

alone may appear of no importance. But you must trace its ramifications, and follow up, link by link, its result. That single, insignificant act, done thoughtlessly, in an unguarded moment, must send forward an influence through your whole subsequent life.

The historian of British India, speaking of the voyage of Warren Hastings to that country, says, concerning a circumstance which occurred on the voyage:—"It is doubtful whether this act did not exercise an unfavorable influence over his whole moral nature, and over his career." Of how many persons might the same remark be made! One wrong act brings the murderer to his ignominious end. One wrong act stamps, with indelible stains of dishonor, a character hitherto above reproach. One wrong act in youth has thrown many a young person from under the controlling love of a kind Providence, and launched him on a sea of trouble and sorrow to a late old age.

Of how much peace, of how much spiritual prosperity and holy joy, has a single sin at the outset robbed a true child of God!—Of how much deep, unavailing sorrow and mortification has it been the inlet! It was an act, perhaps, as soon done as the turning of a key by the angel that opened the bottomless pit; but with a more distressing power for evil it has caused a darkness, as the smoke of a great furnace, to overcloud your prospect, and has let forth amid the wide spread scenes of all your following years, memories and regrets with a keener power than scorpions, and leaving hardly a green thing in the waste of a life that opened with so much to animate and to cheer.—It has drawn down on you the displeasure of God. It has arrayed his providence against you, and shut you off from the fullness of his love.

An unadvised expression from the lips of Moses shut him out from the green pastures and still waters beyond Jordan. Never till we reach heaven, and there have all our secret history unrolled to our view, shall we know from how many scenes of earthly and of spiritual happiness a single wrong act have excluded us; how many sore afflictions it has drawn around our weary pilgrimage; and from what a degree of advancement it has shut us off even amid the glories and blessedness of heaven.

THE ROCK OF GOLD.

1 TIM. vi. 7, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."

The wanderings of a Californian adventurer once brought him upon a rock of gold of enormous richness. The precious metal

sparkled from its solid quartz bed, while he could pick the pure gold from the crevices with his knife. Bewildered with his sudden surprise, he sat down to muse. Half an hour ago he was a penniless exile from home and friends, roaming in a reckless mood over rocks and sand heaps, which only seemed to mock his search. Ill clad, and accustomed to scanty food, he had become the familiar companion of hardship and privation.

Now he sat upon the solid wealth which nature had prepared to reward his sufferings. That rock was worth fifty thousand pounds. Compact in form, elevated in posture, and convenient of access, it would give forth its hidden treasures in lavish profusion. He was now a prince, thus suddenly transformed from a pauper! His brain reeled with the wild rush of schemes which his new circumstances should permit him to carry out. He resolved what he would do for his family.—His wife should be repaid for all her hardships in sharing his lot. His children should enjoy the best home and the best education that money could procure. He would go back to his native village, and his neighbors should be forced to wonder at his brilliant equipage, while his old playfellows should bite their lips as he passed, in the endeavor to suppress their envy. Thus suddenly appeared to his excited imagination all the enjoyment and luxuries of a life of wealth, while the dim outlines of architectural beauty began to assume the familiar look of his own country residence.

Thus he mused, till hunger and the approach of night suggested another train of thoughts. The question sprang suddenly to his mind, "*How shall I carry away this treasure?*" The scenery changed in his excited brain quicker than cords and pulleys ever did the service on the stage. He was alone. He had no instruments for breaking the rock. With his knife he could only dislodge gold enough to tantalize his fevered imagination. Although now sole proprietor and claimant, while he went for machinery and workmen, another wanderer might see the prize, and claim it as his own.

In his perplexity he became as miserable as he had been elated with joy. Indeed, he was pitifully unhappy. His heart had suddenly fastened its mysterious grasp upon a rock, to which he was now chained by invincible yet adamantine bonds. To go for help was to hazard its possession. To stay and watch it was death by starvation.—He could do neither: yet something he must do. Before the discovery, *hope* made him happy. Now a fancied possession made him wretched.

Imprisoned there *day after day*, though neither wall, nor chain, nor keeper could be seen, he lived miserably on nuts which had fallen from some neighboring trees. A little stream hardly gave him drink. At length