

Yet, with all this, with such an ideal and such aspirations, what cause there is to take up the lament of the words, "I have seen an end of all perfection." The results of the struggle do sometimes seem to be very disheartening and full of disappointment. The attainments are exceedingly limited when judged by the expectation. Perfection of life and character, the reproduction of Divine virtue, the manifestation of Jesus Christ's purity, unselfishness, gentleness, seem even among the best of His disciples, if not altogether wanting, yet wondrously deficient. There are times and moods when this is particularly felt. We look, for instance, upon the Church itself—by which I mean all who have accepted the words of Christ as their law, and His life as their pattern, and I ask are we content, can we be content with the manner in which the generality are to-day proving the reality of their discipleship? Does it look as though they were striving after perfection? That they exhibit many excellences no one will dispute; but so do their neighbours, who are not inspired by any such purpose. Is there not a wide-spread complacency, a genial satisfaction with their own attainments which is utterly opposed to this spirit of aspiration of which I speak? They have made a profession of religion, they are in the Church, they can take to themselves all glowing, comforting words of promise, and anticipate all the prospects of the future as their portion, but what beyond? Where are the signs that they are seeking completeness, fullness of being? Friends, are there not times when the heart grows sad at the apparent indifference that the Church shows, and is inclined to utter doleful prophecies; to speak as though the Spirit of God, which is always the spirit of aspiration, had forsaken the Church, and to say, as we compare what ought to be with what is, "I have seen an end of all perfection." Take another instance. We often derive our idea of what perfection is from some persons whom we reverence. They stand on a pedestal of noble character above us. All they do looks like an exact imitation of Christ. If only we could become like them, how satisfied we should be. But maybe there comes a time when our idols exhibit defects. We are brought into closer contact and relationship with them, and we are compelled to see faults of temper or selfishness never imagined to exist—we see the limits of their goodness; or perhaps the idols of our admiration suddenly plunge into the very mire of a public sin. The shock that follows none know but ourselves, and then in our misery we cry, "I have seen an end of all perfection."

Or, take another instance. We are disappointed with ourselves. In the flush of new-born love to Christ and warm enthusiasm, we felt as though the conquest of sin were an easy task, as though no cross of suffering or disappointment or loss could bear down our faith, as though self-sacrifice for Christ or for men were the natural and joyous life we could always live; but there came trial, testing, and we failed. Peace, earnestness, love seemed gone; then in bitterness and disgust we have exclaimed against ourselves, "I have seen an end of all perfection."

Now, these facts are not outside of your experience; you have known them—perhaps know them at this hour. Well, what then? To what do they lead? Why, to the conclusion that spiritual life in ourselves and in others is very limited—our attainments are far, far below our ideal. But shall that conclusion make us despairful? Surely not. We must take human nature into account. We are brought to truer views of ourselves and others. We have to recognise the fact that we and all men are sinners, and that it is out of this poor, weak, sinful material of which our nature is made up that God by His grace is to bring perfection. We feel that if anything is to be made of us, that it must be a long, toilsome work. We realise how much we ever need to draw upon the Divine pity and the Divine patience; for if Christ should give us up, how utterly we should sink! There is not a single soul that does not ever need Him, and those who are striving most earnestly after perfection feel as though they needed Him the most. There is no reason for despair, for despair even of the ultimate result; but there is reason that we should cast ourselves more on God. And then, though our attainments are small, our outreaching towards perfection very limited at the best, and our disappointments grieve us bitterly, yet remember that there is something, there is some attainment, and that is better than nothing; we shall not despise what we have gained, because perfection is not reached. I am not content when I see the buds of apple-blossom on the tree—I want

fruit; but because the fruit has not come, I will not despise the blossom, since that is the preparation for it. I am not content when my babe takes its first step or two, and then stumbles—I want to see it walk without fear; but I do not despise that first step—it is the beginning—there is a relation between the first effort and the last, between the step toward perfection and perfection itself. So, though the attainment of Divine knowledge and holiness is limited—extremely limited—and we are often disappointed, and exclaim, "I have seen an end of all perfection," our virtues are very small and poor; yet we ought to add, "I will reach toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

SUCCESS IN LIFE.

THE aim of most people, but the realisation of the few. In how many different channels, by what a variety of means, how varied the methods, how opposite the themes by which the many are trying to reach this most coveted goal! How few grasp the prize, how numerous the failures, which in the natural, though not necessary, order of things, must be the heritage of the many, and this from no cause of their own! By this we mean that we have no control over our parentage from whom we owe our birth, they being feeble or strong in will, moral power, and physical stamina, transmitting to us their predispositions and hereditary constitutions. Also the ignorance, folly, and sins of mankind are such that we have often to begin life at a great disadvantage. Then, as to the homes of children and the neighbourhood in which their homes are situated, with the evils necessarily attached under present arrangements, that not only is life begun at a disadvantage, but much has to be unlearned—which is more difficult than learning—much precious time is lost in the effort ere men can "leave behind them footprints in the sands of time."

Our object in writing is to show those who read the difficulties which are placed in the path of those who often have a desire and make efforts to rise. A writer has said, "It is what men eat and drink, how they live, where they sleep, etc., that makes them depraved or otherwise." If this is so, our duty is to prevent and remove the obstacles which we have named above. We are also anxious to combat the fallacy that education alone is necessary to success, and have pleasure in quoting from a speech recently delivered by the Marquis of Hartington: "Success in life depends upon a great many things beside mere position and education. Success in life depends upon energy, upon industry, upon strength of will, upon perseverance, upon tact, upon a number of things which cannot be conferred by any education." Have we not known and read of men who possessed most of the above qualifications and were brilliant for a time, but failed in being truly successful? We have read that "in business ninety-nine in a hundred fail." Does this apply to professions as well as business? Such names as Pitt, Byron, Burns, and Chatterton, are sad proofs. We have often quoted, and believe, "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it"; also the words of Burns: "My father was a farmer upon the Garrick border; carefully he brought me up in decency and in order. He bade me act a manly part, though I had not a farthing, for without an honest, manly heart, no man was worth regarding." Paradoxes often meet, and at such times the mind becomes perplexed. Faith at such times wavers, and truth alone is the rock upon which to rest. Why should not success wait on the many instead of the very few? Are the barriers to success immovable? Is there one cause more than another that invariably leads to failure? If so, our duty is to find it, prove it, and then wisely make it known.

All laws are arbitrary in their nature, and must be obeyed, or their violation will be sure to be followed by natural consequences—consequences which the wise will observe and avoid.

We close this article by weighty sentences by Sir T. F. Buxton, Bart.:—"The longer I live, the more I am certain that the great difference between men, between the feeble and the powerful, the great and the insignificant, is **ENERGY**—invincible determination—a purpose once fixed, and then death or victory. That quality will do anything that can be done in this world; and no talents, no circumstances, no opportunities, will make a two-legged creature a man without it."