

## MEDITATION.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE preceding article on "Teaching Children to Pray" suggests, as however unworthy a sequent, a paper on a subject which received more attention in the earlier Christian church than in days when the social outcome of Christianity is apt to stand for Christianity itself. But it cannot be too often repeated that Christianity does not consist solely in good works, nor even in prayer and other devout observances.

Christianity is not merely the following of Christ, but is chiefly, the knowledge of Christ, to be attained by a constant, devout contemplation of the Divine Life. Hence, the primary importance of meditation to the Christian soul. We cannot grow into the likeness of that which is unknown to us, and we cannot know except by that process of reflective contemplation which we name meditation.

It is told that Mr. Romanes once asked Darwin to advise him as to the best course to take in the pursuit of science. The answer of the elder scientist was "Meditate." If meditation be the secret of success in the scientific, much more must it be so in the spiritual, life: for, as has been well said by the late Dean Church, the spiritual life must be nourished upon ideas, and not merely emotionally stimulated. We are *transformed by the renewing of our minds*, and with the renewed vigour imparted by "new thoughts of God," we are again enabled for the spiritual activities of prayer, praise, and godly endeavour.

If we assume that a vigorous Christian life must depend largely on devout meditation, the question arises, How, and how early, may children be led to meditate? All important things are simple, and this question of children's meditations is very simple indeed. The answer depends upon the conduct of the daily Bible lesson. If mother or teacher indulge in much talk, the active principle in the child's mind which generates ideas is deadened—as it were, drowned—and nothing happens beyond the pleased interest of the moment. But suppose the little lesson be conducted something in this way: let the lesson be about Zacchæus, to children of, say, six.

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The last lesson will have brought the children to the particular point in the history where the story of Zacchæus occurs, and the teacher might begin by a few words about Jericho—the trees by the roadside, etc., quite a few words—and then, read to the children the first ten verses of S. John xix., with simplicity, reverence, and a perfect delivery of every word. Hardly any comment will be necessary, a smile perhaps where the little Zacchæus climbs the tree may help to interpret to the children the kindly humour of our Master. The story read, the children should be allowed to ask questions. They will probably want to know what is meant by "a publican," "a son of Abraham," and the like. Then they should be called upon to narrate the story, two or three children taking up the narrative in turn. If the reading has been careful and interpretative, it will be found that the children's narration will be almost verbatim. Then the teacher may allow herself in a few comments, just a word or two about the graciousness of our Lord, and the great joy that came to Zacchæus because he "wanted to see Jesus."

But all this is not meditation? No; but at the end, the mother, or teacher, might say, "You awake sometimes before nurse comes. If you should do so to-morrow, you might tell this

story to yourself without leaving out a word." This is one of the pleasant things a child will love to do; and here we have meditation, not in its initial stage, but in perfection; because this act of mental narration has the curious effect of bringing before the mind's eye the persons and the action of the tale, somewhat as they would appear in a cinemetograph; and, with the progress of the story and the action of the figures, come into the mind the ideas proper to it—you meditate in the fullest sense of the word.

This manner of meditation might well be recommended to children of all ages; their own evening devotional reading forming the subject of their morning meditation, or *vice versa*, whichever is the more convenient.

About the period of Confirmation, perhaps a fuller pondering of these things in their hearts may be recommended to young people, according to their power and inclination for this sort of exercise. I add two or three short meditations which may suggest the sort of thing I have in view. I should like to add

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that this duty of devout meditation seems to me the most important part of the preparation of the mother or other teacher who would instruct children in the things of the Divine life.