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Afterwards.

BY VIRGINIA B. HARRISON.

I heedlessly opened the cage
And suffered my bird to go free;
And, though I besought it with tears to return,
It nevermore came back to me.
It nests in the wildwood, and heeds not my call,
O the bird once at liberty, who can enthrall?

I hastily opened my lips,
And uttered a word of disdain
That wounded a friend, and forever estranged
A heart I would die to regain.
But the bird once at liberty, who can enthrall?
And the word that's once spoken, O who can recall?

—Independent.

The Downward Steps.

Men do not grow either very good or very bad in an instant. When we see some great achievement of bravery, of heroism, of selfrenunciation, we wonder, as if it were sudden. Not so. The coral island that appears of a sudden above the surface was not made in a night. It was built particle by particle by the toiling insects, till it had gained its stature; then some internal convulsion brought it to the light; that was all. And so

The heights by great men won and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward through the night.

The reader of the interesting life of Abraham Lincoln, now appearing in the *Century Magazine*, is struck with observing that in his youth and obscurity, Lincoln was unconsciously nursing the traits that were to make him the Emancipator. No doubt we should see the same growth and preparation in every great life, if we should search out the early steps.

Men do not fall suddenly. There is a series of downward lapses; they do not so much fall into ruin as slide into it. Sometimes in tropical seas, a noble ship founders under a clear sky; it seems sudden and startling; but, in reality, the worms have been eating silently, till her beams were but powder and dust. The great criminals have grown to their bad eminence, not leaped to it. Benedict Arnold and Guiteau, were in boyhood the miniature of their later selves. No doubt, if we knew the early life of Jay Gould, we should find that he was then the bad promise of what has now grown to continental proportion.

The story of the first temptation was the story in brief of all the subsequent temptations and falls. The woman heard the voice of the tempter; she did not turn away with the instinct of a truly loyal soul; she listened; she looked at the fruit; perhaps she took in her hand the golden orb; perhaps she drew in its fragrance; each step led downward; all the while, the tempter was plying his solicitations; one by one the sinews of virtuous resistance were cut; one by one evil gained a new vantage ground, and at last "the mortal taste" which

Brought death into the world
And all our woe

was but the culmination of a series of descents.

Temptation must be resisted in its beginnings; we must not wait till the enemy has occupied the out-works. After he has got possession of the heights which command the garrison, it is too late for a successful defence.

The trusted clerk must fight the first impulse toward "borrowing." The young man must abhor the lewd voluptuous picture, poem, statue; he must turn away from the first glass, no matter if it is offered by the hand of his dearest friend, or of her whom he most admires.—*National Baptist*.

Common People.

What constitutes a "common person?" Webster and Worcester have not given a definition for this specimen of mankind. If to be "common" is to be something not altogether respectable, something odious, something criminal, let us endeavor to be something uncommon. We see people tossing their heads at other people because they are "so common." The writer set out one day with the determination to have the word clearly and explicitly defined by the first person who spoke the word "common" in his presence.

I went for my noon-day lunch into a restaurant—a tidy, inexpensive and respectable place, for I pride myself on being a very respectable sort of a person. I was greatly surprised, therefore, when a young man near me gave his delectable curled head a toss, and said to his companion:

"Sorry we stopped here. Common sort of a place, full of common people."

Here was my chance. "Who and what are common people?" I asked.

The young man looked somewhat amazed.

"Common people?" he asked.

"Yes," I returned; "I do not want to meet such people if they are of that class I infer they are from your words."

"O, well," he said, "common people are—"

He hesitated in some confusion.

"Are what?" I asked. "Are they respectable?"

"O—ah—well, yes; most of them are respectable enough, I suppose."

"Are they ignorant?"

"O—ah—well, no, not always. You see they are mostly people without any standing in society—that is, in the best society. Most of them are laboring people. They don't dress well, they—they—well, there is a specimen for you."

He pointed towards a plainly dressed young man at the head of the room.

"You see how he looks. No necktie; look at the coat, ready-made, as any one can see; shoes, ditto; a cheap, common-looking fellow in every way."

"I don't agree with you," I said, decidedly. "He has an honest, intelligent face; his clothes are perfectly clean; he has on a neat collar; his hands are clean; and he looks as though his moral record might be ditto; he has—" but the young man had taken his dainty cane and was going out, pulling on a pair of stylish kid gloves.

"Probably some spoiled son of an aristocratic millionaire, with more money than brains," was my mental conjecture.

The next day, I met this despicable "common people" again. He recognized me, and blushed as he took my order for soap, sugar and starch. He was a clerk in a small grocery store.—*Youth's Companion*.

Points of Etiquette.

In Sweden if you address the poorest person in the street you must lift your hat. A gentleman passing a lady on the stairs of a hotel must do the same. To enter a shop or bank with one's hat on is a terrible breach of good manners. When a train leaves a platform or a steamboat pier, all the lookers-on lift their hats to the departing passengers and bow to them, a compliment returned by the travellers. In aristocratic circles in Persia, a visitor sends notice an hour or two before calling. If the visit is one of importance, notice is sent the previous day. As the visitor approaches the house the servants, mounted on foot, come forth to meet him, and one returns with speed to announce his coming. According to his relative rank, the host meets him at the foot of the staircase, at the door or at the upper part of the room. The question of seats is also one requiring circumspection in observing the various shades of rank. If the visitor's rank is superior to that of the host, the former is invited to occupy a sofa alone, at the upper corner, while the host sits on a chair or on the floor at the right. The left is more honorable than the right in Persia. In America, a lady with a friend's arm; that is considered a very great and objectionable familiarity by an Italian, "Never touch the person, it is sacred," is an Italian proverb. There are some very foolish customs in Holland, such as that, for instance, which compels a lady, whether alone or accompanied by other ladies, to avoid passing a club house or other place of rendezvous for gentlemen. If a lady must enter a confectionery, library or other place where men naturally go, and finds a gentleman or two there, she feels compelled to retire as precipitately as if she had seen a case of small-pox. The men know this, but unless they have finished their business they will not retire. The lady retreats in a most undignified manner, and the human bear finishes his book or his chocolate, even though the lady is at the door waiting for him to leave.

"Thou art with Me."

"How is it that I am so perfectly calm?" asked a Christian lady, suffering from dangerous illness. If her real life had not been known to her loving friends, they might have been unable to answer. The simple truth was that she had long trusted the atoning merit of her Redeemer. It had become a part of her very being to accept Him as her Teacher, Atoning High-Priest, and Divine Lord. Especially did she apprehend Him in His sacrificial office. The best thoughts and services of her life had been cast in this mould. The teachings of the Bible upon this vital doctrine were interwoven with all her aspirations, hopes and plans.

In these trying circumstances, and after a lifetime of holy trust in the blood of Christ alone, it would have been, indeed, surprising had she not been "Perfectly calm," upheld as she then was by the strong arms of Him

who hath said to every believer: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

What trials await us during the coming new year we may not know. To indulge gloomy forebodings concerning future events is both irrational and unchristian. Revelation points to a better way, namely, to seek daily a clearer estimate of Christ's person, and atoning work. Having this experience, we shall be kept in "perfect peace," whatever God's will concerning us may be.

Prof. Shedd, the profound scholar and theologian, has said: "Whoever is grafted this clear, crystalline vision of the Atonement will die in peace, and pass through all the unknown transport and terror of the day of doom with serenity and joy. It ought to be the toil and study of the believer to render his conceptions of the work of Christ more vivid, simple, and vital. For whatever may be the extent of his religious knowledge in other directions whatever may be the worth of his religious experience in other phases, there is no knowledge and no experience that will stand him in such stead in those moments that try the soul as the experience of the pure sense of guilt quenched by the pure blood of Christ."

A UNFORTUNATE ANT.

Once, when putting some scraps in a scrap-book, a drop of the sweet mucilage fell upon a piece of paper. Presently an ant came crawling towards it, doubtless attracted by its sweetness. It reconnoitered around the drop awhile, as if to make sure of no danger in it. Then it went up to the sweet morsel, planted its front feet fairly on its edge, and then applied itself vigorously to the task of devouring the sweet. It was a warm summer day. The atmosphere was very dry, and between the voraciousness of the ant and the atmosphere, the edges of that drop of mucilage soon became dry and stiff. Shortly after I wished to put that very piece in the book, and when I picked it up I found the ant a prisoner. The very thing he thought so good, and in which he saw no harm, proved his death; for when I tried to get him loose his front legs parted from his body; and as an act of mercy I put him to death.

Foolish ant! do you say? But hold! There are many just such foolish ants in human shape. Perhaps you are a professor of religion; and you have said, I see no harm in the theatre, or ball room, or social cards. You, like the ant, look on the appearance, and not into the character of these things. If you saw their character you must know that they are death to a religious life. Boys and men may see no harm in a social class or the haunts of vice. They may see no harm in the society of flippant, foolish revelry. They may see no harm—yea, even deem it a virtue—to be wholly absorbed by worldly cares and the gratification of worldly desires. But these are all subtle, deceptive gum-drops of death. Flee from them before they harden upon you and you are ruined forever. Young man, young woman, foster your virtue by self-denial.—*W. W. Lane in London Freeman*.

Farmers' Wives.

No class of men are more in debt to their wives for the success that comes to them than are farmers. The wife and the mother who has the courage to go out with the husband of her choice and commence the struggle of life with him on the prairie, or on a new farm, with but little capital except of head and heart, is worthy to stand by the Spartan women on whom the poets have exhausted their words of praise. Upon her falls the brunt of the strife, no matter how hard the husband may toil; his work closes with the day, but her's continues long after, and with her children and the small chores that many of the beginners look after, her lot is not one to be envied. And when, after years of struggle, success, with reluctant feet, comes to crown the husband with honor, the biggest wreath should adorn the brow of the noble wife who was the stay and anchor, the comfort and the source of all hope in the stormy days of trial. The wealth should crown her queen.

We hear much of the men. We hear that so-and-so is making money, and he gets the credit of being a forehanded man; but it is quite as often that the noble little woman, who has toiled and complained not, who has pinched and saved and murmured not, is the one to whom the state and nation is most indebted. These are the women who lead men up to higher manhood, to that shrine where, like knights of old, they bend the knee of homage, not to beauty, but to worth and royal womanhood.

A House of Wrecks.

They tell us that on a certain dangerous sea shore there is a man who lives in a queer house built entirely of wrecks. The floors are made out of a ship's galley, and the walls are the cabin panels of wrecked packets and steamers. The whole structure is composed of the smashed remnants of better things. Such are the lives and characters of thousands of unconverted souls, such may yours be, my impatient friend. One part of your character is made up of broken Sabbaths; another part of broken promises to your Saviour that you would repent and serve him. The whole fabric shows broken commandments of God in every wall. Your heart-house cannot stand inspection, and God will put it to the flames. Move out! This new year is a good time to begin a new structure that will be storm-proof and fire-proof, and will be a habitation for Jesus Christ to dwell in with you. Dig deep; lay your foundation on the rock. The first thing you do to please conscience and Christ will be the first material put into the new structure. "Don't lose an hour; don't stop with wishing or praying to be better; put prayer into practice, and in God's strength begin a new life." Christ is ready to come in unto you; are you ready for him?—*Rev T. L. Cuyler*.

He will not go in.

Some months after a young man's conversion he chanced to meet one of his former dissolute companions, who seemed overjoyed to see him, and asked him to go to a neighboring public-house.

The young man refused, saying, "I have a friend with me."

"I do not see any one with you."

"You can't see him, but he is here."

"Bring him in with you."

"No; he never goes into public-houses."

"Then let him wait outside."

"No, no," was the final answer.

"My friend is Jesus Christ, and he will not go in, and I fear he will not wait if I do."

A noble answer this! The foolish young man did not again attempt to lead him aside.

DISCOURAGED PASTORS.

The *Interior* casts a look backward into the remote past, and this is what it sees: "The pastor at Smyrna had a hard time of it. He was miserably poor. The church was down at the heel spiritually and financially. The formalists in the church abused him. The civil authorities put him in jail. He had the very worst pastoral charge at that time in Christendom. The Lord Jesus sent him a message by John: 'Write to him that I, who am the first and the last—I, who rule the end as well as the beginning,' say 'Overcome, and I will give you a crown.' The poor, discouraged pastor at Smyrna now saw the situation in a new light. The Lord had given him a battle to fight in order that he might have an opportunity to win a crown." Faithful pastor in these latter days, to you, too, under like circumstances, comes the Lord's sweet word of cheer.

Random Readings.

There is time for everything, and with many Sunday is the only time to be a Christian.

Sorrow fails of its divine mission when it blinds us to everything but itself.

Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle another can be drawn.

What is resignation? It is putting God between one's self and one's grief.

How easy it is to please and be pleased, if one will take the fragrance of the rose instead of the thorns, and hold the knife by the handle and not by the edge.

It is not what we earn, but what we save that makes us rich. It is not what we eat but what we digest that makes us strong. It is not what we read, but what we remember, that makes us learned. It is not what we intend, but what we do that makes us useful. It is not a few faint wishes, but a lifelong struggle, that makes us valiant.

We caution our readers to beware of diphtheria, pneumonia, influenza, bronchitis, congestion of the lungs, coughs and colds at this season of the year. Get a bottle of *Johnson's Anodyne Liniment* and keep it ready for instant use. It may save your life. It has saved thousands.

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