

LETTING THINGS ALONE.

As the mind grows brighter, and the intellectual and moral fibre becomes finer, there arises a whole class of temptations and sufferings of which rougher and coarser natures know nothing. A keen conscience is troubled by a thousand annoyances which never come to a blunt conscience; and the sharper the faculties of apprehension and reflection, the greater the danger from worry and painstaking analysis. Things from without and from within vex and annoy those whose eyes behold them, while a duller vision does not suffer at all from the sight of that which it is unable to perceive.

Therefore it is that the lives of some of the very best people in the world are made miserable by that which to most men and women seems ridiculous and imaginary. While the coarse sinner eats, drinks and is merry, the gentle saint, who seems to have nothing to vex his soul, spends his days and nights upon a rack of self-inquisition tenfold worse than any material torture. Indeed, self-consciousness seems to increase directly with intelligence and the sense of moral responsibility. Brutes, and brutal men and women, live as unconsciously as trees and grass; but as the nature of man rises from this lowest level, the cultivation of artlessness and the banishment of morbid self-examination becomes one of the most pressing of duties. No moral victory is harder to attain, for many a soul, than rightly to combine that constant watchfulness which every Christian soldier should have, with that manly independence which is the privilege of God's freemen.

Some people are so conscientious that they really do nothing at all, because they are afraid of doing something wrong. They debate and discuss, they look at every real and imaginary difficulty, they torment themselves and their friends with questionings and quibbles, and they return a thousand times to settle a point which they have a thousand times banished forever. The result is that they do less than those with half their gentleness of spirit and sincerity of endeavour. Because they can let nothing alone, they do nothing well. They think when they should act; they pull to pieces when they should build; they sigh and lament when they ought to take courage and work; they spend in ceaseless introspection the strength that should be used in doing God's work; they battle with chimeras and phantoms when flesh-and-blood opponents surround them on every hand.

To learn how to let things alone is as important a lesson as to learn how to take things up. If, in considering any question, you have asked God for strength and guidance, and have made your decision to the best of your ability, that decision ought to be as much a matter of verity as the existence of the law of right and wrong. It is useless to talk about human fallibility; God and conscience and the Bible are not fallible, and when we have obeyed their commands our duty so far is done. If we have erred, we have erred by the light of the only lamp we had. When we have decided to follow God, we ought never to heed the devil's suggestions that perhaps our God is not the true God, after all. Satan knows how to tempt us on the line of deep piety and sincere desire to do right, just as dangerously as on any other line. He asks no better servant than one who can never make up his mind on which side he is fighting. A gun that is never fired is as useless as no gun at all.

In lesser matters, as well as in great, the person who does not know when to let things alone becomes a bane to himself and to those who surround him. He is miserable before he acts, lest he act wrongly; and afterwards, for fear that he has made a hopeless mistake. He is in constant fear of being misunderstood; he is ever offering excuses before they are asked for; he is possessed with a constant desire to "review his record" and "vindicate his course," as the politicians say; and he fans into a lasting flame, by his misdirected attempts to put it out, a spark that otherwise would have died of itself. He starts quarrels in the zeal of his efforts as peacemaker; he arouses suspicions that but for him would never have existed; and he brings all about him into a wretched state of uncertainty as to what he is going to do next.

Being eternally irresolute, he makes a little task more laborious and disquieting than a great work ought to be. "The irresolute man," says a clever essayist, "whatever his position and powers, not only fails to himself, but is felt by those about him to be useless for the parts of counsellor, supporter, or advocate. He is essentially incompetent for these offices. His own course is determined, not by intention, but by chance; his judgment wants the education of personal experience. No one can remain eternally suspended between two courses of action, for the world moves and situations change, however much a man may desire to keep them at a standstill until his mind is made up. Something irrespective of his judgment steps in and takes the matter in hand. While he deliberates on the highest conceivable best—best in itself or best for him—while he fluctuates, accident settles the matter, with little regard for his credit or interest."

Thus it is that he who cannot let things alone, not only injures himself, but hurts the good cause he ought to aid. It is as true in morals as it is in hygiene, that good health and good work cannot be found in one who is forever dosing himself. Some of the best intellectual and spiritual material in the world is at this minute going to waste simply because certain men and women are asking what they shall do, instead of what they shall let alone.—S. S. Times.

"MASTER, SAY ON!"

Master, speak! Thy servant heareth,
Longing for Thy gracious word,
Longing for Thy voice that cheereth;
Master let it now be heard.
I am listening, Lord, for Thee;
What hast Thou to say to me?

Master, speak in love and power;
Crown the mercies of the day,
In this quiet evening hour
Of the moonrise o'er the bay,
With the music of Thy voice;
Speak, and bid Thy child rejoice.

Often through my heart is pealing
Many another voice than Thine,
Many an unwilling echo stealing
From the walls of this Thy shrine,
Let Thy longed-for accents fall;
Master, speak! and silence all.

Master, speak! I do not doubt Thee,
Though so tearfully I plead;
Saviour, Shepherd! oh, without Thee
Life would be a blank indeed,
But I long for fuller light,
Deeper love, and clearer sight.

Resting on the "faithful saying,"
Trusting what Thy Gospel saith,
On Thy written promise staying
All my hope in life and death;—
Yet I ask for something more
From Thy love's exhaustless store.

Speak to me by name, O Master,
Let me know it is to me;
Speak, that I may follow faster,
With a step more firm and free,
Where the Shepherd leads the flock,
In the shadow of the Rock.

Master, speak! I kneel before Thee,
Listening, longing, waiting still,
Oh, how long shall I implore Thee
This petition to fulfil!
Hast Thou not one word for me?
Must my prayer unanswered be?

Master, speak! Though least and lowest
Let me not unheard depart;
Master, speak! for oh! Thou knowest
All the yearning of my heart;
Knowest all its truest need;
Speak! and make me blest indeed.

Master, speak! and make me ready
When Thy voice is truly heard,
With obedience glad and steady
Still to follow every word.
I am listening, Lord, for Thee:
Master, speak, oh speak to me!

Francis Ridley Havergal.

RELIGION IN TRADE.

BY A BUSINESS MAN.

It is a very difficult matter to determine what avocations are, and what are not, in harmony with or

prevented by a Christian profession in the present age. "The world" looks upon a man's means of obtaining a livelihood as something, as it were, sacred, and, if it is lawful and respectable, as of much more account than his religious views or personal practice; and I am sorry to have to say that the life and conduct of many Christians shew that they must be of the same mind.

The one great object in life seems to be to make money; and, if the business is a profitable one, it "covers a multitude of sins," and I believe that one of the greatest obstacles to the progress of Christianity is the disposition of clergymen to wink at or condone offences against the spirit and teachings of Christianity, when committed by those who contribute largely to their support in things temporal.

I was intimately acquainted in my younger days with an officer of one of the largest and most influential churches in New York city, who thought it perfectly right and consistent to sell intoxicating liquors at retail (not by the glass), and he prayed in public in the church, always had family worship, and used his best endeavours to get those in his employ to become Christians; but, although I watched his life for thirty years, I never knew one of his clerks to become a Christian while in his employ. I was often at his house and attended family worship and often heard him pray in church meetings, but there was a formality and lack of heart and spiritual interest that seemed to chill rather than warm the hearts of his hearers. While he professed and talked religion, he clearly indicated to those in his employ that his business and their attention to it was of much more account to him than their attendance upon religious duties. He was for years a pillar in his church, so far as contributing to its finances was concerned, but his selfish spirit and manifest greed of gain neutralized it all, and he helped no one that knew him intimately to Christ.

I am becoming more and more convinced that the influence of money, with the homage paid to wealthy members of evangelical churches in our land at the present day, is seriously retarding the progress of vital Christianity, and our largest and wealthiest churches are violating directly the teachings of the Apostle James in regard to the treatment of the rich and poor.

If I read and understand rightly the teachings and spirit of the New Testament, I cannot engage in any business or avocation that is not helpful to society in all respects, and I could not engage in or get my living by any business that was not a help to those who used the article sold or made; consequently I cannot engage in or get my living in any way through the buying, selling, raising or manufacturing of tobacco, alcohol, or any other article that is not useful to and necessary for the sustenance of mankind, or that will tend to industrious thrift, and is conducive to the health of all that use it, and be a Christian. In other words, I must employ myself in such a way that I will be in accord with the teaching of the Apostle Paul, when he says "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. iii. 17). And I must let my daily life be occupied in doing that which will only tend to the glory of God and the good of mankind. "God is love." "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour."

DR. PARKER'S paper, the "Fountain," states that the Rev. Paxton Hood, who has resigned the pastorate of Cavendish Chapel, Manchester, is about to join the Church of England.

"THERE can be no pretence," says Dr. Mark Hopkins, in the "Congregationalist," "that man is contained in a monkey; there is much more evidence that a monkey is contained in a man." And he puts well the gist of the whole matter thus: "It would seem then, that evolution can give no account of the origin of anything. What is called evolution may be, and seems to be, a method by which God works to some extent, but as a rational account to the intellect of man for the present state of this world, or as making provision for the wants of his heart and his moral nature, it is an utter failure."