

feeling, or emotion, or affection, in the undetected waning of love for Christ, the relaxing of the heart's clasp on him, in the insidious stealing in of the world -- it is in these merest beginnings of spiritual degeneration, these slightest tendencies toward wrong, that the greatest dangers lie. And it is here that we should do our keenest watching. If there is no beginning of evil there will be no full-grown sin. If there is no breath of poisoned air admitted there will be no hot fever. If there be no loss of first love for Christ there will be no denial and treachery further on.

"It is the little rift within the lute
That by-and-by will make the music
mute,

And ever-widening slowly silence all,
The little rift within the lover's lute :
Or little pitted speck in garnered fruit
That, rotting inward, slowly moulders
all."

If the little rift is mended at once there will be no silent lute. If the first specks of spiritual decay are detected there will be no ruin by-and-by in the once honored character, bringing shock of pain and shame to Christian hearts.

The sources of spiritual danger are very many; indeed, they lie everywhere. Our very blessings, like leafy trees, nurse in their shadow the noxious weeds and vines of evil. Spiritual prosperity often breeds pride, self confidence, vanity and conceit. Rich privileges frequently yield indolent habits, a critical spirit, worldly tastes, exclusivism and kindred earthly growths. The very happiness of the true home-life which Christianity gives among its best fruits has its perils. In the satisfaction which its tender love gives to the heart the sense of the need of God and the hunger for his love too often grows less. In our devotion to one another in the household life we are in danger of slackening our devotion to Christ. The sweetness of the home fellowship tempts us to give up the toils and sacrifices in Christ's service to which he calls us. Duty to our "own" may sometimes so absorb our thought and energy as to blind our eyes to duty, no less urgent, to others. In more seasons than one may a man's foes be of his own household.

In the Church too, the same danger exists. The Mount of Transfiguration had its peril for the disciples. They would have stayed there, holding the sublime vision and enjoying its raptures, but forgetting meanwhile the human needs that waited at the mountain's foot for them. We are all in the same dan-

ger, and we are too apt to find such comfort and pleasure for ourselves in our worship and our Christian fellowship that we become oblivious to the sorrows and the woes of a suffering and perishing world outside.

The same is true of all blessings. Dangers lurk in their shadow. The same sun's warmth that waxes out the fruits and ripens the harvests calls from the ground the poison-plants and the useless weeds. The same heavenly warmth that makes our lives abound in fruits of righteousness fosters in the same soil the growth of faults and evil things. This truth indicates another point for honest self-watchfulness, a point too, at which we are apt to suspect no danger. Happiness is very delicious and very desirable; the heart hungers for it. Spiritual blessings bring great peace to the life: they are highly favored who dwell amid them. But a condition without hardship or struggle, and without unsatisfied yearnings, is not the safest.

Never was there a time when there was greater need than now for watchfulness against doctrinal error. The air is full of scepticism. It is in high fashion to be a doubter. Every old truth has to be questioned. Interrogation-points are set up on every page of the Bible, even over the most sacred beliefs. It is hard to maintain that old-fashioned simplicity of confidence which gave such deep, sweet peace to our fathers and mothers. Young people are peculiarly in danger of losing the faith of their childhood. They hear the Bible sneered at, the great facts of Christianity doubted, prayer ridiculed, the Church maligned. There is need for unsleeping watchfulness over themselves, lest doubt be admitted into their own minds, thus destroying their peace, blighting their dearest joys, and imperiling all their hopes. It is not the watchfulness over ignorance or superstition that we commend. The Bible has nothing to fear from the fullest light of science or philosophy and faith should be intelligent. The watchfulness that is needed is against the mad spirit of scepticism which would sweep away all spiritual foundations regardless of their quality. Safety lies in standing with firm, untrembling feet upon the rock of Christian truth and clinging with unshaken confidence to the person of Christ. Loyalty here need fear nothing from the fullest light of truth in other spheres. It is in the heart's personal faith in the living Saviour that there is security. — *Philadelphia Presbyterian.*