

WRITINGS OF HEDDY BOWMAN

by Heddy Bowman

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Heddy Bowman, compiled for study and devotional reading.

14 Chapters

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01.00. Its Duties and Discipline

Life - its Duties and Discipline Hetty Bowman, 1861

It is with feelings of very deep gratitude for the success already granted, that a Third Edition of 'Life, its Duties and Discipline,' is now offered to the Christian Public. The writer owes them sincere thanks for the favor with which they have received her little work; and would now only beg their prayers, that it may be made the means of leading some wanderer to the fold of the Good Shepherd; and of strengthening, stimulating, and comforting some fellow-pilgrim to the "rest that remains."

It is offered to the younger members of her own gender; sent forth in the Savior's name, and prayerfully entrusted to the guidance of His Spirit. May the great Head of the Church condescend to bless it — and to Him shall be all the glory!

01.00i. INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Those who have been awakened by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, to a sense of the solemn realities of life, and have been taught to consider themselves but as stewards of the grace committed to them — will count no hint unacceptable which may aid them in faithfully discharging their trust, however homely may be its dress, or humble the form in which it presents itself to their notice. And although it may be said that the subject has been already well near exhausted by the many who have written upon it, it is nevertheless true, that, without encroaching on ground already occupied, some corners are yet left whence another hand may gather up the "fragments that remain." When the claims of Christian duty, long neglected, are at length recognized in their full force — so many seem all at once to start up around us, that the mind is almost paralyzed by their number. There are not only those more obvious ones duties, whose authority all must acknowledge, but also those "minor moralities" of life, which are not recognized as binding, until our eyes have been opened by the anointing of the Spirit to perceive that our work lies, not so much in the importance of the services which we render — as in the spirit in which they are performed. It is then seen that the smile which lights up a cheerless home, like sunshine on a rainy day — the word of encouragement which strengthens one, who, perhaps, is growing weary in the daily struggle — the spirit of self-sacrifice in the little things of life — all these are as really work for God — as the more conspicuous duties of the pastor or missionary. And while all are called to the work which is unseen — but few are appointed to that which is seen. Delicacy of health, or the pressure of outward circumstances, may preclude many from active labor — but that labor which lies beneath the surface remains to them still.

It is, however, rather to those who are bewildered by the variety of work — than to those who need to have it pointed out to them, that we wish chiefly to speak. They feel at times ready to shrink back in helpless despair from the task which lies before them, and which, however greatly it may be lightened by that constraining love which dwells within them — seems still a burden too heavy for the feeble flesh to take up.

There is the home sphere, where, perhaps, an anxious mother's cares are to be shared and lightened — or grown up brothers are to be won to love the family hearth as the happiest place on earth — or the labor may devolve upon the elder sister, who is, at once, the teacher and the playfellow, the sharer in every joy, and the comforter in every sorrow.

There are the Sunday School — the Tract district — the Missionary Collectorship — all involving no small amount of mental and physical exertion.

There is correspondence, in which every letter is to be consecrated as a channel of heavenly fellowship — by which the bonds of friendship are to be drawn yet closer, and the ties of earth are formed into ties for Heaven.

There is the work of mental culture, without which all the rest will be much less efficient, for none but a well-stored and regulated mind can possess a very beneficial power over others.

Besides all this, there is work "with which a stranger cannot intermeddle with" — the struggle with heart-sins, the breaking of heart-idols, the "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." And these are to be carried on in the midst of ever-recurring interruptions from without, and of countless hindrances from within. Is this an overdrawn picture? Does not its reality call forth from many a heart, though braced by the spirit of loving service — the almost faithless utterance, "Who is sufficient for these things!" But on this point we believe that a great amount of misapprehension exists. Many choose work for themselves, which has certainly not been marked out for them by their Heavenly Master — and, as He will give support only under the burdens which He Himself imposes, they cannot wonder if their strength fails them. To illustrate our meaning, let us take as an example, the labor of Sabbath School Teaching. It is one in which every young Christian, more especially in a town, feels almost imperatively called upon to engage. And surely none can over-rate its importance, or calculate its vast influence upon the "Church of the future!"

Yet we are far from believing that it is a duty incumbent upon all Christians. When the spirit has been worn by the duties and engagements of the week, it needs the quiet rest of the Sabbath as a well of refreshing along the way. It needs to have its faith confirmed, and its love quickened — by renewed consecration to God, by self-examination, and by yet more fervent application for the empowering of the Holy Spirit. We would not, indeed, selfishly consult our own ease and comfort, when souls are perishing around us. Nor is a mere contemplative quietism the atmosphere in which our Christianity will flourish best. It will be ever strongest when we follow most closely in the steps of Him who "went about doing good."

Still, when, as is frequently the case, the Sabbath hours are the only time which can be devoted to quiet communion with our Heavenly Father, without fear of disturbance. He cannot be well pleased when we rob Him of them, even to employ them in His active service. It is true, that time may be redeemed from sleep — that, after the pattern of our great Example, we may "rise a long while before day," but there are many to whom this is physically impossible, and who would thereby be rendered unfit for remaining duties. And when the little ones at home are untended, when they are left without an elder sister's care — to spend the hours of God's holy day in private religious duties, it cannot be but that the lower duty has taken the place of the higher, in a manner most displeasing to Him who has appointed a "time for every purpose."

Again, we believe that not all, even of those whose position leaves them free to dispose of their own time in their own way, unfettered by any conflicting claims of duty — are, by any means, called upon to undertake an office for which, in many cases, they are not fit. There may be a thorough appreciation of truth in the mind of the teacher — while yet there is almost entire inability to impart it to those of the children. It is not all who possess the talent of communicating Scripture knowledge. And thus the place of a more efficient teacher may be filled up, and the children deprived of instruction, which they might otherwise have received.

Remember, that to each is assigned a special work by God, for which each is especially fitted. Do not, then, hastily seize upon work, which may not be yours, although it is that of many others.

We are far, very far, from depreciating the value of Sabbath School labor. It is a sphere of usefulness second only to the public ministry of the Gospel — and almost matchless in its power to counteract the agencies of evil, and to bring the masses of the population within the influence of the truth as it is in Jesus. We would only entreat our readers to make sure that, while engaging in it, they are leaving nothing else undone — that they are not in danger of neglecting their own vineyard, or undertaking what they are not qualified to perform.

We have given but one instance — yet it is sufficient to show that there is danger, even in the service of our Heavenly Master, of "running where we are not sent." Let us see that the path which we follow is not a self-chosen one — that it is marked out for us only by the light which beams from a Savior's cross, and not by the wandering sparks of our own imagination. Of one thing we may be assured, that He who has redeemed us with the costly price of His own most precious blood, will be no hard task-master. He will require of us no more than we are able to render; so that we need never shrink back from duty, with the withering thought that we have not strength for it. Strength, indeed, we have not, for anticipated labor — but the "grace comes with the burden," and there is help treasured up for us in Jesus, for every moment's need. It is well that, realizing our own weakness — we should be kept clinging to Him in the helplessness of need. Our aim, therefore, in the following pages, will be not so much to mark out work which is obvious and unmistakable — as to offer a few hints on that which may be more easily overlooked. In so doing, we would add nothing to a weight which many already feel to be more heavy than they can bear — but rather point out one or two ways in which it may be lightened. And we would, moreover, endeavor to show, that even for those who are utterly incapable of enduring the "burden and heat of the day," there still remains —

"A work of lowly love to do

For the Lord on whom they wait." On some other subjects, also, we would say a few words of counsel and sympathy, which may, perhaps, assist some young pilgrim in the Zionward way — to disentangle the web of daily duty, and to bear the hidden cross, which is laid upon each faithful follower of the Crucified One.

01.01. Heart Work

Heart Work

"He who would do some great thing in this short life," says Foster, "must apply himself to the work with such a concentration of his forces, as, to idle spectators, who live only to amuse themselves — looks like insanity." How much more, when the work in which we are engaged concerns the well-being of our souls for eternity! Then, surely, we should count no time lost, no effort unnecessary, spent in obeying the solemn injunction, to "acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace."

Though these pages are addressed chiefly to those who have already chosen the Lord for their portion, and are walking with Jesus in "newness of life" — it is possible that they may meet the eye of some, whose hearts are still set on the world, and the things of the world. And firm are the meshes in which it entangles the heedless footstep! Potent the spell which it weaves around the thoughtless and unwary! The world, so fair, so fascinating! how shall it be given up? How shall the fingers be unclasped from that bright cup which seems pressed so full of happiness?

Says the worldling, "Surely the sacrifice need not be made yet! The world and its pleasures need not yet be exchanged for the cross of self-denial and sacrifice! Not yet! Not yet!" But listen, dear reader, and if the words seem harsh, remember that they are those of Him whose heart yearns with tenderness, pity, and compassion for the lost and the perishing, "No man can serve two masters."

"If any man loves the world — the love of the Father is not in him."

"Friendship with the world is enmity with God."

What shall we say to these things? Shall we speak "Peace — when there is no peace?" Shall we flatter you with the hope that all may yet be well? Shall we point you to a crown of unfading glory — while your heart still rebels against the light and easy yoke of the Crucified One? Nay!

Rather would we remind you of the solemn warning, that "The end of these things is death!" A day will come when your eye will grow dim, and the death-damp gather on your brow, and your feet enter the dark valley. Where, then, will be your hope? Where, then, will be your refuge? And when that day has passed, and another — yet more terrible, has dawned — when the eternal throne shall be set, and the books opened, and the dead, small and great, stand before God — then where will you conceal yourself, that you may not hear the awful sentence, "Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into everlasting fire!"

It is because we would save you from such a fearful doom — a doom which, as surely as the Word of God is true, will overtake all, however naturally amiable and cordial — who reject the Savior's offered mercy — that we would earnestly entreat you in Christ's stead, "Be reconciled to God." Yield up to Jesus that heart which He died to win, that soul which He came to rescue from eternal destruction. Listen to the "still small voice," which gently whispers, "Come unto me all you that

labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Go, as a little child, to the foot of the Savior's cross, and ask to be taught of Him. Oh! believe it, there is no peace like the peace which Jesus gives! There is no joy like the joy of acceptance and reconciliation in the Beloved.

There are those who would tell you that religion is a gloomy thing — but believe them not. It is gloomy only to those who have just sufficient of it to embitter the pleasures of the world, but not sufficient to introduce them into the full blessedness of union with Christ. They have light enough to show them their danger — but they turn aside from that which would point out the path of safety. Yes, to such, to the wavering, the undecided — religion must be a gloomy thing.

They strive, although fruitlessly, to "serve two masters," and can please neither. Their inclinations are on one side, and their convictions on another — and the result is misery. Then the unhappiness which is caused by their own lack of decision and whole-heartedness, they charge upon religion, and thus the "way of truth is evil spoken of." Do not be you of their number. Let it be no longer with you an unsettled question, whether you are His or not. Rest not until you can say, if called tonight to leave this earthly tabernacle, with one who now sleeps in Jesus, "The Master calls, and I am ready!"

See that the atoning blood is sprinkled on your conscience, and that the sanctifying Spirit has begun His work upon your heart. Linger not. "Stay not in all the plain," for the twilight is falling fast, and the dark night of death will speedily overtake you. There will be no escape then — no hope — no Savior.

Then hasten to enter that door of mercy, which is open still. Hasten to comply with that invitation which addresses you in tones of mingled pity and reproof, "Turn, turn — why will you die?" Hasten to grasp the hand outstretched to save you! Hasten to draw near to God by the one "new and living way." There is mercy with Him for all who seek it. There is mercy for you.

Remember, it is not enough merely to be the subject of serious impressions. It is not enough to have the emotional part of your nature excited, as, Sabbath after Sabbath, you listen to the faithful appeals of some messenger of God. There may be all this — there may be appreciation of the beauty of religion — there may be attention to its outward duties — and the most praiseworthy diligence in helping forward every effort to promote its extension. Yet He, who is a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," may still write concerning you in His book of remembrance, "Dead in trespasses and sins!"

We believe that many are deceived by these things; that a naturally amiable disposition, or a surrounding atmosphere of piety which prevents their own inward corruption from fully manifesting itself; or affection for some particular minister, on whose shrine, almost as on that of an idol, they offer up days and hours of unwearied exertion, which they suppose to be for Christ — lulls them into a fatal slumber, from which, if not, by God's mercy, previously aroused — they must one day have a fearful awakening! This surface work will not do. It leaves the inner depths of the heart untouched. They are not furrowed by the plough of sorrow for sin — nor fertilized by the soft showers of the Holy Spirit's influence. And, if this is all that has taken place in you, my reader, then are you but one of the "stony-ground hearers," who "receive the word with joy," but whose fair promise withers beneath the sun of persecution or opposition.

Taken from the favorable circumstances in which you now are, and placed among those who know not God — what would become of your religion? Could it stand the test? Would it enable you to bear meekly the cross of contempt and scorn, for Christ's sake? Or would you not rather be firmly entangled in the mazes of pleasure? Would you not be found among the number of those of whom it may be said, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world!" "You did run well — who hindered you?"

Take these questions home to your own heart. Answer them on your knees before God. "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith — prove your own selves." See that your religion does not spring merely from being acted upon from without, but from heaven-born life within. Make sure work in this matter. Beware of self-deception. Let nothing satisfy you but a real "passing from death unto life," and becoming a "new creature in Christ Jesus." So, only, will you be "established in the faith" — and, in the day of the Lord's appearing, be "found unto praise and honor and glory!" But we turn to a more pleasing theme, remembering that if the wanderer must be guided into the way of peace — the steadfast also need to be built up in their most holy faith. What, then, shall we say to you, dear friends and fellow-workers, who long to be employed in your Father's business, and are willing to take from His hand your daily lot of suffering or of service?

We would remind you that there is no vineyard labor on which the Master looks with such a well-pleased eye, as heart work. It may not be in your power to perform great acts, or to make costly sacrifices. You may do no more than breathe the speechless prayer, or give the cup of cold water — yet, if your own heart is well and carefully tended, your Lord will reckon you among His "good and faithful servants." Is your home in Heaven? Are you called with a holy calling? Then "walk worthy" of it. Rest not satisfied with a low measure of spiritual attainment — but aim high, even at walking in living fellowship with a living Lord, constantly realizing His presence, and maintaining close and holy communion with Him.

Remember that it is your privilege to "know the things that are freely given to you of God" — not to linger on the threshold, but to approach the inner sanctuary with a "true heart, and in full assurance of faith." It may be that you sadly feel how far you are from having attained this assurance. It is but seldom, perhaps, that the warm, life-giving rays of the Sun of Righteousness shine brightly upon you. More often you are under a cloud — mourning an absent Lord. You feel that you are not firmly anchored to the Rock, but are ever tossed hither and thither on the waves of temptation and doubt — the light of hope extinguished, the witness of the Spirit lost.

These things ought not so to be. God's heritage ought not so to lose sight of the "hope of their calling." Far be it from us to say that an assurance of salvation is indispensably necessary to the obtaining of it. There are many of God's best beloved who literally "pass the time of their sojourning here in fear." There are many of the Savior's followers who will never be able, in confidence and joy, to say that they are such — until the darkness of times is exchanged for the light of eternity.

Constitutional melancholy, physical weakness, or defective views of divine truth — may combine to tinge the inner life with a gloomy coloring.

Yet the weak believer who cleaves to Christ in the valley of humiliation — is no less dear to Him than the strong one who follows Him on the mount of glory. But we fear that many indolently rest in

this, and do not strive nor pray to be freed from the bondage of servitude, and to enter into the full liberty of the children of God. At some future time, they say, when they shall have attained to some higher degree of holiness, when they shall more perfectly reflect the image of their risen Lord — then, perhaps, they may rejoice, but not now. Sunshine may be for others — but it is not for them. What have they to do with peace? Do they not feel a "law in their members, warring against the law of their mind, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin?" Are they not continually stumbling and falling along the way — or wandering out of it altogether? Are they not, again and again, piercing with grief, the bosom which overflows with love to them?

Dear friend, these things may be true. All who know their own hearts feel that they must be true — and yet there need be no barrier to your rejoicing confidence. Well might the best and holiest among us go mourning all our days, if we were to look within ourselves for any ground of hope. It is not God's will that any of His children should be in sadness and doubt. On the contrary, He commands them to "rejoice evermore," even "with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." "That your joy may be full" — is still His wish concerning you. Why, then, should His will and yours be at variance? Why should you refuse to take what He so freely offers?

We believe that the explanation may be found in that spirit of self-righteousness which is so apt to linger, even in the renewed heart, eating like a canker-worm into the very life of all spiritual enjoyment. You are not willing to "cease from your own works" — and be saved in another way than that of your own devising. You cannot believe that even you, with all your vileness and guilt, your coldness and ingratitude, are still pure and spotless in your Father's eye, because clothed in the righteousness of His Son. You cannot realize that the most helpless outcast who approaches the throne of grace, pleading for mercy in the Savior's name, is no longer "afar off, but brought near by the blood of Christ." Surely, if you believed this, you could not but rejoice. "For" (we quote from the correspondence of the late Dr. Chalmers), "let there be but belief in the Gospel — and the hindrance to peace, joy, confidence, in the good-will of a reconciled Father — is at once removed. Why postpone all this? Why not rely on the good tidings of great joy, and be glad accordingly? How long shall we put off trusting in God for that redemption which is through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sin? It may startle you to be told that this last question is tantamount to another — How long shall we persist in holding God to be a liar? He Himself distinctly reduces it to this alternative. He tells of the record which He has given us of His Son, and He complains of being made a liar of by all who will not believe it (John 5:10-11). This, one might think, is bringing salvation very near to us. It is telling us to take and live — to trust and be satisfied. On this footing, and it is the true one — there would be an instant translation from death to life, from darkness to the marvelous light of the Gospel. Let us not think that the way of being washed from our sins is anything more complex or circuitous than this; else we fall into the error of Naaman the Syrian, when told to wash him from his leprosy in the waters of Jordan. We are washed from our sins in the blood of Christ. Let us so believe, and so it shall be done unto us."

Look not then, inward, to the gloomy recesses of your own dark and troubled heart — but upward and outward, to the cleansing blood and perfect atonement of Him who is made unto you of God, "wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Remember that, in Him, you are without spot and blameless; that in Him there is "no condemnation;" that in Him you, even you, may take up the triumphant challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ that died — yes, rather, who is risen

again."

Look unto Him, until you feel your doubts vanish, your fears depart, and your heart open itself to the warmth and light of love. Do not analyze your own feelings. Do not perplex yourself with intricate calculations as to the strength of your own faith. Do not argue, do not reason — but keep your eye steadily fixed on this one grand truth, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Why should you exclude yourself from the number? Why should you refuse to take the full comfort of this "blessed hope?" Was it not the lost, whom Jesus came to seek and to save? Is it not the helpless wanderer, which He will guide in safety to the fold? Do not be afraid, then, but believe only, and all shall be well.

Go to God for the faith you have not in yourself. Pray, with one of old, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!" Bring your sin to the Sin-bearer. Bring your soul-sickness to the Good Physician. Doubt not but that His hand will be stretched forth to heal. Thus, and thus only, will your peace flow as a river. Thus, and thus only, in simply "looking unto Jesus" — not to yourself, will you be gradually "changed into the same image, from glory to glory."

Beware, lest you dishonor God, by resolutely wrapping yourselves in clouds and gloom, when He has commanded you to "walk in the light, as He is in the light." Beware, also, lest you confound together things that differ, and place your confidence rather in the Spirit's work within you — than in the Redeemer's work for you. The one is incomplete, and will ever be marred by infirmity, until this body of sin and death is laid aside; the other was completed more than eighteen hundred years ago, when Jesus cried and said, "It is finished!"

Here, then, is rest — the rest into which "we who have believed enter" — rest for you, O weary and faint one, "tempest-tossed, and not comforted." Do not fear to claim it as your heritage forever. Do not fear to cast yourself into the ocean fullness of your Father's love! Do not fear to say, with chastened yet triumphant joy, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him."

Thus, also, will you most effectually promote your Savior's glory. A life of praise and thanksgiving will be the best recommendation of the religion which you profess. If we can "sing the Lord's song in this strange land" of sorrow and exile — then who can tell but that others may hear us, and, perhaps, be won to join us in our way? Let us show them that the Christian is not gloomy, as he is often falsely represented to be — but that his sympathies are rather with the bright things of life. His heart is free to enjoy the happiness of this life, because it is at rest concerning its title to that of another. If, like the man in Bunyan's picture, "he has the world behind his back," he has also a "crown of glory hanging over his head!"

Let this be manifested in our daily life, and then our light will "so shine," that the Redeemer's name may be exalted. The world can see that we are cross-bearers — let it see also in us the fulfillment of the promise, "In Me you shall have peace." In every circumstance we shall equally feel that the "joy of the Lord is our strength."

Nothing will so support us to bear the "sufferings of this present time," as the prospect of the "glory hereafter to be revealed." Nothing will so nerve our arm for the combat, as the realized presence of the great Captain of our salvation. Let us, then, pray earnestly that the "God of hope would fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy

Spirit."

We have lingered upon this part of our subject, but we may be justified by its unspeakable importance, both to the individual Christian and to the Church at large. We believe that never will the Church of Christ fulfill the high and holy mission to which she has been called, in the evangelization of the world — until her members learn more fully to realize the privileges of their adoption, and to rejoice in the possession of that "perfect love, which casts out fear."

Again, we would entreat you to be on your guard, dear reader, against that religion of sentiment and aesthetic beauty, so unhappily prevalent in this our day, and which possesses so many attractions for the young and imaginative. It is difficult to avoid the snare! It is difficult to believe that anything hurtful can lurk under so much that is lovely, so much that seems devotion. Have you ever known what it is to worship in a Catholic Church, where the quiet sunbeams steal through the stained window, and flood arch and aisle with their rich yet mellowed light, or throw a radiant glory over the kneeling "Priest," who, in his snow-white robes, ministers at "the altar?" Have you ever listened to the pealing notes of some old chant or anthem, which, with its long low swell of almost unearthly sweetness, thrills even to your very soul? And when the last faint echoes died away, and holy words of prayer and blessing broke the sacred stillness — have you not felt that such worship was well-near fit for the "spirits of just men made perfect?"

Yet, beware! It may seem uncharitable to remove the veil; it may seem harsh to say that there is poison mingled in the cup! Yet so it is. Poison, not in that which meets the eye; not in stained-glass window, nor music, nor surpliced priest — but in the hidden error of which these things are but the outward tokens. All that would substitute the sign for the thing signified — the cross for Him who was offered upon it a sacrifice for sin — or lead the worshiper to rest in any mere form, even the most pure — instead of rising upward to the spirit and the life — is and must be dangerous in its tendency.

And, without venturing on the troubled waters of controversy, we appeal only to experience, when we say — is not this, in too many cases, the result of the system to which we have alluded? Beware, then, dear reader, lest you suffer anything, harmless although it may seem to be, to come between your soul and God. Let no reasoning, however specious, no beauty of external worship, however attractive — tempt you from your firm hold upon the Scriptures of truth, or beguile you from the "simplicity that is in Christ." "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Pray that you may be kept in lowly humility at the Savior's feet; and there may "learn of Him." Pray that, by His Almighty grace, He would keep your feet from the paths of error, and shield you from the evil that is in the world. Above all, pray that in your own heart you may experience the power of His Spirit to save and sanctify. Thus "keeping yourself in the love of God," you will possess the best safeguard against the seductions of mere human teaching.

But, on this subject, one more word of caution is needed. Take heed lest you fall into the opposite danger of harshness and lack of charity towards those who differ from you on minor points. At a time when religious controversy runs unhappily so high, it is difficult to avoid imbibing somewhat of its bitterness of spirit. Perhaps the prayer of our Church was never so much needed as now, "From all uncharitableness, good Lord, deliver us!" Do not condemn the good along with the evil;

and, above all, do not allow yourself to be betrayed into personal prejudices, which a closer acquaintance with those against whom you cherish them, so frequently shows to be utterly unfounded. Remember that true and earnest piety may consist with wide difference of opinion on many minor points — and as long as human nature continues as it is, it is impossible that all men should see the same truths through the same medium.

Differences of temperament and natural constitution, with the prejudices of early education — combine to throw a difference of coloring over those which are in themselves essentially the same. So that, until you can take your brother's place, and see with his eyes — you cannot be justified in sitting in judgment upon him. One mind cannot comprehend or feel the force of many things, which weigh most heavily with another. The cold and phlegmatic, for instance, have marvelously little sympathy with the impassible and optimistic, whose more yielding natures are readily acted upon from without.

There is One, and One only, who can look into the depths of every human heart, and He judges with perfect knowledge of every circumstance which has had a part in what is written there. But as for you — are you to pronounce a verdict against a fellow-sinner, whom, for anything you can tell — you may meet in the mansions above, if, by God's mercy, you reach them yourself?

If, however, you have indeed been taught "as a new-born babe to desire the sincere milk of the word," you will gladly leave the more questionable nutriment of religious disputation to those whose calling and inclination may lead them thereto. When you look into your own heart, you will find there sufficient employment, without entering unnecessarily upon the discussion of matters of debate — and will also see sufficient of its sinfulness and pollution to teach you to bear very patiently with the infirmities of others.

Remember that zeal for religious doctrine, is not always zeal for Christ Himself. Many who manifest no lack of the former, give evidence, by their loud and angry condemnation of those who do not think along with them, that they know but little of the true spirit of the latter. They are far, very far, from exhibiting the "meekness and gentleness of Christ."

Nothing has so great a tendency to deaden the spiritual life, and to promote feelings of self-righteousness and pride, as angry contention, even though it be for the "faith once delivered to the saints." Be thankful, then, that you are not placed in the van of the battle, where duty would compel you to gird on your sword and fight. Be thankful that it is your privilege to take, directly from the hand of the true "Shepherd of your soul" the food convenient for you. "Feed on it in your heart by faith with thanksgiving." Only in this way, will you "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." But we have wandered somewhat from our original intention, which was rather to speak of the inner life, quiet and hidden from the eye of man, than of the disputes which so unhappily disturb the peace of Christ's visible Church. And yet, on thoughtful reflection, a closer connection may be discerned between the two than might at first sight be supposed.

If that which is inward is to be preserved in health and vigor — then it must be jealously guarded from any pernicious influence from without. These are times of trial and danger, demanding proportionate watchfulness against error in any of its many and beguiling forms. The only safety is to be found in a spirit of child-like dependence upon Heavenly teaching, and in the prayer, offered in unreserved sincerity, "Hold me up — and I shall be safe!"

Hold fast the great fundamental truths of the gospel — those which affect the souls standing before God — and on minor matters you may well afford to suspend your judgment. Leave them for other and wiser heads, but "you continue in the things you have learned, and have been assured of" — clinging to that inspired Word, which contains all things necessary to make us "wise unto salvation." On this we need not further enlarge, but would rather remind our readers that there is but one way in which they may disentangle those perplexities in duty to which we have alluded in our introductory chapter, and, with them, many of the most difficult problems of the inner experience.

It is in seeking for that single eye and undivided aim to the Savior's glory, which alone can smooth down the many little roughnesses and annoyances which we meet with in our daily path. When the constraining love of Jesus reigns in our hearts — we learn to delight in any labor, and to glory in any sacrifice, by which that love may be more clearly manifested. We are ready to cut off the right hand, and to pluck out the right eye, to do battle with the besetting sin, and to crucify the heart-idol — at the bidding of Him whose very life was willingly laid down for our sakes! And it is then alone, that our efforts in the cause of Christ can be successful. The words which we speak for God must come warm and fresh from the depths of our own living and personal experience — or they will fall cold and dead upon the hearts of others. Our speech may be about the things of the kingdom — but it cannot minister grace unto the hearers, unless it is "seasoned with salt." It is when we "speak that which we know, and testify that which we have seen" — when our heart is manifestly so in Heaven that all may take "knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus" — that the real power of our religion is shown and felt. Then the world is convinced, even by that which it cannot love — and God's own people are edified and strengthened.

If, then, you would have your lamp to shine as a light in this dark world, remember that it must be daily fed with the fresh oil of the Spirit. Look to your own heart. See to your own vineyard. Be prayerful; be watchful; above all, be in earnest. Do not be satisfied with having a "name to live while you are dead" — but seek to have your life truly "hid with Christ in God." Oh, pray for a large measure of grace, even that your clay vessel may be "filled with all the fullness of God." Walk near to Him in holy fellowship, striving ever to realize the in-dwelling of His Spirit, that, as a temple of the Holy Spirit, you may abstain even from the very appearance of evil.

It is a dreary thing to live afar off from God — to be numbered among the children — and yet to be unable to look up to Him with trusting confidence and say, "My Father, who is in Heaven." We cannot toil up the Hill of Difficulty with the burden upon our back. It must be left first at the Cross, and then, freed from the weight of sin, we can go on from "strength to strength," until at length we "appear in Zion before God."

Again we say, do not allow the stain of unforgiven sin to rest upon your conscience, but keep it ever tender by constant approaches to the "fountain opened for sin and for impurity." There you may be washed daily from the defilement which you must necessarily contract in your passage through the world. Without this, your Christianity will always be dwarfed and stunted in its growth. You will "be ever learning — but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." You will spend all your faith in laying the foundations of hope — and will have little time for those heaven-reaching exercises of adult faith, which fit the soul for dwelling amid the prospective glories and purities of perfected salvation.

We would not see you thus, dear reader. We would rather that you should be rejoicing in hope, dwelling ever in the secret place of communion with God, and abiding in peace under the shadow of His wings.

We believe that God's children need at this time to be specially and solemnly reminded of that "other Comforter" whom the Savior has sent to supply to His people the place of His personal presence among them. We live under the dispensation of the Spirit — but are unconscious of our privilege in so doing? Of how many might this question be asked, "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" And how many, alas! might truthfully reply, that although they have indeed heard that "there is a Holy Spirit," yet they have thought little of His work and office, and seldom sought His quickening grace! Can we, then, wonder if our faith is feeble and our love cold? Can we marvel if our labor for Christ is so often unsuccessful? For never can there be an elevated standard of personal holiness, or real usefulness in our day and generation — until this communion of the Holy Spirit is sought and enjoyed. Never will the living epistles stand out in all their clearness before the eyes of an unbelieving world — until they are seen to be written by the "Spirit of the living God." In the early days of the church, the Apostles were "endued with power from on high," for the work to which they were called. Herein lies the secret of their influence, and of saintly influence in all ages since. And does that power no longer exist? May it not be given also to British Christians of the nineteenth century to be "filled with the Spirit" — to "walk in the Spirit"? Yes, truly, for the treasury of blessing is still full, even to overflowing. But "they have not, because they ask not." Let them "ask that they may receive," and so shall "their joy be full." So will they be strengthened with all might for the inward warfare, and bring life and light and healing to a world that "lies in darkness, and in the shadow of death." The time is fast approaching when the warfare shall be accomplished, and the victory won — when the wilderness shall be exchanged for the Father's house, and the "light affliction" for the "fullness of joy." Be patient, then, my friends, unto the coming of the Lord. Pray only, strive only, live only — that when He comes you may be "found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless."

Live, so as to leave a mark behind you. Live, so that others may be the better and the happier for your life. Live, so that death may be to you but an "incident in mortality" — not dying, but going home to your Father's arms, there to receive the welcome of the beloved child who has been long absent in a far-distant country, but now returns to be at rest forever!

01.02. Wayside Work

Wayside Work

It should be the highest aim of every Christian, continually to realize that this world is not his abiding home, that he is only sent into it to tarry for a season, as "God's messenger" — to speak words for Him. "God's messenger!" How solemn the thought! How responsible the office! Reader, are you conscientiously discharging it? Are you faithfully delivering your message? Are you so living, as that you will, by and-by, be able, fearlessly, to render up an account of your stewardship, and joyfully to listen to the sentence, "Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter you into the joy of your Lord!" These are no light questions. Do not put them carelessly aside, do not shrink from meeting them — but, as in the sight of that God before whom you must one day stand, bring your daily life to the test which they offer.

If you are, indeed, numbered among God's chosen flock, and have been gathered safely into the fold of refuge — you will at once perceive that, with you, the solemn work of life, so far from being finally accomplished, will last as long as life itself. The influence which, consciously or unconsciously, you cannot fail to exercise over others, must be employed in God's service. He it is who has bought you with so costly a price, even the precious blood of His beloved Son — that you may henceforth "glorify Him in your body and in your spirit, which are His."

God will not have any of His servants idle. To some He appoints one kind of work, to others, another. But to each and all the command is the same, "Occupy until I come." Every one, as he receives the seal of adoption, receives also the precept, "Son, go work today in my vineyard!" Not tomorrow — not next year — not at some indefinite period in the far-off future — but today, while yet the shadows of evening fall not, nor the midnight cry arises, "Behold He comes!"

There is no escape from this law. Nor, if, indeed, our hearts are set aright, will there be any wish to escape. We serve no hard master. We are no slaves, performing, thanklessly, the task allotted to us. Ours is an unconstrained obedience, a freewill offering, an expression of grateful affection to Him who has loved and given Himself for us.

Reader, "The Lord has need of you!" Conscious — deeply, painfully conscious as you may be of your own weakness and insufficiency, it is, nevertheless, true, that in the carrying out of His great designs, He has a place for you to fill. You are a link in the chain, and the most momentous interests are daily dependent upon you. No one can take your place. No one can share your responsibility. Only yield yourself up, "to be as clay in the hands of the potter" — and He will make of you a "vessel fit for His own use." Only pray, in believing sincerity, "Lord, What will You have me to do?" and be assured that, in one way or other, your work will be marked out, and the strength given with which you are to perform it.

Keep your eye ever fixed upon your Heavenly Father's eye, so that you may be ready to follow its lightest motion. Do not look out for great services, such as may dazzle the world by their splendor — but cheerfully take up those which lie in your daily path, and accomplish them, as "unto the Lord

— and not unto men." If you will do this, you will soon find your hand fully occupied, and your spirit growing strong to do and to bear.

Remember, even the tiny dewdrop has its mission; the little insects which dance so merrily in the summer sunshine fill no useless place in the scale of creation. These, also, in their measure, are "faithful in little things." And can it be, that you alone are to remain unemployed? Nay, truly, for "no man lives unto himself." But this subject has been so often and so ably handled, that we need not further enter upon it. Yet we must offer a few hints on one or two departments of work, the importance of which is too frequently overlooked.

First, on that (and it comes most strictly under the head of way-side work) which we may do as we journey hither and thither in this "house of our pilgrimage." We fear that with many, even of God's believing people, a journey is a thing far too lightly undertaken. We are often too resolutely bent upon following out some favorite plan of our own, to stop and ask counsel of Him who has commanded us, in "all our ways," seek His guidance. In the anticipation of a visit, or of a tour of pleasure, we are apt to look rather for our own ease and health — than for the way in which we may best glorify God. At such times it too frequently happens that the watchfulness and circumspection of our heavenward walk is relaxed, our close communion with God is interrupted, our approaches to the throne of grace are less frequent, and our holy fellowship With the Father and the Son is estranged. In short, we seem to imagine that relaxation from mental or physical exertion, implies also a sort of relaxation in our spiritual progress, and so, instead of diligently cultivating "vacation piety," we are in danger of indulging a "vacation from piety." Thus we lose ground which cannot be regained by months of unceasing toil — for it is impossible that, after a season of sloth and carelessness, we should stand exactly as we did at its commencement. If there is not advancement — there must be declension. Ours must be a ceaseless warfare, and if, even for one moment, we wield our weapons with an unsteady hand — the enemy will surely gain an advantage over us. And thus our influence for good is weakened — for our lamp must burn with a clear and steady flame, or it can never give light and guidance to another.

There is a living power in the example of one who constantly dwells in the "secret place of the Most High" — which makes itself felt, even when no word is spoken. He is surrounded by an atmosphere of prayer, with which no light or worldly element can mingle, and which at once stamps him as an heir of the glory. Such a one is a "living epistle," which all can read — a "shining light" which all can see. Where this is lacking, where the Christian sinks to the level of other men, and does not declare plainly that "he seeks a heavenly country" — his influence becomes positively pernicious. A stumbling block is cast in the way of the unconverted, and the faith of God's children is weakened rather than confirmed. See to it, then, dear reader, that you allow no outward circumstances to hinder you in the race set before you. Pray that your eyes may be "turned away from beholding vanity," and kept fixed upon the "Author and Finisher of your faith." Let a sense of danger drive you to the shelter of the Rock of Ages — that there, beneath its kindly shade, the world's glare and sunshine may have no power to harm you.

And, alike in visiting and in journeying, strive to follow only where the guiding pillar leads. Seek to be made willing to go or to stay — as you may most effectually perform your Master's bidding. It may be that He designs you to carry a message of hope and consolation to some weary sufferer, who is to hear from your lips the needed assurance that the "Lord has not forgotten to be

gracious." Or you may be sent to arouse some slumberer, to quicken the halting step of some lingerer along the way, or to cheer some tried and doubting pilgrim by your own more steadfast faith in the "faithful and true Witness." Or, perhaps, your own soul needs to be refreshed, and you are "sent to sojourn for a season where it may be more abundantly watered by the fertilizing dew of the Spirit — that in solitude and stillness, or in sweet communion with fellow-travelers to the Celestial City — you may be strengthened to "hold fast the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end." Of one thing you may be sure; that wherever you are sent, it is on some special errand, whether it is that your Father intends to use you in speaking to others that which He would have spoken to them — or that you are to hear from them what, at that particular time, it is necessary for you to know.

Beware, then, that you do not carelessly pass by that which is given you to do. A neglected opportunity — a tract ungiven — a warning unspoken — who can tell what momentous consequences may follow from matters apparently so trivial?

We see but little of friend or companion upon this tossing ocean of life, where we can but exchange a hurried greeting as we are borne past each other on the crested billows. Let us, then, strive to turn these "way-side glimpses" into pledges of an eternal meeting. Let them not be frittered away in idleness or folly — but let their record be, that the "Lord hearkened and heard, and wrote down in His book of remembrance," the words which were spoken by His loving children.

Let us specially plead that they may be to us "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" — so that our lips may be constrained to give utterance to the fullness of the heart. Then, when the earthly tabernacle is exchanged for the better and abiding home — we shall have many to welcome us there, and many to follow in our footsteps, who, but for us, would have been in hopeless misery! The distribution of tracts offers another field of labor, which all may enter. By this we mean, not merely the taking charge of a "tract district," though this is, in itself, a labor of love which cannot fail of its reward. But there are many who have neither time nor strength to undertake such an office, who may yet, as they pass through the world — scatter tracts, like seeds of blessing, which may take deep root within the heart, and bring forth fruit a hundredfold. Offer tracts whenever and wherever you have an opportunity. Give them to the beggar by the way-side, to the stranger whom you meet, and may never meet again, to the cabman as he sits upon his box, to the omnibus-driver, who may truly say, "No man cares for my soul!" Scatter them in your daily walks. Leave them in railway-carriage and steam-boat. Who can tell the good that they may do? Who can count the wretched homes they may make happy, the jewels they may win to sparkle in Immanuel's crown? And though the effort may seem to be unsuccessful, though the seed may lie dormant for many a weary year, as though it had been sown upon the rock — yet, by-and-by, it may be quickened by the living breath of the Spirit, and spring up into everlasting life! And then that rescued one, who has thus been plucked as a brand from the burning, may, in his turn, spread the glad tidings of a Savior's mercy, until, at length, the tiny stream which had so feeble a source, may become a broad and mighty river, bearing a glorious freight to the shores of the distant eternity!

How can you be idle with such work before you — work in which the weakest may share? An infant's hand may plant the acorn, which will one day be a spreading oak; and even your hand,

trembling though it is — may lead another sinner to the mansions of glory! Toil on, earnestly and hopefully, with a single eye and a brave purpose. The great day of disclosures will show that your "strength has not been spent in vain, nor your labor for nothing." But we need not add more. Enough has been said to show that wherever there is a hearty desire to be useful — the means of being so will most certainly be found. If we are "walking in the light," we shall readily hear the "first and softest call" to labor in the vineyard. A spirit of lowly and reverent love will be ever on the watch to seize every opportunity of proving its devotion. Daily are we reminded that our work is but "wayside work" — it will soon be over, for the night comes. "Whatever," therefore, "your hand finds to do — do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you are going." Who would wear a starless crown in Heaven? Who would be content with the "lowest room," when the higher place may be won as the reward of self-denying labor? For if our title to glory rests simply upon the imputed righteousness of Christ, we believe that the degree of that glory depends upon the measure of faithful service here. Surely our joy will be increased a thousand fold, if we are enabled to lay up in the heavenly garner a harvest of many sheaves! And if that bright rest which awaits us could be marred by one thought of sorrow — it will be, because we have not been here more diligent in doing that which there we cannot do. Life, like spring, is the only sowing-time, and if it is not improved, the rich fruits of autumn will hereafter be lacking. Work, then, dear reader, for "Earth has no room for idlers — and life has no time for dreams!"

Work, for if you will not, others will. If the children of God are idle — then the agents of Satan will be busy. If we sow not the seed of the kingdom — they will sow the dragon's teeth of destruction and damnation! Never was there a time when God's saints were more loudly called upon to arouse themselves from slumber. The enemy is mustering his forces in all their strength for a final and decisive conflict. Who will remain inactive? Who will refuse to "come to the help of the Lord against the mighty?" Not you, reader!

Then join the ranks at once! Gird yourself for the combat! Enroll yourself in the crusade against ungodliness and error. Take the "shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," and from a hand nerved with almighty strength, cast a dart against the opposing ranks of the adversary! Only let it be sped on its way by prayer — and who can tell what it may accomplish. Be patient. There may be weariness here on earth, but there will be rest hereafter in Heaven — rest in your own sinless home, where your ascended Redeemer is waiting to receive you, and where, in the fullness of His unveiled presence, you will be "forever with the Lord!"

01.03. Religious and Social Dissipation

Religious and Social Dissipation

There is nothing, perhaps, so strongly characteristic of this so-called "age of progress," as the hustle, bustle and excitement which are attendant upon it. The speed of the telegraph and the railway train seems typical of the rapid succession of events in everyday life; one engagement of business or of pleasure following so closely upon another, that there is little leisure for rest, much less for thoughtful reflection. In commerce, in trade, in literature, even in religion — the same, spirit is everywhere observable, and the busy torrent rushes ever onward, with such force and impetuosity, that few can avoid being carried away by it. Even the most sober and reserved are drawn into the whirl; and, notwithstanding protestations and regrets, plunge helplessly into the same exciting round of imagined duty. We are living literally in a "fast age" — an age of hurry and breathlessness, of superficial acquirements and outside show — an age of mad speculation, and desperate struggles, by any and every means, to acquire wealth.

Such may possibly be the consequence of the striving for improvement, which has been awakened by the rapid and general diffusion of knowledge among all classes of society, but it may be doubted whether it is conducive to strength and solidity of character, or to the formation of habits of deep and serious thought. To think has indeed become a somewhat rare acquirement in the present day, especially among the young.

"We have been," says a modern writer, Mr. Isaac Taylor, "during a long course of years, running hither and thither, spending our days in crowds. We have lost all relish for mental labor, have especially abhorred the toil of private meditation — and have applauded only that which tends to maintain and promote an artificial agitation of the spirit." The censure is sweeping — yet we fear it is but too just. Of this, however, we leave the reader to judge. But it is among the professors of religion that this spirit of excitement is chiefly to be deplored. We speak not now of those merely nominal disciples, who are still "of the earth, earthy" — but of those who have been truly "renewed in the spirit of their mind," and desire to reflect the image, as they bear the name, of a risen and ascended Savior. Will our younger sisters bear with us, while we affectionately entreat them to be on their guard against this growing evil, and to remember the injunction by the Apostle, to be "sober minded." Nor is the dissipation of which we speak less hurtful in its tendency, because it seems, at first sight, to bear the aspect of intense earnestness in religion. The same craving which leads one to the theater, the ball-room, or, perhaps, the ale-house — leads another to the crowded lecture-room or the exciting social meeting. It is the same spirit which, in very many instances, actuates both — though differing somewhat in its outward development. And, though in another manner, it is almost equally harmful to spiritual growth and health, and certainly does not tend to increase our love for the quiet and uneventful routine of home duties. But let us not be misunderstood. We are far, very far, from wishing to affirm that it is wrong to attend either meeting or lecture. Both are useful, and have done much to awaken the interest of the Christian public in those noble institutions which seem to be God's chosen instruments for evangelizing the nations.

We do not stop to inquire how much of this interest is genuine, and how much may be due to the attractions of eloquent and popular speakers — for, in this life, the evil must ever be mixed with the good — and, while we deplore the one, we must not overlook the other.

Moreover, we fully believe that, in every audience, there are many whose hearts beat high with pure love to the Savior, and with earnest desires for the extension of His kingdom. But we regret that attendance upon these things should so frequently be made the serious business of life, to the neglect of those less attractive yet sacred duties — which, as women, and more especially as Christian women, we are most assuredly guilty in neglecting. When we hear of a lady whose name is on every church committee, and whose place in the public assembly is never vacant — we tremble for the comfort of the domestic circle which is dependent upon her superintending care, and owes so much of its brightness to her presence. And even if this is scrupulously attended to, and her absence from home of no material importance, so that she can conscientiously say that "these things she has done," while she has not "left the others undone," we should still fear for her own individual welfare. For if, to the time thus spent, is added that devoted to visiting, to morning calls and quiet evening parties, it will be manifest that but a small portion is left. Even the holy Sabbath brings with it no rest, for so much of it is absorbed by other claims, that there is but little leisure for communion with God in solitude.

We are aware that we touch upon a delicate subject, and that the question is one which demands wise and skillful handling. Yet we venture, in all Christian faithfulness, to suggest the inquiry, whether such a state of things is likely to promote the increase of real and personal piety? Is it not true that, among many, the standard of Christianity has, of late years, become visibly lower? that but few, even of the professing children of God, live up to the full measure of their privileges, as heirs expectant of a glorious kingdom? and that a large proportion of them are lingerers in the "border-country," ever looking wistfully back to the world which they have renounced, and striving to introduce into their religion a measure of its spirit.

Instead of the Church purifying the world — the tendency is far too much in the contrary direction, and the world secularizes the Church. If this is so, then may we not say, in the words of Scripture, "Is there not a cause?" And may not that cause be traced to the neglect of that close walking with God, in the secret exercises of the closet, by which alone the flame of heavenly love in the soul can be kept burning clear and bright? Wrong, indeed, would it be, to undervalue those precious means of grace which are as wells of refreshing to our faint and weary souls — yet we are persuaded that more entire dependence upon God, and less on man — more study of His word, and less of the works of human teachers, more searching into our own hearts, and considering our own ways, would bring down upon our own souls and upon the church of God yet larger measures of the Holy Spirit's blessing.

We must not permit the streams, however precious, to draw us away from the overflowing spring. We have need to take heed, lest, while we are wandering about from one ministry to another, in the eager endeavor to gratify that taste for novelty, which, in these days, is so unhappily prevalent — we come under the condemnation of those who "heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." It is best to keep to the fountain which is opened for us, provided only that its waters are pure. We shall scarcely gain from others, really lasting benefit and strength.

It is quite possible, that, while we are "busy here and there" about the externals of religion — the Holy Comforter may be grieved, and His warning voice neglected. The flower of divine grace in the soul is too tender, too delicate a gem to bear unprotected exposure, even in the busy religious world. It can flourish only when nurtured by prayer, and unceasingly watered by the "silent dew" of the Spirit.

Nay, more — let us remember that, even while we are anxiously caring for the souls of others, we may endanger the peace, if not the safety, of our own, and so be compelled mournfully to exclaim, "They made me the keeper of vineyards — but my own vineyard have I not kept." Thus our work for God must fail of its intended results, for all words that are not "heart-deep" will be powerless, and we cannot teach lessons which we have not learned ourselves. And though, for a season, the fruit of our labor may seem fair and flourishing, it will not stand the test of that fast-approaching day, when "every man's work shall be tried by fire, of what sort it is."

We say this, not as countenancing any sickly and cowardly shrinking from active exertion for Christ's sake, for we believe that the hardest working Christians will ever be the strongest and the happiest. Those who water others will be themselves most abundantly watered; and, forgetting their own doubts and fears and misgivings, will go forward with unfaltering step, singing, as they go, a new song of praise and thanksgiving. But let them guard against the excitement attendant upon their work. Let them see that it never comes between them and God, or interferes with their seasons of privacy and devotion. Let this be their motto: "I seek not mine own glory!" Let them be content to have self hidden — and Christ alone exalted, and careful "Less to serve Him much,

Than to please Him perfectly."

We have alluded to the works of man — and the Word of God. And is it not a danger of our time, when "religious" books are so very plentiful, that they may, perhaps, lessen our relish for the simple teaching of Holy Scripture? Is not this one form in which our religious dissipation manifests itself? There is a constant craving for something new in the world of books; and not to have seen the last-issued periodical is almost equivalent to being altogether out of step with the religious world. There are also so many excellent works for devotional use that it is not by any means impossible that we may learn to depend on them, rather than on that inspired Word — the "entrance" of which can alone "give light." We do not undervalue these helps. Rather would we give God thanks for them. But we must keep them in their proper place. We must not allow the 'Daily Portion' to satisfy us, without being also fed by the "Bread of Life." We may be strengthened and encouraged in our way by the lives of holy men and women who have passed away from among us to the better rest — but they must not beguile us from the study of the life and character of the Master whom they served; still less should we set them up as models, or be saddened and discouraged because we do not in all things resemble them. "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same Spirit that works all in all." Do not, then, weary yourself in a fruitless effort to keep up with the press. It will do you no good, either mentally or spiritually.

Especially watch against the fascinating attraction of the current light literature of the day. Works of fiction are, to a certain extent, useful and beneficial — but we must not indulge in their perusal to the neglect of more solid reading. They will dissipate, more than they will strengthen, and are not infrequently made the medium of conveying the most deadly error. But make the Book the "man of your counsel." Feed upon this heavenly food — live by it, grow by it. Let it be your guide, your

comfort, your strength, your all.

Let the "Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Let it be interwoven with the warp and woof of your being. Pray that it may be illuminated by the Holy Spirit — that your eyes may be opened to see the wondrous things which are written therein, and your heart prepared to receive it with lowly meekness, as God's message to your own soul. Thus will you be enabled to say, with the sweet Psalmist of old, "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart!" But we are to speak of social, as well as of religious dissipation — and therefore must not omit to say a few words on this subject also. We will not allude, at present, to that still more important topic of worldly conformity, which we reserve for distant consideration, but simply to those every-day claims of society which are often felt to be so engrossing and oppressive. In the first place, then, it must be admitted that these claims are imperative, and not to be set aside. It is not by indolently retreating from society that our mission in it is to be fulfilled — but by impressing upon it the stamp of Christian character, and leavening it with the influence of Christian principle. It is not possible for us to go out of the world — and it would not be advisable if it were; but, while in it, we must seek to be like the river, which, as Rutherford says, "keeps its own fresh taste in the salt sea." The Christian in society has a difficult path to tread, beset with dangers on this side and on that. For if, on the one hand, something must be conceded to its claims — it is, on the other, lamentable to think of the precious hours which are wasted in conversation which is often worse than trifling, and this even among those who are partakers of the same blessed hope, and fellow-pilgrims to the same abiding home. Christian meets Christian, as worldling meets worldling; they breathe the air of the wilderness — and they speak as if it were their rest; the things of the kingdom are not upon their lips, and their speech is seldom "sanctified by the Word of God and by prayer."

"How often," says Hewitson, "are we compelled to hide our selves in the secret of God's presence from the strife even of some of His own children's tongues! How many speak to you with as much earnestness, about the vanities of this passing world, as if they were still of the world, and not born from above!" Are hours thus spent, likely to help us in our way to Heaven? Are they calculated to promote spirituality? Are they not rather in accordance with the "spirit that is of the world," than with the "spirit that is of God?" Do they not deaden the fervor of our devotions? Do they not weigh down the wings of faith, and prevent it from soaring upward to the bright realities of eternity?

It is true that, in our morning visits and evening gatherings, the glittering display of the ball-room may be lacking, but is there less excitement, less frivolity, less waste of time? My sisters, these things ought not to be! If the light of our Father's countenance is hidden from us, if the "consolations of God are small with us" — then let us search and see! Let us seek out and bring to light, the secret thing which separates between us and our God. Is He not grieved by our lightness, our earthliness? Does He not often knock at the door of our hearts, and gain no entrance there — because, in the din of other voices, His warnings and entreaties are unheeded? Can we, then, marvel if He withdraws Himself from us in displeasure?

Oh, let us beware. Let us stop in time. Let us dare to be singular. Rather any consequences — than that the luster of our heavenly inheritance should be tarnished, even a little! But even if our own growth in grace be not hindered by this spirit of dissipation; if home duties and the responsibilities of friendship are remembered; the intellectual powers must run to waste, and there

can be little time for that mental culture which forms a most important item in the right occupation of our talents.

Yet it is a more easy matter to point out evils, than to devise remedies for them, especially when, as in the case before us, none can judge correctly of the duty of another. Some are compelled, by their social position, to mingle much more in society than others, and to such, though the path is one of danger, it is still one of duty. He who "divides to every man severally as He will," has appointed them a special work, which they are to do in His name and to His glory. They are to be social missionaries, bearing their Master's message where, perhaps, it might not otherwise find an entrance. They are to lay rank, wealth, and talents, on the "altar which sanctifies the gift," and then, instead of being entangled by their snares and dangers — they will make the offering to God the more costly, and their entire consecration to Him the more visible and impressive in the eyes of the world. Thus may they pass onward to their rest, "Holy fragrance around them flinging, Luring others in the way."

Only let them beware of concealing the cross which they wear. Let them be recognized everywhere as the disciples of Christ, not having one character for the closet and another for the drawing-room — but alike in all places, and in all companies, displaying the badge of Him, "whose they are, and whom they serve."

Let their eye be single in their Master's service, and their lips ever ready to confess His name. Let them remember also, that, if we are to "live for God in the world — we must live much with God apart from the world." We must be anointed daily with the fresh anointing of the Spirit, and have our hearts touched with a "live coal from off the altar" — so that we may think, and speak, and act, in the ever-abiding consciousness that we are not our own, but are "bought with a price."

Watchfulness is also needed, lest inconsistency should bring disgrace upon our Christian profession. There must be no blot upon the "living epistles" — no stain upon the garments of those who have been "washed in the blood of the Lamb." But there are very many who can shield their social dissipation behind no plea of duty. They are fettered only by the opinion of others, or the usage of society. They allow themselves to be drawn into a multitude of acquaintances, and involved in an endless succession of unnecessary engagements, simply because they lack the moral courage requisite to say, "No." And thus a worm is permitted to feed at the very root of their religion; the graces of the Spirit wither; the privileges of sonship are forgotten; the sacred hours of retirement are invaded by thoughts of things "seen and temporal;" home-work is crowded into the shortest possible space, and the calls to labor in the Master's vineyard are hastily put aside. The stimulus of artificial excitement, once needless — now becomes essential, and life, without it, is scarcely endurable! Shall there not be a reckoning for these things? Will they pass by, and leave no trace behind them? Dear reader, do not allow yourself to be held fast within these iron shackles. Break through them, cast them from you, while yet you are able. Remember the high calling with which you are called as a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem. Take heed — you stand on slippery ground. Hasten away from it. Escape for your life; lest, perhaps, the net of the destroyer be woven about you, and your feet never stand within the golden gates of the celestial city!

Thousands have perished where you are now, and thousands more, instead of having an "abundant entrance" ministered unto them, have been "saved so as by fire." Remember the

admonition to "avoid even the appearance of evil," to "hate even the garment spotted by the flesh." And, before all else, pray for that realizing faith which will enable you to look at the things of time in the light of a coming eternity. Then will the present world be kept in its proper place, as a shadow that is quickly disappearing into the past, though its record is laid up in the never ending future. You will learn to "endure, as seeing Him who is invisible," and so to keep yourself, "unspotted from the world." The consciousness that the Savior's eye is ever upon you, will guard you from everything that may grieve Him — and the brightness of His smile will be your support in every difficulty. You will find that, in the strength which He can give, every crooked place will be made straight, and every rough place plain before you; so that, leaning on an unseen arm, stayed by a invisible hand — yet felt, you may go from grace to grace, until at length, when your Father's work on earth shall be ended, you joyfully pass from grace to glory!

01.04. Separation from the World

Separation from the World

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him!" 1 John 2:15

Such is the injunction of a holy Apostle, one who was largely baptized with his Master's spirit of love, and had nothing in common with those rigid ascetics, who would make one continued act of self-mortification of life. Why, then, has he, or rather, why has the Spirit of God who inspired him, thought it needful to leave on record so stringent a command? Why, but because he knew that the "friendship of the world is enmity with God!" "If anyone loves the world — the love of the Father is not in him." He knew the delicate organization of the spiritual life, and therefore uttered an emphatic warning against its exposure to, the tainted atmosphere of a world that "lies in wickedness."

Well would it be, if the professing followers of Christ were more influenced by this warning, and more habitually realized their calling to be a peculiar people, chosen out of the world, though for a season they are compelled to remain in it.

"How far may I conform to the world without, compromising my Christian profession?" is a question which has often caused great perplexity to the believer. It is impossible to lay down a fixed rule by which all are to be tried; for, in forming a judgment as to a thing that is not in itself sinful, differences of temperament, and social position, with many other considerations, must be taken into account.

"I think," writes one, "the love of the world may show itself very differently in different people — and no one can altogether judge for another, whether they are indulging it or not, in what they do. But I believe conscience tells each child of God in secret. After all, our grand concern is, to aim at close walking with God, leaving Him to order our steps for us, and trusting Him so to order our way as best to enable us to walk closely with Him."

Each one must, therefore, trace out the path of duty for himself, and will always most easily discover it, in proportion as he is most fully walking in the light. But we have always felt, that the question, as given above, is wrongly stated. If we have, indeed, been made to "sit in heavenly places" with a risen Savior, and taught to "set our affections on things above" — we shall inquire, not "How far may I conform to the world" — but "How far may I be separate from the world, without neglecting the special work which God has given me to do?"

It is a dangerous thing to speculate how nearly one may approach to the edge of a precipice, without peril of destruction. We cannot take fire into our bosoms — and expect not to be burned. We cannot play with coal — without having our garments sullied. Besides, if our ears have been opened to distinguish, however faintly, the echoes of the song they sing in glory — we shall care little for the poor music of this world.

It is not so much that we dare not mingle with the world — as that we have no desire to do so. We love the narrow way, strait and painful though it is — better than the broad way, with all its offered charms. We have lost our relish for such worldly pleasures. We are satisfied with the joys which Jesus gives, and we need no other. What have we to do with anything which would obscure our sight of the "hope set before us," on which we desire that our hearts should be entirely fixed? Are we not strangers and pilgrims in this poor world? Do we not profess to seek a "better country, that is a heavenly one?" Then why should we entangle ourselves with that which will only hinder us in our progress? Why should we purposely add a heavy weight upon ourselves as we journey heavenwards? Rather let this be our answer, to all who would persuade us to loiter along the way, "I cannot tarry with you, for I am journeying to my heavenly home!"

But, although it is impossible to do more than lay down broad general rules, already framed for us by the Word of God, which speaks in this matter with no uncertain tone — we would, nevertheless, say a few words, in the spirit of Christian meekness, on a subject which, in the present day, is very frequently discussed. We allude to attendance on Concerts, which is considered by many truly good and pious men to be both innocent and allowable. Far be it from us to sit in judgment on the duty of another. We design only to offer one or two hints, which may perhaps assist the reader in coming to a decision.

It has been urged, in defense of Concerts, that music, which, we are led to suppose, will enter so largely in the employments of the heavenly rest, cannot surely be sinful on earth. No one can for a moment suppose that it is! Music, when ennobled, as it always will be, by being consecrated to God — is one of the greatest external aids to devotion, and often assists the lagging and earth-bound spirit to rise from things below to things above. And even when not sacred, it cannot reasonably be objected to, since it is one of the graceful adornments which make home happy, and often prevents the formation of a taste for more questionable amusements. Music is a strong link in the family bond, and frequently holds together what might else be a scattered flock. Nothing can be useless or hurtful, of which this can be said. Religion never was designed to narrow the circle of our pleasures. It rather purifies and elevates them! "

"Since I have known God in a saving manner," writes Henry Martyn, "painting, poetry, and music, have had charms unknown to me before. I have received what I suppose is a taste for them; for religion has refined my mind, and made it susceptible of impressions from the sublime and beautiful." But this leaves the question of CONCERTS wholly untouched. It is necessary to distinguish between music in the quiet home — and music in the brilliant and crowded assembly-room. In the one case, there are accompaniments, which, in the other, are lacking. Besides, it is manifestly impossible to argue from what may be fitting in a state of holiness and purity — to what may be expedient in a state of imperfection and sin. "Unto the pure, all things are pure; but unto those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure." We must not separate antecedents from their consequences; or forget that what is, in itself, harmless — may become pernicious when it gives occasion to evil. This must always be dreaded here below, but the fear will be needless when sin shall cease to be in Heaven.

Thus, it may be no more sinful, considered per se, to listen to music at a Concert, than it is to handle cards and dice — yet no one can defend gambling. It is against the consequences of both of these things that objections may be brought. It may be said that the two are not alike. The one

tends to refine, and elevate, and soften human nature — the other tends to debase it. Be it so. The fact cannot be contradicted. Nevertheless, we think it can be shown that both lead to evil, though the evil differs in kind, and in degree. To confine ourselves to the subject which we at first proposed to consider: Let every Christian, laying aside prejudice, and with earnest prayer for Divine guidance, calmly and dispassionately inquire whether his own personal piety is not injured by mingling in scenes of worldly amusement. Is not the warmth of his love for Christ chilled? Is not the fine edge of his spiritual affections blunted? Can he solemnly implore God's blessing on what he is about to do? Can he pray that he may enjoy the sense of His presence, may adorn His doctrine, and glorify His name? Can he feel that he is going where he may do his heavenly Master's work — may be made instrumental in converting souls to God, or in strengthening his weaker brethren? Who does not feel that to introduce religious conversation in such a place would be to offend against every rule of propriety? Yet surely, the Christian should not go where the name of Christ is not to be mentioned!

Again, can the believer truly say, that, by time so spent, he is more fitted to enjoy that close and holy fellowship with the Savior, which it should be his one great object to attain? Is he able to return from the Concert-room to the stillness of his prayer closet, and there, without more than ordinary distraction — draw near to his Father's throne, with the consciousness that His eye is resting upon him, as on a beloved and obedient child? And when the sacred page is opened, do not his thoughts still wander to the mirthful scenes which he has left? Instead of his listening to the sweet words of Him who "spoke as never man spoke," do not the strains of music still linger in his ear, and float persistently around him? Does not his spirit seem more than usually chained down to the things of sense and time, and more than ever sluggish in soaring upward, on the wings of faith, towards the fair hopes and joys of another world? And when there are so many unavoidable hindrances, so many rugged and difficult places along the narrow way — we have but little need to add to them by those we fashion for ourselves.

Yet, once more, "The time is short!" The arrows of the destroyer are flying thick and fast around us. Who can tell but that the one may even now be on its way which is to summon us before the judgment-seat? And shall it find us at a Concert? Shall it call us from thence to render up our account unto Him "in whose sight the very heavens are not clean," and "who will not allow any iniquity" in His children? Do we not shrink from the thought? Should we not be ready to exclaim, if, with our bodily eyes, we could see the hand of death outstretched to touch us with its icy fingers, "Not here, oh! not here!" Then, surely, since there is but a step between us and eternity — we ought not to go where we would not wish to die! But even supposing that all these questions could be satisfactorily answered, and allowing that we could venture into such scenes without injury to ourselves individually — there is yet other ground to fall back upon. Let us not forget the Apostle Paul's maxim, "All things are lawful unto me — but all things are not expedient." He abstained even from that which was in itself innocent — lest by any means he might cast a stumbling-block in the way of a weaker brother. Would that we all were partakers of his spirit!

We believe that the example of those professing Christians who over-step the boundary line between light and darkness, is productive of very great evil. The world is keen-eyed to discover inconsistency. It is quick to mark the slightest blemish in the symmetry of Christian character. And, as such, it will not fail to stigmatize the very least deviation from its own severe and lofty standard of judgment. Its honest and hearty esteem will invariably be given to an "undiluted Christianity" —

in preference to a halting compromise between two opinions, notwithstanding the former may seem to be regarded with aversion and dislike.

Besides, if we give in, even a little, to the customs and fashions of those around us who know not God — we shall find it difficult to assign a stopping-place. Where shall we fix the line of demarcation? If we go so far — then why may we not go a few steps farther? If we ourselves do not argue thus, others will do it for us. Thus some "lingerer" may say, "Miss _____ was at the Concert last week; she is religious — and yet she did not think it wrong to go. So, surely, there can be no harm done if I go to the ball."

We say nothing whatever as to the correctness of this reasoning — but only that it is extremely likely to be employed. And so, it may be, holy impressions are effaced — the warning voice of the Spirit is quelled, and His gracious influence resisted. Then one downward step follows another, until the last conducts to eternal damnation! One link after another is added to the chain, until it becomes, at length, so strong that the captive is held fast forever!

Christian professor, are you guiltless? Oh! it is a fearful thing to turn back some inquiring one, who, perhaps, was not far from the kingdom of God! Take these considerations home, dear reader, to your own heart and conscience. Spread them before God in prayer, and ask Him to make you willing to obey Him in all things, at whatever cost to your own desires and inclinations.

If you remain still unconvinced, we can say no more, for God forbid that we should judge of another's liberty. Only take heed, "lest through your liberty, that weak brother perish for whom Christ died." Without wishing to dictate or judge, we would affectionately entreat Christians to consider whether, in going further than this, they are not endangering their own spirituality, and making the narrow way still more perplexing for the weak ones of the flock.

We have made no allusion to DANCING, nor is it necessary that we should do so. The defender of the Concert cannot honestly pass a severe judgment upon the Dance — and the converse is equally true. The arguments for and against, though slightly differing, are alike weak, and alike strong in both cases. Both, taking into account the preparation required — involve a large expenditure of time and money, given for very different purposes. Both are alike dissipating to the mind, and pernicious to the spiritual health. But if we have not succeeded in showing the inconsistency of the one, we have little hope of doing so as respects the other.

Once more we, say — let us not be misunderstood, as uncharitably branding the defenders and attenders of Concerts as deceivers of themselves and others. We believe that there are among them many who are sincerely and earnestly desirous to "walk as children of light." Yet, we would beg them to consider whether they are thus aided in so doing, or whether, instead of "laying aside every weight" — they are not rather taking up some heavy weights which are by no means necessary.

But, after all, our main business is with the heart. If the root is right — the branches will take care of themselves. Look inward, then, dear reader, and see that the mainspring is true and steady. If it is not, all your efforts at external regulation will be useless. You must put your heart into the hands of the great Master-Worker, to be controlled and governed — and then the action of the whole will be harmonious. When the magnet of your affections points to Him who is truly your guiding Star — then the attraction of earthly things will scarcely have power to make it tremble.

If some of the holy men of a former generation could once more return to the scene of their labors and sorrows — what would they find among those who profess to follow in their steps? Would they witness the same decision, the same faithfulness, the same unyielding adherence to principles which involve contempt and scorn, the same resolute separation from everything that is even questionable in its tendency — which characterized their own walk in the world? Would they not rather be grieved by the levity, the trifling, the inconsistency which are too often displayed — even by those whose names are enrolled in the list of professing Christians? Would they not be amazed at the slender barrier which divides those who are in the world — from those who say that they have renounced it? Would they not be bewildered by the strange mixture of good and evil which is presented by many who bear the name of Christ; one day to be found in the committee-room of some religious society — and the next at a dance; one day at a prayer-meeting — and the next day at a concert?

Deeply would their hearts be saddened by these things, and mournfully would they exclaim, "How has the fine gold become dim!"

It is to be feared that the religion of the day is, in many respects, of too easy a nature. We know . . .

little of sacrifice,

little of deliberate counting the cost, and

little of forsaking all for Christ's sake!

It is true that this is comparatively little needed as it was in by-gone times. The open confession of Christ does not now involve, as once it did, the estrangement of friends, and the ridicule of acquaintances. The days are passed when the bare suspicion of having become a "Methodist," was sufficient to exclude from the pale of polite society. Now the tide has set in a contrary, direction, and, to use the quaint, but forcible language of Bunyan, "Religion now goes in silver slippers." But it may be questioned whether the cause of God has, in reality, gained much by the change. The calm is more perilous than the storm — the world's smile is more dangerous than its frown. The river which is deep and rapid when hemmed in by rocks on either hand, becomes sluggish when its course lies through the fertile plain.

Truly the Church of God, in these latter days, has need to watch that she be not found lingering in the plains of Sodom, instead of pressing forward, with girded loins and hastening step, to the Zoar which she has set out to seek. Let her take heed, lest He who "walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks," visits her suddenly with the rod of His wrath, and lest her slumber be broken by the unlooked-for coming of the Bridegroom.

But, as the Church is composed of individual believers, let each one of us search and see whether the voice of conscience harmonizes with the dictates of the Word of God. Do not hesitate, my reader, fearlessly to rank yourself on the Lord's side. Listen to the command to "come out and be separate," and be assured that, in obeying it, you will experience a peace such as the world cannot give. The joy that is "unspeakable and full of glory," will never be yours if you tarry upon the debatable ground.

Go forward! Beware of that dwarfish Christianity which is content with simply having a "name to live." Rest in nothing short of a full participation in all the blessings and privileges of the new covenant. Seek to know your place in your Father's heart of love — and then no earthly thing will tempt you thence. Oh, leave the broken cisterns of this poor world, which can never quench your spirit's fevered thirst. Cast yourself upon the fullness of God's grace and mercy, and pray that His own hand may satisfy you with the riches that are treasured up in Christ.

Pray that you may be "strengthened, established, settled;" not like the slender sapling, which is swayed this way and that by every changing wind, but like the full-grown tree, whose roots have penetrated deep and far, and whose boughs are laden with goodly fruit. Live so that all may know "whose you are, and whom you serve."

Remember that, of every one who has enlisted under the "banner of Christ crucified" — it is required to fight manfully against a triple rank of enemies, "sin, the world, and the devil." Therefore, "take unto you the whole armor of God." Let "Christ in you" be the watchword of your warfare, and the crown of glory the prize which you toil to win. This, this is "the victory that overcomes the world, even your faith" — faith which enables you to dwell, even while on earth, so near the unseen world, that when, at length, you are called to go thither, you may find it no strange country, but a long-loved and familiar home!

01.05. Friendship and its Responsibilities

Friendship and its Responsibilities

If it is true that "love is power," then it is no less true that power involves responsibility. Every talent is to be accounted for, to Him who has bestowed it — and there is none more weighty than that which has been entrusted to the keeping of every human being — the power of loving. Other talents are distributed (and for wise reasons) with an unequal hand — but the power of loving is given alike to all. Even as the joyous sunshine, which rests so lovingly both upon the rich palace — and the poor cottage; on the quiet valley — and the rugged mountainside. The heart that dwells within a royal mansion may throb beneath a queenly robe — but it differs in nothing from that of the lowly maiden who fills her pitcher at the village well. One invisible chain encircles them both; and, though its links are silken — they are none the less strong. It is the love which thrills in every human bosom, like some delicate flower blooming in the midst of desolation, a relic of beauty departed.

Hence, however, arises the responsibility. All can love — therefore all can influence. And not only so, but all must influence. It is a necessity of their being, inseparable from their very existence. Consciously or unconsciously — all must attach others to themselves, and draw them with them on their way, whether it is upwards or downwards. It is a solemn thought, which may well make us pause and tremble, as we inquire, "If those I love were to follow my guidance — then where should I lead them?" Oh! where? But it is not of influence generally that we would speak. It is a wide subject, on which we cannot at present enter. We would touch only upon the influence of our friendships.

Perhaps, among all earthly blessings, there is none greater than that of Christian friendship. Assuredly there is none which brings with it a greater amount of happiness. And the friendships of the young are true, for young hearts entwine around each other like clasping tendrils; and, in after years, when time and change have done their work, the recollection of early attachments is still laid up in memory's holiest place. On what hours is it that our thoughts love best to linger? Is it not on those which we have spent in days gone by, with friends who, it may be, have long gone from us to their long home. Their memory is with us still, and steals back upon our wearied spirits like a blessing from above. And when, in the summer twilight, or around the winter hearth, we converse together of the things which belong to our peace; when we speak of the home to which we go, and of the Friend on whose arm we lean by the way; when eye meets eye in the glance of kindly sympathy, the language of thoughts too deep for speech; when words die away into silence, and each spirit is solemnized by the felt presence of an unseen Savior — do we not feel that the present "communion of saints" on earth is, indeed, a type and earnest of their future communion, where the spirits of the just shall be made perfect? Do not our hearts glow with gratitude, as we take from the Savior's loving hand a blessing which He himself has consecrated? for it is written, that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."

Yes, there is joy in earthly love — but also there is responsibility. It is to be feared that we do not sufficiently remember this. We look upon our friendships too much as the things of time, forgetting that they are but the links of a chain which stretches forward into eternity! How much may depend upon the forming, or not forming, of a single acquaintance! How greatly may the circle of our influence be widened and opened out by it! How vast may be its results for the future, our own and that of others, both here and hereafter!

Surely we have need to pray that our friendships may be sanctified, that our Father's approving smile may rest upon them, and that they may strengthen and stir us up in our journey Zionwards!

Among the greatest responsibilities of friendship, we must reckon the correspondence which it involves. There are many people, useful and well-meaning, who imagine that letter-writing is a mere waste of time. And so, indeed, it is, and must be — if restricted to empty compliments and heartless formality; or, if it is nothing more than even the expression of deep and heartfelt affection, or the interchange of thought on the passing events of this world. Surely it is unworthy of immortal beings thus to fritter away precious hours, which all the wealth of worlds can never buy back again — in recording with deliberate earnestness the airy trifles of common life! But letter-writing may be turned into work for God. Through it, we may deliver a message of earnest warning to those who are still afar off from Him, which He, to whom the weakness of the instrument is as nothing — may make a sharp shaft winged from His quiver! Absence, and the tender feelings called up by the sight of well-known hand-writing, will give it greater force, and it may be the means by which the Good Shepherd will bring some straying wanderer back to His fold. And though it may be carelessly read and hastily thrown aside, and may seem to produce no effect until long years have passed away, when, perhaps we ourselves are laid in the quiet "sleeping place" — yet the bread that was cast upon the waters in prayer and faith shall surely be found to the Savior's glory, though after many days. And whether or not our efforts are thus blessed, our own souls are delivered from "blood-guiltiness."

Again, in the midst of all the "changes and chances of this mortal life," in the heavy weight of woes which often presses so sorely upon sorrowing humanity, the letters which we write may be as cups of cold water, by which some fainting one may be refreshed and braced for the difficulties of the journey. Can we not all remember the time when a letter has been to us as a gleam of sunshine on a dark and dreary day, bringing just the message which our souls most needed, so that we could not but recognize in it the over-ruling hand of a gracious Father?

"Letters," says one now gone to her rest, "are God's messengers, awakening, comforting, and refreshing the world-wearied and the sorrowful — if we will only send them forth in His name, and write them with a single eye to His glory. In this life we may never know the good that they do — but we shall know it in the life to come, while thankfully ascribing it to God's grace."

There are some to whom correspondence seems to be assigned as a special mission. God has put into their hands, the pen of a ready writer, which He has commanded them to use for Him. Let them not seem or despise their work because it seems of small importance. It is that which their Master gives — and this makes it true and holy. Though they may be prevented from the performance of active duty — they may yet, as they pass through the world, write words of counsel and encouragement which many an aching heart shall bless. Only let them do it simply and lovingly, not seeking to exalt self, but to glorify their Savior, and to "build up" others in their "most

holy faith." Let them not forget fervently to pray that they may be taught both what to say, and how to say it — and that God would be pleased to speak through them, that which He would have spoken. Without this, all their efforts will be of no avail.

And, surely, the letters of those who profess to be "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," should never be without a word of the place which is to be their permanent abode! The time and strength with which they are written, are not our own — they belong to Him who lived, and died, and rose again, that we might henceforth live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him. Let us not, then, in this matter, be unmindful of the Apostolic injunction, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do — do all to the glory of God!" Henceforth, reader, let your letters be "sanctified by the Word of God, and by prayer." Nor must the necessity for firm — yet gentle faithfulness in reproof, be omitted in our enumeration of the responsibilities attendant upon friendship. It is one which is but seldom acknowledged in practice, since it involves the performance of a painful duty. Still, when Christian principle demands it — we must not shrink back. The love which would allow the fault or the error of a friend to pass unnoticed, from a fear of giving pain — is, at best, but a refined kind of selfishness. Better to inflict a temporary wound, than to permit the formation of a gangrene which may endanger spiritual life! Better, far better, to risk coldness and displeasure, nay, even the loss of affection — than to have a soul required at our hands. But such a result need scarcely be feared, at least where the friendship has been formed "in the Lord." If it has not, its loss need hardly be regretted. On the other hand, however, the utmost caution is needed before entering on an office so delicate as that of a Mentor. We must beware that our accusation is well grounded; that the fault of our friend has not been exaggerated by that many-tongued report which is the author of so much mischief in social and domestic life. And, "considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted," let us do all in the fullness of that charity which "think no evil" — but which, in spite of unpromising appearances, "believes and hopes all things."

Let us despise no tact, no sympathy, no grace of manner — which may make an unwelcome message the more acceptable, so that love may be enabled to heal the wound which love is compelled to inflict.

Above all, let us seek for more of the mind that was in Him, who, while he hated the sin — yet yearned in unutterable tenderness over the sinner, conveying the assurance of pardon in the very look which sealed a sense of guilt upon the conscience.

We have spoken incidentally of sympathy — -not, however, forgetting that, without it, there can be no true friendship. We allude not merely to that congeniality of taste and disposition which sometimes attaches us to particular people by some mysterious affinity — this is involuntary, and beyond our own control. But there is a voluntary sympathy, by which we learn to enter fully into the every-day joys and sorrows, difficulties and hopes — of those with whom we are thrown into contact. It is a power which belongs, naturally, but to few, for we are generally too deeply absorbed with ourselves, to pay genuine attention to the affairs of others. But it may be cultivated, and it will go far towards increasing our influence and our ability to do good.

"Sympathy can only be obtained," however, to use words more forcible than our own, "by living with Him who is perfect sympathy, and deeply drinking of that well of life, which flows from His pierced side. It is all in vain to look for it in ourselves — for it is not there. We must go out of ourselves for it, and the surest way to obtain it is, to feel that we are utterly without it. We are thus

led to ask of Him, 'who gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not.'

Let us, then, earnestly pray that He Himself would teach us to "rejoice with those who rejoice, and to weep with those who weep." And this not in great things only, but also in small. It is easy, comparatively, to give sympathy in real trials — or in those which we consider such. But when there is a demand for it in what we are pleased to regard as trifles, we are apt to become impatient and hasty. But, without genuine sympathy, it is impossible for us to say what is or is not trifling. That which we would think so — which we would pass by without a moment's notice — may press darkly and heavily upon the spirit of another, becoming, while it is borne in uncomplaining silence, a burden almost too grievous to be endured. Yet the load may be lightened by the touch of a loving hand, and the cloud dispelled by the magic of a kindly word.

Besides, "Nothing can be a trifle which either tries another person or affects their welfare. So, from the lack of that little act of self-denial of ours, we may have prevented ourselves from the delight and blessing of helping them when we gladly would have done so." Oh, let us beware lest we thus neglect the fragments of work which our Father gives even to the weakest of His children! We must not pass by an open door of usefulness, however lowly it may seem to be, since we do not know where it may ultimately conduct us.

We need scarcely reckon intercessory prayer as among the responsibilities of friendship. It is rather a necessity laid upon us; for, when we kneel to ask blessings for ourselves, it is impossible to forget those whose names are engraved on our heart of hearts. And often our restless and yearning anxieties for them can be stilled in no other way than by laying them at our Father's feet, and leaving them there. And when long weary miles of distance come between us and them — when love is powerless to guard and guide — then prayer can avail still to throw around them an invisible shield which no evil can break through.

We believe that the blessings of intercessory prayer will never be fully understood until that last great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and when we shall become aware how much we have owed to the petitions of some — whom, in the flesh, perhaps, we have scarcely known, but who have been unwearied in their mention of us to the great Intercessor within the veil. How many dangers have been averted! What abundant showers of blessing have been granted! How often have our trembling feet been upheld in the path of life! Let us arouse ourselves to greater diligence in this most important work. It is almost akin to that in which our blessed Lord Himself is now engaged; for it is written of Him that, before His Father's throne, "He ever lives to make intercession for us."

Let us examine ourselves — let us search and see whether our consciences acquit us in this matter. Could we say, looking back on life from the brink of the grave, that "intercessory prayer is a duty in which we have failed less than in any other?" It is one which remains to us, when all others are taken away — for even the sick and the aged can be praying missionaries, and then can strengthen those who are bearing the "burden and heat of the day."

Let no sloth, no indolence — hinder us in its performance, or tempt us to reckon it of small moment. Let each friendship supply us with a special errand to the throne of grace. Let us spread before "Our Father, who is in Heaven," the needs, the fears, the sorrows of our loved ones — until our own souls are quickened by the life-giving Spirit, and our hearts glow with love to all the

scattered members of the one great family. He to whom we pray will surely give to them and to us an answer of peace, and bestow seven-fold upon ourselves the blessings which we implore for others. With very many whom we frequently meet, it would be impossible for us ever to form friendships. We interchange with them the ordinary courtesies of life, and here the matter ends. Often it is best so that it should be, for only those whose real worth has been tried and proved, should be admitted into the inner circle of affection. Having a "large number of intimate friends," may generally be translated into having very few, or none at all. But even these acquaintances, we must not rashly break off. We do not know to what they may lead. Perhaps they are the materials with which we are by-and-by to perform a most important work. A time of sickness and sorrow may come, when we may be permitted to draw nearer to them, and to speak of the Heavenly Friend who "binds up the broken-hearted." No effort is useless which may aid in preparing the way for this.

Time spent in social fellowship is not wasted, if only we are watchful for opportunities of doing our Master's work, and if we may thus, hereafter, be enabled to do it more effectually. Let us not sever the most slender link of love, since it may, one day, be the means of leading a sinner home to God. But friendship may become idolatry. The gift may take the place of the Giver, and the heart entwine itself too closely around the things of earth — forgetting that they are but as the "flowers by the wayside." There are some dispositions which seem formed to cling. Like the ivy, they are ever catching to the props which come in their way, and need many a lesson before they can be taught to "cease from man." Such have many trials, which they only know — for this idolatry is what God will not allow, and, however sharp the discipline, He will have it utterly rooted out. "The idols He will utterly abolish!" and, though He may be compelled to use means from which the flesh shrinks back in fear, He will not "spare for the crying" of His children. Now He employs one method, now another; sometimes it is separation by death or distance, and sometimes the estrangement of those who have been long and fondly trusted, but He has always one end in view — to teach us to "arise and depart, for this poor world is not our rest!" It is a needed lesson, for the "nether springs" of earthly love must be dried up before we will seek to the "upper springs" of heavenly consolation. But let us beware how we thus draw down on ourselves our Father's chastening rod. He "does not afflict willingly," but He is compelled to do it by our obstinacy and perverseness. Let us listen to His warning voice, while yet it sounds but at a distance, lest we compel Him to draw near and arouse us by a stroke which shall make our very heart-strings quiver.

There are, perhaps, few trials greater than that of disappointment in those we love. When we meet after long separation it is most painful to find that their character and feelings and sympathies are changed — while our affection may remain undiminished. We are repulsed and thrown back upon ourselves, and it is well if estrangement does not follow. Yet it is impossible that it should be otherwise. It is impossible that the course of years, or even of months, should pass over and leave no mark behind it — and we must remember that the stream of time, which has borne others forward, has certainly not left us stationary.

We too, are changed from our former selves, so that it is in every way likely that the sensibilities of our friend has received no less a shock than our own.

Besides, here below it is in vain to look for perfect sympathy. One human spirit cannot take the measure of another, or understand language which, to it, is an unknown tongue. If we could once be firmly fixed in this persuasion, we would be saved from much suffering. But the heart is ever going forth from itself — in the restless search for that which earth cannot supply! And it is well, indeed, so that it should be, or the wilderness would be too bright, and the place of our exile would become the place of our rest. But we "seek a better country," where love is perfected, and where the withering breath of disappointment can never come. And even now, we have the utmost sympathy in that abiding Friend who "sticks closer than a brother," and on whose upholding arm we may lean without the fear that it will fail us like the broken reeds of earth. With such provision for the journey, and such a prospect at its close — may we not well rejoice and be glad, even when our eyes are dimmed with weeping? The cloud of sorrow may overshadow us — but faith can discern the brightness of the rainbow which lingers around it, the pledge of unfailing love. When "the eyes of our understanding are enlightened," we learn to distinguish the "Rainbow braided on the wreaths of storm."

Let us trust God's heart — even in darkness. Let us hope, even when earthly hopes depart. We can never be lonely, never be forsaken, if only we possess the presence and blessing of Him who has left this cheering word as His parting promise to His church, "Surely I am with you always — to the very end of the age!"

01.06. Redeeming the Time!

Redeeming the Time!

"Shall the God-given hours be scattered

Like the leaves upon the plain?

Shall the blossoms die unwatered

By the drops of heavenly rain?

"Then, no longer idly dreaming,

Shall I fling my years away,

But, each precious hour redeeming,

Wait for the eternal day."

Horatius Bonar

"Redeeming the time!" says one of our fair readers, glancing at the title of this chapter, "Time is of no value to me — what have I to do with such a subject?" A great deal, dear friend, as we hope to prove to you — for it is one which concerns you more nearly than you seem to imagine. The sunny days of youth and health were not given to you for nothing. Each one is a talent to be traded with. It comes to you hearing this inscription, "The time is short!" It will be required at your hands by the Master, who, when He comes, will surely demand His own with interest. All this you very well know; for we speak now to those who have been awakened to a sense of their high destiny as immortal beings, and are anxious that their conduct should, in all things, be such "as befits the Gospel of Christ." The "life they live in the flesh," they would live henceforth "by the faith of the Son of God," and, remembering that they were not "redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ" — they would pass the time of their sojourning here as strangers and pilgrims, looking for a better and an abiding habitation.

Nevertheless, even to these it frequently happens, by some strange circumstance, either that they altogether overlook the duty of economizing time — or that their whole life is one ceaseless and breathless struggle to make their work and their time agree. In either case, there is something radically wrong! For while, on the one hand, we cannot, without incurring a weight of guilt — waste the precious hours which our Father has given us, in which to complete our allotted task — it is, on the other, equally displeasing to Him, when we allow ourselves to be hurried and fretted in our work, and to lose the calm and restful spirit in which we shall ever best promote His glory. Both extremes are to be avoided — but the first is the one into which we are more liable to fall. Of it, therefore, let us speak. Have you ever considered, dear reader, the real meaning of those three words which stand at the head of this page, and form a part of the Apostle Paul's solemn counsels to the Ephesian Christians? Did you ever think of them as specially addressed to you — as

"written for your admonition?" Yes! doubtless you have, and, when you say that to you, time is of no value, your words must be understood in a comparative sense only. You mean that it is not to you money and life, as it is to many. But you fill it up, in general, very usefully, and are honestly desirous to devote it to the service of your risen Lord. And yet, do not be startled — you still contrive to waste a great deal of it in the course of the day. You spend, idly and uselessly, a great many moments, which, added one to another, amount to a sum-total which would, perhaps, shock you, if you could be persuaded to look it fairly in the face.

We believe that, to go back to the good old custom of calling things by their right names, the charge of idleness might very truthfully be brought against many of our fair sisters. Not systematic idleness — not sitting from morn until eve with folded hands — but the habitual wasting of the fragments of time, "Those parings of precious duration, those leavings of days and remnants of hours, which so many sweep out into the waste of existence."

How often are these spent in mere chit-chat, in wondering what to do next, deciding first on this, and then on that, and, finally, on nothing at all, because "it is not worth while beginning anything just now" — or in doing slowly and dreaming what might be finished in half the time, if it were set about in hearty, wakeful energy.

We feel constrained, in all Christian faithfulness, to lift up our voice against this great evil. It is more than an evil — it is a sin most displeasing in the sight of God. It mars the usefulness, and leaves an unsightly blemish on the character of many an otherwise lovely Christian. It will demand a solemn reckoning in the great day of account. You have no more right, reader, to the time which you thus foolishly and sinfully squander — than you have to your neighbor's goods. It is not your own, nor was it given you to be employed as you yourself think proper. It is a trust committed to you by God! Oh, see that you do not abuse it! You are wasting what millions, now in the regions of eternal despair, would give worlds to buy back again — what you yourself will regret with tears of bitter repentance, when, on a deathbed, you look back upon a life in which so little has been done. Be warned in time. Break the chains of this ensnaring habit before they are wound so closely about you that you cannot get free from them! Remember that every day these chains of indolence are riveted more firmly. They are light and easy now, but, before long, they will grow into iron fetters! Your only hope of safety is in casting them from you at once, with the determination of a renewed will, and the heaven-imparted strength given to all who truly seek it. But how are you to "redeem the time?" Fully to answer this question would only be to echo what has already been so often said and written. We would, therefore, only repeat, "Gather up the fragments — that nothing be lost!" Be prompt. If a thing is to be done, don't be satisfied with talking about it — but do it, and "do it with all your might." Be punctual. Never gain the character of being a drag on the wheels — the last to make your appearance at a Dorcas-meeting — the last to join the family circle at dinner, to the ruffling of Papa's patience and your own temper — the last of an excursion party to reach the appointed place of meeting, keeping the rest in a fever of anxiety, lest you should be too late. "Always the last!" Unenviable distinction! Do not be the slave of circumstances. Mark out for yourself a settled plan of action, and keep to it. This, of course, it will be impossible always to do. In a town, especially, interruptions are ever occurring which you can neither foresee nor avoid. Every "plan" must be defective which does not leave a large space for these. Here, indeed, lies the useful discipline of every-day life, in the constant warring against selfishness which it compels one to maintain. But still, "things cannot go well with us while it is chance, and not our own conscious

purpose, which determines the employment of each hour as it arrives. We cannot, indeed, help yielding to circumstances — but, even in doing so, we may act from the deliberate decision of our own mind. We need not allow our duties to be forced upon us in a succession over which we exercise no control. We may look before us, and intelligently determine what we shall do, and when we shall do it." Be persevering. Many begin, and leave unfinished what they begin. There is no better recipe for "killing time" than this. You know it is a bad habit — then conquer it!

We could add much more, but it is not needed. We would only remind you of the lines associated with happy memories of childhood, "Satan finds some mischief still

For idle hands to do."

Ponder them well, and act upon them. A woman's fingers need never be unoccupied. She may always have on hand some profitable reading to fill up the little moments that might otherwise run to waste. We fear our venerated great-grandmothers would be shocked by the very small space allotted to useful needlework, by their descendants of the present generation. They would tell us that to sew neatly and mend well, is of far more importance than any mere social accomplishment, and much more likely to make the wheels of domestic life run smoothly, without jolt or disturbance. Above all, they would impress upon us, both by precept and example, that idleness is, more than anything else (considered in connection with the consequences to which it often leads) disgraceful to a woman.

Remember, then, for your admonition and encouragement, that "the hand of the diligent makes rich." While you desire to be "fervent in spirit," strive also to be "not slothful in business." Yet let your diligence be free from hustle and bustle. Those who are always in a hurry never accomplish much. They do — and they undo. In their headlong speed, they frequently stumble and fall. Or they stop from very weariness, and so allow the quiet, plodding, patient workers to overtake, and far outstrip them.

But, WHY are you to "redeem the time?" Because "the days are evil" — because iniquity abounds, and there is need that all the workers for God should be awake and active. Because the days are few, for a voice from Heaven is heard, "Surely, I am coming quickly!" Because the reward is great — an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away!"

"Tis not for man to trifle! Life is brief,

And sin is here.

Our age is but the falling of a leaf,

A dropping tear.

We have no time to sport away the hours,

All must be earnest in a world like ours.

"Not many lives, but only one, have we,

One, only one!

How sacred should that one life ever be,

That narrow span!

Day after day filled up with blessed toil,

Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil."

Horatius Bonar

01.07. The Sensitive Plant

The Sensitive Plant

"The tenderest heart Your hands have made,
Beneath Your rule may rest;
For He who made it for Himself,
Knows what will shield it best.
The feeblest lover of Your word,
Dwells safely in Your breast!"

A.L. Waring

When, in dewy morning or quiet even-tide, we wander, in thoughtful mood, in our garden, or along the fields and lanes of the country, to soothe our troubled spirits by the sweet influences which surround us on every side, and to read holy lessons from the fair pages of nature's open book — we can scarcely fail to recognize the many types which present themselves, of the different varieties of nature to be found among men. The oak, in its gnarled strength — is contrasted with the silvery birch, whose light branches bend in yielding grace. The dahlia and the hollyhock haughtily challenge your notice — while the rich fragrance of the passing breeze alone tells you that the violet is near. The gorgeous cactus is thoroughly impracticable to all your approaches — but many a lowly herb rewards the hand that has crushed it, with a delicate perfume. The sunflower stands alone, in proud defiance of all support — while the ivy clings persistently to any object within its reach.

Look around you now, dear reader, among those whom God has given you to love, or with whom you are thrown into frequent contact — and see if you cannot find among these the anti-types of those plants mentioned above. Some, like the oak, can stand alone and unsupported, bravely and grandly enduring the fury of the storm — others rather resemble the ivy which twines around it; while yet others find their fitting emblem in the trembling mimosa flower, which shrinks and withers at a touch. It is to these last that we would now address a few words of tender and affectionate counsel — in His spirit of whom it is said, that the "bruised reed shall He not break — and the smoking flax shall He not quench."

It may be that, from peculiarity of temperament, and natural constitution, you may be exposed to trials, which others, of stronger mold, can scarcely comprehend, and with which they have but little sympathy. Your lot may be cast, outwardly at least, amid the bright things of life; you may have many to love and care for you, many to throw around you the shield of protection from the rough breath of a world with which you are not fitted to struggle. And yet, in sadness and loneliness of spirit, you may be bearing a hidden cross, which presses none the less heavily because it is one which few can perceive, and none can lighten. You may know little of what the world calls trial —

little of sorrow in its outward and tangible shape; this, you think, would be easier to bear. But you are weighed down by a succession of little, fretting annoyances, which most effectually destroy your peace and comfort.

Nominally, at least, they are little; many would scarcely consider them worth a moment's notice; but to you they are real, all the more so, because you must bear them alone. A word, a look, even the tone of a voice — is sufficient to bring the hot tears to your eyes, and to send a sickening pang through your heart, which amounts almost to physical pain. Life seems, for the time, so cheerless — so cold, and dark, and dreary — that were it not for the sinfulness of the thought, you would almost exclaim with Tennyson's Mariana,

"I am weary, I am weary,

And I wish that I were dead!" And yet, at the same time, the person who has caused you so much distress, may be utterly unconscious of it. The hasty word, which sent a jarring thrill through every nerve, may have been forgotten as soon as uttered. The cold or averted look, which made you close yourself up like the leaves of the sensitive plant when it has been rudely touched — may have had its origin in some cause with which you had not the most remote connection. But this, you think, only makes the matter worse, since it is impossible you can be spared from suffering which is inflicted in ignorance.

Then there is no one who can understand all this. You feel that the burden you have to bear would be lightened if it could be shared by another. But where are you to look for any one who would treat it as more than a mere nervous imagination, which, albeit with due gravity and politeness, they would ridicule and pass over. You would be told, if you ventured to confide in relative or friend — that you were creating misery for yourself, and that if real sorrow came upon you — you would soon cease to feel the pressure of these imagined ones.

It may be so, and yet, in the meantime, you cannot but feel, that these "imagination" are as real as anything you could have. And so you shrink back into yourself, with the weary feeling that you are alone in the world, and must pursue, through life, a solitary and untrodden path.

Yet there are many, in whose hearts you have a warm place, and whose affection you return in its full measure — but you cannot admit them into the inner life — to share in its joys, or to sympathize in its sorrows. Your fellowship with them, on all ordinary matters, is free and unrestrained — but as to anything that concerns yourself, your lips are sealed! Your spirit turns aside from them — you wrap the mantle of reserve more resolutely around you, and live, more completely than ever, in a world of your own.

Yet how gladly would you throw down the barrier! How your spirit yearns for companionship! How willingly would you pour out your trials and difficulties into some tender and sympathizing ear! At length, perhaps, your wish is granted. A friend is given you, in whom, after many a fruitless search, you find one whose thoughts seem to have been cast in the same mold as your own; who has experienced the same difficulties, and passed through the same discipline. In the sweet interchange of thought and feeling — in the calm repose of a faithful and true-hearted love — you feel as if your cup of happiness were well-near full. Your whole soul is poured out in one wild and idolatrous attachment, and for once your heart seems to rest and be satisfied. You feel as if now, surely, your long yearnings would be stilled; as if a tie so pure, so sacred, must be a pledge of that

yet higher communion hereafter to be enjoyed by the redeemed in glory — when the dross of earth shall be purged away, and all shall "know, even as they are known."

Oh, it is a blessed thing so to love! But at length the hour of parting draws on. One is taken — and the other left. One taken to the rest of the inner sanctuary — the other left to the toil and labor of the outer court. Or it may be separation by distance. It is not often, that in this "waste howling wilderness," our paths lie long near together. More frequently they diverge in different directions, as the will of our Father in Heaven may appoint. He assigns to each a separate corner of the vineyard to keep and occupy. And so the heart is again left in its lonely desolation — only now more lonely and more desolate than before. Then return the aching and the void, the yearning for fellowship, and the "earnest questioning for treasures fled," which seem to you to be inseparable from your very existence. You feel as if earth could never again be bright — as if no other tie could take the place of that which has been broken.

But, in time, your spirit seeks for itself another abiding-place, which seems so firm that you imagine it can "never be removed." Yet this, too, is rudely shaken, and again and again you hear the summons, pealing to the inmost recesses of your soul, "to arise and depart — for this is not your rest, for it is polluted."

Well, indeed, will it be for you if, at length, taught by bitter experience that no earthly love can really satisfy — you turn, in lowly thankfulness, from the streams to the fountain — and find your only blessedness in the "Friend who sticks closer than a brother." This is a melancholy picture. Some may think that it has been overdrawn, but others will, we believe, at once recognize in it the outline of their own individual history. It has been faithfully given, with no desire to conceal or to gloss over the blemishes which it contains. And now comes the inquiry — How is this sad state of things to be remedied? For it is not enough, dear reader, that you confess and bewail it, and then fold your hands in indolence and half despair, contenting yourself with the thought that what has been, must continue to be. If, however, you are really desirous of amendment, you will admit a few words of honest and homely advice from one who can fully appreciate the difficulties of your present position, and would gladly aid you in extricating yourself from them. In the first place, then, remember, that though you must to a certain extent retain through life the temperament which is natural to you — it is, nevertheless, in your power greatly to modify and strengthen it. To this end, therefore, do not expose yourself unnecessarily to softening influences — for you they are not needed. The tone of your mind needs to be rendered more firm and elastic, rather than weakened.

Hence, do not indulge yourself in the indiscriminate reading of works of fiction. Your imagination is strong enough already — it does not require cultivation. Such books will only give you false and weak views of life, and utterly unfit you for your own place in it. They will lead you to suppose yourself a kind of heroine of romance, in whom center all the evils and misfortunes common to mankind in general. Viewed through such a medium, your nearest and kindest friends will seem hard and unfeeling — and you will learn either to look upon them with contempt, as having nothing in common with your own higher nature, or to regard them with sentiments very nearly allied to dislike. The contrast between the matter-of-fact occurrences of every-day existence — and the delicious day-dreams of the novels in which you delight to indulge, will become at length so marked, as to be absolutely unendurable. You will shrink back from life with weariness and disgust. Thus, imagined and self-created distress will be added to real life difficulties. But if, on the

other hand, you will steadily apply yourself to a course of judiciously chosen and useful reading, requiring, not merely eyesight, but study and concentration of thought — you will derive from it incalculable benefit. It will enable you to correct those erroneous estimates of men and things, from which so much misapprehension arises — and teach you thankfully to take the world as you find it. It will exercise, and, in exercising, strengthen the intellectual powers — and will supply you with resources within yourself, so that you will cease so acutely to feel the disagreeables which press upon you from without. It will furnish healthful employment for many an hour, which might, otherwise, be spent in idle conversation, or still more idle reverie. Your mind will be prevented from preying upon itself — a process which, as you may suppose, will contribute little to your happiness. But we need say no more by way of inducement. Wage war with sloth, and laziness, and long habits of mental indolence.

"Struggle — you are better for the strife —

The very energy will hearten you."

Only persevere fairly for one month, and at the end of it you will have no inclination to give up. Life will be no longer tasteless and insipid. New hopes, new objects, will spring up around you. Every step of progress will pave the way for others which are to follow — and, before long, you will find that the best prescription for every kind of morbid unhappiness — is work!

Or, if you will not pursue this course, strike out another and a better. Take your Bible in your hand, and go to the haunts of poverty and distress. Carry the bread of life to the perishing. Gather the outcast into the fold of refuge. Raise the veil which hides from many an eye the sad realities of life, and see if the sight of them does not charm or shame away half your own sorrow. Listen to the tale of misery, track out its proofs, witness it with your own eyes — and then set yourself with loving heart and ready hand to relieve it. The blessing of those who are ready to perish will surely be yours, and the cup of cold water shall never lose its reward.

Or, without at all overstepping the boundaries of your own home, you may find in household duties abundant employment which will prove a most wholesome corrective of boredom in any of its developments. Very distasteful they may seem to you — very repulsive to your finer feelings — yet, nevertheless, they form a most important part of every woman's education, and a due attention to them will enable you, at some future time, if not now — to contribute, most essentially, to the comfort and happiness of those around you. Do not despise them, but carry into the doing of them that high and holy principle which, as Herbert so beautifully says, "makes drudgery divine;" even a reference — in these things also — to the glory of Him in whose steps you desire to follow.

You must, however, determine upon your own line of action. Only decide upon something. Shun idleness as you would the plague! Remember that you came into the world, not merely "to be" — but "to do."

One word as to a very necessary qualification for passing through the world happily to yourself, and usefully to others, namely — self-control. How your heart sinks at the word! You feel so utterly destitute of it. Yet take courage. You need not always be so. The means of attaining it are in a great measure within your own power. Struggle for it. Pray for it. Nothing is too small to be made a matter of prayer; and this is a thing which nearly concerns your happiness and welfare. Ask it of Him who "gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not."

Then, begin a resolute battle with yourself. Crush back the starting tear. Brighten the downcast brow. Shut your lips upon the words of fretful complaint. Gain the mastery but once, and the next time it will be more easy. Remember, you must either conquer — or be conquered. Conquer, and your life will be worth living; be conquered, and you will lay up a store of misery for future years! Do not say "it is impossible!" It is not. Few things are so to a brave heart and a strong will. Let not frequent failures dishearten you, but, "If you don't succeed at first,

Try, try, try again!"

These simple words are rich in lessons of practical wisdom. You must expect to meet with many hindrances in the way of your progress. Many a time you will stumble and fall, but do not lie helplessly still — get up and go forward. The victory which is before you will be an ample reward for every effort you may make to gain it.

Again, beware lest you allow yourself to indulge in harsh or unkind thoughts of your friends, because they do not understand or sympathize with you as fully as you could wish. They cannot understand what they have, perhaps, never experienced — or sympathize with what they have not felt. It is from no lack of affection, but rather from the excess of it, that they do not seem entirely to enter into your feelings. They are anxious to prevent you from imagining yourself miserable — from creating subjects of distress which have no real existence. Conscious that they would be themselves unaffected by those things which cause you such suffering — they are desirous of warning you against what must seem to them to be mere morbid sensibility. Do not, then, shut yourself up from them, in cold and gloomy reserve. Remember, it is a dangerous thing to trifle with offered love — to put it aside, or to repulse it. If we do so, we may perhaps one day find, that the confidence which we would gladly bestow — is not encouraged; and the love which we would give worlds to possess — is not granted. If we resolutely persist in "entrenching ourselves within our own individuality," it may be our lot by and by to experience that, when we would go forth from it to more unrestrained fellowship with our fellow men — our advances are not received, and, they shut themselves up from us, as we have done from them. And so you may, at length, be really alone, dwelling in a solitude which you have created for yourself.

You say that you are afraid of confiding in your friends, lest you should be misunderstood. Your heart shrinks from the very thought; the effort seems almost greater than you could persuade yourself to make. Yes, it is difficult. Do not try to think otherwise, for it is no easy task to which we invite you. But no difficulty, however great, should deter you from a clearly defined duty. It is wrong thus to isolate yourself from those among whom your lot is cast — it is unkind to them, and hurtful to yourself.

Remember, there is such a thing as making sympathy impossible — a far more common occurrence than not being able to obtain it. If you will but honestly make the attempt to bring others nearer to you — you will find that, as in many other instances, what seems formidable at a distance, grows easy as it is more nearly approached. And though your heart will beat fast, and your cheek will flush, and the words which rise to your lips will refuse to come further — yet, if you can once succeed in "breaking the ice" — your life will lose much of its present gloomy coloring, and the bond of union and fellowship between yourself and those you love will be drawn yet closer. Surely such a result is worth striving for.

One word more of warning. As you value your own peace, your own health, and your power to make life a bright and blessed thing to others: Beware how you cherish that tendency to morbid melancholy to which one of your temperament is perhaps peculiarly liable. It will destroy your own happiness, and paralyze every effort of usefulness. Do not give way to it, even for one moment. Whenever you feel its approach, shun it, flee from it, fight with it as with a treacherous and ruthless foe! To cherish it as harmless and beautiful, and as interesting as it may appear — would be to cherish a serpent whose sting will infect your whole life with its deadly virus!

Compel yourself to look at the brightness of life — not at its gloom. "Keep on the sunny side of the rock." Read the 103d Psalm, and pray over it, until you can, in some measure, make its joyous strains of praise and thanksgiving your own. Ask God to give you a cheerful spirit, to make you one of His happy children, for such will ever be most precious in His sight.

Seek to be like Him, who, though the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," could yet say, from the depths of a full heart, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth!" Let this be your motto, "Giving thanks always for all things!" There are many bright spots in the wilderness; many wells in the valley of Baca, from which we may drink and be refreshed. There may be shadows, but the sunshine gilds them. There may be tears — but there is also a joy such as "no man takes from us." Do not allow yourself to dwell on little troubles. Do not be worried and fretted by them. Receive them quietly. They will soon pass over, and be as though they had not been.

Above all, do not bring gloom over others. Take care not to be the one dark spot in the home circle. It is better to be a sunbeam — than a cloud; better to diffuse around us light and hope and gladness — than to be a sort of living extinguisher. No one can tell how much good we may do merely by looking happy. A smile may be a refreshing cordial to some sinking spirit. There are many sad, sick hearts in the world — let us not make them sadder still. There are many sorrowful faces — let us not needlessly add to their number. Rather may it be said of us, "In your clear joyance

Sorrow cannot be

Shadow of annoyance

Never came near thee."

Again, remember, that if you had not trial in one form, you would have it in another. If not mentally — yet in some more outward and visible shape. "What son is he whom the father chastens not?" Are you alone to be exempted from the family discipline? It is not well that we should have too smooth paths for our feet, or we would be apt to forget that here on earth we have no continuing city.

"Into each life, some rain must fall, Some days must be dark and dreary."

We would not have it otherwise, for the chastening rod has healing in its touch. Since, then, you cannot be without the cross — be thankful that it is so light a one. It will not be more heavy than you are able to endure, for your Heavenly Father "knows your frame — He remembers that you are dust." He tenderly feels how unable you are to bear even this, without His supporting strength. How can you, then, faint or be weary under His loving chastisement — especially since you are encouraged to "cast your burden on the Lord," in the assurance that "He shall sustain you." Only

lean on Him in quiet and confiding trust! Only strive to realize that the "Lord Himself is the portion of your inheritance and your cup" — and then, even although you may sometimes feel as one of the "solitary set in families," you may still joyfully exclaim, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me!" Do not distress yourself with the thought that this feeling of which we have spoken — this yearning for sympathy — this thirst for

"Communings more full and high

Than anything by mortal known,"

is in itself sinful. It is not so. It is a part of your very self. It is nature's voice — and it will be heard. It has been implanted by an Almighty hand, for some wiser reason than we, in our short-sightedness, can discover. Perhaps that we may be thus the more readily taught to seek our happiness in the "only fountain of everlasting love." But it can never be satisfied here on earth. Human sympathy is precious — but it is still, in its very nature, imperfect — and, even when best intentioned, often misses its aim. There are sorrows which it cannot soothe! There are depths which it cannot fathom!

"Each in its hidden sphere of joy or woe,

Our hermit-spirits dwell, and range apart."

There they remain in solitude which no human voice can break. There they remain in darkness which no earthly light can brighten. It is well. The Savior's voice is but the more distinctly heard, "Fear not — for I am with you! Do not be dismayed, for I am your God." Christ points to the stream of human sympathy and human love, and says, "Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst!" Remember this. Keep it constantly before you, and you will be spared much suffering which you must inevitably experience if you look to this world for what it cannot give. Wait until faith and love are perfected. Wait until patience gains its full reward in the white robe and the unfading crown! Then, and then only, will your hopes be fulfilled. Then, and then only, will your dreams be realized — in the unfettered communion of the saints in light! Do not forget, that if, from the peculiarly sensitive temperament with which you have been endowed, you are exposed to greater suffering — then you possess also a greater capacity for enjoyment than many others. If a very little thing can give you pain — then a very little thing can also minister to you the highest and purest pleasure. An affectionate word, a kindly or appreciating glance, which another might scarcely notice — how it thrills your very heart! How, for a time, it seems to gild your whole life with sunshine! How, even when the present enjoyment is over, does the thought of it still linger in your memory — its soothing influence retained, though years have passed away! And then, the beauty of the natural world, how your spirit revels in it! The purple hill, the quiet valley, the flowers with their delicate penciling and sweet fragrances, the woods in their autumn glory — all these are to you like old and long-loved friends. To your ears there is no music so sweet as the low murmur of the brook, or the silvery rustle of the summer wind among the leaves; there is no sight so lovely as the golden dawn or fading sunset. In all these things you can see beauties which are hidden from other eyes — you can distinguish harmonies which are silent to other ears. They speak to your inmost soul — they touch the mind's harp, and every chord vibrates in answering rapture. And in a thousand other ways, which it would be impossible to enumerate, your life is brightened and blessed, even by that

very constitutional sensibility, which, in another sense, greatly diminishes its happiness. So that, if the cold and unfeeling can move composedly through the world, without being greatly annoyed by the "pin-pricks" they meet with in the way — they also pass carelessly by many a hidden spring of the purest and most intense delight. And even as the one counterbalances the other — so, also, the one cannot be separated from the other. If, therefore, you would escape from some sorrow — it must be at the cost of the joy which is linked with it.

We would, in conclusion, point you to the only true source of comfort "in all time of our tribulation" — the remembrance of the Savior's tenderness and love. In every struggle, in every feeling of weariness and weakness — His eye is upon you, and His arm is underneath you. Your name, yes, your name, reader — if, indeed, you have unreservedly given yourself to Him — is engraved on His heart, and for you He constantly pleads before the throne on high. In Him you may trust, and find Him an unfailing support — while every earthly confidence will fail and leave you desolate. His word is pledged to supply "all your needs" — and surely with this you can lack nothing!

He appoints for you exactly the discipline which is most needed, and which alone can fit and prepare you for the higher service of the temple above. And, while you are undergoing that discipline, He sustains you with the richest consolations of His grace — for He can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and has Himself drained to the very dregs the bitter cup of human woe. He has not forgotten His adopted one, but still can say of you, as in ancient times of His peculiar people, "I know your sorrows!" With such an assurance, what can you fear — even though the clouds may gather closer round you, and the onward path look dark and cheerless? Be still, and trust! Every step brings you nearer to the rest of your Father's house, where the toils of the way shall be remembered no more. Look up, for the dawn is breaking! The darkness of this world's sorrow and loneliness shall pass away like a dream of the night — and the "days of your mourning shall be ended!"

01.08. The Hidden Cross

The Hidden Cross

Notwithstanding all that has been said and written about the happiness of childhood and early youth — it is, nevertheless, true, that neither is beyond the influence of that decree, alike the just penalty and the consequence of sin, by which "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." The tear on the cheek of childhood scarcely flows before it is dried again — yet none can look back to their own early days, without feeling that the fountains of sorrow were none the less bitter for being easily stirred. The cloud may soon pass away, but, while it lasts, the whole sky is overshadowed. And when childhood is exchanged for youth, who shall say that sorrow is also left behind? Surely its touch falls most heavily on the young and untried spirit, which the stern discipline of life has not yet taught to "suffer and be still!" How soon, how effectually, does reality dispel our bright visions of perfect happiness in our "teens!" There is no home so carefully guarded, that death may not enter it. A father's place may be left vacant — a mother's voice may be silent — a brother's manly form may be laid low — and even the gentle sister, in whose life your own seems to be bound up, may leave you to tread the wilderness path alone.

Sickness, too, may come. Days of pain and nights of weariness may be your portion. You may be painfully taught how difficult it is to struggle through the routine of daily duty, when, with languid pulse and aching head, and every nerve unstrung — each trifling annoyance seems to stir up all the impatience that is in you.

Perhaps you may be altogether laid aside; and, so, entirely prevented from openly showing your love and devotedness to the Master whom you serve. But if we are only hidden within the clefts of the smitten rock, no evil shall befall us. When loved ones are taken from us, we know that if they were united to Christ by living faith, we are separated only for a time, for they have but gone before us to the meeting place above. The gates of death are gilded by the light of resurrection hope, for "those who sleep in Jesus — God will bring with Him." We trace their footsteps in the path we tread, and from the home to which they have gone, they beckon us to "follow them, as they followed Christ." A message floats down to us, soft and clear as angels' music: "Do not be slothful, but followers of them, who, through faith and patience, now inherit the promises."

We look up from the narrow graves in which we have laid their mortal bodies, and smile through our tears at the blessed assurance that we may "go to them — though they may not return to us." And in sickness, we may lean for support upon the arm of Him, who was Himself "perfected through suffering." His love and sympathy are at all times precious to His people — but never so much so as in the dark day when heart and flesh are failing. Then the world is shut out — and we are shut in alone with God. The things of eternity become more near, more real to us; for, as it has been remarked, "in sickness we live upon what in health we only talk about." We search into our own hearts, and feel more deeply the sin that stains them, and the iniquity that pollutes even our most "holy things."

Viewed in the light of the eternal world, they seem more dark to us than when seen through time's deceitful glare. Then we are driven afresh to the blood of atonement, and learn to rest, in more childlike faith, on the Savior's finished work. We feel that nothing else can sustain us — that nothing else can bear our weight. The Holy Comforter, too, draws near, and His voice is heard when the din of earth is hushed, bringing to our remembrance the "great and precious promises" which, to us, are "Yes and Amen in Christ Jesus" — and applying them with a force and power such as we have never felt before. Surely such experience is worth gaining! And there is work to be done in sickness too. The constant struggle against impatience and selfishness — the "offering up of our will to God" in the little trials which are so hard to bear — the watchfulness to speak a word for Christ which may, perhaps, be remembered when we are gone. All this is work, none the less real because it is what few can perceive, but is done in silence, "as unto Christ."

"Those also serve — who only stand and wait;" and, if the waiting is only done in a working spirit, it is acknowledged as an acceptable offering. It is less pleasing to the flesh than the bustle and excitement of outside service, and is, therefore, more pleasing to our Great Master. It is purer, higher, holier, than even the active duty in which there is much danger of self-seeking.

"To be a follower of Christ," says MacDuff, "does not require huge sacrifices — brilliant displays of heroic suffering. I believe the Savior is most honored by those who bear most meekly what I might call little crosses — who, not in the great battle-field of the world, but in the quiet of their own homes, exhibit the lowly, submissive, patient spirit of cross-bearing disciples." This, also, is part of the discipline by which we are "made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light." But it is not of these trials that we wish chiefly to speak. There are others, less visible, but not less bitter. There are few, even of those seemingly beings whose feet yet linger on the threshold of life, who have not known its hidden mystery of joy and sorrow. The trials of childhood pass over and are forgotten; the trials of youth leave an impress upon the life. They stir up the very depths of our being, and awaken us to a knowledge of that fearful power which is bound up in our mysterious nature, "the soul's capability to suffer." It is no light matter to have early hopes withered, and the heart's first fresh tide of warm and tender feeling crushed back again upon itself. Yet it is an ordeal which few escape. Few but can look back on the time when "The hopes of youth fell thick in the blast,

And the days were dark and dreary!"

We do not say so that it must be. There is no doubt that careful watching and steady self-control may prevent, if exercised in time, much subsequent misery. We have no sympathy with those sentimental damsels, the readers of Byron, and "yellow-colored literature," who are always imagining themselves the victims of unrequited love, and delight in bewailing their self-created misery. But a woman's heart is a wild and wayward thing, and too often it is her lot to "make idols — and to find them clay!" There is in the youthful mind, a yearning for something strong on which to rest itself — for some prop, around which the clinging tendrils of its affections may be entwined. And often, when it has been found — it is again quickly removed, and the fibers of the heart are left, torn and bleeding. Is there no bitterness in this — no misery?

But, though the cloud may be dark — it has a "silver lining." It is a message to you, dear reader, from your Father's heart of love — to remind you that you are not yet where tears are dried forever. Take it as it comes, directly from Him, and do not bewilder yourself by looking at second

causes.

Without His permission, "not a sparrow falls to the ground!" Every minute circumstance of your life is ordered in His providence. And though it is a sorrow with which a "stranger may not meddle with" — a wound which no human hand may heal — there is the most tender sympathy, the most unflinching love — in that Savior who still retains, in glory, the loving human heart which once He wore on earth. To Him the hidden grief is unveiled — and in His bosom may the aching heart find rest. If He sends affliction — He sends strength with it. If He "allures you into the wilderness" — it is that He may "speak comfortably unto you." His voice is heard above the storm, and it is a voice of peace. But the trial has its lessons — and they are lessons rich in blessing.

It teaches us to sympathize. We must ourselves go down into the deep waters — that we may hereafter be enabled to speak words of encouragement and hope to those who are overwhelmed by the storm. We can show them that there is a strong foundation on which to rest, and that, even when the waves and the billows pass over us, the Rock of Ages is beneath our feet.

God has need of "reapers with sharp sickles," and if we are to be successful laborers in the Vineyard, we must know how to touch, with a skillful hand, the most delicate chords of the human heart. It is only by personal suffering that we can be fitted to "strengthen our brethren," and to hear a rejoicing testimony to the faithfulness of Him whom we know to be a "very present help in times of trouble." Many a weary-hearted one may be afresh inspired with hope and energy by the healing sympathy of a "companion in tribulation," who can point to the only true source of strength, and minister the same comfort with which she has herself been "comforted by God."

Another lesson which this peculiar form of trial seems specially designed to teach, is unselfishness. We must not infect others with our own sadness, or cast from our own darkened hearts one shadow over those we love. Cheerfully must the hidden cross be borne, and borne in silence. It is not in selfish withdrawing from the social and relative duties of life — but in bravely fulfilling them, that the secret of peace is to be found. Still you can be the sunshine of home — though your own spirit may be cheerless and dark. It will soon grow brighter, for the effort to promote the happiness of others, must have a reflex influence upon yourself, and there is joy and gladness in the thought that even yet you may be enabled to fulfill a lowly ministry of blessing. But this brings another quality into exercise, namely, self-control. It is one which sorrow alone can impart — and those who have not acquired it, have acquired but little. The struggle to keep back the surging tides of emotion, to conceal the aching heart beneath a cloudless brow and a tearless eye — is one for which, in after years, you will have cause to be most thankful. And, if it is true that those only can beneficially influence others, who have learned to control themselves — then, surely, we may well desire such knowledge, however dearly it may be bought!

We must not shrink from any discipline by which we may be prepared for the work we have to do. So you cannot but rejoice if your present trial sobers and calms you, sufficiently to enable you, by and by, to be one of the quiet ones, whose influence gladdens many a home, and teaches many a throbbing, anxious heart, how those who have been trained in Christ's school can pass through life more calmly, patiently, and happily — than others, who seem always laboring for their own ends, anxious about this, fearful about that, forgetting that they are not to be their own guides.

England still remembers the gallant conduct of some of her troops in the Crimea, who, when at Alma, marched in front of a galling fire until within about twenty paces of the enemy, and then fired. That was true bravery. It showed cool courage, determination, steadiness. But, depend upon it, those brave fellows had been well drilled. And we believe that the same sterling courage and endurance may be found among the softer gender. But not among those who have passed their girlhood in gaiety and folly — so much as those whom early sorrow has early trained.

There must be self-discipline — self-conquest. There must be a development of those deeper and stronger qualities of a woman's nature, without which she must ever remain a weak and changeful thing — swayed by every passing impulse, and utterly unfitted for the duties of sister, friend, or wife. And in no school can these be so well cultivated as in the school of suffering.

Nothing (we speak, of course, of secondary means only) will so greatly tend to dissipate the cloud which hangs over you — as full and constant occupation. Whether it be engagement in intellectual pursuits, or self-denying exertion for others — you will find it the most unflinching safeguard against melancholy and wretchedness. As painful as the effort may be, it will bring with it a rich reward. We must not bend helplessly before the storm, or fold our hands in the listlessness of despair — but fight the daily battle, with a brave and earnest purpose, looking ever upward and onward! Upward to the ever-present Savior whose strength is "made perfect in weakness!" Onward, to the blessed rest, where "sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Do not, then, give yourself up to idle and morbid regrets. Wait patiently — the victory will come at last, though the struggle may be long and weary. Those who have never known what it is to suffer — have never known what it is to live. The idols must be broken, the flesh must be crucified, the quivering heart must be laid as an offering upon the altar of sacrifice. It is a bitter cup — but it is mingled by a Father's hand — it is dipped in the blood of the Elder Brother! Do not be afraid, then, but be of good courage, for, by the grace given from above — woman's feeble nature is made strong. You tread no solitary path; it is marked by the "footsteps of the flock." Nay, more precious than any human sympathy, is the thought, that He who the chief sufferer — can feel for you, and feel with you. The Savior's eye is upon you. His arm can uphold the fainting spirit. His voice can speak peace to the troubled heart. He draws near in the day when earthly comforters avail not, and whispers, in tones of tenderest pity and compassion, "Be of good cheer, it is I! Do not be afraid!" His hand binds up the bleeding wound, pouring into it the healing balm of "His own unutterable peace."

Rest, then, in the Lord; for, however outward circumstances may distress you, there is peace for you in His presence. "When He gives quietness — then who can make trouble?"

01.09. CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

"In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence — and His children shall have a place of refuge." How gracious is the assurance; how full is the promise! "Confidence," in One who will never disappoint! "A place of refuge," where storm and tempest can never enter! His redeemed children are those over whom the shield of His protecting providence is ever thrown, to guard them from every danger. They are the objects of His peculiar care, and in whose sorrow He sympathizes with a father's heart. Surely, we may well "comfort one another with these words," and, peacefully confiding in that faithful guidance which will not fail to lead us aright, may "go on our way rejoicing!" At present, many things seem mysterious and perplexing. There are many problems which we cannot solve — many questions to which we can only reply, that, as yet, we "know but in part." But in the full light of that hereafter glory which awaits us, we shall see that every step in our path has conducted towards the "City of habitation" — that every link in the chain of life has been one of infinite mercy. The discipline of daily life, with all its varied experience of shade and sunshine — forms the training which is to render us fit for the abode of perfect purity and peace. The living stone must here be hewn and polished for the place which it is designed to fill in the heavenly temple — since no sound of axe or hammer is to be heard therein. And, if the engraver's tool seems sometimes to cut into the very life, let us remember what it is preparing us for, and quiet ourselves with the assurance that the great Master-builder will not inflict one unnecessary stroke.

Even as this present life is the time of training for an eternal future — so, also, the early part of it is a course of preparation for that which is to follow. The trials of youth, with its strong feelings, its quick impulses, its unsubdued will — are fitting us to endure those yet heavier sorrows which await us in maturer years. Those feelings must be restrained and regulated; those impulses must be placed under the control of a governing principle; that strong will must be tamed and broken — or future days will bring with them a burden, well-near crushing in its weight!

When, by early trial, we have been taught the "secret of enduring strength" — when we have exchanged our weapons of rebellion, for the Savior's light and easy yoke — we are enabled to receive, with submission, from our Father's hand, the cross which He sees it needful we should bear. We can then feel that unerring Wisdom can choose for us, infinitely better than we could do for ourselves; and say, even though with quivering lip and tearful eye, "Not my will — but may Your will be done." When the fever of life is over, and the quiet light of eventide sheds its mild radiance around us; when we walk by the brink of the dark river, and see, by the eye of faith, the "shining ones" on the other side — we shall look back, oh, how gratefully! upon all the way by which the Lord our God has led us through this earthly wilderness, and bless Him most for that which once seemed hardest to bear. We shall "set to our seal" to every promise; and acknowledge that "not one thing has failed" of all that the "Faithful and True Witness" has spoken concerning us! And how much more, when the shadows have fled, and the mists have dispersed, beneath the clear shining of that Sun which shall go down no more forever! Be patient, then, dear reader, alike in

suffering and in service. Both will soon be ended — for, behold, the "Bridegroom is at the door!" Are you ready, watching, waiting — whenever the midnight summons shall be heard? Are your loins girded? Is your lamp burning? Are you prepared to join in the exulting cry with which a waiting church shall welcome back her long-loved Lord, "Lo, this is our God! We have waited for Him, and He will save us! This is the Lord, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

Remember, the Word is as sure, as the God who has uttered it is true. He must come suddenly; He may come soon. By all the terrors of that last great day, when the "heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, when the earth, also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up" — we would, once more, affectionately entreat you to give all diligence in making your "calling and election sure;" so that, whether you are summoned by death into the presence of God — or, with your bodily eyes see Him come in clouds of glory, you may equally be able to say:

"Jesus, Your blood and righteousness

My beauty are, my glorious dress;

'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,

With joy shall I lift up my head!" Do not think that your present position is without responsibilities. "The young ladies of the present generation," says a living writer, "seem to pass in review before me, with all their privileges, and in all their grace and beauty. Let them not feel that they have only to seek embellishment, to sip from the honey-cup of life, or to glitter like the meteor in a summer's eve. For, as surely as the safety and prosperity of a nation depend on the virtue of its people — those who reign in the retreats where man turns for his comfort, who have power over the machinery which stamps on the infant mind its character of good or evil — are responsible, to a fearful extent, for that safety and prosperity." And more solemn than any other, is the thought, that when nations shall have ceased to be, and all that now seems great and noble shall have vanished like the shadow of a dream — the consequences of our smallest actions will remain, to gather in an eternal harvest of happiness or woe. Which shall it be? Shall we "sow to the flesh — and from the flesh reap corruption?" Or, shall we "sow to the Spirit — and from the Spirit reap life everlasting?"

S. Separation from the World!

Separation from the World!

Hetty Bowman, 1861

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him!" 1 John 2:15

Such is the injunction of a holy Apostle, one who was largely baptized with his Master's spirit of love, and had nothing in common with those rigid ascetics, who would make one continued act of self-mortification of life. Why, then, has he, or rather, why has the Spirit of God who inspired him, thought it needful to leave on record so stringent a command? Why, but because he knew that the "friendship of the world is enmity with God!" "If anyone loves the world — the love of the Father is not in him." He knew the delicate organization of the spiritual life, and therefore uttered an emphatic warning against its exposure to, the tainted atmosphere of a world that "lies in wickedness."

Well would it be, if the professing followers of Christ were more influenced by this warning, and more habitually realized their calling to be a peculiar people, chosen out of the world, though for a season they are compelled to remain in it.

"How far may I conform to the world without, compromising my Christian profession?" is a question which has often caused great perplexity to the believer. It is impossible to lay down a fixed rule by which all are to be tried; for, in forming a judgment as to a thing that is not in itself sinful, differences of temperament, and social position, with many other considerations, must be taken into account.

"I think," writes one, "the love of the world may show itself very differently in different people — and no one can altogether judge for another, whether they are indulging it or not, in what they do. But I believe conscience tells each child of God in secret. After all, our grand concern is, to aim at close walking with God, leaving Him to order our steps for us, and trusting Him so to order our way as best to enable us to walk closely with Him."

Each one must, therefore, trace out the path of duty for himself, and will always most easily discover it, in proportion as he is most fully walking in the light. But we have always felt, that the question, as given above, is wrongly stated. If we have, indeed, been made to "sit in heavenly places" with a risen Savior, and taught to "set our affections on things above" — we shall inquire, not "How far may I conform to the world" — but "How far may I be separate from the world, without neglecting the special work which God has given me to do?"

It is a dangerous thing to speculate how nearly one may approach to the edge of a precipice, without peril of destruction. We cannot take fire into our bosoms — and expect not to be burned. We cannot play with coal — without having our garments sullied. Besides, if our ears have been opened to distinguish, however faintly, the echoes of the song they sing in glory — we shall care

little for the poor music of this world.

It is not so much that we dare not mingle with the world — as that we have no desire to do so. We love the narrow way, strait and painful though it is — better than the broad way, with all its offered charms. We have lost our relish for such worldly pleasures. We are satisfied with the joys which Jesus gives, and we need no other. What have we to do with anything which would obscure our sight of the "hope set before us," on which we desire that our hearts should be entirely fixed? Are we not strangers and pilgrims in this poor world? Do we not profess to seek a "better country, that is a heavenly one?" Then why should we entangle ourselves with that which will only hinder us in our progress? Why should we purposely add a heavy weight upon ourselves as we journey heavenwards? Rather let this be our answer, to all who would persuade us to loiter along the way, "I cannot tarry with you, for I am journeying to my heavenly home!"

But, although it is impossible to do more than lay down broad general rules, already framed for us by the Word of God, which speaks in this matter with no uncertain tone — we would, nevertheless, say a few words, in the spirit of Christian meekness, on a subject which, in the present day, is very frequently discussed. We allude to attendance on Concerts, which is considered by many truly good and pious men to be both innocent and allowable. Far be it from us to sit in judgment on the duty of another. We design only to offer one or two hints, which may perhaps assist the reader in coming to a decision.

It has been urged, in defense of Concerts, that music, which, we are led to suppose, will enter so largely in the employments of the heavenly rest, cannot surely be sinful on earth. No one can for a moment suppose that it is! Music, when ennobled, as it always will be, by being consecrated to God — is one of the greatest external aids to devotion, and often assists the lagging and earth-bound spirit to rise from things below to things above. And even when not sacred, it cannot reasonably be objected to, since it is one of the graceful adornments which make home happy, and often prevents the formation of a taste for more questionable amusements. Music is a strong link in the family bond, and frequently holds together what might else be a scattered flock. Nothing can be useless or hurtful, of which this can be said. Religion never was designed to narrow the circle of our pleasures. It rather purifies and elevates them! "

"Since I have known God in a saving manner," writes Henry Martyn, "painting, poetry, and music, have had charms unknown to me before. I have received what I suppose is a taste for them; for religion has refined my mind, and made it susceptible of impressions from the sublime and beautiful." But this leaves the question of CONCERTS wholly untouched. It is necessary to distinguish between music in the quiet home — and music in the brilliant and crowded assembly-room. In the one case, there are accompaniments, which, in the other, are lacking. Besides, it is manifestly impossible to argue from what may be fitting in a state of holiness and purity — to what may be expedient in a state of imperfection and sin. "Unto the pure, all things are pure; but unto those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure." We must not separate antecedents from their consequences; or forget that what is, in itself, harmless — may become pernicious when it gives occasion to evil. This must always be dreaded here below, but the fear will be needless when sin shall cease to be in Heaven.

Thus, it may be no more sinful, considered per se, to listen to music at a Concert, than it is to handle cards and dice — yet no one can defend gambling. It is against the consequences of both

of these things that objections may be brought. It may be said that the two are not alike. The one tends to refine, and elevate, and soften human nature — the other tends to debase it. Be it so. The fact cannot be contradicted. Nevertheless, we think it can be shown that both lead to evil, though the evil differs in kind, and in degree. To confine ourselves to the subject which we at first proposed to consider: Let every Christian, laying aside prejudice, and with earnest prayer for Divine guidance, calmly and dispassionately inquire whether his own personal piety is not injured by mingling in scenes of worldly amusement. Is not the warmth of his love for Christ chilled? Is not the fine edge of his spiritual affections blunted? Can he solemnly implore God's blessing on what he is about to do? Can he pray that he may enjoy the sense of His presence, may adorn His doctrine, and glorify His name? Can he feel that he is going where he may do his heavenly Master's work — may be made instrumental in converting souls to God, or in strengthening his weaker brethren? Who does not feel that to introduce religious conversation in such a place would be to offend against every rule of propriety? Yet surely, the Christian should not go where the name of Christ is not to be mentioned!

Again, can the believer truly say, that, by time so spent, he is more fitted to enjoy that close and holy fellowship with the Savior, which it should be his one great object to attain? Is he able to return from the Concert-room to the stillness of his prayer closet, and there, without more than ordinary distraction — draw near to his Father's throne, with the consciousness that His eye is resting upon him, as on a beloved and obedient child? And when the sacred page is opened, do not his thoughts still wander to the mirthful scenes which he has left? Instead of his listening to the sweet words of Him who "spoke as never man spoke," do not the strains of music still linger in his ear, and float persistently around him? Does not his spirit seem more than usually chained down to the things of sense and time, and more than ever sluggish in soaring upward, on the wings of faith, towards the fair hopes and joys of another world? And when there are so many unavoidable hindrances, so many rugged and difficult places along the narrow way — we have but little need to add to them by those we fashion for ourselves.

Yet, once more, "The time is short!" The arrows of the destroyer are flying thick and fast around us. Who can tell but that the one may even now be on its way which is to summon us before the judgment-seat? And shall it find us at a Concert? Shall it call us from thence to render up our account unto Him "in whose sight the very heavens are not clean," and "who will not allow any iniquity" in His children? Do we not shrink from the thought? Should we not be ready to exclaim, if, with our bodily eyes, we could see the hand of death outstretched to touch us with its icy fingers, "Not here, oh! not here!" Then, surely, since there is but a step between us and eternity — we ought not to go where we would not wish to die! But even supposing that all these questions could be satisfactorily answered, and allowing that we could venture into such scenes without injury to ourselves individually — there is yet other ground to fall back upon. Let us not forget the Apostle Paul's maxim, "All things are lawful unto me — but all things are not expedient." He abstained even from that which was in itself innocent — lest by any means he might cast a stumbling-block in the way of a weaker brother. Would that we all were partakers of his spirit!

We believe that the example of those professing Christians who over-step the boundary line between light and darkness, is productive of very great evil. The world is keen-eyed to discover inconsistency. It is quick to mark the slightest blemish in the symmetry of Christian character. And, as such, it will not fail to stigmatize the very least deviation from its own severe and lofty standard

of judgment. Its honest and hearty esteem will invariably be given to an "undiluted Christianity" — in preference to a halting compromise between two opinions, notwithstanding the former may seem to be regarded with aversion and dislike.

Besides, if we give in, even a little, to the customs and fashions of those around us who know not God — we shall find it difficult to assign a stopping-place. Where shall we fix the line of demarcation? If we go so far — then why may we not go a few steps farther? If we ourselves do not argue thus, others will do it for us. Thus some "lingerer" may say, "Miss _____ was at the Concert last week; she is religious — and yet she did not think it wrong to go. So, surely, there can be no harm done if I go to the ball."

We say nothing whatever as to the correctness of this reasoning — but only that it is extremely likely to be employed. And so, it may be, holy impressions are effaced — the warning voice of the Spirit is quelled, and His gracious influence resisted. Then one downward step follows another, until the last conducts to eternal damnation! One link after another is added to the chain, until it becomes, at length, so strong that the captive is held fast forever!

Christian professor, are you guiltless? Oh! it is a fearful thing to turn back some inquiring one, who, perhaps, was not far from the kingdom of God! Take these considerations home, dear reader, to your own heart and conscience. Spread them before God in prayer, and ask Him to make you willing to obey Him in all things, at whatever cost to your own desires and inclinations.

If you remain still unconvinced, we can say no more, for God forbid that we should judge of another's liberty. Only take heed, "lest through your liberty, that weak brother perish for whom Christ died." Without wishing to dictate or judge, we would affectionately entreat Christians to consider whether, in going further than this, they are not endangering their own spirituality, and making the narrow way still more perplexing for the weak ones of the flock.

We have made no allusion to DANCING, nor is it necessary that we should do so. The defender of the Concert cannot honestly pass a severe judgment upon the Dance — and the converse is equally true. The arguments for and against, though slightly differing, are alike weak, and alike strong in both cases. Both, taking into account the preparation required — involve a large expenditure of time and money, given for very different purposes. Both are alike dissipating to the mind, and pernicious to the spiritual health. But if we have not succeeded in showing the inconsistency of the one, we have little hope of doing so as respects the other.

Once more we, say — let us not be misunderstood, as uncharitably branding the defenders and attenders of Concerts as deceivers of themselves and others. We believe that there are among them many who are sincerely and earnestly desirous to "walk as children of light." Yet, we would beg them to consider whether they are thus aided in so doing, or whether, instead of "laying aside every weight" — they are not rather taking up some heavy weights which are by no means necessary.

But, after all, our main business is with the heart. If the root is right — the branches will take care of themselves. Look inward, then, dear reader, and see that the mainspring is true and steady. If it is not, all your efforts at external regulation will be useless. You must put your heart into the hands of the great Master-Worker, to be controlled and governed — and then the action of the whole will be harmonious. When the magnet of your affections points to Him who is truly your guiding Star —

then the attraction of earthly things will scarcely have power to make it tremble.

If some of the holy men of a former generation could once more return to the scene of their labors and sorrows — what would they find among those who profess to follow in their steps? Would they witness the same decision, the same faithfulness, the same unyielding adherence to principles which involve contempt and scorn, the same resolute separation from everything that is even questionable in its tendency — which characterized their own walk in the world? Would they not rather be grieved by the levity, the trifling, the inconsistency which are too often displayed — even by those whose names are enrolled in the list of professing Christians? Would they not be amazed at the slender barrier which divides those who are in the world — from those who say that they have renounced it? Would they not be bewildered by the strange mixture of good and evil which is presented by many who bear the name of Christ; one day to be found in the committee-room of some religious society — and the next at a dance; one day at a prayer-meeting — and the next day at a concert?

Deeply would their hearts be saddened by these things, and mournfully would they exclaim, "How has the fine gold become dim!"

It is to be feared that the religion of the day is, in many respects, of too easy a nature. We know . .

little of sacrifice,

little of deliberate counting the cost, and

little of forsaking all for Christ's sake!

It is true that this is comparatively little needed as it was in by-gone times. The open confession of Christ does not now involve, as once it did, the estrangement of friends, and the ridicule of acquaintances. The days are passed when the bare suspicion of having become a "Methodist," was sufficient to exclude from the pale of polite society. Now the tide has set in a contrary, direction, and, to use the quaint, but forcible language of Bunyan, "Religion now goes in silver slippers." But it may be questioned whether the cause of God has, in reality, gained much by the change. The calm is more perilous than the storm — the world's smile is more dangerous than its frown. The river which is deep and rapid when hemmed in by rocks on either hand, becomes sluggish when its course lies through the fertile plain.

Truly the Church of God, in these latter days, has need to watch that she be not found lingering in the plains of Sodom, instead of pressing forward, with girded loins and hastening step, to the Zoar which she has set out to seek. Let her take heed, lest He who "walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks," visits her suddenly with the rod of His wrath, and lest her slumber be broken by the unlooked-for coming of the Bridegroom.

But, as the Church is composed of individual believers, let each one of us search and see whether the voice of conscience harmonizes with the dictates of the Word of God. Do not hesitate, my reader, fearlessly to rank yourself on the Lord's side. Listen to the command to "come out and be separate," and be assured that, in obeying it, you will experience a peace such as the world cannot give. The joy that is "unspeakable and full of glory," will never be yours if you tarry upon the debatable ground.

Go forward! Beware of that dwarfish Christianity which is content with simply having a "name to live." Rest in nothing short of a full participation in all the blessings and privileges of the new covenant. Seek to know your place in your Father's heart of love — and then no earthly thing will tempt you thence. Oh, leave the broken cisterns of this poor world, which can never quench your spirit's fevered thirst. Cast yourself upon the fullness of God's grace and mercy, and pray that His own hand may satisfy you with the riches that are treasured up in Christ.

Pray that you may be "strengthened, established, settled;" not like the slender sapling, which is swayed this way and that by every changing wind, but like the full-grown tree, whose roots have penetrated deep and far, and whose boughs are laden with goodly fruit. Live so that all may know "whose you are, and whom you serve."

Remember that, of every one who has enlisted under the "banner of Christ crucified" — it is required to fight manfully against a triple rank of enemies, "sin, the world, and the devil." Therefore, "take unto you the whole armor of God." Let "Christ in you" be the watchword of your warfare, and the crown of glory the prize which you toil to win. This, this is "the victory that overcomes the world, even your faith" — faith which enables you to dwell, even while on earth, so near the unseen world, that when, at length, you are called to go thither, you may find it no strange country, but a long-loved and familiar home!

S. The Sensitive Plant!

The Sensitive Plant!

Hetty Bowman, 1861

"The tenderest heart Your hands have made,

Beneath Your rule may rest;

For He who made it for Himself,

Knows what will shield it best.

The feeblest lover of Your word,

Dwells safely in Your breast!"

A.L. Waring

When, in dewy morning or quiet even-tide, we wander, in thoughtful mood, in our garden, or along the fields and lanes of the country, to soothe our troubled spirits by the sweet influences which surround us on every side, and to read holy lessons from the fair pages of nature's open book — we can scarcely fail to recognize the many types which present themselves, of the different varieties of nature to be found among men. The oak, in its gnarled strength — is contrasted with the silvery birch, whose light branches bend in yielding grace. The dahlia and the hollyhock haughtily challenge your notice — while the rich fragrance of the passing breeze alone tells you that the violet is near. The gorgeous cactus is thoroughly impracticable to all your approaches — but many a lowly herb rewards the hand that has crushed it, with a delicate perfume. The sunflower stands alone, in proud defiance of all support — while the ivy clings persistently to any object within its reach.

Look around you now, dear reader, among those whom God has given you to love, or with whom you are thrown into frequent contact — and see if you cannot find among these the anti-types of those plants mentioned above. Some, like the oak, can stand alone and unsupported, bravely and grandly enduring the fury of the storm — others rather resemble the ivy which twines around it; while yet others find their fitting emblem in the trembling mimosa flower, which shrinks and withers at a touch. It is to these last that we would now address a few words of tender and affectionate counsel — in His spirit of whom it is said, that the "bruised reed shall He not break — and the smoking flax shall He not quench."

It may be that, from peculiarity of temperament, and natural constitution, you may be exposed to trials, which others, of stronger mold, can scarcely comprehend, and with which they have but little sympathy. Your lot may be cast, outwardly at least, amid the bright things of life; you may have many to love and care for you, many to throw around you the shield of protection from the rough breath of a world with which you are not fitted to struggle. And yet, in sadness and loneliness of

spirit, you may be bearing a hidden cross, which presses none the less heavily because it is one which few can perceive, and none can lighten. You may know little of what the world calls trial — little of sorrow in its outward and tangible shape; this, you think, would be easier to bear. But you are weighed down by a succession of little, fretting annoyances, which most effectually destroy your peace and comfort.

Nominally, at least, they are little; many would scarcely consider them worth a moment's notice; but to you they are real, all the more so, because you must bear them alone. A word, a look, even the tone of a voice — is sufficient to bring the hot tears to your eyes, and to send a sickening pang through your heart, which amounts almost to physical pain. Life seems, for the time, so cheerless — so cold, and dark, and dreary — that were it not for the sinfulness of the thought, you would almost exclaim with Tennyson's Mariana,

"I am weary, I am weary,

And I wish that I were dead!" And yet, at the same time, the person who has caused you so much distress, may be utterly unconscious of it. The hasty word, which sent a jarring thrill through every nerve, may have been forgotten as soon as uttered. The cold or averted look, which made you close yourself up like the leaves of the sensitive plant when it has been rudely touched — may have had its origin in some cause with which you had not the most remote connection. But this, you think, only makes the matter worse, since it is impossible you can be spared from suffering which is inflicted in ignorance.

Then there is no one who can understand all this. You feel that the burden you have to bear would be lightened if it could be shared by another. But where are you to look for any one who would treat it as more than a mere nervous imagination, which, albeit with due gravity and politeness, they would ridicule and pass over. You would be told, if you ventured to confide in relative or friend — that you were creating misery for yourself, and that if real sorrow came upon you — you would soon cease to feel the pressure of these imagined ones.

It may be so, and yet, in the meantime, you cannot but feel, that these "imagination" are as real as anything you could have. And so you shrink back into yourself, with the weary feeling that you are alone in the world, and must pursue, through life, a solitary and untrodden path.

Yet there are many, in whose hearts you have a warm place, and whose affection you return in its full measure — but you cannot admit them into the inner life — to share in its joys, or to sympathize in its sorrows. Your fellowship with them, on all ordinary matters, is free and unrestrained — but as to anything that concerns yourself, your lips are sealed! Your spirit turns aside from them — you wrap the mantle of reserve more resolutely around you, and live, more completely than ever, in a world of your own.

Yet how gladly would you throw down the barrier! How your spirit yearns for companionship! How willingly would you pour out your trials and difficulties into some tender and sympathizing ear! At length, perhaps, your wish is granted. A friend is given you, in whom, after many a fruitless search, you find one whose thoughts seem to have been cast in the same mold as your own; who has experienced the same difficulties, and passed through the same discipline. In the sweet interchange of thought and feeling — in the calm repose of a faithful and true-hearted love — you feel as if your cup of happiness were well-near full. Your whole soul is poured out in one wild and

idolatrous attachment, and for once your heart seems to rest and be satisfied. You feel as if now, surely, your long yearnings would be stilled; as if a tie so pure, so sacred, must be a pledge of that yet higher communion hereafter to be enjoyed by the redeemed in glory — when the dross of earth shall be purged away, and all shall "know, even as they are known."

Oh, it is a blessed thing so to love! But at length the hour of parting draws on. One is taken — and the other left. One taken to the rest of the inner sanctuary — the other left to the toil and labor of the outer court. Or it may be separation by distance. It is not often, that in this "waste howling wilderness," our paths lie long near together. More frequently they diverge in different directions, as the will of our Father in Heaven may appoint. He assigns to each a separate corner of the vineyard to keep and occupy. And so the heart is again left in its lonely desolation — only now more lonely and more desolate than before. Then return the aching and the void, the yearning for fellowship, and the "earnest questioning for treasures fled," which seem to you to be inseparable from your very existence. You feel as if earth could never again be bright — as if no other tie could take the place of that which has been broken.

But, in time, your spirit seeks for itself another abiding-place, which seems so firm that you imagine it can "never be removed." Yet this, too, is rudely shaken, and again and again you hear the summons, pealing to the inmost recesses of your soul, "to arise and depart — for this is not your rest, for it is polluted."

Well, indeed, will it be for you if, at length, taught by bitter experience that no earthly love can really satisfy — you turn, in lowly thankfulness, from the streams to the fountain — and find your only blessedness in the "Friend who sticks closer than a brother." This is a melancholy picture. Some may think that it has been overdrawn, but others will, we believe, at once recognize in it the outline of their own individual history. It has been faithfully given, with no desire to conceal or to gloss over the blemishes which it contains. And now comes the inquiry — How is this sad state of things to be remedied? For it is not enough, dear reader, that you confess and bewail it, and then fold your hands in indolence and half despair, contenting yourself with the thought that what has been, must continue to be. If, however, you are really desirous of amendment, you will admit a few words of honest and homely advice from one who can fully appreciate the difficulties of your present position, and would gladly aid you in extricating yourself from them. In the first place, then, remember, that though you must to a certain extent retain through life the temperament which is natural to you — it is, nevertheless, in your power greatly to modify and strengthen it. To this end, therefore, do not expose yourself unnecessarily to softening influences — for you they are not needed. The tone of your mind needs to be rendered more firm and elastic, rather than weakened.

Hence, do not indulge yourself in the indiscriminate reading of works of fiction. Your imagination is strong enough already — it does not require cultivation. Such books will only give you false and weak views of life, and utterly unfit you for your own place in it. They will lead you to suppose yourself a kind of heroine of romance, in whom center all the evils and misfortunes common to mankind in general. Viewed through such a medium, your nearest and kindest friends will seem hard and unfeeling — and you will learn either to look upon them with contempt, as having nothing in common with your own higher nature, or to regard them with sentiments very nearly allied to dislike. The contrast between the matter-of-fact occurrences of every-day existence — and the delicious day-dreams of the novels in which you delight to indulge, will become at length so

marked, as to be absolutely unendurable. You will shrink back from life with weariness and disgust. Thus, imagined and self-created distress will be added to real life difficulties. But if, on the other hand, you will steadily apply yourself to a course of judiciously chosen and useful reading, requiring, not merely eyesight, but study and concentration of thought — you will derive from it incalculable benefit. It will enable you to correct those erroneous estimates of men and things, from which so much misapprehension arises — and teach you thankfully to take the world as you find it. It will exercise, and, in exercising, strengthen the intellectual powers — and will supply you with resources within yourself, so that you will cease so acutely to feel the disagreeables which press upon you from without. It will furnish healthful employment for many an hour, which might, otherwise, be spent in idle conversation, or still more idle reverie. Your mind will be prevented from preying upon itself — a process which, as you may suppose, will contribute little to your happiness. But we need say no more by way of inducement. Wage war with sloth, and laziness, and long habits of mental indolence.

"Struggle — you are better for the strife —

The very energy will hearten you."

Only persevere fairly for one month, and at the end of it you will have no inclination to give up. Life will be no longer tasteless and insipid. New hopes, new objects, will spring up around you. Every step of progress will pave the way for others which are to follow — and, before long, you will find that the best prescription for every kind of morbid unhappiness — is work!

Or, if you will not pursue this course, strike out another and a better. Take your Bible in your hand, and go to the haunts of poverty and distress. Carry the bread of life to the perishing. Gather the outcast into the fold of refuge. Raise the veil which hides from many an eye the sad realities of life, and see if the sight of them does not charm or shame away half your own sorrow. Listen to the tale of misery, track out its proofs, witness it with your own eyes — and then set yourself with loving heart and ready hand to relieve it. The blessing of those who are ready to perish will surely be yours, and the cup of cold water shall never lose its reward.

Or, without at all overstepping the boundaries of your own home, you may find in household duties abundant employment which will prove a most wholesome corrective of boredom in any of its developments. Very distasteful they may seem to you — very repulsive to your finer feelings — yet, nevertheless, they form a most important part of every woman's education, and a due attention to them will enable you, at some future time, if not now — to contribute, most essentially, to the comfort and happiness of those around you. Do not despise them, but carry into the doing of them that high and holy principle which, as Herbert so beautifully says, "makes drudgery divine;" even a reference — in these things also — to the glory of Him in whose steps you desire to follow.

You must, however, determine upon your own line of action. Only decide upon something. Shun idleness as you would the plague! Remember that you came into the world, not merely "to be" — but "to do."

One word as to a very necessary qualification for passing through the world happily to yourself, and usefully to others, namely — self-control. How your heart sinks at the word! You feel so utterly destitute of it. Yet take courage. You need not always be so. The means of attaining it are in a great measure within your own power. Struggle for it. Pray for it. Nothing is too small to be made a

matter of prayer; and this is a thing which nearly concerns your happiness and welfare. Ask it of Him who "gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not."

Then, begin a resolute battle with yourself. Crush back the starting tear. Brighten the downcast brow. Shut your lips upon the words of fretful complaint. Gain the mastery but once, and the next time it will be more easy. Remember, you must either conquer — or be conquered. Conquer, and your life will be worth living; be conquered, and you will lay up a store of misery for future years! Do not say "it is impossible!" It is not. Few things are so to a brave heart and a strong will. Let not frequent failures dishearten you, but, "If you don't succeed at first,

Try, try, try again!"

These simple words are rich in lessons of practical wisdom. You must expect to meet with many hindrances in the way of your progress. Many a time you will stumble and fall, but do not lie helplessly still — get up and go forward. The victory which is before you will be an ample reward for every effort you may make to gain it.

Again, beware lest you allow yourself to indulge in harsh or unkind thoughts of your friends, because they do not understand or sympathize with you as fully as you could wish. They cannot understand what they have, perhaps, never experienced — or sympathize with what they have not felt. It is from no lack of affection, but rather from the excess of it, that they do not seem entirely to enter into your feelings. They are anxious to prevent you from imagining yourself miserable — from creating subjects of distress which have no real existence. Conscious that they would be themselves unaffected by those things which cause you such suffering — they are desirous of warning you against what must seem to them to be mere morbid sensibility. Do not, then, shut yourself up from them, in cold and gloomy reserve. Remember, it is a dangerous thing to trifle with offered love — to put it aside, or to repulse it. If we do so, we may perhaps one day find, that the confidence which we would gladly bestow — is not encouraged; and the love which we would give worlds to possess — is not granted. If we resolutely persist in "entrenching ourselves within our own individuality," it may be our lot by and by to experience that, when we would go forth from it to more unrestrained fellowship with our fellow men — our advances are not received, and, they shut themselves up from us, as we have done from them. And so you may, at length, be really alone, dwelling in a solitude which you have created for yourself.

You say that you are afraid of confiding in your friends, lest you should be misunderstood. Your heart shrinks from the very thought; the effort seems almost greater than you could persuade yourself to make. Yes, it is difficult. Do not try to think otherwise, for it is no easy task to which we invite you. But no difficulty, however great, should deter you from a clearly defined duty. It is wrong thus to isolate yourself from those among whom your lot is cast — it is unkind to them, and hurtful to yourself.

Remember, there is such a thing as making sympathy impossible — a far more common occurrence than not being able to obtain it. If you will but honestly make the attempt to bring others nearer to you — you will find that, as in many other instances, what seems formidable at a distance, grows easy as it is more nearly approached. And though your heart will beat fast, and your cheek will flush, and the words which rise to your lips will refuse to come further — yet, if you can once succeed in "breaking the ice" — your life will lose much of its present gloomy coloring,

and the bond of union and fellowship between yourself and those you love will be drawn yet closer. Surely such a result is worth striving for.

One word more of warning. As you value your own peace, your own health, and your power to make life a bright and blessed thing to others: Beware how you cherish that tendency to morbid melancholy to which one of your temperament is perhaps peculiarly liable. It will destroy your own happiness, and paralyze every effort of usefulness. Do not give way to it, even for one moment. Whenever you feel its approach, shun it, flee from it, fight with it as with a treacherous and ruthless foe! To cherish it as harmless and beautiful, and as interesting as it may appear — would be to cherish a serpent whose sting will infect your whole life with its deadly virus!

Compel yourself to look at the brightness of life — not at its gloom. "Keep on the sunny side of the rock." Read the 103d Psalm, and pray over it, until you can, in some measure, make its joyous strains of praise and thanksgiving your own. Ask God to give you a cheerful spirit, to make you one of His happy children, for such will ever be most precious in His sight.

Seek to be like Him, who, though the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," could yet say, from the depths of a full heart, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth!" Let this be your motto, "Giving thanks always for all things!" There are many bright spots in the wilderness; many wells in the valley of Baca, from which we may drink and be refreshed. There may be shadows, but the sunshine gilds them. There may be tears — but there is also a joy such as "no man takes from us." Do not allow yourself to dwell on little troubles. Do not be worried and fretted by them. Receive them quietly. They will soon pass over, and be as though they had not been.

Above all, do not bring gloom over others. Take care not to be the one dark spot in the home circle. It is better to be a sunbeam — than a cloud; better to diffuse around us light and hope and gladness — than to be a sort of living extinguisher. No one can tell how much good we may do merely by looking happy. A smile may be a refreshing cordial to some sinking spirit. There are many sad, sick hearts in the world — let us not make them sadder still. There are many sorrowful faces — let us not needlessly add to their number. Rather may it be said of us, "In your clear joyance

Sorrow cannot be

Shadow of annoyance

Never came near thee."

Again, remember, that if you had not trial in one form, you would have it in another. If not mentally — yet in some more outward and visible shape. "What son is he whom the father chastens not?" Are you alone to be exempted from the family discipline? It is not well that we should have too smooth paths for our feet, or we would be apt to forget that here on earth we have no continuing city.

"Into each life, some rain must fall,

Some days must be dark and dreary!"

We would not have it otherwise, for the chastening rod has healing in its touch. Since, then, you cannot be without the cross — be thankful that it is so light a one. It will not be more heavy than you are able to endure, for your Heavenly Father "knows your frame — He remembers that you are dust." He tenderly feels how unable you are to bear even this, without His supporting strength. How can you, then, faint or be weary under His loving chastisement — especially since you are encouraged to "cast your burden on the Lord," in the assurance that "He shall sustain you." Only lean on Him in quiet and confiding trust! Only strive to realize that the "Lord Himself is the portion of your inheritance and your cup" — and then, even although you may sometimes feel as one of the "solitary set in families," you may still joyfully exclaim, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me!" Do not distress yourself with the thought that this feeling of which we have spoken — this yearning for sympathy — this thirst for

"Communings more full and high

Than anything by mortal known,"

is in itself sinful. It is not so. It is a part of your very self. It is nature's voice — and it will be heard. It has been implanted by an Almighty hand, for some wiser reason than we, in our short-sightedness, can discover. Perhaps that we may be thus the more readily taught to seek our happiness in the "only fountain of everlasting love." But it can never be satisfied here on earth. Human sympathy is precious — but it is still, in its very nature, imperfect — and, even when best intentioned, often misses its aim. There are sorrows which it cannot soothe! There are depths which it cannot fathom!

"Each in its hidden sphere of joy or woe,

Our hermit-spirits dwell, and range apart."

There they remain in solitude which no human voice can break. There they remain in darkness which no earthly light can brighten. It is well. The Savior's voice is but the more distinctly heard, "Fear not — for I am with you! Do not be dismayed, for I am your God." Christ points to the stream of human sympathy and human love, and says, "Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst!" Remember this. Keep it constantly before you, and you will be spared much suffering which you must inevitably experience if you look to this world for what it cannot give. Wait until faith and love are perfected. Wait until patience gains its full reward in the white robe and the unfading crown! Then, and then only, will your hopes be fulfilled. Then, and then only, will your dreams be realized — in the unfettered communion of the saints in light! Do not forget, that if, from the peculiarly sensitive temperament with which you have been endowed, you are exposed to greater suffering — then you possess also a greater capacity for enjoyment than many others. If a very little thing can give you pain — then a very little thing can also minister to you the highest and purest pleasure. An affectionate word, a kindly or appreciating glance, which another might scarcely notice — how it thrills your very heart! How, for a time, it seems to gild your whole life with sunshine! How, even when the present enjoyment is over, does the thought of it still linger in your memory — its soothing influence retained, though years have passed away! And then, the beauty of the natural world, how your spirit revels in it! The purple hill, the quiet valley, the flowers with their delicate penciling and sweet fragrances, the woods in their autumn glory — all these are to you like old and

long-loved friends. To your ears there is no music so sweet as the low murmur of the brook, or the silvery rustle of the summer wind among the leaves; there is no sight so lovely as the golden dawn or fading sunset. In all these things you can see beauties which are hidden from other eyes — you can distinguish harmonies which are silent to other ears. They speak to your inmost soul — they touch the mind's harp, and every chord vibrates in answering rapture. And in a thousand other ways, which it would be impossible to enumerate, your life is brightened and blessed, even by that very constitutional sensibility, which, in another sense, greatly diminishes its happiness. So that, if the cold and unfeeling can move composedly through the world, without being greatly annoyed by the "pin-pricks" they meet with in the way — they also pass carelessly by many a hidden spring of the purest and most intense delight. And even as the one counterbalances the other — so, also, the one cannot be separated from the other. If, therefore, you would escape from some sorrow — it must be at the cost of the joy which is linked with it.

We would, in conclusion, point you to the only true source of comfort "in all time of our tribulation" — the remembrance of the Savior's tenderness and love. In every struggle, in every feeling of weariness and weakness — His eye is upon you, and His arm is underneath you. Your name, yes, your name, reader — if, indeed, you have unreservedly given yourself to Him — is engraved on His heart, and for you He constantly pleads before the throne on high. In Him you may trust, and find Him an unfailing support — while every earthly confidence will fail and leave you desolate. His word is pledged to supply "all your needs" — and surely with this you can lack nothing!

He appoints for you exactly the discipline which is most needed, and which alone can fit and prepare you for the higher service of the temple above. And, while you are undergoing that discipline, He sustains you with the richest consolations of His grace — for He can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and has Himself drained to the very dregs the bitter cup of human woe. He has not forgotten His adopted one, but still can say of you, as in ancient times of His peculiar people, "I know your sorrows!" With such an assurance, what can you fear — even though the clouds may gather closer round you, and the onward path look dark and cheerless? Be still, and trust! Every step brings you nearer to the rest of your Father's house, where the toils of the way shall be remembered no more. Look up, for the dawn is breaking! The darkness of this world's sorrow and loneliness shall pass away like a dream of the night — and the "days of your mourning shall be ended!"

S. Thoughts on the Christian Life

Thoughts on the Christian Life;

or, Leaves from Letters

Hetty Bowman, 1872

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Under the touching circumstances of the early and lamented death of her who wrote this volume, I cannot refuse a request made to me, that I should write a few prefatory lines. The name of "Hetty Bowman" is now, however, so widely known, that it seems well near superfluous.

It was a mournful pleasure, in the course of a recent tour in France and Spain, to find her books chosen as traveling companions by those who had never seen her face in the flesh. The rapid progress of her name and fame, and the peculiar feelings of gratitude so often expressed by strangers, gave the prospect of a literary career of brilliant usefulness; checked now this may be, but not altogether disappointed — for by her works she will long "speak" to us, and we cannot doubt that where she sees God's face, and lives for evermore, still higher degrees of service are appointed for her.

Just before leaving England I had the pleasure of going over with my beloved friend several of these "leaves," and judging from them, I believe that the volume will fully sustain her reputation for the keen yet chastened observation of life and character, and for the practical lessons of sanctified wisdom which characterize her other writings. She bestowed much pains on this work, more, she told me, than on any other, even in her weak and suffering state — not "offering to the Lord that which cost her nothing." May He graciously continue the wide personal application and blessing so signally granted on every previous occasion.

Mrs. Gordon, May 17, 1872

A REMINISCENCE

You want to know how I like S_____?

Well, my dear Mary, as to the place, it must be confessed that asphalt pavements, new houses in red and white brick, forming streets which run with painful regularity at right angles, and never show the slightest sign of a curve — are not suggestive, and slightly apt to become monotonous. True, there is the misty grey line which, to clearer sight than mine, means the sea — and there is the pure breeze which sweeps up the Channel, bringing health. And there are the life-giving odors that some people do not love — tarry, sea-weedy breaths whose salt savor is as welcome, in its way, as the scent of hawthorn or hay. But still I cannot grow enthusiastic about it. I have not yet recovered the transplanting process — not being of a nature to strike ready roots into new soil. There are times when, to borrow Miss Thackeray's image, all the sunshine of the world seems concentrated on one spot, where we are not. But, after a while, the clouds move. Light breaks

through them in little glints here and there, and falls on other places, showing much we had never thought to find again. Unexpected compensations arise too, and tiny odds and ends of happiness, small in themselves — but forming when woven together a tolerably stout strand, begin to form such "ties" as bind us to any scene in which our lot is cast. And, for me, the remembrance of one life, lived in these straight streets — transforms their very ugliness into beauty.

You have heard me speak of dear Mrs. F_____, and you know that very lately, the story of her "suffering, affliction, and patience" ended in her "falling asleep in Jesus." But you do not know — no one can — what was lost to me when her death left one less in the wide, wide world.

I remember her first on a visit at her house, when I was about fifteen. She was not married then, and most people would have thought it very unlikely she ever would be. A "regular old maid," one could hardly imagine her anything else, and the whole household was in the same style with its mistress — unexceptionably fresh and pure and neat. Oh, so neat! Anything out of its place looked so terribly wrong that one felt rebuked into tidiness. At least one did generally. Now and then I was conscious of a reverse effect, and felt a wicked impulse to ink table covers, and crumple up napkins. But she would have taken it so sweetly that there would have been no sort of satisfaction in doing it.

Yet she could be made angry. She was by no means one of the imperturbably amiable people who irritate by their placidity. Her still grey eyes could flash fire upon occasion, and I have seen her roses pale into a white heat. Now and then too, perhaps, the gentle lips did "speak unadvisedly" — to my great consolation, who found it so hard to guard my own.

I do not think a girl of fifteen is a very companionable creature. I was uncomfortable enough, I know — certainly to myself, and, I suspect, to most of my friends. But she knew how to touch me without irritating. She could sympathize with restless, wayward impulses which others thought it their duty to lecture. She listened to what I said without being shocked at it, and when I oscillated between one heresy and another, she kept her patient faith that I should settle into orthodoxy at last. She did not scold me, but I knew she prayed for me — and her own look of perfect rest and delight, as she bent over her little Bible, did me more good than many sermons. It taught me that most of the dark places I stumbled at were in my own heart — and not in God's Word; and that, to one who leaned on it as she leaned, and on Him, the Word incarnate, with whom she walked as her living Lord, life might be always full of brave endurance, and sometimes of joyous worship.

I do not know whether her marriage was in prospect at that time or not. Many a woman keeps her youth, because of a secret hope, unacknowledged, even to herself; coming events sometimes send bright shadows before them, just as the spring breezes bring messages of summer.

One day I spent with her in her new home. We did not talk much, I remember. My lips would not shape themselves to say Mrs., even when I sat between her and her husband at dinner and saw her eyes shining as they rested on his. They were a rare couple. For those who knew them, it was enough to say that they were worthy of one another, set each to each, like "perfect music unto noblest words."

One year, one bright brief year of love and rest was given to her, and then she was left a "widow indeed and desolate." The next time I saw her she was again in the old home at S_____, where she returned to wait once more for her bridal. Meekly she waited, through years of suffering and

slowly increasing helplessness — of uselessness, she would have said, but not so her Master, for she served Him even then; and of the service hereafter for which He was training her, there may be much in His own words, "I have many things to say unto you — but you cannot bear them now."

She was a picture to remember, seated in her low rocking-chair by the fire — her husband's portrait hanging above her, and the dress she wore in his memory suited so well her slight figure and pure chastened face. She had a word of quiet wisdom or of most tender sympathy for all who came — and the burdens left with her were sure of being taken to God and pleaded for as if they had been her own.

How I loved to sit on a stool by her side and feel the soft caressing touch of her hand upon my hair. It seemed to draw the fever out of one's very heart and reach the sore spot there with some cool balm of healing. She never dwelt upon her own grief. If she spoke of the death of her husband — it was only as she looked on to the day which should give her treasures back; and meanwhile she mourned with others whose lives were left empty and bade them take hope and endure, for One remained.

Her death was a "going home" indeed. "Clearer and clearer, brighter and brighter, nearer and nearer" was the testimony of one who saw her when she was close to the brink of the river. She is across it now.

"After the burden and heat of the day,

The starry calm of night;

After the rough and toilsome way,

A sleep in the robe of white."

I would not bring her back. There is blessing and strength for a lifetime in the memory of such a friend, even though the sense of loss can never wholly die. She taught me — I wish I could pass on the lesson — what an older woman may be to a girl. The friendship between such is as holy and helpful as it is rare. I would be content, I think, if years hence I might give to some uncertain troubled heart — what God taught her to give to me. How little they know, who are shut up in silent sick-rooms or "hindered" by the restrictions of weakness, what work they do for Christ by the mere power of their saintly living.

EVERY-DAY LIFE

"How hard it is," you say, "that so much of one's time is taken up with things that must be done — and yet none of them seem worth doing!"

Ah, that is not a new difficulty, dear! The hermits of the East stumbled over it, and the monks of the West; and many a one who has not left, like them, the every-day life of the world — has groaned under it, as if there were guilt in the weight as well as care.

One thing, however, we are sure of — that all which God sends to any human soul must have its meaning. There is nothing, however trivial, which He cannot make a means of grace. It is for us to take it as such — or to scorn it. There is blessing wrapped for us in every lowly duty, and if we despise its homely dress, then the loss and the responsibility are our own.

"But mine are such common duties," you say, "helping in the house, or sewing for the children. It's all such material work." I think I have been learning, lately, that we may not call anything common which God has cleansed; and has not His consecrating touch fallen on all home-toil and care, material though it may appear, since Jesus lived in the workshop at Nazareth? He counts nothing unclean, nothing unworthy of Him, but sin. His love in the heart will purify everything it touches. It has transmuting power enough to change the dross of the common street, into the fine gold of the sanctuary. And so the "base things of the world, and things which are despised" become, when laid on the altar which sanctifies the gift, things which God has chosen.

Well, you admit all this in the abstract, but I can hear your question, over all the miles of distance between us, "What is the use of it all? If I have made a pudding for dinner, or cleaned Lucy's frock, has my time been spent worthily of an immortal being, with powers which are surely fitted for nobler employment?"

I might say much in answer to that, but I will dwell only on one "use of it all," which you can hardly question: Do not each of these things furnish you with an occasion of offering up your will to God? You may turn them all into sacrifices, and they will be truer than many which you bring in sight of other eyes, and with much delight to yourself.

I think too that we are all in danger of dwelling too much on what we do — and too little on what we are. God's work by us we may leave with Him; His work in us, our being and our becoming, is surely our first care. And the truest helps to this are the small self-denials in which we oftenest fail. We yield them indeed, but grudgingly and of necessity, not with the free heart of a cheerful giver. So, when you are tempted to murmur over a wasted day, may you not feel that each bit of "useless drudgery" has had its place in working out for you God's great design — that each of His children should be conformed to the image of His Son?

Yes, but still you sigh and wish we might be without all these things — so much care for the body is very humiliating. Is not the time spent upon it a robbing of God? Of course it may be — unless the body is brought into subjection. But we cannot live in this world, constituted as we are, without some care for it. If we try to do so, we shall be requiring of ourselves what we cannot possibly perform; what God, who knows us, has never asked.

We are not all spirit yet, and so long as mind is linked with matter, it cannot accomplish much without some thought of its companion, and we must be content to wear fetters until we are free. God's hand will strike them off when we are ready for liberty — but until He does, there must be some purpose in our bearing them. And, if we struggle too impatiently, we may be rebelling against His appointment. We cannot tell how the discipline is to be wrought out by which He prepares us for His presence, but there are indications that much of it comes through our bearing the yoke of physical humiliation.

Of this I feel more and more deeply assured — and the thought would help us much, I think, to bear the "every-dayness" of life — that all the passing occupations with which our time is taken up have an element of the eternal in them and, in their outcomes, stretch far away into the unseen and everlasting. The outside husk of them, so to speak, perishes with the using — but within it is a living soul of impulse and influence which never perishes.

For in every moment of our days, when once our hearts are yielded to His service — God is working in us and through us. Hitherto, perhaps, our little world has only been large enough to hold self and the present. But gradually, through tender leadings and unfoldings, and perhaps through pain and suffering, we come to learn life's lesson — that it is God's world, not ours; that our existence is not finished and rounded off here, but forms part of one vast scheme to which mind and heart and spirit expand and grow, while all the horizon round them grows and expands too — until it touches the shore of the illimitable future, and we become conscious that earth and Heaven are not so far separated but that the first is but the vestibule of the second — imperfect, cloudy, full of broken fragments, but still part of the same Temple of God as that to which we shall pass in by and by.

And there is one command which, in its fulfillment, consecrates our working days as well as our Sundays: "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Do you think He cares whether we are doing this or that, while each thing is "unto Him"? God asks from us simple obedience — not some wonderful piece of consecration, or what to us seems such — but that, hour by hour and day by day, we should follow His will.

Perhaps, for the present, that will for you may be to be "faithful in a very little," but if we will not do a little thing to please Him — we should not do a greater thing. It is easy to make great sacrifices when God does not ask them, but to give up our own will in each detail of life is something far harder. And this is what He does ask! To hold ourselves ever in readiness for His bidding — to count no token of it too slight — such is His call to each. Thus only shall we be ready for further service if He sees fit to lead us on to it.

Mrs. S_____ gave me a number of little books for you the other day, but I do not think I shall send them. I would rather send you out on the moor with your Bible — than make you read through a bundle of tracts. You would be more likely to get rid of mental cobwebs. For I feel very strongly, dear, that it is your duty, now and then, to go and get a healthy talk with nature, if only for ten minutes. She will do more for your scruples, if you will let her, than many a book of introspective theology.

I am sure that Christians who will not look at the loveliness which God has spread everywhere — who have no ears for the speech through which He utters, as in a parable, His own teaching — lose more than they know. For the entire visible world is a shadowing forth of the "invisible things of God." Its beauty is a "wayside sacrament," full of a most real Presence. And, when we pass it by with eyes that seeing see not — we lose a part of the heritage which is His children's right.

I wish you could have been with me in my walk this morning. It did not extend beyond the garden, but I wanted no more than I found there — masses of white cloud floating in bluest sky, flowers and wet leaves glistening with fresh rain-drops — the sunlight making a picture out of every shrub — and the soft wind bringing sweetness from the hay-fields it had passed. If you had been with me, I believe many of your difficulties would have solved themselves; and some, perhaps, if you were there every-day, would never arise at all.

FAULT-FINDING Did you ever consider the amount of good, and certainly of pleasure, of which we are deprived — by our growing habits of criticism? In the highest things, I am sure this is the

case.

Criticism of sermons for instance — I think we can hardly estimate the evil of it. I know there is much to be allowed about those of the present day — that too many are "flat, stale, and unprofitable;" either, as someone says, "altitudinarian, latitudinarian — or platitudinarian." But I know, for myself, that the help they might bring is lessened by listening as a judge instead of a learner. And every sermon, even the poorest, has so much more truth in it than we are living out — that we have greater reason to feel condemned, than to condemn. It is good to remember how little we know, how much less we do, and how far the lowest standard stretches beyond our attainment. And even when the criticism ends in praise, it does not tend any the more to profit. We pick the flower to pieces until we lose its fragrance! Perhaps, too, what we can coolly analyze has not touched us very deeply: or, if it does, the emotion passes off into the analysis, and leaves the life uninfluenced.

But to come lower, an immense amount of discomfort, not to say harm, results from — what shall I call it? — domestic criticism. You feel, in some families, as if you were living between the glasses of a microscope. Manner, accent, expression, all that goes to make up your "personality," all that you do or leave undone — is commented upon and found fault with. I have seen sensitive natures harden into positive ugliness under this constant pressure. Some characters have force enough to resist it — but others are crushed, I was going to say, out of shape — certainly out of their own natural shape, into one they would never have assumed if they had been let alone. From being analyzed by others, they begin to analyze themselves, until they are overgrown by morbid self-consciousness. They become untrue to their own nature; they are criticized into falseness; and they know, painfully enough, that they are "not themselves." They have been instructed how to look and move and speak and think — until they have lost all power to throw off the yoke, although it galls them. But they feel that, under the spell of that dreadful question — What will so-and-so think? — they say what they do not mean, and do exactly what they would not do.

"That is very silly," you are strong-minded enough to reply. Very! But when you live with so-and-so and are compelled to listen to the expression of his or her opinion, delivered probably with harshness, you feel the "continual dropping" and are worn by it, in spite of protests to yourself that it is a trifle and beneath your notice.

This habit of criticism, undue interference, needless comment, or whatever else it may be called — is dignified by some of one's friends as "faithfulness." "It is not pleasant," they say, "but they must be faithful." That is very unselfish, but I nevertheless hold to the belief that their faithfulness is not altogether disagreeable to them. And as to the effect of it, have you not felt many a time the hopelessness which settles down on you like a November fog, when something you have striven to do well with your fingers or your head, is met by, "Yes, my dear, it's very pretty, very. But I don't think your colors are well chosen. It would have been better if you had put mauve instead of white." Or "Yes — that is well written — but why did you choose such a worn-out subject?"

Now of course we all need such candor, and may be very thankful for it in certain measure. We can only have it from the inner circle; outsiders do not care enough about us to take the trouble of pointing out even the faults they see. But one may have too much of a good thing, and it is the excess of fault-finding that I am pleading against, especially when it is minute and captious. With some people it becomes a mere habit — they slip into depreciation before they are aware.

"Evil is wrought for want of thought

More than for want of heart."

But this same want of thought is an evil in itself — one to be resisted. This is the influence of unkindly criticism on others — but it is equally hurtful to the person who indulges it. Too keen an eye for small blemishes — must rob one of much true help and pleasure. I never envy people who invariably balance a description of character with a "but," and then make you cognizant of some flaw in temper or manner which spoils the whole. I mean, of course, if they do this gratuitously, when there is no strong reason for their insight. And turning from criticism of people, how many tiny springs of most pure delight are troubled, if not dried, by the spirit of depreciation — by not taking the good we have and rejoicing in it — not enjoying small pleasures simply and thankfully! You take two visitors, for instance, for a drive. You know your home scenery is nothing remarkable, but it has its own beauty, and you have learned to love it. One "wonders you can live in such a dismal neighborhood — not the sign of a hill to be seen, and no trees worth speaking of." The other delights in the wide expanse of sky or points out to you how the red poppies mingle with the green of growing wheat, while the blue corn-flowers wait until the golden tints are come.

You recognize the true poetic gift of finding beauty everywhere; the loving, childlike heart which, satisfied to glean among bare fields, finds there a harvest of wonder and gladness. And you are helped to put down your yearning for the hills you remember, and look round your flat horizon line with contentment.

"Give true hearts but earth and sky

And some flowers to bloom and die —

Homely thoughts and simple views

Lowly thoughts may best infuse."

But your other friend has missed pleasure for himself, and by no means added to yours.

Ruskin says, somewhere, that the "temper of which true taste is formed, is characteristically patient. It dwells upon what is submitted to it. It does not trample upon it, lest it should be pearls, even though it looks like husks." And the remark applies, like all truth, to small things as well as great.

There is room and need for this wise and tolerant patience in the narrow round of home — as well as in the wider sphere outside. We women, at any rate, do not greatly need it anywhere else, but it will help us "within bounds." To sympathize with what is imperfect, to catch the idea which struggles through broken expression whether of word or deed, to estimate at its true value the nature which lies deeper than speech; and instead of repressing, to find for it, or help it to find for itself, some outlet for free development — this seems to me one of the noblest parts of woman's ministry.

We have need in it of the "quiet wisdom which comes from the Lord," and no less of the charity which "believes and hopes all things." This, our Lord's own spirit of love, caught as it can only be from Himself, is our true safeguard against a habit of fault-finding.

I suppose one is more prone to this fault-finding in early years, than latter. It may proceed partly from what is not in itself wrong. Our standard is high in youth, and we are impatient, both in ourselves and others, of whatever falls short of it. It seems a sort of injury that anyone should give us less than the best. But through the bitterness of our many failures, we are taught toleration. Our own "best" lies far beyond our grasp. We look toward it very humbly for ourselves, and in others we learn to bear with imperfection which we cannot help observing. We are tender over it, with almost reverent tenderness. Have not our hearts grown sick with yearning after an ideal we have never realized? Why should we add, by even a word, to the hopelessness of that same yearning in another?

After all, the art of admiration is much more rare than that of criticism — being always more difficult, especially for little minds and narrow hearts. There are not many whose sight is so much absorbed in all that is high and pure and noble, that, if it is compelled to see defects — it cannot long rest on them.

AGNES

You wonder that Agnes Lytton should suit me as a friend — "we are so unlike." But, my dear Mary, what does one need in a friend? Surely not a reflection or repetition of oneself! Do you not get enough of that personage? I do — and I want no more.

I am to "make you know her," you say. No, I cannot. You would never know one another, you two, if you lived together for a year. I can paint her for you, in dim outline, with a dash of color here and there, and your remembrance of her home may help you to frame the picture. But I can bring her no nearer to you than that.

You know the rectory here — an old house of thoroughly comfortable English type — added to, and embellished at different times and in various ways, until it has reached the perfection of home-like beauty and pleasantness. I wonder, by the way, wherein that pleasantness consists. Not, I think, in any tangible "this " or "that," so much as in the pureness and loveliness which the very walls have drunk in through years of quiet family story — years that have flowed on in the everyday current of a common living — or been broken by spaces in which hearts have beat fast with joy or pain. They settle down again afterwards into peace, wherein comes the growing and ripening of seed sown when they were deeply stirred.

For Agnes, the ripening time is now. Years ago, when we first knew one another, no one dreamed that at thirty-five she would still be the rectory child. Ah, it is not death only which lies between lives which touched and blessed one another once, and perhaps in some mysterious fashion are touching and blessing still, though one seems to have wandered into darkness and the other is left waiting in a world whose meaning is all changed, if not confused — waiting only for a hope whose blossoming is not here. But there is no dreariness in the waiting and no restlessness — nothing but the calmness of full contentment, which can "patiently abide always" because it knows that, though the past may have broken its promise, the future will keep it sevenfold.

Yes, she is very happy. Look at her, as she sits there by the window, the light falling softly on her calm fair face, and you cannot doubt it, though you may wonder — for there seems little in her outward lot to make her so. She is left alone of the band of brothers and sisters who once made the old house ring. Her mother is a constant invalid — while her father is silent and grave. There is

little society in the place, and not much work that need necessarily be done; for the parish is small, and the most scrupulous attention to the schools and the poor leave a wide margin after their claims are satisfied.

Some women, perhaps, would make their lives tell upon a wider circle, but Agnes never dreams of that. The home-sphere, with its narrowness and peace, is all she asks for. Watch her fingers as they move at her work — what is it? Some "tacking" to help the school-mistress — there is something in their steady sustained motion which tells of being satisfied; even if you could not read the same tale in the rested curve of her lips, and the stillness of her dear brown eyes. She is not pretty — but you turn to look at her again and again as on a pleasant picture, full of sweetness and harmony.

"But I don't like your picture," I think I hear you say, "it's altogether too still for me. I want more force and fire. I never care for women who sit by the window and sew. Your Agnes is wasting her life — why doesn't she do something with it?"

I think there are few in L_____ who would not tell you that "Miss Agnes" does a good deal with her life, and most certainly the blessing of it falls in her own home like refreshing dew and congenial sunshine. Does that seem little to you? I don't think Agnes would be much disturbed by your judgment. She knows that her lot is "appointed," and that what to her or us may seem like limitations — are not really such. A life like Mrs. M_____ 's would be easier by far, which, beside its hard work, is full of change and excitement; the demands on nerve and brain being partly supplied by the stimulus of constant interest. Take Mrs. M_____ away from her "refuges" and put her in a quiet village like L_____ , and she would find its monotony more trying than the weariness of a London winter.

Do you remember Mrs. B_____ once pointing out to us that remarkable expression in Luke 12:1-59 : "So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God," which gives us a glimpse of something we know very little about at present. She said it seemed as if God gathered into His storehouse, from each of our lives, all that is pleasing to Himself — fruit in which He delights. And the daily cross-bearings and self-denials, the bright word spoken when head and heart are weary, the meek endurance of misunderstanding, the steady going on in one unbroken round — with a patient cheerfulness that knows nothing of "moods" — all of these are garnered there, and add to our riches towards Him; riches which shall be manifested in "that day." And it may be that from the lives which have few outlets except toward God — there will be at last the fullest harvest. A woman's life especially may surely be a ministry of blessing, though she never leaves her home at all, for is it not her first duty to be a "keeper" there? God indeed calls some out as distinctly, as He bids others stay; but we should be very sure of the call and not believe too hastily that we have heard it.

No, my Agnes' days are not wasted — and I cannot let you think so. For herself, she is not troubled on the point at all, not being one of the introspective women who are always looking at themselves from the outside. She is content to live her life without analyzing it. She is content, as the catechism says, "to do her duty in that state unto which it has pleased God to call her." There could be no nobler history for any human being.

Besides, even granting that, according to your estimate, she is "doing nothing" now — does it follow that her lot is never to change? Alas, when I look at Mr. Lytton's silver hair and note his failing step — I know the day is not far distant when the barriers about her will be broken and she will be left lonely in her freedom. Meanwhile, do you not believe that the intervals in our lives have their meaning? There is no music in a rest — but it has its own place in the melody. And I think a space is often given us between youth, with its pain and hope its eagerness and longing — and what may unfold from these in the riper years that are to follow.

Which space, by-the-by, need be by no means an empty one. The apostle Paul speaks to the Ephesians and Colossians of being "rooted and grounded in love — rooted and built up in Christ." All this implies something which is deep within — a hidden work, not shown to the outward eye. It is the work of days and years in their slow teaching — the work of all those silent influences which are brought by God's Spirit to bear upon the soul, like change of summer heat and winter storm. There are often times when we feel as if the work of God stood still within us — when outward circumstances seem to restrain it, our discipline being apparently one of repression rather than of fostering development. And we murmur and are restless because we see the fair fruit in other lives, and in our own there is only the yearning towards it, hardly even the blossom. But God is strengthening the roots of faith — its bloom and fruitage will come hereafter. He is teaching our faith to root down to the Rock and take firm hold there, to feel the strength of the love and power which sustains it, to rest in conscious living nearness on Jesus Himself. He is teaching it to penetrate to the "rivers of waters," to drink deep of the only source of true growth. And all these are lessons mostly learned in the "spaces" of life — wherein our own patience often fails, and we feel as if time were lost; lessons whose results are not immediate, but gathered only after waiting; some, it may be, never gathered here at all.

CONFESSION AND RESTORATION

"Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you — and return to the LORD. Say to him: Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously." Hosea 14:1-2

I have been much struck today with that expression: "Take words with you — and return to the LORD." Israel had fallen by iniquity — it must be confessed and put away before they could be restored. God brings it into the light — and He tells them to bring it into the light too.

"Take words with you — and return to the LORD." I think there is a great deal of help in that command about the way of return to God when we have wandered from Him. We are often conscious that there is something between our soul and Him — but we will not acknowledge it. We do not "take words with us" and acknowledge in His presence; we shelter ourselves in a general idea that, as He knows it — we need not tell Him.

It is easier, much easier, to ask forgiveness — than to say why we need it. There is something very humbling in that — we do not like it — our pride shrinks from it.

You know how frequently, when a child has done wrong, a parent has a contest with its self-will before it will confess the wrong. It is quite ready to ask forgiveness — but to go further and confess the particular wrong-doing is too much. I believe it is to this very point that God will bring us — confession of our particular sins; for then we are thoroughly humbled and broken, and the contrite

spirit is ready for the balm of forgiving love.

I suppose we have all known, at one time or other, what it is to have something in our hearts which we dare not look at — something that lies, palpitating and living, under the heap of restless thoughts with which we try to hide and smother it. What cowers beneath, it is more comfortable to screen from sight. And so we go on, for weeks and months, keeping ourselves out of the focus of our own scrutiny — and yet holding down a hidden consciousness which now and then wakes into troublesome activity.

It is possible, I suppose, to feel the dragging of a chain — and yet not to have power to will it broken. It is possible to see it, lowering, degrading, eating out with deadly rust — all vitality of spiritual being — and yet to cling to it. What its links are, we know — and so does God.

Others, even if they knew, might see nothing in them. On our neighbor's conscience, holier far perhaps than we — they might lie with no weight of guilt; but that is no question for us. Enough that they make prayer a form — and the Bible a mere collection of sacred documents. And yet, all the while, we go about our work and thrust this terrible reality away from us. In naked fact — we are living a lie. But that is an unpleasant admission, not to be made in words — only felt, down in depths where words do not come.

"Can this be," you ask, "for one who is a child of God?"

Yes, I think it may, though one can only bear to acknowledge it with faith's grasp firm upon the assurance, "If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father." But I am sure that the only help in such a state is to "take with us words" and go to God. Half the evil lies in its being unacknowledged. If we looked — we would see it. But what we turn aside from — it is easy to ignore. But when we tell all to our Father, we must make ourselves hear; and surely He who is "greater than our hearts" has given this command for our sakes. He would bring us face to face with our own vileness and loathsomeness. So, only, will the cry go up to Him, real at last in its soul-agony, "Lord if You will — You can make me whole!"

Still, again and again comes the shrinking and the fear and the failing. "I cannot give up this one thing — I cannot." No, we cannot. But we can pray, "Lord, make me — give me the will to ask You to put it from me. I hardly know whether or not I do wish it gone; I can only throw myself on You to have the wish infused. Only help me; You know how," — and help will come. The spell will be broken; the faint longing for deliverance will grow stronger. It will rise like a tide, sweeping away all that now keeps it down — will rise until it joins itself to everlasting strength, and liberty is once more proclaimed to the captive, and the opening of the prison to him who is bound.

"He restores my soul." It is a true word, enfolding within it many a secret of God's dealing with His children. The "restoring" may not come in the way of comforting — at least not its first stages. It may be rather through sharp discipline, whether by a heavy stroke or a "scourge of small cords."

Suffering is not always, nor necessarily, penal. For others, I think, we should be very careful of viewing it in that aspect; but for ourselves it is hardly well to put down altogether the consciousness which, if we would let it speak, often connects chastening with declension in holiness. We have allowed sin upon our souls — and we know it. We have not been dealing openly with our Lord — there has been something which we have tried to hide from His sight.

"Search me, oh Lord, and try me," — this has been our prayer — but we would rather that He should not take us at our word. Yet He has done it, in love too tender to be ever unfaithful. What we have not told Him, He will tell us — in speech which cuts deep. And so He will bring us to acknowledge our transgression, with tears perhaps; but it is good to shed tears. And then He "heals our backslidings." If we confess — He is faithful and just to forgive. So — He restores.

The end of the verse gives us the result of the confession and the restoring: "So will we render the calves of our lips." The idea seems taken from the offering of sacrifice. God asks from us now no gift of lamb or bullock — but He does require from each of His people their testimony that they are His.

Here we come to the word "confession" in another sense (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9). And this confession can never be what it ought — clear, bold decided — so long as we know that there is sin between us and God. It is only when we are walking in the daylight, not afraid to look up to our Father — that we can speak for Him.

Sin within there always must be, but unless our conscience witnesses that it is sin resisted, not indulged — our lips must be sealed. May not this be one reason why we often find it hard to speak for God? Our very words condemn us; no wonder that they die upon our lips. We know, and we feel God knows, that our hearts are not whole with Him.

TO AN INVALID (No. 1)

So you are troubled by the wonderful things you hear of other invalids? I will not tell you that this is one of the many ways in which you may "disquiet yourself in vain," because you know it as well as I; and I remember too vividly how, in physical weakness, some "worrying" thought often fastens itself on the mind, with only greater persistence the more one strives to throw it off. It will speak whether you listen or not, and I believe it is best to let it speak — not to try and smother it; because you can hear it mutter — if it does not cry.

Certainly your friend's account of her new acquaintance is very striking. Five years on her back, in a darkened room, so that she can rarely work or read — and passes many wakeful nights — and yet she never feels the time long or lonely, as Jesus is always with her, and "how can she complain with such a Friend?"

One loves to thank God for His strength thus made perfect in weakness — for the tenderness which gives "songs in the night," so sweet to hear. And yet while we know that to us also the same strength is open, and while we may and ought to be stimulated by an example so bright — we may, if we allow it to sadden us, come under Paul's condemnation of those who, "measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." We are discouraged because of something we know — we forget how it may be modified by something we do not know.

For instance, though this case seems to be one of far greater suffering than yours, who are able to be out occasionally and even to bear a short drive — yet there may be one unthought of cause which makes your endurance something this lady has no idea of. A little more, a little less, of nervous susceptibility — a little difference in the kind of pain and its consequent power to depress — you need nothing further to account for her sunshine, or your own too frequent clouds.

She may be able to think during her hours of unemployed quiet; while with you the interest of "something to do" is often all that keeps you, as you say, from "going half wild."

"How can you do so much?" I have now and then been asked in illness, "but then I suppose you don't suffer." I could have replied, only I should not have been understood, that a certain kind of suffering can hardly be borne without "doing."

Or yet again, to take a contrasted phase of illness, you reproach yourself, and sometimes hear unmistakable hints from your friends that you might do more if you would. "Look at so and so — her sofa is the center of a whole machinery. How such weak hands can keep it in motion is a marvel, but they do. Look at the letters she writes — look at the sums she collects for different objects of charity. See how her talent for organization enables her to arrange work for others, how her wisdom counsels and her sympathy stimulates those who carry out what she originates. Or look at the wonders her needle accomplishes, how her skilled fingers charm money from pockets that will open to buy, but not to give; while you" — yes, you know how to fill up the blank. You lean back your head and sigh. How does she manage it all, while she must be carried from room to room; and you, who are able to walk around the garden or across the street to see a friend, have to lie for hours idle after you have written a note of two pages?

Perhaps because she knows nothing of that one tender spot in the spine which answers with a dart of pain to every bend of the neck, every pressure of the fingers. Perhaps — but you need not multiply "perhapses" — they, after all, are not very profitable subjects of speculation.

If you are doing what you can, then whether or not your friends are satisfied — He who knows you best, asks no more. And if you attempt to do what you cannot, under some idea of "making efforts" — then you are perhaps only indulging secret self-will; for you have learned by the past how such efforts end — in reaction which brings on someone the trouble of extra nursing, and unfits you for even the little you can generally do. So that it is not quite clear whether God calls you to them — or only your own unsubmissive desire to struggle into activity, which He for the present forbids.

No, dear L_____, we must go back from these "weak reproaches full of self" to the thought of that one Master — our own — to whom we stand or fall; and He — how one loves the remembrance! — "judges righteous judgment." Human friends cannot — to them one invalid is much like another. "She is confined to her bed or sofa, and she does so and so — why cannot you do the same?" And we ourselves misjudge also — how can it be otherwise? One eye alone can see differences which are real, under similarity which is only apparent. But we may look up to that One, and if we meet approval there, why need we care if others fall on us coldly?

"Yes, I see all that," perhaps you will answer me, "and I do not care whether I am doing more or less — it is not my business to choose. But I cannot be always bright, as I hear some invalids are, and as I know I ought to be. Feeling surely is under control, if not action."

Is it? To a certain extent, no doubt, and perhaps to a greater than we think; but there are limits to all possibilities, and in illness the end of some at least is reached very quickly; for in this warfare you fight at a disadvantage. Physical causes occasion depression, while they weaken your power to combat it. So there is a double difficulty: you "feel" wrong, and you are without certain important aids toward putting yourself right. For instance, you, I know, like many people with active brain and vivid imagination — are dependent on variety. Does that seem a contradictory statement? It is

true, like many another of which the same thing may be said.

There are some who can live on through months and years of unvarying routine and never find it weary. They need no outside "distraction" to break its monotony; they can go on upon themselves without interchanging ideas with a human creature. I do not mean the full-minded people, who have all they want within and can use it; for to them also solitude is no loneliness; nor yet the empty-minded, who cannot bear it at all; but rather the slow-minded, whose mental force never works hard or fast enough to weary itself. It does work so constantly that they do not know what boredom is, but in such quiet, plodding fashion that neither can they understand the exhaustion which sometimes makes you need the stimulus of another mind to keep your own going; nor have they ever felt an idea take hold of them with such overmastering force that it becomes for the time an actual "possession," from whose spell only another voice will bring freedom.

"Very undisciplined," they would say, "very." The river which bears you onward will sometimes overflow — while their sluggish stream was never found in any unexpected channel.

And so it is, I think, that you long, though you call the longing weak, for some "change" in your day. A very slight one is enough; great ones, indeed, you could not bear. But some little break in the current of thinking and enduring, you cannot help craving for, and if it does not come the struggle for sunshine is all the harder. A letter, a new book, a new pattern, a ten minutes' visit — you are almost ashamed to confess what any of these have become to you, enough to beguile a long afternoon, which seems else interminable. Is it wrong to feel thus?

Surely not, if we strive against unsubmitive restlessness — if we take the cross of our will as a little bit of our Lord's loving discipline. How can we be disciplined, in fact, by what brings no discomfort? One would wonder how some people benefit at all by trials which they never acknowledge to be such. We are to "rejoice in tribulation," but how can we if we never allow that we experience it? We are to be "as sorrowful — yet always rejoicing," but the joy is in the sorrow — so the sorrow must be felt. No, I cannot help feeling that if we confess to nothing in the fiery furnace but the light of it, we are either, without knowing it, a little unreal or else are "striving to wind ourselves too high," etc. We are anxious to magnify God's sustaining grace — but He will always take care of that Himself; and it may well be that, in our exceeding jealousy for His glory, we are not without some remembrance of our own. Perhaps He is glorified in us most, when we think least about it.

Therefore, to go back to the question which troubles you — do not be distressed because your invalid days are sometimes sad. In health the mere change of sight and sound which comes as we move from room to room, or, still further, in outdoor exercise, has more of an exhilarating influence than we know — until we are deprived of it. But in illness the same objects are always before you. You grow sick of their familiarity — they are so associated with suffering in the past that they bring up the remembrance of it to intensify that of the present. Hence the difficulty of getting away, so to speak, from yourself — from the inexplicable nervous misery which seems at times too much for sense and strength to bear.

I know well that in all this I am touching only on outside difficulties. The sorest trouble of all, is that the one joy which should make you exceeding glad is so often "a fountain sealed." "He who has light within his own clear breast, may sit in the center and enjoy bright day." But if that light is

clouded If it is clouded, dear one, God is calling you to a higher lesson in trusting Him without it.

He knows how the clouds rise — very often from that same nervous shattering which makes itself felt in many mysterious ways, not to be calculated on or accounted for. He knows how dark they seem — and do you think He does not care? Is He not touched with your drooping under them? Is not the "heaviness through manifold temptations" something to Him as well as to you? And yet, even though He is thus "pitiful and of tender mercy," He will not let you miss this training in naked faith, which is to be one day "found" to His praise. Not joy or brightness or happy resting in great delight under His shadow — not these you are to seek or to be satisfied with; but Himself — trusted through darkness, clung to through silence, when He seems to "answer not a word." He is teaching you to be willing to be stripped of all comfort, to lie bare before Him, with no happy thoughts, no thrills of His conscious nearness. To be content, even when He deals with you thus — is perhaps the highest attainment of self-renunciation.

And for the rest, leave the living of your life to Christ. You are harassed and often cast down — is it not because He does not wholly rule within? You have yet many rulers there — man's opinion, man's estimate, whether your own or others, of what you ought to be and do. No wonder you are in bondage, not to say perplexity; but put all this aside, or rather ask Him to put it aside for you. Ask Him to take your will as He has taken your guilt — to take you from yourself and make you wholly His.

If you mean the asking — then you will get the answer. His life will fill and satisfy you. You will rest, because He plans for you — and you need have no difficulties about doing this, and not doing that. If you are to work — then His power will give you strength and wisdom and words. If you are to be still — then you will feel that He gives you the stillness. It will be no burden on your conscience — because it is His choice.

One thought struck me the other day as full of comfort for the suffering members — that as the whole body is "held together" by that which every joint supplies, and each part is to be a separate manifestation of the varied beauty of the whole — Christ; so some members must be made like to one aspect of the life of Jesus — and some to another. It must be as much an "office" then as any other, to be brought specially into fellowship with His sufferings; for without such joints, the whole body could not be "held together."

My letter is too long, or there is yet much I would gladly say. Perhaps some day you shall have another, if you care for it.

TO AN INVALID (No. 2)

So my letter requires a supplement — it is "too full of soothing." Then you shall have the other — the danger-side, perhaps a glimpse of the duty-side also.

One temptation, do you not feel it, of a life in which the body demands much thought and time — is SELF-INDULGENCE. It is difficult to distinguish between necessary — and undue care; between a rash persistence in efforts — and an indolent refusal to make them. From this latter many invalids suffer, even physically. They have grown so accustomed to the hopeless, "I can't do so and so," that the unused power gradually fails — and the imagined impossibility becomes real. It is better,

in spite of fatigue and temporary suffering, to persist steadily in any exertion which medical advice does not forbid. Of course, if it increases illness or retards recovery, thus entailing trouble on friends — it must be given up; but, short of this, it will do good and not harm.

It may often be very difficult. There are times when the announcement of a visitor tempts the immediate, "Oh, I'm too tired to see anyone" — and yet the visit would not injure — it would more probably brace and refresh. We shall be "glad of them afterwards," more glad still, in days to come, when we look back and see how, by God's blessing, the steady struggle not to give in — has saved us from hopeless, helpless weakness. We can do more for ourselves in this matter than any doctor can do for us. The battle is very much in our own hands; and in the strength of our own will, as it leans on power given even for such need to the faint, lies the victory.

It is a good rule to try and dispense with any indulgence we do not positively require. "Imaginations" about food or noise or light are better striven against, if possible. They grow and multiply with most curious rapidity, silently gaining ground which they do not readily give back. And the more we withdraw ourselves from the ordinary home-life around us, the harder it becomes to bridge over the space which separates us from it. Wherefore, in so far as we can "make believe" to be well — let us do so.

Difficult! I have learned something of the cost of my counsel, but I do not shrink from it notwithstanding. I know how the eager discussion confuses one's brain — how the sound of voices seems often to fall on a raw nerve — how the constant coming and going reduces to the last point of irritated weariness. But if it can be borne without real harm, better all this for some part of every day, than the luxurious quiet of one room, with its shutting in and shutting out. Shaded light is very pleasant — but you may live in it until neither mind nor body will bear free healthy sunshine.

There is another point wherein we have need of watchfulness. Do you remember what is said of Dr. Arnold's sister in the brief notices of her which are scattered here and there through his life — a record of "suffering affliction and patience" which contrasts strangely with his stirring activity: that she "made it a rule never to speak of herself"?

I must say, I hope she transgressed the rule occasionally, for it was undoubtedly a little strained; but it is astonishing how one glides into the habit of dwelling on and in one's own little world — instead of leaving it to sympathize heartily with others. It is a strong temptation, often a relief, to pour the chronicle of daily pain and discomfort into the first kindly ears that will listen. Thus the hour of a friend's visit becomes so full of "I" and "me" — that "you" and "yours" cannot get in edgeways.

You do not know how much this is the case, until you are suddenly wakened up to see it. You may grieve over it in others and never dream of it in yourself — so unconsciously are the chains of an evil habit riveted. We have much need of prayer that God may keep us from the wrong we do not suspect — may show us the unguarded place we had not thought of watching.

Especially in long illness should we cry mightily that the power of God's grace may keep down the exacting spirit which is so unlovely in many invalids. Constant little requirements of service or companionship — make up a whole which even tenderest love must feel a burden, though it is borne in uncomplaining patience. Better, instead of giving way to the imperative, "I must have so

and so" — to train oneself to say, "I can do without it." And it is astonishing of how many things you will learn this to be true — if you steadily put the thought of another's trouble first — and of your own comfort second.

Then again, I feel very strongly the evil of supposing that, because we cannot do this or that — we can therefore do nothing. Many invalids can testify how the weakness they are willing for God to use, is made strong by Him as the hour of need comes round. And, though anything like regular engagements may be impossible — there are always fragments of work which the Master will send as they are watched and prayed for. The young servant who waits on you at the sea-side lodging, with whom your very helplessness brings you into closer contact — can you not tell her of the Friend who helps you to bear your suffering? She may be even now on the brink of some terrible temptation — can you not speak the warning word to save her? Or the girls in your own rank — the young things who are some of them linked to you by ties of kindred — have you no message for them? They have perplexities, which the memory of your own girlhood may help you to understand — and the very fact of your being found quiet in one place may prompt them to turn to you for help rather than to busier friends. Could you not gather two or three of them beside your sofa for a Bible reading — or give half an hour for a talk with one alone? And if they float away beyond your reach, a short note may be treasured more than you know, and made, by Him who uses weak things, a link in the chain to draw them to Himself.

And then, may not the sufferers specially glorify their Master before those who know Him not? It is not only that He gathers for Himself the fruit of love and joy and peace — but its beauty is to be visible in other eyes. Are not the bright look, the meek endurance, the struggle against the small selfishnesses of invalidism — telling, though silent witnesses, for Christ's sustaining power? Do you think the young creatures, whose merry words and fresh exuberance now and then stir your quiet — do not feel as they leave you, that, in spite of the pain they pity, there is peace they envy? And is it not worth something, even at cost of after-weariness, so to have thrown yourself into their plans and pleasures that the heart, at leisure from its own suffering, has touched theirs with yearnings to share its rest?

You must not think you are "only a cumberer," dear friend. If the thought is true — then it is your own fault; but in your case I do not think it is. I would rather bid you remember that you have your own ministry — you have many companions in tribulation who are stronger for your struggles, calmed by your quiet patience. And down where the fields are white and the reapers are weary — your prayers bring many a cup of cold water, which, though you never know how it is welcomed, shall never lose its reward.

Most of all, He has need of you whose power can rest on your infirmities and use them for His own glory. It is not, after all, the friend who is constantly trying to do something for us who is nearest and dearest in our love — but the one who comes closest in heart-communion. It is for this, that your Lord calls you apart into the desert which He makes glad. He gives you a place of honor near Him, where few voices are heard but His. Enough for you to lie and listen — until in His own time He brings you out into a "wealthy place," where you may speak in the light what you have learned in the still darkness. And if that may not be here — there is a yet wealthier place in His kingdom of rest, where service may be awaiting you, for which you are training now. "His SERVANTS shall SERVE Him" THERE.

One phase of service, I need not remind you, may have its special manifestation in suffering — our glorifying God by meek submission. There is something yet higher — the joy which not only does not murmur, but even triumphs, under chastening; which can sing on its unfaltering song, "Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty — yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!" Habakkuk 3:17-18

God's grace is sufficient to lift us even to this — why should we doubt it? Why should we not plead for it, and pleading, expect it? But if, looking onward to this glorious goal, we can only feel that we have "not attained" — then let us at least try to keep down all restless questioning and repining. "Shall we indeed accept good from God — and shall we not accept adversity?" Job 2:10 This is not easy. "One cannot always be at concert pitch when one is ill." No, but we may strive for it. We must do so, or trial will not yield the "peaceable fruits" for which it is sent. It brings a message for our self-will, that it grieves and dishonors Him who would reign wholly within us. Shall we work with Him — or, by our resistance, make the struggle longer and harder? To go back once more to the subject of "efforts". I am tempted, as a postscript to my letter to add a passage I have just read on one of our Lord's miracles of healing — the cure of the impotent man at Bethesda:

The man knows nothing about Jesus, and He makes no demand upon his faith — except that of obedience. He gives Him something to do at once. The man obeys — takes up his bed and walks.

Jesus sets an open path before us; we must walk in it. More, we must be willing to believe that the path is open — that we have strength to walk in it. God's gift glides into man's choice. It is needful that we should follow with our effort in the track of His foregoing power; to refuse is to destroy the gift. His care is not for such as choose to be invalids — they must be willing to be made whole, even though it should involve the carrying of their bed and walking.

Some keep in bed — who have strength enough to get up and walk. There is a self-pity — a laziness and love of incapacity — which are as unhealing to the body as they are unhealthy to the mind, corrupting all dignity and destroying all sympathy. Who but invalids need like miracles wrought in them? Yet some invalids are not cured — because they will not be healed. They will not stretch out the hand; they will not rise; they will not walk — above all things they will not work. Yet for their illness, it may be that the work so detested is the only cure; or, if no cure — yet the best amelioration.

Labor is not in itself an evil like the sickness — but often a divine, a blissful remedy. Nor is the duty or the advantage confined to those who ought to labor for their own support. No amount of wealth sets one free from the obligation to work in a world, the God of which is ever working.

But there is a class of people the very opposite of these, who, as extremes meet, fall into a similar fault. They will not be healed either. They will not take the repose which God gives to His beloved. Some sicknesses are to be cured with rest — others with labor. The right way is to meet the sickness as God would have it met, to submit or to resist according to the conditions of cure. Whatever is not of faith is sin, and she who will not go to her couch and rest in the Lord is to blame — even as she who will not rise and go to her work.

CHRISTIANITY

Is it not strange, you ask me, that you should feel so lonely when you are "among Christians"? Alas, no! From your description of your friends, it does not seem to me strange at all. I think it would be if you felt anything else — both strange and sad. For, though they may have been truly converted to God, and are thus numbered among Christians "not nominal" — yet, if they have rested in this first stage, while you, in desire at least, have passed beyond it — it cannot be but that between you and them must be difference enough to account for some uncongeniality.

Conversion places us (how shall I define it?) judicially, in a state of salvation from God's wrath and from sin's penalty. But though to be saved is our first and great necessity, is it indeed the "prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus"? Is not this rather, not only to be ourselves "in Christ" — but, through the daily dying of the old man, to have Christ formed in us, "to be renewed after His image" — to have His life penetrating ours and displacing it? To this conversion is the gate, but no more. And yet too many are content with having entered the gate without pressing on in the path to which it leads. They may have life — but they are careless of growth. They are satisfied to be safe, and they forget that safety is only the beginning and not the end. They say rightly that they cannot be saved through their own efforts, but they forget that, being saved, they must strive after Christ-likeness.

Hence we see so many who bear Christ's name removed, by painful distance, from self-sacrificing, world-renouncing Christianity, in His spirit and after His example. Hence the prevalence of religious selfishness and sentimentality; and the mixture, sad as it is unholy — of religion and the world. Hence also, too often, religion without moral principle.

You think these are hard words? They seem not only hard, but presumptuous and proud. "Who are you that judge another?"

But you well know that nothing is more humbling than to have before you a standard which you do not reach. I see what it is to be a Christian. I cannot compare my own life with my ideal, without bitterest mortification. But still, I do see it — and so do you. Consequently our point of view is different from that of many around us, on whom this light has never dawned, even to "reprove" and "make manifest."

Hence the loneliness of being with them. I have never felt more solitary among those who do not profess to care for Christ at all — than with those who love Him — and yet do not realize what the love binds them to. We may fall short of our goal, but it is in sight; and the very looking toward it separates us from those whose eyes never turn to it.

We measure everything differently. It is like, as someone remarks, "we are living by the dial — while others go by the clock." Things which others do, amusements in which they join — we stand aloof from. We do not judge them, but for ourselves there is no hesitation — we cannot take our Lord's time and spend it so. We are His — His only — having no ownership in ourselves, or in anything which we possess. And from this entire surrender springs willingness to be identified with Christ. As He was in the world, so are we ready to be — outside of it, taking His place of rejection and dishonor. It is hardly a cross to us to be there, when we are living in the strength of this entire oneness with our Lord. And we are not troubled with many questionings. It is our place to be with Him, and the strong yearning of love cuts a way for us through difficulties we cannot reason about. When others wonder and exclaim and protest against our "extremes" — we cannot explain, and

we are in no haste to justify ourselves. We lay down no rules for our neighbor. We may say, like Abraham of old, "I will not take a thread or a shoe-latchet (Genesis 14:23-24); but, for the young men, let them take their portion." Yet, at the same time, we ask nothing about rules for ourselves. The only question for us is — How would Christ act? He, the living Lord, is more to us than maxims and directions.

And that thought brings help in this very trial of loneliness. It is hard to bear, especially when it first sets in and we are just beginning to feel that we, and some who have been so far very near — must henceforth tread paths separate though not diverging.

Christ Himself has borne this cross of standing apart even from the so-called "religious world." Does not He know how hard and sharp its burden must often be? Does not He understand how our hearts must ache for the old nearness and sympathy once so sweet? Surely He does. If He calls us to be for Him alone and not for another — He does not forget that His voice must silence other voices, and that we must miss their speech. But His pleading is the same still: "Do you love Me more than these?" And His answer is the same to our pleading: "Am I not better to you than ten others — even of your heart's chosen?"

He teaches us, too, how to deal with those who do not yet see as we see. We are tempted to be very impatient of their not seeing. We tell them what our Lord has shown to us, and we wonder that they do not perceive it. We are slow to learn that God alone "teaches to profit." Only the words which He Himself speaks are "spirit and life." All others fall powerless.

I think He means us always to witness for the truth He has taught ourselves — but we are not to be dismayed, still less irritated, if the witness is unheeded. Let us remember His patience with those who were "slow of heart," and did "not yet understand." How wisely He led them on, step by step, as they were "able to bear it" — never taking them further or faster than they could follow.

It is the same still. The lessons, as well as the fruit-bearing, of His children — have their season. They follow in the order He chooses, and we cannot anticipate for them, or say, "You shall learn this now — leave that alone for the present." Very often, I think, He brings His people together just when "one that loves, but knows not," is ready to reap "a truth from one that loves, and knows." But if the time has not yet come, we must be content to wait. We may sow, but "it is the Spirit who quickens," and His working, first and last, is when and as He will.

Perhaps, too, God's deepest teaching cannot be received at once. For each life, it is hidden in His hand, and bestowed gradually — as we need it. One human being cannot give it to another.

One needs faith here, however, and patience — for both are tried. I sometimes think it is easier to feel sure of blessing for the unconverted, than for Christians who are "following afar off." For them, prayer and effort seem sometimes paralyzed. Yet why should we limit, even here, the "exceeding greatness" of our Lord's power? He has already spoken the word of awaking — bidden them come forth from spiritual death. And can He not speak the word of freedom: "Loose him and let him go"? He has already given life — can He not give it "more abundantly"? FOR YOU

One thought in your letter I must notice. It is true and right in itself — and yet it may lead to what is both untrue and wrong.

"When I think of other sorrows, so much greater than mine — then my little trouble seems not worth speaking of. I ought not to feel it, but I do."

Yes, you do — and God knows you must feel it. By all means let us look at the crosses of others, and give Him thanks that our own are lighter. But they have their special weight, and we need not charge it as a sin on our conscience if, under their pressure, we "groan, being burdened." Does not God measure trial by what it is to us? Surely He does — is not that part of the "confidence we have in Him"? Does not this alone bring the unutterable sense of rest in which we lean our hearts against Him — knowing that He has made the very spirit we are of, and can gauge the hidden depths of it, and see the wounds kept from our nearest and dearest — the trials that are felt only and cannot be put into words? A thing is not a trial in the abstract, any more than a note on the piano is an unchanging tone. All depends on its relation to other things, other notes in the scale, through which comes the tender harmony or the frightful discord. It is the realization of this that makes the Lord Almighty, "My God, my Father" — the Father of our spirits.

There is untold relief in turning from the human, to the Divine. You go to a friend with something that troubles you — and you hear, perhaps, of some crushing calamity which makes you hold your breath in shocked pity. You cannot speak of your "little trouble" after that, but no more can you get outside the shadow of it. And yet the shadow is invisible to everyone but yourself. You do not wear mourning, though life looks to you all grey and black. And you do not take a nervous fever — you only go through every day with each nerve throbbing in its own misery. But you can look to your Elder Brother. He who judges "with other eyes than ours" can see that one with whom many are sympathizing, is bearing no more than you — possibly not so much. He has special tenderness for your need — and entire understanding of it. He does not reproach you because you feel what another might perhaps not feel at all. It is not someone else's trial, but yours — and if it brought no soreness of heart, neither could it bring healing.

Those words of Christ to Paul hold within them depths of comfort: "My grace is sufficient for you." For you — Paul's whole self, physical, mental, spiritual, was included in the words. The secret of the "thorn in the flesh" lay between him and his Lord. To Peter, it might not have been a "thorn" at all. If it had been "sent" to him, his different organization would have shielded him from its sharpness — he would have worked on and never felt it. But for Paul, its keen agony was always present — he could not live it down. And so the promise was of grace sufficient "for you." It was not the need of Peter or James which his Lord promised to meet, but of himself — a very different person.

And, for you and me today, there is the same individual knowledge — the same individual help. You need not put away from you the comfort God sends — because you think I need it more. There is enough for us both in our Father's treasury; and there is a portion belonging to each, "for you," and "for you" — with which neither may intermeddle for the other.

And this reminds me, I scarcely know why, of that first verse of Psalms 116, which always seems to me peculiarly sweet: "I love the Lord, because He has heard the voice of my supplication." There is a sort of personality in this utterance of David's love for his Lord: "because He has heard the voice of my supplication." It refers to something out of sight — a secret between his soul and God. The longer we follow Christ, the more we understand this.

We love Him in early days, as indeed we must always do, because of His own infinite love in bringing us up from the "horrible pit and the miry clay." Yet here our love has common ground with that of all His children. But there have been days when our cry has gone up to God, and He alone has heard it — days when the very blackness of darkness was about us — and yet we went through them with calm faces, and none knew that for us, the grave was closing over all we cared to live for — days, too, when Satan's power seemed let loose upon us, and we wrestled in deadly conflict, which God only and His angels watched. When, perhaps, we spoke of His love as men speak of something they once knew but which has passed away from them forever — its very possession now like a dream and a delusion. And from all these desert places where we walked alone and none knew it because we seemed to walk with others, as ever our cry has gone up to Him and we can recall how He came to us in the wilderness and made it glad — we can look back now and see them studded with Ebenezers, which none saw us raise, and of which none can read the meaning. But as our eyes rest upon them and count them up as treasures, even for eternity — we can say, oh how joyfully, "I love the Lord — because He has heard the voice of my supplication."

ASSOCIATIONS

I sometimes think that sounds and scents have most power to touch the wondrous subtle springs of our inner world. In the street, just now, a passing breeze brought me the scent of musk. It stirred memories that sleep, but never die — of letters perfumed with it — letters which now never cross the gulf which lies between two lives.

A little further on I heard a barrel-organ playing a sacred tune. Now I have a great objection to barrel-organs, and think the liberty of the subject might be advantageously interfered with, in respect of their being put down. Especially I dislike their grinding out "The Portuguese Hymn" or "The Old Hundredth" in juxtaposition with "Pop goes the Weasel". But I could have found in my heart to give the organ-man a penny for the picture he brought just then to my mental vision — nay, it was worth to me what gold could not have bought — our little church at W_____.

Ugly enough, you will tell me — never mind, I loved it, and it suited the old village perfectly. In my mind, I was sitting again at the end of our parsonage pew, close by the dear surpliced figure in the desk, looking through the half-open door to the line of trees beyond the green. I watched the people drop in one by one — homely folk from the countryside, farmers whose very walk showed self-respect and honest purpose — their faces, somewhat stolid perhaps, marked by kindness and wisdom, and lighted now and then by gleams of humor, quaint and keen — even if it might be slow.

Then their wives, whose best bonnets had been laid up in lavender for many a year; and their daughters, whose hats were of the newest market-town fashion — were not half so befitting. And the shy heavy lads, whose stalwart frames so generally required the support of the pew-back to keep them upright. It was not a cultured congregation — but each man, woman, and child had a sort of ownership in the rest; and the thrill of kindly feeling ran from seat to seat. And this tune — it was generally sung at the beginning of the service to that grand old hymn: "Lord of the Sabbath, hear us pray."

And I remember how its stately, stirring cadence touched one's heart with an indefinable yearning — lifted one on and up to the "nobler rest above," of which our quiet country Sundays were almost a foretaste. The barrel-organ took me back to them — over all the years which lay between. I could almost hear the click of the church gate as someone came in late. I could almost feel the soft, west wind as it crept up the aisle and stirred the leaves of my book.

I suppose, after all, that we never lose an impression once received. It may be covered over, but it cannot be effaced. And some very slight thing, as little to be calculated on as the breeze which lifts one mass of leaves after another to let the light shine through, will throw a gleam on it, we know not how, and show its traces cut deep. Perhaps in eternity, we shall be able to go back at will to all we have forgotten — back to the dim beginnings which lie beyond us now — those first faint dawns of an inner consciousness which we sometimes struggle hopelessly to recall. And in this sense it is true not only that nothing we ever had can be entirely taken from us — but that we "have" many things which seem to have been denied. Of all beauty we have seen, perhaps longed for — the subtle essence remains with us. And so a life that is spent amidst the most homely surroundings, may possess treasures of beauty and delight which the outside world would never guess. What is not there, may be put in, and held fast as real wealth, which can neither be touched nor spoiled.

God's giving can multiply the five barley loaves in this way as in many another. Even the stillest, narrowest days have many outgoings, for those who use them, into the wide world beyond. A glimpse, the faintest shadow of a hint, is enough to take us there if we will go. A handful of leaves or grasses will bring us all the freshness of spring, with the wind blowing over the violets. So it comes — the memory of all that has been gathered into life, here and there, as we have passed through it — comes, we know not how or whence, wakening us with a spirit-touch, to realize all imaginings and remembrances — what has been and always must be.

CHRIST OUR KING

I was reading today that wonderful account of the adoration of the magi, on which Christian love lingers with not less reverence than Christian art. It teaches a different lesson from the adoration of the shepherds — one which we are a little apt to pass over. The leading of the star is in itself remarkable, as given to those who were worshipers of the heavenly bodies. Does it not show how God meets each soul, as it were, on its own ground? To the woman at the well of Sychar, Christ spoke of "living water." To the fishermen of Galilee, He promised that they would become fishers of men.

The magi sought Christ as a King, and when they had found, worshiped Him with gifts. Our recognition of Him as such is not, I think, a very early stage in the Christian life. God's infinite mercy has made it no hard thing for us to obtain salvation from His wrath and from the punishment of sin. "He who believes," "Him who is thirsty" — these are its conditions. We are justified "freely by His grace." Our pardon is no purchase — we give nothing for it — we have nothing to give. So the shepherds of Bethlehem had but a short way to go from the fields where they heard the angel's message, until they found in the city of David, the Savior born. They came to Him empty-handed — they left Him, doubtless, rejoicing.

But even when we have thus found Christ the Savior — it is an entirely different thing to recognize Him as our King, and therefore to bring every thought into captivity to His obedience — to realize His claim, always and everywhere, to our allegiance. Is not this second stage, if I may so call it, of Christian progress, shadowed out in the adoration of the magi? They, as well as the shepherds, came to Christ at Bethlehem; but to reach Him, they must leave home and country and traverse the dreary desert of Arabia. They must bring with them gifts, as fitting offerings — gold and frankincense and myrrh. From us also Christ the Savior asks nothing. His salvation is without money and without price. But Christ the Ruler bids us to deny self — He bids us to leave all and take up the cross — He bids us to yield in sacrifice what we hold most precious.

And so we find that those who long to know Christ thus — who seek not their own will, but only to know His that they may do it — have to come, like the wise men, from a far country. They have received all — now they would yield all. Even friends, once dearest, and in love dearest still — must give place to their King. They can have no communion of heart with any who do not hold the interest of His kingdom first. They turn aside, not in narrowness, still less in asceticism — but in simple distaste, from much which they once cared for. They ask now, not as formerly, "May I do this or that? Has God forbidden it?" — but, "Will it be for my King's glory?" And on all their time, on all their strength, on every power of mind and body — is set this seal, the stamp of His ownership: "The Lord has need of it."

Yet how few of us recognize Jesus thus — as King as well as Redeemer! He has given us the joy of His salvation, and in its unutterable peace, our hearts are content — as a little child, held fast in its father's arms, is satisfied in being so held, and asks for nothing more. And this is deep blessedness. There is a sense in which we want nothing more on this side Heaven.

But we are not to be always babes in Christ. We are to grow up to the stature of the perfect man, and with the developed powers of manhood come its duties and its allegiance. Hence, I think, we reach a sort of crisis in our Christian life, when from or rather after the joyous following of children, we hear our Lord's call to the sterner following of discipleship (Luke 14:26). "He cannot be my disciple." He does not say, "He cannot be saved" but, "He cannot be my disciple" — he cannot share My mind. And the "mind that was in Him" was surely of sacrifice.

Do you remember how, years ago, Mrs. B_____ pointed out to us one lesson of that sweetest idyll, the story of Ruth? She first knew her mother-in-law as Naomi, "the pleasant one," but afterwards as Marah, "bitterness." Yet her heart was true, even to the end. Are our hearts true to our Beloved, when His words, "If any man serves Me — let him follow Me" — call us to surrender — call us to a path which is separate and lonely, one which even fellow-Christians wonder at, and think we tread needlessly, because it is not theirs? Do we look up to Him even then as our King — whose command we are to follow only, never to question? Then for us, as for Ruth, the bitterness will end in joy. In proportion to our faithful obedience to His rule here — will be our reward in Heaven, when those who have suffered with Him will also reign with Him.

CHRIST OUR KING — WHAT HE WILL DO FOR US

You point out to me one most important consequence of Christ as King. I had not before thought of connecting it with the petition in His own prayer: "May Your kingdom come." We need to have that prayer fulfilled first in our own hearts, and you give me an answer to many almost hopeless

longings in the simple reminder that, if the kingdom is His — then He has power to set it up. From us He asks nothing but trust and obedience — for He is the "Author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."

There is no question here of justification — for with this, obedience has surely nothing to do. But by His own obedience unto death, by His "learning obedience through the things which He suffered" — He has wrought for us freedom from the power of the creature will. He has not only atoned for our sins by His voluntary sacrificial death — but, by the perfect subjection of His own human will to that of the Father, He has wrought for us present deliverance from sin — not from its indwelling, but from its dominion, far beyond what most of us have dreamed of.

We should be very careful how we undervalue this His kingly power. Those are solemn words in the seventy-eighth Psalm: "They limited the Holy One of Israel." How did they limit Him? Was it not by distrusting His power to give them victory over His enemies and theirs? We limit Him in the same way. Just as, when we see in the Bible a path of holiness such as we have never reached, we are apt to say, "Oh, but I could not walk there — it is too high for me! If I got upon it — I could not stay upon the narrow path of holiness. Besides, I do not think Christians are meant to walk in it." And so we try to bring the Bible standard down to our experience — instead of trusting the power of Christ to bring our experience up to the standard! We need more of the strong faith of David's words: "He makes my feet like hinds' feet, and sets me upon my high places. He teaches my hands to war. You have enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip" (Psalms 18:33-36). The faith is strong — because the self-distrust is absolute. It is always, "He makes, He teaches."

We know what is the will of our King for each one in His kingdom: "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love," "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." Those words mean something — they are not mere figures of speech. God never sets before us an unattainable standard. No, but here is the secret: "I must trust myself to You." We know the will of our King — let us rest in His power also. Let us only ask, when some besetting sin is to be overcome, some progress in holiness gained, "Is Jesus able?" And then let us test His sufficiency — test it, not doubtfully, not as if we were making an experiment which might fail — but simply and fully. I believe the whole secret of victory lies here — in looking not to ourselves, for in us there is nothing which can conquer — but looking straight up to our King. What are our enemies to Him? What limit can there be to the power of His might working through us? So when temptation arises, let us not even try to meet it — but in a moment throw ourselves helplessly back on Christ, sending up the cry of the heart, "Lord, fight for me now! Lord, undertake for me now!"

We cannot tell how He will do it. Sometimes it may be by turning the battle aside altogether — sometimes by so covering us with the shield of His love that we lose sight of everything else. But, in one way or other, He will do it. Let us only trust Him — and He will show us how.

WHAT LIFE MAY BE

And so you wish you could drink from the river of Lethe? (Lethe was also the name of the Greek spirit of forgetfulness and oblivion, with whom the river was often identified. In Classical Greek, the word lethe literally means "oblivion", "forgetfulness".) Be thankful you cannot, for the draught is poisoned! Of all myths of antiquity, that seems to me the most thoroughly pagan — not unchristian

only, but anti-Christian, opposed to all teaching from holiest lips about the sweet uses of adversity and the peaceable fruits of chastening. No, we cannot afford to throw away our past!

"They are poor,

Who have lost nothing. They most poor

Of all — who lose and wish they might forget."

You tell me life can never again be to you what it has been. No, but it will be what it never could have been — sadder, perhaps, but wider and deeper as well. And the time will come, not soon but surely — when you will give God thanks that it is what He has made it. He has laid a gift in your hands with this sorrow, whose value you know not now, but you will hereafter — even on earth.

A gift! Nay, but you will say, "He has added nothing — rather He has taken away all." Not all — not indeed anything which was really needful. He never spoils our lives for us — never leaves them crushed and empty — at least if they are so, it is by our own choice, not His. For the fullness in Himself of strength and rest and peace, may be ours if we will. He may not give us what we have stretched out our hands for in the wild yearning that knew not what it sought — but something falls into them that meets our true need as well, or better.

You cannot take the comfort of this at present. We do not suffer and rejoice at the same moment — nor, while fighting, do we gather the fruit of victory. Others may watch the battle and understand the meaning of it — but we only learn it afterwards, when we have come out with wounds that are noblest trophies. For the present there is only a blind struggle of passion and pain — no more. But looking back after it is over, we can see for others what we once could not realize for ourselves. Therefore I have one thing to say to you which, though you will not believe it, is nevertheless true — that in time the bitterness of the grief will pass. You feel now as if this could not be. In ten years or less — you will know that it is. Thousands who have suffered as you suffer — will tell you the same. How else could life be borne at all? God's own hand will put a veil between you and your past. Its outlines will reach you through the mist of memory — touched with softness, if not with beauty. They will throw no shadow on your present — only one of calm.

Remember again, remember always, that your life is not a mere spoiled life, which you have just to live on and live out. It seems empty now — but if you can believe and wait, it will bring you still enough and to spare. You have seen a thing that "might have been" — a glimpse just shown you, and withdrawn. But all the rest is left — and God.

And there are many brightening influences, after all, stirring our sensitive inner consciousness in some subtle fashion which we cannot explain. They may not reach, and could not heal if they did — the one sore spot in our hearts; but they play around and soothe its aching, like the breath of a wind that tells of summer. We may shut them out. Many do; and their hearts grow dry and wither. It is a sure retribution for refusing any gift of God — whether cross or simple joy. But if we take it as He sends, who is over all and in all — then we shall often find that we have entertained angels unawares.

Of course there is the inevitable loneliness of an unattached life; but of this, as of many other things, the reality is far less dreadful than the seeming. At least I have heard many women say so, whose social instincts are as strong as yours or mine. Nay, they have felt that only through the

thwarting of these instincts, has life become possible. For them the "attaching" would have been so close, would have brought such intensity of love and care — that the strain of it could hardly have been borne.

Such have even come to love their solitude — and find its strengthening rest essential to repair the waste of hours spent in the service of others. Even that most desolate "coming home and having no one to speak to" may be a lightening as well as a loss — when brain and voice are tired. If one by the fireside needs cheering, we must make the effort to cheer — or, if it is too great, we must give up what makes it hard. But alone, we may look into the blaze and think. The soul may turn inward upon its hidden springs of power, and draw with which to renew the force which has ebbed away. And the next claim will find us ready to meet it, calm and wise and strong — not in ourselves, but in Him at whose feet we have "rested awhile."

"But there you are — setting the single state above the married!" How could I, when I believe that what God Himself has chosen as a type of the union between Christ and His Church, must ever be the crown and flower of this our human life. No, but as to the individual — His choice for each must be the highest for that one soul. He knows His own purpose for it — and we, who see through a glass darkly and cannot follow the deep channels of His grace, must be content that He should work it out by means which His wisdom fits to their end. Not what is best in the abstract — but what is best for you and me, is the only question with which we are personally concerned. And as we cannot answer it for ourselves — we may well be content to take the answer from Him.

"The Master calls you!" — is not that enough for the disciple? To do what He bids — that is life in its true meaning, here or hereafter.

"Ah," you will tell me, "many can look at the loneliness and never fear it — with strong health and limitless powers of locomotion, able to go out and bring plenty of interest back. But think of illness, with its silent helpless hours; think of being dependent on hands not kindred, whose very touch irritates, and whose soothing you must pay for."

Ah, I think of it, and I know how the thought brings unutterable pain. All I can say is — Leave it with your Lord. You have nothing to do with it at present, but to throw it off — and you cannot even do that unless you know where to lay it. Yet even then it will cling to you, and your only help is to cry, "Lord, take it from me! Deliver me from this my fear." One word of His rebukes it: "No good thing shall He withhold from those who walk uprightly."

If no tenderness of child or sister may minister to your need — He will lay it on other hearts in the household of faith, and care for you Himself through these. One thing you know: He will not leave you desolate, any more than He left the prophet by the brook. He has messengers enough to send on errands of help for His children, and He knows where to find and how to use them. Do you think that your hour of need can come without His remembrance of it? And if He remembers, He will meet it — how, you cannot tell, but when you say, "Our Father," you leave that with Him. Remember our prayer is for "daily bread," and there is such a thing as missing the answer while we try to grasp some "bread" in the future which we think may fail us. We shall find it there when we go forward and meet the need for it — but we must wait until then. And there is something to wait for always! Not what we have dreamed, or even ever caught sight of — rather that which may come by the way of losing all this. Yet something lying now under the horizon of our lives — yet

still coming, here or there. And let us remember that while we wait, it may be in painful "missing" which seems so dreary, someone else has, even now, the joy which for us, only might have been. Other eyes watch the beauty which is shut from our sight. Other lips are singing the song we only hear afar. Let us learn to be glad in this better thing, though we may but stand aside and see it pass. We think we have only half what life should have brought us — while someone else has the other half, and we must go on always with the sense of loss — the yearning without the answer. But there is the whole beyond — beyond the waiting, and behind it.

But all this which I have said has been only saying — nothing more. I cannot teach it you. We must learn, each for ourselves — by no forcing, but by gradual need and following and gentle answering. We cannot begin with another at the same beginning which has unfolded itself to us.

DIFFICULTIES

You wish you were more like your friend and mine, Miss I_____, but you despair of ever being so. I do not think your wish is likely to be accomplished — but why should you despair if it is not? We might save ourselves much, if we could only see how useless is the attempt to engraft an opposite nature on our own. Be yourself, dear — that is what God asks from you, except insofar as He changes you into His own likeness. Our individuality is His gift. He has not formed men and women on one model — any more than leaves and flowers. Happily, nature is too strong for our efforts after conformity — but even the struggle for it is hurtful. In proportion as we imitate another — we become untrue. In each of us there is some tendency of natural character which marks us off distinctly from others. It is to be restrained, no doubt — but not eradicated. God has some purpose for it, and we may trust Him to mold it to that. Does our Heavenly Master need to have all His tools fashioned on one pattern? If He uses one for one kind of work — may He not want quite a different instrument to do some other? He will not set the hammer to polish gems — or the delicate chisel to hew stones from the quarry. But if only we are lying close to His hand, ready to be taken up and used at any moment, in any way — we may trust Him to choose our service for us.

Remember, our service is never true unless we get it straight from Himself. What we do because we see another do it, is mere copying. God's work for us may be something entirely different from our anticipation — but it is His, and that is enough. Does it matter whether we carry out this or that bit of His great plan — when it is all one?

I pass on to another sentence in your letter. "You will never feel as good people feel. You thought that when you began to love Christ, you would grow holier every day — more willing to give up self — more detached from the world. Instead of which you are longing for some tangible, material happiness. The old spell is strong upon you still — will it ever lose its power?"

And so, though you have only just sown your field — you are disappointed because the harvest is not already fully ripe! Do you not know that in spiritual as well as natural husbandry — there must be "long patience" first? The blade is not the full corn — but it enfolds it, and though the unfolding is not yet, it will come.

Cherish the life you have. Guard it and pray over it. Imperceptibly, but surely, it will increase, for growth is its law. Only keep near to the source of growth — to Him who has promised to be as "the dew unto Israel." Be sure that nothing hinders His grace from flowing over your soul and filling it;

and, for what that grace will work, if you are working with it — wait His time.

Do you remember him who complained that he "saw men as trees walking"? Yet his eyes had been opened by the Light of Life — and so have yours. He never leaves His work unfinished. He will give you the open vision you long for, only He will choose His own hour for the gift. But you can ask Him for it — you can go to Him with your complaints about the spiritual darkness and plead with Him to remove it. He may try your faith and discipline your patience by delay — but His hand is upon you still, and while that leads, you are safe.

You may not understand why it is best that you should not at once see all things clearly — but you know that He makes no mistakes. And perhaps, through our groping in the shadows for awhile, comes a more intense yearning for the light, and a more absolute willingness to be guided by it.

For may it not be that the light dawns for us slowly — because we fear it? Deep down in our hearts, so deep that it escapes us without sharp scrutiny — lies a certain shrinking from what it might reveal. It may show us some stern truths — about sacrifice for instance — about a giving up of all. And flesh and blood fail here. We fear as we enter, not "into the cloud" — but into the brightness. Is it not true that we do not see it — because we dare not?

But how shall we get rid of the fear? Only by taking it to Christ. We need not hesitate to tell it out to Him. He will not chide us — He will only bid us stay in His presence until He puts it away. And this brings me to the true help for your difficulty about becoming "detached" from the world. It can only be through closer attaching to Christ. You remember Paul's words to the Thessalonians: "You turned to God — from idols"? The turning from — is only possible in the strength of the turning to. Do not be too much troubled because you find it hard to give up this or that. Think rather of what Christ has to give you, and open your heart to receive it. The more it is flooded with His love and joy — the less room there will be for anything else; for, in one sense, it can only be emptied of worldliness — by being filled with Jesus. All "turning from" without this will only be — as to many good people it is — the brick and mortar of hard bondage; no "offering of a free heart," but something they would gladly withhold if they might.

I have said very little, dear — and not at all as I would have liked to say it. We never know until we are tried by some attempt to help others, the poverty of our own resources — the impossibility of feeding the hungry soul with the bread of life, even though it is our own stay and support. Yet perhaps our cry that God Himself may give them their portion is the truest support we can offer.

OUR PRESENT DAY

I feel very strongly the truth of what you say about religious talk and controversy. Is it not a sad sign of the times that terms expressing the deepest and most sacred truths of our holy faith — are bandied about in the flippancy of drawing-room or dinner-table chat? Or else they are flung backwards and forwards in careless irreverence of denominational dispute, until they have come to be associated with theories and counter-theories, with suspicions and recriminations, and we think of them too often only as weapons of attack and defense.

For you, dear, as for myself, my one longing is that we may be hidden in the cleft of the rock — kept under the shadow of our Redeemer's hand. The din of strife will not reach us there — but in living communion with our Lord, we shall know the "truth which makes free." Differences will adjust

themselves in the light of love, and the untroubled calm of faith.

And is it not after all entirely consistent with sound philosophy to let reverent faith supply the missing links of reason? There are difficulties we cannot explain and mysteries we cannot solve — but the refuge from doubt we do not find in reason — we may find in ignorance and patient trust. What seems to us contradictions — may lie only in our imperfect apprehension. Truth may be presented to us not as it is in itself, but only as we can grasp it. There may be absolute and higher truth of which what we know is only the shadowed outline — we cannot reach it now, but it waits for us "behind the veil." And meanwhile, as God's truth is one, we need not be terrified by any fragments of it which as yet we cannot fit into their place in the whole.

You and we have much to be thankful for, in that the teaching of our stated ministry is rather positive than aggressive. The full setting forth of truth in due proportion is surely the best safeguard against error. Many complain of it as monotonous and tame. Morbid craving for excitement demands something sensational on Sundays, as well as weekdays; and it is pleasant to have thought drawn away by combating heresy in other people — from uncomfortable scrutiny of oneself.

Out under the lime trees this morning, with the whirr of winged things about us and the whisper of leaves overhead, Alice and I had a talk which reminded me of you. You know I am visiting the Linton's. I am happy with them always, in the thoroughly "at home" feeling which makes any visit enjoyable. But still the atmosphere of discussion which fills the house brings me sometimes to the last point of irritation. Mr. Linton is a good man, but the "combativeness" which his clerical calling debar from any other outlet, develops itself in theological "fencing," to an extent which I do not like to characterize. Even his gentle wife is infected, and his two older girls, "up" in all the controversies of the day, are as quick to detect anything heterodox, and as eager to do battle with it as himself.

Alice, the third, holds aloof, in a silence which seems half scornful, half perplexed. Hers is the deepest nature of the three, but she is not at present what anyone would call a "pleasant" girl. She is moody and restless and erratic, at war with most things in her world, within and without. She interests me intensely, but I have never dared to show the interest. People have tried to "do her good" until she has turned like a wild creature at bay and will have no more of it. She has "taken" to me; I cannot tell why, unless it is because I let her alone. But she shows the "taking" in a curious contradictory fashion, which I thought meant dislike until her mother informed me to the contrary. So I was a little surprised when she joined me in the garden today. I had taken my work out of doors, Mrs. Linton being busy about domestic matters; Mary had gone into the parish and Kate to the school-room where she teaches the younger children. Alice occupies a middle position in the household, the work belonging to which she does not seem to have found.

Today she was in a quieter mood than usual — softer, I should say, for in general she is quiet enough. She took up a book I had been reading: Albert Durer and his Works.

"I wish I had lived in those days," she said; "life must have been easier in those old-world German cities, with their still, quaint ways."

"I imagine that life is life always," I replied. "For Durer's mother, it does not seem to have been a particularly easy thing — she had eighteen children."

Alice laughed. "But I didn't mean troubles of that kind. I meant — I hardly know what." She threw herself on the grass at my feet, and looked up in my face. "I feel wicked inside this morning, and I know you do too, if you would only say so; that talk at breakfast made me stamp under the table."

Truth to tell, I had almost done the same myself. Mr. Linton and a clerical friend, who came in from the country and arrived at the vicarage by eight o'clock, had been indulging wit at the expense of charity, against some of their fellow-Christians, in a way that pained me exceedingly, both for themselves and their listeners. The elder girls were encouraged in the same wrong, and the flush on Alice's cheek told its own tale.

"But Miss Hettie," she went on abruptly, "you won't think that because I hate all this horrid controversial talk, I don't care for — for" — She stopped, but the wistful, reverent look in her eyes filled up the sentence.

"Dear Alice," I said, "I think it is just because you do care for holy things that you cannot bear what even seems like a careless touch upon them."

"Thank you," she said; and then she went on turning over Albert Durer, while I waited for what might come next, and the soft speech of nature fell into our silence.

"Dear me, how strange," she exclaimed at last; "here is old Albert saying just what I felt this morning, and couldn't find words for: Oh, for God's Word cleared of all human commentaries."

"Then don't you see that he and you were just fighting the same battle? The field of it is the world, and the length of it is all time. There was one phase in the Nuremberg of three centuries ago — and another in this town today. Surely the longing of all hearts which God has touched must be the same, for the light of His truth, without the darkening of man's speculations. But does not Christ promise it: 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it is from God.' Only we can't have it without the condition."

"And that is so difficult!"

"Is it not impossible, dear, until we get power beyond our own? Only we can pray, "That which You would have me — make me. Let Your will in me be done."

Our strength is in those words: "It is God who works in you to will and to do."

"It seems hopeless," she said despairingly.

"Dear Alice, how many have trusted themselves blindly to Christ's hand, and gone with Him on His bare word until the time came for their eyes to be opened!"

But Alice went back to her old sigh: "It is so difficult!"

"Only where love fails — for he who loves, trusts."

"Then how are you to get the love — if you haven't it?"

"Not by thinking about it and trying to grow feelings. But do you remember Louisa's hymn last night,

"There is a green hill, far away

Beyond a city wall,

Where the dear Lord was crucified,

Who made and loves us all."

"If we have ever heard from Him who died there, those wondrous words, 'For you — for you!' then all our pride and coldness will melt, and the difficulties about loving will melt with them. Was it not so with the poor woman in Simon's house? It was the sight of Jesus which touched her heart and brought the flood of tears with which she bathed His feet. She saw Him, the Friend for whom she was yearning — how could she but weep? Just as she was, she came to Him — what joy it is to think of that! Not because she loved Him or was worthy of His love — but because she needed Him. Don't we often stay away from Him because our faith is weak, because our hearts are cold, because we grieve Him, oh, so constantly? Better come to Him as we are — that He may make us what He would have us to be."

"Yes," said Alice hastily putting the thought aside, I believe, to be taken out and pondered some other time; "but you remember that coil of opinions Mr. Yorke was trying to unravel this morning? Not that he did unravel it, or if he did, I couldn't follow him. And how full of confusion it all seems!"

"Is not that because we begin at the wrong end — with trying to understand — instead of doing and loving? We keep reading our New Testament backwards, beginning with Revelation or the epistles, and working down — instead of passing up to these through the simple story of the gospels. It is there Alice — the 'message is cleared of all human commentaries.' It is not what has been — but what is. Christ answers all your questions today, in the very words He spoke to those Hebrew men and women then. He has said it all — what we are striving to work out with such a gasp and strain of heart; and after all our reaching and groping and puzzling, we must become as little children — go back and find it there."

"Yes, but it isn't our own, unless, "

"Unless we grow to it?"

"No; there again, how can we grow?"

"What is growth but life? And is not Christ the Life as well as the Way and the Truth? Has He not come that we might have, and more abundantly?"

She looked up at me then, a bright, flashing glance — but it passed in a moment, and the trouble came back into her face. "You help me," she said, laying her hand on mine; "why does no one else? Why does no one find out what I need, and give it me?"

"Dear Alice, do you make it possible for anyone else?"

"I couldn't!"

"I don't say it's easy — but that is hardly the question. Only I think we are too apt to blame others — for not seeing what we draw down blinds to hide."

Just then Mrs. Linton joined us — and Alice went into the house. But she has seemed grave and thoughtful all day and has clung about me in a wistful fashion which means much. You will ask that

the Good Shepherd may Himself lead her in His way of peace, and if she walks with Him there, then the strife of tongues will not reach her. But why, oh why, in our deepest soul-needs, do we always stretch out our hands for help — if to human aid at all, then to someone outside our own little circle? Why must the nearest be so far apart? I never could answer those questions satisfactorily. I know the answers that are given, but they do not content me.

Sometimes, I think, we really do stand in the deeper places of one another's life, where we so much long to be — without knowing that we are there. We ask for word and sign — when the thing itself, precious beyond either, is given into our very keeping.

We went for a country walk this afternoon, and I found, while "puttering in the ditches," as you know I am fond of doing, something which reminded me of all this. The children were wild in the delight of gathering flowers. There they were, growing side by side, but they could see nothing of one another but the green hiding sheath which made one look much like the rest. The glory of purple and gold within it was out of sight. And with us the sheath never falls off entirely here. But what revelations there will be when we get up into the light and glory there!

TO AN INVALID

I had a thought given me the other day which I must pass on to you; it seems exactly to meet your present state of weakness and consequent depression. We had been speaking of spiritual conflict and doubt — realities both, though some Christians ignore them. My friend told me how those words in Jeremiah had once been to him a sheet-anchor in some such storm: "I have loved you with an everlasting love — therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." I think I looked what I felt — that the appropriation of that promise required a strong grasp of faith, for he met my unexpressed objection by saying, "Just reverse the order of the words; you can feel, can you not — that God has drawn you with loving-kindness?"

Yes, truly — how could I look back and not acknowledge that!

"Then remember the 'therefore' which links the latter part of the verse to the former. The 'drawing with loving-kindness' must be because of the 'everlasting love' with which, He says to you, 'I have loved you.'"

Now join with this promise our Lord's plea in His prayer for His disciples (John 17:23-24): "You have loved them as You have loved me"; and connect the following verse, "You loved Me before the foundation of the world." Are not the three together a cup of "strong consolation"? I will not weaken it by any words of mine, but a verse I have read somewhere sings itself over and over in my heart,

"So dear, so very dear to God,

More dear I cannot be;

The love with which He loves His Son, Such is His love for me!"

A remembrance of illness months ago helps me to understand what you have been going through lately. I recollect well the gleam of light which fell one night through a "horror of thick darkness." I had been thinking rather drearily of that command in Ephesians, to "take the shield of faith, with

which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." But I could not take the shield — I was too weak for any effort. I must be at the enemy's mercy — if my faith should be my defense. And then there came to me — did not God's own Spirit bring it — the word of one sore tried, even as I: "Oh, Lord God, O strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle!" What I could not do — He would do for me. I needed not, as I had no power, to fight in this battle. I was only to lie still and lay all the strain of it on Him — only to cling to His hand and say, "You shall answer for me, Oh, Lord, my God!"

We cannot store up comfort and pass it on to others as we would — so I hardly know whether what I have said will help you. But it is cheering to see the "footsteps of the flock" in some rough bit of the way where we seemed to walk alone. Therefore I am tempted to recall another trouble of those dark days, which rose again in memory as I read your letter — the sorrow of being shut out, as I thought, from work for my Lord. But gradually I came to see how many of my ideas about Christian work had been entirely mistaken. I had thought only of doing — and lost sight of being and becoming. I had forgotten that God's will must be wrought in me — as well as by me, and that the one could only be in proportion to the other.

I had imagined that while I accomplished so much — all must be well; while in reality only work done as He would have it, will stand the test of "that day." We lose sight of this too much. We are called, not only to be fellow-workers with God, but to something higher still — even to fellow-feeling with Him. But this our calling we do not see, or seeing, do not rise to it. We do not seek to know and share His mind about our work — it is too much routine with us. We plan it out and cut it to our own pattern — instead of looking up, hour by hour, in the love which waits and follows, for the guidance of His counsel.

We are not always quite ready to stop and let someone else take it up, caring rather that we should do it, than simply that it should be done. And even in what we count as directly spiritual service, we know little — oh, so little, of our Lord's infinite tenderness and patience! We have not borne, as He did, with weakness, or meekly endured the contradiction of sinners. Our rough handling has broken the bruised reed — where He would have strengthened and bid it lean on Him. Someone comes to us with a question perhaps, and instead of trying to put our minds "alongside" the inquirer, as Dr. Chalmers would have said — we have only wondered that there should be any question in the matter. And then we have gone on, busy hither and thither — satisfied that we were busy, and never heeding that in our bustle we have perhaps overlooked the one thing appointed for us to do.

All this and much more we see, when God puts a space between us and our eager activity — that we may estimate it truly. And then, instead of grieving that we are taken out of it, we grow almost thankful to have everything in the shape of work put aside for a time, that we may be alone with Him who cleanses the leper.

He will find other hands to do what He has taken from ours — no fear of this — or He Himself will do that for which He needs no human aid. What we might have done suffers nothing from our helplessness; what we may be, might suffer sorely without it. It is no loss, but gain beyond all price, to be put down thus into absolute nothingness — that we may give ourselves over to Christ — to be so filled with Him, that body, soul and spirit, may henceforth be only the organs of His living Presence.

I sometimes think that those who are laid down helpless are called, in a special sense, to share the "burden of the Lord." We bring to Him our own burdens, but we hardly remember, as we might, our privilege of bearing His — of grieving with Him over His law dishonored and His mercy slighted. There are those who refuse when He calls, and regard not the tender stretching forth of His hand; and it is given us, as priests unto God, not only to plead for them before Him, but to enter as it were into His heart, and to share, in some small far-off measure, its unutterable love and grief.

And yet again, if God teaches us by His chastening to humble ourselves for our own sin — are we not, as members of His mystical body, to confess that of others also? We mourn over our Church's departure from the simplicity of faith; over the carelessness of her clergy, and the decay of vital holiness in her children. But it would be better if our sighing and crying went up to God, as over guilt which brings us to the dust in bitter shame — guilt in which we bear our personal share.

"But these things are not real to me," I think I hear you say. Alas no, they are not real to us — would that they were! But we must plead with God to make them real and keep near Him until they are — live near Him always, that they may so continue. In His light we shall see their reality. Better that the sorrow of it should oppress us, than that we should be blind to it.

And now, when I have written all this of the service left for days of weakness, I am half inclined not to send my letter, for I know too well that there are hours when one can neither think nor pray; when every other consciousness is lost in that of mere oppression. Especially I know how the request to remember this or that in prayer sounds like mockery — when the heart can scarcely tell its own need to God. But I have merely indicated what may be. Do not feel saddened if for the present your prayers are nothing more than a helpless looking up through the dark — a clinging hold, for yourself alone, of a Hand you can scarcely see. He knows your frame — Whose judgment of you is true. There are many things you long to speak of to Him, but when you cannot do it — does He not understand your silence? He hears the sigh which lays them on His heart. He will keep them there, and not forget them. Can you not trust Him?

It is one hindrance to prayer in great weakness, that we make it too much a set business. We look on it rather as formal asking audience of a King — than trustful converse with a Father. We think of it as something to be gone through at certain times and in a certain way; and hence, with weakened power of body and mind, it seems often an utter impossibility. Don't you think that if we seized a moment of ease or quiet whenever it came, for the swift glance upward which always meets an answer — we would not so often have to complain of weariness or wandering?

There can be no sustained effort in illness without suffering. The very attempt to persevere in it is too much for nerves which will bear nothing. Do not try it. You know that the "eyes of the Lord are over the righteous — and His ears open unto their cry." Speak when you can — and when you cannot, remember that He has no need of words.

I recollect once hearing of a clergyman, long laid aside by over-work of brains, who said that for six months his only prayer had been two words: "Lord Jesus." He could ask for nothing; he could only realize a presence near of One long loved and trusted. It was all he could bear, and for the time, all he needed.

SYMPATHY

"Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called." There is much in that Jesus stood still. He did not give merely a hasty passing touch — though His power, which indeed needed no medicine, could have made it effectual for healing. But He "stood still."

And just remember when this miracle was wrought. It was during that last journey, when, if ever, the prospect of His own suffering might have absolved Him from heeding that of others. He "steadfastly set His face to go unto Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

Here it is that the types of the Old Testament fail. The bullock, the lamb, the dove — all were unconscious victims. He alone, as the one who loved Him best has emphatically declared, "knew all things that would come upon Him." The shadow of His cross was upon Him from the beginning — but now it grew deeper. He "entered into the cloud," and on His human spirit, as on ours, must have fallen a mysterious fear. Yet He failed not — He steadfastly set His face.

Still there seems to have been a longing for the human sympathy which, thank God for it, was as sweet, as real to Him as to us. He began to "tell the disciples how the Son of man must suffer many things." It was as if He strove wistfully to bring them into the cloud with Him; just as we, when some strange dread is hanging over us, seek to share it with another — seek, how often in vain, and cry out of our sore disappointment: "The heart truly only knows its own bitterness."

How we faint under the pressure of our one life — the pain of which none may help us to bear. May it not comfort us in such moments of loneliness, to remember that He, our Elder Brother, has known the same; for His disciples "understood none of these things." His sorrow was a sealed book to them. The Master must tread the wine-press alone.

And when we meet with such a repulse, or perhaps with blank silence instead of the response we crave for — we retreat, as we say, "into ourselves," and take refuge in silence too, as bitter as it is proud. I think nothing more truly than this, shows our unlikeness to Christ. It is easy to love those whose sympathies meet ours — but to find our joy as He found, in bringing ourselves down to weakness — to bear as He bore, with blundering, wondering misinterpretation — this is not easy. And yet does not His law of love bind us to a tender consideration which we need never expect others to observe — to a giving of sympathy which we ourselves receive from none save God?

We are not to thrust our moodiness or our misery on our neighbor — we are to keep back even the expression of our discontent; but we are to have keen sight for the burden another is trying to hide, and ready touch to lighten it. And even so, only so, we follow Him who came not to be "ministered unto but to minister." The weight of coming agony was upon the soul of Christ as He went onwards to Jerusalem with His disciples. Still for others His heart was free — His eyes were open. We should have made it an excuse for not heeding: "I had so much to think of — that I did not notice." But with Him the cry of need found immediate response: "Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called."

Do we not sometimes feel, in trial or perplexity, that others might help us if they would only stop and listen? But they will not, and in their constant hurry we know it is little use to speak. Let us note the lesson for ourselves, and give what we ask — leisure to hear, concentrated attention — calm, patient consideration.

It may be our busy work, as we think, for the Master, which so overcrowds our lives that we have not time for this "standing still." Sad eyes meet ours — but we cannot stay to read their story. Some look to us for help in battles which we fought long ago — but we cannot turn aside to see how it fares with them in the strife, or to whisper the secret of victory. But He would have said, even though some plans of our own for His service were put aside — "You have done it unto Me."

How many are around us whose strength almost fails in their sore daily struggle — and yet we never stand still to offer them even a cup of cold water? We all know someone of whom we say, "I wonder how she bears it — her life would kill me!" And yet we show no personal interest. We pass by on the other side, watching the possible wreck of faith and love and hope — and it is not in us to reach out a helping hand or to speak one word of cheer. We let the brave heart wrestle on in its loneliness, until sometimes the thought will come, "If earth is far, Heaven is farther; man cares not for my sorrow — is not God unmindful too?" It is a great victory for Satan to send such a doubt rankling into any human soul. I feel — don't you — as if I had sometimes helped him to obtain it.

"But," now I can imagine you reply, "I don't like to speak to others of their troubles. I can't bear to have my own noticed. Bunsen was right: 'A man has nothing more sacred, of all that is essentially his own, than his grief.' And yet your grief is just what people seem to think they have a kind of property in — a right to pull out for themselves, and touch, and turn over, which they do in most rough fashion.

But there is such a thing as sympathy which never wounds by direct expression. It is possible to soothe pain — without seeming to see that it is pain. Some natures know by instinct how to do this. It is a good gift, given to fit for special ministry. It is born of self-forgetful tenderness, caught from Jesus Himself. But surely for this, as for wisdom, we may ask, if we have it not — from Him who "gives liberally." He can teach it. Let us keep very near Him, that we may learn.

Have you ever considered the service of the priests in the tabernacle of old? One aspect of it seems to link itself with what I have written — their special ministry for man. It might not be often exercised, but the occasions of it were as blessed as they were rare. It would have availed the leper nothing to seek help from one of his fellow-Israelites, for these were not near enough to God themselves to restore another to His Presence. But the priest could bring the poor outcast back through blood and water, and open to him again the way of access to Jehovah. Will you think me very fanciful if I see here an indication of a kind of service which is given to few of God's children — and only to those who live in very near communion with Himself? "If a man is overtaken in a fault — you who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness." Might not many who have left their first love and slipped down from the higher ground where they once walked in faith — be restored by the loving, healing touch of one whose yearning over their souls would spend itself in crying for His power Who can strengthen even what is ready to die?

We do not realize what God would give us in fulfilling our office of pleading with Him for our brethren — of drawing others with us into the light and love in which we dwell ourselves. But it is only the priestly lives, hidden in God and to Him wholly consecrated — which have power enough to tell upon those which lie on a lower level, and to lift them higher by the very intensity of their own spiritual love. Only to these is given insight, quick and tender enough to detect the hidden spot of evil which is spreading death through the whole being. Only they, in the freedom of their own health, can fearlessly lay it bare. Only they can know when healing has been truly sought and

found. And only they know the joy of bringing the healed one back again into the courts of the sanctuary.

One thought more about this priestly ministry. It was out of sight of "the congregation." And is not the highest service of God's people, now in a sphere beyond sight even of many among their fellow Christians? They do not know it, and if they knew they would very likely misunderstand. The broken box of costly ointment was waste in the eyes of some disciples. Perhaps many a true-hearted Israelite, busy in the camp, and much burdened by its tumult and toil, thought he was doing more for God and man than the priests, in their still waiting within the veil. Even so many Christians cannot understand the hidden lives which have no outlet except towards God, and do not overflow much in work which can be appreciated from the outside.

And yet is it not enough for us that we live towards God? If He cuts off, as with some, all the manward side of our lives — let us believe that He will own and use, in a way we know not, the energies which are shut up to Him. We are indeed redeemed to serve — but the choice of our service is our Master's. It may not be doing — nor even very definite enduring. It may be nothing which others can watch, or that we ourselves can measure. But does not He know best what He needs from us, and if we are giving Him that, is it not all we ask for?

"No man takes this honor unto himself — but he who is called of God." Yet God may call — and we, through our unreadiness and earthliness, may fail to obey.

ON VISITING INVALIDS

May I give you one or two homely hints about your "invalid visiting"? I can imagine what a ministry of comfort it may be, in a place like S_____, where many sufferers are left to that feeling of loneliness which, in illness, means double desolation. You need not wish for a truer mission of mercy than to seek out the sick ones at a watering-place, and try to bring some stray bits of brightness into their shade.

How well I know what it is to say in a morning, as one wakes to the remembrance of "knowing nobody." "Nothing can come to cheer me today — there is no one to throw a pebble into the pool and break its stagnation with a fresh ripple." A very pleasant feeling at first. You are glad to be let alone for a time. You would rather not have the trouble even of answering a message of inquiry. It is a satisfaction that you may be as ill as you like — and no visitor need be sent away unseen. But by and by, when you have had time to gather up your scattered forces and, though not perhaps well enough for settled occupation, are still well enough to bear some "distraction," you cannot help feeling rather dreary when the hours wear on and bring you none. Nothing to look forward to when you wake, nothing to think over in the last dreary moment before sleep. It is very hard not to dwell on aches and pains until they are multiplied. It harder still not to give way to that inexplicable dread of possibilities, which is one of the skeletons of invalid life. If you should get worse — if, if, if! Of course you know the "if's" are faithless — but they are very persevering too, and have little insistent voices that will be heard. What a pleasure it is when some fresh, soothing tones from the outside world break in softly on their clamor and help to quiet it — though, of course, only one voice can really make them still.

Well, it is something to be a sunbeam glinting across such shadows. But you do not know much of illness, Nellie, and I could hardly wish experience to qualify you for your work; though, if it came, I

might congratulate the work. Meanwhile, however, do not smile if I tell you a little of "how not to do it," even if my directions somewhat resemble the "doctrine of contradictory inconceivables."

(I) Do not stay too long — that is no true kindness. Do not suppose that because you have remained a "good while" you have necessarily done well. "Oh," you say, "but she begged me not to hurry, and she didn't seem tired." Possibly not. The tiredness has not come, even to the invalid's own consciousness, still less to the perception of another. The entreaty to remain was given in all good faith; but if, in half an hour you could return unseen — you would be satisfied that it was better not acceded to.

Stimulants are good in homeopathic doses; but beyond these there is danger of reaction. You have given variety — that is well; but if you induce exhaustion — then you have done harm. So you need not rack your brain for entertaining talk, when the most entertaining word you can utter is "Goodbye."

It is difficult, I know, to avoid this over-length, just because nothing warns you of it. You do not feel fatigued yourself. Brain and voice answer every demand upon them, and there is no consciousness of effort to mar your pleasure. You do not dream that, for your friend, the tired chest and head ache with every word, or that she is nervously apprehensive of "talking nonsense," because half her strength must be given to keep down pain. And with no strain like this to pull the check-string — you can go on for an hour very happily, heedless of the minutes as they pass, and quite startled when some trifle wakes you up to see that time has gone, you know not how, and that "really you had no idea it was so late!" But on the other hand —

(II) Do not hurry. If you are in haste, then try at least not to seem so; but it is better not to go at all — if you have only time to fill the room with an atmosphere of bustle. You do not know the effect of a restless, breathless manner upon one who is weak — how it infects with its own lack of repose and acts upon the sensitive nerves that so sadly need soothing instead of irritation.

I once lived near a lady whose flying visits in a time of illness were almost a small martyrdom to me. She never had "a minute to stay." Her goodbye came before I had recovered breath after her rapid greeting. She thought she never tired me, because she would hardly sit down; but while she stood half in motion and rattled off half a dozen engagements with a speed which made my brain whirl, she "took as much out of me" as if she had prosed for an hour. And this brings me to another caution —

(III) Do not speak on too many topics. Any invalid will thank you for change of thought, for a glimpse of interest outside the narrow world which is shut in with pain. And most helpful and healthful it is to be lifted for a moment into fresher air, and made to feel the pulsations of more vigorous life. It is good to have self-centered sympathies widened, and material given for the sick-room ministry of prayer. But if, by way of doing this, you pour out a whole history of work of different "cases" and "classes" and meetings and committees, you are doing — well, be thankful you cannot understand what. "I wanted to give her something to think of afterwards," you say. Yes, but I suppose you do not wish a headache to aid the thinking? And the simple hearing of so much stir and bustle is too much for one who is very prostrate, not to speak of the dreary feeling it often leaves: "I can do nothing! What are my little bits of work compared with all that?"

But, independently of this, it is really difficult for an invalid to follow the rapid transition of conversation, which in health forms its chief charm. The mind is weakened by suffering, and the very sadness of regret, that it will not work as in former days, makes the effort to urge it on harder. Of course this remark does not always apply. I speak only of cases where brain and nerves have been strained until, in their reaction, they will bear nothing. And in these you will generally find it best to touch only on two or three topics, demanding only easy attention and no discussion. Therefore —

(IV) Avoid argument, for argument is sure to excite, and excitement sure to exhaust. You who are well can enjoy a difference — you like to hold your own and to try your opponent's mettle in holding his; but in illness it is another matter. Thoughts, words, memory — all leave you when you want them. You have forgotten most opinions you ever had — and you are in no state to take up new ones. A few old familiar truths and facts you can cling to, but anything beyond confuses; and these you would rather not have meddled with.

"New views" might have their interest once, but you only shrink from them now. You feel unable to estimate them fairly, and until you can do that you would rather not be unsettled in the old. You only desire to be left in peace. What you can hold by, is often grasped faintly. You cannot afford to have the grasp still further loosened.

(V) Always leave if another visitor is announced. Pray do not be offended at this suggestion. I have too often seen this rule of ordinary politeness infringed, to feel its enforcement needless. For an invalid it is generally very trying to speak to more than one person at a time. The wish not to neglect any, the effort to bring all into some sort of connection, or to avert collision if such seems likely, is sure to bring its penalty afterwards. And even if someone else is present, who can entertain one friend and leave the others for a *tete-a-tete* beside the sofa — still the hum of voices, the difficulty of hearing, and the general movement in the room are very trying, and much better avoided. A quiet talk with one alone may be a refreshment — a room full of talkers may be an overwhelming infliction.

One hint I must add. Do not make many suggestions about wonderful cures, medical advice, etc. To a stranger, indeed, some hint about the latter may be of great use; but, as a rule, it is no true kindness to press new treatment or new doctors, upon one who has been long ill.

I know how often my heart has sunk as I have gone through the inevitable catechizing from every new acquaintance. Have you tried this? Have you seen so and so? It is a curious fact that the one thing in which you might be supposed to be yourself most interested and about which you are surely best qualified to judge, namely, your own health — is exactly that in which you are most tormented with interference. If you are ill, you are worried with suggestions of remedies ten times worse than the disease, and often themselves contradictory and impracticable.

Each friend has some new medical theory which he is anxious to test by crucial experiment; or some favorite doctor, whose treatment has been "wonderfully successful in cases like yours." And, if you are shy of the theory and doubtful as to the soundness of non-professional judgment as to similarity of symptoms, you are set down as willful or prejudiced, and pitied, if you are not scolded.

You have faith in your doctor probably. You know, at any rate, that he understands your physical idiosyncrasies, and will not kill you in process of curing by prescribing medicines which never

agree. And, in the course of long fellowship, you have grown to like and trust him, resting confidently in wisdom which has never failed you at your need. But because he is not doctor so-and-so, the great authority — your friends wonder that you can be content to waste time in trifling. "Now if you would only go up to London and see him! It would be so easily arranged!"

Yes, to one with strength and energy and money at command. Failing any of these three, — he difficulties are slightly greater. Besides, the chances are that some one fact puts you entirely out of the celebrity's line. If you were under him tomorrow — you would be no nearer health, as you know too well. But you cannot explain or defend yourself; you can only endure in silence, while you are sermonized and wondered at until only strong self-restraint keeps down an impatient, "Oh, if you would only let me alone!"

On the whole, it is reasonable to suppose that invalids and their friends are as anxious for health as anyone else can be for them. But they know, better than outside observers, what is possible and hopeful. It may very fairly be left to their own judgment as to these, which is probably as much exercised as their neighbor's. In the matter of medical attendance, especially, I think this is true; and if a patient has confidence in a doctor, it is not kind, without strong reason, to unsettle the trust. A random hint, or half expressed doubt, carelessly uttered and soon perhaps forgotten — may work more mischief than you know. And if no harm comes thus, there may be other mischief wrought. In long illness which has settled at last into a chronic form, there is probably little to be done, except in the way of alleviation. Slowly enough the sufferer learns to accept that conclusion — not until after many a struggle, which God alone watches. But when it is reached, it brings, like most certain things, a kind of rest. If there is not much to hope for — it is something to be done with disappointment. The ordeal of repeating the same sad dreary story, the eager grasping each bit of encouragement, only to let it go, the falling back into deeper despondency — all this is far more wearing than quiet acquiescence, even in constant pain. And it is positive cruelty, real though most well-intentioned, to bring up again the old question: "Can nothing else be done?" Let it be. If it is hushed — better not to touch it. It has brought suffering enough — why trouble it when it is at peace?

Besides, no one can tell what old, wild longing some chance suggestion may waken from its sleep. "I think the air of the Mediterranean would cure you — I wonder you don't try it — it is a very elixir of life!" Yes, you know that, and the words fall straight upon a strong conviction that it would cure you. But then, you cannot go. Over and over again that plan has been taken out and pondered; but always with the same result, always to be put quietly aside, with perhaps a little sigh of regret — yet with a satisfied remembrance that nothing "good" would be withheld by your Father. But still, you cannot quite get rid of the wish — and it is rather hard to have it stirred up again, just to be combated anew. Probably your friend does not guess that the battle will cost you an hour's sleep.

I might enlarge on many more minutiae, but they are not to be laid down as rules, only caught by close observation and quick intuitive sympathy. It is impossible to say, for instance, whether invalids like to have their health noticed and inquired into (generally, I think, they do not) or whether they may wisely be encouraged, or the reverse, in speaking of themselves; because, "There are some people — and other people," and no two cases will come under the same precedent. Routine will not do in dealing with human beings. You may start with an idea of sympathizing — and in some cases you may only foster morbidness. Or you may determine to

give "healthy diversion" — and all the while your listener puts aside the tale of pent-up suffering, which would lose half its pain if it might have but one outlet. But loving insight will guide you — a good gift, especially needed for your work, and therefore sure to be had for the asking. Seek it fresh for each visit. Never pay a visit without this preparation — and then you will be sure to give unconscious help and cheer, even though you may come away lamenting that you have done no good. I think that you will often do most good — when you are without definite ideas of doing any. The look of kindly eyes, the touch of a cool hand, the soothing of a low, peaceful voice — are better than homilies upon resignation.

This I say, knowing, of course, that your visits are not "ministerial." If they were, I might be tempted into further strictures on the score of brevity, and simple keeping to the Word of God and prayer, without any very lengthened expositions. I heard the other day of a clergyman who received from a sick man a lesson on this subject, well worthy of note. The poor fellow was evidently restless and uncomfortable, not giving full attention, and apparently wishing the visit ended. "What is it?" asked Mr. _____ at last, "is there anything you wish to say to me?"

"Oh, sir," he replied, "I'm sure I'm very much obliged to you for what you've said; but do tell me something of what God says." And this, after all, is the longing of many a sufferer. Not man's word, however excellent, but God's Word, brought to us in wisely-chosen portions, as we often cannot choose it for ourselves.

To return. Perhaps you think my cautions absurd. "How can one remember such trifles — and how can any sensible person mind them if they are forgotten?" But you have to do with those who, for the present, are not always sensible. It is a humiliating admission for invalids, but there are many hours when its truth is too painfully real to be contradicted. Mind and body are alike out of harmony — and the jar in one reaches through the other. You know little yet of the mysterious way in which they mutually act and re-act; but even a cold or a headache may teach you something about it, when you have felt generally "out of sorts," — hovering between irritation and stupidity, and more conscious of your

nerves than was at all agreeable.

Let imagination widen this bit of experience. It is enough to guard you from some mistakes, and your own watchful tact will save you from still more. Perhaps this is all we can go upon in our attempts to help one another. For every soul among us knows only its separate world. We may look over into those that lie about us, and borrow something from the borders of them, where they touch our own. But beyond this we cannot go; for no two, however near, inhabit exactly the same range. And health and sickness are very far apart — apt, somewhat, to lose the memory of one another; and hence, to misjudge what they have forgotten. But there is insight "laid up," as well as "wisdom," in a storehouse of which you know the key. God make you a helper, as you long to be — for the sufferers who often cannot reach the comfort which they know.

A PICTURE

I have had a rare enjoyment today, which came, as so many do, in spite of myself, for I would have put it away if I could. I have seen a dear old woman. How I can imagine your laugh as you read that, as if my sources of pleasure must needs be few! But consider how much goes to one's ideal of an old woman, and you will acknowledge that to find it even faintly realized is not so frequent a

delight that we should not hail it. Especially in days when the race of old women, dear or not, is becoming rapidly extinct.

I think, by-the-bye, that one very important element must be missing in the education of the "rising generation." We middle-aged have at least in our remembrance some friend of the olden time, with whose stately deferential courtesy was combined a charm of kindly graciousness nowhere to be found now. We are better, nobler, richer, for having our love and reverence linked to such; for having heard reminiscences of days when railways were not even in the dictionary, given in the composed, dignified English which was in vogue before we learned to exaggerate and abbreviate, as if we were mentally and physically out of breath. Most of all for the remembrance of a chivalrous high-mindedness in men, and a delicate purity in women, of which I am misanthropical enough to fear we shall never see the like again.

Certainly that inexplicable grace of manner which belonged to those who bore of right the names of "lady" and "gentleman" before they had been "soiled," as now, "by all ignoble use," has passed away forever from among us. Much that is pleasing may live in the memories of those who come after "our present day," but of this they can keep no record.

However, I am wandering into reflections instead of telling my story. But all was done at last, and Mrs. S _____ said to me, "Now I will take you to see an old lady."

"Oh no," I said, "don't let us go to see any old ladies today; it's too hot."

But she only laughed and persisted, so we went — turning into one of the outlying streets and stopping at an old-fashioned house with a green door and a brass knocker of marvelous brilliancy. And forthwith we were ushered into the "best parlor," where the air was sweet with dried rose-leaves, and in the cool shade and an immense cushiony arm-chair, I could have gone to sleep myself and been well content if our hostess had never appeared. But she came, and I must rouse to propriety.

And her greeting, most cordial and kindly, put slumber to flight. I was glad to look and listen; to talk I had no need, for Mrs. S _____'s powers in that line are considerable, and I was amused to see how good Mrs. Annandale meekly put in a word now and then, sideways or edgeways, as she could; but the few she spoke were full of force and sweetness and quaint wisdom, and fell very crisp in the homely northern speech. At length she took advantage of a moment's break to press us to join her early tea; we might drive home in the coolness afterwards, and we were so tired, she would order it at once. The offer was too tempting to refuse, and very soon she led us into the dining-room opposite, where I saw for the first time what one must know to understand — a genuine north-country tea-table. I can't describe it; you must go to American books for pictures of cookery; only I remember the clear crimson jelly, the golden honey and the snowy "short-cake" — a wonderful compound of all deliciousness; to say nothing of the home-made bread, brown and white, and the delicate pink ham which nestled daintily in its green garniture. And then there was the welcome which sweetened all, and the dreamy sort of rest in which I sat, and enjoyed looking out into a sunny square of garden, wherein grew clove pinks, and sweet williams, and such old-fashioned favorites; while the other two discussed the gossip of the country-side — births and deaths and weddings to be — who needed a cook, and who "would never have good servants because she didn't know how to manage them." Very harmless it was, and never unkindly. I have

heard gossip ecclesiastical, medical, and legal, which struck me as being the same thing in different phase and phrase.

But, after tea, Mrs. S_____ went out again, remembering a want forgotten, and I sat with Mrs. Annandale in the "parlor, window" — not the best, for I begged her to stay where easy-chair and knitting-basket betokened habitual presence. And this was always her summer seat — the curtain looped back that she might see "up street," while in winter she retreated to the fireside, and could see only the passing opposite. Nearly fifty years ago she had come to that house as a bride, for her father's home had been "quite on the other side of the town," and I daresay the parting from it was a sore thing to her. And here, in the early years of her married life, the rooms echoed to the stir of baby feet and the music of baby laughter — too soon hushed; for, one after the other, two bright buds were gathered by the angel reaper, and the mother gave them meekly, but not without tears.

Then another girl and boy were given her, and for a while there was sunshine in heart and home, until a deeper shadow fell; and after a sharp sudden illness, her husband "went on before." Then followed years during which she lived only in the two young lives that were growing up together: "Bonnie bairns they were," she said; "how could I help being proud of them? Willie was so manly and steady and good, and my frail, fair Maggie, that I watched lest a cold wind should touch her; she was like the tall pure lily in the window yonder — as spotless, I think. She went first, and it was long before I could see that the Lord had done right to take her. But He brought me to it at last; He has patience enough, and I didn't grudge Him so much when Willie died. Well, He's keeping them for me, and we'll meet again: but I have to pray I may not be making idols, even in Heaven."

She told me all this very simply and quietly. Her smile was a perfectly happy one, and the pretty northern tongue was as cheery as a child's. There was no appeal for sympathy, no trite moralizing on the sorrows of life. Only at the end she took off her spectacles and sat silent a while, and I saw the clear grey eyes shining with tears that did not fall. I thought of Jean Ingelow's "Song of the Boat," —

"Oh, one after one they flew away

Far up to the heavenly blue.

To the better country, the heavenly day;

And I wish I was going too."

But I don't think Mrs. Annandale did wish it; or if she did, her wish was made to wait her Lord's will. "I have so many mercies," she said, "it's just wonderful — and there are the poor people."

I caught at that. Could not her experience give me some hints in my district difficulties?

"I don't know anything about districts," she said; "I don't think I could help people in a lump, like that. I just find them out, one by one, or rather the Lord sends them when He sees I'm ready for another bit of work; the poor tired mothers that don't know how to keep the home together, because the husband drinks perhaps; or the misguided silly girls that are laying up sorrow and shame to themselves. And one thing comes after another — you've nothing to do but look for leadings, and follow them."

It was a piece of profound wisdom. Does our complicated machinery of "doing good" accomplish half as much as this simple "one by one"?

But while we talked, there came a diversion in the shape of two young ladies, who like ourselves, had driven in from the country; and the whole of "our present day" seemed at once to contrast itself with a quickly vanishing past. In they rushed, with a general effect of loudness which made me almost gasp — wild hair floating behind from under perky little hats, jackets and neckties as mannish as might be, and voices — oh me; one "excellent thing in a woman" has gone out of fashion since the days of King Lear! Mrs. Annandale's silvery tones had no chance of a hearing; indeed she was overpowered by something more than voice, for the chatter of those merry lips was evidently not to be stopped by reverence for old age.

"Oh, I don't think so"; "indeed you are quite mistaken"; how could they speak so to one who might have nursed their mother! But they were good-natured girls too, and honestly thought they were doing a great kindness in coming to see an old woman. They had only caught the tone of an age which makes itself the measure of wisdom, and has lost the art of looking up. I do not suppose it ever occurred to them that experience is beyond accomplishments, or that years can bring more than they take.

They went at last, but the broken thread of our talk could not be gathered up again; and very soon I had to say good-bye, knowing that here I shall probably never see my old friend again, for I leave the neighborhood soon, and life for her can hardly be very long. But it will rest me to think of her in some of the busy days that are to come — waiting, in her patient contentment, until the Master's token shall summon her beyond the river.

How many still lives there are like this — tiny hidden springs, only known by the greenness round! Narrow, perhaps some may call them — and yet with an outlook towards eternity — for on that side the soul lies open, the thought reaches wide. I wonder whether those who are always grasping out into the full world of power and knowledge and most doubtful satisfying, can know one tenth part of their blessedness or their blessing. I wonder too, whether those from whom God has taken so much, do not receive tenfold for what they have not. The "cedars have fallen round them, but they see the light behind." And in that light, who can tell for what future possibilities they are being prepared?

"Perhaps the cup was broken here

That Heaven's new wine might show more clear."

At any rate we know that God's people, like their Lord, must needs be "made perfect through suffering." And following thus in His footsteps, though with bleeding feet, they may reap a richer harvest from love's losses than they could ever have gathered from its gain. The peace He gives — springing from sorrow, ripened by pain — is better than all earth's gladness. And yet, as we walk in the path of His leading, we shall find many blossoms of the human happiness we have ceased to live for, full of unexpected sweetness and refreshing.

MORTIFICATION

I have just been reading the Life of Madame Louise of France. She was a daughter of Louis XV, who left the court of Versailles which she was in every way fitted to adorn, for the cloister of the

Carmelite Nuns at Denis. It is a saddening book. One grieves that there was no one to show her the "more excellent way" — to tell her of the service which is freedom, and not bondage. Yet I cannot but believe that she was one of the many hidden ones whom Christ has owned everywhere and always — one of the lambs He has carried in His bosom, though to many eyes His mark upon them may be obscure. I would not doubt that her soul rested on the one foundation, in spite of all the "wood, hay, and stubble" which other hands had piled upon it. But I am not concerned with this now. I wish you would read the book and tell me if it does not impress you with one thought — that we nineteenth century Protestants might learn some wholesome lessons of self-denial from this Romanist princess. Of course many of her cloister austerities were useless, childish, and degrading. I see the falsehood of the whole system, and deprecate it from my heart. But there is a "soul of good even in things evil," and I do believe that in our recoil from asceticism, we have gone to the extreme of neglecting "mortification."

Yet Paul says, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth," and he is speaking to those who were by no means in "bondage under the elements of the law." What do we know practically of this "mortifying" in our daily lives? It is good for us to face that question — good to take it into the light of God's presence and look at it there. Perhaps we may make discoveries we do not like, but we had better see that the sore festers than heal it slightly.

We do not, I think, dwell enough on sacrifice — as required from the disciples of Christ. There are women in England at this moment who are acting out the idea of it in a way that shames many who pity their "delusions" — women whose rule especially binds them to the care of such disorders as, whether from their contagious or peculiarly repulsive character, are liable to be shunned by others — women who, though in many cases of the highest culture and refinement, do not shrink from nursing the poor in their own homes, faring as they fare, and remaining with them until their need is over.

"Oh but," we say, "they do it from a wrong motive." Ah well, we may leave that to their Master. The judgment-seat is no place for us — though we are all fond of sitting there. Perhaps an analysis of our own motives might not be too satisfactory in its results. But at any rate, the question for you and me is — does knowledge of the right motive blossom out in our own lives, to any such fruit? And I am not sure whether even a mistaken sacrifice for conscience sake may not be among the all things which "work together for good to them that love God."

One I daresay you are very jealous of all this, dear Mrs._____. "Women should not leave their homes," I hear you say. That is a different question: I do not mean to touch it at present. I am only maintaining the need of greater self-denial, which can be as well exercised in our homes as out of them, sometimes far more truly. I may be following my own will in going to see a poor woman down in some dingy back court, while I give it up by staying in the drawing-room to entertain a stupid visitor. But you shall have just one extract from some instructions of the Soeur Therese (such was the name by which Madame Louise was known after she left "the world") to the novices of her convent, toward whom she at one time filled the office of Mother, which indicate, better than any words of mine, the nature of what I mean by "sacrifice."

"If you feel any repugnance to some duty," she used to say to her spiritual daughters, "do not begin to try and find some lawful way of being relieved from it. Supposing that you find less pleasure in the society of some of your sisters than others; try to be extra kind to them in action

when present, and in thought when absent, without letting anybody find out the reason. If your opinion is opposed, and you might easily triumph over those who differ with a word, abstain from speaking that word. If some piece of news is mentioned which cannot edify, though it may amuse you — avoid listening, if you can do so without affectation. Certain practices are more difficult to you than to others; observe them with special fidelity without talking about them. Even if you are reprov'd or punished when not to blame — keep silence before men, and let none know save Him who will certainly reward you."

It is in little things like these, that we "Evangelical Christians" are sadly deficient. We do not think enough of yielding our inclination in trifles — making it an offering to Him who sees in secret. We like our own way and our own ease. We can submit in great things, so we say — but we fail under many a smaller test. We do not even in reference to material things, put a sufficient curb on self-indulgence. We know that the kingdom of God is not food and drink, nor yet the abstaining from either; but we forget that even Paul speaks of "keeping his body under control." There are very few of us for whom literal fasting would be possible or even right, but we may keep the spirit of a fast by refusing little luxuries by no means necessary to our physical well-being (often hurtful to it), or by quietly taking some distasteful or ill-prepared article of food, without making a fuss about it. Our spiritual health would prosper more, if we remembered that the flesh is to be crucified literally as well as figuratively, and that while the body is not to be neglected, but cared for as an instrument of God's glory — it is not to be pampered by indulgence, or allowed by even trifling excess to hinder the spirit in its upward soaring.

Self-denial, in its strict sense, can only be exercised in reference to lawful things; as to unlawful things, we have no choice. If we would train ourselves to resist in some great temptation — we must learn restraint in trifles. This is what I mean by fasting — not obedience without an object, nor to such an extent as to bring us more under the power of our wretched nerves, but simple resistance in one shape or other to the spirit of self-pleasing.

I suppose the root of the evil lies in our sharing so little the mind that was in Christ. He "pleas'd not Himself," and if we were more like Him, we should be less self-indulgent and more forbearing. But we are content too often that He should save us — forgetting that we are saved only that we should walk over self and choose the thorns and the cross, and give up our own will to do that of our Lord. Hence the arrogance and self-assertion, the unevenness of temper and roughness of manner. Hence too, the indolence and love of pleasure which so often characterize those whom we cannot doubt to be converted people. They need to be roused to self-discipline, sharp and stern, and, as they would think it, somewhat legal, rather than to be soothed by reminders of their "privileges." They "see their calling," but they overlook the "walking worthy" of it; I do not mean in respect of any glaring inconsistency, but of small unlovelinesses, of which one can only say, that they were not seen in Christ.

And this reminds me of that lovely picture in Hosea: "He shall grow as the lily." I wish we could keep it before us, as a pattern of what we ought to be. God gives to some more natural attractiveness of character than to others. It is something we cannot analyze, but which few can resist — an indefinable fascination, as much a gift as personal beauty. It is a "good gift" too, if laid on the altar which sanctifies — a talent to be traded with for the Master, though like all such, dangerous to its possessor if not thus consecrated. But it is a still fairer thing to see a character

naturally unlovely, touched with beauty by the grace of God; like one of those transparencies which are nothing but grey lines when you look at them alone, but when placed that the light may shine through them — they make a picture so fair and soft that you cannot help turning again and again to study it. Are we living so near to Jesus that His light overpowers our shadows — so near to Him that we catch and reflect His beauty, just as we insensibly grow like anyone we are much associated with? How often we say, "Such a person has quite caught so-and-so's tone." Have we caught our dear Lord's "tone," from being always with Him — His tenderness and meekness, and purity and self-forgetfulness?

That last word recalls one point in the lily's beauty which it seems hard for human beings to resemble — its perfect unconsciousness. And our natural self-consciousness is aggravated, just now, by the tendencies of this analyzing, anatomizing age, which lead so much to morbid introspection that it seems a necessity laid upon us — the penalty perhaps of our higher culture. We cannot free ourselves from ourselves. No, but we may strive and pray to be so taken up with Him who is "altogether lovely," that we may forget ourselves.

I have wandered a long way from my beginning; but I am writing a letter, not a treatise, and if I have rambled, you will forgive.

REGENERATION

"So is everyone that is born of the Spirit." Your questions about the mystery of the new birth, dear, find their only answer in those words. We may see the effects of the spiritual life in ourselves and in others — but we cannot trace its beginning or mark out its course. You cannot prescribe rules about life — it is a force not to be confined within systems.

The truth is that we cannot see our way here because of the light — we are blinded by the excess of it. But though we cannot explain this mystery of regeneration — we may experience it without explanation. The needle guides you to the north, though you cannot tell why it points thither. An infant's birth is without its own knowledge — and we must be "born again" and grow up in Christ before we can gain even a faint glimpse of the nature of this second birth; but we may know whether life is present, though we cannot determine how it has come.

Will you tell me that sometimes you cannot feel sure even of this? Ah, I know how one may confuse oneself by endless analysis until everything seems doubtful! But what proves the presence of life in the infant? We know it first, do we not, by the little feeble cry which is the expression of need? And in any soul that is born of God there will be the same expression of need and helplessness — a cry which will utter itself in prayer.

Here is the test of spiritual life, if we need one by which to try ourselves. Is there an earnest longing after God, though it may be expressed in broken words, or perhaps is not expressed at all? Then there is life, and for the rest, let us trust the power which has bestowed, to maintain it.

God imparts His own life to us through means of His own appointing — His own Word, first of all; and as new-born babes we must feed on that. It is because we do this so little, that our growth in grace is slow as it is. We put man's teaching first — man's thoughts about God's Word above the Word itself. For twenty people who will read "good books," and with most earnest desire for spiritual profit — you will not find one who will take the Bible, and let thought and prayer brood over

it until it yields up its hidden stores of sweetness and strength. Hence, alas, the impressions which are of human origin only — human influence can so easily efface. Hence the being "tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine," instead of being deeply "rooted and grounded" in the faith of Christ.

"If you abide in Me, and my words abide in you" — so spoke our Lord to His disciples. There is something more here than even the mere study of Scripture, as precious as that is. The "abiding" implies such a presence of God's Word within us, that every word and thought of ours is tintured, as it were, by His; that through His Word we are always in such full communion with His mind that we can never be in doubt as to His will. We are so joined to Him as to become "one spirit," and in this deep union we catch, as it were instinctively, all that He would have us know and do. But this does not come very early in the Christian life — it has to be waited for at some cost of self-denial, and certainly at much sacrifice of ease. Indolence is the great hindrance to its attainment — we do not make sufficient effort to seek it.

I felt much reproved the other day, when a friend said to me that she had often spent three or four hours in waiting before God for light upon some passage which she did not understand; for her example was a rebuke to that mere surface-study of the Bible with which we are too often content — instead of the musing and pondering over it which is implied in that "abiding" of which our Lord speaks.

But for the beginning of Scripture study, those words in John 2:22 have often helped me: "When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them," etc. They remembered — they did not understand at the time. How often, at first, we say, "I cannot grasp this or that — there is a truth here which seems to contradict some other truth." Or perhaps we feel still more sadly that we do not find anything in the Bible — it does not speak to us at all. Others can hear its teaching — but for us there is only silence. But the teaching of God's Spirit is gradual and slow. Christ is "the Way" — but we learn the way step by step. So it was with the disciples — and so it is with us. There is much in His Word which we cannot bear until some later stage in our spiritual life, and which is hidden from us until we reach it. Humility and patience are our lessons meanwhile — and they are the only true preparation for knowledge.

I know well that in these days and for some minds there are special difficulties in the study of God's Word. The doubt and perplexity which are inseparable from an age of great mental activity and highly-wrought culture, inevitably influence and infect us all. Even the most earnest and single-hearted feel now and then the shadow of unbelief and questioning; just as the unbeliever is not wholly positive in his unbelief, so the believer is uncertain in his faith. The rapid inter-communication of thought renders it indistinct — colors blend one into another, and lines of difference are sharp no longer.

So it is very possible that you also may be troubled by present attacks on the authenticity and authority of Scripture. Remember, however, that even making the widest allowance for the genuineness of hostile criticism, our faith stands, or ought to stand, on grounds which it cannot reach. Even the Scriptures are a means, not an end: "they testify of Me." And if we have received that testimony, we know well that nothing can deprive us of Him whom it has revealed. The clasp of our faith cannot be loosened, even by the possible loss of this passage or that; for it rests not on the Scriptures but on Christ. True indeed that we cannot reach Him except through them — but, having reached, our hold of Him is independent of any medium. And yet, on the other hand, we

love the medium for the sake of that to which it has conducted us. We have found Christ in the Bible — and we cling to it for His sake; we dare not lightly surrender it; we would not cavil at apparent contradictions or difficulties, nor would we judge it as if God's revelation must in all respects conform to man's rule and measure.

I have no fears for my Bible — let it be exposed to any tests, it will bear them. And I am more and more persuaded that the old-fashioned belief of the universal church is not so groundless as many would assure us. We do not need a new creed — we rather need our faith in the old one strengthened.

RAINY DAYS

I ought not to write to you today — I feel low-spirited enough to infect you across three hundred miles. Do not suppose I have any cause to be — the very shame of it, I think, only makes me worse. Any reasonable depression one can nerve heart to strive against — but when it is unreasonable and therefore wrong, one ought to strive all the more. Yes, so conscience has just been telling me. But the "ought" is difficult to obey.

Perhaps there is a reason, however, for my feeling "dumpish" this morning, though my pride will hardly let me write one so trivial. It is a wet day — the rain beats against the window, and the wind roars in the chimney. I suppose we shall see the blue again some time, but at present the sky is one uniform leaden grey.

"Well," you will say, "and what of that?" Nothing that I can explain, dear, for if you could understand the explanation, then you would not need it; only be thankful that you were born insensible to atmospheric influences, and pity those unfortunates whose spirits rise and fall with the barometer. It is not that I murmur at the weather — I only know that, in some states of it, I must resign myself to simple endurance; for the clouds will hang low sometimes, on mental as well as material horizons. The mountain heights are shining clear above them, but I am not there, and faith is not sight.

Life seems very bewildering on days like these — full of contradiction and weariness — its meaning hidden. Perhaps they are sent to teach us a lesson of waiting, of trust in love beyond our knowledge, but not beyond our grasp; for we can hold on to it in the darkness, while we can do nothing more; and when the shadow passes, then our patience will turn to praise.

Perhaps they have another meaning too: to test our obedience to simple duty. Whether we will go on with the day's work because it is appointed, even when despondency whispers only of labor in vain, and strength spent for nothing. It is good, every now and then, to be stripped of all delight in the daily round, and made to pursue it because it is right. God's tenderness gives us generally so much pleasure in our work, it brings so truly its own great reward, that we hardly realize how much of mere self-gratification there may be in it — how little we are doing it for Him.

One other lesson, most precious, I have felt these days bring home — hardly a lesson either, but rather a remembrance of unutterable comfort: that the "Lord knows whereof we are made." Some good people are shocked at anything like depression without reason, and think you are very wicked to give way to it (knowing nothing, by the by, of the struggle which is not "giving way," but downright resistance). But He knows the reality of even unreasonable suffering — that it is not to

be brushed aside by mere effort of will, but often only to be borne and neither explained nor put down. He estimates causes by their effects, not general but special, and surely He does not chide us when we feel, in acute misery, what another would hardly notice.

However, we ought to be very patient with the non-comprehension of our neighbors in these matters. It is hard not to be irritated at it. But we are often vexed ourselves at what we do not understand; and we must remember that, to them, our atmospheric discomfort must seem the essence of childish weakness. We are slow to learn that we are all, more or less, sealed books to one another — in which are many pages we cannot read. But it is a great gain when at last this knowledge dawns upon us; when we are content to say of many things, "I speak to those that know the thing whereof I speak," and to give up useless explanations to those that do not "know."

It is the greatest charm of social life, and almost the rarest, to meet a person of sufficient toleration and imagination to recognize this for others, and let them act upon it.

To come back to oneself, however, it is good to remember that sometimes those rainy days in one's life — I do not mean literal only, but figurative — are as much to be traced to physical causes as headache or pleurisy. To many they come as the inevitable accompaniment of a certain temperament — their inheritance for life, perhaps their cross. It may be modified by thoughtful training — but changed wholly, it can never be. It is a great thing for anyone who possesses it to be aware of the fact — you know what ails you when the dark hours set in, and you can at least shut your lips and keep silence until they pass. Being miserable yourself — you need not make others so. You need not utter the morbid fears and suspicions which have laid hold of you like a veritable "possession" — at least you need not speak them to man, but you may tell them to God. Some outlet you must have — let it be toward Him who understands all, and will strengthen you to endure.

Something, too, may be done towards preventing the darkness from setting in at all. It is generally the exhausted reaction of nervous energies which have been overdrawn; wherefore it becomes a clear duty to avoid all undue excitement — all living at too high pressure — difficult, in these days, when stimulants, physical, mental, even spiritual, are taken in unsuspected and increasing doses. But if our lot is cast in the midst of certain dangers, we are not left without power to watch against and overcome them. We can keep a controlling hand upon ourselves, and prevent our being drifted into a whirl which will only sweep us on for three days to leave us uselessly stranded on the fourth, in the "used up" state of which all manner of nervous irritation and depression is the result. We can avoid all excess, whether in work or study or amusement — refusing to overdraw our powers, and exhaust in one week, the force which would carry us steadily and equably through six. If we did this, I believe we would know less of unaccountable glooms and miseries, and be able even to go through the rainy days with some hope of brighter to follow.

WORK AND FAILURE

I knew you would like Miss Lloyd, or I would not have asked her to call on you; and you have been struck by the very thing about her which always so strongly impresses me — her freshness. She has a perpetual fountain of it within her, overflowing on other people. Her life is monotonous enough. I think it would make a machine of me — or else I would fret myself into a fever for the mere sake of variety. But she goes on through day after day of routine, neither worn, nor morbid,

nor flat.

I suppose the little spring down in our home-meadow would say the grass about it was always green; and it is the secret love in Annie's heart which for her makes the old duties ever new and sweet. She fulfills them "as unto the Lord," and takes each one afresh from Him; and this love opens for her all the fountains of the deep, and the windows of Heaven. No wonder she is fresh — when the very roots of her being are fed by Him who is as the dew unto Israel. The heart that leans on Christ keeps its childhood always; living in One Presence — the whole world is flooded for us with light. Small joys are sweet, as they were in our infancy — when we receive them there; and even small troubles lose their power to break our calm.

Annie Lloyd always reminds me of that promise about the dew. Many deep thoughts are linked with it, but I have been dwelling most lately, on that idea of freshness, which seems to fit in to a very real need. You know what it is to feel as if your spirit had grown dusty among the tiny fretting worries of your life. Hours will come when the spring of energy flags, when the most precious truths grow dim, when all the words you hear or speak of God, seem mere commonplaces — flat, unreal.

It is such joy to claim this promise then — to plead for the dew and wait for it — going to God dry and withered, with scarcely strength even to look up, and to leave His Presence, rather feeling that we do not leave it, for that in all the "burden and heat of the day" we are "watered every moment." Then, when there are no gaps and broken spaces in our communion with the Father — there will be, in the dullest, most monotonous routine, in every lowly deed and common word — the power and the freshness of life.

And yet, on the other hand, perhaps this emblem of the dew enfolds one other bit of teaching. It does not fall in the sunshine. "The flowers need night's cool darkness, the moonlight and the dew." We may lose the sense of our Lord's nearness — though we cannot lose the reality. It is in such hours that faith has her "perfect work," and we "endure as seeing Him who is invisible."

I think that, apart from carelessness and its inevitable chastening, there may be times when God would lead us into union with Himself, higher than we have known, by the discipline of apparent withdrawal. Perhaps, in earlier stages of our Christian life He gives us the joy of "feeling" to sustain our weakness; but, as we grow up to manhood, He will teach us to lean on nothing but Himself. In this sense also, it is true that "He must increase — and we must decrease." Our enjoyment of Him must be made less, that He in all His glory may be more to us than He has ever been, and then in adoring gratitude and praise, we shall say rather "I am His!" than "He is mine!"

We must learn too to, be satisfied with giving Him just what He gives us; and if we cannot bring Him the eager fervency of our first love, we can give Him a faith which holds on to His word, and a yielded will, naked and helpless in its submission.

And this leads me, by a connection you may trace if you will though it does not lie on the surface, to another subject of your letter — your Sunday School discouragements. The work was so joyful at first — and now it seems dull if not wearisome. It has been a history of failure too — your sowing was full of hope, but your hands are still empty of the sheaves you would have gathered for the Master. One thought perhaps, may help you — that all work for God must necessarily bring trial. There is double blessing linked with it: help for others — or, if that may not be — then discipline for

ourselves. And if we are indeed "workers together with God," then we do know that nothing in His husbandry is lost. If there is no seed for the garner — it may be that the fallen flower enriches the soil.

In any work that has to do with God's Word, is not His promise our stay, that it "shall not return unto Him void"? I think the following sentences rebuke and lay bare one source of discouragement. "It shall accomplish that which I please — it shall prosper in that whereto I sent it." Too often we expect it to do what we please; and if the exact result which we have set our hearts upon does not follow — we are forthwith hopeless of any. Yet we cannot tell what may be the thing for which God has "sent it to prosper." It may be to enter some human soul, like one of the unseen impulses of spring — silent, and for a while apparently inactive; but living and imparting life. Here again that word is true, "He who believes shall not make haste." Faith can wait, content even in these things not to know now what God does — fully assured that it shall "know hereafter."

It is best for us, perhaps, not to look too much at our work as a whole, or to count on a certain outcome of it. Our business is to bring the stones one by one — and put them in their place. The building will grow, we know not how — and in the end it may turn out to be different from our preconceived plan. But God's purpose has not failed. The success we thought of, He may withhold — but only to give "some better thing."

And perhaps we do not enough remember that God appoints our service, not because He needs it — but because we need it. We need training, and He gives it thus — through lessons of failure, and, as we think, of loss.

And little we know for what it may be the preparation, in the restful work of that eternity wherein His "servants shall serve Him."

Nor will it be without result in the nearer future. Recollect those forty years in the life of Moses, spent at the "back-side of the desert." They began with the bitterness of disappointment. He had sought to help his people, and failed. The burden lay on his soul with a weight like death, but his attempt to lighten it had gone for nothing, except that it cut off all hope for the future. He needed the check. His unchastened eagerness might have wrought yet greater evil without it, and he would have missed the ripe calm wisdom, the steadfast hope, the strength born of self-distrust, which were the gift of that silent waiting alone with God. And what would the Exodus and the wilderness-journey have been without them?

"But I am not Moses," you will say, "and my work can never be like his!" No, but in all lives and in all duty there is something in common between highest and lowest. We need the same discipline for what we have to do — though it may be some humble work within the four walls of a Sunday school, or only those of our home. For we too, make wrong beginnings, blunders, mistakes, and require, as well as he, to be kept back until we are ready to go forward. With God there are no "small duties," and He grudges no pains to fit us for what, in our pride and blindness, we call such. And He would have us ready, "less to serve Him much — than to please Him perfectly."

The deepest help of all lies in the remembrance of our identification with Christ. We are one with Him, personally — for, if we believe, we have received Him (John 1:12), we abide in Him (John 15:4), we are His (1 Corinthians 3:23); and therefore we are one with Him in purpose — to give

"eternal life to as many as should believe on Him" (John 17:2), to "gather together in one the children of God which are scattered abroad" (John 11:52).

But yet for Him also, there were times of restraining and waiting. He began His work at twelve years old — but still He never hurried on events, but observed the fullness of time. "My hour has not yet come" — so He spoke once. Yet "when the time was come, He sat down and the twelve apostles with Him" (Luke 9:51; Luke 22:14). He came as a servant to do God's will (Isaiah 42:1; Psalms 40:7-8), and He bids us "learn of Him" — for as "He is, so are we in this world." For us then, as for Him, there must be simple obedience. Let us remember that — and for all else, let Him care.

Is not God's mighty plan for all this universe of worlds, like the design of some noble architect, completed when each lowly builder and joiner finishes his own task? Each stone laid in its place, each pillar and arch, each grove and molding, a part of someone's living — lived apart and alone, but brought together for one mighty whole at last. Meanwhile, we have each our own piece to do. We are only working, any of us, by one stone at a time. But there is beauty and completeness somewhere, and waiting.

OPINIONS

Your letter, with its vehement assertions, reminds me somewhat of the state of ecclesiastical matters in this curious little town. You know we have a good deal of the clerical element among us — with, it must be confessed, no small amount of theological fencing and wrangling and exclusiveness, of vigorous setting up of party standards and no less vigorous pulling of them down. There are of course the three recognized sections of the Church of England, each maintaining that the other two are wrong and the authors of wrong, doing more harm than good in the world — or else neutralizing the good by the harm so that, upon its own showing, the Church altogether is not doing very much in the world, being at any rate not so bright and burning a light as it might be.

First of all we have RITUALISM, as represented by Kentigern's, its incumbent, a noble, self-denying man, with some mysticism tinging his keen spiritual sense, and a firm hold, through all symbolism, of the thing symbolized — caring only for the symbols indeed, for the sake of the truth which he believes them to shadow forth. He is a man more liked by the poor than the rich; being austere and reserved in manner, and having small sympathy with his fashionable congregation, whose unreasoning love for ceremonial as such he holds in check as well as he can, though having once encouraged it he finds this a rather delicate task. As for his curates, with their chatter of copes and chasubles, their devotion to croquet and flirtation, and their incoherent gabbling over the holy words which they make it an article of salvation to repeat daily — perhaps the less said of them, the better.

Then we have the ST. JOHN'S CONGREGATION, who make no genuflexions — and delight greatly in declamatory sermons which never reach the ears of those declaimed against. Honest and earnest people they are, perhaps slow to believe that truth has many sides, of which the greater number can hardly be commanded by the same organs of vision, but still doing most of the hard work which is done at all; and so faithful and conscientious in what they think right, that we must forgive them some lack of charity towards those they deem wrong.

Upon these two alike, the BROAD CHURCH, as represented by the College masters and a good many thoughtful men associated with them, look down with kindly, if rather lofty indifference — not holding positive truth so firmly themselves, that they should be much ruffled by claims to exclusive possession of it in others.

And surging outside and around all three, is the tide of DISSENTERS — Nonconformist, Wesleyan, Baptist, etc., etc. — a tide strong and rising, and not likely to be stayed in its flow by much respect for establishments, ecclesiastical or other. Its ministers meet on platforms with their "dear Evangelical brethren" of the church, to exchange such demonstrative expressions of affection, that one wonders whether they would say so much if they felt more. Yet theirs was the energy which in time past thrilled a sleeping land and woke her to a new and deeper life. And theirs is the love which since then has plunged into many a depth with the lever of a simply preached Gospel, and lifted many a sunken one into purity and light.

Sometimes scowled at, sometimes politely ignored by the church which should have recognized them as her friends, as doers of work she left too long neglected; still they have held on their way until now. The gulf they were not first to make — they do not greatly care to cross, except as they bide their time for a day that is coming, when it will be bridged by energy not altogether peaceful in its aim.

And on these His children — for some there are among them all — on their pride and strife and pettiness, their contradictions and assertions and depreciations, surely their Father in heaven looks down, waiting with tender patience for the day when they shall understand each other, as He understands them even now.

But for you, dear Clara, I have one fear — shall I tell it to you? That you are in danger of making up your opinions into bundles, "sorted," as the Scotch say, and so tied up that they will admit none of the new facts or influences life may have in store. You are beginning almost to fear these, lest they should disturb the symmetry and perfection of your arrangements. But do strive — and pray that you may strive still harder — not to lose your sympathy with truth, however it may present itself; not to shrink, though it brings you the trouble of pulling down from your mental shelves a good deal which you had put away there — complete, as you thought, and comfortable. It is an unpleasant process, involving a measure of temporary confusion. Just as you cannot, without a good deal of dust-raising and some despair of ever getting things right again, go into a closed room and open its stores to sunshine and west wind. But they are healthful influences nevertheless. Would it be wise to shut them out?

You will not think I am counseling restlessness and say, "Have sympathy with truth." I do not say that speculation and truth are identical, or that systems of human thought are to be received as of equal worth with God's revelation. Nor again, should I think it wise, while you do not exclude light from any quarter whence it may come, for you to go about seeking what may only trouble that which you have already.

Here, as ever, there is danger on this side and on that; either in undue clinging to the old — or undue eagerness for the new. The first, unchecked, ends in superstition; the second, in scepticism. But in measure, we need both. Holding fast the "faith once delivered," let us add to our faith knowledge. Keeping to our childhood's teaching of creed and catechism, let us welcome what

may have grown since, out of wider study and more enlarged thought.

I know there is something to be said on the other side. It is true that those who do not see very far, are sometimes clearer in sight and more decisive in action than those whose vision ranges further. In these latter the process of balancing leads to a species of uncertainty. In their sight of some distant benefit, they overlook the small but certain gain of the present; while the practical people who objure theories, at least do the bit of good which lies under their hands and mend the road before their own door. Well, I suppose the world has need of both, and work for them too. Each class owes much to the other, and, to whichever we belong, it is well to study excellencies which are not our own. Which I now advise for you.

Remember, too, that early youth is hardly the time for the formation of opinions. It is life in a state of productive and changeful progress — wherein new impressions and ideas crowd upon us, before the old ones have been regulated. We must wait for clearness and repose, for the ripening and balancing of developed powers — before we pronounce decisively on subjects concerning which the wisest hold their judgment in suspense. One most valuable mental quality is the patience which can wait; not restless under uncertainty, but calmly enduring it until the time for its removal has come.

You have much to do meanwhile. If I say to you, "Suspend your judgment," I say also, no less earnestly, "Try to prepare yourself for judging, both by accumulating materials for thought and by training your mind to work upon them." We women have too little done for us, educationally, in this matter. We are accused of "jumping at conclusions" and "arguing from hypothesis," but it is rather hard measure to be scolded for faults we are not taught either to detect or amend.

True, indeed, that there is not one woman in a hundred who can reason or appreciate reasoning — who has patience and fairness enough to compare and weigh evidence on any given question — or power to hold in abeyance her own crude and inconsequent decisions, while she changes her mental standpoint and looks at the other side. True all this, and the greater the pity — but is the fault all at our door?

But I must not wander into another field, as tempting as it is. I wish only to show you that we who have only received an ordinary girls' education, in the very narrow sense of that term as it is used at present — have much to do for ourselves in supplementing its deficiencies. We can go back and lay the foundation deeper. We can widen and strengthen it by adding what has been omitted. We can exercise the "judicial faculty". We can train ourselves in concentration and reflection, in analysis and synthesis, in observation and comparison. We can learn to combine facts and deduce principles. We can accustom ourselves, above all, to greater accuracy of thought and speech, to habits of closer attention, more patient and candid research. And, to sum up much, if rather roughly, we can educate ourselves in Butler's Analogy.

Of course, to do all this — we must leave a good deal undone.

We must wage war, first and last, with the modern habit of light reading. Robertson says of it, that it "weakens the mind more than anything else — more than doing nothing — for it becomes a necessity at last, like smoking, and is an excuse for the mind to lie dormant while thought is poured in, and runs through, a clear stream, over unproductive gravel, in which nothing wholesome can grow." But to set oneself against it requires considerable effort. Tempting books

come in from the library — periodicals multiply like mushrooms — pamphlets, reviews, newspapers, all demand time if not thought. "Have you seen so-and-so? Oh, you must read that! It is very short; you'll soon skim it through" — this one hears perpetually, and it is difficult to resist the pressure, and plod steadily through an old book which will yield nothing to skimming, instead of dipping here and there into a new one which you can discuss at the next dinner party. Yet thus is formed a habit of skimming — destructive to mental force, and thoroughly paralyzing to mental growth.

"The art of judicious skipping" has undoubtedly its use, but it may be acquired too dear.

"But one must keep up with the thoughts of the day — it will not do to drop behind the stream." Possibly, though it is a stream that may drift us out into a wide and uncertain sea. But I do not forget what I said just now about keeping the mind open to new impulses — cultivating sympathy with new phases of truth. I only wish to impress on you the need of having always on hand some one book which requires absolute study — which is worth reading and re-reading — marking and inwardly digesting. If you will do this, keeping to it steadily for half an hour or an hour daily, giving it your whole mind for the time and dwelling on it afterwards — then you may safely be trusted to skim as much as you like beside; provided always that you do it for a purpose — not merely to get rid of time. You may skim to share the interest of a friend, or as needed recreation after mental work, or to find an illustration for a Sunday class. There is hardly any field in which you may not glean for the Master, unless such as you have no business to enter. But — forgive my repetition — your "study-book" must be a book to be studied. I do not say merely a good book, which, read without effort, no possible effort can recall, because there is nothing in it for memory to lay hold of. There are scores of books, excellent in the opinion of some judges, or at least with "no harm" in them, of which I would like to clear many a drawing-room table, because they do harm, and that deeper than their readers dream; for the good in them has no force in it, living and communicating life — it is all negative, if such a thing can be. They are "faultily faultless," having neither savor nor salt. They are unnatural; the light in them never shone on sea or sky in any world of every-day living. And they are the more hurtful, because their religious tone disguises the harm they work. The mind glides inert through their pages, soothed against any fear of wasted time by the "reflections" which recur here and there (very generally skipped, however, being introduced by some formula which is equivalent to, "Now you may go, while I preach"). And there is no suspicion — so pleasant, so apparently healthful is the draught — that, if not poisoned, it is at least fatally enervating. It would be hard to turn from such milk and water diet to any stronger food.

PROGRESS

This is an age of progress, you tell me, and the religious teaching which satisfied our forefathers must be expanded and remodeled for their children. Every branch of human knowledge feels and obeys the impulse of some progressive influence. Old fields of inquiry yield fresh stores — and new ones are being daily opened to stimulate investigation. Ideas change — thoughts widen — we, our whole selves, are borne onward, for good or evil, with the course of time.

Then must not religion also be progressive — susceptible of new developments? Is the New Testament to be the limit of its growth? Do we not see, even within that very Book, some gradual unfolding of Christian doctrine — is it not destined to unfold still? Do we embrace, even yet, the completed circle of Christian faith? Or may we not go even further, and say that, though

Christianity was no doubt a stage in the world's education — yet surely it is not its final goal. It brought us light, indeed — but has not the light so brightened and broadened that we can afford now to dispense with that which introduced it?

I hardly know how to answer you, because I fear to damage a good cause by unworthy advocacy; and, for myself, I would almost rather give you no reply than that one line of Tennyson, "I cannot understand, I love."

But I do not expect this to content another. Only remember that, if what I say fails to satisfy you — there is much which others can say better.

"But this gospel — is it not after all an old, old story? Do we not leave it behind, like others of the earlier world?"

I think not; for consider what it professes to be. It announces something done. It proclaims also certain facts, which bear a twofold aspect. They declare man's position with regard to God — and God's mind as regards man; both are unchangeable. And human nature is from age to age the same; therefore the relation between the two is unvaried, and the gospel cannot be superseded. Any revelation from God to man (I assume, of course, the possibility of such) must bear directly on these two facts, and hence cannot be susceptible of change.

You say that revelation itself was progressive. True, but that which was revealed was essentially and absolutely the same. The Divine plan was unfolded through a gradual development of historical facts — but the truths underlying these are identical.

Then again: "What do you mean by 'the gospel'?" It is a vague term, admitting no exact definition." Well, I will give you Paul's gospel to the Corinthians: the brief creed in which he sums up what he at least held to be the essential points of Christian teaching: "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

The central fact which he had to deliver to mankind was this, which fact touched the relation between God and man and entirely changed it; for it was God's message to man, revealing His love. It dealt with the sin which separated between the Creator and the creature, and abolished it. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," and, through Him, God can still be just and yet the justifier of him who believes. This is what Paul understood by "the gospel." It might be more, but it was always this.

I go back then to my point — that, unless God is changed, unless human nature is changed — the death of Christ must have exactly the same influence on the condition of mankind that it ever had. The supposition that God has changed, is absurd; and, as to the second, the heart of man is as much enmity against God now as it ever was. Who shall be the Reconciler, making both one? The New Testament gives the answer; and until God Himself reveals some other answer, we must regard it as final. For if the death of Christ was God's appointed and designed means of dealing with and destroying sin — then this His appointment must inevitably stand until He changes it.

Still, it hardly satisfies me to reason thus with you; for I know that my arguments will not reach your real need. I would rather remind you that you possess the power of testing this revelation which you gainsay — but then you must test it by experiment. There is disorder and need within you —

God has provided a remedy for both. Do not reject it until you have found it fail; accept it as His, and its efficacy shall be attested by its effects. "He who believes has the witness in Himself," but only "he who believes." The doubter will listen for its voice in vain.

I cannot prove to you that the death of Christ was an atonement for sin; but believe it, and His cross shall be its own proof. You will recognize it as God's solution of the world's mystery — nay more, as the explainer and reconciler of your own inner world. Believe it, and you shall know that it is so by the destruction of sin's power within, and by the peace it brings, "higher than all thought — deeper than all sorrow."

One thing remember — you cannot live upon negations. Both mind and heart require to be sustained by positive truth. And you may be assured that in all the dogmas and formulas you quarrel with as worn out and obsolete — there is some seed of living truth, which if you have not discovered, you do not even understand the questions you are trying to solve.

LIVES THAT GO ON

This is one of the resting-times of my life, and I am tired enough to be glad of it; tired, somewhat, of my fellow-creatures, and not greatly caring to see any of them. This is a state of mind which I do not excuse, nor yet very earnestly contend against. We are happy together — Maggie Leicester and I — she being for the present the one fellow-creature of whom I am not tired. But then we do not see too much of one another, our intimacy having reached the happy stage in which we are free to stay in separate rooms for half a day, or to sit in the same, even at work, without exchanging a word.

Of these same rooms, there is something to be said. Lodgings in general are a trial to me; it is not so much that I object to having my best "things" crumpled into tiny drawers, or my first sleep disturbed by the "party below" returning from an evening entertainment; but any small sense of beauty I possess is so continually shocked, that I wish I could reserve it for my walks abroad and put it away when I am in the house.

Imagine my dismay when I entered our little drawing-room, to see a green drugget, blue table-cloth, and yellow-covered chairs and sofa! On the mantel-piece were sundry specimens of art in china, beside photographs of our landlady's six children — and on the walls were engravings, from the Illustrated, of the Duke of Wellington's funeral. Maggie laughed at my blank look, but she possesses that "mysterious happiness of touch" by which so much may be made of unpromising materials. Her fingers know how to charm some hidden power of comfort or beauty out of lurking-places where no one but herself would look for it; and so, when she had flitted about a minute or too, arranged the flowers we brought from home, disposed our few books, inkstand and work-baskets, and respectfully placed some of the ornaments in the closet, I was amazed to see that the room had lost half its ugliness, and really looked, if one could not say elegant, still "not so bad after all."

We have a good many talks, however, and I will try to gather up for your benefit the broken threads of one or two, which touched on subjects you and I have often discussed. This morning, after our usual penance of water-drinking, we sat for a delightful hour in some shady gardens near. A fountain splashed beside us, the bees hummed in the sunshine, the brown chestnuts shone on the ground near their gleaming white shells. A fresh wind came singing up the valley; it had lowered

the corn as it passed, and now it stirred the beech-leaves and brought them in a down-pour of gold upon the green. A dappled sky was overhead, and the soft haze of October melted and wreathed in the distance. We watched it — neither of us inclined to read.

"What are you thinking?" I asked Maggie, at last, after some study of her changeful face.

"Of lives that go on," she replied.

"What in the world do you mean?"

"I can't tell how I came upon the thought — yes, perhaps I can — but that does not matter. But you know how, in books, you read episodes in a life, beautifully rounded off and finished. The story ends — complete in itself; there are no tangled, straggling threads, which are not taken up into the pattern of it, left floating in space attached to nothing. But it is not so in reality — the story of a life is over, but the life itself goes on."

"I have often thought of that," I replied; "but it is not all dreariness. In a woman's life, at any rate, there are two sides — perhaps more, but these at least. There are longings and askings — never to be satisfied; there are moments when we hold our breath and live — when our souls palpitate in intensity of joy or pain. And there are days, weeks, years, when, as you say, we go on; not getting all our hearts might hold, but content with what comes to them: some homely comfort — something that must be 'done next.'

There is a part of us that settles down into these with a certain sort of rest, willing to wait and ask for no more — yet knowing of something that might have been ours though we have missed it. In one way it may seem a sort of descent, this contentment, from what is more elevated and elevating; but we may as well confess to it — we are women after all, and we could not bear to be constantly wound up to our highest pitch. I do not believe that the strongest-minded of us will not occasionally turn from the most abstruse book, or the noblest imaginations — to the attraction of a needle and thread. And we learn to be glad in simple, every-day joys, and honestly interested in every-day duties. They have a wonderfully sedative effect, happily for those whose lot lies among them."

"Yes, I know," said Maggie smiling; "and I suppose it must be thus that many women who have gone through a great deal and left it behind them, or else are waiting, patiently as they may, for something which lies before — can yet keep half of their being down, so to speak, and live on with the other."

"Yes, and so it is that there are unsuspected histories, folded away, or still to unfold, in lives which seem from the outside as commonplace as they well can be. I think this should make us very tender, very pitiful in our judgments. The sudden lifting of a veil, years ago, would explain, if we knew it — the suspicious bitterness of today. The shock which once dislocated mind and body, would explain the nervous irritation we are apt to condemn as mere lack of self-control. We see the hardening or the sharpening which circumstances have wrought in their slow grinding pressure — and we cannot tell what softened, rounded grace of soul might have bloomed out from other influences. Ah well, God knows!

"But the 'days go on,' as Mrs. Browning says, and though these things remain, the pain of their beginning has worn itself away. But of course all this is outside the highest source of comfort.

Even the faintest reflection of the peace of God will keep the heart warm — how much more that full measure of it which He gives, even here, to those who will receive it!"

"Yes," said Maggie, answering me with her eyes on the far-away distance" — here many such lives are going on around us — narrow they seem, to look at, and not over bright — but I suppose if they are overshadowed, that they are also sheltered; like a brook that flows through woodland depths; the sun doesn't often reach them, neither does the storm, but now and then they lie open to the blue and give back its peace."

"I don't know about that; it's a pretty simile, but I'm a very matter-of-fact person, as you ought by this time to have learned. I do believe, however, that no life need be desolate which is capable in some lowly fashion, of being helpful; for other lives go on too — there is always some thing, or body, to think of and care for. Look at your Aunt Gertrude, for instance — what a blessing she is! Just one of the sweet, simple-hearted women of whom the world doesn't take much notice until they leave it, and then it finds out how much they have done. She is one among many, that are first and best to no one — but who yet go on their way brightly and cheerfully, earning the highest praise, that home would not be home without them."

"Ah, and perhaps it is only through pain that this power of helpfulness comes. We can hardly learn, without it, how to discern deeply, and to influence strongly and wisely. Perhaps some things may be waiting for us in the years to come, for which we are having a long education."

"Yes, and perhaps too, we get most of our education in the days that go on. There may not be much in them — this or that as it happens; but there is life, which works on, through slight outward seeming."

But here we became conscious of a chill and darkening in the day. There was a black cloud overhead, and already a soft whisk of raindrops among the leaves; we had to run for home, and reached it barely in time to escape a wetting; and all afternoon the rain continued.

We gave ourselves up to writing letters, watching at intervals the piles of grey cloud as they shifted and broke and gathered again, while the mist-robe wreathed itself about the hills, and the wind sighed, as it only does in autumn, with a sort of wistful grieving over the falling year.

Toward evening the sky cleared; some points of higher ground caught a gleam from the horizon and lay in golden green light, and now and then a bit of brightness strayed down to the shiny roofs and fair freshened fields below; but still it was too damp to venture out. We sat and drank our tea half idly, and speculated on our fellow-lodgers, next door and opposite.

It is curious how unconsciously one drops into this habit at a watering-place — watching arrivals and departures, looking in at uncurtained windows, and getting imaginary peeps into hearts — weaving histories, and hopes, and fears — even sending out ventures of love and pity for those whose very names and voices one may never care to know. Some natures are always given to this borrowing from the lives around them, gathering to themselves what they may of kindred in this wide world, where all are brothers; a tendency which on its wrong side, degenerates, I suppose, into gossip.

My own thoughts, indeed, needed not to stray further than to Maggie's face for a story sad enough to occupy them. Not an uncommon story; the brief outlines would be easily written — and yet

others like them hold crystallized the tale of many a life. A tale of waiting — and then of loss; the waiting a slow dying of heart — the loss a blow to the quick. Hers is a strong nature, and she suffered in proportion to its strength. She did not die, either in body or spirit, as many a weaker woman might — the spiritual death being sadder and more cruel than the physical. No, she summoned all her force and laid hold beside on what God gives for such conflict, and she lived.

She will live, if God spares her, to be one of those noble women, helpful and sympathetic, who give plenteously to others of the riches within them, having regard to suffering which their own has taught them to read, and taught also to comfort it, by remembered anguish. Other lessons, too, she learned — yet deeper. Sometimes it is by the thorny way of some sorrowful human love — that God leads His chosen people up to the temple of His own infinite love and rest.

And thus may come, gradually but surely, that time which is so beautiful in the lives that go on: the fair, elder womanhood, calm in its contentment, rich and sweet in its wider living and loving; when, after days and nights of pain, we pass into the far-off glen of the sun-break — not the setting, not the closing in of evening darkness, but the out-going of the morning.

SALVATION, PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Have you ever considered the various meanings of the word "salvation," as used in Scripture? It has a threefold aspect, and we lose by not remembering this. There is —

First, salvation from the PENALTY of sin: Colossians 1:13; 1 Timothy 1:15; 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 1:7; Ephesians 2:8; Acts 16:31.

Second, salvation from the POWER of sin: Matthew 1:21; Romans 5:10; Romans 7:24-25; Hebrews 5:9; Hebrews 7:25; Jude 1:24.

Third, the salvation or redemption of the BODY: Romans 8:23; Romans 13:11; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 1:9.

From lack of clear apprehension as to the first of these, spring many doubts and misgivings as to our eternal safety. We do not see that Christ by His substitution of Himself for us, as bearing the punishment due for our guilt, has forever put away from us the consequences we dread. Salvation in this sense is already complete; it is absolute — finished; it cannot be broken, nor can it be added to. It springs from God's free unmingled mercy, which laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all. It is ours today — present deliverance, present joy. Are we living in the strength of that joy, or are we fearing to accept it — putting it from us, with the desponding unbelieving plea, "Not for me"; shutting ourselves out from the "Whoever will"; gathering the shadows round us when we might live with free glad heart in the sunshine? Then we are refusing God's testimony — making Him a liar — grieving Him as we dare not grieve an earthly friend who would bless us with some poor gift of human love.

And yet, even when we do accept this free grace of pardon and enter on the rest of heart it brings — we too often lose sight of the second salvation Christ has wrought for us, in deliverance from sin's power as well as from its punishment. Mere pardon is not God's sole aim in redemption; it is the first step, which makes a further aim possible — "that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life." We are to be a "people formed for His praise" — re-created after His image; Christ

formed in us — His life manifested by us — our life made one with His in glorious ineffable union. The first salvation is wrought for us by the death of Christ — by His having been made a curse for us, who "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." The second is attributed to His life — He lives, our advocate with the Father, to intercede for His people, to sanctify and cleanse them, to "keep them from falling," to "present them faultless."

Our standing is in the first salvation; our calling is to the second. We are to die to sin, as Christ died — to rise, as He rose, and sit with Him in heavenly places. And I think we shall get some clearer light on this whole subject by turning to that wonderful third chapter of Colossians, which brings out so strongly this truth of our risen life in Christ, without which we cannot realize for ourselves the second aspect of salvation. This is no new truth; here it is, in our Bibles, as it has been for eighteen hundred years. But just now the hearts of many of God's people seem to be turning to it with a longing love they have never known, because His spirit is leading them to see in it a source of power they have never dreamed of. It is no more new than justification by faith was new at the Reformation — and yet we know how God then put that truth into the hands of His children and made it "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds."

Nothing will deliver Christians from the strongholds of worldliness in which so many are kept in miserable bondage — but a firm grasp of the fact of their risen life with Christ. It may be that even now He is meeting the special need of His church by this special teaching — sending among His fainting, shrinking people, the power which is to rouse and nerve them for days of progress and of conflict, on which they are only beginning to enter.

Colossians 3:1 is an inference from something in Colossians 2:1-23. (See Colossians 2:12-13, Colossians 2:20) There is an idea of identification here, which many overlook: we believe that Jesus died for us, offering Himself as the sinner's substitute to God. Here, we know, is the foundation of the peace which He has made, and on which we rest. We can remember how unutterably precious that peace seemed, when first His Spirit showed us the ground of it — and gave it to us as our own. And still it is there, underlying all else — the anchor of our souls, sure and steadfast. But after a time, even this peace does not seem enough; it gives rest, but it does not give power; we want something more. The anchor is firm, and we know the cable will hold, but the ship tosses notwithstanding, and the waves are high.

Many days of waiting there may be; some, too, of despondency — though there would be neither if there were not days of unfaithfulness as well, before we find what, without knowing it, we seek. But God Himself will surely show it to us, perhaps in the midst of much humbling, that we had not seen before what ought to have been as clear as day — that not only has Christ died for us, but that we also die with Him. And just as the Bible seems a new book to us after our conversion, and we feel that we had read it before with closed eyes and wonder how we could read and not see. So, when He first unfolds to us, in answer to the deepening need of our spiritual life, this truth of our identification with Christ in His death — then again a veil seems lifted from the page, and what had been dim before, flashes out full of new and glorious meaning.

But how is it that we thus die with Christ? We know that if indeed we belong to Him, we are in Him — one with Him, as the members with the Head. The Head has not only died for the members — but they have died with Him. The teaching of Romans 6:1-23 is clear upon this point: we go down with Him to the place of death. It was thus that Israel went down to Jordan in association with the

Ark. They went into the place of death — yet alive, in company with the Ark, the symbol of God's presence and power — and this was their preparation for victory. In like manner we must go to the cross. Death is written there on every thought and word and deed of the natural man before God — and life is seen as existing in Him only who lays down His life that He may take it again; and in taking it again, confers it upon us, who are "quickened together with Him." It is there that we receive first, as at conversion, the atoning efficacy of His sacrificial death, which we realize (keeping to the type of Israel of old) in the passage of the Red Sea. And secondly, the power to die to self as He died to it, which I believe is what Paul meant when he speaks (Php 3:10) of being made "conformed unto His death." What else can he mean? Not His atoning death certainly, for in that He stands alone.

Now here we have been lacking. We have come through the Red Sea; we look back to the days of Egyptian bondage and give thanks to Him who has "delivered us from so great a death" — but there most of us stop. We know, indeed, that the atoning blood of Christ is the only ground of our justification. But we speak of resting in Jesus, until we have let the thought of rest absorb the thought of progress. But even the wilderness side of the Red Sea, as the book to which you referred in your letter so forcibly shows, is not the place of our rest. We were brought through it for a purpose, and that purpose was that we should go up to the good land before us and take possession of it (Deuteronomy 6:23). The wilderness is a type of the world, and we must leave it by passing through it; in other words, the world must be overcome, or we are unfaithful to our high calling. The journey from the Red Sea to the Jordan represents the first stage of a converted soul's experience, but there are others beyond. Have we reached them? Are we reaching out toward them? Or are we among the hundreds, nay thousands, of Christians who are content with the wilderness — safe so far, but never entering the good land of promise?

"But I long to enter there," perhaps you may answer me. But are you ready for what comes first? There is no entrance into Canaan — except through Jordan. "I cannot realize this risen life in Christ — this salvation in Him from sin's dominion" — is not this too often our complaint? "I see it in my Bible — but I do not know its power in my life."

No, because we do not know the meaning of the dying with Him which precedes it — we shrink from that. The waters of the river of judgment are dark and cold. It is hard to be shown that there is nothing in us but death. We knew we could not save ourselves, but you remember what sore struggles there were with self-righteousness before we learned that; yet the struggles are still sorer before we learn that we cannot sanctify ourselves — before we begin to cry out, not "Lord help me" — but "Lord make me."

And this is just what God will teach us. If His Spirit shows us the good land and wakes in us the desire to go up and possess it — He will, He must take us down first to Jordan. We cry for holiness, we yearn for closer communion — and He just sends us the sense of utter dryness and emptiness and powerlessness. He brings us down to complete self-loathing, self-despair. It is a way of darkness — through the valley of the shadow of death; but it is His way — the right way; for life is only through death (John 12:24).

What have we learned of this? It is a solemn question; are we willing to face it — or do we shrink away from it? Ah, how often we turn aside from the truth because we dare not look at it — because there is so much in our lives which will not bear its light, so much it must alter and put aside. Let us

remember again that deep word of our Lord," If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine."

And yet (here is the point to which I am trying to lead you) do not our thoughts of Christ too often stop at Calvary? We think of Him as the dying Savior, through whom we enter into life — but we forget the opened grave — the risen Lord. But what is the meaning of those words in Romans 5:10 : "Saved by His life." Saved from what? Not from God's wrath, for the words are addressed to those already reconciled. No, but the life also of Jesus — that very risen life in the power of which He is now at the right hand of God, is manifested in us (2 Corinthians 4:10-11).

He imparts Himself to us. It is not only that we abide in Him — but He abides in us. We may know the one as our justification — and yet we may know nothing of the other as our power of holiness; but see how continually the apostles speak of Christ in us: Colossians 1:27, Romans 8:10, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 4:19, Ephesians 3:17.

And now, do you not see the consequences which flow from this? No, we cannot see them; they are too glorious for our dim sight, but we get a glimpse of them "through a glass darkly" — a glimpse enough to transfigure our whole lives with heavenly light; for if Christ is in us — if He imparts to us the power of His risen life — then no attainment in holiness is impossible, no victory over sin is too hard. To grasp this truth is to enter on the good land indeed.

Before, we fought and looked for failure; now we fight still, must fight to the end — but we know that we may overcome; rather, we know that He overcomes. It is no question of ourselves — there is nothing in us which can conquer. We do not look there for power, or, when we do, we go back to certain failure. But we look to Him, our captain; He, He alone gives us the victory.

You understand now what I mean by salvation from the dominion of sin. Look on to the following verses of this same chapter. It is only through the life of Christ in us that their practical teaching can have any meaning for us.

"The gospel first bestows the gift, then imparts the precept, which is only to be obeyed in the power which the gift imparts." Dora Greenwell. Do we not remember how we have striven and striven to "seek those things which are above" — while yet some invisible chain seemed always to drag us down? We need, first, to have our point of view entirely changed — to realize that in the unity of Christ's body we are above even now, seated with Him in heavenly places; and that our life henceforth is not to be a lifting ourselves up, as by a painful effort, but a joyous springing up by the force of life within.

True, there will be conflict still, but the ground of it is changed. It is not the conflict of effort, but the conflict of ceasing from efforts — of laying the strain of them all, moment by moment, on Jesus only.

Sin too, as the occasion of conflict — must not that remain? If we understand it as consisting only of conscious transgression, our struggle with it may cease; but if sin is anything contrary to the mind of God, which of us can say we are free? For the more we learn of God's holiness — the more, surely, we must loathe our own unholiness — the more sensitive we must become to our own impurity. Sin within — sin of thought and motive, self-will, self-indulgence, pride, temper, uncharitableness — still these are present with us: present — yet overcome. And how overcome?

By the "exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe." Or, if they are not overcome, it cannot be because that power fails, but because we fail in surrendering ourselves to its mighty working.

And yet another, the third, aspect of salvation is still future, as distinguished from past and present. It is not complete now; it cannot be, until we and all those that are "departed in the true faith of Christ's Holy Name, have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and mind, in God's eternal and everlasting glory."

EDUCATION IN TRUTHFULNESS

You do not give me credit for knowing much about the training of children? Well, I dare say you are right; for the best theories are apt to break down when they come to be tested by practice — and I and thousands more must be content to the end of our days to have our strictures met by the half bitter sarcasm of that old Scotch proverb which rises so readily to a young matron's lips: "Maiden's children are always well bred."

But one thing I would like to say, not about "management" in any shape, of which you ought to know ten times more than I, but about one essential point of moral training: teach your children to be TRUE.

"Of course," you reply — but bear with me still, and do not hastily conclude that I am giving unneeded counsel. Look away, for a moment, from your own nursery to the general state of English society as it exists at present. Look at any development of it, from the highest downwards, and acknowledge what you see, with fairness if it must be with shame. What is the one need, everywhere felt, from the poet's cry for

"A strong still man in a blatant land,

Whatever you name him — what care I.

Aristocrat, autocrat, democrat — one

Who can rule, and dare not lie,"

down to the fashionable lady (alas, that one should say it) whose appearance is a web of falsehoods — and the shopkeeper who sells anything but what he professes to sell? Is it not, however we may disguise and gloss it over — simply and nakedly the lack of truth? And what is it that makes our modern life, though full of material and intellectual wealth — yet still a poor base thing, growing every day poorer and more base? What is bringing the honor of an Englishman to be almost as much a byword as it was once a rock of strength? Worse than all, what is disgracing the very name of religion, linking it in too many minds with every form of hypocrisy? Falsehood — deceit in word and deed!

We do not like to admit this, but can we open our eyes to the state of this England of ours and not see it? Religion separated from morality — the true spiritual life of our people gradually dying out, and as a consequence, material decay to follow — already presaged too sadly, notwithstanding our vaunted progress. For when we begin to substitute sham work of all kinds, shortcuts, things that literally are not what they seem — for the old honest fashions of patient plodding and toiling,

there can be no surer sign that a people's conscience is put to sleep, and that some sharp visitation will come, as it is needed, to waken it once more and bid the nation arise and live. For God's law of righteousness remains, and will assert itself, though we may not always be able to trace it in the confusion of our own or other days.

But, as surely as God is true, He will vindicate truth. "The mills of God grind slowly" — but their grinding never fails. He will deal, in His own time, with whatever loves and makes a lie — it is the Lord's controversy. How and when He will settle it we cannot tell — probably in ways we little expect, and less desire; but He will do it.

"Well, but," you will say, "what has all this to do with my nursery?" Simply that English nurseries are the springs of English life. One can hardly believe that, if English boys and girls were taught as they used to be taught in days when people learned their catechism and "did their duty" in such fashion as they have forgotten now — taught in word and deed to "speak the truth and shame the devil," one can hardly believe, I say, that this plague-spot of falsehood could grow and spread as it does.

I greatly fear that even Christian parents are to blame in this matter. They teach children texts and hymns, but they do not teach them everyday morality. I know within my own circle more than one home where the children receive most careful Bible teaching — and yet they are not shown how to live it out in this one point of truth speaking. Small deceits are passed over without notice. For instance, Johnnie when at fault in some school-room question, will invariably reply on the least hint, "Oh yes, I know — I was just going to say that if you hadn't told me." But the governess's attempt to correct what is only one index of an untruthful character, meets with summary reproof from Mamma, who "will not have her children fettered with morbid scruples." And so in many other things. No child in the nursery ever confesses a fault without some cobweb prevarication which ought to be punished more than the fault itself; but punished it never is.

"There are so few true in the world," a gentleman remarked the other day. Very cynically I thought, but a little reflection convinced me that he was not mistaken. How few friends, for instance, you can thoroughly trust — hardly more than one or two in a lifetime! How rare to find a person whose representations of fact are not misrepresentations! How few give you simple historic reality, instead of exaggeration and imagination more or less unconscious! How constantly you are startled by finding deceit and untruthfulness you can hardly credit in those you have known for years! How often some strange dimness comes over the transparency of a character you had thought as clear as day! And in the quick consciousness of it, how often you say that you will never trust anybody again! Yet, next to faith in God, nothing so greatly contributes to the healthy growth of our moral being as unshaken faith in man; and if this lower becomes more difficult, must not the higher, in some proportion, suffer?

But I go back to my point — that this evil must originate, to a certain extent at least, in defective early training. Would the bent of after-life, in too many cases, be entirely opposed to "whatever things are true," if it had been turned towards them in the years when character receives the impulse it will retain?

There are indeed instances where falsehood is too thoroughly ingrained to be eradicated. But apart from these I cannot but think that, if the sense of truthfulness were more cultivated in the

minds of children, we would not find it so sadly deadened in grown-up men and women. Not as respects speech only, though that is much, but speaking truth can come only from being true. Train your little ones to this, so far as you may do it by training. Teach them to hate lies, direct or indirect, to shrink with sharp recoil from all that cannot bear the light. Teach them to be real; never let them learn the meaning of "company goodness" — going into the drawing-room and "behaving," because there are visitors, and "what will they think of naughty children". Teach them that pretense is lying, that exaggeration is lying. Teach them that everything, in fact, is a lie, which intentionally appears what it is not. Teach them that to be true is more, far more, than to be successful — that all "success" built upon unreality is miserable and shameful failure. Teach them, from God's Word, His hatred of falsehood, how it is one thing which, in any shape, He cannot tolerate, which He will judge and not spare. Show them how all contact with deceit, is contact with the father of lies. Teach them how truth is of the light, God's light — and falsehood is of everlasting darkness.

THE TWO PUPILS

I do not think you ought to be discouraged because one of your pupils makes slower progress than the other. From the little I saw of both children during my visit to you, I imagine the true measure of it in each is exactly the reverse of your estimate.

Little Edith is an unexceptionably good child. She keeps her frocks clean and her hair tidy, and when she grows up she will keep her opinions tidy too, and arrange them in regular orthodox fashion — so many and no more. She acquires knowledge quickly and has a certain dutiful pleasure in gaining it. She never tries to miss a lesson and is greatly scandalized at Dora's delight in half-holidays. She will give you strings of dates and summaries of history and repeat any number of "rules," with the exceptions thereto belonging. Altogether she is a most satisfactory pupil to teach.

You feel at the end of every day that something has been put into her mind which will be kept there; you can take stock of her mental gains, and count the additions.

Yes, but what will she do with them? I fear nothing. Her mind is a granary wherein seeds of knowledge are stored — not a garden in which they germinate. They will lie there lifeless, yielding no future blessing of seed to the sower or bread to the eater. She can accumulate — but she does not assimilate. I would give all her facts for one of Dora's thoughts, confused and blundering as they may be.

In some ways Dora is much more trying to teach, than her cousin Edith. You cannot pump information into her mind as you can into a stone basin, which will hold it until it is needed; the material is too porous for that. You do not find much trace one week — of what you have laboriously imparted the week before; but it is there, nevertheless — not as you gave it — perhaps in some shape you hardly recognize — yet as a source of living freshness and strength.

She will never equal Edith in mechanical recollection of dates and places, but the scenes and heroes of history are as real to her as the garden and the playmates of today. She will always rebel somewhat against schoolroom tasks, but her accidental education will bring her in stores of wealth far more precious — education gained in those same half-holidays, when Edith works with such pattern industry and Dora lies on the orchard grass — apparently doing nothing, but really

drinking in the teaching of earth and sky, though she can no more recall or measure it than the outlines of the clouds that melt and change as she watches them. These idle afternoons will have more influence on Dora's future — than all Edith's repetition of summaries upon hers; for she grows as the flowers grow, shooting out little rootlets here and there and unfolding the leaves of her fresh, healthful life, to all influences that reach her as she needs them. Knowledge somehow comes to her — she dwells in the best and gathers it without much need of set culture; she is truly, as someone says, "a child full of possibilities" — keen enough, some of them, both for living and enjoying.

"But she is such a naughty child," you say, "so passionate and willful. Now Edith is always obedient — one never has reason to find fault with her." What will she be as a woman, when, as a child, she has attained such an unbroken level of goodness? Don't be shocked, but I really feel oppressed by the prospect. However, as to Dora's naughtiness, you must have patience with her there — as well as in her slowness to learn. Hers is a strong nature, and its forces of evil are too much for anything but God's grace to overcome. May He draw her early to seek that! And I believe it is with her even now. She is not fond of reading good little books, but her eyes were fixed on me as I told her and Edith a Bible story, while the latter gravely remarked that she had "heard it before." And the keeping back of one angry word within those eager lips, when she is quivering with impatience down to the tips of her fingers, is a more real victory for Dora, though dozens of naughty ones have gone before it, than Edith has ever gained yet. Her goodness will be always somewhat of the militant order, and in her fighting she may now and then hit hard blows at those who stand near; but she will have what Edith will never learn — sympathy for the failures and tenderness for the struggles of others. Edith will watch them with a sort of lofty wonder and pity, unmoved and perhaps a little scornful. Dora will throw herself into the conflict with all the strength of love, and not without some knowledge of its agony; but weary, fainting hearts will bless her, and One will whisper, "You have done it unto Me."

What will her future be? I often wonder and ponder over it, with a wistful longing to shield her from the sorrow I foresee. Edith will glide over the surface of life — Dora will be taken down into its lonely places, where the shadow of death lies dark. Such characters, wayward and fiery with all their nobleness, need "strong cure," and the process of it is often through mortal anguish. Yet it is His chosen vessels that God passes through a furnace seven times heated. He leads none thither but those whom He can trust, and whom He is fitting for noblest use, here or afterward. We may leave her with Him. He who knows the spirit He has made, and can measure its capacity for pain — will not try it too sorely. Perhaps our over-tender shielding might be the dimming of her crown one day; besides, even here, God compensates such natures for the burden of suffering He lays upon them. He meets them when their hearts are torn — and so reveals His love, that they forget, in the sight, the aching of their wounds.

Do not think I undervalue Edith because I write of her as I have done. I can see her, somewhere in the years to come, ruling her husband's house with placid wifely dignity, and managing a nursery full of children with a moderation and self-control most edifying to behold. The members of her household will hardly love one another in the distracted fashion which leads to endless trouble of "hurt feelings." Her "practical" sense will over-rule all nonsense of that kind; but they will do their duty in bearing and forbearing, with most unexceptionable patience. And then all her domestic machinery will work admirably, accomplishing the right thing at the right time, and in the right way.

She will meet all social claims too, and give most correct entertainments, impossible to find fault with, if perhaps a trifle difficult to enjoy. And all her acquaintance will speak of her as a "useful, estimable woman."

Dora, on the other hand, will not be a general favorite. Only kindred eyes will know how to read hers, and she will sometimes show the worst side of herself to any who have not skill to touch the best. But those who love her once, will go on loving. She will gain and give treasures of affection which few can measure. Will she marry? I cannot tell — doubtful perhaps. But one love will grow up in her life — a gift of blessing though it may come through scorch and pain.

She will be "in her teens" before long, and then your task will be harder. Do you remember how you felt when you were a very young thing? It is curious to hear old, long-forgotten sentiments and thoughts bubbling up again in another girl's chatter, recalling the time and the self of long ago. Do let the chatter be free and unrestrained, and do not think it beneath your dignity to be confidential now and then and impart to her the cream of your own experience. Not that she can take it in, but it may give a tone to her dreamings and encourage her to tell you in return a good deal of what passes behind the smooth white brow, which has never yet been wrinkled by a trouble.

Let her even venture on the ground of "love," about which, like every girl, she will have "her own ideas." Try to win the "ideas" from her, and let them be fairly cooed over to you, who will treat the subject reverently, and show her how our Lord honored the sanctity of marriage as a type of His own love for His church; for, after this, she will be less likely to let silly children like herself desecrate holy mysteries in light bantering talk.

QUESTIONS

I think I can see, dear, that, through all your questionings of this and that, your heart is hungering and thirsting still. You want something you have not — is it not so? You want certainty, you say — and how, amidst all the confusion of opinions and controversies, are you to find it? You are feeling much as the woman of Samaria did, when she spoke of the coming Messiah which is called Christ — and added, "When He has come, He will tell us all things." I do not think she meant this as a distraction: I believe she truly expressed a need. It is as if she had said, "How all this may be I know not — whether you Jews or we Samaritans are right as to worship; but there is One who when He comes will tell us all things; from Him we shall know!" Is not the same longing, the same uncertainty, in many hearts among us? We want someone to "tell us all things." Religious conviction is assailed on one side by science, on another by criticism, on yet another by worldliness.

There are doubtful questions in every mind. Few of us, even in the most sheltered Christian homes, can escape the blighting breath of that spirit of skepticism which is poisoning the atmosphere of faith; and even if this does not reach us, there are many difficulties which we are unable to resolve.

Questions of duty — details of daily life — who shall settle them? We want someone to whom we may tell them all out — whose wisdom may guide us, as light through darkness. Have we ever heard Jesus saying, "I who speak unto you am He"? Have we heard Him speak, being among the sheep who know His voice: "I who speak unto you"? Has He dealt with us thus alone; none near to listen — none knowing the secrets which are between our souls and Him? Then we shall know

what it is to have Him tell us all things — to have our doubts dispelled by His teaching, to be in such close communion with His mind that we are always "guided by His counsel."

Only we must take care that all our questions are put to Him — and to none else. We must have no way before us, but only to follow Him; no will, but to do His; no thought, but of Him. There must be no stopping short to say, "Is it necessary to do this or that? Is there harm in such or such things? Is it needful to be thus separate?" We shall hear nothing from Him clearly while we question so, but only while we inquire, "What would our Lord have done — what would He command?" Then, to the unreserved asking — will be granted the unreserved answer. He will tell us all we need to know in order to glorify Him, and if there are some questions to which He gives no reply, and others of which He says, "You cannot bear them now" — He will strengthen us to wait, with Him, until the "knowing in part" is over, and we know, even as we are known.

Another word in that wondrous dialogue by the Sychar well seems to me to meet your need, so far as I can guess it. Christ speaks of the living water: "Whoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst." Which I shall give, "freely," "without money and without price" — and yet, to some of us, here lies our one difficulty. We do not like accepting a gift — we would rather earn wages. It is very humbling to be put down on the ground of simple receiving, which implies that we have nothing to give in return. We do not dream of doing anything perhaps; most of us have been too well taught to think much of works, but our feelings — ought not they to be worth something? And so we try to feel right, at any rate, before we ask for the living water.

Perhaps we imagine we ought to long for it more, and we will not seek it until we do. We will not go to God just as we are — rather indifferent than otherwise; not exactly thirsting, hardly longing that He may waken the thirst. Hence we go on, for a blank of dreary years — not quite unhappy — yet never fully, consciously content. But the true help is in our dear Lord's word: "If you knew the gift of God." Only take the gift, and do not trouble yourself overmuch as to whether you desire it sufficiently. Take it — and with the receiving will come both satisfying and yet longing for more — a longing which has no pain, like some which can never be met, but which only draws us on to deeper, richer rest.

A friend pointed out to me the other day a trinity of texts which comprehend the whole gospel: John 3:16; John 6:37; John 1:12-13. Do they not unfold the entire scheme of redemption, pointing to the Father's love, His own royal grace, as the grand first cause — to the Son's love as the efficient cause — and then to the result of these as actually applied by the Holy Spirit: "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God"?

One word more I would say, not harshly but in tenderest love: remember the danger, the responsibility of your present position. You know so much about the Savior — He seems so near you — shall He "pass by" and leave you still unblessed? There is a solemn lesson in those verses of John 2:23-24; He did not trust Himself to them — He did not treat them as true and earnest disciples. They entered into no spiritual relation with Him, nor He with them. He saw that the faith produced by His miracles was a mere intellectual conviction — not saving faith, the loving recognition of the heart.

We also may acknowledge a Divine Lord, whom we believe and outwardly follow; we may reckon ourselves, or be reckoned by others, among His people; but the veil which hides us from our own

eyes or from those of our fellow-men — is pierced by His. He does not "commit Himself" unto us; we know nothing of the free outpouring of His love; He does not call us " friends," or unfold to us the deep living truth by which His children are made free — because He knows that, in our heart, there would be no response of love.

Some idol is reigning on His throne — some earthward clinging is holding us back from His service. He can see it, and if we are only willing, He can make us see it too. If we are only willing to be set free — then He can set us free; and then He will show us what His love is — then He will "come to us and make His abode with us."

SERVING WITH OTHERS

I feel much for your difficulties with your fellow-workers. They are very trying — and yet perhaps one ought not to say they are surprising. Did you suppose that the mission sisters had suddenly become angels without wings? Did you suppose that all pride and temper, all jealousy and hyper-sensitiveness, were left behind, once and forever — on the threshold of the home?

Of course, in theory, you expected nothing of the kind; but, practically, you did think that Christians so devoted to doing good, would not be thus quick to take offence at trifles. Yet it is a sorrowful truth that "doing good" may be set about in very unChristlike fashion, with will unsubdued and self by no means held in check. And he, of whose "devices" we are "not ignorant," is surely not shut out from a community of Christian workers; it rather seems his special delight to tempt such to neglect "whatever things are lovely." He turns their work itself into a snare. They are so busy in it, mind and body often alike overstrained — that, if only it is done, they forget that Christ would have it as on earth He would have done it — in all grace of humility and patience, in all beauty of self-forgetful meekness and most tender forbearance.

Hence with no wish to look for motes, one cannot help feeling that many who for their work's sake are highly esteemed in love, do nevertheless try the love they gain. For they are often rather hard and angular, careless about giving pain, and impatient of prejudices and prepossessions, with small stock of that one good quality which comprehends so many more — consideration.

After all, it is much easier to go and spend strength in hospital or mothers' meeting — than to keep temper in family life. The one, far more than the other, tries "what manner of spirit we are of" — and this is especially the case where the grouping of the family is artificial and not natural.

Subjection there must be, to make organization possible; and yet, where many are disposed to hold fast the privilege of "protesting" in opposition to any rule of obedience, it is hard to keep the various elements fused in harmony.

Difficulties about work, too, are constantly arising. A sister who will go into the basest room in the town, and think it no degradation to sit down among its wretched inhabitants with her Bible — will rebel against any duty she considers menial at home, even though she may thus set someone else free for what she could not do. The "serving of tables" is in any shape altogether beneath her dignity. She forgets that, in meek acceptance of lowliest tasks — may be truest fellowship with a lowly Redeemer; that, in filling some merely material office, there may be a more real offering to God than in one apparently higher and more spiritual.

But we have small need to look beyond ourselves for faults in this matter. After all, the trials in our work are like so many mirrors, showing a good deal within we might not else have seen. We are very humble — while nothing stirs our pride. We are very patient and yielding — when no one differs from us. And we can do very disagreeable things by our own choice, much more cheerfully than we can stand aside and let another do them, while something pleasanter, which we had not chosen, is appointed for our share.

There are certain sacrifices, hard enough to look at, which are nevertheless yielded easily — because they do not cross our wills. And yet we cannot give in to another on a simple matter of opinion — without showing a degree of temper which makes itself felt through the household like an east wind.

"How far am I doing this for myself? How far am I doing this from love to Christ?" These are questions which these daily worries may help us to answer; and the temptation they bring to stand aloof from what we have not originated, or to criticize unkindly plans for which our own have been set aside — answers them often in humbling form.

It shows that the motives we thought were so pure are perhaps more mingled than we know. It shows that the eye we thought so single, was not fixed solely on the glory of our Lord. And thus, perhaps, He is giving what we have often asked and then forgotten: the knowledge of ourselves — which is to deepen our knowledge of Him. We turn in very loathing and despair from the sight of unholiness we never dreamed of — but we throw ourselves back on one whose blood can cleanse as well as justify — whose power can realize for us the keeping of the command, which is itself a promise: "Sin shall not have dominion over you." And thus the work we do for Him, He makes a means of grace for us — training us through failure — and by falls, raising us higher.

Hence comes one great blessing of serving with others. We may work on in a little sphere of our own, without collisions or hindrances — and feel that we can "do so much more by ourselves," which is very well, if work is to be measured by quantity. But what about the spirit of it? The Master's estimate of that may be different from ours — and yet we cannot correct our wrong one without some test; and this He sends us very often, through tempers and temperaments in our fellow-workers.

Stier remarks how, even for Paul, His chosen instrument, the answer to his question, "What will You have me to do?" must come through man, and not direct from God. "For not everyone, alas, who has fallen lowly before the Lord, will bow before man for the Lord's sake."

We have learned much too when we see the folly of expecting Christians to be "all goodness." I remember the time when I constantly condemned myself if I could not find in some, the attraction I ought to find — being drawn rather to others who were perhaps not equally "orthodox." Now I see that my instinct was right, that the repelling forces I was conscious of, were present and must needs be active. Something in my organization was specially sensitive to their influence, and, though many excellencies accompanied them, I could not help being acted upon rather by the one, than the other.

You may sneer at antagonisms and attractions — but they are realities and will remain such. Now I can like "good people" far better than when I was striving against a feeling which I could not put down. They are not perfect — and I do not try to think them so. If they were perfect, by-and-bye,

how far away they would be from me!

"I wish we were in Heaven," Milne says in one of his letters, "where the members as well as the Head will be able to say of one another: You are all lovely!" How fervently one echoes the longing; and yet our true help meanwhile is to try and see the Head in the members — to look at what there is of Christ — and to overlook what is left of sinful human nature. But we can only do this while we share very deeply the spirit of the Head. He sees not as man sees — finding fair lilies in His garden — where human eyes would hardly seek them. If we were nearer to Him, we would look at others from a different standpoint; and, this being changed, we little know how they might seem changed also. The picture which in one light is nothing but blurred lines — shows in another light as a thing of beauty.

And for the faults we cannot but see — let us not forget that the common guilt of Christ's people must be confessed and mourned by each. Let us hide our secret faults from one another — but humble ourselves before the Lord, while we tell them out to Him. If they are not overcome, is there no sin at our door? God sees them. The sore struggle which He alone watches may be aided by a fuller gift of His power.

How can we tell the conflict some sorrowing heart may be going through at this very moment — because of the proud, hasty word which may be rankling in our own? "Fallen again!" Oh, let our cry go up with that which is wrung from the bitter remembrance of dishonor done to God, that for His own name's sake He may put forth His might and give the victory. Little do we dream how the "beauty of the Lord" might be seen on many an unlovely Christian — if we joined our prayers to those which, in their long waiting, have grown almost hopeless. It would be a secret ministry — in the true spirit of our one Advocate with the Father. His hand must consecrate us for it — let us seek from Him the prevailing faith and self-forgetful love which alone can make it effectual.

WORSHIP

I have been thinking much today, I do not know why, of that text in Habakkuk: "The Lord is in His holy temple — let all the earth keep silence before Him!" You know there are two kinds of silence — the silence that has nothing to say, and the silence that has too much. But it is well for us sometimes to be still before God — not always to tell out, even to Him, the crowding multitude of thoughts and needs for which we have no words; but to rest in His presence, in utter self-abandonment and self-surrender.

We have known moments like this when our very hearts have been silent, even from prayer, in precious nearness to our Lord; when there has been no sound, no voice in His holy temple but His own word of life, no light but that which by its very clearness must purify.

Have we not very much lost sight of the true meaning of worship? We think that to pray for what we want, to pour out our griefs and confess our sins, or at most to rejoice in the sense of God's pardon — is all that God requires. So it may be; but love takes no thought about requirements. She knows that it is "more blessed to give than to receive," and rejoices that this blessedness God has not withheld, even in relation to Himself, from His poor worthless creatures. Surely, then, we are wrong when we make worship consist only in gathering what He has for us — and forget the outpouring to Him of our hearts' adoration.

Too many of us, infected by the restless spirit of the times, make worship consist in work. They are doing for God, and they have little time for anything else. To many more, worship is mere hearing — listening to sermons, or even criticizing them. But of waiting before God, enrapt in the soul's silence, neither hearing nor doing — how little we know of this!

But you will tell me I am verging towards mysticism. This is not greatly to be feared in the "practical" days of this nineteenth century. We are so greatly losing our power of passive reception, so to speak, of holiest influences — that a little more of the contemplative element might not come amiss to us.

You must not think, on the other hand, that I undervalue preaching. It is God's own ordinance, and I do not forget His solemn word, that through its very foolishness, it has pleased Him to "save those who believe." I know that it rouses the dormant spiritual life of His children, and often conveys that life to those who are not among them. But preaching is a means toward worship — not worship itself. If the flock of God receive from the hand of their shepherd sound and wholesome nourishment — it is surely that they may render back to the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of their souls the incense of hearts overflowing with His love. Surely to listen is less than to worship — and to adore is more than to understand.

I do not care to "guard" my letter as I might guard an essay, otherwise I should have to fence my truth with counter-truths. It may be misunderstood; but one cannot always stop to reconcile, though cautions and harmonies are indeed necessitated by the existence of error, and God's Word alone is free and bold on this side and on that. But I will only give you now one golden sentence from the judicious Thomas Hooker: "We are not simply to measure good by its distance from evil, because one vice may in some respects be more opposite to another than either of them to that virtue which holds the true mean between them both." Which piece of wisdom touches human life at many points; but the special application of it now, in my mind, you will not find difficult to determine.

TOILING AND TRUSTING

More and more I see that it is indolence which eats away the heart of our spiritual life. We need more energy of soul. Every step of advance is positive gain — but every day of idleness is not only loss, but added difficulty. We need to cultivate the reality of earnestness — so to master our flagging spirits that we may live in the power of what we know; and, thus living, our knowledge grows. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."

We realize so little, we test so little, the meaning of those words in John: "He who has the Son of God has everlasting life." In this deepest sense, godliness "has promise of the life that now is." Redemption is deliverance accomplished, not merely foreshown; a hope "set before us," but not removed into the distant future — rather "brought in" to the door of our common living; sufficient for all time — not only of our sore tribulations, but for the small perplexities or provocations of each day.

Is not our life in Christ, here or hereafter, one life still? It is hidden now — then it shall "appear in glory." Here is the life of tangled and shapeless roots, struggling with darkness and cold — there is the life of the flower, unfolding in sunshine. But even now, if in Paul's words we have "received the atonement" — we "have life," and are not merely waiting for it.

True, it is a life of temptation and sorrow, in contact and daily contention with the forces of death; but still of "joy which no man takes from us," and of "peace which passes understanding."

We lose much by forgetting this — what riches of spiritual blessing are before us, concerning which our Lord might say, "How long are you slack to possess the land?" It is one thing to know our portion — another to dwell in it. The condition of Israel's inheritance is ours: "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread on — that have I given you" (Joshua 1:3).

It was the foreshadowing of the New Testament promise, "according to your faith, be it unto you." So it is, that, although God has blessed us, here and now, with all spiritual blessings "in heavenly places in Christ" — it remains for ourselves to take possession.

It was not enough that God gave the land to Israel — He gave it to them that they might conquer it. It is not enough that God has given us our land of promise in Christ — we must set the "soles of our feet" upon it for ourselves.

How much is still remaining of our spiritual nature which is like the seven tribes, who when the tabernacle of the congregation was set up at Shiloh had "not yet received their inheritance" — and so this glorious truth of our one life in Christ will bring little joy or power, if it is only held as a doctrine in the mind — and not a reality in the life.

It is the Holy Spirit alone who can really unlock to our souls the treasures that are hidden for us in Jesus — but when they are put into our hands, we must grasp them. We must cry for the unbelief, which paralyzes our grasp, to be removed. There is power in Christ Jesus exceeding great to us who believe.

Ah, if we were only willing to give up to it the very last corner of our hearts — we would find it penetrating and purifying where sin reigns now, and bringing "into captivity every thought" to His obedience. We have no might in this battle — we have striven for victory again and again, and failed to win it. Why? Just because we have striven. We have not cried to Him, with whom nothing is impossible, "Oh Lord, undertake for me!" Or, even as we cried, we have secretly doubted whether He would do it. We have expected too much from ourselves — and too little from God. We have set ourselves to do this or that for Him — instead of trusting Him to do it for us. And then we have said, "Alas, I have no power" — forgetful that He has. Whereas our plea should be, "Now, Lord, the work is Yours — how can I dare to doubt that the power is Yours also, even to sanctify me wholly and preserve me blameless unto the coming of Your Son?"

The one great practical conviction to be ever held fast is surely this — that being one with Christ, abiding in Christ — then strength for all duty, grace for all attainment, is ours by simple right of possession. The power that made the grave give up its dead — the power by which He burst its bars and rose triumphant to the right hand of the Father — this same power is mighty in us for victory over spiritual death. It never yet proved too weak for anything; it is "hindered" only "because of our unbelief" — it cannot work because we fetter it; it lies within us, like untold wealth in the bank — waiting only to be drawn upon!

And this lesson of joyful trust and triumph, God seems again and again to impress upon us in His Word. He finds us prostrate and despairing. He first lifts us up and bids us stand; and, having done this, every other blessing follows. We are not to lie down crushed under a sense of our incapacity.

God will not have it so — for there is a kind of imperial dominion assigned to the least believer in Christ, in virtue of the power which is given to Him in Heaven and in earth, so long as He abides in us and we in Him, drinking in fresh draughts and inspirations of His undying energy.

WORK FOR LADIES

The two sisters here make me melancholy. There is so much wasted power in their lives — wasted, because for lack of a legitimate outlet it is misdirected. Do parents know what they are doing, I wonder, when they condemn their daughters to luxurious repression, and hem them in with overcareful limitations — instead of allowing them freedom for the active healthy work which is as much their right as that of any man in creation?

Only something to do — something to live for — from how many hearts that cry is rising, silent only because it is exceeding bitter! Even to see the end of it would be something; but to go on from year to year through the round of visiting and dressing, practicing and walking — and to feel that it is indeed a round and not a line, with no break in its grey continuance — is a strain of endurance almost too heavy to bear. And yet thousands do bear it, with meek unconscious heroism, submitting without a murmur to cut down much that is highest and noblest in their nature, to the dwarfed standard that is required of them.

"All nonsense!" I imagine I hear you say, "J_____ would always find something to do!" I have no doubt of that; but you must remember that a certain amount of energy must be presupposed, for the finding of what is difficult to find. And there are thousands of women whose lives would be enriched and blessed by work outside their own homes — yes, and who are longing for it too, while yet they have not force of character enough to carry them over or through the barriers which keep them from it.

Of course I know that in every life there is something to do. I know too that each is watched over by One who judges best what will help forward its true development — by One whose purpose for it cannot be thwarted. And we can see so little of what this may be, that we need never grieve over any, as if "circumstances" must inevitably spoil it. But this knowledge by no means lessens our responsibility towards each other, and I think those parents are wrong, who deprive their daughters of that luxury of spending and being spent, which is the sweetest luxury that earth knows.

"If I am glad of anything," a friend wrote to me the other day, "it is that I live in the nineteenth century, when women can work in healthful ways, making their lives bright with reflected light, instead of being bound down by the conveniences, in a narrow stifling atmosphere, where all their powers are employed to keep up appearances, or hang on to the skirts of a society which would gladly shake them off. I know two elderly young ladies, between forty and fifty, who spend the winter at a summer resort, and are always struggling to dress nicely and live nicely, and practice their old duets to play out at parties, and always are treated like girls. They are so faded and unwelcome — and only asked out of charity. They seem anachronisms in society. I daresay they are be-glamored with the old lights still, and each expects the other will soon marry and have a home of her own. The worn thread-bare illusions — how pitiful they seem beside the happiness of working women!"

One possibility of helping others lies within such easy reach of many ladies, that I wonder they do not more often embrace it. What of the knowledge acquired in laborious school-days and the accomplishments which, even in a money point of view, have cost so much? Are there none to whom their very possession would be a door of hope — daughters perhaps of men with narrow means, on whom the difficulty of educating their children weighs with a sore pressure they hardly dare acknowledge? Look at the curate's family, or the doctor's — the "living" of each being still in the future; how often the harassed, worn-out mother must sigh over the growing girls she has neither time to teach nor money to send to school. Or look again at the young teacher, home for the holidays, and painfully conscious that from her own lack of culture she is hardly able to keep ahead of her pupils. She would like a firmer grasp of what she teaches; she longs for lessons from a good master, in drawing or French — but how can she pay for them when her wardrobe needs replenishing, and she must save every possible penny for the home fund? Or she would like to begin German, if only she could find someone to help her over its first difficulties, so that she might work on alone for a while and have a master when she could gain more from him.

I wonder if some of the young ladies who murmur because "papa and mamma will not let us visit the poor," ever reflect that there are poor, not living in cottages, who might be enriched and blessed out of stores of wealth that is not material? Even three or four hours a week given to a music or drawing lesson, would be an untold gain to some of these; and a couple of hours daily for more systematic instruction would be still greater. I do not say that such a plan can be carried out without self-denial. Teaching is not easy work, even with the most eager scholar, and the tie of a regular engagement, not to be lightly set aside, is apt to be sometimes irksome. But I am thinking of those who do not wish to give what costs them nothing, and they would find a sacrifice of time and patience in such service bring its own true reward. It is not quite the work they may have planned — it is something, indeed, far more commonplace than that; but it is true work still, which may be made a stepping-stone to much beyond itself. The mental may lead on to the spiritual. If mind comes in contact with mind, there is hope that heart may touch heart — and that thus the living water in one may flow over to quicken another.

Few parents would object to such an employment for their daughters, and many might consent to it who would forbid district or school work with most emphatic rigor. But one reason, I think, often prevents them from allowing girls other occupation than mere amusement — they do not understand the need of it. Their own lives are probably full of business or household cares, and it simply does not occur to them that anyone else may be as greatly oppressed by having too little to do — as they are by having too much. And, except in some happy but too rare instances, there is seldom such unreserved confidence between elder and younger in a family, that the latter can explain any longings of mind or heart which are not to be read without explanation. Too many are the parents and children who, as the despised Martin Tupper has it, "While walking up and down the world — have missed each other's friendship."

I touch on difficult ground, and perhaps it would be wisest to stop with the safe remark, that there is "much to be said on both sides." But of one thing I feel sure — that we often complain of lack of sympathy in our pursuits and wishes — when our own reserve and pride make it impossible; and that mothers would not so frequently say, "I do not see why you should wish to do so and so" — if daughters would honestly and frankly try to make the reason clear.

And then for all who have no definite work, there is the doing of indefinite. Alas, for the little bits of pleasure that would never be given — if everybody's hands were full! "People are so busy about charity," a lonely invalid said to me one day. She had come to the place as a stranger — but, because she did not want beef-tea and flannel, her introductions to one or two Christian ladies had brought her very little help. She did not complain of them; her remark was meant, all in good faith, as an excuse, when I expressed my surprise that they so seldom saw her. But I could not help wondering whether those who have a certain aim before them — so much to be "got through" in each day — do not need a sort of supplementary band of gleaners to follow up "opportunities" they have missed. And among these unattached, there is always room for spare energies; for there are "fatherless and widows" who need to be visited in their affliction, although they do not reside in "districts," and sick ones to be found, other places than in hospitals. And sometimes a bunch of flowers may do as much good as a gospel tract!

Why do not we, who live in the life and the sunshine, reach forth and gather what is so near us there, and minister it again to those who are hungering? We have many things about us that bring messages, sweet and true, from the "innermost" of everlasting love and beauty. Why do we not send them on, as we read, to carry joy where human lips cannot? Why do we not remember how much is missed in the world by those who never tell their needs, but go on living without them? Why do we not remember how large a part of life, as one says, is "made up of the days that never have been lived at all"?

RETURN

Have you ever noticed the first words of Hosea 14:1-9 : "O Israel, return unto the Lord"? God is speaking to Israel as a backsliding nation, but He addresses them in the one word with which He always meets men, "Return." For though man has not regarded Him, man still belongs to Him — created in His own image; bearing that image still, though broken and defaced.

"Man," says our ninth Article, "is very far gone from original righteousness." The very phrase, the "fall of man" witnesses of some standing from which he has fallen. Hence this is always God's message: "Return. There is a true home of your spirits from which you have wandered — come back to it."

"The prodigal in the far country," says Dr. Vaughan, "spoke of 'his father' though he was an exile, and when he thought of going to him, it was a returning — it was to a home." This is the ground on which we too should deal with "those who are outside." There is something akin to God in each heart — strive to touch that.

"To talk of a man's being utterly lost to good is absurd, for then he would be a devil at once." God does not leave Himself without witness in any soul. It may be faint; it may be resisted — all the rubbish of sinful human nature may be piled up to crush and deaden it — but it is there. I believe those are found to be most blessed and owned by Him in bringing souls to Himself, who address themselves to that witness and rouse its slumbering testimony.

This thought has arisen while reading your last letter and thinking of the work to which, for the present, you seem set apart. It is service on which many run, who are not "sent," but God has made the steps of your sending too clear to be mistaken. May I say one word more, which this same verse in Hosea suggests to me, for it gives another hint as to God's dealing with those

whom His bands of love are drawing. He always begins with sin — always awakens conscience. "O Israel, return unto the Lord, for you have fallen by your iniquity." "When the Spirit of truth has come, He will reprove the world of sin." So it was in our Lord's interview with the woman of Samaria. The "Go, call your husband" must be spoken, to "bring back old forgotten days," and flash its terrible light into the darkness of her life.

Perhaps we have now too much lost sight of the preaching of repentance which must precede the preaching of salvation. Reaction from an extreme which insisted on horrors of distress before the peace-bringing look to Jesus, and which virtually interposed a certain routine of "experience" between the sinner and the Savior — has led to another extreme which perhaps treats sin too lightly. And it may be that just because the preparatory work of ploughing and harrowing is superficial — the seed which "immediately" springs up takes no deep root, and the rapid growth too quickly withers.

I do think this is a thing to remember, if God in any way calls us to guide the spiritual life of others. We are not to say, "This do — and you shall live;" but we are to bring home to each, "This you have not done." Repentance is not salvation — but it must accompany salvation, or there is little hope of after-progress. I do not say it cannot be, but it is at least doubtful. The presumptuous self-importance, the spirit of wilfulness and intolerance, the carelessness about sin, and the lack of chastened meekness — so often seen, alas, in those truly converted, are painful evidence that the "bondage of Egypt" has not done its proper work. May not this be one secret of the transient results of some of our most hopeful revivals?

And yet, again, in all your teaching remember the need of much patience, not only as to the result of it, but the manner of it. Especially in dealing with younger and less experienced Christians, there is danger of trying to lead them on too fast, and thus inducing unreality. But, if we know ourselves what it is to receive any truth or to be led into any practice by the Spirit of Christ — we shall not try so much to press our knowledge upon others, as to wait prayerfully until God Himself fits them for it, if indeed He sees that it is fitted for them. Better that His hand should give them their portion — than that they should take it from ours. Better that, in simplicity of heart, they should seem to startle at anything — than that we should be instrumental in drawing them where God has not yet led them. For if they have been faithful up to the point at which they stand and remain faithful there — then their Guide will surely meet them and clear up the way beyond. The single-hearted who cling to Christ — He will lead fast enough, and give them light fast enough too. He knows better than we how much they can bear.

I will give you a sentence from quaint old Pennington: "He who is truly spiritual and strong in the light and spirit of the Lord, cannot desire that the weak should walk just as he does — but only as they are strengthened, taught, and led thereunto, by the same Spirit that taught and led him."

PRAYER

I can truly sympathize in your difficulties about "wonderful answers to prayer." This subject has been to me always an "exercise" of faith. I have hesitated about entering on it with you, from a fear of suggesting questions which might not occur to yourself. But most thinking people have the same hesitations and perplexities, and perhaps it is better we should speak of them freely, than keep them smothered up in our hearts to trouble the peace which, thank God, they can never take

away; for we have no doubt about the efficacy of prayer.

We believe that "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." We know that our Father does hear and answer the cry of His children. We take, in its simple fullness of meaning, our Lord's assurance, "Whatever you shall ask in my name — that will I do." It has conditions — but its truth from His lips, we accept in humble faith. The ground of our difficulty does not lie here.

But, in plain words, your question and mine is this — in reading or hearing the experience of some Christians, "Do they always obtain what they ask — and if they do, why may not I?" For how long have we prayed for this or that, prayed earnestly, believingly, submissively — and yet in vain! On, on, through years of hope deferred, our hearts' desire is not given; the "request of our lips" is still denied. While they

One thing we must remember. There are books full of "remarkable answers to prayer" — but the refusals have no record. Christians put down, as they truly believe for the encouragement of others, what God gives. I am not sure whether it might not be equally for the encouragement of others to know sometimes what He refuses.

Then again, one explanation of the difficulty I take home with shame to myself, though for you I have only to state it. Is there not some hindrance in us — to the granting of our petitions? Christ says, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you — you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." "If My words," for the written Word teaches us the limits of prayer, and, when it rules within, our asking can only be in the way of God's giving — we cannot will to ask what would be discordant to the will of our Heavenly Father.

But, are we fulfilling the condition of the promise — fully abiding in Christ — and His Word in us so abiding as to rule our lives? If not — if indolence, or worldliness, or any other cause is interfering with the wholeness of our consecration — can we wonder at unanswered prayers? "If I regard iniquity in my heart — the Lord will not hear me." There are many subtle ways of "regarding iniquity" — unsuspected until we are willing to have them shown us. Do we not see, in all who are "mighty in prayer," that their lives are given to God, lived in Him and for Him? And this is one secret of their power with Him.

But, beside this, the story of our Lord's life on earth gives us other glimpses of light in our difficulty. For some suppliants there was at once the "I will," and the immediate answer; for others, as now, the long delay. But was it not the strong faith which He tested? The weak faith which, in infinite tenderness, He would not try. He knew what was in man, what He was proving, and how the proof would be borne.

Witness His dealing with the Syrophenician mother and the nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. Yet surely they lost nothing of their blessing through their waiting! What they gained, neither they nor we can fully know — but our guess of it may help us also in our "long patience."

It may be, we cannot tell, that from prayers which seem unanswered here — we may reap the richest harvest there. Perhaps, in this sense also, the words are true: "Behold, we count them happy who endure." And may we not well rejoice if His eye detects in us a longing so intense for fellowship with Himself, that He can trust us not to shrink, even if He teaches us the meaning of that exceeding bitter cry: "Oh my God, I cry in the day-time — and You hear not."

Someone remarks that we are never ready to have our prayers answered — until we are quite willing that they should not be. Perhaps, indeed, we are not fit for the tokens of our Father's favor — until we are able, in perfect meekness and submission, to justify Him in what seems like neglect. Was it not just this lesson He would teach the mother who pleaded for her child? He let her drink His own cup — He let her taste His own rejection, when He said, "It is not fit to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto dogs." And she caught it at once; she took the place assigned her — she would be a dog, if He willed to call her so — she made no defense. Her humility acknowledges it as her right position — and she would make use of it: "Even the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table." And Jesus said, "Oh woman, great is your faith — be it unto you even as you will." Was she not a "prince with Him," and had she not prevailed? He never said to His disciples, "Great is your faith" — on the contrary, He exclaimed repeatedly, "Oh you of little faith." But one who dwelt, not in the favored land of Judea, but in the despised coasts of Tyre — won a blessing from Him, which even they had never heard. He might say to her, "Be it unto you even as you will."

Yes, our prayers remain with God — though they may not come back to us. They are not lost — they cannot be, when our great High Priest gathers them each one, even the faintest breath, to present them before our Father.

"The warfare of prayer and its accomplishment," says Dora Greenwell, "is the warfare, the accomplishment of the cross: a conquest through apparent defeat. Its work is one with that great effectual work in which its strength lies wrapped and hidden; it is, like it, a real work, and an effectual work — though one of which the believer, with his Lord, must sometimes be content to say, 'I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing, and in vain' yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God."

And if it was to be one result, solemnly announced as such, of the entire life of Christ on earth, that the "thoughts of many hearts should be revealed" — will not every part of His economy of grace bear the same likeness? It will be, as it were, detective in its character — appealing to faith, and trying it. His name is secret; His footsteps are not known — but "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

SERMONS

So you think Mr. A_____ 's preaching too sensational and exciting? I remember the time when I would have agreed with you; indeed I am still much at a loss to understand the special virtue of shouting — or the necessity of gesticulation.

But I begin to think, with Coleridge, that for a long while past, the Church of England has been blighted with prudence; and to join him in wishing that we had a "little zealous imprudence"! I am not sure that it might not be warranted by those words of Paul, "that I might by all means save some."

And, in this matter of preaching, just consider the object of it. Sermons are intended either to rouse the careless or to build up in the faith of Christ those who are already His. Leaving the latter result out of sight — how many preachers seem even to aim at the former?

"Oh man," I could not help saying to myself last night, while listening to the sermon addressed to our vast evening congregation at Mary's, "do you really believe that the crowds of men and women before you have souls to be saved or lost forever? Can you, in the utmost stretch of charity, persuade yourself that they are all, as you would say, 'safe in Christ'? And if they are not — then what are they?"

For this very clergyman would be inexpressibly shocked by any imputation on his belief in the eternity of punishment. He would tell you that he dares not doubt it, though he cannot explain it. And he grieves most truly I know, over those who doubt; yet if he believes it, why does he preach as if he did not? Why do he, and thousands more, deal, Sunday after Sunday, in mere vague exhortations, instead of entreating, imploring, compelling their hearers to flee from the wrath to come?

"You don't believe it," a young fellow said to me once; "you can't believe it — you orthodox Christian people — or you would go out into the streets and preach to everyone you met. I rather think that you doubt what you say you believe — than that you held it true and let poor wretches go on to Hell without warning."

I took shame to myself with the rebuke, for I had been truly guilty, and am so still. But after that I would not call Mr. A_____ 's preaching "sensational," even though its impassioned earnestness were ten times greater; for if the speaker realizes that he stands as God's messenger to bid sinners escape from eternal death to eternal life — then what can he do but be earnest?

It seems to me most grievous that so few ministers, in the church or out of it — aim at conversion in their preaching. We may thank God, indeed, for an increasing number who throw themselves heartily into evangelizing work — but, "what are they among so many?" I do not forget the hundreds and hundreds who are quietly and truly doing their Lord's will in watching for souls — spending themselves in "labors more abundant," of which none take note but Christ. Yet I know and you know, that my preacher of last night is only a specimen of more than one can bear to remember — considering the tremendous issues at stake. Good men they are, one cannot doubt — but surely the burden of unsaved souls has never been laid upon their hearts, or its weight would open their lips to different preaching, in church and home, from any preaching to be heard from them now!

With too many, alas, the explanation of the difficulty is sufficiently simple: they have not themselves fled for refuge to the hope set before them — so how can they urge others to do so? They hold "evangelical" doctrines; they are diligent in parish and school; there seems to be nothing lacking in them but — life. And what they have not — they do not seek. I do not mean for themselves, but in those associated in their work. Our friend Mr. B_____ has been looking out for a curate lately, and most particular have been his inquiries as to freedom from High Church or Broad Church errors. But, secure of this, he seems to have contented himself with negations — taking for granted that anyone who did not teach error, would necessarily teach truth. As to Mr. _____ being truly converted, Mr. B_____ did not apparently think that within his province to consider. And yet, I suppose, he knew the meaning of our Lord's word: "Can the blind lead the blind?"

These are sad facts, dear Louisa. They ought to humble us before God for the church of our fathers — the church of our own early love. Within her pale alone, we need to grieve over the many unconverted evangelical ministers preaching smooth things to unconverted congregations! But we have too much to mourn for in ourselves, that we should find fault with others. Oh, that God would rouse us to "take hold of His strength," that we may plead for a mighty outpouring of His Spirit; "showers upon those who are athirst, and floods upon the dry ground."

We hear and read strange sad things nowadays . . .

of the immoral state of society;

of an impure press;

of the spread of infidelity and communism;

of crime increasing in new forms of horror.

All is true, and to an extent of which you and I hardly dream! But what is the remedy? Has the old one failed? Is there no virtue now in the story of the cross — not told as a dead fact of history, but in all its living joy; told by men who know what it has done for them, who have faith in it, simple and uncompromising, as the power of God unto salvation for every one that believes?

We need that story — not allusions to it only, or a few vague thoughts about it spread over many words — but the story itself, briefly, simply told, by men who aim at a mark and hit it; by men who live up to it, and realize its wondrous freshness as they speak. This is the remedy; alas, that by so many preachers, in pulpits and out of them, it is not used.

But again you will say, "Why do you complain of the lack of appeals to the unconverted — neither in the church or among nonconformists? Is it not the theory of any assembly for worship, that it is composed of Christians? Can there be true worship from those who are not such? And why invite those who are within the fold to enter? They need building up in the faith — not persuasion to embrace it."

True, most true. But I need hardly remind you that the normal condition of the church has long passed away. The "kingdom of Heaven" consists . . .

of wheat and tares;

of faithful and unfaithful believers;

of covenanted but unconverted children. And therefore, just as the compilers of the prayer-book, understanding this, have constructed a Book of Common Prayer in which are words which may be used by all, and suited to a variety of states — so surely, can no clergyman believe that all his congregation belong to that one true church which is the "blessed company of all faithful people." And if the minister in his heart believes the fearful alternative — may there not well be excitement in his sermons — the excitement with which one would throw a rope to a drowning man or awaken one slumbering on a precipice!

And then again, even those who are ready for building up, do not get it. If, as Dean Goulburn says, "The office of the Christian ministry is twofold — to rouse consciences and to guide them," it is to

be feared that the majority of sermons do neither the one nor the other. They are not pointed enough to rouse — and not strong or deep enough to guide. They are too often mere generality and vagueness — an uncertain sound, which reaches neither believer nor unbeliever.

I was struck by a remark of Mr. I _____, when he came in from church on Good Friday: "We had a good sermon, all about Christ, and very earnest in its way — but there were no hooks in it."

You think me very critical, I know, if not something worse. But I am rather answering a criticism of yours, being much too sorrowful to criticize myself. Yet perhaps, instead of complaining thus to one another — it is better to take our complaints to God — better to plead with Him, for His own glory's sake to awaken His watchmen that slumber, and bid them cry to the careless ones whether they will bear it or whether they will forbear.

If we feel there is something lacking in any sermon, the very perception lays upon us a responsibility of prayer. We are not to sit down and moan while there is yet something to be done and God bids us do it. But it is easier to grieve over an "inefficient ministry" — than to set apart an hour to seek for its power from on high.

WORK WE CANNOT DO OVER AGAIN

How well I understand your feeling about the work we cannot do over again! It is very sad, very humbling, to look back and see how different it might have been — how differently we would do it now. And yet, perhaps, this sort of retrospection has its wrong side. It may be a little faithless — and more than a little morbid. It should make us more watchful — it should not make us despairing. We must learn to cast on our Lord the burden of a finished work — as well as of that which is not begun.

There is a temptation to take it up and do it over again in our own minds — very much better, as we think, for we bring experience to this mental review and can read our mistakes in the light of it. But let us rather leave the past with our Lord — He knows the worst of it, which even we do not; and the failure we can see, let us take to Him in humble confession. Let us tell it out before Him, fully and frankly; and then, with His forgiveness making us glad, let us "forget the things which are behind."

We cannot gather up the broken threads — why should we waste strength in trying? We need that for the present. What has been, or might have been — is beyond our power to alter. In reference, however, to your special subject of disquiet — the book which you wonder how you could write, or anyone else read — I do not think you are a fair judge. You would "write it differently now," you say.

Pardon me — you would not write that book at all, but quite another. You could not, in fact, write it now. The self of ten years ago is entirely unlike the self of today — you cannot feel, or see, as you felt and saw then, because you cannot travel backwards and occupy the same point of view. "The rest we cannot recreate; ourselves we cannot reinstate, or set ourselves to the same key of the remembered harmony."

"Then I wish I had waited," you will say. "How many more my words would have reached — if I had not been in such haste to speak them!" Possibly, but they would not have reached some hearts to which they went straight home and in which they have been a seed of life and health. The same

thing is true of all teaching that is living and not formal. You look back and sigh, "How differently I would speak or write if I could give my message again!" But if, indeed, you asked it from God — if from the felt need of your own heart you sought to meet the need of others — then you may be sure that it was not in vain that you that gave what you received.

We pray for daily bread and obtain it; but what you live by now, you would have been once unable to appropriate; you had not grown to the need of it. It could not have satisfied, because it would not have suited you. Even so, supposing for a moment that it had been possible for you to minister it to others, it might not have been "food convenient" for them, any more than for you.

No, each stage of life has its own experience, its own sore strain and conflict. And only when we are passing through it can we speak of it as it really is. Pain which we have lived over is softened in remembrance, and we are apt to estimate it too lightly; drifted into smooth waters, we forget the tossing through which we reached them; and the perplexities we look back to, we can hardly realize. They would not perplex us now, and it is difficult to believe they ever did. When our path lies in light, we can scarcely recall the uncertainty and bewilderment of feeling our way in darkness; hence, our sympathy is less intense for those who are following in the way behind us.

We can indeed say to them, "There is smoother road before you — I have reached it, and I know"; but we forget how weary they are meanwhile — how weary we were as we passed through the same straits. I think help comes to us most in such need, so far as it may from any human source, through those who are "companions," if not in "tribulation," at least in the difficulty and doubt which have their own trial.

Must we not believe that not one word spoken for God, if it has been a true word, uttered straight from the heart as He laid it there — will be allowed to fall fruitless? It is given to few, perhaps, to speak those which shall be remembered in themselves. Only now and then come the mighty masters, whose sayings ring on through the ages. But, if we have touched one heart in the next street, strengthened in holiness one life, however lowly — we have not lived in vain. As silent as the dew, and as secret, may our influence be; but if God has used it — taken it up, as it were, into His mighty scheme of working — we need ask no more.

I believe He has so used your book. You wonder now how anyone can read it — and would not like to be condemned to read it yourself. Probably not; it would be a pity if all that has come and gone since you wrote had left you at precisely the same point, going on still with the same "exercise" of heart, by whose sharp pressure you were constrained to give others what none had given you. In any life of true growth, there must always be a certain dissatisfaction in looking back to the lower stages of it. But those who stand where you stood once, feel that they are met on their own ground; and accordingly I have seen those poor despised pages covered with pencil marks, and often blistered with tears. And remember that this would have been the same though you had never known it. We sow in hope — and the springing seed may never bless our sight here; yet if its harvest may be gathered in the garner of God, is it not for this we have toiled?

And, after all, if indeed your writing was a "mistake" — what then? Humility, surely — but not despondency. Even looking at this subject in its widest and saddest aspect, shall we believe that the shadow of our own error must rest on us forever? If we have confessed it to our Father — can we doubt that He is faithful and just to forgive — and mighty to restore? It may be that, through the

mEEK, patient living out of these very mistakes, we are to reach that "end of the Lord" which is folded up and hidden in each of our lives. "He is forever making up for us, our own undoings."

If, as He solemnly warns us, He can "curse our blessings," His transmuting power can equally "turn the curse into a blessing." The wrong step and the wrong path, He may, in answer to our penitent cry, make to lead on at last through green pastures. Let us only lay our hand in His and cleave to Him wholly, trust Him fully, believing that, through all the confusion into which our waywardness or blindness may have led us — He can make a way for us into His own perfect order.

At any rate, lay this rule down and keep to it — do not go back to the work you cannot do over again. Let the tangled stitches go; we may not put them straight here, but we cannot tell what may be given us out of these imperfect beginnings when we come out into the light yonder.

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