

ness, and truth and trust will bear a rich harvest of truth and trust. There are many little trivial acts of kindness which teach us more about a man's character than many vague phrases. These are easy to acquire, and their effects will last much longer than this very temporary life.

For no good thing is ever lost. Nothing dies, not even life, which gives up one form only to resume another. No good action, no good example dies. It lives forever in our race. While the frame moulders and disappears, the deed leaves an indelible stamp, and moulds the very thought and will of future generations. Time is not the measure of a noble work; the coming age will share our joy. A single virtuous action has elevated a whole village, a whole city, a whole nation. "The present moment," says Goethe, "is a powerful deity." Man's best products are his happy and sanctifying thoughts, which, when once formed and put in practice, extend their fertilizing influence for thousands of years, and from generation to generation. It is from small seeds dropped into the ground that the finest productions grow; and it is from the inborn dictates of Conscience, and the inspired principle of Duty that the finest growths of Character have arisen. Thus sings Wordsworth of Duty:

"Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know I anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face;
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
And the most ancient heavens are through thee fresh and strong."

CHAPTER II.

DUTY IN ACTION.

Put thou thy trust in God,
In duty's path go on;
Fix on His Word thy steadfast eye,
So shall thy work be done. LUTHER.

Do noble things, not dream them, all day long,
And so make life, death, and that vast forever, one grand sweet
song. CHARLES KINGSLEY.

O worker of the world! to whose young arm
The brute earth yields, and wrong, as to a charm;
Young seaman, soldier, student, toiler at the plough,
Or loom, or forge, or mine, a kingly growth art thou!
Where'er thou art, though earthy oft and coarse,
Thou bearest with thee hidden springs of force,
Creative power, the flower, the fruitful strife,
The germ, the potency of life. *The Ode of Life.*

HE who has well considered his duty will at once carry his convictions into action. Our acts are the only things that are in our power. They not only form the sum of our habits, but of our character.

At the same time, the course of duty is not always the easy course. It has many oppositions and difficulties to surmount. We may have the sagacity to see, but not the strength of purpose to do. To the irresolute there is many a lion in the way. He thinks and moralizes and dreams, but does nothing. "There is little to see," said a hard-worker, "and little to do; it is only to do it."

There must not only be a conquest over likings and dislikings; but, what is harder to attain, a triumph over adverse repute. The man whose first question, after a right course of action has presented itself, is "What will people

say?" is not the man to do anything at all. But if he asks, "Is it my duty?" he can then proceed in his moral panoply, and be ready to incur men's censure, and even to brave their ridicule. "Let us have faith in fine actions," says M. de la Cretelle, "and let us reserve doubt and incredulity for bad. It is even better to be deceived than to distrust."

Duty is first learned at home. The child comes into the world helpless and dependent on others for its health, nurture, and moral and physical development. The child at length imbibes ideas; under proper influences he learns to obey, to control himself, to be kind to others, to be dutiful and happy. He has a will of his own; but whether it be well or ill directed depends very much upon parental influences.

The habit of willing is called purpose; and, from what has been said, the importance of forming a right purpose early in life will be obvious. "Character," says "Novalis, "is a completely-fashioned will;" and the will, when once fashioned, may be steady and constant for life. When the true man, bent on good, holds by his purpose, he places but small value on the rewards or praises of the world; his own approving conscience, and the "well done" which awaits him, is his best reward.

Will, considered without regard to direction, is simply constancy, firmness, perseverance. But it will be obvious that, unless the direction of the character be right, the strong will may be merely a power for mischief. In great tyrants it is a demon; with power to wield, it knows no bounds nor restraint. It holds millions subject to it; inflames their passions, excites them to military fury, and is never satisfied but in conquering, destroying and tyrannizing. The boundless Will produces an Alexander or a Napoleon. Alexander cried because there were no more kingdoms to conquer; and Bonaparte, after overrunning Europe, spent his force amid the snows of Russia. "Conquest has made me," he said, "and conquest must maintain me." But he was a man of no moral principle, and Europe cast him aside when his work of destruction was done.

The strong Will, allied to right motives, is as full of

blessings as the other is of mischief. The man thus influenced moves and inflames the minds and consciences of others. He bends them to his views of duty, carries them with him in his endeavors to secure worthy objects, and directs opinion to the suppression of wrong and the establishment of right. The man of strong will stamps power upon his actions. His energetic perseverance becomes habitual. He gives a tone to the company in which he is, to the society in which he lives, and even to the nation in which he is born. He is a joy to the timid, and a perpetual reproach to the sluggard. He sets the former on their feet by giving them hope. He may even inspire the latter to good deeds by the influence of his example. Tennyson hits the mark in the following words:

"O living Will, that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow through our deeds and make them pure;

"That we may lift from out of dust,
A voice as unto him that hears,
A cry above the conquered years,
To one that with us works, and trust,

"With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved,
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul."

Besides the men of strong bad wills and strong good wills, there is a far larger number who have very weak wills, or no wills at all. They are characterless. They have no strong will for vice, yet they have none for virtue. They are the passive recipients of impressions, which, however, take no hold of them. They seem neither to go forward nor backward. As the wind blows, so their vane turns round; and when the wind blows from another quarter, it turns round again. Any instrument can write on such spirits; any will can govern theirs. They cherish no truth strongly, and do not know what earnestness is. Such persons constitute the mass of society everywhere—

the careless, the passive, the submissive, the feeble, and the indifferent.

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that attention should be directed to the improvement and strengthening of the Will; for without this there can neither be independence, nor firmness, nor individuality of character. Without it we cannot give truth its proper force, nor morals their proper direction, nor save ourselves from being machines in the hands of worthless and designing men. Intellectual cultivation will not give decision of character. Philosophers discuss; decisive men act. "Not to resolve," says Bacon, "*is to resolve*"—that is, to do nothing.

"The right time," says Locke, "to educate the Will aright is in youth. There is a certain season when our minds may be enlarged, when a vast stock of useful truths may be acquired; when our passions will readily submit to the government of reason; when right principles may be so fixed in us as to influence every important action in our future lives. But the season for this extends neither to the whole nor to any considerable length of our continuance upon earth. It is limited to but a few years of our term; and if throughout these we neglect it, error or ignorance is, according to the ordinary course of things, entailed upon us. Our Will becomes our law; and our lusts gain a strength which we afterward vainly oppose."

The first Lord Shaftesbury, in a conversation with Locke, broached a theory of character and conduct which threw a light upon his own. He said that wisdom lay in the heart and not in the head, and that it was not the want of knowledge but the perverseness of will that filled men's actions with folly, and their lives with disorder. Mere knowledge does not give vigor to character. A man may reason too much. He may weigh the thousand probabilities on either side, and come to no action, no decision. Knowledge is thus a check upon action. The Will must act in the light of the spirit and the understanding, and the soul then springs into full life and action.

Indeed the learning of letters and words and sentences is not of the importance that some think it to be. Learning

has nothing to do with goodness or happiness. It may destroy humility and give place to pride. The chief movers of men have been little addicted to literature. Literary men have often attained to greatness of thought which influences men in all ages; but they rarely attain to moral greatness of action.

Men cannot be raised in masses, as the mountains were in the early geological states of the world. They must be dealt with as units; for it is only by the elevation of individuals that the elevation of the masses can be effectually secured. Teachers and preachers may influence them from without, but the main action comes from within. Individual men must exert themselves and help themselves, otherwise they never can be effectually helped by others. "As habits belonging to the body," says Dr. Butler, "are produced by external acts, so habits of the mind are produced by the exertion of inward practical purposes—by carrying them into action or acting upon them—the principles of obedience, of veracity, justice, and charity."

In speaking of Butler, Mr. Stephen, in his recent work, says that "his attitude is impressive from the moral side alone; but from that side its grandeur is undeniable. In the 'Analogy,' as distinctly as in the Sermons, the deification of the Conscience is the beginning, middle, and end of Butler's preaching. Duty is his last word. Whatever doubts and troubles beset him, he adheres to the firm conviction that the secret of the universe is revealed, so far as it is revealed, through Morality."

There is little or no connection between school teaching and morality. Mere cultivation of the intellect has hardly any influence upon conduct. Creeds posted upon the memory will not eradicate vicious propensities. The intellect is merely an instrument, which is moved and worked by forces behind it—by emotions, by self-restraint, by self-control, by imagination, by enthusiasm, by everything that gives force and energy to character. The most of these principles are implanted at home, and not at school. Where the home is miserable, worthless, and unprincipled—a place rather to be avoided than entered—then school is the only place for

learning obedience and discipline. At the same time, home is the true soil where virtue grows. The events of the household are more near and affecting to us than those of the school and the academy. It is in the study of the home that the true character and hopes of the times are to be consulted.

To train up their households is the business of the old; to obey their parents and to grow in wisdom is the business of the young. Education is a work of authority and respect. Christianity, according to Guizot, is the greatest school of respect that the world has ever seen. Religious instruction alone imparts the spirit of self-sacrifice, great virtues and lofty thoughts. It penetrates to the conscience, and makes life bearable without a murmur against the mystery of human conditions.

"The great end of training," says a great writer, "is liberty; and the sooner you can get a child to be a law unto himself, the sooner you will make a man of him." "I will respect human liberty," said Monseigneur Dupanloup, "in the smallest child even more scrupulously than in a grown man; for the latter can defend it against me, while the child cannot. Never will I insult the child so far as to regard him as material to be cast into a mould, to emerge with the stamp given by my will."

Paternal authority and family independence is a sacred domain; and, if momentarily obscured in troublous times, Christian sentiment protests and resists until it regains its authority. But liberty is not all that should be struggled for; obedience, self-restraint, and self-government are the conditions to be chiefly aimed at. The latter is the principal end of education. It is not imparted by teaching, but by example. The first instruction for youth, says Bonald, consists in habits, not in reasonings, in examples rather than in direct lessons. Example preaches better than precept, and that too because it is so much more difficult. At the same time, the best influences grow slowly, and in a gradual correspondence with human needs.

To act rightly, then, is the safety-valve of our moral nature. Good will is not enough; it does not always pro-

duce good deeds. Persevering action does most. What is done with diligence and toil imparts to the spectator a silent force, of which we cannot say how far it may reach. The Rev. Canon Liddon, in his lecture to young men at St. Paul's Cathedral, made an eloquent allusion to Work as the true end of life. "The life of man," he said, "is made up of action and endurance, and life is fruitful in the ratio in which it is laid out in noble action or in patient perseverance. But the physical workers are not the only true workers. The lives of thought do not lie outside this division, for true thought is undemonstrative action. . . . To pass life in indolence, in a state of moral coma, is degrading, for life is only ennobled by work."

Noble work is the true educator. Idleness is a thorough demoralizer of body, soul and conscience. Nine tenths of the vices and miseries of the world proceed from idleness. Without work there can be no active progress in human welfare. No more insufferable misery can be conceived than that which must follow incommunicable privileges. Imagine an idle man condemned to perpetual youth, while all around him decay and die. How sincerely would he call upon death for deliverance! "The weakest living creature," says Carlyle, "by concentrating his powers on a single object, can accomplish something; whereas the strongest, by dispersing his over many, may fail to accomplish anything."

Have we difficulties to contend with? Then work through them. No exorcism charms like labor. Idleness of mind and body resembles rust. It wears more than work. "I would rather work out than rust out," said a noble worker. Schiller said that he found the greatest happiness in life to consist in the performance of some mechanical duty. He was also of opinion that "the sense of beauty never furthered the performance of a single duty." The highest order of being is that which loses sight in resolution, and feeling in work.

The greatest of difficulties often lie where we are not looking for them. When painful events occur, they are, perhaps, sent only to try and prove us. If we stand firm in

our hour of trial, the firmness gives serenity to the mind, which always feels satisfaction in acting conformably to duty. "The battles of the wilderness," said Norman Macleod, "are the sore battles of every-day life. Their giants are our giants, their sorrows our sorrows, their defeats and victories ours also. As they had honors, defeats, and victories, so have we."

The school of difficulty is the best school of moral discipline. When difficulties have to be encountered, they must be met with courage and cheerfulness. Did not Aristotle say that happiness is not so much in our objects as in our energies? Grappling with difficulties is the surest way of overcoming them. The determination to realize an object is the moral conviction that we can and will accomplish it. Our wits are sharpened by our necessity, and the individual man stands forth to meet and overcome the difficulties which stand in his way.

The memoirs of men who have thrown their opportunities away would constitute a painful but a memorable volume for the world's instruction. "No strong man, in good health," says Ebenezer Elliot, "can be neglected, if he be true to himself. For the benefit of the young, I wish we had a correct account of the number of persons who fail of success, in a thousand who resolutely strive to do well. I do not think it exceeds one per cent." Men grudge success, but it is only the last term of what looked like a series of failures. They failed at first, then again and again, but at last their difficulties vanished, and success was achieved.

The desire to possess, without being burdened with the trouble of acquiring, is a great sign of weakness and laziness. Everything that is worth enjoying or possessing can only be got by the pleasure of working. This is the great secret of practical strength. "One may very distinctly prefer industry to indolence, the healthful exercise of all one's faculties to allowing them to rest unused in drowsy torpor. In the long run we shall probably find that the exercise of the faculties has of itself been the source of a more genuine happiness than has followed the actual attainment of what the exercise was directed to procure."

It has been said of a great judge that he never threw a

legitimate opportunity away, but that he never condescended to avail himself of one that was unlawful. What he had to do, at any period of his career, was done with his whole heart and soul. If failure should result from his labors, self-reproach could not affect him for he had tried to do his best.

We must work, trusting that some of the good seed we throw into the ground will take root and spring up into deeds of well-doing. What man begins for himself God finishes for others. Indeed we can finish nothing. Others begin where we leave off, and carry on our work to a stage nearer perfection. We have to bequeath to those who come after us a noble design, worthy of imitation. Well done, well doing, and well to do, are inseparable conditions that reach through all the ages of eternity.

Very few people can realize the idea that they are of no use in the world. The fact of their existence implies the necessity for their existence. The world is before them. They have their choice of good and evil—of usefulness and idleness. What have they done with their time and means? Have they shown the world that their existence has been of any use whatever? Have they made any one the better because of their life? Has their career been a mere matter of idleness and selfishness, of laziness and indifference? Have they been seeking pleasure? Pleasure flies before idleness. Happiness is out of the reach of laziness. Pleasure and happiness are the fruits of work and labor, never of carelessness and indifference.

An unfortunate young man, who felt that his life was of no use whatever in this world, determined publicly to put an end to it. The event occurred at Capron, Illinois, United States. The man had cultivated his intellect, but nothing more. He had no idea of duty, virtue, or religion. Being a materialist, he feared no hereafter. He advertised that he would give a lecture, and then shoot himself through the head. The admission to the lecture and the sensational conclusion was a dollar a head. The amount realized was to be appropriated partly to his funeral expenses, and the rest was to be invested in purchasing the works of three London materialists, which were to be placed in the town