

TRUE WEALTH.

Some murmur, when their sky is clear
And wholly bright to view,
If one small speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue ;
And some with thankful love are fill'd,
If but one streak of light—
One ray of God's good mercy—gild
The darkness of their night.

In palaces are hearts that ask,
In discontent and pride,
Why life is such a dreary task,
And all good things denied ?
And hearts in poorest huts admire
How love has, in their aid—
Love that not ever seems to tire —
Such rich provision made.

SHIRKING.

THE fact is, there is a deal of spiritual shirking in the world. Men ease their consciences by attributing their evil deeds to everyone but themselves. They deceive their creditors, and excuse themselves on the ground that their "confidential clerk" has been derelict. They squander the reserve resources of the firm in outside speculations, and then attribute their failure to the "hardness of the times." They take to drink, and become sots, and then lay the burden of guilt at the door of their wives, who were unamiable or extravagant. They "fall from grace," and excuse their sinfulness on the ground that the church did not "watch" over them as it should. "If the pastor had only been faithful to me, or the deacons had assisted me, I should never have fallen as I have." Ah, indeed! what a little, weak, six-foot baby you are! Where did you get the brilliant conception that it was the pastor's duty to carry you safely in his vest pocket, or that the pastor's wife should hide you away in her muff, lest the devil should find you, and possibly hurt your little delicate soul?—*Golden Rule.*

DO NOT SCOWL.

DO not scowl; it spoils faces. Before you know it, your forehead will resemble a small railroad map. There is a Grand Trunk line now from your cow-lick to the bridge of your nose, intersected by parallel lines running east and west, with curves arching your eyebrows; and oh! how much older you look for it! Scowling is a habit that steals upon us unawares. We frown when the light is too strong, and when it is too weak. We tie our brows into a knot when we are thinking, and knit them lightly when we cannot think.

There is no denying that there are plenty of things to scowl about. The baby in the cradle frowns when something fails to suit. The little toddler who likes sugar on his bread-and-butter tells his trouble in the same way when you leave it off. "Cross," we say about the children, and "worried to death" about the grown folks, and as for ourselves, we can't help it. But we must. Its reflex influence makes others unhappy; for face answereth unto face in life as well as in water. It belies our religion. We should possess our souls of such peace that it will reflect itself in placid countenances. If your forehead is rugged with wrinkles before forty, what will it be at seventy?

There is one consoling thought about these marks of time and trouble—the death angel almost always erases them. Even the extremely aged, in death, often wear a smooth and peaceful brow, thus leaving our last memories of them calm and tranquil. But our business is with life. Scowling is a kind of silent scolding. It shows that our souls need sweetening. For pity's sake let us take a sad iron, or a glad iron, or a smoothing tool of some sort, and straighten these creases out of our faces before they become indelibly engraven upon them.—*Selected.*

A good man and a wise man may at times be angry with the world, at times grieved with it; but, be sure, no man was ever discontented with the world if he did his duty in it.

THE MYSTERIES OF PROVIDENCE.

THE appointed path is often a dark path, and the way in which the Lord leads us enshrouded in shade and mystery. What then? We are to march boldly on in the course of duty and trust the Lord to care for consequences, and bring all things right at last. And we are under no obligation to understand the drift and bearing of all things that surround us. It is enough to know that all things are working together for our good. Even Abraham "went out, not knowing whither he went," yet guided by the counsel of his God. We cannot tell why our present lot is so portioned out to us, nor what God means by all the providences which He appoints. It belongs not to us to know the hidden purposes of Him who made us.

"Will you ask the soldier thrown into the heat of the battle to explain the plan of the general? How could he? If he has done his duty, if he has thrown himself into the struggle, he has only seen the disorder of the charge, the flashing of the arms, the cloud of smoke and dust; he has only heard human cries mixed with the deafening sound of artillery. To him all was disorder and chaos; but upon the neighbouring heights one eye followed the combat; one hand directed the least movement of the troops. So there is a battle which is pursued through the ages. It is that of truth, of love, and justice against error, egotism, and iniquity. It belongs not to obscure soldiers thrown into the fight to direct the contest, it ought to suffice us that God conducts it; it is for us to remain at the post He assigns us, and to struggle there firmly, even unto the end."

And when we look back from the heights of triumph to which we now turn our eyes with longing and with hope;—when we trace the well-remembered path along which God hath led our feet from warfare to victory, and from weariness to rest; all will be plain and clear, and blessed in the presence of Him who has said: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

BIBLE STUDY.

GOD'S Word should not be treated as a reservoir for theological cavillers, but as a fountain of sacred truth, to tell us what we are, whither we are tending, and what we must do and be in order to win a crown at last. We should study that word with becoming reverence; not to manufacture theology out of it, but to learn the revealed mind of Deity. We should not treat the Bible as a theological plaything, to help in theological games. It has been well said by Dean Alford:

In the study of the Bible, the first requisite is *faith*. Trust this book. Do not be ever trembling for it, still less cavilling at it. In it is found the blessed presence of Him whom, if you are a Christian, your soul loves above all things. He who is ever sitting at the feet of Jesus, and learning, will be listening more to His blessed words than to idle voices which float around.

The next requisite is *intelligence*. "Be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." The Greek language possesses great capacities for expressing minute differences and fathoming profound depths of thought.

Another requisite is *honesty*—a straightforward, candid spirit. Handle not the Word of God deceitfully. Every fact is God's fact, sent to thee for thy good. Fear it not, face it, give it its due influence. It may seem unwelcome at first—a visitor whose speech jars on thy snug system of cherished home thoughts; but, depend upon it, thou wilt entertain an angel unawares.

The last requisite I name is *charity*. Oh, my brothers! we all speak and write too many hard and bitter words. We try to break, not to mend, the bruised reed. While we strive to be strong in faith, let us not despise the faith of the weakest; for there will come a day to all of us, when in the giving way of the powers of nature, and in the pouring in of the great water floods, we shall grasp at something which may hold us up, and carry us over. And then, not how much we have searched out and known, not how much we have disputed and prevailed, will help us, but how much we have lived on Christ, and imbibed His spirit.