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Religious.

Dwelling on the Future.

There is an evil in the life of many excellent, truly Christian people, which they do not recognize until after varied experiences, and often most trying, thwarting, disappointing lessons.

They look with wonder at the blindness and worldliness of those who are always making great plans for enjoyment and prosperity in the future. "How can they boast themselves of to-morrow," they ask, "when we know not what a day may bring forth?"

It is people who are prospering, that scheme for prosperity to come, but those whose lives are full of care, who see a threatening cloud before them, are often guilty of as great blindness and impiety, when they allow themselves in what is called "dwelling on the future." One practice is as contrary to God's express commands, and to the wisdom of every day's experience, as the other.

"Do you remember," said a lady to her friend, "the foolish story of the girl who was heating a brick oven and found crying over it, and gave as a reason that she was thinking what if she should get married and have a dear little girl, and some day, when the oven was heating, the dear little thing should creep into it and get burnt to death, what should she do, O dear! O dear! and she wrung her idle hands while the bread was spoiling and the oven for this day's baking growing cold?"

"Well, I find I have been all my life crying over that oven. My imagination is so vivid, that I am ever living through a chain of events which it calls up, and placing myself in the most trying situations. Sometimes I have recalled my thoughts, and found myself actually weary and worn with what I had been enduring in day-dreams, and yet up to this time those very things that then seemed inevitable, never have come to pass. For instance, my husband was in delicate health. My attention has been attracted in church by hearing him cough, or catching the peculiarly pale tint of a cross-light on his face.

"Away my mind flies. I picture to myself his gradual decline; what a trial it will be to him when he is obliged to give up business, what arrangements we had best make. I pass through the agony of the parting scene—the awful loneliness of heart and life which will be my lot. I look at the little ones seated so unconsciously between us; I think of their loss, and how I shall ever be able singly to train them—to exact obedience, to clothe and educate them. I suddenly come to myself in the midst of a calculation of what will remain to me of worldly goods, and find that I have lost the whole of the preliminary argument of an excellent sermon which would have prepared me for the very trials or duties of the week before me.

"I have lived to smile at the folly and uselessness, and to give over the sin of these counsels with myself. Here is my husband comparatively well, and my own health wretched. Apparently he will be the one on whom the burden and responsibility will fall. Now, when I am tempted, and naturally enough, to brood over his future cares, or their troubles when I shall be taken away, I look back upon the miserable care-worn days of that autumn and take a lesson."

This is an exact illustration of what we mean. Such brooding is useless; the things we dread may never happen; we have no more reason to place confidence upon the sorrows of the future than its joys; besides, we cannot alter them. But you ask, Do you shut out all forethought in laying wise plans and taking wise counsels to avoid certain losses or misfortunes? By no means. That is the duty of the day—a part of it; but when these plans have been made, in accordance with God's will, when these precautions which wisdom and experience dictate have been commended to God in earnest prayer for his blessing upon them, leave them with Him.

"Cast thy burden on the Lord," and then do not take it back, and toil on with it again. "Having done all, stand." Besides, all our worry will not alter the event. Our hands are tied down to the labor of the present, we cannot reach forward and touch a spring here

or retard a wheel there, in our destinies; and it is well we cannot. "The thing we most earnestly long for might prove our ruin," says Bishop Wilson. "That which we most dread and fear may be the effect of the greatest mercy." We are weaving the pattern of our lives, and the image of Christ in them, thread by thread. Our heavenly Father, who has the end from the beginning, alone knows what sombre shades are needed to bring forth the brightness of the design.

It is wearing. We all know how the mind reacts upon the body—"like a sword fretting the sheath." Mental worry affects the bodily health and strength—hence the duty of cheerfulness, that we may give a good account of these talents committed to us, for our allotted task. It is often in bearing the burdens of the morrow, that we break down to-day; and are led into the sins of petulance, irritability, moroseness, faithlessness. For, last of all, brooding over the future is plainly sinful; inasmuch as it so often leads to these results, and because it is opposed to the plain command of Christ, who, "having not where to lay his head," must have understood perfectly every temptation to that folly against which he so plainly and repeatedly warns us. What true earthly as well as heavenly wisdom, is garnered in these remonstrances!

It is noticeable that they follow immediately upon the rebuke to those who are resting on the future—"laying up treasures upon earth." The rich man who murmured how he might bestow his increasing possessions, and how he might enjoy them, is held up as an example of the uncertainty of the events of this life, and how short that future, for which we are taking thought, may be.

But, then, our Saviour turns at once to the anxious and the harassed—those who trust in riches, though they do not dream that they are guilty of it. This is the hidden sin. If they were wealthy, would they worry over and brood upon their future lot? Not at all; they would rest in their riches. Now they are fed from day to day by God's providence, and if they look forward with painful anxiety, it is because they do not rest on that. They are equally guilty with the rich man, whose folly they see, whose worldliness they condemn.

"Can you alter the future?" asks our Saviour of these. "Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature?"

"If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?"

There is the folly of it. "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." We are not left to struggle on alone, unwatched and uncared for. Another than yourself, and one fully able to provide, always ready to assist you, has foreseen as well as yourself these coming cares and necessities. There is a friend to go to, who understands it all, and can help you, though you cannot help yourself.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God"—that is, give it the first place in your thoughts and your desires—"and all these things shall be added unto you." There is an absolute promise, a bond to rest upon. If we fail to do so, however dark the prospect may seem, however straitened and hemmed in and perplexed we may be, Satan is tempting us to unbelief. Let us fly from his dark suggestions, that take the shape of wise forethought, and necessary planning, only to lure us towards the dungeon of Doubting Castle; turn from them as from other more open temptations, remembering that "though Satan desires to have us," Christ prays that our faith fail not, and "our Heavenly Father has more ways of providing for us than we can possibly imagine; it is, therefore, folly to confine him to our ways and means."

We err by reading this whole portion of our Saviour's teachings as figurative, whereas it is, of all that he has left to sustain us in the journey of life, the most literal; and nothing is more pleasing to God than the child-like, wholly-confiding faith of those who consider it thus, and throw themselves entirely upon it. It has been the experience of hundreds and thousands of his people, while as many more go stumbling wearily on, as if everything depended wholly on themselves, and not on God's blessing on their industrious and faithful endeavors. It has been the les-

son of the writer, and has constrained the hand now penning these words, to the fearful and faint-hearted, to set before them a page from a varied, sorely-trying, yet blessed experience.

The remedy for this tendency in those of a naturally anxious, forecasting, or imaginative mind, is suggested in the condition on which we have a right to expect that we shall be provided for—"seeking first the kingdom of God." If we look into our thoughts for one day, even when most cheerful, we shall find that when alone we are speculating upon the very topics forbidden, above all others—"what we shall eat and what we shall wear." If we accustom ourselves at all times, in prosperity as well as adversity, to turn our thoughts and desires toward our higher spiritual life; if, instead of the garment we are fashioning, or the bargain we have just made, we dwell on the goodness of God to us in making us heirs of better things, on the character of Christ which it is "our charge" to imitate, on the blessedness of the future in which all these earthly needs shall be done away with, we shall find that when our cares press heavily the Comforter, whom we have made a welcome guest "in all times of our prosperity," will not desert us in our extremity, but hasten to sustain our faith, increase our hope and courage and submission to God's will, in which alone true rest and peace are to be found.

Be still, my heart, anxious cares
For thee are burdens, thorns, and snares;
They cast dishonor on thy Lord,
And contradict his gracious Word.

Brought safely, by his hand, thus far,
Why wilt thou now give place to fear;
How canst thou wait, if he provide,
Or lose thy way with such a guide?

When first before his mercy-seat
Thou didst to him thy all commit,
He gave thee warrant, from that hour,
To trust his wisdom, love, and power.

Did ever trouble thee befall
And he refuse to hear thy call?
And has he not his promise past
That thou shalt overcome at last?

Though rough and thorny be the road,
It leads thee home apace to God;
Then count thy present trials small,
For heaven will make amends for all.

—American paper.

Jesus is your friend.

I heard, not long since, of a gentleman who had been at the Sabbath school; and when he returned home, he sat down in his chair, and was looking very sad and discouraged. He was a Sabbath school teacher, and he had begun to think that he should never see any good results from his efforts to teach others; and this troubled him very much. Just then his little girl passed through the room, singing, in a clear, merry voice—

"Oh, do not be discouraged,
For Jesus is your friend."

In a moment his face lighted up, all sadness was gone, and he was happy again.

What made this great change, all so suddenly too? Just these four words, "Jesus is your friend." "Oh, yes!" he thought, "Jesus is my friend, and He will help me." I can never fail while his grace is promised. Thus was the father's heart cheered by a simple Sabbath school song.

Have you, my readers, this same Jesus as your friend? Do you love and trust Him? If so, you are truly happy. Nothing can harm you, for He will always take care of you. He is the great Shepherd; and little children who love Him are his lambs, whom He delights to watch over and keep from evil. When you are sick, he can make you well; when in trouble, He can cheer and comfort you; when you have no earthly friend, He can always be near, for He is everywhere. And, above all, when you come to die, He can take away all fear; and after death, can take you to heaven—that happy home—to live forever with Him. How many little children will begin to seek Him now, that they may be his when He gathers all his lambs to his bosom? May every reader of this little story be amongst that happy number!

The Lord's Prayer illustrated.

Our Father, Isa. 63: 16.

By right of creation, Mal. 2: 10.

By bountiful provision, Psa. 145: 16.

By gracious adoption, Eph. 1: 5.

Who art in heaven, 1 Kings 8: 43.

The throne of thy glory, Isa. 66: 1.

The portion of thy children, 1 Pet. 1: 4.

The temple of thy angels, Isa. 66: 1.

Hallowed be thy name; Psa. 115: 1.

By the thoughts of our hearts, Psa. 86: 11.

By the words of our lips, Psa. 51: 15.

By the work of our hands, 1 Cor. 10: 31.

Thy kingdom come; Psa. 110: 2.

Of providence to defend us, Psa. 17: 8.

Of grace to refine us, 1 Thess. 5: 23.

Of glory to crown us, Col. 3: 4.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Acts 21: 14.

Towards us, without resistance; 1 Sam. 3:

18.

By us, without compulsion; Psa. 119: 36.

Universally, without exception; Luke 1: 6.

Eternally, without declension. Psa. 119:

93.

Give us this day our daily bread;

Of necessity, for our bodies; Prov. 30: 8.

Of eternal life, for our souls, John 6: 34.

And forgive us our trespasses, Psa. 25: 11.

Against the commands of thy law; 1 John

3: 4.

Against the grace of thy gospel, 1 Tim.

1: 13.

As we forgive them that trespass against us;

Matt. 6: 15.

By defaming our characters, Matt. 5: 11.

By embezzling our property, Phil. 18.

By abusing our persons, Acts 7: 60.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver

us from evil: Matt. 26: 41.

Of overwhelming affliction, Psa. 130: 1.

Of worldly enticements, 1 John 2: 15.

Of Satan's devices, 1 Tim. 3: 7.

Of error's seduction, 1 Tim. 6: 10.

Of sinful affections, Rom. 1: 26.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and

the glory, for ever. Jude 25.

Thy kingdom governs all, Psa. 103: 19.

Thy power subdues all, Phil. 3: 20.

Thy glory is above all. Psa. 148: 13.

Amen. Eph. 1: 11.

As it is in thy purposes, Isa. 14: 27.

So it is in thy promises; 2 Cor. 1: 20.

So be it in our prayers; Rev. 22: 20.

So it shall be to thy praise. Rev. 19: 4.

Discipline.

Gotthold one day looked on while a farmer's wheat was being thrashed, and observed that the men not only stoutly beat it, but trod upon it with their feet, and finally, by various expedients, separated the grain from the chaff, dust, and other impurities. How comes it, he asked himself, that whatever is of a useful nature, and intended to be profitable to the world, must be submitted to every kind of ill-treatment; but that man, who himself does with other things as he lists, is unwilling to suffer, or permit God to do as he lists with him? Wheat, which is the noblest of all the products of the earth, is here thrashed, trod upon, swept about, tossed into the air, sifted, shaken, and shoveled, and afterwards ground, resifted and baked, and so arrives at last upon the tables of kings. What then do I mean in being displeased with God, because he does not strew my path with fine leaves, or translate me to heaven in an easy chair? By what other process could the wheat be cleansed, and how could I be sanctified or saved, were I to remain a stranger to chastisement?

Deal with me, therefore, O my God, as thou wilt, and grant that what is thy will may also be made mine. Thrash, toss, and sift me, that, at last, I may appear as white and pure as bread upon thy table. I will suffer all the more willingly, knowing as I do the words of thy servant, "Breadcorn is bruised and yet not destroyed by thrashing. This, also, is done by the Lord of hosts." Isa. 28, verses 28, 29.

The first hour a person spends at sea is commonly devoted to admiring man's triumph over the deep—the next in admitting that the deep is gradually triumphing over him.