

closer to the guilty man the circle was drawn. First, his tribe was discovered, then his family, then name after name was passed over until Achan stood revealed as the troubler of Israel. When Joshua sternly, yet kindly, demanded that a full confession be made before God—the God who already knew his crime—and before the men who were suffering the consequences of his sin, he did not attempt to make any excuse. He not only declared himself to be a sinner—as we are all quite willing to do in general terms—but said: "Thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent."

This was not an ordinary case of stealing. The spoils of Jericho—being the first fruits of the Promised Land—were claimed by God, and had been solemnly devoted to Him. The people had been warned that if they took of the "devoted thing" they should bring a curse on the whole camp of Israel. (Josh. vi.: 18, R. V.) Achan's covetous spirit had led him to commit sacrilege, and, though he had made no use of his stolen goods, but kept them buried in the midst of his tent, his carefully hidden sin was a danger to the whole community.

Do you think that is unjust? We know that if a man keeps his back-yard in a filthy condition it may bring pestilence to his neighbors, even though he keeps its state a secret. If a case of diphtheria or scarlet fever is kept secret, that does not prevent it spreading, but helps it on. If there is a bad state of morals among the children of a school, the fact that it is kept secret makes it all the more deadly. We are bound together so closely that it is hardly possible for one man to sin without injuring more or less seriously the whole community. In our bodies we know that if one member is poisoned beyond hope of recovery, very often the only safety for the rest of the body is speedy amputation. When blood-poisoning has started in a finger, unless the doctors succeed in arresting its terrible advance very quickly, perhaps the whole arm may be infected and have to be sacrificed in order to save the life.

We read the story of Achan's temptation, fall, discovery and punishment; and perhaps we feel that he did not deserve to suffer death for his sin. Perhaps we think that Joshua was cruel. But we are not the best judges of the situation. When a great army of men, with helpless women and children to care for, is surrounded by enemies; and one man of that army secretly makes his own profit out of tampering with the enemy in a way which brings the whole camp into terrible danger, his captain must make an example of him and crush out the poison of disloyalty at once.

But I have not time to consider fully the question of Achan. Probably it was a good thing for him that he was not allowed to enjoy any advantage from his sin, just as it is a good thing for a young man in business, who has begun to steal small sums secretly from his employer, to be found out and severely punished. Sins committed secretly and successfully will poison the soul more and more, spreading until they infect many other souls. The shame and pain of exposure and punishment are far less terrible than the slow death of righteousness and the hardening power of sin. A father who loves his son, and who finds he has been secretly committing a great sin, will show his love by stopping the sin if possible. If gentle persuasion has no effect, then severe measures must be tried.

Achan was fighting against the quiet rebuke of his own conscience when he hid his stolen goods in the earth. Why did he hide them unless he knew he was doing wrong? Was he trying to hide them from God or from men? Evidently he cared more to keep his sin a secret from men than from God. The earth could not hide from God's sight, as he knew very well. If the thought of God's anger and the misery of his own conscience failed to bring him to repentance, perhaps it was necessary that the disgrace of open exposure should be his. It is evident that his repentance was real when the consequences of the sin at last opened his eyes to hate the sin itself.

Perhaps many a murderer, rushing on in his path of crime, is brought to a better mind—like the penitent thief on the cross—by open disgrace and punishment. God loves His prodigal son, and, if nothing else will win him to look to Christ as his only salvation from sin, he may be won through the shame and pain of the cross or scaffold. The penitent thief died "justly" for his sins—as he himself declared—and yet his kind Elder Brother threw His arm around him as they entered together the Paradise of the Father. Would it have been better for the thief to have sinned on, without discovery or check?

Secret sins! how they shrink from sight! God knows about them, but does that trouble us much, if only we can keep them secret from the people who know us? We read in the Bible that God shall not care so much then about the opinion of our friends. So, in order to stop the sins which may harden into habits or poison the very springs of character, our Father may suddenly give us the bitter medicine of being found out. Achan thought himself safe from discovery, but no one is ever safe when God sees that discovery will be good for him.

from secret sins. We may not be hiding a great crime, but little sins—or sins which seem to us to be little—may be more dangerous just because they hardly seem worth fighting and conquering.

A wise man once said: "Whoso neglects a thing which he suspects he ought to do, because it seems to him too small a thing, is deceiving himself; it is not too little, but too great for him, that he doeth it not."

Secret sins become more dangerous because they are hidden from other people. If a man is tempted to become a drunkard, the knowledge that he will disgrace himself in the eyes of the people whose good opinion he values, helps him to overcome the temptation. It is the same with dishonesty or the common evil of unkind gossip, or carelessness about paying one's debts, or untruthfulness. As St. Paul says: "Some men's sins are evident . . . also there are good works that are evident; and such as are otherwise cannot be hid."—1 Tim., v.: 24, R. V.

If we are not afraid of God's judgment, if we are willing to risk the poisoning of our souls by little secret sins which seem too insignificant to be worth troubling

can do nothing." We cannot live on yesterday's prayer any more than we can live on the breath our lungs inhaled yesterday. One who lives with God in his secret thoughts can be used by God to do the work He wants doing—and that is the only work that is worth while. The secret thoughts should mount instantly to God when the pressure of outside events is taken off—when one has to wait for a train or an appointment, for instance.

The conquering of secret sins is not an easy task, but if we work at it prayerfully and perseveringly, we shall be better this year than last, and better still next year and the year after next. By daily climbing, great progress can be made. Let us invite the Holy God to live as King and Guest in the most secret room in our hearts. Then it will be a true Holy of Holies, so bright with His Presence that all dark thoughts and sinful habits will be driven out.

"God cometh, let the heart prepare,
Let all be swept and garnished there."

DORA FARNCOMB.

The Song of Steam.

Harness me down with your iron bands,
Be sure of your curb and rein,
For I scorn the strength of your puny hands
As a tempest scorns a chain.

How I laughed as I lay concealed from sight,
For many a countless hour,
At the childish boasts of human might,
And the pride of human power;

When I saw an army upon the land,
A navy upon the seas,
Creeping along, a snail-like band,
Or waiting the wayward breeze;

When I marked the peasant faintly reel
With the toil that he daily bore,
As he feebly turned the tardy wheel,
Or lugged at the weary oar;

When I measured the panting courser's speed,
The flight of the carrier dove,
As they bore the law a king decreed,
Or a line of impatient love,

I could but think how the world would feel,
When these were outstripped far,
When I should be bound to the rushing keel,
Or chained to the flying car.

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! they found me at last,
They invited me forth at length,
And I rushed to my throne with a thunder blast,
And laughed in my iron strength.

O, then you saw a wondrous change:
On the earth and the ocean wide,
Where now my fiery armies range,
Nor wait for wind or tide.

Hurrah! Hurrah! the waters o'er
The mountain's steep decline;
Time-space—have yielded to my power:
The world, the world is mine.

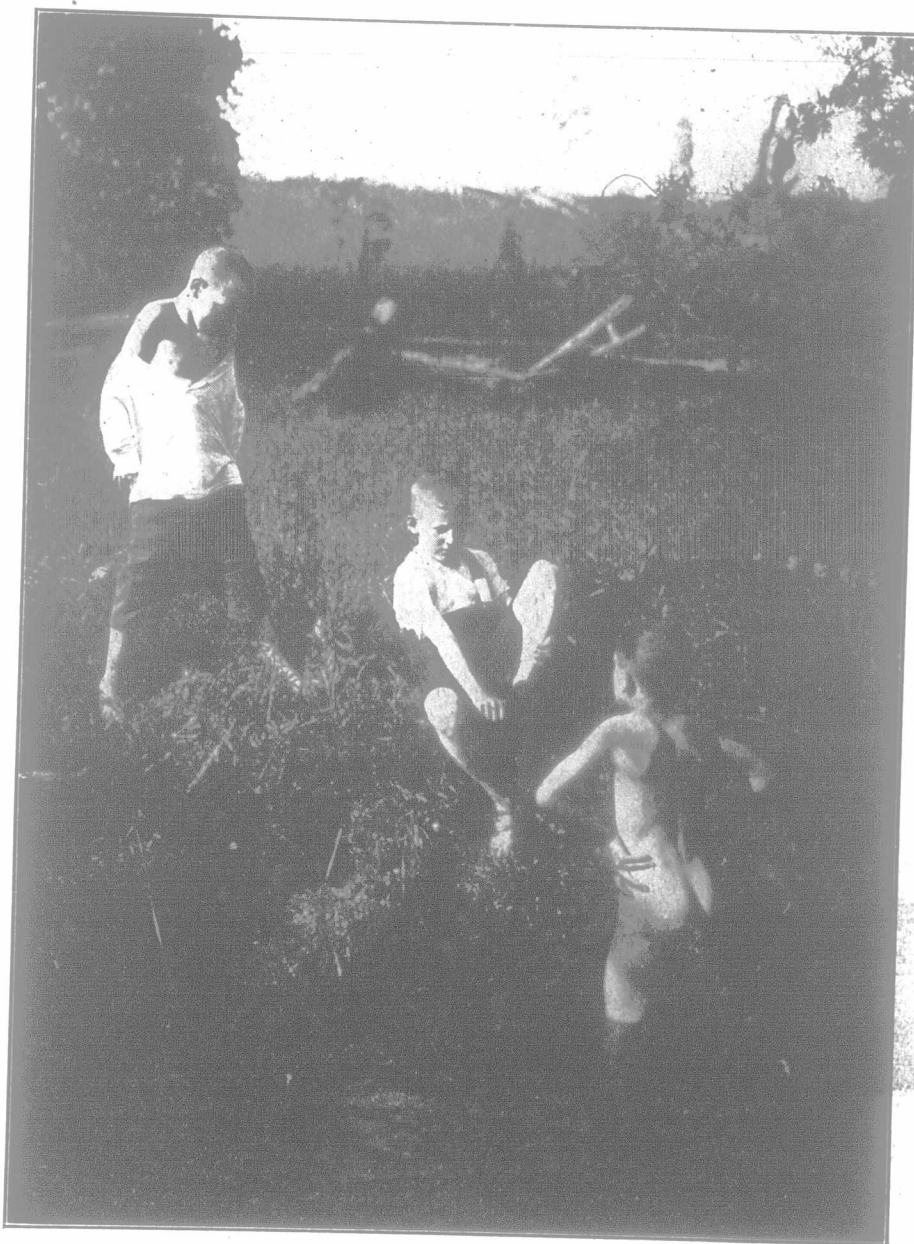
I blow the bellows, I forge the steel,
In all the shops of trade;
I hammer the ore and turn the wheel
Where my arms of strength are made;

I manage the furnace, the mill, the mint,
I carry, I spin, I weave;
All of my doings I put in print,
On every Saturday eve.

I've no muscles to weary, no brain to decay,
No bones to be laid on the shelf,
And soon I intend you may go to play
While I manage the world myself.

But harness me down with your iron bands,
Be sure of your curb and reins,
For I scorn the strength of your puny hands,
As the tempest scorns the chains.
—George W. Cutter.

Twenty people in Port Hope, Ont., were ill last week from the effects of eating jellied veal. The temptation to use prepared foods in hot weather is great, but the home-prepared foods of ingredients whose quality is known are safer.



At the Swimming Hole.

Secret sins can never remain hidden entirely. They will slowly write their names on the face, on the conversation, on the everyday acts of life. We meet a stranger, and after a short acquaintance we know a good deal about the secrets of his past life. We know whether he has cultivated the habit of walking with God, or whether his secret hopes are fixed constantly on the hope of worldly success. We know whether his heart is filled with love or selfishness; we know whether he has been pure in thought—and it is certainly not because he talks much about his purity.

Once a woman came to ask for work, and she at once began to explain to me that she was very honest and had never been known to steal anything. I at once suspected her of dishonesty. Perhaps I was mistaken, but I thought that a really honest person would not think of saying anything about it, but would take that fact for granted as a matter of course.

But let us consider our own danger

about, perhaps it may wake us up from our dangerous comfort to be reminded that they "cannot be hid." No secret is safe. Probably other people are perfectly well aware of the "little" defect which we think we have covered up out of sight. Most likely they don't consider it "little" at all.

Perhaps some of these secret sins may be sins of omission. A very common one is neglect of prayer and Bible reading. That is a very, very dangerous secret sin. God warned the Israelites that they could not stand before their enemies unless He was with them—neither can we. A branch of a vine cannot be strong and healthy, bearing good fruit, unless it draws life from the vine every day. A member of the body cannot do its work unless it is in close union with the heart—not one good thing can it do without the direction of the brain. Christ is the Vine, we are the branches. Christ is the Head, we are His members. He says, and it is a solemn truth: "Without Me ye