

The Ethics of Rest.

"To him who in the love of Nature holds communion with her visible forms she speaks a various language."

The forms of Nature are so seemingly simple ^{and} withal so complex, her modes of development are so perfect ^{and} the likeness between parts which are apparently as far separated as can be, is so finely drawn, when one stops to think of the analogies existing, that no one can express the thought more appropriately than did Bryant when he said "She speaks a various language."

To me she speaks of Work, Rest, ^{and} Perfection. Work ^{and} Perfection being grouped around a center common to both, — Rest. There is a likeness existing between certain things, which in their development ^{and} life history, each have a season of seeming inactivity or dormancy ^{and} then break forth into the brightness ^{and} beauty of perfection.

Take for instance the plant. We find its future energy all stored up within an insignificant looking little seed, plain ^{and} unadorned. Put this seed into the ground, leave it alone for a time in perfect rest ^{and} quiet, ^{and} finally as you watch its growth you see first the two tiny little leaves break through the soil ^{and} peep up from the ground. Then come a few more, ^{and} so on day by day until finally

there is before you a beautiful plant with its mass of green foliage, its lovely flowers of delicate hues ^{and} texture, through which the fine markings of the fibres which build it up are faintly discernable. You can hardly believe that this is the outgrowth of that small insignificant looking little seed you held in your hand but a few short weeks ago. Can it be that its long days ^{and} nights of inactivity were but the preliminaries for such a grand climax to the whole as you see before you?

You notice a worm crawling at your feet. How repulsive it looks as it wriggles along, slowly, so slowly, - yet how hard it seems to be working. Your curiosity is attracted ^{and} you think as an experiment you will take it home ^{and} watch its growth. Every day you procure it food, ^{and} each day you watch it with increasing interest. Soon it begins to grow languid, - then you fear it is going to die. But no, - it begins to spin, - ^{and} soon it is hidden inside of a silken cocoon. How long ^{and} how hard it has labored to prepare for itself this resting place. After so much work surely it deserves this rest. You put it carefully away, ^{and} from time to time you examine it to see if there are any traces of life. You find none, - no movement, no sound. It is still ^{and}

silent. One day however, your attention is rewarded, - the cocoon is burst ^{and} there issues forth a beautiful butterfly that lifts itself from earth ^{and} floats airily away on the summer breeze. You can see the delicate tracery of the veins in its gauzy wings, while its bright spots ^{and} brilliant colors glimmer ^{and} shine in the sunlight. ^{And} this, the most beautiful of all the insects, could never have perfected its little life had it not been for the period of rest given it in the silken cocoon.

Suppose it to be a rainy day. You wend your way wearily along the muddy road near a manufactory. You see the black smoke curling from its chimneys, ^{and} the soot falling to the earth, mixing with the clay ^{and} making the road more black ^{and} dirty, your pathway more disagreeable ^{and} uncomfortable. But time goes on, - countless ages pass. Now the soot which you had noticed, together with the sand ^{and} clay upon which it fell, has long lain undisturbed. Yet together they are throwing off the foreign material collected with them. The clay becomes white earth. Do not disturb it. It becomes set, ^{and} capable, finally, of absorbing all rays of light but the blue ones. 'Tis then we have the sapphire.

The sand in the meanwhile has been going

through a like process while & all outward appearances it has been inactive. It too becomes white, then clear ^{and} hard. Then it arranges itself in tiny parallel lines which have the power of reflecting green, purple, ^{and} red rays of light as well as blue ones. The result of this transformation is the opal.

While the sand ^{and} clay have been transforming themselves, the root, the dirtiest ^{and} filthiest looking of them all, has not been idle. Slowly but faithfully it has done its little work, the foreign materials have been thrown out, it too has become clear ^{and} white, harder ^{and} harder has it grown till finally it is the hardest ^{and} most beautiful of all substances, - the diamond. Not only that but it has also been given the power of reflecting all of the rays of the sun till it blazes ^{and} flashes in such dazzling glory ^{and} radiance as only the diamond possesses.

^{And} think, if you will, of the long long rest that was necessary for the ultimate perfection of these three, - the sapphire, the opal, ^{and} the diamond. Not only a few weeks as in the cocoons, not only a few months as in the seeds, but hundreds - yes even thousands upon thousands of years of perpetual quiet, - never a disturbance

but its own quiet workings in its inner self, —
was necessary before we could know of the marvel-
ous work which had been wrought.

Come with me. We will go back to the carbon-
iferous era of this world of ours & together we will
be spectators of a scene, more wonderful yet than
this, which is taking place there. The surface of
the earth is yet covered with water, while out of it
grow trees of a singular form. We gaze upon them
in awe, for they extend many feet into the heavens;
— tall & slender they are, — & their bark is beauti-
fully carved with fluting spirals & ovals of the
most intricate & curiously wrought patterns.
Immense ferns are growing everywhere. In the
distance we see queer plants whose branching
roots, reaching out into the water, are singular-
ly dotted & figured. At the base of the trees small-
er ferns are growing while all around are broken
branches & vegetable debris. The air is dense &
hot. The sky is darkened with oppressive clouds.
The only light is wan & shadowy, making
the whole scene weird & ghastly. No flowers
brighten the dullness of the scene with their bright
hues & delicate tints. No birds fill the air with
their sweet music. The only sounds which wake
the dismal echoes of the forest are shrill calling

of the insects ^{and} the croakings of amphibians. As we watch this scene during the ages we see the crust of the earth slowly lifted up, ^{and} afterward covered with vegetation. Then it is again sunk ^{and} the ruined forest is covered with the water from the ocean ^{and} the sediment brought by its current is deposited there. Again comes a season of growth when the whole land is covered with verdure ^{and} once again it is submerged.

As we watch we see this same thing take place many times, ^{and} each time a new layer of earth or sand, peat or limestone is added. Then comes a period when it seems as if the whole forces of Nature stopped. To all outward appearance no growth, no change of any kind, takes place. Ages ^{and} ages pass, possibly millions of years go by, ^{and} - now we are sitting before the bright fire on a winter's night, thankful for our warm room ^{and} pleasant quarters where we are surrounded with all that we could wish for, - books, papers, pictures, flowers, friends, ^{and} loved ones, - every thing to make the heart content. The fire dies down, ^{and} as we place on the the fading embers a fresh supply of coal we pause, for, imbedded in its dusky blackness, we notice the tracings of a queer shape which, as we gaze, grows familiar.

Do we not recognize it as an impression of one of our forest trees which we had watched until they were totally submerged by the water & debris from the ocean? Surely we cannot be mistaken. And this glowing fire & the gentle heat it is giving out is the result of the period of total darkness which we saw, or rather did not see but knew. It too must needs have rest in order to fulfill its allotted end. And as we watch the blue flames curling upward, taking weird & fantastic shapes we think of the slow gathering of forces, - the long long years of silence since those days of outbreak cloud & storm.

So too were the hills built up, - the quiet, - the strong, - the everlasting hills.

So are the forces of Nature working in silence all about us, - still. "He has made everything beautiful in its time". And if we see not the beauty now the time has not yet come. Only in Nature's quiet moments do we trace her grand designs. Wait but for the slow thousands of years, & that which seems crude & formless now, shall come forth in the light of marvellous beauty. Only through rest comes perfection. And is it so with life?

If while here on earth we do our appointed

work in the best ^{and} truest manner of which we are capable may we not infer that after our period of rest, we too may find a more perfect form of existence? May enter upon a life of fuller ^{and} richer experiences ^{and} blessings, a life which shall be filled with radiance ^{and} beauty?

Whether the analogy will be complete ^{and} our existence will be in another form is not for us to determine, - that rests with our Heavenly Father, - but we may at least feel that it will be richer ^{and} more full of promise than this has been. That, though our work here may have been small ^{and} insignificant, like that of the root, or of the worm, we, after our period of rest as they after theirs, may rise into the fullness ^{and} beauty of deserved perfection, - convinced that in us there has been a development due to our period of rest which can be equalled in no other way, by no other method. A perfection which, in its simplicity ^{and} purity, will be worth the trials which we underwent to attain it, ^{and} which will be but a fit tribute to the glory of the great Author ^{and} Finisher of the workings of all Nature.

Quiescent DeLong Mudge.