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OCTOBER DAYS.

O rare October days! Ye leave your strange
Foreshades of things ideal everywhere:
Autumnal glory crowns the mountain range;
Autumnal rapture floods the tranced air;
Steeped in a golden languor sleeps the sky,
As sinks the drowsy sun into his rest,
Where burning clouds in crimson masses lie
Athwart the glowing portal of the West.

The waning sunshine softens over all;
Unto the music of sweet-voiced rills,
Enchanted lights and shadows rise and fall
Within the charmed circle of the hills:
The hazy world a magic vision seems;
The far-off heights a fairy glamour take;
And distant headlands, dim as Summer dreams,
Immerge their purple shadows in the lake.

From the brown stubble fields on either side
Is heard the mellow piping of the quail;
And, from an opal sky faint-flushed and wide,
The Hunter's moon looks down, serene and
pale:
On the steeps remote the parting sunbeams rest;
Illusive shapes the bosky hollows fill;
Then twilight shades the quiet glens invest,
And all is dim, and mystical, and still.
—Alfred Abernethy Cowels, in *Christian Work*
and *Evangelist*.

THE CONSOLATION OF FAITH.

Jesus Christ is the only Comforter—He and that Comforter sent by Him being one in God.

This is a religious statement; and the reader may ask,—How far is it true? In what sense is it true? What does it mean? We do well to scrutinize our religion; to ask of what value it is; what it means, etc., etc. For if it is valueless, it cannot have come from the wise and loving God; and if it means nothing to one, it is nothing to that one at least.

Let a man consider life. He cannot solve its mystery. Today he is; tomorrow he is not. The beginning is lost in the ages; and he knows not what a day may do for him. He is secure in nothing. He is surrounded by conditions that he cannot surmount. His dearest friends do not understand him; and the closest brother may leave him in a moment forever. He may amass wealth; but it answers not the hungers of his soul. He may come into immense power, but when he falls asleep he knows not if he shall awake with the morning. He cannot explain. He does not know what life is for, or what makes life, or what makes life worth living. And he cannot say what he ought to do.

It is with these questions that religion deals. Long ages she felt after them, but her answers were but shadows and altogether unsatisfying; and men knew not whether it were better to make an end of all in voluntary death. And if they lived, whether to live for the belly, or the mind, or the emotions, or power or what not. But Jesus came. And from that hour His followers have found clear the meaning of life. Herein is the supreme consolation. The mystery and the discouragement and the faltering have gone. We live for what He lived for. We find life beautiful with purpose. The mystery of the beginning is solved in God; the perplexity of the now is solved in God; and the shadows that await us dissolve as we approach them in God. By Christ we know that He who made us loves us, is Father to us, and shall receive us again to Himself. Life becomes no more a mystery, but simple. We fear no more the terrible manifestations of the elements. We know that they and we are in God's hands. We fear no more the troubles that surround us. By God's help we shall surmount them.

There is no satisfaction in any other conception. The man who uses life for the making of

money or fame or power or the gratification of his body or mind, falters as he considers himself. The mystery of life overthrows and confounds him.

More accustomed are we to view our religion as the means of triumph over Death. But it is primarily the triumph over Life, in that it explains it and gives it meaning. What is life? It is the gift of God. Of its processes the scientists may tell us. But only Jesus could tell us that it is the Gift of the good God. What is its meaning, its purpose; what is its object? To do His will; to develop us in His likeness; to bring us into life forever with Him. Who am I? A child of God.

It is well that as we stand by open graves, and contemplate our loss or consider the sure fate of our bodies, that we sing, "My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary," or "It is not death to die." But it is better to sing all day long ere we have reached the last enemy:

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
I am this dark world's light.
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise
And all thy day be bright.
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In Him my Star, my Sun,
And in that light of life I'll walk
Till travelling days are done."

And it is well to know in our sorrows that we have the fellowship of His grief, and in our burdens that we have the sure recompense of His promise to make them blessings; well that we can count all trials, bereavements, persecutions and all of whatever nature that we may suffer as the chastening of His love. But it is better still to face life in the day when there is scarcely a dream of a shadow, when the tide is full and fair and all goes well, to say "I am of God, the loving, Holy God; I am His and He is mine. From Him came and comes my life: Him must I serve, and gladly will I serve Him." And who says so much; all the vicissitudes of life and all the terrors that lie ahead cannot overwhelm. In such thinking the base things, envy, littleness, ambition and all the train of vices that flesh is subject to lose their power and disappear.

The chief consolation of faith is that it explains and gives meaning to life.

DIVIDED IN TASTE.

One morning, as Judge C., of N. County, Virginia, was starting for the town, he was approached by one of his negroes, who with more or less confusion asked:

"Massa, when yo' goes to de co't house will yo' git me a license? I's gwine to be mar'ed."

"Married, are you Sam? All right," called the Judge as he hastily drove off. Arrived at the court house he spent a very busy day, and it was not until he was preparing to leave that he remembered Sam's license and realized that he had not been told the name of the bride-elect.

"The old idiot, he never told me who he wants to marry, but, of course, it's Lucinda; he's always making eyes at her." So saying, he returned to the court house and had the license made out in the names of Sam and Lucinda. Sam was the first to greet him upon his return with the inquiry:

"Git my license, Massa?"

"Yes, Sam, you old fool. You didn't tell me who you wanted to marry, but I remembered how you're always courting Lucinda, and got the licenses in her name."

"Lawd, Massa!" exclaimed Sam, "taint Lucindy, it's Kyarline. What's I gwine do?"

"Well," said the Judge, "the only thing will be for me to get another license."

"Massa," said Sam, "did you' pay anyt'ing fur dem license?"

"Yes, Sam, a dollar and seventy-five cents."

"Will another license cos' anyt'ing," asked Sam.

"Yes, Sam, a dollar and seventy-five cents more," replied the Judge.

After scratching his woolly pate for a few minutes, Sam replied:

"Well, Massa, I done axed Kyarline an' she sed 'yase,' but dere ain't no dollar an' seventy-five cents' diffunce in dem two niggers, so I'll jus' take Lucindy."—Prudence Baxter, in *Lippincott's*.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF SCHOOL PROGRAMS.

(By Ossian H. Lang in the October-December Forum.)

Slowly the educators of America are becoming convinced of the wisdom of concentrating their endeavors upon the definition of standards for the construction of programmes for the various educational institutions from the kindergarten up to the professional schools. Thus far tradition has been the only really universal guide. The substantial transformation which the industrial and social life of the nation has undergone in the last fifty years and the consequent changes in the demands upon the educational adult have received but scant practical recognition in the general scholastic routine. Comparatively few schools have made serious efforts to remodel their courses of study in accordance with the new aspects of worldly affairs. Nor have the results been uniformly satisfactory where reforming exertions have enjoyed fullest scope. Psychological diletantism and speculative experimentation have been permitted to work confusion in vain endeavors to find a way out of the present dissidence between school programmes and the needs of American civilization. The trouble is that there is among school men no hard and fast agreement even concerning the most elementary details of every-day practice.

The lack of binding professional norms is at last being regarded as a misfortune by an increasing number of earnest students of education. The growing membership of the recently founded Society of Educational Research supplies encouraging evidence of a widespread desire to reach some conclusions worthy of general adoption. The method of scientific inquiry adopted by this society assures the collection of incontrovertible data concerning the actual capacity of children at different stages of development, the physical and intellectual conditions of learning, and similarly fundamental questions. The pedagogical reasonableness of the various demands made upon the several grades of schools may then be tested by reliable standards, and order will be wrought out of the present chaos.

To be sure, desirable as it is that there should be some degree of professional consensus as to the possibilities and limitations of tried pedagogic processes, and urgent as it is that teachers should possess a certain amount of definite and reliable information concerning the time and conditions most favorable to the attainment of specified scholastic results, there still remains the ever new teleological problem of educational values. The latter has been for the past three thousand years or more the favorite topic of reformers. But as there has been, in all this time, no universally acceptable standard for testing the relative importance of the various educational pursuits proposed to the schools, the discussions have yielded only very meagre results.

The original source of the present curricula was the desire to train up young men for the priesthood and the church choir. By a series of compromises the practical demands of secular life were accorded recognition, until there were evolved the typical school programmes of the present day. As far as the public elementary schools are concerned, the course includes reading, writing, spelling, language, and arithmetic. Almost everything outside of these generally accepted studies must defend its claims to a place on the programme. There are, indeed, educational theorists who would contest even the limited agreement we possess. But the plain people have decreed that these branches must be taught, and, as they pay the teachers, their decision stands.

The points to be settled, then, by the discussions now standing about school programmes, are what should be taught beyond the three R's, and how to apportion this subject-matter among the several forms of schools—elementary, secondary, and higher. A preliminary step will be the defining and fixing of the time limits of the combined course.