

PURITY AND GROWTH

We occasionally hear some one who wishes to discount the precious truth that holiness is an instantaneous work of grace say, "I believe in growing in grace." They sometimes look wise and appear as though they had forever disposed of the question of Christian holiness.

Progress in the Christian faith involving growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is both normal and necessary for all Christians. There is a true relation between the instantaneous sanctification of our spirit, soul and body, and such progress and growth. One cannot, in the nature of the case, be a substitute for the other. Growth in grace does not cure sin, and the cure of sin does not mature character nor bring us to that maturity which involves a time element and is the result of living the life after we are purified.

The most normal progress is made after the epoch of sanctifying grace is accomplished. This instantaneous work is to the soil of the soul what clearing the soil of a garden from weeds is in relation to the growth of the plant. In order to mature a garden you do not plant more good seed to overcome the presence of weeds, but destroy the weeds, mellow the soil in order that the good seed planted may come to maturity. This is not a perfect parallel in all points suggested, but it does have a point of illustration concerning the relation between the work of grace which purifies, and the progress which comes by experience in living the life. How gracious the fact that we may be instantaneously delivered from inward sin. Then how precious it is that we may run with patience the race set before us and continually advance in all that makes for mature and abiding Christian character—Christian Witness.

WE THAT ARE STRONG

"We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." And there are plenty that are "weak," at least weaker than ourselves. Some are weak in body and others are weak in mind. Many are weak in gifts or personality or condition.

But conceit and selfishness would prevent our bearing their infirmities. It is easier to laugh at or make fun of their mistakes, or their manner of dress, and say that they ought to have known better (which may be true). In pointing out their weakness and foolishness by contrast our own accomplishments and wisdom are magnified and our own conceit is fed. And then it is sometimes a lot of trouble to help people. Sometimes it disturbs and sometimes it costs in time and money. Self calls for the feast to be made for "friends" who can return the favor. Self does not dictate ministry to the weak.

Why bother to bear their infirmities, then? Just because they are weak and needy, and because we are strong and able. And because we are followers of Him who pleased not Himself. And because we have His command and His blessed example, for surely His ministry was to all men.—The Free Methodist.

DEATH IN THE QUICKSANDS

Victor Hugo's familiar description of the traveller in the quicksands of Brittany is per-

haps one of the most vivid and terrible stories of death by such means ever written. It runs thus:

"It sometimes happens that a man, traveler or fisherman, walking on the beach at low tide, far from the bank, suddenly notices that for several minutes has been walking with some difficulty. The strand beneath his feet is like pitch; his soles stick to it; it is sand no longer—it is glue.

"The beach is perfectly dry, but at every step he takes, as soon as he lifts his foot, the print which it leaves fills with water. The eye, however, has noticed no change; the immense strand is smooth and tranquil; all the sand has the same appearance; nothing distinguishes the surface which is solid from that which is no longer so; the joyous little cloud of sand fleas continues to leap tumultuously over the wayfarer's feet. The man pursues his way, goes forward, inclines to the land, endeavors to get nearer the upland. He is not anxious. Anxious about what? Only he feels as if the weight of his feet increases with every step he takes. Suddenly he sinks in.

"He sinks in two or three times. Decidedly he is not on the right road; he stops to take his bearings. All at once he looks at his feet. They have disappeared. The sand covers them. He draws them out of the sand; he will retrace his steps; he turns back; he sinks in deeper. The sand comes up to his ankles. He pulls himself out and throws himself to the left; the sand is half-leg deep. He throws himself to the right; the sand comes up to his shins. Then he recognizes with unspeakable terror that he is caught in the quicksand, and that he has beneath him the fearful medium in which man can no more walk than the fish can swim. He throws off his load if he has one, lightens himself like a ship in distress; it is already too late; the sand is above his knees. He calls, he waves his hat or his handkerchief; the sand gains on him more and more. If the beach is deserted, if the land is too far off, if there is no help in sight it is all over.

"He is condemned to that appalling burial, long, infallible, implacable, and impossible to slacken or to hasten, which endures for hours, which seizes you erect, free, and in full health, and which draws you by the feet, which at every effort that you make, at every shout you utter, drags you a little deeper, sinking you slowly into the earth while you look upon the horizon: the sails of the ships upon the seas, the birds flying and sinking, the sunshine and the sky. The victim attempts to sit down, to lie down, to creep; every movement he makes inters him; he straightens up; he sinks in; he feels that he is being swallowed. He howls, implores, cries to the clouds, despairs.

"Behold him waist deep in the sand. The sand his neck; the face alone is visible now. The raises his arm, utters furious groans, clutches the beach with his nails, would hold by that straw, leans upon his elbows to pull himself out of this soft sheath, sobs frenziedly; the sand reaches his shoulders the sand reaches neck; the face alone is visible now. The mouth cries; the sand fills it; silence. The eyes still gaze, the sand shuts them; night. Now the forehead decreases, a little hair flutters above the sand; a hand comes to the surface of the beach, moves, and shakes, and disappears. It is the earth-drowning man. The earth filled with the ocean becomes a trap. It presents itself like a plain, and opens like a wave."

Alas, that death should come to anybody in such hideous fashion. But sin does that and worse. It slays, not merely a single lone traveler now and then, but it betrays and ruins its millions. Like the deadly quicksands sin may look harmless and even attractive until the victim is in the power of some deadly habit. Like the quicksands, help must come from some source outside of self-determination and struggle, and that is just the kind of help Christ delights to bring to the repentent soul sinking down under the power of hell's deadly grip. "Life hath quicksands, life hath snares," says Longfellow, but it is the good news of the Gospel that Christ brings a mighty deliverance from the most treacherous quagmire of evil habits that ever engulfed a soul when He has a fair chance to work, but be sure to call on Him in time.—The Wesleyan Methodist.

TRIED IN THE FIRE

Expose water to fire, and it goes into vapor; wood, and it vanishes in smoke and flames, leaving but grey ashes behind; iron, and it melts; but fire may play on gold for a thousand years without depriving it of a degree of its luster or an atom of its weight. Beautiful emblem of the saints of God! They, like gold, cannot perish; and their trials, like the action of fire on this precious metal, but purify what they can not destroy.—Thomas Guthrie.

"I believe the promises of God enough to venture an eternity upon them.—Watts.

"Giving is a fine grace, and an excellent discipline for character, but endless and patient begging for money, with all sorts of expedients from bazaars to tea meetings, is not at all within the range of grace, and aids no one's character."—Exchange.

A merchant will never make much of a fighter for temperance (nor any other good cause) as long as he is afraid the wets will go to another store to buy their potato mashers and tooth picks—Selected.

The right use of today equips us for a better use of tomorrow.—Selected.

"Obedience is the keynote of victory."

"The way to do a great deal for Christ is to keep on doing a little."—Selected.

QUESTIONS

Can you put the spider's web back in its place That once has been swept away?  
Can you put the apple again on the bough Which fell at your feet today?

Can you put the lily back on the stem, And cause it to live and grow?  
Can you mend the butterfly's broken wing That was crushed with a hasty blow?

Can you put the kernel back in the nut?  
Or the broken egg in the shell?  
Can you put the honey back in the comb, And cover with wax each cell?

You may think my questions are trifling, dear;  
Let me ask another one;  
Can a hasty word ever be unsaid,  
Or an unkind deed undone?—Selected.