gave up all for conscience' sake.

In the life of the great and good Fenelon, a circumstance is related which gives an appropriate and capital illustration of the power of goodness to reach and soften the hardest hearts. The circumstance is thus narrated:

"The diocese of Cambrai was often the theatre of war, and experienced the cruel ravages of retreating and conquering armies. But an extraordinary respect was paid to Fenelon by the invaders of France. The English, the Germans, and the Dutch, rivalled the inhabitants of Cambrai in their veneration for the Archbishop. All distinctions of religion and sect, all feelings of hatred and jealousy that divided the nations, seemed to disappear in the presence of Fenelon. Military escorts were offered him for his personal security, but these he declined, and traversed the countries desolated by war, to visit his flock, trusting in the protection of God. In these visits, his way was marked by alms and benefactions. While he was among them, the people seemed to enjoy peace in the midst of war."

Here is a beautiful illustration of the sovereign power of goodness. Enemies are made friends; the evil passions engendered and fostered by war, are changed into mildness and kind regard. And all this because of the inspiring presence of a good man!

"The virtues of Fenelon," says his biographer, "give his history the air of romance; but his name will never die. Transports of joy were heard at Cambrai when his ashes were discovered, which, it was thought, had been scattered by the tempest of the Revolution; and to this moment the Flemings call him 'the good Archbishop.'"—*Mrs. Dana's Letters.*

SEEKING THE TRUTH.

We should beware how we exhibit any thing like a spirit of pride and arrogance in our possession of the truth, as though we rejoiced that it belonged exclusively to us, and were not the common property of all men. For it *does* belong to us all, that gracious truth which God has revealed in order to our salvation. We are all alike concerned to know it, to believe it, to obey it. Let us love the truth too well then, to uphold it against others who deny it, other than in a loving spirit, and with a sincere desire to bring them to a knowledge of it. A disputatious spirit does not evidence a deep and pure love for the truth. It is rather a sign of vanity and self-conceit—of a desire to gain the victory in a strife of words—than any thing else. It is true that every Christian is beholden to maintain the truth when it is attacked, to give a reason for the faith which is in him, and, as he may have opportunity, to recover others from their errors. But he is to do it all in a spirit of meekness and humility, with caution lest he injure the sacred cause which he upholds, and with tender concern, lest he may repulse those whom he would fain draw over to his own belief. But he is not to be seeking at all times, and under all circumstances, occasion for controversy. As a true Christian soldier, and a faithful witness for the truth, he is not required to be always on the attack, and to manifest ever a hostile spirit towards those who do not hold with him. And when the battle for truth is put upon him, he is not to shun it, but he is to engage in that holy warfare in a proper spirit, remembering that his truest victory will be, not to have his opposer discomfited but still an enemy to the truth, but its willing captive, through the force of clear persuasion and words spoken in love.

We live in a day rife with religious controversy—a day in which all manner of religious notions are abroad. The Arch-enemy would seem to be striving, not without success, as it is ever his wicked device, to confound to the minds of men truth and error into one; to set them afloat upon the wide sea of speculation, and to create a feeling of scepticism and doubt as to whether there is any such thing as a *one system of revealed truth* needful to be known and believed by man in order to his salvation. As we would escape the perils which surround us, the dangers we run of missing the truth, and of falling into some of the manifold forms of error, it is imperative upon us all, that we

cherish for the truth a spirit of affectionate love, that we be not afraid to know it, however that knowledge may find us in a false position towards it, and require us to forsake the system or the sect to which we may have attached ourselves. God's truth is eternal and unchangeable. It is that alone which shall endure, when all the counterfeit systems of falsehood and error shall be swept away. Upon that truth, we are to build up ourselves, our lives, our hopes for eternity, if we would build upon a rock and not upon the sand. Let us be diligent and conscientious then in seeking ever to learn that truth. Let us look to the grounds of our faith. And let us, after our best endeavors to find it out, be zealous and earnest in maintaining it.—But let us do so, in true charity for those we think to be in error. So loving the truth, so speaking it in love, shall we "grow up into Him in all things Who is the Head, even Christ," Who is "the way, the truth, and the life;" Who would have us all to know the truth, that by it we may be made free from all sin and error.—*Calendar.*

The habit of exaggerating the wretchedness of man's condition, for the purpose of rendering Jesus more necessary, operates very seriously to degrade men's love to Jesus, by accustoming them to ascribe to him a low and common-place character. Were you to see millions and millions of the human race on the edge of a fiery gulf, where ages after ages of torture awaited them, and were the shrieks of millions who had already been plunged into the abyss to pierce your ear, could you refrain from an overpowering compassion, and would you not willingly endure hours and days of exquisite pain to give these wretched millions release? Is there any man who has not virtue enough for this? I have known men of ordinary character hazard their lives under the impulse of compassion, for the rescue of fellow-beings from infinitely lighter evils than are here supposed. To me, it seems, that to paint the misery of human beings in these colors of fire and blood, and to ascribe to Christ the compassion which such misery must awaken, and to make this the chief attribute of his mind, is the very method to take from his character its greatness, and to weaken his claim on our love.—*Rev. W. E. Channing, D. D.*

We must not look round on the universe with awe, and on man with scorn; for man, who can comprehend the universe and its laws, "is greater than the universe, which cannot comprehend itself." God dwells in every human being more intimately than in the outward creation. The voice of God comes to us in the ocean, the thunder, the whirlwind; but how much more of God is there in his inward voice, in the intuitions of reason, in the rebukes of conscience, in the whispers of the Holy Spirit! I would have you see God in the awful mountain, and in the tranquil valley; but more, much more, in the clear judgment, the moral energy, the disinterested purpose, the pious gratitude, the immortal hope, of a good man.—*Ibid.*

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THE DIFFERENCES AND DIFFICULTIES OF ORTHODOXY.

Our Orthodox friends are prone betimes to enlarge on the differences which exist among Unitarians, adducing the fact of these as evidence of the uncertainty of the Unitarian system. We do not pretend to deny that differences exist among us. It would be strange, indeed, if it were otherwise. We give a free range to inquiry, and conceive that the interests of truth are best served by doing so. We neither impose nor accept any human formularies of faith, with the view of securing uniformity of opinion. We believe these to be disastrous to the progress of truth, and the cause of virtue among men,—sometimes preventing investigation entirely, and sometimes fostering hypocrisy by inducing men to make outward professions which they do not inwardly believe. Unitarians, then, from the very position they take may be expected to differ. Of course they all agree on that great fundamental doctrine from which they derive their distinguishing name—that strict unity of God. By a de-