

TOPICS OF THE TIME.

[We print below two editorials, entitled "The Lesson of the Year" and "Poverty as a Discipline," written by Doctor Holland for the December number of THE CENTURY MAGAZINE. That on "Poverty as a Discipline" is unfinished and unrevised, but we print it just as it was written, adding a quotation from President Garfield, of which Doctor Holland intended to make use.]

The Lesson of the Year.

THE assassination of President Garfield was, without question, the most impressive event of the year, and one of the most impressive that has occurred within the memory of men now living. Never, perhaps, from so small a motive was a man struck down from so high a place. All the accompaniments of his death were impressive in the most profound degree.

The open attack upon his life; his long suffering, borne with heroic patience; the intense interest in the progress of his illness felt all over the civilized world; his removal to the ocean amid the hushed hearts and voices of millions of men; his death and burial amid symbols of mourning that blackened a continent and even darkened the air across the sea; the unprecedented expressions of grief and sympathy that came from other governments and peoples,—all contributed to make this death of our chief magistrate one of the most striking events of history. There are some points of this great tragedy which may profitably be recalled, with reference to the lesson they convey, and we propose to do this here.

First, we suppose it is true that there was never so much and such earnest prayer offered for one man's life as was offered, during his illness, for that of the President. And it did not avail anything. Let us have a word about this. The people did not know that they were praying for a dead man. There was undoubtedly never a moment, from the time the President was shot until he died, that he could have been saved without the performance of a miracle, and this was not prayed for. The people did not dream of asking for the performance of a miracle. They would have presumed to ask for nothing more than the illumination of the minds of those who had the President in their care and under their treatment, and for the forwarding of all those processes of healing established by nature and exercised within an organization not injured beyond the possibility of restoration. There is no doubt that many of the earnest petitioners for the President's cure were disappointed, and received a shock to their faith, on the denial of their prayers; and to these so much, at least, as this ought to be said: the earnest prayers of a great nation that turned unitedly to God in its distress are certain of an answer.

In the first place, the universal turning of the eyes Godward for help is an invaluable good in itself. The death of the President, or, rather, his long dying, was the cause of the revivification of the relig-

ious life of the country. Men were taught to pray by their great desire and their conscious helplessness. What every Christian man is bound to believe and assert is that all this tide of earnest prayer shall return to the nation in blessings equivalent to that which was sought. How this sad event has unified the national feeling! How can we be sufficiently grateful for this? The North and South came nearer together over the coffin of the lamented President than they had done since the war. It is quite possible that death has accomplished this much-desired result more surely than life would have done.

When the assassination took place we were in the beginnings of a fierce factional strife, instituted to break down the President's power. How far this strife would have gone in breaking the influence of the Administration we can never know, of course, but we can see that the prime mover in this most inexcusable factional strife has been politically slain, and that he who proposed to control the Senate of the United States, the Administration, and his own State, could make no headway against a dying man.

If he ever enter politics again, it will not be as dictator to his party, but as a humble and loyal servitor. If this death of the President shall serve, in any notable degree, to kill the power of the political machine, as represented by such men as Roscoe Conkling, he will not have died in vain, and the people who prayed for the President's life will have received a large installment of the equivalent of that life.

Again, the foreign participation in the profound interest excited by this calamity was a great good, not easily to be measured in all its relations and bearings. President Garfield was a man of the people, who rose, by sheer force of genius and character, to the highest place a human being can occupy. He was not the tool of a party. He had not sought the place to which he was elected. He was thoroughly educated for any political position, and he became President because he was our best man.

These facts had come to be recognized all over Europe, so that when he was stricken down the shock was felt from highest to humblest, from the heads of governments to the lowest of their peoples. The expressions of grief and sympathy that came from all these were an honor alike to the great Republic, and to the manhood which that Republic, in harmony with its ideal standards and theories, had elevated to its highest place. The death of the President has turned the hearts of the nations to us as no other event has done during the last century, so that his months of suffering may have won for us more than a life of service would have done.

A most valuable part of the lesson conveyed by the President's death relates to the vice-presidential office. It is devoutly to be hoped that Vice-President Arthur will follow loyally in the footsteps of his great predecessor. If he shall do so, we may practically have our President with us during the period of this Administration, so that we shall be deprived of no great

blessing by his death. The Being to whom we prayed so earnestly could not give us back a life destroyed, but he could, and we believe He will, perpetuate its influence through the term of the President's successor. Still we have had a great scare, and the circumstances from which it rose are not likely to be repeated. This one lesson we have learned—that the nomination of a vice-president by a party convention is no light matter. Such a nomination is never to be made to satisfy a faction, or to oil the wheels of a party machine. Just as much care should be taken to get a first-class man for the second place on the ticket as for the first. No man ever took the presidential chair with a fairer prospect of long life than President Garfield, but he was no proof against the assassin's bullet, and his work passed over to a man who began his term of office without the slightest expectation of ever occupying the White House. We have no wish to be offensive to a man who has undertaken to bear a great burden, to which he has been unexpectedly, and, we believe, unwillingly called, but, as a people, we have learned from him and the circumstances by which he is surrounded that too much care in the choice of a vice-president cannot possibly be taken. If the death of the President has impressed this important truth upon the country, then another great good has been bestowed upon it. Of this thing we are certain, viz. : that no nation can pray for a great good, as ours has done, and be refused.

The nation did not get just what it asked for, because it could not be granted, but we believe it has secured by its prayers an equivalent good, and that out of the death of the President will come a great treasure of peace, harmony, and prosperity. The nation is better for this death, which has so stirred and affected it, and in a sense the great, good man has died for us. Death alone could have sufficiently emphasized the lesson of his life, harmonized our jealousies and strifes, attracted to us the sympathy of the world, and brought some of our political methods to the test which proves their unworthiness.

Poverty as a Discipline.

WE often hear it said of a man that he has had great advantages. We have meant by this simply the advantages which wealth could buy—university training, travel, high society, unlimited books, etc. It is not often that we hear poverty spoken of as an advantage, yet we believe it to be demonstrably true that, of all the advantages which come to any young man, this is the greatest. The young man who is saved from the effort of making his own way in the world and the necessity of establishing his own position, is denied the most powerful stimulus to labor and development. The young men who are coming every year out of the colleges and the professional schools of the country, and starting into active life, will win success or sink into failure mainly in accordance with the amount of stimulus under which their education has been acquired. If they have been obliged to labor until they have learned the value of money; if they have been forced into close economies, and learned, also, how difficult it is to keep it; if they have grown up with the consciousness upon them that everything they hope

for in the world must be won by their own unaided force and industry; if they have acquired thrifty habits and self-helpfulness and self-trust,—they enter life with great and most assuring advantages. No amount of wealth given to a young man can possibly give him so good a prospect of a true success as poverty that has secured such advantages as these.

Twice within the easy memory of this generation a man who started at the lowest extreme of the social scale has risen to be the President of the United States. Abraham Lincoln rose from his nest of leaves in a Western log-cabin to be twice the elected ruler of the nation, at a most momentous period of the national history, traversing in the passage every degree of the social scale. The poor frontiersman's child, the flat-boatman, the day-laborer, the indigent student, the humble country lawyer, the politician, the stump-speaker, the legislator, the statesman, the President, and chief of one of the greatest armies the world has ever seen,—who believes for a moment that, had he been rich at the start, he would have ended where he did? It was the discipline of poverty that made him what he was. It gave him a profound sympathy with the people, most of whom are engaged in a struggle with poverty from the cradle to the grave. It stimulated and trained his powers to their highest development, and it helped him to form those habits of industry and economy that are essential to the best success.

James A. Garfield, whom we have just laid in the tomb with tears of affectionate reverence, was another instance of the beneficent influences of poverty. He rose from as low a place as Lincoln, and took even a higher flight than he. The most brilliant man who ever occupied the Presidential chair, and rapidly becoming the most admired and best beloved ruler in the world, he was mourned when, in realizing one of the many coincidences that existed between his life and that of Lincoln, he was murdered by an assassin, as man was never mourned before. His marvelous accomplishments and powers won for him the respect of the great, and his sympathy with the humble drew to him the hearts of the world. * * *

"Poverty is uncomfortable, as I can testify; but nine times out of ten, the best thing that can happen to a young man is to be tossed overboard and compelled to sink or swim for himself. In all my acquaintance, I never knew a man to be drowned who was worth the saving."—JAMES A. GARFIELD.

Doctor Holland.

DOCTOR HOLLAND'S death, though occurring at a time when years of mental vigor and usefulness might fairly have been hoped for, was still delayed till his life had reached a singular completeness. He had accomplished nearly every desire of his heart. His life had grown broader and richer to its close. Though keenly sensitive to sharp criticism, and often suffering from it, still he was buoyed up through all his busy career by the grateful affection of untold thousands and the love of all who were near him. He lived long enough not only to be able to say honestly that he had forgiven all his en-