

had been born. I didn't know just when, but my impression was that this interesting event occurred when I was about two years old. Marriage would come next in the logical order of events, and this, they said, although quite a crisis, would be rather a pleasant one. Here I am reminded of my brother's opinion that there was never a girl like our own sister. For years after he entered the knickerbocker period he stoutly maintained that he never could marry any girl but Kate. He has changed his mind, I am pleased to see, and Kate is now another man's wife; so there are four happy people, instead of two. Somehow, sooner or later, we all find a fellow whose sister we like better than our own. Death, to me, was a grim prospect of the future, but so far distant and so overshadowed by the earlier crisis—marriage—that I found it possible to keep from worrying much about it. It is hard for childhood to take in the thought of death.

Schooldays are a large part of the Canadian child's years, and school, like after-life, is pretty much what we make it. To some it is cheerful and pleasant; to others a dread and a terror. I was of the latter class. The strange, rough boys; the strict teacher; the grim, formal school, with its door at one end, blackboard at the other, three windows on each side, and four rows of desks; the long silence; the turbulent recess; the cold dinner; the long absence from home; the sympathetic morning goodbye, which brought a lump to my throat that remained suspiciously near there all day—these impressions come back vividly as I write. "Stan," my younger brother, and I started together. The first day we hung it out till first recess, and came toddling home, tears giving way to smiles as we turned into the long lane from the road. What a fine place home was! How big and solid and safe the old brick house looked as it loomed up through the spruce! It seemed as though it could resist an attack of soldiers. And what a kind mother and father we had! Never had they seemed so tender before. They didn't tell us we would have to try it again—that day. Next week they arranged that our favorite cousin Gordie, a seasoned veteran of some two years' school experience, should go with us. Thus reinforced, we sallied forth with new courage to do battle for learning and progress. This time we held out till noon. After many heartbreakings and many stomach pains, which seemed always to come on at half-past eight in the morning, we did get fairly launched on our scholastic career, and gradually, as the older boys dropped out, and we advanced in physical as well as intellectual prowess, and could hold our own in a fight with the other boys, or take a licking from the teacher without crying, school became a more tolerable place. But I'll never forget the day I decided to "not take arithmetic any longer." Arithmetic, somehow, didn't agree with my mental digestion. The endless adding and subtracting was discouraging. One day "Stan" beat me in doing the "questions," and I forthwith decided my forte was not arithmetic. Peter James, of the fourth class, had dropped geography; Nellie Christie had been "excused" from reading on account of her stammering, and Mary Rittenhouse was no longer taking history. Why shouldn't I stop arithmetic if I wanted to? But the test was to come. "Part Second, arithmetic," called the teacher. All went forward but me. "Willie, what's the matter?" Bravely but weakly I replied, as the gaze turned my way, and a flush mounted to my forehead, "I'm not going to take arithmetic any more." "Why?" "Because I can't get along with it, and I won't need it; I'm going to be a farmer." "Nonsense, come up here with the class." Reluctantly I went, resolution melting like snow in August, and then I learned a great life-lesson, to wit, that the only way to dispose of difficulties is to overcome them.

I might tell very much more. I used to indulge, I believe, in some of the most stupendous flights of imagination that ever a boy conceived. Through the back of our farm ran a small creek, which, to my great disgust, had been straightened to a ditch. It ran to the Grand River, which in turn empties into Lake Erie. In the spring and after great rains it ran full, and even overflowed, being then large enough to float a raft. I used to start, in my mind's-eye, with a raft on this ditch and float down stream to the river. As the creek widened, my raft became a rowboat, then a sailing vessel, and by the time Lake Erie was reached it would be a steamer, an extra large and fast one, of course, especially designed according to original plans prepared by myself. First thing I knew, I saw myself steaming the ocean in a vessel compared to which the famous Great Eastern would have been a mere dingy. By and by the ship would be multiplied into a fleet, and I saw myself walking the deck, owner of the greatest steamship line on earth, carrying large cargoes, and giving a better freight and passenger service than any known before, and at a lower rate, doing this all by virtue of my marvellous success in cheapening the cost of transportation! There was not much airship talk in those days, or I would certainly have been scaling the heavens.

But the sea could not long claim my attention. The instinct of the farmer asserted itself, and I resolved to win my laurels on the land. Commencing as a bachelor pioneer in New Ontario or the Canadian Northwest, I would rapidly acquire more land, and soon own a farm comprising thousands of acres. When the pinnacle of material success had been attained, I would contrive to meet a lovely but homeless girl in some romantic manner, and a new era of happiness would begin. Amid other diversions, I planned a dairy barn, 280 x 260 feet, figuring out every detail in my mind, from the silos to the passages and stalls, without drawing a line on paper. The capacity of this stable was 800 cattle and 1,500 hogs.

Of course, I realized full well the stark absurdity of these day dreams, but they were very interesting, and, looking back, I have no hesitation in saying that the mental exercise of constructing them was an excellent thing. The time was spent to far better purpose than it would have been if given entirely over to games or to hankering after toys. It developed self-reliance, daring and initiative, qualities that have served me in good stead since. Moreover, it made me a student of principles and methods. Many a fact in farm economics I learned, and many a lesson as to the impracticability of proposed ideas, which many older men have not studied out to this day. My aim ever was to raise the intellectual standard of farmers and farm laborers. I wanted to do things in the most economical way, so as to be able to hire men, not for the lowest, but for the highest admissible wage. Money was not valued in the sense of acquisition, but in so far as it typified success and enabled me to accomplish greater things. I never wanted to be left money by a dead relative, nor to marry a rich girl. These two ambitions have been realized.

Refreshing it is, at times, to review the humors of childhood, with its disappointments and joys over things that seemed most important then, but look very trivial now. Say not that retrospect is useless; that the past is done and gone. Cherish the dreams of youth as the rarest of memory's treasures. For every happy experience I've had—yes, for the others, too—I count myself permanently the richer, and if—as I trust may not happen—but if the romance ever fades from my own life, I expect to enjoy the drama of real life around me, and live childhood anew in the budding promise of other young lives, for children we have with us always.

The Quiet Hour.

A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY.

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.—St. James v.: 16, 18.

"God is not dumb, that He should speak no more!
If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness
And find'st not Sinai, 'tis thy soul is poor!
There towers the Mountain of the Voice
no less,
Which whoso seeks shall find, but he who bends,
Intent on manna still and mortal ends,
Sees it not, neither hears its thundered lore!"

Did you ever face the awful thought of the tremendous power for good that God has put into the hands of each of His children? I call it an "awful" thought, because we have been warned over and over again that we shall be called to account for leaving undone the things we ought to have done; that we shall be punished if we allow our talents to rust in idleness; punished if we pass our neighbor by, in neglectful unkindness, when we see that he needs our help; punished if he starves at our side, while our hands are full of bread. And we have at our disposal the mightiest force for helping the world that can possibly be imagined. We all want to help the world, and very often lament that we are cut off by want of strength, time, money or opportunity from plunging into the battle against sin and misery. And, all the time, we let this glorious talent of prayer lie idle, or exercise it so languidly, hurriedly and faithlessly that it accomplishes scarcely anything.

Look at our text! Elijah was only a man like other men—only a countryman who had from childhood been drinking in the Spirit of God among the solitary hills of Gilead. Like John the Baptist, who followed in his steps, he was not clothed in soft raiment, not versed in the fashionable etiquette of kings' courts. When he saw the nation turning its back upon God, led by a wicked queen and a weak king, he did not use gentle words of pleading, but tried to wake the slumbering consciences of his countrymen by the strongest means at his command. He prayed a terrible prayer, prayed a long drought, which would inevitably plunge the country into the miseries of famine, and he was perfectly fearless about it. He suddenly appears upon the scene with his daring defiance of Ahab—a defiance which could not fail to provoke the wrath of the wicked king: "Elijah. . . . said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

He must have felt that the disease was a desperate one when he resorted to such a desperate remedy. We may not feel tempted to exert power in that fashion, and surely he would not have dared to do it without a direct call from God; but St. James puts him before us as an example to be followed—an example of the prevailing force of earnest prayer for the healing of the disease of sin. Though Elijah, by his prayer, stopped the rain, it was not he, but Ahab, who brought trouble upon Israel.

The story is all so wonderful, so like a tale of magic, that we hardly feel as if it applied to ourselves at all. Here is a prophet who, by his prayer, can stop the rain supply for more than three years, and then bring the rain in answer to his earnest appeal to God. He can stand by the altar of sacrifice, and look up in calm certainty that his prayer for fire from heaven to consume the victim will be answered. We cannot do these things, and it would be sinful presumption to put God to the test, and expect Him to work miracles for us. We know that Elijah was not acting presumptuously, for he simply obeyed God, without doubting His power to work miracles through any instrument He might choose.

We read in 1 Kings xviii, that "the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth." He was not putting God to the test and seeking miraculous signs from Him, He was simply obeying orders with soldierly promptness and child-like confidence. But—his whole soul had been stirred into a fiery indignation against sin, a great jealousy for God's honor and glory, and a burning desire to bring Israel back to its lost faithfulness. God did not pick out a man haphazard, and use him as an instrument for reaching His people. The man chosen was indeed subject to like passions as we are, but he was full of zeal for God, and had prayed long and earnestly for the evil around him to be cured. If he had shaken his head sadly over the idolatry of his neighbors, and decided that he could not help it, God could hardly have used him to work a reformation.

If you want to help in the battle against sin that is being waged by the great army which follows One riding upon a white horse—One whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and whose vesture is dipped in blood—then you must be tremendously in earnest, as Elijah was. You will never work wondrously with the mighty weapon of Prayer if you are content to plod through the wilderness of life with your eyes seeking only manna for yourself. If God wants to send you on His errands, wants to send His messages by you, you must be always standing in His presence, always listening for the still, small Voice, which is unheard by anyone who allows himself to be absorbed in the cares and pleasures of this outward, visible life.

It was perfectly natural for Elijah to say: "As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand." He could not see God, any more than we can, but he had lived in such constant communion with Him that His Presence was not a misty possibility, but the one great Reality of his life. This is within our reach too. We can form the habit of letting the remembrance of God be crowded out by visible things around us, or we can form the habit of realizing His Presence in every quiet moment. When the hands are busy kneading the bread, or the body is bent over a wash-tub, the heart can rise in glad communion with an unseen Friend. Take the potatoes to be peeled, or the pan of peas to be shelled out under a shady tree in the yard, and you will find it much easier to lift up the heart to God than if you sit down in the hot kitchen. It is far better for the body too.

You all lead busy lives, I know, and it is not easy to find time for long prayers. Has God ever asked us for long prayers? If you care about your brothers' needs, if you want them to be healed, if you really believe that your prayer can bring down showers of blessing on a thirsty, parched world, you can't help praying. If the promises about prayer are not true, then life is not worth living, for God must be either powerless to help us, or untrue to His promise. But we know that He is true, and mighty to save; and, as St. John reminds us, "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death."

The example of Elijah is an example of eager, persistent, faithful claiming of the gifts God wants to give us—gifts for ourselves and for others. He wants to soften hard hearts, to strengthen weak faith, to arouse joyous eager love; but He cannot force these glorious gifts upon us. We must earnestly desire them, and prove our desire by determined pleading. We must pray as Elijah prayed for the blessing of the rain on the parched and barren fields. Think how he "cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees," in lowliest supplication. Think with what unshaken confidence in God's swift answer to his prayer he, seven times over, sent his servant to watch for the cloud which must be coming. God had said that He would send the rain, therefore he prayed the more confidently. And God has said to us that He will give His Holy