

## LIFE'S LIMITATIONS.

We meet our limitations on life on every side. Some of them are common to the race, tied as we are to the surface of this planet, unable either to float in the air or live in the depths of the sea, ignorant of the peoples of every other world, and constantly baffled in our efforts to master some secret of this one. Our very conquests of earth's forces but emphasize our inability to make her entirely subservient to our uses. At the end of every advance we find ourselves facing a dead wall on which is written, "Thus far, and no farther."

Our individual limitations are equally pressing. "Which of you, by being anxious, can add one cubit unto his stature?" We may be so foolish as to allow our excess or want of height to torment us all our days, but there is no remedy. So of our mental stature. We see and would repeat the achievements of the great men of the race—of its Shakespeares, its Dantes, its Michel Angelos, its Newtons, its Gladstones—but we lack the force to realize our dreams of greatness. The epic may never be written, the grand discovery never made, the great picture never painted, the new social order never evolved. Our names may never hold a niche in any Temple of Fame. Therefore our happiness and our usefulness depend greatly upon our recognizing our limitations, and taking the lower place at the feast. Payson says he was struck with the fact that many eminently useful men in God's service never were of much use until they had given up the dream of becoming great.

Life itself is a story of limitations. It is given to us but a second at a time, and no other second comes till the first has been used and is gone. Thus we cannot reach back to the past in our control, nor forward to the future in our knowledge, and must content ourselves with the little circle in which we move onward at a rate that we cannot govern. We are only sure that the end will come, in that great change from which nature revolts because it seems not so much an ending of life as a contradiction of it. And except the great moral principles which give the life after death its character, and its continuity with the life that now is, we have nothing but meager hints of its nature, and of the discipline, the uses, and the delights which await us there. Those who have entered upon it return not. As David said of his dead child, we shall go to them, but they return not to us to lift the veil which hides that future. Life lies as a little circle of light between the unseen whence we came and the unseen to which we are moving.

There is just one sphere of life in which all this is reversed, and in which we are bidden to set no limits to our hopes and our expectations. It is that of spiritual growth, which we attain through communion with God. "Ye therefore shall be perfect," says the Son. Human achievements may mock us, making us feel how small we are in comparison with the great on the roll of fame. The divine perfection draws us, inspires us, and bids us be content with nothing below itself. Goodness alone has this secret of infection. Once in an age the poetry of a Spenser or a Burne may awaken the dormant power of song in a Whittier. Every day the touch of the divine Spirit awakens the cold hearts of men to aspiration and resolve, and launches them upon a career of growth which will require eternity to finish, and whose goal is the holiness of God.

It is only on the Godward side that our nature is subjected to no cramping limitations. It is only in the greatest things that we all may be great. It is so because God gets nearer to us than great men can. They can show us their excellence, but they cannot impart it. He clothes us with his own perfections, and through his indwelling Spirit makes us partakers of the mind which is in himself. They touch us on the circumference of our being; he at the very center. It is his joy to win us back to himself, and to seeking the best in all the universe—a joy which lights up

heaven with a fresh brilliancy of glory—the "joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Cynics sneer and pessimists mock at the littleness of human life, its vanities, and its wonderful disappointments. But behind both cynicism and pessimism lies atheism. They leave God out of their estimate of human possibilities, and out of their count of what man has achieved while staying himself upon the divine help. Life has its disappointments, but those disappointments are the thorns with which God "hedges up the way" for us, to bring us back to himself. They are sent us to teach that we are not to be content with a part when the whole is for us—not to crave some paltry kid to make merry with our friends when all that the Father has is ours for the taking:

"For a cap and bells our lives we pay;  
Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking;

'Tis heaven alone that is given away;  
'Tis only God may be had for the asking."

The limitations of life are constantly meeting us in the operation of the law of compensation, which Emerson has expounded in the most famous of his essays. Our seeming gains are bought at a high cost. What the world counts success inflicts on us the loss of the freshness, the animation, and the capacity for delight, with which we set out to search for it. Wealth may come, but rarely spares us the imagination needed to use it fruitfully. The heart is wearied in the hour of its triumph, and the victor deserves our pity more than does the vanquished. What we gain in one direction we more than lose in another. At best we are like the Irishman who tried to lengthen his blanket by cutting a piece from the top and sewing it to the bottom. No net gain seems possible to us.

Compensation is the mark of the finite, and if human life touches only on the finite its lot is sad indeed. We may, indeed, keep it on that lower level by making the things that perish in the using the measure of the success we live for. Every human life is pitched on one key or the other. Our Lord warns us that it cannot be on both. The wise man is forever seeking the things that are above, and getting out of the region of compensation to the solid and lasting gains which involve no losses to balance them. He is reaping the fruits of the Spirit, which are "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control against such there is no law" of compensation or any other. He has given up seeking to "add one cubit to his stature," that he may grow "unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

The Pilgrim is not a new magazine, but an old favorite under new management, and fully up to date. In its pages will be found all the departments usually appearing in a modern, well conducted magazine. The Pilgrim and The Presbyterian, \$1.50 for a year. See advertisement on last page.

The Regina Leader says:—Mrs. (Rev.) McKillop, of Raymond, Alta, was recently presented with a handsome suit with gloves and shoes by members of Mr. McKillop's congregation. This following at a brief interval the costly presents given by the same people to Mr. and Mrs. McKillop at Christmas, is a testimony to the esteem in which they are held by the non-Mormons of Raymond. Mr. McKillop has already witnessed at least one conversion from Mormonism since he entered upon his difficult labors in Raymond. A young woman of marked intelligence, a school teacher, recently renounced the Mormon faith. Diligent efforts were made by the Mormon bishops to win or force her back into the fold, but she still remains true to the gospel doctrine.

The man who knows what he is after usually knows how to get it.

## BRITISH AND FOREIGN.

The Irish Society has granted £1,000 for relief of distress in Londonderry.

King Robert the Bruce was crowned at Scone 600 years ago on the 27th ult. The population of the British Empire has now reached a total of over 400 millions.

A secret league has been formed in Switzerland to prevent the marriage of tuberculous persons.

The Callander and Oban Railway Company are to plant some hundreds of trees at Connel Ferry station.

Popular edition of the "History of Kilmacoolm" is being brought out by the author, Rev. James Murray.

Education in Ireland is in a languishing state, but how to improve it is a problem bristling with difficulties.

Rev. Hugh Alexander, late assistant, Cowcadens U. F. Church, has been elected minister of Lamlash U. F. Church.

Lady Curzon's parting gift to the city of Calcutta is a fountain which is shortly to be erected in the public gardens.

The State of Maryland has undertaken to build a modern macadamized highway from Baltimore to Washington.

The State coach used by the King of Spain is drawn by eight pure white horses, with white plumes and white harnesses.

Sir William Howard Russell, better known as Dr. Russell, of the London Times, entered his 87th year on the 22nd ult.

There are four "all the year round" bathers at Scarborough, and every morning this winter they have taken their dip.

It is said that the life of Robert Owen will be described for the first time "in its entirety" in a forthcoming work in two volumes.

A community of nuns from Paisley intended settling in Greenock, and Alival House, Larkfield Road, has been purchased for them.

There being no criminal business for trial at the Limerick City Quarter Sessions on the 27th ult., Judge Adams was presented with a pair of white gloves.

It is proposed to employ elephants in India six hours a day generating electricity which will be stored in batteries and used at night for lighting streets.

In Australia there are 210 churches to every 100,000 people, a larger number in proportion than any other country. Britain has 141, and Russia about 55.

A startling decrease seems to have taken place in recent years in the number of candidates who compete for woman and girl clerkships in the London Post Office.

Gout is rarely known among the working classes of Ireland. Their immunity from this complaint is thought to be due to the fact that their food consists largely of potatoes.

Campbelltown Highland Parish Church is to have an American organ. It is curious that none of the Highland kirks have ever tried to lead the psalmody with the bagpipes.

The fact that Great Britain leads the world in fast railway runs is remarkable when it is taken into consideration that there is far more traffic on British than on American and Continental roads.

On the roll of the new House of Commons Mr. John Murphy, M. P., has signed his name in Gaelic. This is the first time that a member of Parliament has signed the roll in other than English characters.

Every horse in the British army is numbered and has a little record kept. The number is branded upon the animal's hind feet—the thousands on the near hind foot, and the units, tens, and hundreds on the off hind foot.

The British Museum has declined to purchase the Nelson memorandum outlining the plan of the Battle of Trafalgar, which was recently sold at auction for \$18,000 and offered to the museum by the purchaser at the same price.