

GUARD THE SPRING.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.—Prov. iv.: 23.

People are growing more wide-awake to the dangerous, invisible foes which surround them than they used to be. Water may look clear enough, and yet carry far and wide the germs of disease. When typhoid or diphtheria break out, we try to exterminate the deadly, invisible foe, striking at the root of the trouble by having drains or well attended to. But, too often, the mischief is done, and a bright young life is taken from our midst because the spring has been left unguarded. Careless neglect is sometimes almost a crime, in the matter of physical germs of disease, but how much worse it becomes when the disease is spiritual. The spring should be kept pure, for if the thoughts of the heart are poisonous they will soon infect the whole nature, and when deadly disease takes hold of soul or body it is far harder to fight than if it were grappled with earlier.

We hear a great deal in these days about the "Higher Criticism," and timid souls fear that the strong rock of the Bible—a rock which has weathered many storms and come out stronger after every fight—is going to be shattered to fragments this time. Never fear! The truth can always stand investigation, and the more the Bible is read and studied, the more boldly it will stand out and give God's message to a questioning world. Let the "Higher Critics" study the outside questions of the date or authorship of this book or that, yet the Bible words strike straight to the heart to-day, as they did in the days of our forefathers, "for the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

How absolute is the purity demanded by our great Leader in His marvelous Sermon on the Mount. He sweeps aside as valueless any attempt to keep the commandments which is only concerned with outside acts or words. A man who appears to be moral and respectable may be breaking the sixth or seventh commandments in thought or word or look. And as it is with sins, so, also, is it with virtues. The giving of alms, praying, fasting—which exercises were considered by the religious people of the day to be meritorious in themselves—are declared by Christ to be worthless unless they spring from the right motive. His blessings are showered on the meek, the merciful, the pure-hearted—not necessarily on those who do great deeds which call forth the praise of the world. From the first book of the Bible to the last book, the same stern rule holds good: "The LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." It was utterly useless for Israel to attempt to deceive the Teacher of all hearts, to flatter Him with their mouth, and lie unto Him with their tongues, when "their heart was not right with Him." It was useless to make a show of repentance, in fasting and weeping, for prophet after prophet declared that sinners must rend their "hearts" and not their garments, if they would receive pardon and peace.

We need the constant reminder as much to-day as ever, for we are only too apt to rest satisfied if the outside conduct is fair and apparently virtuous, without troubling ourselves to go below the surface. And the rule holds good the other way, too. Our Lord's Divine clear-sightedness showed Him treasures of the soul, sometimes, hidden beneath an outside that was far from fair. He saw the germs of a saint in the sinful woman who washed His feet with her tears, in the publican who sat, driving his worldly business, and in the other who climbed a tree to see Him pass. He saw grand possibilities of glorious manhood in the persecutor who was making "havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." What an irreparable loss the Church would have sustained if Christ had judged by out-

THE QUIET HOUR

side appearance only, and had not put out His hand to change Saul of Tarsus into Paul the apostle.

We have not the Divine power of looking at the heart, or of seeing invisible beginnings of sainthood, so, perhaps, we had better try to be more careful than we usually are in passing judgment on our fellow-servants. It may be that they are, in His sight, far ahead of us, even though their outside behavior may as yet show few signs of saintliness.

When I was in the FARMER'S ADVOCATE office the other day, I was presented with a copy of "Carmichael," the book lately published by The William Weld Company. There is a fine old man described in it—"Chris," by name—and his views on this subject are worth quoting. Peggie had been asking his opinion about a neighbor, and this is how he answered her:

"Most folks hes their good points, 'n' don't you ever go to gettin' so much dust on yer glasses as not to see it. It's that same dust that causes a good deal o' the misery o' this world, little girl."

"But, Chris, swearin's very wicked, isn't it?"

Slowly Chris laid the axe-handle down. "Surely it's not right to swear," said he, "an' I'm thinkin' when a man gets enough o' the grace o' God in his heart, he's glad enough to lay it aside fer good 'n' all. But I have sometimes been thinkin' swearin' isn't altogether shut up jist to the words that comes out of a

hidden beneath a rough exterior, our business is to keep both outside and inside fair and beautiful. Holy thoughts must infallibly—sooner or later—blossom out into righteous acts and courteous speech. And unholy thoughts cannot long be hidden either, 'for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.' He cannot help himself. We are continually telling our friends and neighbors the thoughts and desires of our hearts. They generally know pretty well whether we are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, or whether our highest ambitions are bounded by the horizon of the world. Only—they can't see either the evil or the good within a heart when it is only in the embryo state. God can. And with wonderful tenderness He cares for each flower and insect and bird; surely we can trust Him to send just the training needed to develop the precious soul of each of His own dear children, for we are of infinitely more value in His sight than many sparrows. Let us try to trust Him always, and wait patiently until, in His good time, the flower of our longing desire opens in perfect beauty. If you try to pull open a tightly-closed bud, you only spoil the rose that God was carefully making for you. So it is in life. Jacob was promised the bless-



"THE DELIGHTS OF THE STREAM."

man's mouth. The Bible says, swear not at all; 'n' the Bible's a grand guide fer us all. I'm not just sure o' the kind o' swearin' it meant just there—mebbe they did swearin' different, as well as other things in them days—but if it meant all-round cursin' like what Henry Carmichael there does off 'n' on 'why I'm thinkin' mebbe it was litten' just as much at what's behind the words as at the words themselves. Ye see I'm thinkin' a good deal o' the swearin's about like when I say 'Dash it.' Fer example, if I was mad enough I could make 'Dash it' pretty bad swearin'—'n' hev' mebbe, lots o' times 'n' if I didn't say 'Dash it,' at all, but just felt ugly enough 'n' mean enough, why that 'nd be swearin' too, just as wicked swearin' mebbe, as when a man uses big soundin' words like them Henry Carmichael says."

I won't quote the whole of the old philosopher's speech on this subject, for it would be far better for you to get the book and follow his line of argument. There is a wonderful spirit of big-heartedness pervading the whole story. The writer evidently is not given to the common habit of standing as a pillar and looking down on everybody within sight.

But, though there may be a big heart

dwelling, the King's daughter should be determined to be "all glorious within"—then the outside will develop naturally into beauty of conduct and expression. I heard a clergyman say, in preaching to children about the Seventh Commandment, "We are Christ's body-guard, and should rather die than let one evil thought through to hurt His heart."

What a wonderful union their is between our Lord and His members. A thought of evil not only injures us—in body as well as in soul—but also hurts Him.

The connection between body and soul is so close and mysterious that when the soul indulges in evil thoughts the body also is injured, as our Lord has warned us that the evil thoughts which come from within defile the whole man. Look at the faces you see in the crowded streets of a city. How plainly you can read the debasing thoughts, which have become a habit of years, on the faces and slouching figures of some whom you meet. Study the cases of miserable disease, in the wards of a large hospital, trace them to their root, and, in the large majority of cases, you will find that evil thoughts have poisoned the body. Take most cases of nervous diseases, and find that they began in worry—and worry is always want of faith, the corroding fear that God is not to be trusted in future dangers and difficulties. Go into the insane asylums and you will find that a great many patients have lost their reason through worry, bad temper or secret sins which began in thought.

And, take the other side. Look at the bright faces which make the sunshine of our homes. They may not be beautiful in complexion or feature, but they are far more to us than the most faultless face of a stranger, for they tell out visibly the invisible love and purity that are the real beauty of life. The fair thoughts within the heart cannot be hidden. They are unconsciously written on the face and revealed in the trivial actions and unstudied words which reveal us, for good or for evil, to those who live with us day after day. "Company manners" may deceive for a time, but no one can be on guard always at the doors to keep the innumerable thoughts from peeping out. They slip out through mouth or eyes, through looks and words and acts. And, even if evil thoughts could be hidden always within the heart, their deadly work would still be going on, and they would be poisoning the issues of life at the source.

And, remember, that it is not enough to have the house "swept and garnished" if it is allowed to remain "empty." It is not enough to drive out evil thoughts, the heart must be filled with good thoughts so that evil may have no chance to enter again. All the doors should be thrown open to our Royal Guest, who stands knocking and pleading for admittance. He is close beside you, or within you, at this moment. But He will not accept any but the first place in your temple. All other gods must be turned out, and then you will find that His word of "Peace" is full and satisfying.

"The Spirit of God lies all about the spirit of man like a mighty sea, ready to rush in at the smallest chink in the walls that shut Him out from His own."

Hope.
"This is the Gospel of Labor,
Ring it ye bells of the kirk,
The Lord of love
Came down from above
To live with the men who work."

OUT OF MANY.
None sought for beauty in that rugged face,
Her form revealed no subtle lines of grace—
But in the quiet of her fearless look
One read the life, as in an open book.
Sorrow had walked with her; she shunned despair.
Love drew the poison from grey thorns of care.
Close to her staff of strength the help-
less clung,
While little bells of Hope about them rung.
A lovely woman, on life's common street
Where myriads go, who never pause to greet,
She has no record in the Hall of Fame,
But lips grow tender as they speak her name.
C. M. Pickford.