

HABITS OF READING.

(1) Make time for reading. For this purpose utilize the now wasted fragments. Have a book in the dining-room, and read while your are waiting for your meal; have a book in your overcoat pocket, and read while you are riding in the horse-cars to business. Schliemann did his first studying in Greek, as a boy, standing in line at the post-office, waiting his turn for the letters.

(2) Learn what not to read. Skip the gossip and the scandal in the daily papers; skip the partizan editorials, which tell you only what you thought before. Waste no time before the intellectual looking-glass, which gives you back a reflection of your own image. Read the newspaper with the pencil in hand, mark what is worth preserving, and cut it out. Doing this will fasten the item in your memory, whether you paste it in a scrap-book afterward or not.

(3) Extend this pencil habit. Make notes of all that you read. A good place for such notes, in your own books, is on the fly-leaf at the end of the volume. In reading borrowed books make the notes on a half sheet of note paper, and file it away. Be careful how you vitiate your memory by reading what is not worth remembering, but do not discourage yourself from reading because you cannot remember all that you read. All food does not go into tissue—all reading does not remain in the mind.

(4) Examine yourself on your reading. If possible, have every day a self-recitation. Write down the most important points in what you have read, or in the thoughts which that reading has suggested to you. Keep a journal, not of your feelings, but of your thinking. Doing this will make you think. No one fully possesses a thought until he has expressed it. Self-expression fastens it in the mind.

(5) Avoid long courses of reading. Begin undertakings which you can have reasonable hope of finishing, and measure your reading, not by the amount of ground covered, but by the amount of thought stimulated and produced.

(6) Finally, remember that perseverance is the mother of habit, and the only way to form a habit of reading is to keep on reading until it has become a habit.—Lyman Abbott.

BITS AND SNATCHES.

Owing to the limited number of hours in a day, it is not possible to get two or three solid hours for every bit of work we want to do. Happy he who can learn to use the odd minutes.

To some of us it may not perhaps have occurred that most of our pleasures must come in much the same way. A new world of pleasure opens to the soul that is willing to take it so, by bits and snatches. There is something very lovely and precious in the little glimpses of sky one gets in city streets, up high between the houses. It is piquant, suggestive, stimulating. But not satisfying? No; and neither is an ocean hemisphere of sky, where the horizon makes the only boundary.

"Oh, if I could only get time to read!" sighs some bright girl wistfully. "Ten minutes here, ten minutes there—what is it?"

Do you know what makes the book you pick up on the hotel table, in the last few minutes of waiting, so delightful? Some traveller left it after a week's possession, and your page or two is worth all he got out of it. Your very limitations helped you. What you see quickly you need not see hastily. The boy or girl who will make the most of the chance peeps into books that are possible for every one, need look with no such wistful glance at the day-long leisure of another. You know the saying of the Southern "mammy" about her "pickaninnies"—they grow fat, not

so much by table-meals as by "everlastin' pickin' roun' de do' step." At least we may say that "picking" may have good results where table-meals were not regular and frequent.

The same thought holds in higher realms, where busy people often grow despairing. How many a busy sister and daughter, as well as mother, has to "steal a while away," if she ever gets away to have a minute by herself praise or prayer? She need not for that lose the sense of sweet communion with her Lord. He is willing to keep tryst with her in the most unforeseen and quite unchosen places. Be on the watch for little accidental meetings with Christ—a word, a look, a whispered sentence in His ear; you can afford to wait for longer times of quiet rest together.

A THOROUGH CONVERSION REQUIRED.

What we want is a thorough conversion, writes Canon Knox Little—a real turning away, slowly it may be, and with many haltings, but surely—from sin to God. What we want for our souls is life, life strong and steadfast, life glorious and eternal, "and this life is in His Son." The heart that more and more is opening to Him; the soul that more and more, by penitence, is seeking, and therefore receiving His forgiveness; the being that more and more is resting on His strength, and living its life of daily duty, trial, joy, and sorrow, in reliance upon Him, and by the power of His promised grace—this is the soul preparing for that solemn judgment, as only we can prepare. Serious as are such thoughts, through the shadows comes plenty of sunlight, when we are using the helps given to every earnest Christian. God give us grace to use them! God give us grace to hide our life with Christ in God! Then, surely, "when Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory." Hope is a blessed power. Hope, amidst all such solemn thoughts, it is our duty to cherish. Hope rests upon God's promises, which cannot fail. Hope in Christ leads us to self-sacrifice, to watchfulness, to "purifying ourselves even as He is pure."

AVOID DISCUSSING IRRITATING SUBJECTS AT THE DINNER TABLE.

Why is it that in most households the dinner table becomes a dumping ground for the wholesale complaints of its members? Probably because this is the only meal of the day when the entire family meet together, and each one feels it a duty to air a few personal grievances in order to seek consolation from the others, says the Boston "Herald."

Out of deference to digestion, if for no other reason, dinner-table conversation should be of the spiciest, but this fact is lost sight of in the general desire of everybody, from papa down to the youngsters, to serve up only those topics which have marred rather than made the day's happiness.

Hardly has the man of the house finished his carving duties before he falls into an animated financial discussion with his wife. Household expenses are rehashed, bills grumbled over, and the cost of living recalculated with tedious regularity.

Mother, in her turn, eagerly pours into any listening ear her domestic woes. The day's errors below stairs are minutely recorded. She sighs over Bridget's butter waste, declares that the butcher's indifference to her order is becoming intolerable, and so on.

Then the small boy (poor little target for family flaw-picking) comes in for his share of criticism. His failures at school are relentlessly raked up and all sorts of punishments threatened unless there is speedy reform.

If there are guests present this talk of the inner circle is, for courtesy's sake, given a less personal flavour, but only then. "Good cheer and plenty of it" is not the motto of the average family dinner.

VICTORY OVER DEATH.

Death was born at our birth, and ever moves by our side with his shadow rising upon us. He is ever pencilling wrinkles on the brow, and blanching the bloom of the cheek, sowing rottenness in the bones, scattering grey hairs upon the crown, hampering activity and enjoyment, mocking at wisdom and strength and beauty, and finally, as the penalty of sin, extinguishing, with accumulations of misery, our earthly existence. Such is the dark background against which the life and immortality of the Gospel shines out so brightly. Sin, the sting of death, has been extracted; the law, the strength of sin, has been satisfied; believers in Christ are freed from death as the penalty of sin; so that Jesus Himself could say, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." (John xi. 26). In His death He has abolished ours, and hence has delivered us, not only from the dominion and sting of death, but even from the fear of death. (Heb. ii. 15). This is the deepest note of the Gospel. It reveals the lost harmony of our human existence; it offers the only medicine that sweetens the Mara of bereavement, and descends with healing to the deepest springs of our nature.

COST UNTIRING EFFORT.

Saintliness of character or of manner is not born in a person. It is a growth, or an acquirement, or a result of training. And the more markedly it stands out in the face and bearing and methods of a man in maturer life, the more it must have cost him in its securing. It is very easy to see the signs of this saintliness as it finally shows itself, but it is not so easy to realize the struggles which have been made in the efforts at its attaining. Hard blows on the marble in its cutting and trimming, and patient and persistent effort at its polishing, are essential in the process of transforming the rude block as it comes from the quarry into the finished statue which is a centre of admiration in the gallery. Yet no statue ever formed by the hand of man cost such determined effort, and such untiring patience in its completing, as a finished human character. A saintly face is a thing of beauty, but it costs more in its securing than most of us are willing to pay for it, however glad we should be to have it as our own possession.

DO IT NOW.

Don't live a single hour of your life without doing exactly what is to be done in it, and going straight through it from beginning to end. Work, play, study, whatever it is—take hold at once, and finish it up squarely and cleanly; then to the next thing, without letting any moments drop between. It is wonderful to see how many hours these prompt people contrive to make of a day; it is as if they picked up the moments that the dawdlers lost. And if ever you find yourself where you have so many things pressing upon you, let me tell you a secret; take hold of the very first one that comes to hand and you will find the rest all fall into file, and follow after, like a company of well-drilled soldiers; and though work may be hard to meet when it charges in squad, it is easily vanquished if you can bring it into line.

Every situation—nay, every moment—is of infinite worth; for it is the representative of a whole eternity.