

or ought to know the nature of the tree. To be earnest and honest with oneself is the first element of self cultivation. In the case of other men you may charitably cite the force of circumstances or the power of passion as the excuse for sin ; but when you do it for yourself, you have surrendered your opportunity for moral work. For your own heart belongs to you as your neighbor's never can. You can examine it and work upon it, and open it to new influences, where his is open only to a chance influence which you can bring to bear upon it here and there, now and then. Even to your own child you can never approach with the slightest degree as you can to yourself. For each life, the very humblest and weakest carries a citadel of self knowledge, of which it alone commands the approach and which no other can storm. What chance can there ever be of success in another's field, where our own which offers so much better opportunity lies neglected. It is in this last that true principles are learned, true methods adopted, true work accomplished. What you learn of your own heart measures your ability to deal with your brother's, what you do about your own sin teaches you how to deal with the sin of others. "Then shalt thou see clearly"; as an experienced and educated man, as one who has earned to himself a good degree, as an expert who has labored in the hardest field, a man will enter the difficult field of moral reform, when once he has labored with himself and understood the sin of his own heart. Deep work upon our own sin produces its good result for others even unconsciously ; men see that we are in earnest, and that the battle is a great one ; their own motives begin to appear like beams, when they see you working hard at your beam ; those inner forces of their own lives, by which alone the work can ever be accomplished, are set in motion, and they too go deep in laying the foundation of a new life. Clearness of moral sight spreads and men become fellow workers in moral reform. Often men resent the Bible's earnest and thorough expressions about sin, they want advice and not pictures of moral need and labor. They consider the statements of the worlds condition overdrawn. "Matters cannot be as bad as they are represented. A little mutual help will set all things right." Look at your own life. What are your own motives what are you living for ; what moral possessions have you that would stand the test of another and an eternal world, how often do you think of God as the Creator and the End of your existence, what is the nature of your secret thought and hidden desire? Such questions