

"SLIGHTLY SOILED."

Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him: If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.—St. John xiii.: 8.

How thoroughly we can understand St. Peter's feeling of unwillingness to have the Master he loved and revered stooping to wash his dusty feet, soiled with the day's labor. And how natural is the sudden exclamation which followed the statement given above: "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

When we look back, at the close of the day, and see how the soiling touch of sin has left many marks on our souls, we thank God for His great mystery of "the forgiveness of sins," as we come to our Master for cleansing. We cannot bear to go to our rest until we are white and spotless. No power of our own can wash away a single stain, and we should be ready to despair but for the One Fountain opened "for sin and for uncleanness."

"No one, I say, is conquered till, he yields:
And yield he need not, while, like mist from glass,
God wipes the stain from life's old battle-fields,
From every morning that He brings to pass."

But, while we rejoicingly accept the offered forgiveness—the cleansing which takes away the guilt of sin, but does not save us from the necessity of enduring its consequences here in the world—let us see to it that we do not deliberately or willingly contract the slightest stain.

I put the words "slightly soiled" in quotation marks at the head of this paper, because the idea of writing on this subject came from the following story, which I read the other day in a newspaper:

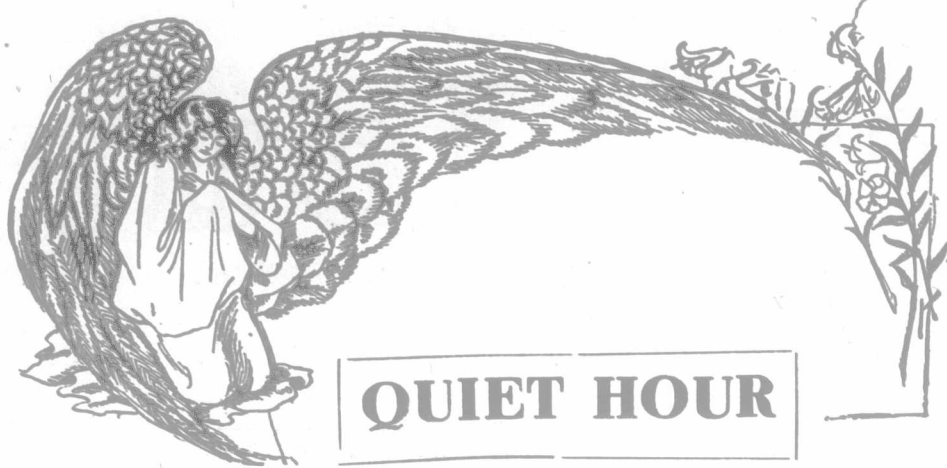
"Two theological students were walking along an 'Old Clothes' street in the Whitechapel district of London. Suddenly one exclaimed, 'What a splendid text for a sermon to young men!' pointing to a suit of clothes that hung swaying in the breeze at the side of a window. 'Slightly Soiled; Greatly Reduced in Price.' 'That's it exactly,' he went on. 'We young people get soiled so slightly, just seeing a vulgar show in a theatre, just reading a coarse book, just allowing ourselves a little indulgence in lustful thoughts, just slightly soiled, and lo, when the time comes for our manhood to be appraised, we are greatly reduced in price. Our charm, our strength is gone. The consecration of youth is gone. We are just part and parcel of the general shop-soiled stock.'"

I write to you who are young. Now don't lay down the Advocate, fancying that you are no longer young, and that these words are not addressed to you. You are young—though you may be ninety or more. God teaches us in parables. The old earth is made young every spring—bursting out in leaf and blossom, pressing forward towards the time of harvest with all the hopeful, eager enthusiasm of youth. The day is new every morning—the dawn brightens into the exultant light of noon, and dies down to restful quiet of peaceful evening. And we can be made over new every day. We can come to the Fountain of Life as well as of cleansing. We can begin all over again, looking up to God and gaining strength from Him, leaving the Past in His tender keeping. He can make even its sins to be stepping stones for our climbing feet. God has made all things new.

"New life, new hope, new courage! Let this be,
O, soul, thy cheerful creed! What's yesterday
With all its shards, and wrack, and grief, to thee?
Forget it then—here lies the victor's way."

Life is before us to-day. Shall we carelessly allow our glorious manhood or womanhood to be "greatly reduced in price," lowered in value by indulgence in sins which we dare to call trifling? From apparently trifling sins of omission or commission, terrible results may proceed. The world is beginning to find that to stem an evil satisfactorily it is necessary to take it in time.

In "The Survey" for May 18, is an



QUIET HOUR

article on dental hygiene, which shows that carelessness about the teeth of children strikes a serious blow at the welfare of a nation.

St. Paul told us—in 1 Cor. xii.—that the whole body would certainly suffer unless every member were cared for and the daily "tooth-brush drill," which has its place in the three first grades of some schools in the United States, is a practical recognition of that fact. It is startling to be told that such defects as "hunch-back, club-foot, knock knees, smallpox, and other scrofulous conditions" may result from tooth decay. St. Paul says: "Much more, those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary; and those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor." Dr. Hyatt, of Brooklyn, says that the dental end of a nerve can manifest itself in the eye, causing temporary blindness; or in the ear, causing deafness; or in the muscles, causing temporary paralysis and insanity. Dr. Gulick states that "an investigation of 39,000 cases had proved that children with decayed teeth spend fifty per cent. more time in graduating from schools than those with good teeth." It is easy to see that carelessness about the teeth may result in injured digestion, impaired nutrition, and therefore in loss of power and quality in work.

And the soul, like the body, cannot afford to trifle with small diseases. Neglect of the daily habit of prayer may result in loss of power to see God's face or hear His voice. One man has declared that he read a debasing pamphlet in his boyhood, and the evil thoughts which resulted from that deliberate soiling of his spirit, haunted him all his life. To indulge one wrong thought deliberately is to inject poison into the heart. Only God knows the deadly mischief it may do. And it is an act of open disloyalty to our Master, Christ, for—as I once heard a clergyman say when preaching to children on the Seventh Commandment—"We are Christ's body-guard, and should rather die than let one evil thought through to hurt His heart."

We want to grow up pure and sweet and beautiful, like "lilies of the Lord." We want the King to rejoice in the beauty of our joyous lives. We want to

be like the "saint of the holy shadow," whose shadow healed and cheered the rich and sad without his knowledge.

We want to mount from strength to strength, with eyes uplifted to the vision of God's perfect holiness, with heart resting in absolute trust on His Love, and with hands stretched out to help our comrades. But such an ideal can never be attained and maintained suddenly. There must be first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. And every time we give way to "little" sins of pride, bad temper, selfishness, covetousness, distrust of God, want of love to Him or to our comrades cherishing sins of thought or word or act—we hinder the great work of our perfecting. Christ sits "as a refiner and purifier of silver," watching eagerly to see His image show ever more and more clearly in our lives. We are precious in His eyes, let us accept as a sacred trust from Him these priceless jewels which we call our souls, remembering that we are not our own, but are bought with the price of His own heart's blood. A bride adorns herself with her ornaments for the sake of her husband—because she would please him with her beauty. And the Bride of Christ knows that she can give joy to her Lord by putting on "the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.—1 St. Peter, iii.: 4, R. V.

Let us prepare to meet the Bridegroom when Death shall draw away the veil which hides His face, by pressing closer and ever closer to Him in the spiritual union which He gives us already, by coming to Him for daily, hourly cleansing, and by keeping our eyes fixed on the Vision of His Face so that we may become daily more like Him, because we see His perfect beauty of holiness. The Present and the Future are ours—the Past can be utterly forgiven. Let us be glad and press forward.

"While the world shall roll,
To-morrow's fresh shall rise from out the night,
And new—baptize the indomitable soul
With courage for its never-ending fight."

DORA FARNCOMB.



PHOTO BY T. STEWART COX

OUT OF BABYLON

Their looks for me are bitter,
And bitter is their word—
I may not glance behind unseen,
I may not sigh unheard!

So fare we forth from Babylon,
Along the road of stone;
And none looks back to Babylon
Save I—save I alone!

My mother's eyes are glory-filled
(Save when they fall on me);
The shining of my father's face
I tremble when I see!

For they were slaves in Babylon,
And now they're walking free—
They leave their claims in Babylon,
I bear my chains with me!

At night a sound of singing
The vast encampment fills:
"Jerusalem! Jerusalem!"
It sweeps the nearing hills.

But no one sings in Babylon
(Their home of yesterday),
And no one prays for Babylon,
And I—I dare not pray!

Last night the Prophet saw me:
And while he held me there
The holy fire within his eyes
Burned all my secret bare.

"What! Sigh you so for Babylon?"
(I turned away my face).
"Here's one who turns to Babylon,
Heart-traitor to her race!"

I follow and I follow!
My heart upon the rack;
I follow to Jerusalem—
The long road stretches back

To Babylon, to Babylon!
And every step I take
Bears farther off from Babylon
A heart that cannot break!
—Isabel Ecclestone Mackay, in The New York Independent.

A CHALLENGE

My lesser self is abroad today,
Tight lipped and smug, in fine array,
In confidence of power to please,
Well fed and sleek and quite at ease.

But my real self, that is hidden deep
From the watch that other people keep,
Is lean and hungry and wild to burst
From the dark, where all my strength
is purged.

And my lesser self grins covertly
At the real self in bonds to me;
And the real self shakes the prison
bars,
Demanding the right to see the stars.

My lesser self has a thousand friends
With a thousand lesser selves he spends
The time. But my real self is one
With friends but few, and known to none.

Why should my lesser self have scope
For a stronger life while I darkly grope
In the fastnesses that I dare not
break,
While I cringe, for other people's sake?

From what? From a laugh I may never
hear,
From a fight that I have no need to fear,
From loves made proud and from
friendships pure,
From an upward path that the great
make sure.

Some day, I know, ere my spirit dies,
If I dare, I shall defy the lies,
And let my real self out to greet
The sun or the stars, and the air most
sweet.

Some day, I know, ere it is too late,
My real self must slay his mate,
The lesser self, and with surprise
Will meet new love in all men's eyes.

No longer to play at hide and seek,
No longer bandaged and mute and meek,
No longer skulking and dodging sight,
But alive and valiant, in quest of light.

My lesser self is abroad to-day,
But my real self will not let him stay.
All this has my real self told to me,
I wonder where your real self can be?
—The Independent.