

penitance is taken which leads to the goal of true faith in Christ. If the excuse is the familiar one, "I am not good enough," it ought to carry with it its own answer, for there is no one good enough. Even St. Paul could describe himself near the close of his life as the chief of sinners. Holy enough we can never be. It is only the spirit of self-righteousness which can rest satisfied with its state. The true Christian is the one who feels most his own utter unworthiness, as he humbles himself in the dust, as he remembers that he is a sinner, though a sinner saved by grace. His confession is that he is "not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table." He feels that his own righteousness is but filthy rags, and he desires to be covered with the spotless robe of the righteousness of Christ. But if this feeling is a fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, if it rises from a sense of sin and a knowledge of the holiness of Christ, there is the good hope that the person making it will be led into clearer light. If it be not a mere excuse, but the expression of the sense of sin and the sinner's need, that very conviction is a proof that God is working in the heart, and the words of the Prayer Book are deeply significant, "When God calleth you, are ye not ashamed to say ye will not come?" How true are Hart's beautiful and expressive words:

"Let not conscience make you linger,  
Nor of fitness fondly dream;

All the fitness He requireth

Is to feel your need of Him:

This He gives you: 'tis the Spirit's rising beam."

Another fruitful excuse is, "I am not prepared to-day." There can be no question but that one of the needs of the Christian church is that of more careful preparation for the Holy Communion. At the same time, it can be said that the Christian should always be prepared. He should be prepared to die whenever it may please God to call him. That summons may come at any moment. And he should be always prepared to accept the invitation to the Supper of the Lord. The knowledge of the truth, "Behold, I come quickly," is one that teaches the need of constant preparation in the spirit of watchfulness and prayer. And so it should be for the Holy Communion. For that preparation our communion service is a wonderful model.

Still another excuse is made by those who tell us that hypocrites can be found at the Lord's table. This is true, but the excuse shows a wrong spirit. It forgets that in the visible church the evil is ever

mingled with the good. It forgets that the speaker is not omniscient, and that it is possible that the ones he censures are, in God's sight, better than he is himself, and perhaps better than those he considers shining lights in the church. Judgment is not our prerogative. In matters of the heart we are oftener wrong than right. We have not the full knowledge of the facts; nor can we read the motives and weigh the actions. It is an absurd excuse, and if carried out would make life a burden. Are we to abstain from all good things because hypocrites use them? Are we to refuse to read our Bibles or to pray because hypocrites use both? The church guards the Lord's table by plain statements of what is required on the part of those who come. But if she can only accept those who do come on their own testimony that they are what they profess to be, the individual should do the same, judging himself severely, but others kindly.

There are those, again, who fail to come because they are afraid to make a profession which they fear they may not be able to keep up. This excuse has its root in the ground of want of faith. The knowledge of our weakness should send us more and more to Christ, and make us more anxious to use the full means of grace which He has provided. It is in Christ that the strength to overcome lies—"My grace is sufficient for thee." The one purpose of the Holy Communion is to lead us to Christ, to feed us with Christ, to keep us in Christ. "The benefit is great, if with a true, penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy sacrament; for then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink His blood; then we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us."

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#### ALL IN THE DAY'S WORK.

ALL in the day's work—tired heart,  
Lift the load bravely and do thy part,  
God will do His;

"And be the day weary, or be the day long,  
At last it ringeth to evensong!"

All in the day's work—straight from Thee  
Comes the right task Love sets for me:

I will attempt it;

"For be the day weary, or be the day long,  
At length it ringeth to evensong!"

All in the day's work—let it be  
Or short or long, 'tis all for Thee,  
Singing I'll do it;

"And be the day weary, or be the day long,  
I shall sleep to awake with the angels' song."

—*Marcia Tyndale.*

For PARISH AND HOME.

#### GROWTH.

FOR the Christian no other question is so important as that of growth in the knowledge of truth. Behind all our efforts must lie an ever-ripening appreciation of the beauty, the sweetness, the peace and comfort of the Christian consolation for our spirits, or we are not making progress. We may pride ourselves that we hold and teach the same old truths that we learned long ago. But for us they ought not to be quite the same old truths. They should be wider, deeper, fresher truths than we knew in our spiritual childhood. The love of God, the rest of faith in Jesus, the steady teaching of the Holy Spirit as we have come our devious way to the place where we now stand, are to us different because better understood than before. The eternal hills are unchanging, but their outline varies for us as we pass from one point to another; and in the Christian life there must be this progressive variety amidst eternal changelessness, or we are standing still. "I have learned that the world moves," said a tried old Christian, quaintly, "and to keep right we must move with it."

This perennial freshness in the Christian life has nothing in common with the fickleness that to-day is enthusiastic about a fancied truth, and to-morrow proclaims eloquently its opposite. It was said reproachfully of Arnold of Rugby that he awoke every morning with everything an open question. For us some questions should be settled forever in the earlier stages of our Christian experience. Our own deep sin, our entire dependence for mercy upon the passion of our dear Lord, are truths that should be written so large in our heart's experience that their meaning can never be mistaken by us. But these truths, so vast and far-reaching, have in the storm and stress of life endless possibilities of renewed understanding. They do not change, but we draw nearer to the centre.

We shall find it difficult sometimes to answer satisfactorily a test of our growth in Christian truth. In nature growth is intermittent. The rapid increase of spring and summer is followed by the apparent stagnation or even decline of autumn and winter. Yet the one period is as necessary as the other to the life of the tree or plant. The field that lies fallow is preparing for renewed fertility. Our lives, too, have their barren seasons. The sweet freshness of May and the bleak December storms alike come to us. We cannot always feel the same. God Himself is light; yet clouds