

before us. We know that there are those who say, "Why should we strive after that which is impossible?" And because they cannot attain sinless perfection in this life they become indifferent and make no effort at all. The words of Christ are emphatic, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." In this command we see both the aim and the motive of the Christian life. Our Lord whom we serve has set the standard very high, and we must strive to reach it. One of our own writers has well said: "If it be a heresy to believe in sinless perfection in this life, yet it is a ten-fold greater heresy to sit idly by and remain indifferent to the demands which God makes upon us. Our duty is to be perfect, to strive every day, every hour to become like Christ himself. This subject should teach us most impressively the duty of a humble and earnest walk with God. 'Be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord,' etc. The best that we can do will fall far short of the divine requirements. Only by fervent prayer, untiring watchfulness and trust in our Master can we resist the innumerable inward foes, ever ready for the assault, vehemently and irresistibly. In such a position you cannot afford to be indifferent to your all important duty, for the very powers of the under-world are eagerly pressing to destroy you. Wherefore arise then to the battle, 'take the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.' Let not the reality of your continual imperfections be an excuse; but rather let it excite you to more ardent exertions to reach the crown of life. Be satisfied with nothing less than perpetual progress in holiness. You have but commenced the war; there remaineth yet much land to be possessed. Go on from victory to victory until not an inch of promised territory remains in possession of the enemies of our Lord.

We have also a word to the self-righteous. Be distrustful of your condition if, in your endeavour to keep God's holy law, you are not conscious of failure. We do meet people now and then who manifest the utmost satisfaction when they contemplate their own spiritual condition; when this is the case there is something wrong: either that person is ignorant of the requirements of God—has placed the standard too low, or else he is indifferent to the claims of God upon him. It is often true that the greatest sinner is not conscious of his sinful condition; for sin has blunted his sensibilities; even much more should the Christian man beware if he fails to see within himself evidences of a sinful heart.

Humility and penitence are indispensable to a right approach to the throne of grace. None are permitted to mention their own goodness as the meritorious ground of their acceptance. Observe the prayer of the Psalmist: "enter not into judgment with thy servant for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Hear the words of Isaiah: "For we all are an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Jeremiah prays: "through our iniquities testify against us, yet grant this request for thy name's sake."

God has promised to have regard to the prayer of the destitute. He has promised the kingdom of God to the poor in spirit; but we find no such promise to the perfect man. He who gloats with perfect satisfaction over present attainments has no promise of help from God, and that on which he builds will certainly prove to be a poor foundation. We may adopt this as a general principle, "In exact proportion to the soul's advance in holiness does it shrink from claiming that holiness has been already attained and become humble before God for the remaining apathy and unbelief.

We find also a word for the disheartened. We should not be discouraged if we fail to come up to our ideal; failure should only teach us greater dependence on God. In our efforts to follow Christ we are continually disappointed. We find that as the months and years roll round that we have not made the progress that we had hoped and so become discouraged. But let us remember that sanctification as well as regeneration is the work of God. We cannot sanctify ourselves; it is the work of the Holy Spirit. Our faith is only the means by which we appropriate his work. We must "work our own salvation," but how are we able to do this? because "it is God that worketh in you."

The process of sanctification goes on by our fulfilling certain conditions,—there is no chance work. We become like God by knowing more about him, so we must use every endeavor to study Divine truth, we must meditate much upon the precepts of Christ, and imitate his character in the deeds of daily life. Thus shall we become like him. Do not be discouraged. Exercise anew your faith in God. Believe him, trust and obey. Only he can save, only he can sanctify; and when you are conscious of failure let it teach you your own weakness, and your need to depend more firmly on him who has promised, and whose word cannot fail.

As a concluding thought for the encouragement of all we say: Death should have no sting to the Christian, and the future should be full of brightness, for we shall then attain unto complete sanctification.

Death in itself is always an unwelcome visitor to the abodes of men. If I am to anticipate no greater deliverance from sin beyond it than I have now attained, then there is nothing to reconcile me to its approach; but if the struggle with the King of Terrors is the definite date of my last contest with sin—as well as sorrow,—if my "earthly house of this tabernacle" is to be "dissolved" that I may wake in perfect likeness to God,—if the purity and glory of heaven to which I am hastening is a boundless ocean in comparison to earthly streams of delight,—if this be true, then, where is death's sting? The valley may be dark and gloomy, but the prospects beyond are bright and clear.

Let no one doubt the wisdom of God in postponing our "complete likeness to him" until "we see him as he is." Though we may not be translated in a moment from spiritual childhood to maturity, yet we may go from strength to strength, and from glory to glory until every one of us shall appear before God in peace. Our citizenship is in heaven,—we are journeying to a celestial city. There may be great conflict on the road faith is certain of final victory and glorious triumph.

"Strive man, to win the glory;
Toll man, to gain the light;
Send hope before, to grasp it,
Till hope be lost in sight."

Lawrencetown, N. S.

The Virtue of Pluck.

BY IAN MACLAREN.

"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord."

Perhaps, however, the bravest thing in literature, and it is neither fiction nor poetry, is the letter which Paul wrote from his prison in Rome to his beloved Philippians. He had been arrested in the midst of his great campaign, and hindered from those journeys by which he hoped to compass the Roman Empire for Christ. He was confined in a barrack room, and chained to a Roman soldier. He was in danger of death, and hardly had a friend on whom to depend. He was now an old man, not so much through years as through labors; he was infirm in body and a constant sufferer; the very work he had done was being undermined by his enemies, and it looked as if the greatest career open to any Jew in his day were to end in failure. What a letter he might have written to those Philippians, and would have written if he had been an ordinary missionary, or an ordinary traveler, about his disappointments, and the attack on his name, and his bodily sufferings, and his personal discomfort. Why, I've read a page in a missionary's report on the poor food which the man had, and many pages in travels about the flies, and the bad water, and such like calamities through which the heroic explorer had been passing. But this man never tells you what he ate or drank, what he suffered through cold or heat, what an unspeakable harassment that Roman guard was, or how miserable were his lodgings. No, what he tells the Philippians is his satisfaction that he has got to Rome, and that the gospel has been preached there, and that his fellow-servant Epaphroditus had recovered from sickness, and that the Philippians had been so good to him. He enlarges also on the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, but it is in order to show that through suffering Christ has come to his throne. There is no crying nor pulling in the letter of Christ's soldier, but it is full of high spirits and holy gaiety. He commands the Philippians to forget themselves and to think of other people, not to boast, but to carry themselves modestly, to keep peace among themselves and to help one another, and, above all, he tells them to rejoice. His great commandment is Joy. And his whole letter bears witness to the pluck of that true servant and brave gentlemen of Christ.

By the commandment of Paul and by the example which Providence has set before our whole nation, let us pluck up courage and try to live more bravely. Amid the softness of today we want more bravery of life. There are people whom you and I know, who have caught the spirit of the apostle, and who live on a high level, boring no person with their grievances, ventilating no grudge against the world, denying their diseases, and hiding their trials. If they have wounds, and one suspects they have, they cover them carefully; if their voice breaks sometimes it is in prayer to God, not in conversation with men. They never tell you how badly they have been used by their fellows; they rather tell you how everybody has used them well. People without discernment think they have never known suffering because they have never whimpered, but when they come to die it will be like the soldier who fell down suddenly without fear and without a moan at his general's feet. Brave souls and fine Christians, they are the strength of society and a standard of high living to their friends.

The rest of us, I think we must confess, have not shown over-much manhood in playing the game of life, or in following in the steps of our Lord. We have thought too much of ourselves, we have vexed ourselves about our concerns, we have been peevish and petulant. Many of us, and the men more than the women, have been quite babyish when things have gone against us, and we haven't had our own way, or somebody said something about us, or we had some bodily ailment. Let us play the man.

Above all things, when you speak of religion, do not mourn and lament as if all things were going wrong, and Christ had been beaten. There are people who never refer to religion but they seem on the point of weeping, and they never look out on the world but one hears a moan of despair. Their voice takes the mendicant whine as soon as they touch on sacred things, and let me tell them in a brotherly way—whether they be in the pulpit or the pew—that they are a slander on the gospel. You will make your children infidels, you are next door to an infidel yourself, if that is all the faith you have in God and in the Cross of Christ. There are many things to pain the Christian, and Rome was a fearsome spectacle in the days of Paul. The sight of Nero on the throne would have filled the cowardly Christians of to-day with pessimism, and our school of pining piety would have declared there was no hope for society except the coming of the Lord with judgment and with fire. Paul had a keener sense of Nero and all that Nero meant than any one of us, yet Paul saw Jesus Christ high above the throne of Nero and above all thrones, and he believed the day was coming "when in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow." "Rejoice," he said to the Philippians, "and again I say unto you rejoice." What he said to the Christians of the first century he says to us in all the relations and circumstances of daily life.

Be brave in speech and deed for the sake of your children and your families, for the sake of society and the man next you, for the sake of the church and the world, and for your own sake. You will lift half the weariness of life, and half the burden from your brothers' shoulders, you will cleanse your character from some of its worst faults, and commend Christ to them who do not believe. For after love there is no power in life so admirable and so forcible as pluck, and its highest form is the courage of a strong heart like Paul.—British Weekly.

Education and Morals.

For many years the theory that education is the direct means of promoting morality and religion has been almost unchallenged in this country. The public-school system has been extolled as "the palladium of our liberties," and religious people have contributed most generously to schools and colleges on the ground that these institutions contribute directly to the moral and religious welfare of our communities. But perhaps there are few questions upon which the minds of men are coming to be more deeply exercised than the relation of education to the moral and spiritual life. Is it not true, they are asked, that the education of the schools simply endows men with a new power, which is used as often for evil as for good? Have the acquisition and the possession of this power any necessary relation to the moral and spiritual life?

One of the answers to these questions must be that to strengthen the mental powers of men and to broaden their intellectual horizons inevitably tends to deliver them from prejudice and superstition and to acquaint them with the facts of life. To do that is to make a large contribution to moral and spiritual advancement. The philosophy of Socrates, which tended to identify knowledge and virtue, has always broken down in practice. The maxim, "Whoever sees virtue must love her," does not accord with the facts about the workings of human nature. Virtue and vice have their seat in the disposition and the will rather than in the intellect. Sin is profoundly illogical. But while this cannot be denied, it is also true that ignorance, prejudice, and superstition, which afford such favorable conditions for the growth of evil dispositions, are dispelled by education. Mental training does not do anything; probably it does not exert so profound an influence upon character as many have supposed, but it does something positive and substantial to create the conditions favorable to virtue. If all of our people were put through the public schools, and trained to a high degree of knowledge and mental discipline, they would not thereby be made good men and women, but they would be able to make intelligent choices. Light would be thrown upon their paths, and while many would not choose righteousness, many who blindly, ignorantly, and carelessly would have chosen iniquity will avoid the evil way.

The discipline of character involved in the mastery of intellectual tasks is also of the highest worth. All work demands persistence, the coordination of various powers and self-denying pursuit of a single purpose, has a high character value; but there is this difference between physical labor, or the ordinary business life, and a strictly intellectual task, that the latter involves the mind itself. A man's mind may be uncorrelated to his work when he is about a thousand useful tasks, but in the mastery of a science, a philosophy, or an epoch of history, he works with his mind itself, and under this discipline his mental, emotional, and volitional energies are adjusted to a single purpose. When you come in contact with men who have long carried large responsibilities and anxieties, and fought their way to the honor and confidence of their fellows, you are apt to be impressed with their poise, their self-restraint, and the harmonious adjustment of their powers to each other. Those are some of the manifestations of character; and few men who have not had occasion to use their brains persistently ever acquire these qualities. The lad who goes out into the world, from school or college, with the alphabet of that discipline, because he has trained his brain, starts in life with a valuable moral asset.

While our schools and colleges cannot do everything, in addition to the services we have mentioned, they bring young people under the personal influence of a noble type of men and women. Probably there are few forces acting upon the lives of young people so persistent and influential as the character of their teachers. Every year the standard in the profession of teaching is becoming higher. There are few nobler bodies of men and women than the school and college teachers of the United States, and there is no class exerting a profound influence upon the future life of our country. A wholesome and high-minded teacher, of good breeding and noble ideals, is a missionary for morality and good living. The thing that has the greatest character value is character itself.

Perhaps our schools and colleges are not ministering to the moral and spiritual welfare of the country in just the ways many persons imagine, but they are ministering to it in ways that are exceedingly effective.—Watchman.