

Lutheran Observer.

Sales with proofs of Holy Writ, or with manifest, clear and distinct principles and arguments, I am refuted and convinced, I can and will recant nothing.—Luther.

In Essentials, Unity; in Non-Essentials, Liberty; in all Things, Charity.

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Poetry.

FROM "INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY."

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That Nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest,
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest.
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:
Not for these I raise
The songs of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts, before which our mortal nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
Are yet the master-light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,
Nor man nor boy
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither;
Can in a moment travel thither—
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

"LONG IN CITY PENT."

BY JOHN KEATS.

To one who has been long in city pent.
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
And open face of heaven—to breathe a prayer
Full in the smile of the blue firmament,
Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,
Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
And gentle tale of love and languishment!
Returning home at evening, with an ear
Catching the notes of Philomel—an eye
Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
He mourns that day so soon has glided by,
E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
That falls through the clear ether silently.

Our share of night to bear,
Our share of morning;
Our blank in bliss to fill,
Our blank in scorning.

Here a star, and there a star.—
Some lose their way.
Here a mist, and there a mist,
Afterwards—day. —Emily Dickinson.

Contributions.

THE PERILS OF OUR VIRTUES.

BY ROBERT E. SPEER.

There is no getting away from the danger and discipline of life. Monks thought they could escape by retiring to cells and caves, but the attempt was futile, because men carry their life with them wherever they go, and it is in the movings and responses of life that the real perils are found. St. Anthony withdrew where he would not see the sights of the world that dazzle and allure; but he was not delivered. He had an inward eye, and its possibilities of peril were as great as physical vision. Indeed, the only peril of his physical vision arose from the assent and acquiescent interest of the eyes of the mind. To move the body away from the world is not to deliver the soul of fleshliness. The real dangers are within.

And as men do not escape from the peril of life by any horizontal movement from one place to another place, so they do not escape by any vertical movement from lower ranges to higher. They simply change the quality of their dangers. Many men have been delivered from the coarse physical temptations. They walk in the midst of them exempt, unawares, unsolicited because there is no inward response, no momentary consciousness of desire. And this is a great gain. This is the proper movement and destiny of life, a progressive inward deliverance, range succeeding range of ever new and ever-expanding life, and each new development leaving behind as a skin sloughed away, the grosser perils of the life now transcended.

But this is not to be quit of all peril. The new attitudes have their own. The coarser temptations of the rougher life hid for a while the finer dangers. The soul had no discernment of them. It was busy with a bludgeon warfare. But now in the new sphere to which it has advanced a new set of adversaries await it, more furtive and subtle, harder to define and attack, but none the less real and all the more dangerous on that account. The cultivated man is not tempted to brutality, but selfishness allures him with an insidiousness proportionate to his escape from vice.

And the Christian life is full of these concentric or successive belts of temptation. Many men fall because they do not perceive this. They assume that the only temptations are the grosser ones which they meet at the outset of their Christian lives, and they prepare for battle with them. They do not realize that beyond these the very virtues which the Christian life produces are beset with new dangers. And not seeing this, they yield to subtle evils which they have not discovered and scrutinized. In this way many have made shipwreck of their character on the rocks of an aspiration for spirituality. Perhaps this was part of what Mr. Gladstone meant when he wrote to the Duchess of Sutherland: "There is one proposition which the experience of life burns into my soul; it is this, that a man should beware of letting his religion spoil his morality. In a

thousand ways, some great, some small, but all subtle, we are daily tempted to the great sin. To speak of such a thing seems dishonoring to God; but it is not religion as it comes from him, it is religion with the strange and evil mixtures which it gathers from abiding in us."

No small measure of contempt falls upon the higher Christian life on this account. And many earnest men lose their influence with the world because they do not perceive that their very progress has brought them into a new range of perils, against which they must be on their guard, and from which they must save their souls.

Each Christian man can discover for himself the subtler perils which are peculiar to his own soul, but there are many which are so common among active Christian workers as to deserve a general characterization.

The Christian man begins by fighting a battle against actual evil and by winning it, but he is exposed in doing so to the danger of depreciating the guilt of evil of thought and imagination. He will never fall into gross sin; therefore he need not be scrupulous about avoiding books and papers which deal with it. Purity of art constitutes no warrant for imperiling purity of imagination. Once the fountain is tainted the stream will not long continue clean. Good men should be the more, not the less cautiously scrupulous to keep their conversation stainless of all faintest suggestion of evil or coarseness, and their minds aloof from all salacious curiosities.

The Christian worker fights against the spirit of torpor, of indolence, of self-solicitude, and sooner or later begins to possess the character of intense and continuous application to work and activity. The zeal of his Father's house eats him up. He spends himself, and with Paul, spends himself out. "Be doing and be done" quotes Mr. Gladstone. Is he aware that this very new virtue carries with it a new danger, the peril of absorption in work, of incapacity for relaxation and rest? Some men get so busy in Christian work that they have no time for prayer and none for friendship, and the consequence is surely seen in lessened power and impoverished love. Many Christian workers are the slaves of good purposes. They are not free. They are bound. The intensity of their will to accomplish much of good prevents their minds from ever being at leisure from themselves to soothe and sympathize, for cheerful fellowship and unrestrained kindness. The Savior left us an example here. He made it his meat and drink to do his Father's will, yet the little children knew he was accessible and were not repulsed and the people thronged him, and the Pharisees called him the friend of publicans and sinners. He was himself, and he was all men's.

The Christian worker contends against the sense of pride and self-exaggeration. He seeks to esteem other men better than himself and to be like Christ, who made himself the servant of all. The peril is that he will not be able with Christ to realize that he is a prince of God and of the truth and a King's son and master of the worlds and of men, and that his work is the supremest of all works and for the saving of the world. Dickens has said that it is a requisite of success that a man should believe his particular work to be the greatest work in the world. But the Christian spirit of humility and the sense of humor which give a man a just perspective of himself are full of the danger that a man will fail thereby to take a justly exaggerated view of his place and work and will accordingly get much less accomplished than some other man who takes himself seriously, who sees his work in exalted outlines, who has learned the secret of Paul, both to be abased and to abound, and of the Savior who was both the servant and the sovereign of humanity.

The firmer Christian life and service are full of these anomalies, these balanced dangers. (1) There is, as I have suggested, the peril of absorption in work and of the consequent incapacity for rest and relaxation. (2) Such intensity of purpose in the accomplishment of results as to prevent the mind from ever being at leisure from itself for sympathy and cheerful, unrestrained fellowship; the enslavement of good purpose in the world. (3) The peril of keeping the balance between the assentive and the oppositive moods. We seek always to give a response to that with which we agree and we lose the sharp edge of discernment of error. We perceive with keen vision error and mistake and we fall out of that charity and sympathy by which alone we may hope to win men. (4) The difficulty of walking evenly between absolute faith in the unseen potency of truth on one hand and the legitimate desire to see the tangible results of spiritual effort on the other. (5) The difficulty of personal judgment; of avoiding all malice and yet speaking the truth, even about wicked and unworthy men. Believing all things and yet believing only the truth. Speaking lovingly of all men and yet denouncing liars.

Much of this advance peril of life is due doubtless to the confusion of simple impulse by reflective self-consciousness. We conquer coarse sin by fighting against the inner disposition to respond. But the victory over the outer evil leaves us with the new conflict of the inner soul upon us, the struggle between unconscious instincts toward good and the self-consciousness of virtue. To imbed our moral impulse in conscious reason is a gain, but it is a gain with loss, with new and real possibilities of danger. As Pobvedonostseff says in "The Reflections of a Russian Statesman:"

"The justest sentiments of the human soul remain true only while they preserve their independence and simplicity, for there is nothing simple which is not also right. The danger for every simple sentiment is its image in the consciousness—its reflex action. Sentiment acquires a new force when confirmed by reason and sanctioned by ideas; but at the same time it meets with the new danger of absorption by the reflective faculty, and of consequent loss of simplicity. It may happen that sentiment, leaning upon thought for support, partakes of its nature, and re-issues as a conscious formula, from which the element of sentiment has disappeared. The form, as the letter, may fill the living spirit; the form deceives, for beneath it insensibly develop hypocrisy and the seductions of human vanity. Is there one thing more splendid, more precious, more fruitful than the sentiment of love in the human soul? Yet, from the moment it unites with reason, a danger threatens it from this reflex action. It may create itself a form, divide itself into classes, doctrines, categories, orders, and schools. At last the time must come when it is no longer a simple sentiment, filling and enlivening the soul, but our poor human vanity imagines that it masters the sentiment, and makes it its bondsman and instrument. Here simplicity disappears, decomposition begins, and, with but little more, hypocrisy may end it. The works of love, it may be, will multiply, order will replace impulse, but simplicity of feeling has flown, the perfume has departed."

The comfort and encouragement of it all is that our introduction to new perils is parallel with our deliverance from old, and that with finer dangers, we have also ampler resources of strength and skill to antagonize them and subdue them. If evil presents itself in more delicately seductive forms as we draw nearer Christ, we may rejoice that it is because we are drawing nearer Christ, and that the Savior close at hand is able to deliver us and to present us flawless before his presence with exceeding joy.

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