

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

ONE STEP ENOUGH.

Sunday School Times.

The whole history of many a pessimist may be described by saying that he never appreciated the value of a step,—would not be contented with anything less than a stride. It is the very essence of humility to be willing to do what we can; and it is for want of that willingness that splendid talents have been desolated, and noble ambitions have sunk down into cynicism and complaining.

In every line of Newman's hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light," we read a prayer against restlessness of soul. But restlessness is not the wholly mysterious thing we are often disposed to think, and in one phrase after another he touches the sources from which it springs, and shows us the points at which we may conquer it. When he says that one step is enough he puts his finger upon one of the most fertile sources of his misery; our natural desire to do more than can be done. Behind the brief sharp phrase we discern the struggle by which a great talent that longs to change the world at a single stroke has begun to learn its needed lesson, and has humbled itself to take the one step which is all that is open to it.

It is easy and pleasant to dream of power, but it is above all things necessary to remember that power means the acceptance of limitation. It is the nature of explosives that they need to be confined in order to do their work. We cannot show ourselves generous except by narrowing ourselves down to some concrete act which makes that generosity tangible to others. There is plenty of that genial good-nature which, in a very general way, wishes well to the whole world; but it does not for a moment rank with the willingness to tie oneself up to some particular form of service, and persist in it until it is done. Good causes suffer on every hand because they have too many well-wishers, too many whose good-will we cannot condense and apply to any particular point. The disciples were always offering to do for Christ larger things than he ever asked for, yet they were strangely reluctant to do those smaller and humbler things about which He was so insistent. Their growth in action was a growth in the power to act within narrow limits. All action is, after all, a sort of narrowness. The poet has to accept his meter and bring his vision within bounds, or he remains a dreamer. The meters are his best friends, and they give him his only chance.

Whatever our vision may be, there are cool and definite steps to be taken about it, and they are usually of a sort that somewhat chill our enthusiasm. The first step seems almost a profanation; we hold back. Then the ideal, which was meant to be the very health of our bones becomes a poison in our system that makes us hate and resist the world. We use the word ideals with a shallowness and recklessness that are nothing short of amazing. We seem to think that simply because we have them, all must be well with us, without realizing that the world has a right to demand of whoever has an ideal more labor and sacrifice than of anybody else. We speak of our ideals as if they gave us a sort of exemption from the world's roughness, when the truth is that the man whose ideal amounts to anything knows that he is a candidate for trouble and rough going, and accepts cheerfully the situation.

The ideal that hovered before Newman's mind, however much we may wonder at it, had this robust quality about it, that, instead of turning his life into a petulant inactivity, it started him upon a course of incessant labor that gave substance and reality to his life.

In his particular case the one step that was open to him is very instructive. It was to make the best of a dead calm that had fallen upon the Mediterranean and that held the orange-boat on which he was travelling home drifting helplessly about for days in the Straits of Bonifacio. Seething with schemes and fretting for action as he was, the next step was to make the most of a dead calm. Probably the next step never seemed more distasteful to any man than the one which he had to take. Of what use was it to attempt any thing there on shipboard? How could anything done there ever contribute to the great purpose which had laid hold of him? Nevertheless he took the pen, and, mastering the pain of beginning,—which is always a sharp twinge to most of us,—he wrote. Probably the one step possible amid limitations never turned out to be more surprisingly fruitful than that which brought forth the hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light," by which he is known to thousands who never even heard of his more far-reaching schemes. It is instructive, also, to notice that this phrase seems to hint at some deep temptation in his nature which had to be met and laid again and again.

It was only four days later, when the wind had freshened and borne them off Sardinia, that once more he had to apply the brake of his restless spirit, as he does in the poem called "Flowers without Fruits":

"Prune thou thy words, the thoughts
control
That o'er thee swell and throng;
They will condense within thy soul,
And change to purpose strong.

"But he who lets his feelings run
In soft luxurious flow,
Shrinks when hard service must be
done,
And faints at every foe.

"Faith's meanest deed more favor
beats
Where hearts and wills are weighed,
Than brightest transports, choicest
prayers,
Which bloom their hour and fade."

In this and many another allusion of his up to the end of his life there is more than a hint of how, if he had not mastered an infirmity that besets us all, the output of his life might have been "soft, loose and wandering" instead of having that beautiful precision and hard-attained ease which came to be the wonder of his words.

In the spiritual life we fail because one step is not enough for us. We sink back deeper into the slough of defeat, and lose more ground, because we are too proud after a sin or a relapse to take the poor first step which is all that is possible toward our recovery. Never prouder than when we have fallen, we sit and dream about some repentance that will seem adequate to so great a fall. The poor unworthy prayer which at the time is all we can utter seems wholly unequal to what we feel. We want to make some large, free stroke toward our restoration. We wish the days would slip by more swiftly. We wish we could live a week at a time in order to arrive sooner at the point from

which we have slipped. But one step is enough; and when pride makes us unwilling to take it, we only sink lower and lower until at last no repentance that is possible to us seems worthy of us. St. Theresa has left us one word of wisdom that would change many a life history if thoroughly appropriated once for all: her discovery that after failure it is best to repent at once and in what words and ways one can.

How little any of us know about what is enough! And how assertive we are about what we need! Day after day we have had enough within our reach, and have let it go. To realize that we have enough of opportunity, and more than we can ever fill, would be to find contentment coming back again. It would conquer our restlessness if we could look with reverent eyes upon a single day without worrying about any other. The continuance of our life into this present day is an assurance of God's intention to bless. There is not a day nor a duty that does not contribute to life's main purpose. And the Kindly Light has no kinder leading than that which leads us to taking contentedly one step more as long as we live.

THE COLOR LINE IN INDIA.

(From the Springfield Republican.)

It can hardly be wondered at that English rule is not popular in India where natives whatever their personal merits, are not tolerated in clubs. A writer in the Pall Mall magazine tells of the useful work being done by the Calcutta club, lately formed for the express purpose of bringing together the races. There is no sterner social law in Calcutta, he says, than that a "native is ineligible for the Bengal or the United Service club:

"He may be a Christian; he may have been brought up in England without the slightest accent, and thoroughly imbued with English ideas; he may be wealthy, cultured, or universally popular in English and Anglo-Indian society—that will not help him. His complexion offends it all. He not only cannot become a member, he may not even enter the doors of these institutions. To people who had grown accustomed to this state of things, the idea of the Calcutta club was a revolutionary one. It is the old story of Columbus and the egg. The thing has been proved to be possible by the simple fact that it has been done."

It is one of the misfortunes of India that its people are better treated in England than at home. A young prince who goes to Oxford and visits London is made much of; naturally he is offended at being "put in his place" when he returns to India. The difference is simply that in England the color line is not a live issue; in India it is.

Rev. Wilbur Chapman, D.D., and his band of workers, will likely be invited to Hamilton for a simultaneous evangelistic campaign next fall.

Rev. Wm. A. Guy, B.A., B.D., formerly of McDonald's Corners, who went west several months ago, has received a unanimous call to a Presbyterian church at Regina, and has accepted.

Rev. Dr. McMullen, of Woodstock, conducted very successful jubilee services at Avonbank and Motherwell on the 28th ult. There are only three survivors of the membership at the organization sixty years ago.