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Christchurch

DISCIPLINE.

What Wordsworth wrote of Duty could equally well be said of Discipline:

"Stern daughter of the Voice of God!

O Duty! If that name thou love

Who art a light, a guide, a rod,

To check the erring and reprove;

Thou who art victory and law,

When empty terrors overawe;

From vain temptations dost set free,

And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity."

In writing of what is closely associated with discipline, and which more or less accompanies it, Cowper wrote: "Pain in man bears the high mission of the flail and sword," finely expressed by another as, "God is deeply concerned that every soul shall have its full chance. He is not in a hurry about the transformation of souls." Can we wonder if the heir of heaven has not a good time of it in this life? "The children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). True, but this gives us no status in a Christ-rejecting world. Then there is the discipline that comes to us from our sins, faults, foibles. David it was who said, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Thy Word." And of Him, the God-Man, we read, "Though He were a son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."

True, it is "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous"; but, child of God, does not what follows make it worth the cost: "Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." But we bring, too, much discipline upon ourselves if any part of our entirety is not God-controlled. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

What a commentary upon our profession of Christianity those hot-headed words and precipitate actions that for us set back the clock of time and destroy much good! What a commentary on our boasted civilisation and humanitarianism that at this stage of its advancement it has found no other way of settling its disputes than by an appeal to the sword! Commenting on the disintegrating forces at work before the outbreak of the war, the Rev. Henry Howard remarked: "Beneath our skin-deep civilisation are moving forces far more terrible than those of war,—forces of intemperance, uncleanness, mutual distrust, commercial dishonesty, political chicancery,—forces elemental, barbaric, which, should they break through, will prove volcanic in their power to lay waste and destroy. The hour of war is the hour and power of blind instinct and brute force."

Only with the coming of Him whose rule shall extend to the uttermost parts of the earth, when "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9) will wars cease. But what we may not hope from nations may be realised in us as individuals if God-possessed. So shall we be saved from all that makes for 'carnal' warfare in our small circles" (1 Cor. 3:3).

It is well for us if we have been well disciplined in early life. The pains and penalties of discipline are then minimised for us in later life. Some of us can thank God that our youth was passed under Godly control in well-ordered home and school. But granted that we have no such background to our lives, and so are battling with duties, temptations, difficulties, for which we lack equipment, what then? Our now surrender to God through Jesus Christ our Lord will take out of the life the friction, rebellion, disobedience, that make discipline irksome. We can then say

with the Psalmist, "Thy commandments are not grievous."

"It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." But we cannot get away from the fact that all life needs control, so that Christ, not self, shall be its goal. Let us earnestly set ourselves to seek the "good" that not only belongs to the bearing of the yoke in youth, but to the bearing of that yoke that alike befits all. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

Our attitude towards youth may have in it entreaty, a tender yearning that all its untold possibilities for God and man should be unhampered. We would not sacrifice the man to an undisciplined youth, and spoil the child by sparing the rod. But we may forget our own youth, or made hard by its lacks, perpetuate its evils and spoil the child by our undue application of the rod. True, the Apostle said, "Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder." But our fitness to discipline other lives is the measure of our own self-discipline. And so the Apostle adds, "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

The discipline of life that is ours in life's manifold relations has nothing in it of friction as we abide under the yoke,—the yoke of Christ, and in His harness find our "rest." We cannot then make capital of our position, or fail to render to others their due. Our relations Godward and manward adjusted, discipline is not bondage, for as one has said, "True freedom is not to do as you like, but to like to do as you ought."

GERTRUDE COCKERELL.

Yale club-houses have gone dry.