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MORAL MUSCLE.

MORAL MUSCLE,

AND HOW TO USE IT.

A Brotherly Chat with Young Men.

BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY REV. THAIN DAVIDSON, D.D.

"Thou shalt need all the strength that God can give
Simply to live, my friend, simply to live."

F. W. H. MYERS.

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NAWAB SALAR JUNG BAHADUR.

INTRODUCTION.

TRULY the young men of our day are well looked after. Within the last twenty years the Press has issued quite a library of books written specially for this class, and dealing with all the difficulties and dangers that attend the outset of life. Periodical literature has also given a prominent place to their interests; the pulpit is alive to their claims as it never was before; and in nearly all our large towns the significant letters, "Y.M.C.A.," meeting the eye on the public thoroughfares, tell that the Young Men's Christian Association, with its manifold and wholesome influences, is extending its ramifications throughout the land.

Of the younger men who of late years have vigorously exerted themselves in this direction, probably no one has been more conspicuously active and successful than the writer of the following pages; and in the spirited journal which he edits

(*The Young Man*) he gives abundant evidence of his exceptional adaptation for the work. On every page of this little book, whose title appears to me to be equally accurate and felicitous, there is stamped the conviction that our glorious Christianity has been given us, not merely "to save souls" (an expression open to criticism), but to save MAN—his "whole spirit and soul and body"—in every part of that complex being which Christ came to redeem. Our author has a wholesome dread of the spurious pietism that tends only to emasculate; he has no faith in a sickly and molluscous religiousness, but believes that the grace of God ennobles humanity as nothing else can do; that

"The Christian is the highest style of man,"

and that, after all, the secret of true manliness is true godliness.

With rare skill he has condensed within some sixty pages an amount of wise and brotherly counsel that might have filled a large volume; and with a firm but delicate hand has touched upon the vices that are working sad havoc amongst the youth of our land. The style is pointed and attractive: he who reads the first page will go on till he reads the last. Would that this valuable brochure were put

into the hand of every young man in the United Kingdom! Sure I am that under God it could not fail to promote the cause of a pure and Christian manliness, and to hasten the day

“When crime shall cease, and ancient fraud shall fail,
Returning justice lift aloft her scale ;
Peace o’er the land her olive branch extend,
And white-robed innocence from Heaven descend.”

J. THAIN DAVIDSON.

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MORAL MUSCLE:

AND HOW TO USE IT.



I.

A FIERCE FIGHT.

"Think of living! Thy life, wert thou the pitifullest of all the sons of earth, is no idle dream, but a solemn reality. It is thy own. It is all thou hast to front eternity with. Work then, even as He has done, and does, like a star, unhasting yet unresting."

—CARLYLE.

LIFE is a battle. We have all discovered that. However sheltered our position and serene our career, we have had to encounter occasional skirmishes, and most of us know the bitterness of defeat. Life is not a thing to be played with, to be frittered away in dreams, to be wasted in frivolity. It is a stern fight, in which the warrior must have ceaseless energy, keen foresight, and strong faith, if he is to win success and make an honourable record. The firing will not be done with toy pistols—we are

not about to parade our superficial cleverness in a sham fight; we shall have to endure wounds and blows, sickening disappointments, and soul-haunting temptations.

Are we ready for the fray? Some are not. The puny mannikin, who possesses no higher ambition than to rub shoulders with a "lion comique," and whose mental calibre never rises superior to the purposeless chatter of barmaids and turf tipsters, or a discussion as to the exact length of a ballet girl's skirt, *he* will not prove a victor in life's battle. The man who lounges the hours away, who drinks deeply of the fiery alcoholic cup, who keeps late hours, and continually breathes the vitiated atmosphere of nameless dens of pernicious vice, will come to his work with weakened intellect and enfeebled body, and be easily beaten by studious and temperate competitors. Nor is there any room for the brainless and overdressed doll, the

"man who would
Be a woman if he could,
But as he can't, does all he can
To show the world he's not a man."

The doctrine of the survival of the fittest may seem hard and cruel, but it is undoubtedly in force, and we must make the best of the situation. Let young men gird up their loins; let them devote

their leisure to intellectual culture, healthy exercise, and rational recreation—then they need not fear. There may be a hard struggle, but in all the vicissitudes of life we have a strong and sympathetic Friend who knows the difficulties of young manhood. To live as the loyal disciple of Jesus Christ, is to have an irresistible power and an unfailing happiness that even the devil cannot destroy. Life *is* a battle, but it can be fought victoriously by the young man who has the clean hands, the pure heart, and the chivalrous courage which belong to a soldier of the great King.

But how easy it is to go astray! Here is a youth who has left the refreshing joys of quiet home life for the big, mysterious, unknown London; what part will he play in the tragedy of life—the stout-hearted warrior or the backboneless weakling, the earnest Christian or the cowardly self-pleaser? Will he choose fast life, and therefore swift death, or will he build up a noble and useful career? Let us follow his life for a month. Open-eyed wonder soon changes to weariness of heart. The first glow of excitement wears off, and the everlasting routine of office work becomes unbearably monotonous. The awful sense of solitude is hard to bear. He feels that if he could but meet one of the home dogs he would gladly shake its paw and welcome it

as an old friend. Oh, the bitterness of being alone in a crowd! No smile, no hand-shake, no genial word of welcome, nothing but a maddening sense of isolation. One night, as he saunters down the Strand, a hand is laid on his arm, and a cheerful voice exclaims, "Where are you off to, old chap?" Turning round, he meets the smiling face of a counting-house companion. "Ah," he continues, "got a fit of the blues?—poor old boy, I know what it is. Come down to the 'Frivolity' for an hour, and kill dull care by a smoke, a sip, and a song." The young man is startled, but pleased. He has been in London a month, and seen none of the gay sights—why shouldn't he go? Here is a charming companion ready to show him round. Why go on moping any longer, in the face of such an opportunity? So in they go through the swinging doors, and all the devils in hell must laugh as the two brave, honest English lads step into the gilded trap. How the poor fellow hates himself next morning! "Why didn't I say 'No!' at once—how could I go into such a palace of unwholesome pleasure? But then life was so dull, and irritating, and lonely." Yes, he is beginning to discover, what we all have to find out sooner or later, that life is not a playground, but a battlefield.

Let no man, therefore, attempt to guide his own

life without the inspiration of Christianity. Good resolutions will not stand the brunt of city temptations, and philosophy is no match for passion. The environments of life make it easy to do wrong and difficult to do right. When some men discover that, their courage fails; they despair, and then they sink. That is the result of leaving God out of the reckoning. Our supreme comfort is that God is ever and always the sure defence of every young man whose principles are manly and whose fidelity is staunch. He can turn our weakness into strength, and enable us to thunder an unyielding "No!" to the world with its godless glitter, the flesh with its fascinating allurements, and the devil with his seductive lie.

But on our part there must be no selfish reservation, no cowardly compromise. I have seen a ship in the bay, swinging with the tide, and seeming as if it must follow it out to sea; and yet it cannot, for down below the dancing waves it is securely anchored. So it is with many a young man to-day. He looks towards Christ, and longs to live the high and noble life of purity and love and self-sacrifice. But his efforts are unavailing, for he is anchored to a secret sin. Let him not despair, however. While there is the faintest longing for the path of righteousness there is hope.

To realise our incapability and poverty of resource is a good thing. "The greatest of faults is to be conscious of none." All the angels of heaven watch the desperate encounter of the men who falter and blunder and fall, and yet rise again and struggle upwards towards the light. Christ welcomes with infinite tenderness the bewildered prodigal, who, sick of the swine, penitently returns to the Father's house. He never gives up any man; He offers us all another chance to begin anew, and by His omnipotent strength to overcome. He provides not only forgiveness for the past, but strength for the present and hope for the future. *He lives—He loves—He reigns.* Then all will yet be well!

"Poor human nature," says Carlyle; "is not a man's walking, in truth, always a succession of falls? Man can do no other. In this wild element of a life he has to struggle onwards; now fallen, deep-abased; and ever with tears, repentance, with bleeding heart, he has to rise again, struggle again, still onwards. That his struggle be a faithful, unconquerable one—that is the question of questions."

II.

PERSEVERANCE WINS!

"I have been watching the careers of young men by the thousand in this busy city of New York for over thirty years, and I find that the chief difference between the successful and the failures lies in single elements of staying power. Permanent success is oftener won by holding on than by sudden dash, however brilliant. The easily discouraged, who are pushed back by a straw, are all the time dropping to the rear—to perish or to be carried along on the stretcher of charity. They who understand and practise Abraham Lincoln's homely maxim of 'pegging away,' have achieved the solidest success."—DR. T. L. CUYLER.

ONE great secret of success in life is dogged, resolute "stick-at-itiveness." Dash and audacity and superficial cleverness may create a great stir for a time, but they achieve no lasting success. In a recent chat with an interviewer, Mr. Edison quite unconsciously, preached a most powerful sermon on perseverance. He described his repeated efforts to make the phonograph reproduce the aspirated sound, and added, "From eighteen to twenty hours a day for the last seven months I have worked on this single word 'specia.' I said into the phonograph

'specia, specia, specia,' but the instrument responded 'pecia, pecia, pecia.' It was enough to drive one mad! But I held firm, and I have succeeded." That is just the kind of man who always does succeed. This simple confession of an almost heroic effort ought to stir some of us to face the battle of life with a calm, indomitable determination to fight and conquer.

"He can toil terribly;" that is what an opponent said of Sir Walter Raleigh. It is true of all great men. They have simply gained their positions by thoroughness and diligence. Sir Isaac Newton said that the only point in which he was superior to others was this—that he had a power of concentrating his attention. The great scholar Erasmus could not afford, when a boy, to buy a torch, so he read by moonlight. John Milton, when quite a youth, had mastered Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Italian, and French. When studying at St. Paul's School his ardour for knowledge was so great that he rarely went to bed before twelve o'clock. In the same way all great men have achieved success by unswerving diligence. The grand old German Emperor, William I., was not by any means a genius—but the secret of his power lay in tireless perseverance. Although he climbed to the giddiest heights of glory, he remained to the last a simple,

faithful, hard-working man. A friend says of him: "When I passed the Palace at Berlin night after night, however late, I always saw that grand Imperial figure standing up beside the green lamp, and I used to say to myself, 'That is how the Imperial Crown of Germany was won.'" Three thousand years ago Solomon said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." And he also prophesied: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men."

Genius unexerted is no more genius, says Emerson, than a bushel of acorns is a forest of oaks. There may be epics in men's brains, just as there are oaks in acorns; but the tree and book must come out before we can measure them. How many men would fain go to bed dunces and wake up Solomons! But it cannot be—you will reap only what you sow. "Those who sow dunce seed, vice seed, laziness seed, usually get a crop. A man of mere capacity undeveloped is only an organised day-dream with a skin on it."

How is it that so many young men remain in the same lowly position, year after year, waiting for promotion that never comes, and enduring the weary round of drudgery until the very heart grows sick? Frequently it is because they put no *spirit*

into their work. They do just what they are obliged by their contract to do, and no more. They have no faith, no pluck, no push—they never surprise their employer with new plans or fresh ideas—and so they make no progress. *There is plenty of room at the top*—but they never try to climb! It is very sad. The man who is to succeed in these days must put his heart into his work, and not grumble if he is kept ten minutes beyond office hours.

The crowning necessity, in the case of many men, is *promptitude*. We all know the amiable, easy-going fellows who intend to surprise the world by some great achievement—*to-morrow!* Such men will never succeed. Amid the clash and competition of this age, we must act with smartness and decision. It is no use waiting for something to turn up. “Things don’t turn up in this world,” said Garfield, “unless somebody turns them up.” A pound of pluck is worth a ton of luck. Success comes not to the man who idly waits, but to the faithful toiler whose work is characterised by sleepless vigilance and cheerful alacrity.

Never give in! Never be discouraged by early failures. The greatest men have had to suffer crushing defeat at first. Even Jesus Christ said, in tones of deepest agony, “I would . . . but ye would not.”

There must be intermediate failures before the ultimate victory—therefore, let no man spoil his life by morbid regrets. Have you ever noticed how that little word *until* comes to the front in the three parables in the 15th chapter of Luke? The man who loses his sheep seeks for it *until* he finds it. The woman who has lost a piece of silver searches diligently *until* she recovers it. And then the great-hearted old father, whose son went off to see life, and has come so sadly to grief—he never gives up the prodigal, but watches patiently and eagerly *until* he returns. That is the spirit we need to-day. We pick up a useful book, glance at the opening chapters, but a dry page frightens us, and we do not persevere *until* the end is reached. We intend to conquer some evil habit, but finding that it has become rooted into our very life, we give up the struggle instead of fighting *until* we overcome. We take up some Christian work, or begin some new study, but as soon as tiny obstacles and trifling discouragements come in our way, we fume and fret and fidget, and the work is left unfinished. The man who wins the battle to-day is not always overwhelmingly brilliant, but he *must* be persevering, determined, and painstaking. Whatever his task may be, he must stick at it UNTIL it is completed.

And *now* is the time to begin. Think of what

Holman Hunt, the great artist, said on one occasion when he was congratulated by a friend on his selection to paint the historical frescoes in the House of Commons. "Yes," he said, with sadness, "but I began with my hair grey." Brother, don't wait till your hair is grey. Your strength and opportunities are greater now than they can be in the future; begin now, and work, "unhasting, yet unresting."

III.

PURITY IS POWER.

"All wickedness is weakness."—MILTON.

"My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure."

—TENNYSON.

PURITY is power. Vice and vigour are as far apart as good and evil. Nothing enfeebles a man like sin; therefore, as strength is the crowning necessity in the campaign before us, we must be *pure*.

"Keep thyself pure," was Paul's counsel to Timothy—that is, preserve untainted the purity which is the inheritance of every young man who starts in life. The deadliest error that can mislead men is that "vice is a necessity." When the veteran apostle said, "Keep thyself pure," he knew that it was perfectly possible for his young brother to maintain his integrity and keep his purity uncorrupted. Oh, brothers, let us clear our minds of cant. It is not the vigour and fulness of young life that make it necessary to sin. It is the tampering with

temptation, the indulgence of degrading thoughts, the indecent story, and the scrofulous novel. If a man deliberately and wilfully gives himself up to the fatal spell of passion, and then complains that vice is a necessity, he is a hypocrite, and stands self-condemned. Purity is *not* impossible. Thousands of young men could testify that the conquest of sensual temptations is comparatively easy, when the body is kept in health by wholesome exercise and the mind fully occupied by lofty thoughts. *Constant occupation* is one of the surest methods of preserving purity. Be careful and temperate in diet, take regular exercise and frequent cold baths, shun the company of "lewd fellows of the baser sort," and above all, if you want to shake off the traitor of passion for the angel of Purity, you must *pray*. "If ever you are tempted," says Kingsley, "by passion and vanity, to form *liaisons*, snares, and nets, and labyrinths of blind ditches, to keep you down through life, stumbling and grovelling, hating yourself and hating the chain to which you cling—in that hour *pray*—pray as if the devil had you by the throat—to Almighty God to help you out of that cursed slough! There is nothing else for it!—PRAY, I tell you!"

Some men will sneer at all this; they will indulge in their ghastly giggle, and then they will say, "But,

my dear chap, you know a fellow must sow his wild oats." Well, then, he will have to reap a wild harvest. That is the natural law, the inevitable sequence, and there is no escape from it. I wish all young men could read a letter I have now before me. It is written by a youth who has strayed from the path of purity, and now he is suffering the very torture of hell. With a broken spirit, a despairing heart, and a weakened body, he asks, "Is there any hope for me?" Fleeced and frightened by the scoundrelism of quack doctors, he has been driven to the very verge of madness and suicide. This is the bitter harvest of suffering and degradation which follows the "sowing of wild oats"—this is the sure and swift retribution which curses the man who has fallen into the sin of unchastity.

Thousands of men would cut off their right hand to be free from the results of impurity. The memory of their deadly sin is ever before them; ghostly dreams disturb their rest, fear haunts them every hour. For them "the furies have taken their seats upon the midnight pillow." Hope begins to dwindle, love becomes dim, even God seems far away, and the poor victims of the syren of sin begin to realise the burning prison of a corrupt life.

They cry with David, "My sins have taken such

hold upon me that I am not able to look up; my heart faileth me." They might say with Hartley Coleridge—in those sad verses written in his Bible on his twenty-fifth birthday—

“When I received this volume small
My years were barely seventeen,
When it was hoped I should be all
Which once, alas! I might have been.

And now my years are twenty-five,
And every mother hopes her lamb,
And every happy child alive,
May never be what now I am.”

Some even go beyond this bitter repentance, and sink into hopeless and cynical despair, which is far worse. Like Lord Byron, they could write on their thirty-third birthday—

“Through life’s dull road, so dim and dirty,
I have dragged to three-and-thirty;
What have these years left to me?
Nothing, except thirty-three.”

If you would be saved from such a remorseful retrospection, be not deceived; “God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” Brothers, I invite you to look the facts in the face; will you make shipwreck of your life, will you de-

stroy your manliness, will you sacrifice your soul, all for a shadow—an inane and fleeting pleasure—an evanescent and unsatisfying indulgence? Have done with the riotous living, the hollow amusement; be serious, sober, steadfast, strong, and

“Sit, self-governed, in the fiery prime
Of youth, obedient at the feet of law.”

Trust God, respect yourself, be strong in the strength of Christ, and you may yet tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot.

It is a solemn thought that every man, whatever his circumstances or character may be, is sure to be tempted; not one of us can escape. Everything depends on the way in which we meet the assault. Do we yield a little to the honeyed promises and the plausible suggestions of the tempter? then temptation becomes sin, and we shall be fettered by the awful tyranny of habit. Do we check the stealthy whisper of evil, and crush the degrading thought of lust? then resistance is victory, and the devil will flee from us. Never surrender; fight the battle out inch by inch; give no quarter to the enemy. Every time you vanquish him, you gain in moral strength, and you will be better able to meet the next attack.

Young men make a sad mistake when they think it necessary that they should have a personal acquaintance with the dark and seamy side of life. Many a man who has peered into the abyss, "just to see what it was like," has lost his balance and fallen almost hopelessly. A young man was talking to a pilot on one of our big steamers. "How long," he asked, "have you been a pilot on these waters?" The old man replied, "Twenty-five years; and I came up and down many times before I was pilot." "Then," said the young man, "I should think you must know every rock and sandbank in the river." The old man smiled at the youth's simplicity, and replied, "Oh no, I don't; but *I know where the deep water is.*" That is what we want—to know the safe path, and keep to it. The subtle allurements of the flesh are desperate in their power, and he who gives way ever so little is in danger of rushing down the steep incline. Go to a lofty eminence and drop a stone out of your hand. By the law of gravitation it sinks with rapidly increasing momentum. If it falls 2 feet the first second, it will fall 48 feet the next second, and 108 feet the third second, and 200 feet the fifth second, and if it falls for ten seconds, it will in the last second rush through 1200 feet till earth stops it. It is the same with sin. To stop half-way is almost impossible—to be safe

you must resist the beginning of evil; *now* is the time to break with the habit, to drive it out and close the door on it for ever. To-morrow you may be imprisoned in its clutches—

“To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.”

Few men seem conscious that there is such a thing as physical morality. “Men’s habitual words and acts,” says Herbert Spencer, “imply the idea that they are at liberty to treat their bodies as they please. Disorders entailed by disobedience to Nature’s dictates they regard simply as grievances, not as the effects of a conduct more or less flagitious. Though the evil consequences inflicted on their dependants, and on future generations, are often as great as those caused by crime, yet they do not think themselves in any degree criminal. The fact is, that all breaches of the laws of health are *physical sins*.”

Alas! for those physical sins! If drink slays its thousands, then impurity destroys its tens of thousands. No man with his eyes open can deny that vice is increasing in our great towns, and is sapping the physical strength and moral manhood

of the nation. There is nothing more unspeakably sad than to see fine fellows galloping through a course of infernal revelry, wallowing in cheap nastiness, enduring the agonies of a spoilt and shattered life, and then dying like dogs, for—

“The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to plague us.”

Go amongst men of an apparently decent type and you will be sickened by coarse slang and filthy jests; you will hear them boast of the fair young lives they have degraded and ruined, and you will observe that their contemptible jokes meet with no manly protest, but are followed by ghastly grins and roars of approval. What can we do? How long are we to stand by and let the vile contagion spread amongst our brethren? In this, as in other matters, the best contribution any man can make towards the reformation of society is the reformation of himself. Let us see to it that we keep *ourselves* pure. Then, without any approach to Pharisaism, we may earnestly warn our brethren against the power and bondage of lust. Excellent and well-meaning fellows are constantly falling through simple ignorance. We must show them that the man who blasts a fair young life, tears the frail flower up by its roots and tramples on its blossoms, is a

mean and heartless creature, unfit for decent society ; we must boycott the foul-mouthed man, cut the debauchee, and if the seducer cannot be sent to prison, we at least may send him to Coventry. Thus we may be promoting a purer public opinion. But after all, the one great panacea for impurity, the one hope of our race, is the health-giving and uplifting influence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sin is not a mere mistake—a momentary and accidental blunder ; it is a foul, loathsome, soul-blurring stain which nothing but the power of Christ's cleansing touch can remove, and from which nothing but Christ's limitless mercy can deliver.

IV.

THE REDEMPTION OF THE EVENING.

*"Sweet recreation barr'd, what doth ensue
But moody and dull melancholy,
Kinsman to grim and comfortless despair."*

—SHAKESPEARE.

THE redemption of the evening is a problem which has more to do with progress in life than some of us imagine. Two of the greatest factors in the formation of a successful career are physical health and mental agility, and these are largely dependent on the way in which we spend our leisure hours. The worst thing you can do of an evening is to do nothing. No man goes wrong when he is at work. But at night—that is when the battle begins; when the young man shuts his books, locks his desk, puts on his hat, and goes out into the busy streets, free for the evening—then the dangerous time commences. Probably he is dull and fagged and listless—lonely and tired and discontented. The devil dogs his footsteps. He is tempted at

every street corner. That is how men go wrong—having nothing else to do, they do evil. Life is so monotonous, and the daily round so oppressive—and thus in killing time they are apt to kill themselves—in seeking for pleasurable excitement they find a slippery path which may end in degradation and despair.

The remedy is simple and obvious. We must fill our life so full of good that there shall be no room for the evil. Dulness can be charmed away by music, depression can be banished by vigorous exercise, and these pleasures never harmed any man. “The best exercise and pastimes,” said Luther, “are music and gymnastics; the former dispelling mental care and melancholy thought, the latter producing elasticity of body and preserving health.” The grand old reformer was right, and music and muscle remain to this day the best and safest amusements we can enjoy.

It is always a great safeguard for a young man to have a *hobby*—a hobby he can be enthusiastic about, one that will exercise both body and brain. How many men have found in the study and practice of music a delightful means of redeeming the evening. What a power it wields! How it revives the best feelings and rouses the noblest emotions! We are not surprised to read that,

“when the evil spirit was upon Saul, David took a harp and played; so Saul was refreshed and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.” God’s sweet messenger of song knows well how to calm a worried brain and cheer a fretful spirit.

But men who are tied to a desk or confined to a warehouse all day will want to ride a more spirited hobby. Then I would suggest cycling. “What! in the evening?” Yes, in the evening; and winter evenings, too! I know nothing more exhilarating than a ten miles’ spin on a frosty moonlight night—when the air is crisp and the roads are hard, and the silver lamp of night reveals the broad expanse of country to our admiring view. On, on we pedal, swiftly and merrily, and our hearts are buoyant, our appetites keen, and our enjoyment simply boundless.

But do you object to cycling on account of the expense of buying a machine, or the frequent spells of wet weather? Then join a good gymnasium. What happy healthy hours can be spent with bar and bell, horse and trapeze, while we gain firm limbs, strong muscles, and stout hearts. And this is not all, for a course of gymnastics is no small help in developing a manly character. It not only fosters endurance, perseverance, and pluck, but the cheerful rivalry, the constant effort to attain a

higher standard of agility and strength—all this tends to make a man chivalrous and modest and brave.

I need not refer to cricket, or photography, or any of the popular hobbies in which so many young men find wholesome delight. But I must suggest that, for a man engaged in business, there can be no more fascinating pastime than a systematic and intelligent study of the best books. "A good book," said Milton, "is the life-blood of a master spirit;" and the best works of master spirits were never so readily accessible as they are to-day. The greatest books are now the cheapest. For threepence or fourpence-halfpenny you can have opened to you vast stores of the highest wisdom—you can be transported from a dull work-a-day world into gardens of undimmed beauty, where the flowers of gracious poetry never fade, and the leaves of noble biographies never wither.

The love of good books is one of the strongest defences against temptation. It provides a man with a new and brighter world, into which he can retire at will and hold intercourse with the wise and good. Nothing in Dickens' works is more touching than the picture of his own child-life which he gives in "David Copperfield." He shows us how easily he might have gone wrong had it not been for one

great power and influence that cast a spell over him—the love of books. In his dismal and solitary garret he was not alone, for he had the cheerful companionship of his books, and they kept him pure in thought, shrewd in intellect, and right in life, even in the midst of a crowded city, with its myriad dangers and temptations. What books did for Charles Dickens they will do for us. The Apostle Paul never gave Timothy better advice than when he urged the young man to “give attendance to reading.”

The despotism of habit is so strong that it is extremely important the taste for reading should be cultivated in *youth*. Have we not known men who have sacrificed every hour to business, eschewing all pleasure, quenching all intellectual yearnings, until money-making has become the one dominant passion of their lives? We know the result. They become rich, retire from business, and are miserable. It is positively wicked to neglect the mind until it becomes dull and stunted and useless, at least for the study of any other volumes than the ledger or bank-book. You will be all the better business men if you can go to your desk every morning fresh and happy, because the evening has been devoted to a study which has gratified the fancy and enriched the mind. The great thing is to have some

hobby, some scientific, literary, or athletic occupation, *outside* the line of the daily work.

There is yet another way of redeeming the evening, and by no means the least important. Nothing will contribute so much to real, deep, unfailing happiness, as one or two nights a week spent in trying to mitigate the suffering and enlighten the ignorance of our fellow men. I like to think of Ion Keith Falconer, the brilliant university man, the champion bicyclist, the best shorthand writer of his day, leaving the fashionable crowd of admirers, and going down to the Mile End Road to preach the Gospel to the poor and degraded masses of the East End. Keith Falconer had many hobbies; his bicycle races and his phonography gave him great delight, but I do not think they ever filled him with such genuine happiness as the work he did for his Lord amid the darkness and despair of Whitechapel. The soul of all improvement is the improvement of the soul. What we *are*—that is the main thing. It is well to cultivate the mind, but the first and supreme need is a pure heart and a Christlike character. And if by God's help we have known and loved the Man of Nazareth, and instead of leading a barren and selfish career, are trying to make the world a little brighter and cleaner, and nearer heaven, then the battle of life cannot end in defeat.

We may not have conquered so triumphantly as we expected, but when the King scans our poor record, He will hide its defeats with His all-abounding mercy and magnify its victories by His all-embracing love.

V.

HELPERS IN THE FIGHT.

"As nothing can help the eye, without sight; or rouse if there be no life; worship and practice are of no worth without living religious affections. But, when, to use Scougal's fine phrase, which brought Whitfield peace, 'the life of God is in the soul,' helps are tendrils to lift our trailing thoughts and desires above the rank growths of the world, till they throw out their branches far up in the light."—DR. CUNNINGHAM GEIKIE.

"BENAIAH went down and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy day" (1 Chron. xi. 22). What an exciting incident, and with what telegraphic conciseness it is related! There is more pulsing life and throbbing realism in those fourteen words than in many a modern novel. The natural inquiry is, "What made Benaiah so brave?" He is not a prominent Bible character. We know scarcely anything about him. Our information is practically confined to the bare, bald fact that he was *one of "David's mighty men."* And yet that is sufficient! It unfolds the secret of his warrior spirit. Solitude and isolation are not the best nurseries for producing heroes.

The effect of comradeship with a band of noble-hearted men, and of loyal devotion to a loved and trusted leader is magnetic—marvellous !

Some men may paddle their own canoes through the choppy sea of life, brave its bleakest gales, survive its biggest storms, and float at last right up to heaven's gate. But it is not safe to attempt it. You had better mingle with brave, pure-souled men, that you may catch their dauntless spirit and lofty enthusiasm.

I know nothing that requires so much care as "making friends." Some men of superficial character possess what I may almost call a fatal facility for becoming entangled in dangerous companionships. "Example," says Burke, "is the school of mankind, and they will learn at no other." How necessary, then, that the examples by which you are surrounded should be pure and good. You *must* have friends, and you cannot help being influenced by them. But you *can* resolve that, whether they are rich or poor, they shall at least be high-minded Christian gentlemen.

Above all, you must get into the company of great David's greater Son, who will inspire you with valour, and multiply your strength, until to kill a lion on a snowy day, or, in other words, to conquer a temptation under exceptional difficulties,

will become almost easy. But the enthusiasm of "mighty men" is not everything. The influence of a pure woman is often much stronger. In life's conflict, few helpers are more potent than the trustful affection of a true-hearted girl unspoilt by the fashion and frivolity of the world. More men have been saved from ruin, by homes that were bathed in the sunlight of love, than by the most graceful and eloquent sermons. And how many men have conquered unpropitious circumstances, overcome inherent laziness, and risen to lofty heights of honour and success, as the result of the encouragement and sympathy of a brave, loving wife. Marriage has made more men than it has ever marred. Prince Bismarck, in speaking of his wife, has declared, "She it is who has made me what I am." Burke said, amid all the clamour and anxiety of a statesman's busy life, "Every care vanishes the moment I enter under my own roof." "I would not," said Luther, "exchange my poverty with my wife for all the riches of Croesus without her." Such quotations could be multiplied. Lord Beaconsfield always spoke with gratitude of the devotion of his wife. Sir Walter Scott and Daniel O'Connell ascribed all their success to the loving co-operation of their life-partners. Hood, with infinite pathos, confesses, "I never was anything, dearest, till I knew you, and

I have been a better, happier, and more prosperous man ever since." And even Carlyle, whose married life had its hours of shade and sadness, lamented that, when his wife died, "the light of his life" went out, for she "unweariedly forwarded him, as none else could, in all of worthy that he did or attempted." Facts all point to this definite conclusion: that a wise marriage, safeguarded by prudence, ennobled by virtue, and crowned by love, is a marvellous helper in life's battle. It *compels* a man to rouse himself and fight with renewed energy. So long as he has only his own needs to supply, and his own welfare to think of, he may be tempted to sink into sloth and selfishness, but the faithful comrade at his side will cheer him in times of depression, save him from despair, and very often make a hero of him.

Here, however, we need a word of warning. Nothing is more sad than to observe the unthinking haste with which marriages are contracted. The most important event in a man's life is too often treated as the lightest joke. A pair of bright eyes, a seaside ramble, the intrigue of a match-making mamma—and the thing is done! *She* wants to vary the monotony of life, and excite the envy of her girl friends; *he* is easy-going and soon fascinated; and so a weak man with thirty shillings a week is

mated to a vain girl who cannot cook a chop ! Oh, the pity of it ! For a marriage of this kind never helps a man through life ; it will bring the husband obscurity and poverty, the wife fret and anxiety, and the children dependence and beggary.

Some of the entries in the diary of the good Earl of Shaftesbury give us an interesting insight into his thoughts on marriage. On September 24, 1828, he writes : " In solitude very often of late I somehow begin to feel how truly God pronounced, ' It is not good for man to be alone. ' " On December 3rd the following sentences occur, " Marriage, I have seen, corrects many and various errors in a man's character. I know and feel the vices of my moral constitution, but I dread the chance of a Jezebel, a Cleopatra, or that insupportable compound of folly and worldliness which experience displays every day, but history has not yet recorded. Give me the mother of the Gracchi, exalted by the Gospel ! " And again, on December 25th, " What a purity of delight if God would bestow on me the wife of my heart, and a place for the exercise of imagined virtues ! " It would indeed be a blessing if all young men would exercise a similar care in avoiding thoughtless and characterless dolls, and in seeking, as helpmates, true-hearted Christian women.

At what age, then, should a man marry ? Carlyle

thought that young men should be shut up in barrels until they attain the age of twenty-five, and many eminent men have fixed twenty-five as the earliest age at which a man should wed. The youth of nineteen or twenty, who, with all the recklessness of inexperience, persuades some gentle but weak-minded girl to share with him two attics and thirty shillings a week, is not only to be pitied for his folly, but condemned for his wickedness. It is not, however, altogether a question of money, for even if his pockets were filled with gold, his head is not likely to be filled with wisdom, and he had far better wait until his principles are settled, his intellect broadened, and his will strengthened, before he embarks on so serious an enterprise. I cannot help deploring the childish advice given by certain advocates of social purity. "Poor young man," they say in effect, "you are so much to be pitied—your passions are so strong, your temptations are so great, and your will is so weak. In order that you may not fall into immoral habits, marry early." This is nonsense—and pernicious nonsense. Let us take the higher and more Christian standpoint, and say, Be men! Exercise the indispensable attribute of self-restraint. It is not a mere toss up between marriage and immorality. Resolve to be brave, and chivalrous, and strong. If you truly

love a woman, you will surely scorn to drag her down to a miserable existence of constant poverty and crushing anxiety. Work and wait for her. Go forward, trusting in God, and labour on with pluck and patience until the day shall come when you will be able to lay at her feet, not a mere declaration of boyish affection—honest and pure as that may be—but a noble record of honourable work, and the golden victory of an assured position.

“To fall in love” is not everything. When a man *falls*, he is certainly not particularly his own master. Let him recover his feet, and steadily scan the situation. “If ever one is to pray,” says Jane Welsh Carlyle, “if ever one is to feel grave and anxious, if ever one is to shrink from vain show and vain babble, surely it is just on the occasion of two human beings binding themselves to one another for better and for worse till death part them.”

VI.

THINGS THAT HINDER.

"Rocks whereon greatest men have oftst wreck'd."—MILTON.

IF we are to fight the battle of life with strength and success, we must "lay aside every weight," not merely the sin that so easily besets us, but every hindrance that might hamper our progress and endanger our victory. Let us think of two or three things that have thrown many a man down and involved him in failure and despair.

First I would refer to *lack of faith* in whatever work or enterprise we have in hand. One of the chief necessities for genuine success is that we should love our work and thoroughly believe in it. I can never understand how conscientious Liberals can accept the post of leader writers on Conservative journals, or how red-hot Tories can spin convincing arguments in favour of Radical measures in Gladstonian prints. And yet it is done. It is, however,

the exception that proves the rule, for nearly all successful work in the world to-day is done by the men who have boundless faith in the enterprise they have undertaken. The British governor of one of the Indian provinces, commenting on his good fortune in getting out of the country before the breaking out of the mutiny, said, "I never could have fought well, for I could never make up my mind whether our conquest of India was a divinely inspired act or a terrible mistake." Nothing saps the strength like loss of faith. Scepticism inevitably destroys a man's working powers. Who can imagine a half-hearted Stanley? The man who is to cross Africa must believe that he is doing that particular thing which above all others needs to be done—and that he is the man to do it! If we are to work well, we must do a work that we believe in. If we are to achieve anything high and noble and good, we must banish doubt and put our hand to the business before us with a resolute courage and a triumphant faith.

Secondly, how many men are hindered in life by *ill health*! "There is no good in arguing with the inevitable," says Lowell; "the only argument with an east wind is to put on your overcoat." I wish young men would always remember that. When the wind has been keen and cutting, and influenza

seemed to dwell in every gust, I have seen men riding their bicycles or standing at street corners thinly attired and without any overcoat. They would feel hurt if I said they were mad—but that is the simple fact. Many men consider they are very bold and manly and plucky if they ignore overcoats and umbrellas, and laugh at all protection against wind and wet. They might learn wisdom if they could spend a winter, as I have done, in a southern seaside health resort, where the doctors are overworked, the chemists' shops crowded, and every other man you meet seems to be on the brink of the grave. It is almost heart-breaking to see consumptive young men who have had to abandon an honourable and useful career and fly to the sunny south—in many cases, I fear, only to postpone death by a few months. How many of them might have enjoyed continuous health and vigour but for some trifling carelessness. Let every young man who enjoys good health thank God for an unspeakable blessing, and take care to preserve it.

Thirdly, what bright and promising careers have been wrecked by *gambling*! The awful power and fascination of this vice has seldom been shown in such a glaring light as by the frank confession of Lady Sebright. She has told us in a public

meeting that not long ago she was a great gambler, and loved to attend the races. "There was nothing she cared for so much as gambling, and over and over again she made promises to give it up, but broke them just as the drunkard breaks his promises. She would now rather lose her right hand than play cards or gamble in any way." Gambling becomes an irresistible passion, and the fetters with which it binds its victims are almost stronger than those that tighten round the drunkard. Of all habits it is, in the words of Kingsley, "the most intrinsically savage; morally it is unchivalrous and unchristian; the devil is the only father of it." Lord Beaconsfield called the turf "a vast engine of national demoralisation," and all who know anything about the racecourse and its surroundings are aware that it is a world of robbery and riot, in which faith and trust, purity and manliness, are absolutely unknown—a world—alas! that we should have to say it—that is largely made up of young men who ought to be the backbone of our country. It is simply distressing to see, in city trains, scores of youths—the senseless tools of chance—disfigured by big collars and loud attire, enjoying the feeble jokelets and filthy inuendoes of low sporting papers. Gambling is an unpardonable vice. It has been well pointed out that taking

alcohol is not in itself a sin until a certain line is passed, and the bar separating moderation from excess is broken down; and impurity is but the misdirection or abuse of that which is not only legitimate but hallowed by God. But gambling is vicious, whether practised in moderation or excess. It directly violates the two great principles which our Lord has taught us as the whole duty of life: (1) to love the Lord our God with all our heart with all our mind, with all our soul and with all our strength; and (2) to love our neighbour as ourselves.

"Listen," says Mr. Herbert Spencer, "to a conversation about gambling, and where reprobation is expressed, note the grounds of the reprobation. That it tends towards the ruin of the gambler; that it risks the welfare of family and friends; that it alienates from business and leads into bad company—these and such as these are the reasons given for condemning the practice. Rarely is there any recognition of the fundamental reason. Rarely is gambling condemned because it is a kind of action by which *pleasure is obtained at the cost of pain to another*. The normal obtainment of gratification, or of the money which purchases gratification, implies, firstly, that there has been put forth equivalent effort of a kind which, in some way, furthers

the general good ; and implies, secondly, that those from whom the money is received get, directly or indirectly, equivalent satisfaction. But in gambling the opposite happens. Benefit received does not imply effort put forth, and *the happiness of the winner involves the misery of the loser*. This kind of action is therefore essentially anti-social, sears the sympathies, cultivates a hard egoism, and so produces a general deterioration of character and conduct."

There we have a calm, weighty, and logical summing up of the whole matter. Thank God, the passion for gambling can be checked and crushed, and the best way to do it is to fill the mind and heart with interests and tastes and purposes of a higher and nobler kind.

A fourth defect that hinders many a good-hearted fellow is *self-conceit*. You have heard a man referred to as "a clever chap, but the worst of it is that he *puts on side*." This is a slang phrase, and as such I apologise for it. But it is the popular description of a very common vice. I have heard of a gentleman in the north who was so oppressed by an overwhelming sense of humility that he prayed, "Lord, give us a good conceit of ourselves." Assuredly there is no need of such a petition to-day. It would be better

if the Lord would say to some of us, as He said to Zaccheus, "Come down;" for no one can deny that this is an age of bombast, conceit, and vanity. The spruce little counter-kicker, all collar and cuffs, gives himself the airs of a count; and there are few clerks who do not feel able to reconstruct the universe on an improved plan. Cheap and shallow critics abound on every hand, and the self-assertive sham, who tries to give you the impression that he is the *confidante* of Cabinet Ministers and the bosom friend of every popular hero, is an omnipresent nuisance. While we seek to abandon self-conceit, however, it is necessary to beware of what Coleridge calls "the pride that apes humility." As a rule, no one is so arrogant or so ostentatious as the man who takes every opportunity of informing you that he is "a poor thing—a worm of the dust." I do not advocate a feeble and flabby abasement which regards ignorance and melancholy as outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace. Our manhood is a noble thing, to be revered; our life is a sacred burden, to be borne with dignity and devoutness, and yet with a sublime humility. There is such a thing as *manly modesty*, and that is what we have to strive after. The Cross will kill conceit. The man who goes there inflated with pride will come

away with but one cry—"God be merciful to me a sinner."

Amongst other hindrances that cripple men who might otherwise be successful, I would mention *debt*. It looks manly—so some fools think—to throw money about lavishly; but debt is a dark shadow which has cast a gloom over many a bright life. It entangles the feet, destroys reputation, and drags a man down to despair. Lord Wolseley has told us that, on looking back on his own experience, he could not remember any man who had made it a habit to keep well within his income who did not become a successful man.

Then, lastly, it is necessary to add one word about the *drink*. Not so very long ago the body of a young man was discovered in Liverpool. In his pocket was found a paper on which he had written, "I have done this myself. Don't tell any one. It is all through drink." An intimation of these facts in the public press drew 246 letters from 246 families, each of whom had a prodigal son who, it was feared, might be the suicide. The wasted manhood in our cities is largely owing to the indulgence in strong drink. The sad part of it is that many a man is wrecked and dead almost before he has begun to live. He takes a few glasses, then drinks to excess; then comes loss of character, abject misery, self-contempt,

and very often a self-inflicted death. Oh, the pangs and perils of this tragic fight of ours! Let us try to fence our brethren round with healthy influences, and lead them back from the husks of profaned hopes and forgotten loves to the brightness and safety of the Father's House.

VIL

VICTORY!

*"Let my voice be heard that asketh
Not for fame and not for glory;
Give for all our life's dear story,
Give us Love and give us Peace."*—JEAN INGELOW.

WHO is the victor in life's battle? That is an important question to settle, because men whom we should regard as having failed ignominiously are respected by others as having succeeded brilliantly. The difference is this: that some people judge a man's success by his bank-book—others are wise enough to reckon it by his character.

Let this rule be laid down once and for all—that success in the battle of life is not to be estimated by a man's possessions; it cannot be measured by the number of his acres or the weight of his money-bags. Goodness before gold, wisdom before wealth—that is the guiding motto of all noble lives. Never perhaps was the "narrowing

lust for gold" more painfully prevalent than it is to-day. The staunchest Protestant is in danger of becoming a miserable idolater, not of wood and stone, but of hard, cold gold. Many men have, of course, gone to extremes, and wickedly misquoting Solomon, they have asserted that "money is the root of all evil." That is a ridiculous blunder, for money, when circulated with sanctified wisdom and large-hearted love, is the root of unspeakable good. It is the *love* of money, the passionate worship of "saint-seducing gold," that robs men of their sensitiveness of conscience, deadens their spiritual life, and degrades them to the level of money-making machines.

Those who are afflicted with an overwhelming passion for wealth should remember that the gratification of their desires might prove a terrible curse. Few men can be trusted to be wealthy and *good*.

Once, when George Whitfield was preaching, the old clerk in the desk below, in giving out the notices, said, "The prayers of this congregation are earnestly requested on behalf of a young man who has just fallen heir to a large fortune." No man needs praying for so much as the rich man, for he is always in the gravest possible danger.

How little money can do after all! Those who

have read Mr. Rider Haggard's fascinating novel, "King Solomon's Mines," are not likely to forget one exciting chapter, in which the weary travellers, who have braved starvation, savagery, and countless dangers, at last reach the renowned cave in which is hidden an innumerable collection of diamonds, every one of which is worth a fortune. They are within an inch of becoming millionaires, their mission is all but accomplished, when the door, which can only be opened on the outside by a secret spring, quietly closes, and they are caught like mice in a trap! Surrounded by countless gems of wondrous worth, they are nevertheless buried in a horrible and hopeless tomb. This is no mere fiction. It is stern, sober truth. Many a man would gladly give up all his wealth for a good digestion, sturdy health, pure love of friends, and a capacity for enjoying life.

The possession of money has kept more men away from Jesus Christ than the want of it. More than one young man has gone away from the Master very sorrowful, for "he was very rich." Money has never made a man *good* yet. It saves from carking care, and adds a few comforts to life, but it never ennobles character. The grandest life ever lived on earth was that of a certain Man who had not where to lay His head. It has been well

said that "the loveliest blossoms do not grow on plants that plunge their greedy roots into the fattest soil; a little light earth in the crack of a hard rock will do. We need enough for the physical being to root itself in—we need no more." None of this world's gifts can make a man rich or restful. The true treasures are kept in the soul. Are we selfish, mean, uncharitable, and faithless? then the possession of the whole world could not make us rich. Are we tender, loving, self-denying, and honest—trying to fashion our frail life after that of the model Man of Nazareth? then, though our pockets are often empty, we have an inheritance which is as overwhelmingly precious as it is eternally incorruptible.

We see, then, that the man who is successful and victorious in life's conflict is not necessarily the rich man. The tender story of Jesus Christ and the glowing history of the Apostle Paul prove this conclusively. Paul was never so great as when he occupied a prison cell; and Jesus Christ reached the height of His success when, smitten, spat upon, tormented, and murdered, He cried in agony—and yet with triumphant satisfaction—"It is finished!" The true victory, the genuine success, consists in a Christ-like *character*. It consists in the God-given power to do right when we know it; to

trample under foot selfishness and pride and impurity, at the bidding of that inner voice which speaks of righteousness and duty ; to resist temptation, to cast off cowardice and indolence, and to take our part in the work of "redressing human wrongs."

A missionary, when preaching one day in the heart of Africa, was stopped in the middle of his address by an eager, smiling young fellow, who, running up, shouted, "When you go home, write it down in your book that I am Jesus Christ's man now." Well might the dusky convert desire to have such a glorious fact "written down," for all the world's fame sinks into ridiculous insignificance beside the honour of being "Jesus Christ's man." That and that alone is the crowning victory of life. To render to Christ, not the mechanical respect of cold and superficial allegiance, but the warm love of a purified heart and the loyal service of an inspired life—that is the highest good.

To be a *man* is a grand thing! "Before I go any further," says Frank Osbaldistone, in "Rob Roy," "I must know who you are." "I am a man," is the answer, "and my purpose is friendly." "A man," he replied; "that is a brief description." "It will serve," answered Rob Roy,

“for one who has no other to give. He that is without name, without friends, without coin, without country, is still at least a man.” But to be “*Jesus Christ's man*”—that is a far nobler name. He may be poor, despised, and friendless. He may live in the smoky city, amidst difficulty and temptation, but he shall have in his heart a ceaseless flow of unfailing happiness. For “*Jesus Christ's man*” is a cheerful, genial fellow, with large sympathies, and a bright, manly spirit. Some very excellent and religious people seem to suppose that when a man accepts Christ and His gospel, he must become a miserable weakling, without backbone or bravery, a nerveless creature, deaf to all music, blind to all art, and ignorant of all pleasure. There is no more dangerous sophism than to suppose that a sallow-visaged dyspeptic with a sepulchral voice, or a cold-blooded ascetic with a morbid solemnity of manner, is a better Christian than a hopeful, buoyant, muscular young man.

“The luxury of false religion is to be unhappy,” said Sydney Smith, but the true follower of the Man of Nazareth will show the world that the glory of real Christianity is that it fills men with a delightful rapture which money cannot purchase and trial cannot destroy ; it takes nothing from a man but what is irredeemably bad and baleful ; it gives him a life

of joy and happiness and peace here on earth, and at last "pleasure at God's right hand for evermore."

"What a farce if it does not deal with men's lives!" exclaimed Gordon, in reference to the Khartoum expedition, and we may say the same of much of the timid, lifeless religiousness that exists to-day. But "Jesus Christ's man" does not confine his Christianity to the four walls of a church. It has a forceful influence on his daily life. His great desire and aim is to purge the city of its moral leprosy, provide for its spiritual destitution, and cure its enfeebled physique. He is ready, with chivalrous daring, to battle with vice and immorality, to tell out the story of Christ's Evangel, and to minister to the needs of the suffering poor. All this because he is "Jesus Christ's man," and is therefore bound to consecrate time and ease and pleasure to the cause of freedom and progress, brotherhood and peace. Oh for more men of this sort! The world is bursting with sin and sorrow, and needs thousands of warm hearts and willing hands to save it from wreck and ruin. Why fritter away your time in self-indulgence? Why ignore the love of God and spoil your own lives?

"Try to make others better,
Try to make others glad,
The world has so much of sorrow,
So much that is hard and bad.

Love yourself last, my brother,
Be gentle, and kind, and true—
True to yourself and others,
As God is true to you."

The victory, then, is to be won by the man who, in the strength of the risen Lord, is able to conquer self and lay down his life for the brethren. But to conquer self, that is the hard thing. Philosophy can culture the mind and uplift the emotions, but it cannot cure a sinful heart. Thrift and perseverance and business acuteness, these will improve a man's environment, but they are powerless to change his life. The only way is to grasp the hand of the Christ, who alone can keep us straight and strong.

"Is Satan bigger than me?" said a little girl. "Yes," replied her father. "Is he bigger than you?" "Ah, yes," was the sad reply. "And is Satan bigger than Jesus Christ?" "No." "Well, then," said the little one, brightening up, "*I don't care a rap for him!*" Let big men, for once, learn a useful lesson from a little girl.

Directly we realise that the strong and loving Christ sympathises with us in our struggle, and will stand by us till the battle is won, we gain new hope; the outlook is brightened, and we know that victory is not far off. For if He is for us, who shall be against us? So let the battle begin, and we will

take our places under the victorious banner of Jesus Christ, and toil and pray and fight until every foe is vanquished. Then at the last we may receive an epitaph like that once placed over a soldier's grave—

“ Here lies a soldier, whom all must applaud ;
Who fought many battles at home and abroad.
But the hottest engagement he ever was in,
Was the conquest of self in the battle of sin.”

To do that we must not only be true men ; we must accept Jesus Christ as the corner-stone of our faith, the centre of our love, and the inspiration of our life.

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