

The Art Of Living With People.

BY REV. J. R. MILLER, D. D.

We find life's best school in living with people. Some one says, "It is better to live with others even at the cost of considerable jarring and friction than to live in undisturbed quiet alone." It is not ideally the easy way. It means oftentimes hurts, wrongs, injustices, many a wound, many a heart-ache, many a pang. It requires self-forgetfulness, self-restraint, the giving up of one's right's many times, the overlooking of unkindness and thoughtlessnesses, the quiet enduring of things that it would seem no one should be required to endure. Nevertheless, it is immeasurably better to live with people, though it is not easy, than to live alone.

Living alone nourishes much that is not good and beautiful in human nature. It promotes selfishness. It gives self-conceit an undue opportunity of growth and development. It permits us to do too much as we please, which is bad training for any of us; to indulge our own tastes, feelings and whims without limitation, without protest, since no one is near enough to us to be seriously affected by our selfishness. Then it deprives us of the opportunity for discipline and education which we can get only by living in daily contact with others. One never can grow into true nobleness of character, sweetness of disposition and beauty of life while living in solitude. "We need to have our sharp corners rubbed off, our little pet fancies punctured, and most of all to learn self-control, 'sweet reasonableness' and tolerance for other people's point of view."

Then we never can learn the lesson of love but by living with people. We may learn the theory of loving and be able to preach about it and write delightful essays on the subject, but that is different altogether from getting the lesson into our own lives. Nothing will teach us unselfishness but the practice of unselfishness under the pressure of necessity. We cannot learn patience with others save in experiences which put our patience to the test. The same is true of all the virtues and graces—they can be acquired only in practical life. People are the best means of grace to us.

It is important, then, that we learn the art of living with others. It should not be hard to live with those who are sweet, gentle, patient, thoughtful and unselfish—anybody ought to be able to get along with such pleasant people. But not all with whom we mingle are of this class. There are disagreeable people, those who are thoughtless, uncongenial, exacting, quick tempered, unreasonable, sensitive, and our duty of living sweetly with others includes these, too.

It may help us if we will always remember, when we find it hard to get along with anyone, that this is only a new lesson in loving set for us. Of course it would please us if the disagreeable person should by some process be quietly changed into sweet reasonableness and Christlike agreeableness, so that there no longer should be any uncongeniality to fret us. But it is not probable that any such miracle will be wrought to make it easier for us to get along peaceably. Almost certainly the task set for us must be worked out without any perceptible amelioration of conditions. The problem is ours—we must meet it. It is ours to be Christians, which means Christlike, just where we find ourselves.

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Our Young People

The Fulness of God; How Secured.

Eph. 3: 14-21.

The Christian Endeavor Prayer Meeting for September 21.

When men talk to us about receiving "the fulness of God," we are likely at once to think, "How impossible that is! How can I, a poor, weak, finite creature, receive the fulness of God, who is infinite in power and goodness and understanding? How can the thing made receive the one that made it?"

The difficulty is not warranted by the Scripture. It is nowhere said that man can receive all of God. That would indeed be impossible. Not even Christ received all of God. He Himself said that the Father was greater than He. And yet, of Him it is written that the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily.

No; to be filled with the fulness of God means only that you may receive all of God you have capacity for receiving. Touch an electric battery, and you will receive electricity—as much as your body can contain, but not by any means all that the battery contains. Dig a great reservoir, and make a trench between it and the ocean, and the reservoir will at once be filled with the ocean—as much of the ocean as it can hold, but not by any means all of the ocean.

The entire Christian life is summed up in this: first, in realizing that God may be had for the asking, and second, in constantly enlarging our capacity of receiving Him—His power, His wisdom, and His grace. We can widen our souls for His indwelling only by following the example of the Being who received God perfectly—so far as the human frame can receive Him perfectly—our divine Lord, Jesus Christ. Study His precepts and follow His example, upheld by His hourly companionship, and inspired by the strength that He alone can give. As you do this, you will attain to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, and as God perfectly filled His well-beloved Son, so will He perfectly and blessedly fill up your life and make it glorious beyond your noblest dreams, and happy beyond your wildest imaginings.

Since all this is possible for each one of us, dare we be satisfied with anything else?

Our Members Testify.

Once a little boy was asked, "How many gods are there?" "One," he answered. "How do you know?" was the question. The boy answered, "Because there is only room for one." Surely there is no room then, in our hearts for anything but God, if He is to enter in His fulness.

St. Augustine urges us to fill the empty out of our fulness, that out of the fulness of God our emptiness may be filled. That is, if we want God to give Himself to us, we must give ourselves in holy service to others.

Disraeli once said that "the man who does not look up, will look down, and the spirit that does not dare to soar is destined, perhaps, to grovel." Nothing will exalt a life like a lofty ambition, and no aim can possibly be so lofty as the ambition to be filled with God.

To receive into our souls the fulness of God and retain that marvellous indwelling, we need the constant aid of the Holy Spirit of God himself. Ian Maclaren compares the soul to a sensitive film, and the Christ of the New Testament to some vision of loveliness which we do wish to photograph upon our souls. There can be no photograph without the light, and the light is the Holy Spirit of God, who comes to bring all truth to men.

Luther once quoted the words of Isaiah, who said that the heavens are the throne of God and the earth is His footstool. But Luther adds that Isaiah did not say that either heaven or earth is the abode of God because God, for whom all heaven and earth are not a fit dwelling place, has His abode in the obedient heart of man. For Christ said, "If any man love Me, he will keep My words, and we will make our abode with him."

No one pities a rose bush when it blooms. No one pities a bird when it sings. And so no one should pity a soul when it gives itself to God, even though this surrender keeps a man from doing other things and getting other things. Man was made for this—to give himself to God, just as the rose was made for blooming and the bird for singing. It is the crown of his life.

For Daily Reading.

Mon., Sept. 15.—God in His church. Eph. 1: 15-23
Tues., Sept. 16.—God in His Book. Jer. 31: 31-34
Wed., Sept. 17.—God in His children. John 1: 9-16
Thurs., Sept. 18.—The stature of Christ. Eph. 4: 7-16
Fri., Sept. 19.—The Spirit unmeasured. John 3: 27-36
Sat., Sept. 20.—Complete in Him. Col. 2: 6-12
Sun., Sept. 21.—TOPIC. The fulness of God; how secured. Eph. 3: 14-21

The Many Inventions of Skepticism.

What shows more absurdity and perversity in human nature than the many inventions by which skeptical minds seek to get rid of a Creator and banish him from his creation?—admitting natural forces, but denying all supernatural control—gigantic steeds, yoked to a huge chariot, and pursuing a fixed path, with no hand on the reins! Here is an effect: is there no cause? Here is workmanship: is there no workman? To declare all this to be the result of accident, the work of Chance—"a fortuitous concurrence of atoms"—to affirm that Force is a sufficient cause, that matter is self-existent and eternal, or that all this symmetry and order and beauty come from the "reign of Law"—this is mere evasion. It is scientific fallacy and sophistry, if not jugglery. It is giving to "Chance," "Force," "Matter," "Law," or whatever may be its name, the attributes of Deity! A vague something is virtually erected into a god, and invested with those qualities and characteristics which can only be conceived as belonging to being. Attributes, such as pertain only to a person, demand a personality. Lyman Beecher must have had some such wild and senseless philosophy in mind when he told of a little negro boy crying violently because, as he said, he "couldn't find nowhere!"—From "The Gordian Knot," by Arthur T. Piccon.